

WRITINGS OF JAMES DENNEY

by James Denney

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by James Denney, compiled for study and devotional reading.

57 Chapters

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01.00. Gospel Questions and Answers

GOSPEL QUESTIONS AND

ANSWERS BY THE REV. PROFESSOR JAMES DENNEY, D.D

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01.01. Misgiving

THE QUESTION OF MISGIVING 'What lack I yet?'

Mat 19:20

Most people would have envied the man who put this question to Jesus. He seemed to have everything that heart could wish. He had youth, which means hope and inspiration and an unknown inheritance in the future. He had social position, which usually tends to satisfaction with one's self. He had wealth, which attaches the soul so powerfully because it is on the borderland, as it were, of the material and the spiritual — not bad, if not good, but a permanent possibility of doing and of enjoying most things that men wish to enjoy or to do. He had character, too, which was better than all: he could hear the commandments recited by Jesus with no qualms of conscience. Neither rank nor wealth nor youthful passions had hurried him into any of those excesses which can never be forgotten, and which make memory a curse. But in spite of this extraordinary happiness, in spite even of his good conscience, his soul was not at rest. He felt that something was wanting; he could not say he had eternal life, and it was a divine prompting that brought him to Jesus with the question, "What lack I yet?" No situation is commoner in the Church than that of this man. There are hundreds and thousands who have been brought up in Christian homes, and recognise more or less their own likeness in him. They, too, have kept the commandments all their life. There is no great stain upon their conscience that makes them hopelessly miserable. If they have not rank or wealth, at all events they know that it is not rank or wealth that would make any difference to them. They have been, as a rule, pure, truthful, kind, respectful to their parents, considerate of the rights of others, reverent to the law of God; but they are not satisfied. They know that at the very heart they are not right. They have religion, of a kind, but it is not the religion of the New Testament. They do not take it with rapture. The characteristic note of New Testament religion — its assurance, its confidence, its joy in a life which leaves nothing to be desired — is the very one which their voice does not command. They are perpetually asking, "What lack I yet?"

Jesus answers the question with the utmost plainness. But the answer was in more than words. "Fastening His eyes on him. He loved him." He appreciated all the good there was in the man, and still more his wistful inquiry after a more perfect good. Christ and a young man, as Samuel Rutherford said, is a meeting not to be seen in every town, but it is a grateful meeting to the Lord. No one can be surer of Christ's interest and sympathy than one who comes with such a record as this ruler's to put the same question of misgiving. If there must be something peculiarly trying in the answer, Christ will flash His love into the heart before he speaks, that the questioner may know that the exacting words do not come at random or from want of feeling, but are inspired by a genuine care for his soul. But after the loving glance Jesus did speak, and that with all gravity. He did not pooh-pooh the man's misgivings, as unwise friends sometimes do. He did not say, 'This uneasiness of yours is morbid: it is an unwholesome mood which you ought not to indulge. Accept the responsibilities and the advantages of the position which God has given you, and do not worry

or mope about ideals and impossibilities. Nobody can be more perfect than his nature and his place allow him to be; and it is a mistake to nurse what are really spiritual ambitions which forget what man is.' On the contrary, with His earnest, loving look fixed on the man, Jesus answered: "One thing thou lackest Go thy way, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow Me."

There is no understanding this answer until we see that the pith of it lies in the last words, and that those which precede are only conditional. When Jesus says Follow Me, He implies that He has what the ruler lacks, and that the misgiving which troubled the ruler's soul was one which He, and only He, could overcome. This is the constant attitude of our Lord toward men; it is in this that we feel, first and last, how He is the Lord, and is conscious of being so. He stands over-against the world, and He knows that He has what all men need, and has it in such fulness that all men can obtain it from Him. This is the ultimate proof of His divinity, this is the infallible sign that He is Saviour: He can do for men, and for all men, what all men need to have done; He can give to men, and to all men, what all men need to receive; in His company, misgivings die, for He is the Author of perfection, of eternal life, to those who receive Him. There were men present when Jesus spoke who could certify that that was so. Peter was there, who had cried not long before, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast words of eternal life." John was there, who wrote long after, "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." This was what the ruler lacked, and it was to be had nowhere but in Jesus. Only through Him, through His words, through His revelation of the Father, through His coming death, through the Spirit which those who were His should receive, could he enter into a life in which misgiving should be no more. To sell all that he had and to give to the poor was for him, in the circumstances of the time, and with his moral constitution, the one condition on which it was possible to follow Jesus into eternal life. Jesus, in short, asked him to do what the twelve had done: "Lo, we have left all, and followed Thee," — at the same cost he should have the same reward.

Yet, although this is so, great emphasis is undoubtedly laid upon the preliminary condition: "Sell all that thou hast." Eternal life is not only the free gift of God in Jesus Christ; it has to be purchased with a great renunciation by every one who enters into it. He who lives in it, with a life from which misgiving has vanished, can not only say, as Paul said of his Roman citizenship, "I was free born," but also what Claudius Lysias said of his, "With a great sum obtained I this freedom." To put the same truth in another way, salvation is not only a gift, but a calling. Perhaps among Protestants it has been presented too exclusively as a gift. Men have been conceived as sinners simpliciter — as defeated, disgraced, doomed, in despair; eternal life for such must be a gift as pure and simple. But it is possible to conceive men also as seekers and aspirants. It is possible to find men in whom the inner life is characterised not by the sense of guilt, but rather by that of deficiency: whose souls do not cry with St. Paul, "O wretched man that I am who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" but rather question gravely with this ruler, "What lack I yet?" To these last salvation is a calling. Follow me is the sound of a trumpet. It is an appeal to those who are capable of great actions: who are brave enough, honest enough, earnest enough, to renounce everything, to pierce through everything, that they may win Christ. If they can find it in their hearts to count the cost and pay, they enter into the life which is life indeed. And they have no misgivings as to whether they are saved by grace. None are readier than they to confess what they owe to Christ. None are readier than they to utter John's confession: "God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in

His Son." But the price has to be paid, and often it is staggering. It has to be paid by every one. "If thou wouldest be perfect . . . follow Me": Christ says that to us all, but between the two parts of the sentence comes the condition which must be fulfilled before we can follow Him, and enter into life. It will vary in different men, but it would be very extraordinary if it were not, in many, connected with money. There is nothing, for reasons already suggested, with which so many spiritual perils are associated. There is nothing to the advantages of which we are more keenly alive, to the risks of which we are naturally so blind. Does anybody really believe that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God? Does any one realise the deceitfulness of the heart implied in a remark of St. Francis of Sales, that in all his experience as a confessor no one had ever confessed to him the sin of covetousness? If there is anything in the teaching of Jesus, we may be sure that voluntary poverty—the deliberate renunciation of possessions—is the strait gate through which alone multitudes can enter into the Kingdom of God. Self-scrutiny would often reveal that the one thing an otherwise good character lacks is to be made right with God in this particular: to resign a source of income that He could not approve, to arrest a self-indulgent expenditure, and replace it by an unselfish spending for a good greater than our own; to bring money, in a word, under law to Christ. And when we look at society as a whole, the one conspicuous feature is, not simply the power of money, but the power of money organised and entrenched against the Kingdom of God. The vested interests of iniquity are the most gigantic social forces among which we live.

It is easy to protest against such ideas, and one can easily imagine the disciples themselves protesting. It was seldom they had the chance of enlisting such a recruit as this respectable proprietor, and they were certainly astonished, and probably disconcerted, at the exacting terms of discipleship proposed to him by Jesus. Many share their astonishment, and criticise the incident in the spirit of Strauss, who thinks that Jesus in His teaching fails to do justice to the instinct of accumulation. Jesus had no right, such persons say, to make the demand He did. God gave the ruler his property, not to squander it on so-called charity any more than on self-indulgence, but to administer it in His service. It is enough to reply that of this the ruler was the best judge, and his conscience sided with Jesus. Certainly, at the first hearing, the words startled him; one of the evangelists notices his sudden change of countenance; but he went away sorrowful. Not angry, as he would have been if the demand of Jesus had been a mere impertinence; but sorrowful, because he felt that Jesus had touched the secret infirmity of his character, and that he had not courage to face the cure. Could anything be more melancholy than to see a man whom Jesus loved, a man with a yearning after eternal life, drop his eyes under that loving, searching glance, and go away sorrowful — go away, although he wished to stay; go away, because he loved money better than the life of God; go away, with a more poignant ache in his heart than when he came to the Great Physician? It is one of the saddest things in the gospel, and how much sadder when we think of the look with which Jesus followed him — a man who, when it came to the point, counted himself unworthy of eternal life.

Let his very sorrow speak to us in Christ's name. It is the only experience in such cases. No one is ever glad that he has turned his back on Jesus. The things we prefer to Him lose their value the instant they are so preferred. The possessions of the ruler would never again be to him what they had been. The brightest sun that ever shone would never lift from his fields the cold shadow of that great refusal. He knew now what he lacked and how much it was. And if we want a companion

picture to inspire, as this to awe us, let us look at St. Paul as he writes to the Philippians: "Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may gain Christ, and be found in Him." That is the life in which there is no misgiving more — the life that only God can give, in Jesus Christ His Son; the life, too, that every one has to buy, at the cost even of his money.

01.02. Doubt

THE QUESTION OF DOUBT 'Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another? '

Mat 11:3 The Jewish race, more than any other, lived with its eye upon the future, and in this respect John the Baptist was the representative of his race. He believed in the Hope of Israel. He believed there was One who should come, a King and a Saviour, to do for the nation all that its noblest spirits had ever longed to see done. After He came, the final and perfect representative of God, there could be no other to look for; the history of Israel would have reached its term. This great hope, which floated in the people's minds, waiting impatiently the appearance of some one whom it could claim as its champion, and whom it could invest in all the strength of a nation's faith, had been identified by John with Jesus. He had spoken of Jesus, while yet unknown to Him, as One mightier than himself, who could do what he had failed to do — baptize with holy spirit and with fire; he had consecrated Him to His life-work, as the instrument of Israel's hope, in baptism; he had seen heaven opened, and the Spirit of God descend and rest upon Him; he had borne witness that He is the Son of God. Nay, by a sudden flash of revelation, as he looked upon Jesus he had seen that sin is not to be overcome, as he had tried to overcome it, by direct and violent assault, but by a method more mysterious, painful, sacrificial, even divine. Behold, he had said, as Jesus passed before him. Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

It is this which makes the subsequent doubt of John so disconcerting; yet that doubt can be explained, if not justified. It is evident that John had somehow been disappointed in Jesus. The lofty witness which he bears Him, and which is recorded in the Gospels as the essential point in his relations with Him, probably represents the height to which John rose at the crises of his career, not the ruling quality of his thoughts. John belonged, we cannot forget, to the Old Testament, and his anticipations of the works of the Christ were shaped on Old Testament models, and on too partial a selection even of these. It would be wrong to say of one who was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb that he was an unspiritual man, but his hopes were of a cast which failed to do justice to the spirit of the new era. God's Kingdom must come, he thought, in a moment, suddenly; the axe that lay at the root of the tree would flash and smite; the fan would wave in the Judge's hand; in an instant the judgment would be consummated; the old order and its wickedness would be annihilated; the new would be set up, to last for ever. But John had not observed Jesus long till he saw that these anticipations were not destined to fulfillment, and the question inevitably rose Have I been right in attaching the hope of Israel to this Nazarene? Is He the Coming One of prophecy, or must our eyes turn again to the unknown future? The crossing of hope and experience was aggravated in John's case by his own unhappy fortune. He had prepared the way of Jesus. Jesus had entered into his labors, had found in the circle of John's disciples every one of those who became His own most intimate followers, and yet to all appearance had forgotten him. All his services had not earned bare gratitude. As he pined in Herod's prison, and felt that power was still in bad hands, he could not but doubt whether the Kingdom of God had come in Jesus. It did not look like it. He might have been hasty in identifying the hope of Israel with Him, and he resolved to send two of his disciples to put the question point

blank. The answer of Jesus is of course an affirmative, but not in express terms. Not even to John the Baptist did He say, I am the Christ. The only religious convictions which are ultimately superior to doubt have to be attained in another way; they are revelations on the one side and discoveries, or insights, on the other. They have little to do with Yes or No. When the doubt of John was submitted to Him, Jesus answered by exhibiting to John the grounds of His own certainty that He was the Messiah, the Hope and the Saviour of Israel. How did Jesus know Himself that He was the Coming One? What was the nature of that self-consciousness which certified to Him that He was the Sent of God, the Redeemer of men? The question has been much discussed by those who have written His life, but as far as we can make out the answer, it is here. 'Go and tell John the things that ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.' These manifold blessings, bodily and spiritual, which were all one with the presence and work of Jesus upon earth, identified Him in His own mind with Him that should come. The features of the Coming One were adumbrated in those prophecies which had nourished His youth, and as He looked into them it was His own features that looked back upon Him from the divine page. Jesus recognized Himself in the great Servant of God, of whom it had been written, "He shall not cry, nor lift up nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgment in truth." He recognized Himself again when He read in the synagogue at Nazareth, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach glad tidings unto the meek." He recognized Himself once more, and the fruits of His work, in that bright vision of Isa 35:1-10 : "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert". The correspondence between prophecies like these and that which He knew Himself to be, and saw around Him, identified Jesus to Himself as the Promised Saviour; He implies that the argument should have weight for John, and, with the proper qualifications, for us also. The argument from prophecy has been discredited by abuse; but the proper application of it — that which is made by our Saviour here, and which goes to show the fulfillment of the Old Testament in the New, or, in other words, the substantial unity of revelation — can never go out of fashion. The first generation of Christians was overwhelmed by its force, and the more it is understood the more highly it will be valued.

Thus far our Lord answers the first perplexity of John — that arising from his disappointed hopes. But when he adds, "Blessed is he that shall not be offended in Me," it seems almost certain that He refers to John's impatience with his fate. John could hardly believe the Kingdom of God was there, if he was left in prison. Jesus hints, in this warning word, that no man is too good to suffer for the Kingdom, and that no man should allow the necessity of such suffering to shake his faith in Him, and in the fulfillment of God's promises through Him. The continued existence and power of evil is a trial to Him as well as to us, but it did not shake His faith that God had visited the world in Him, to bless and save it, and it should not shake ours. It is dangerous to weigh our own importance against that of the Kingdom of God, and to argue that it cannot have come — that the hope of the world has still to be looked for — because we are neglected. Jesus knew that the Cross awaited Him, but that did not disturb His faith that the Kingdom had come in Him; and He teaches more plainly elsewhere that the need of suffering wrong in its service, far from being a cause of doubt, ought to be a seal of faith. The doubt of John is one of the most familiar religious

phenomena of our own time. People look at the world, after all its long experience of the Gospel, and acknowledge a profound disappointment. 'Is the thing we see salvation?' Is Christ really the Saviour of men and of society? Or must we not, when we see the state of things around us, conclude that God has something better to do for the world than He has yet done, and that we just look on into the future for another? Especially when we see how spiritless and ineffective are many of the persons and institutions which carry the Christian name, must we not have doubts as to whether that name can really preside over the future development of the world, as it has no doubt done over much that is good in the past? Christianity certainly has been a power in history; but is it not a creed outworn?

Even in the Church the disposition to ask such questions is strong. The shapes Christianity has taken, the institutions in which it has expressed itself, the ideals it has yielded, are subjected to unsparing criticism. Young people especially, those in whom 'the prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming on things to come' makes its power felt, those who look instinctively to the future as their home, yet desire guidance in it, can hardly help asking, Is Jesus Christ still the hope of the race? Is it still at His lips we are to seek words of life?

Happily it can be shown that many of the most characteristic tendencies and hopes of the new age are distinctly Christian in their inspiration. It is a Christian principle which would lead in the state and in society to a more effective recognition of human brotherhood. It is a Christian principle which would try to secure for the honest age of laboring men and women a better abode than the poorhouse. It is a Christian principle which would aim at making every kind of human interest—politics, art, science, religion—accessible to all sorts and conditions of men; at guaranteeing, as far as possible, to every child of the human family his part in the common inheritance. It is a Christian principle, too, which would take care that no transformation of the social or political order should be made, whatever the economical gain to the many, which should involve injustice to the few; and which would provide against purchasing material advantages at a moral loss. Far from the prospect raising doubt under this view, it suggests one of the most solid and astonishing proofs of the truth of the Gospel. The ideal presented by Jesus Christ is always ahead of us, yet always adapted to our situation. He lived on earth nearly nineteen hundred years ago, and the inspiration of the world's progress still comes from Him. We have not passed this way heretofore, yet when we lift our eyes we see it is still He who is our guide. There are no new ideas in morals, no creative social thoughts, no wisdom of life, for which we have not to be indebted to Him. No: we do not look for another to bring in the world's hope. And if we turn our eyes from the future to the present, and let the whole discouragement of it sink into our souls, we shall find again that our only hope is in Him. Sometimes it seems impossible to exaggerate the discouragement. Here are great towns, which have been Christian for a thousand years or more, and we know what they are. Is Christ the hope of the race, when after a thousand years' acquaintance with Him people still live in such houses, with such facilities for drunkenness and vice, with such a practical impossibility of being temperate and pure? Is Christ the hope of the race when, in a society which has known Him for thirty generations, there are whole classes that live by sin, and sell their souls to make their daily bread? Is Christ the Saviour of the world, when after all these centuries the world is manifestly not saved, and as far as great masses of society are concerned, is not the least like being saved? Here is the great cause of doubt and of heart-searching in those who have had hopes of what Jesus would do for men: here is the pain which makes them say to His face, 'Art

thou He that should come, or do we look for another?' Is it not wonderful that Jesus Himself had experience of this trial, and remained sure of Himself and of His divine vocation in spite of it? He saw, if we may say so, the failure of the Gospel. In this very chapter He upbraids the cities that had been spectators of His mighty works, yet had not repented. The way in which He overcame this trial was by looking away from the disappointments and failures to the work which was actually being accomplished and to the spirit in which it was being done. 'Go and tell John the things which ye do hear and see.' The big town with its misery and vice may be a melancholy sight; but look through it from end to end, search all ranks from the highest to the lowest, and you will be compelled to admit that the hopeful spots in it are those in which Christ is actually at work. Wherever you encounter a truly Christian man or woman you must acknowledge that there is one ray of light in the darkness, one grain of salt in the else unwholesome mass. It is not easy to understand that this is the way salvation works, that men should be so insensible, and God so intolerably slow; but it is easy enough to understand that if the Spirit of Christ were sovereign in all souls, the work of salvation would be done. Why then, because of the slowness of its conquests, should we look for another? Do we not read in the Book of Revelation, not only of the Kingdom, but of the patience, of Jesus Christ? Why should we doubt Him, because we have to share the trial of that patience? 'Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Him.'

01.03. Failure

THE QUESTION OF FAILURE 'Why could not we cast him out?'

Mat 17:19 & Mark 9:28 The same page in the Gospel presents to us the glory for which man was created, and the humiliation in which he lives. We see Jesus transfigured at the top of the mountain, and at the bottom his disciples face to face with a possessed child they cannot heal, and taunted by the scribes whom they cannot answer. When Jesus descended, neither the scribes nor the disciples were forward to speak to him. The scribes became suddenly conscious of their inhumanity, for in their hostility to the followers of Jesus they had been indifferent to the sufferings of the child; the disciples were mortified by their failure; both were abashed in that gracious and mighty presence. The poor man, who alone suffered in his boy's suffering, explained the situation to Jesus. It was not flattering to those who had used His name. 'I spoke to Thy disciples that they should cast him out, and they were not able.' They were not able: there might be valid explanations, but there was the inevitable fact. Mark dwells on the struggle in the father's soul, on the paroxysm in the illness — epilepsy apparently — of the child, and on the wonderful words of Jesus about the power of faith. It was only after all was over, and the crowd had dispersed, that the baffled disciples came to Jesus in the house, and asked, 'Why could not we cast him out ? ' This is a question which, whether we ask it or not, we have often to answer. The Church's failures are conspicuous enough, and there are plenty of indifferent or hostile spectators to demand the explanation of them. Why cannot you cast the evil spirits out of society, or even out of the members of your own body? Why are there men and women all about you, victims of evil passions and of evil principles, literally possessed by pride, by lust, by ill-nature, by drunkenness, by inveterate falseness? Why cannot you deliver them from the degradation and misery of vices like these? Such questions are asked, but to such questioners they are never answered. The disciples, fencing with the scribes, did not yet know the answer, and even if they had known they might have found it impossible to tell. Nothing they could ever have told would have gone to the root of the matter. And it is always so. In any document which is of the nature of an apology made by the Church to the world — in any explanation of failure for the benefit of the non-Christian — the essential things are of necessity left out. There are explanations of a sort, pleas in extenuation more than enough, but not the truth. The truth comes out, not when the disciples are questioned by outsiders, but when they put this question to the Lord — Why could not we cast him out? The Lord's answer is its own evidence, and every man who has been conscious of failure in spiritual work will confess its truth.

'He saith unto them, Because of your little faith.' Jesus had spoken strongly to the father of the child about faith — 'all things are possible to him that believeth'; He had reproached the whole company as faithless and perverse; and now He explains by lack of faith the failure of the disciples. What is the faith on which He puts such stress? In a word, it is that exercise and effort of the human soul which lays hold of God, and brings Him into the field. It is that power in the soul which makes God present. To have no faith means to have no sense that God is here, no conviction that He is with us as a Redeemer from evil. To have little faith, like the disciples in this

story, means to have only a feeble conviction that He is with us — a conviction that seems good enough as long as it is untried, but that vanishes or is reduced to impotence the moment we are confronted with the mighty forces of evil. With no faith, or with little faith — with no hold on God, or with a hold so slight that we faint and let go in face of the enemy — what can we do? We can do nothing. The power of evil in the world is a tremendous power: there is nothing to match it but the power of God. To overcome it is to work the mightiest of miracles, and it is God alone who does wondrous things. To go out to war with it without faith is to go out to certain failure, for it is to go out alone, without God. That is why men preach so often, and no one is blessed; and teach so assiduously, and no heart is won, even for ten minutes, by the love of God. We have left home to do it as if it were a simple thing; we stand before our congregation or our class as if it were a matter of course, and as a matter of course nothing is done. Why? Why, but because we are alone — because God is not here, present to our faith, to do what only He can do. In the time of James VI there was a famous preacher in Edinburgh, Mr. Robert Bruce. 'No man,' says one of his contemporaries, 'in his time spake with such evidence and power of the Spirit. No man had so many seals of conversion; yea, many of his hearers thought that no man, since the apostles, spake with such power.' Do we not discover the secret of that power — a secret illustrating our Lord's answer to His disciples here — in the story told of his preaching at Larbert? He was in the vestry before the service, and some one was sent to call him. But the messenger brought back word that he did not know when the minister would come out.' He believed there was somebody with him, for he heard him many times say with the greatest seriousness, "that he would not, he could not go, unless He came with him, and that he would not go alone," — adding, that he never heard the other answer him a word. When he came out, he was singularly assisted.' That example explains to us, better than any words, the real cause of our failures. It is because we go alone to do the work of God. Why should we be able, without Him, to speak to the heart, to touch its secret springs, to call forth repentance, faith, love, self-surrender? Why should anything we say or do, apart from Him, have power to cast out evil spirits from men? We should be afraid to command them, even in the name of Jesus, except in the assurance that God is with us.

Only faith like this can enable us to overcome the fatalistic temper which is so apt at the present time to infect both those who suffer from evil and those who would help them. 'I am what I am,' a man says, 'and so I must be; there is a necessity in it against which it is vain to strive.' Even Christian men fall into this tone. They speak sometimes as if the evil we see were inevitable, and the enslavement of human souls by the devil a part of the order of the world against which it is useless, and indeed senseless, to protest. Such a recognition of natural law is equivalent to the denial of God. Faith means, in the last resort, the assurance that God can work miracles — that He is greater than all the powers of evil, and can overcome them even when they are entrenched in nature — that there is no connection formed in nature which He cannot break; nay, that He is here in the omnipotence of grace, to do the very things which to nature are impossible. We need to believe in the spiritual nature and destiny of those we try to help: we need to believe that God is able, in spite of all that has been, to carry that destiny to a divine issue. 'Of all the sins that can be committed,' says the great preacher already referred to, 'I esteem this the greatest, when a man in his heart will match the gravity of his iniquity with the infinite weight of the mercy of God.' If there is a greater sin still, is it not that of resigning in apathy, as if thus it must be, the victory over God's sovereign mercy and holiness to the evil spirit which has subdued a human soul? If we want to see the victory where it ought to be, we must believe that there is One who is stronger than the strong

man armed, and who can bind him and spoil his goods. The Gospel of Mark enables us to see a little further into our Lord's meaning. There He is represented as saying, 'This kind Cometh not out but by prayer (and fasting).' Faith has to be kept alive and vigorous if it is to work wonders, and here we see the conditions under which it lives. It was neglect of prayer, we should judge from this answer, which explained the dwindling of the disciples' faith.

Prayer, in the most general sense, is that exercise of the soul in which we come into God's presence and assure ourselves again of what He is in Himself, and of what He is to us. It is in this way the great proof of faith, and the great nourisher of faith; and it makes faith conscious of itself. There is no example of prayer, in the Bible or out of it, to compare with Jesus. He saw the evil that was in the world as no other saw it, felt it as no other felt it, was conscious as no other of the enormous strength with which it had rooted itself in the constitution of man and of society, yet He did not despair; His ceaseless passionate prayers kept Him always in contact with the omnipotent love of the Father. As He advanced to the most difficult works, He could say: 'I know that Thou hearest Me always.' He never failed.

Much work fails because it is not only prayerless, but in a manner an evasion of prayer. We bustle away with studying and preaching, with visiting and teaching, and after all it is ineffective and may even have been aimless: why? Because we have never had our work in God's presence to get guidance, inspiration, and force from Him. Prayer, to say nothing else of it, gives a new directness and strength to our purpose; it compels us to leave out of our methods all that is irrelevant, all that is of ourselves or looks to our own ends, all that is evasive: it compels us to go straight to the object in the strength of God. To think that we can do the work of God without prayer is to think that we can do it without God, and there can be no hypocrisy or presumption beyond that. Failure itself should have taught us to 'speak oftener of men to God, than of God to men.' Certainly it is only as prayer keeps our hearts right with Him, and enables us to address ourselves to our work, knowing that He is with us, that we can hope to see that work, which is His rather than ours, prosper in our hands. The Revised Version leaves out the words 'and fasting' in Mark 9:29. The scholars who agree with the revisers in this omission suppose the words to have been added — at a very early date — by some ascetically inclined copyist. I once heard a distinguished interpreter of the gospels say that he always felt 'and fasting' was unlike Christ, and that it was quite a relief to him to discover that there was good authority for omitting the words. But in spite of this, the question of evidence is not perfectly simple, and whether Jesus used the words on this occasion or not, they convey a truth to which He often gave expression on other occasions, and which seems to me entirely in place here. When we pray, in connection with any work we are about to undertake for God, we offer ourselves for His service: we put our whole nature and faculties at His disposal. We must be as fit as possible, to use the language of the gymnasium, for the work He has to do. But fitness implies self-discipline; self-discipline implies abstinence, of various kinds; and the most general name for abstinence is fasting. Take the simplest case of all, the case of food. One need not speak of gluttony: nothing is more unholy than a glutton. But short of that, the man who has just dined heartily, and feels a little heavy with meat and drink, knows that many things, meanwhile, are impossible for him. He is too conscious of the flesh to be of much use spiritually: no evil spirits are likely to be dispossessed by him. Now there is a principle here which has a wide application, and it is this: that those who are going to fight God's battle in the world, to encounter evil and vanquish it, to succour the degraded and fallen, must vigilantly guard against

any compromising relations with the enemy, and even with things otherwise innocent, which the enemy has been able to pervert to his use. This is not an anti - evangelical doctrine. The fasting it commends is not a ritual abstinence twice a week, to be praised of men, but a voluntary abstinence, prescribed to the soul by itself, from all that it feels, though lawful otherwise, would impair its fitness for the service of God. If history can be summoned to prove anything, it is to prove that fasting in this sense is a *sine qua non* of successful work for God. The greatest of all preachers of liberty — St. Paul — never once enunciates the principle of liberty in its full compass without instantly subjoining to it this principle of restraint. 'All things are lawful for me, but — all things are not expedient' , 'All things are lawful for me, but — all things do not build up.' 'All things are lawful for me, but — I will not be brought under the power of any.' The principle of fasting is defended by every one of these 'buts': and experience shows that it is the men who have been superior to the attractions which life at the common level has for the average sensual man who alone have been able to do the world spiritual service. No doubt the explanation of much of our failure lies here. We are not separate enough from the evils from which we wish to save others. There is not enough of Puritanism in our moral ideal or in our character. We have not learned what Christ meant when he said: 'First bind the strong many and then spoil his house.'

Little faith, little prayer, little self - discipline: these are the things which spell failure in spiritual work. They are not the reasons we often hear. You are powerless, outsiders tell us, because your creed is too complicated, or because its forms of thought and expression are antiquated. You are powerless, because your preachers have little intelligence, and little eloquence; you are powerless, because you give too little (or too much) attention to aesthetics in your worship; you are powerless, according to the most recent diagnosis, because you are ignorant of social science, and do not care for the condition of the people. Perhaps if we wanted to excuse our failures, we might mention some of these things ourselves; but if we want to understand them we had better hearken to Jesus. The evil spirits are not cast out, from want of faith, want of prayer, and want of self-denial, directed on our work as Christians. There is only one way to strength and success — re-union to God, and separation once more from the world.

01.04. Poverty

THE QUESTION OF POVERTY ' Whence should we have so much bread? '

Mat 15:33

When the popularity of Jesus was at its height, great multitudes followed Him. The disciples, with their notions of what His Kingdom should be, saw in the crowds armies of possible supporters; to Jesus they were like shepherdless sheep, scattered and torn. He was moved with compassion for them, healed their sick, and day after day spoke to them of the Kingdom of God. As they lingered in His company, loth to take leave, and ill able, many of them, to face the journey home, He suggested to the disciples that they should give them something to eat. The disciples had a right to be astonished. They were poor men who had left their all to follow Him. They knew what hunger was, and had sometimes no more to stay their appetites than the ears of corn they plucked in their way through, the fields, or the figs they gathered from a chance tree on the wayside. As they looked at the thousands crowding round their Master, and thought of their ill-furnished wallets, is it any wonder they asked, 'Whence should we have so much bread as to fill so great a multitude?' The question is virtually a disclaimer of responsibility. The problem presented by Jesus to the Twelve is the problem of the Church today. The world lies before us, full of destitution, both material and spiritual; and its misery, if not its wistful waiting upon the Church, appeals to our compassion. The imagination is oppressed if we try to present to ourselves vividly the dimensions of its need. We cannot count the millions who are famishing for the bread of life; we cannot estimate the weakness, the misery, the lingering pain, the low vitality, the expiring hopes, the stupor, the vice, of those incalculable numbers. But if we see these things at all, and if we have learned anything from Jesus, His words will rise in our hearts, 'Give ye them to eat.' No doubt they have come to us again and again, and have probably been answered with the disciples' question, 'Whence should we have so much bread?' 'What are our resources compared to the demands made upon us?' If the Lord made windows in heaven, and manna fell over all the earth, it would no more than meet the need. When we confront it with our paltry resources, it seems out of the question that we should attempt anything. Our five loaves are nothing among so many.

Jesus does not accept this disclaimer of responsibility. He feels so deeply for the crowd that He invokes the divine power to succour them, and the characteristics of the great miracles in which the bread is multiplied are a virtual answer to the disciples' question. We shall not be able to plead non-responsibility if we observe what these are: for they show how the seemingly impossible task is actually accomplished.

It requires, in the first place, the consecration to Christ, for His service, of all that we have. 'How many loaves have ye .? Bring them unto Me.' This is fundamental, and till we have come so far it is idle to look beyond. Christ does not ask much, nor anything definite, but what we have. It is on the basis of the resources actually in our hands that the great task is to be accomplished. This requirement applies to the material resources at our disposal. Many churches are crippled by financial difficulties, especially in their missionary work. Some of their members see the hungry

multitudes, and are as eager to help as the love of Christ can make them, but the necessary means are not forthcoming. It is very rarely the case that this is due to poverty. There is plenty of money — no one knows how much — if only it were brought to Christ. Churches ought to feel, far more profoundly than they do, that avarice is a sin, and that there is nothing more repulsively unlike Christ than to weigh against the world's need of the gospel selfish indulgences of our own. If the wealth in the churches were consecrated as it ought to be — if it were ours only to be laid at Christ's feet — many aspects of our duty to the world would be much more practicable than they are. The same holds good of spiritual resources. How few Christian people comparatively give themselves exclusively to the service of God in the gospel! How few men, especially from those classes in which it would imply the renunciation of a business, a fortune, or a career, give themselves to the Christian ministry! Surely there must be some whose hearts have been touched by the world's destitution, and have heard the Master saying: 'What hast thou? Bring it unto Me.' Let no man say that what he has is nothing to the need: that his infinitesimal quantity of knowledge, faith, hope, charity, could only mock the world's distress. It is with what His disciples have that Christ is going to satisfy the universal hunger, and He can do nothing till their whole store is at His feet. The necessity of the world appalls us because the great mass of disciples will not bring anything: they are like non-effectives in an army, a burden, not a strength. In most churches women are far more loyal than men to the world's claims and to Christ's command. They put their spiritual resources as teachers, administrators of charity, visitors of the poor and the sick, far more freely at His disposal. But the force which the Church sends into the field is nothing to what it should be. It is nothing to what it would be if there was not one of her members who did not bring to Christ whatever he had. I suppose if the Twelve had reserved or saved any of their stores on this occasion, the miracle could not have been wrought: and certainly the world's needs remain unsatisfied, not so much because the Church is poor, as because she lacks that compassion and that faith in God to which the consecration of all she is and has would be easy. Why are we so slow to learn that all spiritual possessions are multiplied by use, and that, however it may be with gold and silver, the more we give the more we have of all that satisfies the hunger of the soul? It is spending, not saving, which is the way to wealth here.

Consecration of what we have, however little, is the first and most essential point of Christ's answer to the question, 'Whence should we have so much bread?' But to consecration He adds method. 'Make the men sit down by hundreds and by fifties.' No conceivable supplies could feed five thousand men pell-mell, and the women and children would be sure to be overlooked. The difficulty of feeding the multitudes has been aggravated by the haphazard fashion in which it has been attempted. Our own country is a conspicuous example of this. The want of method is seen in numberless evils. One is the mutual jealousy of Christians. Often they seem to contend with each other instead of with evil; they are more like merchants trying to cut each other out of a market than good men seeking in Christ's compassion to relieve human need. Another is the wrong ideas which the multitudes acquire of the gospel. They can hardly help thinking that they are being courted by rival churches, and instead of seeing in the gospel something which they deeply need, they are tempted to see in it only the private interest of some church or minister, to which they are willing to lend their patronage — for a consideration. Another is the waste which is inseparable from want of method. And another still is the tendency to evade responsibility. Churches are played off against each other: the Established Churchman is content if the people say they are Free, and the Free Churchman if they say they are Established; and neither then is so much

concerned with the more serious question, whether they have received Christ. Want of method, generating all these evils, makes the resources of the Church far less adequate than they might be to the demands upon them; and method must be mastered if we are ever to give the multitudes to eat. The miracle culminated in the thanksgiving of Jesus before the breaking and the distribution of the bread. The thanksgiving was evidently a characteristic and striking act. When John wrote his gospel, perhaps sixty years after, he referred to the scene of the miracle as 'the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks!' This was what stood out in his memory. The thanksgiving indicates the spirit in which alone anything can be done answering to this miracle. We can imagine that the disciples, as they lifted their eyes from the five barley loaves and the two small fishes to the hungry thousands on the green hill-side, were uneasy, alarmed, and not a little miserable; but Jesus was grateful and glad. That scanty store was the Father's gift, and it is as easy for God to feed five thousand men as to make five loaves. Those very loaves sprang from His blessing upon the seed, and He who multiplies the grains in the ear can multiply all that we put at His disposal. When we bring what we have to Jesus, let us remember that it is not our own. If it were, we might disparage it, and calculate the disproportion between it and the need it has to meet; but it is God's gift, and though it seem a small thing, we are to rejoice in it as His. Our little store may seem ludicrous to others; they may laugh at our contribution of money or intelligence, of faith or love, to the world's necessities; but if we are grateful to God that there is at least this which we can offer for His service, it will multiply as we use it. It was so with the disciples; the bread never failed under their hands, and when the multitudes had eaten and were filled, their own baskets were full. They were richer than before they had given up their all.

Thankfulness is the only spiritual temper in which hope and joy can live, and without hope and joy we can never approach the multitudes for Christ. Perhaps the most signal illustration of it in Scripture is the thanksgiving of Jesus at the Last Supper: as He took the bread and the wine He gave thanks. Can we doubt that as He made them symbols of His body and blood His thanksgiving covered His own sacrifice for sinful men? Can we doubt that He gave God thanks that it was His, in accordance with the Father's will, to give His life a ransom for many? Too often we regard the demands which are made on us by God and the world as a grievous tax: as long as we do so, no response we make to them can ever be equal to the world's need. But that need would not be beyond the Church's resources if Christians with one consent laid all they have at Jesus' feet; if they distributed the common duty among themselves; and if their hearts rose up to God in gratitude that He had called even them into the fellowship of His Son's ministry. If we could only learn these secrets, or rather attain to these virtues, we should know the answer to the question, 'Whence should we have so much bread to feed so great a multitude?'

01.05. Remonstrance

THE QUESTION OF REMONSTRANCE 'Goest Thou thither again?'

John 11:8 The Gospel of John differs from the other three in showing us more of the Jerusalem ministry of Jesus. We could, indeed, infer from them that His relations with the capital had been more serious than appears from the surface of their narratives; the great cry, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not,' is of itself sufficient to prove this. But the Gospel of John might almost be read as an illustration of this text. It exhibits the repeated efforts of Jesus to win the Jews, and the steadily growing antipathy with which these efforts were repelled. In John 1:1-25, at His first appearance, we are told that He did not trust Himself to them, knowing what was in man. At His next visit the Jews seek to kill Him, because He breaks the Sabbath and makes Himself equal with God. A little later the rulers send officers to apprehend Him; later still, the people take up stones to stone Him even in the temple courts. A renewal of this murderous assault compelled Him to seek refuge beyond Jordan, and it was there, apparently, that the message came to Him from Martha and Mary: 'Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick.' Perhaps the two days that He remained in Persea encouraged the Twelve to think that He was now beginning to take care of Himself, and their amazement was all the greater when He said, 'Let us go into Judaea again.' It was putting His head into the lion's mouth, and they felt He might do it once too often. As Peter had done before at Caesarea Philippi — though the precedent was not auspicious — they ventured to remonstrate. 'Master, the Jews even now were seeking to stone Thee, and goest Thou thither again?' The answer of Jesus is striking. 'Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.'

Practically the disciples had accused Jesus of recklessly shortening His life, and the answer signifies that the life which is spent in doing the will of God is always long enough. 'Are there not twelve hours in the day ? ' — a long, ample, gracious, liberal space of light to fill with work. Jesus does speak elsewhere of the shortness of time and the urgency of duty: 'We must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work.' With this idea we are familiar, but we need to habituate our minds to the complementary one, that for the faithful servant of God there is plenty of time, and no risk of life coming to a premature end. If we only did at each moment the duty which the Father has assigned to it, we should never be hurried nor confused; night would not overtake us; we should not stumble like the man who has to continue his journey in the dark; the true light would shine upon us till our day's work was done. And whether the life thus lived was short or long measured by human standards, it would be all that it need be to one who could say at last, 'I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.' For work, not time, is the measure of life. The remonstrating question of the disciples is silenced therefore by a great confession of faith in God. 'My times are in Thy hand ': so we read in Psa 31:1-24, a psalm used by Jesus on the cross ; and close by the words we read again, 'Fear was on every side; while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life. But I trusted in Thee, O Lord ;

I said. Thou art my God.' One can hardly help thinking that the Psalm was in the Saviour's mind as He rebuked the timidity of His followers, and bade them remember the ever - present providence of the Father. Jesus is the author and finisher of faith in this providence, the Pattern of a trust in God so perfect that it leaves to Him without misgiving all that disquiets common men. It is God who fixes the length of our day. No enemy can reduce the twelve hours to ten or eleven, and no anxiety or evasion of our own could stretch them to thirteen or fourteen. Such faith is not fatalism — a stony acquiescence in whatever happens, as inevitably fixed by chance or by necessity; it is the loving acceptance of a Father's will, which we believe and know is seeking our good. It is this which gives serenity to life even when it is encompassed with peril. It is this which secures sunshine all through the hours in which our work is to be done. Every bitter word His enemies spoke against Jesus, as He hung on the cross, turned to His praise, but none more gloriously than this — He trusted in God. And of all happy expressions of His trust, there is none happier than this, when as He set His face for the last time to go to the city that killed the prophets, He said to His trembling followers, 'Are there not twelve hours in the day? '

Faith is the root of all the Christian virtues, and our Lord on this occasion, in contrast with His disciples, eminently illustrates two of these. The first is courage. Jesus knew that He was going into danger; He foresaw, as the disciples did not, not merely the risk but the certainty of an ignominious and painful death. But He did not weigh His life against the Father's will, which called Him to Bethany. He counted not His life dear to Him that He might finish His course and the ministry He had received.

Courage is the most elementary of virtues, and perhaps there are few who are incapable of acquiring it in some degree. Soldiers acquire it in the simplest form, and it is readiness to surrender life at the call of duty that makes the soldier's profession not merely lawful, but great. Physicians and nurses, who have to do with infectious diseases, acquire it almost as simply and inevitably as soldiers. After all precautions, it remains for them to take their life in their hands; and the thousands who do so and would rather die themselves than leave the sick unattended are practicing a Christian virtue. But it is Christian in a pre-eminent sense when it is practiced in the interest of men's souls. The annals of missionary enterprise abound with examples of that very spirit which Jesus here seeks to infuse into His disciples. The men who have planted Christian churches along six hundred miles of the coast of New Guinea, among tribes whose sole trade had been to barter sago for earthenware pots in which to cook man, are illustrations of it. So are the men who have laid the foundations of the Church in the unhealthy regions of Western and Central Africa, and in many of the Pacific islands. But is their courage always appreciated? 'What!', do we not hear people say. 'Are you going to carry the gospel to the Congo? Do you not know that the Congo is worse than Sierra Leone, which used to be called the White Man's Grave? How many people have died there already! Are you going there again?' By the inspiration of Christ men and women have been found to answer: 'Yes, we are going again. What is life for, but to be used in His service? We are ready to die, and to die on the Congo, far from help and friends, for the name of the Lord Jesus.'

These are exceptional or rather signal cases of courage; for virtue expects no man from her claims. A Christian who has not this courage, in the measure in which his circumstances require it, is a contradiction in terms. When the Book of Revelation enumerates those who are shut out of the New Jerusalem, the very first title in the list is 'the fearful,' — that is, the cowards, who can brave

nothing for Christ's sake. Whoever gets into heaven, they do not. Few people would plead guilty to cowardice in general, but how many have actually exposed themselves in the Christian Service — not to death, which is not an every-day affair, but to an uncivil word, a rebuff, an impertinent laugh, the pity of superior persons? Why are we not more visibly, more decidedly, Christian? Why do you not remonstrate with that man, who is your friend, and who is going wrong? Why do you not protest against the tone of conversation in that company which you frequent? Why do you not go on that errand, though you know it will be thankless, and may very likely provoke the coolness, the rudeness, or the contempt of others? Why do you not 'stand in jeopardy every hour'? Is it because you are afraid? Remember that cowardice is as incompatible with any Christian as with any natural virtue; and that if anything is alien to Christ it is this. He did not weigh life itself against duty: how can we follow Him if we are always balancing our own convenience, or rather our own indulgent selfishness, against the claims of God? The other virtue conspicuous in our Lord's conduct on this occasion is patience. He was going back to Judaea, not merely for the sake of Lazarus, but for the sake of the Jews. In raising His friend to life again. He was making a last and supreme appeal to their unbelief. Again and again He had tried to win them already, and had been steadily repulsed: what was the good of trying further? So men might have argued, but Jesus did not. It was written of Him long before, 'He shall not fail nor be discouraged,' and the prophecy was illustrated when He resolved to give the Jews one opportunity more. The Apostle understood this when he wrote, 'The longsuffering of our Lord is Salvation.' Is it not amazing, when we think upon it, the number of chances which God's patience gives to men? The number of times He visits us, hoping to find a kinder welcome than He has yet done? Every morning as His sun shines upon us; every Sabbath as it speaks of His work as our Creator and Redeemer; every incident that breaks the thoughtless monotony of life and makes us feel beneath the surface; every word of God that leaps out on us from the Bible; every gospel sermon to which we listen — in all these Christ comes and comes and comes again. How often has He come to us? What does He come for? What reception does He get? If there were an angel standing by and looking on, might He not ask in amazement, as the disciples did on this occasion, 'Lord, goest Thou thither again? That man, who has heard Thy voice every day, and still loves the world, and will not follow Thee: that man who calls himself by Thy name, and affects reverence for the gospel, and defends the truth, but who is a cold-blooded, self-complacent Pharisee: that man, whose conscience has been touched, now more and now less keenly, any time these twenty or thirty years past, but who remains a coward, a sensualist, a slanderer, a thinker of low thoughts: Goest Thou to him again?' Yes, Jesus goes to him again. The grace of our Lord is exceeding abundant. He comes to us once more, this very moment; and if we remember how we have turned Him away already, and sulked, and made excuses, and stifled the heavenly voice, and counted the cost and found it too high, let the remembrance of these things humble us that His patient love may prevail at last. Remember that His longsuffering is salvation.

It is not only salvation, but a pattern and an inspiration for all Christian service. The most earnest are apt sometimes to fail and be discouraged, and they need to remind themselves that Jesus resisted such temptations. The Church becomes disheartened with great problems, like the maintenance of the Christian standard among its members, the defence of Christian truth, or the propagation of the gospel among the heathen; and when it is disheartened, it relaxes its efforts. Missionary operations are curtailed, and there is a weary acquiescence in what we know is not the best. It is the same with individuals. How many Sunday school teachers have resigned their

classes, because the boys and girls were irresponsible, or less? How many men have tried to save a comrade as he sank through the first stages of drunkenness, but when their efforts were repulsed resigned themselves not even to try any more to do him good? How many are so wounded in what they call their self-respect, but what is really their pride, by the first rebuff, or the first symptom of defective appreciation, that they wash their hands of all responsibility to others, and retire to keep a selfish state? If we call ourselves Christians, let us imitate Jesus. What if we are not appreciated: was He appreciated? What if we meet with ingratitude: were the Jews grateful to Him? Let us remember that the disciple is not above his Master, and go again and again and again — as He went to the Jews and as He has come to us — to the most inappreciative, the most thankless, the most irresponsible of men. Let us go in His spirit, brave and patient, and so full of love that no other motive can have place in our minds. Let us go with His words in our ears: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee!' Let His longsuffering, which is salvation, have its perfect work in us. And then the faith in God from which these graces spring will be confirmed by them, and through all dangers and discouragements we shall walk in the light with Him and not stumble.

01.06. Ambition

THE QUESTION OF AMBITION 'Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?'

Mat 18:1 In substance, if not in set terms, this question was put to Jesus again and again. The disciples were firm believers in the Kingdom, and had staked everything upon its coming. If they were ever to be great, it must be then; and it was natural enough for them to think that as they had shared the fortunes of the King while He was waiting for His inheritance, they should have some signal reward when He entered upon it. Jesus Himself says as much. 'Ye are they that have continued with Me in My temptations, and I appoint unto you a Kingdom.' But their misconceptions of the Kingdom are nowhere more plainly seen than in their ambition to fill the high places in it. The world's idea of greatness is simply carried over from the old life to the new. It hardly needs to be explained. It is the idea that greatness consists in immunities, in exemptions, in the power of compelling others to do us service; it is as old as humanity; it is fostered in every human heart not only by native selfishness, but by plausible reasonings, innumerable examples, and habitual indulgence. The disciples hardly thought of modifying this idea: all that concerned them was, who was to be the great one. The best way to appreciate the question is to notice the various occasions on which it was put, and the increasing plainness, vehemence, and even severity of Jesus' answer. The first occasion is that recorded in the eighteenth chapter of St Matthew. Jesus had lately shown special favour to Peter, James, and John, admitting them to see His glory on the holy mount. He had spoken to Peter of the keys of the Kingdom, and recognized in him some kind of eminence among the Twelve. Perhaps there had been some heart-burning over these or similar events when they asked Him point-blank, 'Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?'

Jesus did not answer directly. He never does answer questions about individuals. He would not even tell Peter what was to become of John. It is nobody's business who is to be greatest, so far as that is a personal matter. What does concern us all is not who is to fill the highest place, but in what way eminence is to be attained. And nothing could be more beautiful than the manner in which Jesus met these jealous, ambitious, mistaken men. Nothing could illustrate more finely the terms on which He lived with them — 'familiar, condescending, patient, free.' He called to Him a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. The 'verily' marks the answer of Jesus as one of the utmost seriousness, as well as the utmost sweetness. The gracious manner, the affectionate illustration, must not diminish the solemnity of the truth. The faces of the rival disciples are at that moment turned away from the Kingdom. Nothing less than a complete turning in the opposite direction, a complete renunciation of ambitious rivalry, can secure even admission. As for anything further, 'whosoever' shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the Kingdom of God.' The first point to notice in this answer is its generality — whosoever shall humble himself. There is no respect of persons with God. Greatness in His Kingdom is not titular or official, but spiritual. There can only be one Prime Minister in Britain, but the highest rank in the spiritual world is open to all. The second and principal point in the answer is this — the prime element of greatness in the Kingdom of Heaven is unconsciousness. The humility

of the child consisted in the fact that he was not thinking of himself at all. He had no claims to make in Christ's presence; he did not stand upon his dignity; he did not negotiate for terms, or for a reward, when Jesus held out His arms and said, 'Come.' There is a sense in which this unconsciousness belongs to the perfection of all greatness: we admire it most when the great man is what he is, or does what he does, as unconsciously as a flower opens to the sun, or a vine bears the clustering grapes. It is a distinct abatement, for instance, even in the highest intellectual powers, when they show a face of pride and scorn to the weak. And if this is true of earthly things, how much truer is it of heavenly? The man who can stand face to face with Jesus, and all the time be thinking of himself — what he is to get, how high he is to stand, what distinction he may win, what terms he may make — has no promise of greatness in him. The whole foundation of it lies here, that when we see Him the thought of self dies. If we can be like the little child in His presence; if we allow Him to call us, lift us, bless us; if we simply trust ourselves to Him, making no claim, not having even the shadow of a claim cross our minds, but content to be with Him, and having no thought beyond that; then there is the basis in our souls on which greatness may be built. There is the promise of it at least, if it be not blighted by folly or pride. Christianity is revolutionary here, as on all fundamental questions. Jesus turns the world upside down, because it is wrong side up; He tells us that if we wish to be great, instead of setting our own image before us, magnified by ambition and fond hopes, we are to set Him before us, and in Him lose the thought of ourselves entirely. For here also the saying is true, that he who loses his life shall save it. The disciples were not without the sense that there was something unworthy in their question, something alien to the spirit of Jesus. He was not ambitious, but meek and lowly in heart; He did not seek His own; yet they were conscious of His greatness. Once when they had been discussing this persistent question by the way, he asked them what they had been talking about, and they kept silence. They were ashamed to say to Him what they had been saying, evidently with considerable animation, to each other; and it was a sign that they were learning, though slowly. But the lesson was far from perfect, for before long two of the most advanced and sympathetic of the Twelve not only raised the question again, but put in, through their mother Salome, a claim to the coveted pre-eminence: 'Grant that these my two sons may sit, one on Thy right hand, and one on Thy left, in Thy Kingdom.' And the other ten, on whom the sons of Zebedee had tried to steal a march, were filled with indignation; for they, too, had their ambitions, and were by no means ready to take the lowest room meekly.

Jesus, as Bengel says, was then dwelling in His passion: He was to have others on His right hand and His left before He entered into His Kingdom. The Cross was now full in view; it awaited Him at the end of a few days, perhaps not more than ten; and the passion of it throbs in His answer. It is as though He said to them, 'You wish for places beside the throne? They are to be gained as the throne itself is gained. They are open to you as they are open to all; they can be won by all who tread the appointed path. The greatness of the King — the Son of Man in whom humanity comes to sovereignty over the brute forces of the world — is the greatness of consecration, of suffering, of service, of death. That is how I win My throne. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink, and to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?' And then He turned from the two to the whole company, and with an urgency all the greater that this was among the last lessons He could hope to give to the men on whom the future of His work depended, explained once more the nature of His Kingdom and of greatness in it. 'What you have in your minds' He says in effect, 'is a kingdom of this world, in which the great people lord it over the lowly and the strong exact service

from the weak; but My Kingdom is the very reverse of that. " Whosoever would become great among you, let him be your servant ; and whosoever would be first among you, let him be your slave; even as the Son of Man came, not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." The greatness, then, which begins in unconsciousness — in the absence of any thought of self, or of what self may claim — is perfected in service; that is, in the thought of others, and of the needs of others to which we can minister. High in the Kingdom of Heaven is he who has learned from Jesus to put himself out of his thoughts, and to spend and be spent, to the utmost limit of means and life, in lowly loving service of others. The further we travel along this road, the nearer we come to the King in His glory. Ambition makes us look at men in other lights — as rivals we have to overcome; possible claimants on our help, of whom we have to steer clear; as tools to be used, and then thrown away; as insignificant counters — but ambition is not love, and only love can exalt in Christ's Kingdom. If we keep in His company, we shall attain that heavenly greatness, in some degree, which is fatal to selfishness and pride, and to which pride and selfishness are fatal.

Even the passionate lesson evoked by the ambition of James and John was not enough to cure the Twelve of their deep-seated fault. It broke out once more at the Last Supper, possibly over some small dispute as to places at the table, for the paltriest spark can kindle this kind of fire. Whatever it was, it had the usual effect; in thinking of themselves they forgot to think of each other. The odiousness of ambition is that it expels love, and when love is cast out men are blind to duty. There was no one to wash the disciples' feet, as decency and comfort required, and no one would confess inferiority by moving hand or foot to supply the deficiency. Then it was that Jesus gave a last lesson on greatness in the Kingdom of Heaven. In the full consciousness of His divine nature and dignity — knowing, as the evangelist says, that the Father had given all things into His hand, and that He came forth from God and was going to God — He rose from supper, laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. Then He poured water into the bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded. We are not, I should think, to suppose that this was a gratuitous service, a mere ostentation of humility, a parable in action for which there was no natural motive; the disciples' feet needed to be washed, and ought to be washed; and when they were too proud to serve each other, Christ made Himself the servant of all. To all His other teachings, to the constant example of His whole life, He added this special instance of service, which must have cut them to the heart. How their cursed pride had humbled them again, and how, once more, had the lowly ministering love of Jesus exhibited His divine 'greatness! And He did not leave the act to teach its own lesson; He explained it with unmistakable clearness and emphasis. 'Ye call me Master and Lord : and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you.' And then with redoubled assurance, as if of a lesson which, in spite of its apparent simplicity, it seemed all but impossible for the disciples to learn: ' Verily, verily, I say unto you, A servant is not greater than his lord.'

It is as though He implored them to consider that there is only one kind of greatness in the Kingdom of Heaven, that kind which He possessed, and which others could only learn of Him. Love, unconscious of self but always mindful of others, ever awake to their needs, ever ready to serve them in the lowliest modes of service, incapable of pretensions, of claims, of self-assertion:

this is the one and only greatness which God can recognize. It is not akin to what the world calls greatness; it is the exact opposite of it, and that is why it is so hard to understand. Not he who has most servants is great, but he who does most service. To teach the world this lesson has been hard, yet we dare not say it has not been learned at all. When Jesus lived, the most ignominious object on earth was the cross; now the cross is the loftiest and most honored of all symbols, and this change in outward appreciation marks to some extent a corresponding change, wrought by Jesus, in the common idea of greatness. We build our churches cruciform; we make jewels of gold and silver on the same pattern; princes give the Victoria Cross, or the Iron Cross, to their soldiers, in honour of self-sacrificing courage; the word that once spoke of nothing but infamy is now the most sacred and glorious in human Speech, because Christ has identified it with the greatness of love. He is great, who, as an early Christian glossed one of the royal psalms, reigns from the tree. And all true greatness is measured by nearness to Him. The common work of our life, the work by which we make our living, is exalted, and we ourselves rise in the Kingdom while we work at it, when we regard it, not as the instrument of our own fortunes, but as the divinely allotted calling in which we are to serve our brethren. It becomes great, and makes us great, in proportion as we can treat it as a partnership with Christ in His ministry to man. And few who have had even a remote contact with Christian ideas would deny that the truly great figures in humanity are those in which the spirit of the Cross has been supreme. Where do we find anything so great as that utterance of Moses: 'Oh, this people have sinned a great sin and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin — ; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written'? Where do we find anything so great as this, unless it be in the similar yet more passionate and profound exclamation of St. Paul: 'I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren.' These, as a great theologian has finely said, are 'sparks from the fire of Christ's substitutionary love.' And it is men like these whom that fellowship in the Lord's passion raises to His right hand and His left in His Kingdom.

01.07. Folly

THE QUESTION OF FOLLY ' Are there few that be saved? '

Luk 13:23 This question may no doubt be asked from different motives. Sometimes it has been forced upon men by the rigour of the theological systems in which they have been educated. 'By the decree of God/ says the Westminster Confession, ' for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.' 'These angels and men,' it proceeds, 'thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed ; and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished.' Calvinism is strong because, when necessity and chance are offered to it as the alternative explanations of the universe, and even of man's destiny, it elects for necessity ; but a statement like this is not required by any religious interest, and it stimulates a curiosity which may become a pain and a torment, but can never obtain the kind of satisfaction it seeks. There is no list published of the citizens of heaven, as there is of those who possess the franchise here. Others, again, ask this question in the perplexity of love. They look at the world, perhaps at themselves, or their own family or friends, and cannot but have misgivings. They are not sure that those who are dearest to them are in the way of salvation, and they are certain that multitudes are not. May not the way, after all, be wider than they had supposed? May not God have, among the forces working for redemption, some that are unknown to them, and that only produce their effect in the world unseen .? Others may have the question prompted by the words of Jesus Himself. It seems to have been in some such way that it occurred, if not to the man who put it, then to the evangelist who records it. Luke has just set down the two parables which predict the extension of God's kingdom : it is like a mustard seed which expands into a great tree ; like a piece of leaven which leavens a great mass of dough. The contrast between this glorious prospect and the actual fruit of Christ's labours reminded him of this question, as it may have put it into the questioner's own head at first. Nevertheless it is a foolish question. When it comes from the head it always is so; only when the heart lends it its tenderness and anxiety can it be profitably asked. And Jesus treats it as a foolish question: He does not respond to the speaker's curiosity or speculative interest; turning away from him to the others who were present, He says: ' Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I tell you, shall seek to enter in and shall not be able.' It is the same word, no doubt, which we find in a fuller form in the Sermon on the Mount: 'Enter ye in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way which leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.'

Question and answer alike recognize, what is recognized by every unsophisticated conscience, that there is such a thing as salvation, and that it cannot be taken for granted. In other words, what is put before us in this life is an alternative. There are two gates, two ways, two goals, two sides of the throne, two kinds of foundation for the house we build: and we have to make our choice between them. We can go in at the strait gate, or at the wide gate, but not at both. We can travel in the broad way or the narrow way, but not in both. We can build on the rock or on the sand, but not

on both. We shrink from making this decisively plain to ourselves, that the decisiveness of our action or inaction may also remain veiled; but it is implied even in this foolish question; it is emphasized in our Lord's answer; and it is the one conviction without which thought on this subject is fruitless. The ideas we have formed of salvation and perdition, of life saved and life lost, of the bright banqueting - hall and the outer darkness, of heaven and hell, may be erroneous enough; but there can be no reason for thinking of such things at all, and as little profit in it, unless we feel that in the very nature of the case these are alternatives which for ever exclude each other. Christ's answer bears directly on this, and is wholly plain and practical. 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate.' The strait gate, as we see from the Sermon on the Mount, is so called in opposition to the wide gate, and the wide gate is not so hard to understand. A wide gate is one through which you can pass easily, carrying what you please, and no questions asked. That, Jesus tells us, is the kind of gate which opens on the way that leads to destruction. Anybody can go in and take what he likes along with him. You can go in with your money, your pride, your sloth, your appetites, your vices, whatever you please. Nothing is excluded, and there is no toll. The consequence is that many do go in. The wide gate is always busy; the broad way thronged with travelers. You can drift in with the stream, you can have the pleasant sense of being well supported, you can maintain a certain self-respect by pointing to the large numbers of people, of all possible capacities, tastes, and characters, who have taken that way. Nevertheless, it leads to destruction. Its very breadth and easiness prove this. Conscience is not only quite decided and unambiguous on the first point, that there is such a thing as salvation, and that it cannot be taken for granted; it is as decided and unambiguous on the further point, that while you may drift to perdition you cannot drift to eternal life. No matter how false our ideas may be as to the precise import of salvation or ruin, we have a witness in ourselves that Jesus speaks truth when He says that it is easy to be lost, and not easy to be saved; that you can be lost without an effort, but if you are to be saved, must summon up every atom of resolution.

What, then, is meant by the strait gate which opens on the path of life? It is a gate, as the name suggests, which excludes much. You can carry a thousand things to hell which you must lay down before you can take the first step on the way which leads to heaven. In one sense it is wide enough it can admit any man; it can let the whole human race pass through, if they come one by one, and strip at the outside; but it is not wide enough for anything else. The question has sometimes been asked, 'What, in one word, is the strait gate?' and various answers have been given. It has been called Repentance, Faith, Christ, and what not. Even if these answers are in some respects true, as they are, they are misleading; they divert the mind from the very point which Jesus wishes to emphasize. His purpose is to make us feel that the entrance to the path of life is an entrance in front of which man becomes suddenly, profoundly, perhaps startlingly conscious, that if he is ever to pass through there he must leave much behind him. If there is one word which expresses this, it is Renunciation. The strait gate is the gate of renunciation, and it is left for every man to say what in his case must be renounced before he can enter. No sin can go through: the strait gate calls for repentance, and renunciation of evil. No sham can go through: it demands renunciation of acted insincerity, and a humble resolve to walk in the truth. No compromising relations with evil can go through, no tenderness for old associations which ignore God, no disposition to fret or pity ourselves; and hence for some there is no entrance unless they pluck out a right eye, cut off a right hand or a right foot, and enter halt or maimed or blind rather than stay outside. To come to the strait gate is to feel that what lies beyond is the one thing

needful, and that it is a good bargain, for the sake of it, to renounce all that has ever been dear to us.

Jesus takes it for granted that every one has something to part with. The gate is a strait gate for all who go up to it. There is not a man on earth who can be saved as he is: he has something to renounce before he can enter into life. This is one of the indirect ways in which Jesus assumes the natural sinfulness of the human heart. The heart may have the capacity of heroism, and of making the great renunciation which is required; but no heart is spared renunciation; no man enters the Kingdom without the sense of sacrifice and constraint. And it is because the renunciation is painful and requires a great effort, that Jesus says with such solemnity and urgency: 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in and shall not be able.'

Strive to enter in; is this what everybody does, whom God in His grace brings up to the strait gate? Unhappily not. Some, when they come face to face with it, and understand in the depth of their hearts the renunciation it requires of them, simply withdraw. They will not think of entering at such a cost. Others hesitate, and stand hesitating for years, perhaps for a lifetime. They are in two minds about going in till their dying day. The blessings of the heavenly kingdom, the company of Jesus, and the new life, are very real to them, and very dear; they so crave the enjoyment of them; but the things they must renounce are also very real and very dear; and they cannot win from themselves the irrevocable sacrifice, and go in. Others, again, to an ordinary observer, are even more promising. They admire the life beyond the strait gate; they extol those who have paid the price and forced their way in; they take themselves a hasty timid step, now and again, in the direction of the door; but they remain outside. All such persons are in view when Jesus says, 'Many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.' At first this seems a hard saying, and terribly unlike what we mean by 'the gospel.' The gospel is all grace and generosity: its characteristic word is, 'Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.' Why are there some, why are there many, unable to enter in, though they seek to do so?

Partly, no doubt, as Jesus goes on to explain, because they do not seek entrance till it is too late. How ominous is that double 'begin' in Luk 13:25; Luk 13:26! What a time to begin to think of entering — when the Master of the house has risen and shut the door! Is a man to keep God and the universe in everlasting suspense? Is the world to wait for ever to see whether I will make up my mind? If not, there is the possibility of beginning too late: of refusing to be serious till the door is shut, and seriousness no longer avails. 'To-day, if ye shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts.'

Delay becomes fatal, because it begets irresolution, and nothing more easily than irresolution becomes chronic, incurable, irreparable. Decent people probably lose more by it than by all the sins they confess put together. They lose eternal life by it when it makes them, as it eventually does, incapable of the grand decisive renunciation by which alone we can pass the strait gate.

Many, again, are unable to enter, because instead of accepting the conditions which the strait gate imposes, they try to get these conditions modified. They spend infinite time and pains trying to transact, to negotiate, to compromise with Christ. The gospel abounds in unqualified statements and in peremptory demands; such and such things, Christ tells us, are impossible; such and such others are necessary — they simply must be. Many waste life, like incompetent men of business, trying to evade the inevitable, to achieve the impossible; they exhaust their talent in attempts to qualify our Lord's inexorable words; they seek, so to speak, to widen the strait gate, before they

make any push to enter. They would fain justify their retention of something upon which the door closes, and in sophisticating conscience, and arguing against Christ's ultimatum — the end comes and the door is shut. But above all, many are unable to enter because they will not make the effort they could if they were wholly in earnest. Many shall seek, Jesus says; but His commandment is not seek, but strive. 'Strive' is much the stronger word; it is the word appropriate to a contest in which all the force of man is exerted against an adversary. Well-meaning people, as we say, will seek to enter in; but eternal life, our Lord tells us here, is the prize not of the well-meaning but of the desperate. Put all your strength into it when you come to pass the strait gate: it will need it all. 'The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.'

Such is the answer of Jesus to the idle, or at least in this case the idly put question: 'Are there few that be saved?' It is hard to be saved, it is easy to be lost, as experience shows. Jesus does not answer as knowing some divine decree which fixes men's destiny irrespective of their will; He answers out of His own sad observation of men's deliberate and voluntary conduct. He saw with His eyes many entering in at the wide gate, and traveling at their leisure, or at reckless speed, down the broad way; He found few who had it in their hearts to make the needful renunciation and to follow Him. It is throughout simple, stern, unquestionable fact in which He deals. No doubt many, when this question rises before them, look away from the present disheartening world, and speculate on the possibilities of salvation in the unseen; some can even assert roundly that sooner or later all shall be admitted to the light and joy of heaven, and can be indignant and almost contemptuous to those who do not share their confidence. But can we help feeling that to enter on this line is to ignore not only the testimony of experience, but the testimony of Jesus; and that conclusions which require us to treat the words of our Lord and the facts of life as things that must somehow or other, we cannot tell how, be got over, are not conclusions on which one dare venture much either for this life or for that which is to come? Jesus refuses to look at the question of salvation except in connection with man's responsibility and action. Many, He sees with pain, yet cannot help seeing, enter on the way that leads to destruction; many also, He sees with pain as keen, refuse to make the effort which is needed to enter into life. These are facts which consist with God's character, and no appeal to God's character can alter them. If a man is on the wrong side of the strait gate, it is not because God has shut it in his face, but because he is keeping something which can never go through. The severity of our Lord's words about the strait gate is indeed mitigated in two ways. There is nothing Scripture teaches more plainly than the truth, which the heathen also had discovered, that though it is hard to become good, it is easy to be good. The initial difficulty in Christianity is the supreme one. Everything is unexact compared with the entrance on the way. Christ's commandments are not grievous. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. 'A life of self-renouncing love is a life of liberty.' Even from outside the gate we can see this; it is the joy set before us to enable us to make the hard renunciation. And the second lightening of the prospect is found in our Lord's express teaching, in this very connection, that hard as it is to enter into life, many will be found there whom men in general did not think to see. 'They shall come from the East and the West and the North and the South, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of God.' The true Church, if these words are true, must be to a great extent invisible: "the Lord knoweth them that are His," and in every nation He has those, unknown to us, who have counted the cost and passed the strait gate into the everlasting Kingdom. THE END

02.0.1. THE ATONEMENT AND THE MODERN MIND

THE ATONEMENT AND THE MODERN MIND BY JAMES DENNEY, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF NEW TESTAMENT LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, AND THEOLOGY UNITED
FREE CHURCH COLLEGE, GLASGOW WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR THE DEATH OF
CHRIST STUDIES IN THEOLOGY THE EPISTLES TO THE THESSALONIANS THE SECOND
EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS GOSPEL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

LONDON HODDER AND STOUGHTON 27 PATERNOSTER ROW

MCMIII

02.0.2. CURRENT COPYRIGHT STATUS

CURRENT COPYRIGHT STATUS This book was originally published in 1903 and is now in the public domain in the United States.

02.0.3. PREFACE TO THE E-SWORD EDITION

PREFACE TO THE E-SWORD EDITION

E-Sword has become a significant part of my Bible study routine and I am grateful to many who have made that possible. If you have ever contributed material to e-Sword, you are among that group. I am especially grateful to Brent Hildebrand, Dr. David Thomason, Pamela Marshall, Jason Briggs and Virgil Butts. Each of them has played a significant role in my journey with e-Sword. This module has been adapted to the e-Sword format. Some changes have been necessary because of limitations of the format. The changes are as follows:

Some format changes have been made to present the content in a more easily readable form.

Some scriptures mentioned in the text have had the appropriate references added for the convenience of the reader and have been changed to a format that is supported by the e-Sword Scripture Tooltip capability.

Some minor spelling and punctuation issues may have been corrected.

Material at the end of the book advertising other books available from the publisher in 1903 has been removed.

As far as I know, those are the only changes since the author originally published this work. Needless to say, any errors introduced by my changes are my responsibility. This topx module and many other conservative Christian materials for both e-Sword and The Word are available free at www.doctordavet.com. I would encourage you to visit that site to expand your electronic library with worthwhile publications.

I would be remiss if I did not recognize two other people who have made it possible for me to make this contribution. My wife, Kaye, has provided support and encouragement as I have spent more and more time with e-Sword. And Jesus, my Lord and Saviour, truly makes all things possible.

Ed Sandlin

Corinth, Texas

02.0.4. PREFACE

PREFACE The three chapters which follow have already appeared in *The Expositor*, and may be regarded as a supplement to the writer's work on *The Death of Christ*: its place and interpretation in the New Testament. It was no part of his intention in that study to ask or to answer all the questions raised by New Testament teaching on the subject; but, partly from reviews of *The Death of Christ*, and still more from a considerable private correspondence to which the book gave rise, he became convinced that something further should be attempted to commend the truth to the mind and conscience of the time. The difficulties and misunderstandings connected with it spring, as far as they can be considered intellectual, mainly from two sources. Either the mind is preoccupied with a conception of the world which, whether men are conscious of it or not, forecloses all the questions which are raised by any doctrine of atonement, and makes them unmeaning; or it labours under some misconception as to what the New Testament actually teaches. Broadly speaking, the first of these conditions is considered in the first two chapters, and the second in the last. The title--*The Atonement and the Modern Mind*--might seem to promise a treatise, or even an elaborate system of theology; but though it would cover a work of vastly larger scope than the present, it is not inappropriate to any attempt, however humble, to help the mind in which we all live and move to reach a sympathetic comprehension of the central truth in the Christian religion. The purpose of the writer is evangelic, whatever may be said of his method; it is to commend the Atonement to the human mind, as that mind has been determined by the influences and experiences of modern times, and to win the mind for the truth of the Atonement. With the exception of a few paragraphs, these pages were delivered as lectures to a summer school of Theology which met in Aberdeen, in June of this year. The school was organised by a committee of the Association of Former Students of the United Free Church College, Glasgow; and the writer, as a member and former President of the Association, desires to take the liberty of inscribing his work to his fellow-students.

GLASGOW, September 1903.

02.0.5. CONTENTS

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CHAPTER III CHRIST AND MAN IN THE ATONEMENT

02.1. CHAPTER I PRELIMINARY DEFINITION OF THE SUBJECT

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It will be admitted by most Christians that if the Atonement, quite apart from precise definitions of it, is anything to the mind, it is everything. It is the most profound of all truths, and the most recreative. It determines more than anything else our conceptions of God, of man, of history, and even of nature; it determines them, for we must bring them all in some way into accord with it. It is the inspiration of all thought, the impulse and the law of all action, the key, in the last resort, to all suffering. Whether we call it a fact or a truth, a power or a doctrine, it is that in which the differentia of Christianity, its peculiar and exclusive character, is specifically shown; it is the focus of revelation, the point at which we see deepest into the truth of God, and come most completely under its power. For those who recognise it at all it is Christianity in brief; it concentrates in itself, as in a germ of infinite potency, all that the wisdom, power and love of God mean in relation to sinful men.

Accordingly, when we speak of the Atonement and the modern mind, we are really speaking of the modern mind and the Christian religion. The relation between these two magnitudes may vary. The modern mind is no more than a modification of the human mind as it exists in all ages, and the relation of the modern mind to the Atonement is one phase--it may be a specially interesting or a specially well-defined phase--of the perennial relation of the mind of man to the truth of God. There is always an affinity between the two, for God made man in His own image, and the mind can only rest in truth; but there is always at the same time an antipathy, for man is somehow estranged from God, and resents Divine intrusion into his life. This is the situation at all times, and therefore in modern times; we only need to remark that when the Atonement is in question, the situation, so to speak, becomes acute. All the elements in it define themselves more sharply. If there is sympathy between the mind and the truth, it is a profound sympathy, which will carry the mind far; if there are lines of approach, through which the truth can find access to the mind, they are lines laid deep in the nature of things and of men, and the access which the truth finds by them is one from which it will not easily be dislodged. On the other hand, if it is antagonism which is roused in the mind by the Atonement, it is an antagonism which feels that everything is at stake. The Atonement is a reality of such a sort that it can make no compromise. The man who fights it knows that he is fighting for his life, and puts all his strength into the battle. To surrender is literally to give up himself, to cease to be the man he is, and to become another man. For the modern mind, therefore, as for the ancient, the attraction and the repulsion of Christianity are concentrated at the same point; the cross of Christ is man's only glory, or it is his final stumbling-block.

What I wish to do in these papers is so to present the facts as to mediate, if possible, between the mind of our time and the Atonement--so to exhibit the specific truth of Christianity as to bring out its affinity for what is deepest in the nature of man and in human experience--so to appreciate the modern mind itself, and the influences which have given it its constitution and temper, as to discredit what is false in it, and enlist on the side of the Atonement that which is profound and true.

And if any one is disposed to marvel at the ambition or the conceit of such a programme, I would ask him to consider if it is not the programme prescribed to every Christian, or at least to every Christian minister, who would do the work of an evangelist. To commend the eternal truth of God, as it is finally revealed in the Atonement, to the mind in which men around us live and move and have their being, is no doubt a difficult and perilous task; but if we approach it in a right spirit, it need not tempt us to any presumption; it cannot tempt us, as long as we feel that it is our duty. 'Who is sufficient for these things! . . . Our sufficiency is of God.' The Christian religion is a historical religion, and whatever we say about it must rest upon historical ground. We cannot define it from within, by reference merely to our individual experience. Of course it is equally impossible to define it apart from experience; the point is that such experience itself must be historically derived; it must come through something outside of our individual selves. What is true of the Christian religion as a whole is pre-eminently true of the Atonement in which it is concentrated. The experience which it brings to us, and the truth which we teach on the basis of it, are historically mediated. They rest ultimately on that testimony to Christ which we find in the Scriptures and especially in the New Testament. No one can tell what the Atonement is except on this basis. No one can consciously approach it--no one can be influenced by it to the full extent to which it is capable of influencing human nature--except through this medium. We may hold that just because it is Divine, it must be eternally true, omnipresent in its gracious power; but even granting this, it is not known as an abstract or eternal somewhat; it is historically, and not otherwise than historically, revealed. It is achieved by Christ, and the testimony to Christ, on the strength of which we accept it, is in the last resort the testimony of Scripture. In saying so, I do not mean that the Atonement is merely a problem of exegesis, or that we have simply to accept as authoritative the conclusions of scholars as to the meaning of New Testament texts. The modern mind here is ready with a radical objection. The writers of the New Testament, it argues, were men like ourselves; they had personal limitations and historical limitations; their forms of thought were those of a particular age and upbringing; the doctrines they preached may have had a relative validity, but we cannot benumb our minds to accept them without question. The intelligence which has learned to be a law to itself, criticising, rejecting, appropriating, assimilating, cannot deny its nature and suspend its functions when it opens the New Testament. It cannot make itself the slave of men, not even though the men are Peter and Paul and John; no, not even though it were the Son of Man Himself. It resents dictation, not wilfully nor wantonly, but because it must; and it resents it all the more when it claims to be inspired. If, therefore, the Atonement can only be received by those who are prepared from the threshold to acknowledge the inspiration and the consequent authority of Scripture, it can never be received by modern men at all. This line of remark is familiar inside the Church as well as outside. Often it is expressed in the demand for a historical as opposed to a dogmatic interpretation of the New Testament, a historical interpretation being one to which we can sit freely, because the result to which it leads us is the mind of a time which we have survived and presumably transcended; a dogmatic interpretation, on the other hand, being one which claims to reach an abiding truth, and therefore to have a present authority. A more popular and inconsistent expression of the same mood may be found among those who say petulant things about the rabbinising of Paul, but profess the utmost devotion to the words of Jesus. Even in a day of overdone distinctions, one might point out that interpretations are not properly to be classified as historical or dogmatic, but as true or false. If they are false, it does not matter whether they are called dogmatic or historical; and if they are true, they may quite well be

both. But this by the way. For my own part, I prefer the objection in its most radical form, and indeed find nothing in it to which any Christian, however sincere or profound his reverence for the Bible, should hesitate to assent. Once the mind has come to know itself, there can be no such thing for it as blank authority. It cannot believe things--the things by which it has to live--simply on the word of Paul or John. It is not irreverent, it is simply the recognition of a fact, if we add that it can just as little believe them simply on the word of Jesus.[1] This is not the sin of the mind, but the nature and essence of mind, the being which it owes to God. If we are to speak of authority at all in this connection, the authority must be conceived as belonging not to the speaker but to that which he says, not to the witness but to the truth. Truth, in short, is the only thing which has authority for the mind, and the only way in which truth finally evinces its authority is by taking possession of the mind for itself. It may be that any given truth can only be reached by testimony--that is, can only come to us by some historical channel; but if it is a truth of eternal import, if it is part of a revelation of God the reception of which is eternal life, then its authority lies in itself and in its power to win the mind, and not in any witness however trustworthy.

Hence in speaking of the Atonement, whether in preaching or in theologising, it is quite unnecessary to raise any question about the inspiration of Scripture, or to make any claim of 'authority' either for the Apostles or for the Lord. Belief in the inspiration of Scripture is neither the beginning of the Christian life nor the foundation of Christian theology; it is the last conclusion--a conclusion which becomes every day more sure--to which experience of the truth of Scripture leads. When we tell, therefore, what the Atonement is, we are telling it not on the authority of any person or persons whatever, but on the authority of the truth in it by which it has won its place in our minds and hearts. We find this truth in the Christian Scriptures undoubtedly, and therefore we prize them; but the truth does not derive its authority from the Scriptures, or from those who penned them. On the contrary, the Scriptures are prized by the Church because through them the soul is brought into contact with this truth. No doubt this leaves it open to any one who does not see in Scripture what we see, or who is not convinced as we are of its truth, to accuse us here of subjectivity, of having no standard of truth but what appeals to us individually, but I could never feel the charge a serious one. It is like urging that a man does not see at all, or does not see truly, because he only sees with his own eyes. This is the only authentic kind of seeing yet known to mankind. We do not judge at all those who do not see what we do. We do not know what hinders them, or whether they are at all to blame for it; we do not know how soon the hindrance is going to be put out of the way. Today, as at the beginning, the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness comprehends it not. But that is the situation which calls for evangelists; not a situation in which the evangelist is called to renounce his experience and his vocation.

What, then, is the Atonement, as it is presented to us in the Scriptures, and vindicates for itself in our minds the character of truth, and indeed, as I have said already, the character of the ultimate truth of God? The simplest expression that can be given to it in words is: Christ died for our sins. Taken by itself, this is too brief to be intelligible; it implies many things which need to be made explicit both about Christ's relation to us and about the relation of sin and death. But the important thing, to begin with, is not to define these relations, but to look through the words to the broad reality which is interpreted in them. What they tell us, and tell us on the basis of an incontrovertible experience, is that the forgiveness of sins is for the Christian mediated through the death of Christ. In one respect, therefore, there is nothing singular in the forgiveness of sins: it is in the same

position as every other blessing of which the New Testament speaks. It is the presence of a Mediator, as Westcott says in one of his letters, which makes the Christian religion what it is; and the forgiveness of sins is mediated to us through Christ, just as the knowledge of God as the Father is mediated, or the assurance of a life beyond death. But there is something specific about the mediation of forgiveness; the gift and the certainty of it come to us, not simply through Christ, but through the blood of His Cross. The sum of His relation to sin is that He died for it. God forgives, but this is the way in which His forgiveness comes. He forgives freely, but it is at this cost to Himself and to the Son of His love.

This, it seems to me, is the simplest possible statement of what the New Testament means by the Atonement, and probably there are few who would dispute its correctness. But it is possible to argue that there is a deep cleft in the New Testament itself, and that the teaching of Jesus on the subject of forgiveness is completely at variance with that which we find in the Epistles, and which is implied in this description of the Atonement. Indeed there are many who do so argue. But to follow them would be to forget the place which Jesus has in His own teaching. Even if we grant that the main subject of that teaching is the Kingdom of God, it is as clear as anything can be that the Kingdom depends for its establishment on Jesus, or rather that in Him it is already established in principle; and that all participation in its blessings depends on some kind of relation to Him. All things have been delivered to Him by the Father, and it is by coming under obligation to Him, and by that alone, that men know the Father. It is by coming under obligation to Him that they know the pardoning love of the Father, as well as everything else that enters into Christian experience and constitutes the blessedness of life in the Kingdom of God. Nor is it open to any one to say that he knows this simply because Christ has told it. We are dealing here with things too great to be simply told. If they are ever to be known in their reality, they must be revealed by God, they must rise upon the mind of man experimentally, in their awful and glorious truth, in ways more wonderful than words. They can be spoken about afterwards, but hardly beforehand. They can be celebrated and preached--that is, declared as the speaker's experience, delivered as his testimony--but not simply told. It was enough if Jesus made His disciples feel, as surely He did make them feel, not only in every word He spoke, but more emphatically still in His whole attitude toward them, that He was Himself the Mediator of the new covenant, and that all the blessings of the relation between God and man which we call Christianity were blessings due to Him. If men knew the Father, it was through Him. If they knew the Father's heart to the lost, it was through Him. Through Him, be it remembered, not merely through the words that He spoke. There was more in Christ than even His own wonderful words expressed, and all that He was and did and suffered, as well as what He said, entered into the convictions He inspired. But He knew this as well as His disciples, and for this very reason it is beside the mark to point to what He said, or rather to what He did not say, in confutation of their experience. For it is their experience--the experience that the forgiveness of sins was mediated to them through His cross--that is expressed in the doctrine of Atonement: He died for our sins. The objection which is here in view is most frequently pointed by reference to the parable of the prodigal son. There is no Atonement here, we are told, no mediation of forgiveness at all. There is love on the one side and penitence on the other, and it is treason to the pure truth of this teaching to cloud and confuse it with the thoughts of men whose Master was over their heads often, but most of all here. Such a statement of the case is plausible, and judging from the frequency with which it occurs must to some minds be very convincing, but nothing could be more superficial, or more unjust both to Jesus and the apostles. A parable is a comparison, and there is

a point of comparison in it on which everything turns. The more perfect the parable is, the more conspicuous and dominating will the point of comparison be. The parable of the prodigal illustrates this. It brings out, through a human parallel, with incomparable force and beauty, the one truth of the freeness of forgiveness. God waits to be gracious. His pardoning love rushes out to welcome the penitent. But no one who speaks of the Atonement ever dreams of questioning this. The Atonement is concerned with a different point--not the freeness of pardon, about which all are agreed, but the cost of it; not the spontaneity of God's love, which no one questions, but the necessity under which it lay to manifest itself in a particular way if God was to be true to Himself, and to win the heart of sinners for the holiness which they had offended. The Atonement is not the denial that God's love is free; it is that specific manifestation or demonstration of God's free love which is demanded by the situation of men. One can hardly help wondering whether those who tell us so confidently that there is no Atonement in the parable of the prodigal have ever noticed that there is no Christ in it either--no elder brother who goes out to seek and to save the lost son, and to give his life a ransom for him. Surely we are not to put the Good Shepherd out of the Christian religion. Yet if we leave Him His place, we cannot make the parable of the prodigal the measure of Christ's mind about the forgiveness of sins. One part of His teaching it certainly contains--one part of the truth about the relation of God the Father to His sinful children; but another part of the truth was present, though not on that occasion rendered in words, in the presence of the Speaker, when 'all the publicans and sinners drew near to Him to hear Him.' The love of God to the sinful was apprehended in Christ Himself, and not in what He said as something apart from Himself; on the contrary, it was in the identity of the speaker and the word that the power of the word lay; God's love evinced itself to men as a reality in Him, in His presence in the world, and in His attitude to its sin; it so evinced itself, finally and supremely, in His death. It is not the idiosyncrasy of one apostle, it is the testimony of the Church, a testimony in keeping with the whole claim made by Christ in His teaching and life and death: 'in Him we have our redemption, through His blood, even the forgiveness of our trespasses.' And this is what the Atonement means: it means the mediation of forgiveness through Christ, and specifically through His death. Forgiveness, in the Christian sense of the term, is only realised as we believe in the Atonement: in other words, as we come to feel the cost at which alone the love of God could assert itself as Divine and holy love in the souls of sinful men. We may say, if we please, that forgiveness is bestowed freely upon repentance; but we must add, if we would do justice to the Christian position, that repentance in its ultimate character is the fruit of the Atonement. Repentance is not possible apart from the apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ. It is the experience of the regenerate--*poenitentiam interpretor regenerationem*, as Calvin says--and it is the Atonement which regenerates.

This, then, in the broadest sense, is the truth which we wish to commend to the modern mind: the truth that there is forgiveness with God, and that this forgiveness comes to us only through Christ, and signally or specifically through His death. Unless it becomes true to us that Christ died for our sins we cannot appreciate forgiveness at its specifically Christian value. It cannot be for us that kind of reality, it cannot have for us that kind of inspiration, which it unquestionably is and has in the New Testament. But what, we must now ask, is the modern mind to which this primary truth of Christianity has to be commended? Can we diagnose it in any general yet recognisable fashion, so as to find guidance in seeking access to it for the gospel of the Atonement? There may seem to be something presumptuous in the very idea, as though any one making the attempt assumed a superiority to the mind of his time, an exemption from its limitations and prejudices, a power to see

over it and round about it. All such presumption is of course disclaimed here; but even while we disclaim it, the attempt to appreciate the mind of our time is forced upon us. Whoever has tried to preach the gospel, and to persuade men of truth as truth is in Jesus, and especially of the truth of God's forgiveness as it is in the death of Jesus for sin, knows that there is a state of mind which is somehow inaccessible to this truth, and to which the truth consequently appeals in vain. I do not speak of unambiguous moral antipathy to the ideas of forgiveness and atonement, although antipathy to these ideas in general, as distinct from any given presentation of them, cannot but have a moral character, just as a moral character always attaches to the refusal to acknowledge Christ or to become His debtor; but of something which, though vaguer and less determinate, puts the mind wrong, so to speak, with Christianity from the start. It is clear, for instance, in all that has been said about forgiveness, that certain relations are presupposed as subsisting between God and man, relations which make it possible for man to sin, and possible for God, not indeed to ignore his sin, but in the very act of recognising it as all that it is to forgive it, to liberate man from it, and to restore him to Himself and righteousness. Now if the latent presuppositions of the modern mind are to any extent inconsistent with such relations, there will be something to overcome before the conceptions of forgiveness or atonement can get a hearing. These conceptions have their place in a certain view of the world as a whole, and if the mind is preoccupied with a different view, it will have an instinctive consciousness that it cannot accommodate them, and a disposition therefore to reject them ab initio. This is, in point of fact, the difficulty with which we have to deal. And let no one say that it is transparently absurd to suggest that we must get men to accept a true philosophy before we can begin to preach the gospel to them, as though that settled the matter or got over the difficulty. We have to take men as we find them; we have to preach the gospel to the mind which is around us; and if that mind is rooted in a view of the world which leaves no room for Christ and His work as Christian experience has realised them, then that view of the world must be appreciated by the evangelist, it must be undermined at its weak places, its inadequacy to interpret all that is present even in the mind which has accepted it--in other words, its inherent inconsistency--must be demonstrated; the attempt must be made to liberate the mind, so that it may be open to the impression of realities which under the conditions supposed it could only encounter with instinctive antipathy. It is necessary, therefore, at this point to advert to the various influences which have contributed to form the mind of our time, and to give it its instinctive bias in one direction or another. Powerful and legitimate as these influences have been, they have nevertheless been in various ways partial, and because of their very partiality they have, when they absorbed the mind, as new modes of thought are apt to do, prejudiced it against the consideration of other, possibly of deeper and more far-reaching, truths.

First, there is the enormous development of physical science. This has engrossed human intelligence in our own times to an extent which can hardly be over-estimated. Far more mind has been employed in constructing the great fabric of knowledge, which we call science, than in any other pursuit of men. Far more mind has had its characteristic qualities and temper imparted to it by scientific study than by study in any other field. It is of science--which to all intents and purposes means physical science--of science and its methods and results that the modern mind is most confident, and speaks with the most natural and legitimate pride. Now science, even in this restricted sense, covers a great range of subjects; it may be physics in the narrowest meaning of the word, or chemistry, or biological science. The characteristic of our own age has been the development of the last, and in particular its extension to man. It is impossible to dispute the

legitimacy of this extension. Man has his place in nature; the phenomena of life have one of their signal illustrations in him, and he is as proper a subject of biological study as any other living being. But the intense preoccupation of much of the most vigorous intelligence of our time with the biological study of man is not without effects upon the mind itself, which we need to consider. It tends to produce a habit of mind to which certain assumptions are natural and inevitable, certain other assumptions incredible from the first. This habit of mind is in some ways favourable to the acceptance of the Atonement. For example, the biologist's invincible conviction of the unity of life, and of the certainty and power with which whatever touches it at one point touches it through and through, is in one way entirely favourable. Many of the most telling popular objections to the idea of Atonement rest on an atomic conception of personality--a conception according to which every human being is a closed system, incapable in the last resort of helping or being helped, of injuring or being injured, by another. This conception has been finally discredited by biology, and so far the evangelist must be grateful. The Atonement presupposes the unity of human life, and its solidarity; it presupposes a common and universal responsibility. I believe it presupposes also such a conception of the unity of man and nature as biology proceeds upon; and in all these respects its physical presuppositions, if we may so express ourselves, are present to the mind of to-day, thanks to biology, as they were not even so lately as a hundred years ago. But this is not all that we have to consider. The mind has been influenced by the movement of physical and even of biological science, not only in a way which is favourable, but in ways which are prejudicial to the acceptance of the Atonement. Every physical science seems to have a boundless ambition; it wants to reduce everything to its own level, to explain everything in the terms and by the categories with which it itself works. The higher has always to fight for its life against the lower. The physicist would like to reduce chemistry to physics; the chemist has an ambition to simplify biology into chemistry; the biologist in turn looks with suspicion on anything in man which cannot be interpreted biologically. He would like to give, and is sometimes ready to offer, a biological explanation of self-consciousness, of freedom, of religion, morality, sin. Now a biological explanation, when all is done, is a physical explanation, and a physical explanation of self-consciousness or the moral life is one in which the very essence of the thing to be explained is either ignored or explained away. Man's life is certainly rooted in nature, and therefore a proper subject for biological study; but unless it somehow transcended nature, and so demanded other than physical categories for its complete interpretation, there could not be any study or any science at all. If there were nothing but matter, as M. Naville has said, there would be no materialism; and if there were nothing but life, there would be no biology. Now it is in the higher region of human experience, to which all physical categories are unequal, that we encounter those realities to which the Atonement is related, and in relation to which it is real; and we must insist upon these higher realities, in their specific character, against a strong tendency in the scientifically trained modern mind, and still more in the general mind as influenced by it, to reduce them to the merely physical level.

Take, for instance, the consciousness of sin. Evidently the Atonement becomes incredible if the consciousness of sin is extinguished or explained away. There is nothing for the Atonement to do; there is nothing to relate it to; it is as unreal as a rock in the sky. But many minds at the present time, under the influence of current conceptions in biology, do explain it away. All life is one, they argue. It rises from the same spring, it runs the same course, it comes to the same end. The life of man is rooted in nature, and that which beats in my veins is an inheritance from an immeasurable

past. It is absurd to speak of my responsibility for it, or of my guilt because it manifests itself in me, as it inevitably does, in such and such forms. There is no doubt that this mode of thought is widely prevalent, and that it is one of the most serious hindrances to the acceptance of the gospel, and especially of the Atonement. How are we to appreciate it? We must point out, I think, the consequence to which it leads. If a man denies that he is responsible for the nature which he has inherited--denies responsibility for it on the ground that it is inherited--it is a fair question to ask him for what he does accept responsibility. When he has divested himself of the inherited nature, what is left? The real meaning of such disowning of responsibility is that a man asserts that his life is a part of the physical phenomena of the universe, and nothing else; and he forgets, in the very act of making the assertion, that if it were true, it could not be so much as made. The merely physical is transcended in every such assertion; and the man who has transcended it, rooted though his life be in nature, and one with the life of the whole and of all the past, must take the responsibility of living that life out on the high level of self-consciousness and morality which his very disclaimer involves. The sense of sin which wakes spontaneously with the perception that he is not what he ought to have been must not be explained away; at the level which life has reached in him, this is unscientific as well as immoral; his sin--for I do not know another word for it--must be realised as all that it is in the moral world if he is ever to be true to himself, not to say if he is ever to welcome the Atonement, and leave his sin behind. We have no need of words like sin and atonement--we could not have the experiences which they designate--unless we had a higher than merely natural life; and one of the tendencies of the modern mind which has to be counteracted by the evangelist is the tendency induced by physical and especially by biological science to explain the realities of personal experience by sub-personal categories. In conscience, in the sense of personal dignity, in the ultimate inability of man to deny the self which he is, we have always an appeal against such tendencies, which cannot fail; but it needs to be made resolutely when conscience is lethargic and the whole bias of the mind is to the other side.

Passing from physical science, the modern mind has perhaps been influenced most by the great idealist movement in philosophy--the movement which in Germany began with Kant and culminated in Hegel. This idealism, just like physical science, gives a certain stamp to the mind; when it takes possession of intelligence it casts it, so to speak, into a certain mould; even more than physical science it dominates it so that it becomes incapable of self-criticism, and very difficult to teach. Its importance to the preacher of Christianity is that it assumes certain relations between the human and the divine, relations which foreclose the very questions which the Atonement compels us to raise. To be brief, it teaches the essential unity of God and man. God and man, to speak of them as distinct, are necessary to each other, but man is as necessary to God as God is to man. God is the truth of man, but man is the reality of God. God comes to consciousness of Himself in man, and man in being conscious of himself is at the same time conscious of God. Though many writers of this school make a copious use of Christian phraseology, it seems to me obvious that it is not in an adequate Christian sense. Sin is not regarded as that which ought not to be, it is that which is to be transcended. It is as inevitable as anything in nature; and the sense of it, the bad conscience which accompanies it, is no more than the growing pains of the soul. On such a system there is no room for atonement in the sense of the mediation of God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ. We may consistently speak in it of a man being reconciled to himself, or even reconciled to his sins, but not, so far as I can understand, of his being reconciled to God, and still less, reconciled to God through the death of His Son. The penetration of Kant saw from the

first all that could be made of atonement on the basis of any such system. What it means to the speculative mind is that the new man bears the sin of the old. When the sinner repents and is converted, the weight of what he has done comes home to him; the new man in him--the Son of God in him--accepts the responsibility of the old man, and so he has peace with God. Many whose minds are under the influence of this mode of thought do not see clearly to what it leads, and resent criticism of it as if it were a sort of impiety. Their philosophy is to them a surrogate for religion, but they should not be allowed to suppose (if they do suppose) that it is the equivalent of Christianity. There can be no Christianity without Christ; it is the presence of the Mediator which makes Christianity what it is. But a unique Christ, without Whom our religion disappears, is frankly disavowed by the more candid and outspoken of our idealist philosophers. Christ, they tell us, was certainly a man who had an early and a magnificently strong faith in the unity of the human and the Divine; but it was faith in a fact which enters into the constitution of every human consciousness, and it is absurd to suppose that the recognition of the fact, or the realisation of it, is essentially dependent on Him. He was not sinless--which is an expression without meaning, when we think of a human being which has to rise by conflict and self-suppression out of nature into the world of self-consciousness and right and wrong; He was not in any sense unique or exceptional; He was only what we all are in our degree; at best, He was only one among many great men who have contributed in their place and time to the spiritual elevation of the race. Such, I say, is the issue of this mode of thought as it is frankly avowed by some of its representative men; but the peculiarity of it, when it is obscurely fermenting as a leaven in the mind, is, that it appeals to men as having special affinities to Christianity. In our own country it is widely prevalent among those who have had a university education, and indeed in a much wider circle, and it is a serious question how we are to address our gospel to those who confront it in such a mental mood.

I have no wish to be unsympathetic, but I must frankly express my conviction that this philosophy only lives by ignoring the greatest reality of the spiritual world. There is something in that world--something with which we can come into intelligible and vital relations--something which can evince to our minds its truth and reality, for which this philosophy can make no room: Christ's consciousness of Himself. It is a theory of the universe which (on principle) cannot allow Christ to be anything else than an additional unit in the world's population; but if this were the truth about Him, no language could be strong enough to express the self-delusion in which He lived and died. That He was thus self-deluded is a hypothesis I do not feel called to discuss. One may be accused of subjectivity again, of course, though a subjective opinion which has the consent of the Christian centuries behind it need not tremble at hard names; but I venture to say that there is no reality in the world which more inevitably and uncompromisingly takes hold of the mind as a reality than our Lord's consciousness of Himself as it is attested to us in the Gospels. But when we have taken this reality for all that it is worth, the idealism just described is shaken to the foundation. What seemed to us so profound a truth--the essential unity of the human and the divine--may come to seem a formal and delusive platitude; in what we once regarded as the formula of the perfect religion--the divinity of man and the humanity of God--we may find quite as truly the formula of the first, not to say the final, sin. To see Christ not in the light of this speculative theorem, but in the light of His own consciousness of Himself, is to realise not only our kinship to God, but our remoteness from Him; it is to realise our incapacity for self-realisation when we are left to ourselves; it is to realise the need of the Mediator if we would come to the Father; it is to realise, in principle, the need of the Atonement, the need, and eventually the fact. When the modern mind therefore presents itself to

us in this mood of philosophical competence, judging Christ from the point of view of the whole, and showing Him His place, we can only insist that the place is unequal to His greatness, and that His greatness cannot be explained away. The mind which is closed to the fact of His unique claims, and the unique relation to God on which they rest, is closed inevitably to the mediation of God's forgiveness through His death.

There is one other modification of mind, characteristic of modern times, of which we have yet to take account--I mean that which is produced by devotion to historical study. History is, as much as science, one of the achievements of our age; and the historical temper is as characteristic of the men we meet as the philosophical or the scientific. The historical temper, too, is just as apt as these others, perhaps unconsciously, perhaps quite consciously, but under the engaging plea of modesty, to pronounce absolute sentences which strike at the life of the Christian religion, and especially, therefore, at the idea of the Atonement. Sometimes this is done broadly, so that every one sees what it means. If we are told, for example, that everything historical is relative, that it belongs of necessity to a time, and is conditioned in ways so intricate that no knowledge can ever completely trace them; if we are told, further, that for this very reason nothing historical can have absolute significance, or can condition the eternal life of man, it is obvious that the Christian religion is being cut at the root. It is no use speaking about the Atonement--about the mediation of God's forgiveness to the soul through a historical person and work--if this is true. The only thing to be done is to raise the question whether it is true. It is no more for historical than for physical science to exalt itself into a theory of the universe, or to lay down the law with speculative absoluteness as to the significance and value which shall attach to facts. When we face the fact with which we are here concerned--the fact of Christ's consciousness of Himself and His vocation, to which reference has already been made--are we not forced to the conclusion that here a new spiritual magnitude has appeared in history, the very differentia of which is that it has eternal significance, and that it is eternal life to know it? If we are to preach the Atonement, we cannot allow either history or philosophy to proceed on assumptions which ignore or degrade the fact of Christ. Only a person in whom the eternal has become historical can be the bearer of the Atonement, and it must be our first concern to show, against all assumptions whether made in the name of history or of philosophy, that in point of fact there is such a person here. This consideration requires to be kept in view even when we are dealing with the modern mind inside the Church. Nothing is commoner than to hear those who dissent from any given construction of the Atonement plead for a historical as opposed to a dogmatic interpretation of Christ. It is not always clear what is meant by this distinction, nor is it clear that those who use it are always conscious of what it would lead to if it were made absolute. Sometimes a dogmatic interpretation of the New Testament means an interpretation vitiated by dogmatic prejudice, an interpretation in which the meaning of the writers is missed because the mind is blinded by prepossessions of its own: in this sense a dogmatic interpretation is a thing which no one would defend. Sometimes, however, a dogmatic interpretation is one which reveals or discovers in the New Testament truths of eternal and divine significance, and to discredit such interpretation in the name of the historical is another matter. The distinction in this case, as has been already pointed out, is not absolute. It is analogous to the distinction between fact and theory, or between thing and meaning, or between efficient cause and final cause. None of these distinctions is absolute, and no intelligent mind would urge either side in them to the disparagement of the other. If we are to apprehend the whole reality presented to us, we must apprehend the theory as well as the fact, the meaning as well as

the thing, the final as well as the efficient cause. In the subject with which we are dealing, this truth is frequently ignored. It is assumed, for example, that because Christ was put to death by His enemies, or because He died in the faithful discharge of His calling, therefore He did not die, in the sense of the Atonement, for our sins: the historical causes which brought about His death are supposed to preclude that interpretation of it according to which it mediates to us the divine forgiveness. But there is no incompatibility between the two things. To set aside an interpretation of Christ's death as dogmatic, on the ground that there is another which is historical, is like setting aside the idea that a watch is made to measure time because you know it was made by a watchmaker. It was both made by a watchmaker and made to measure time. Similarly it may be quite true both that Christ was crucified and slain by wicked men, and that He died for our sins. But without entering into the questions which this raises as to the relation between the wisdom of God and the course of human history, it is enough to be conscious of the prejudice which the historical temper is apt to generate against the recognition of the eternal in time. Surely it is a significant fact that the New Testament contains a whole series of books--the Johannine books--which have as their very burden the eternal significance of the historical: eternal life in Jesus Christ, come in flesh, the propitiation for the whole world. Surely also it is a significant fact of a different and even an ominous kind that we have at present in the Church a whole school of critics which is so far from appreciating the truth in this that it is hardly an exaggeration to say that it has devoted itself to a paltry and peddling criticism of these books in which the impression of the eternal is lost. But whether we are to be indebted to John's eyes, or to none but our own, if the eternal is not to be seen in Jesus, He can have no place in our religion; if the historical has no dogmatic content, it cannot be essential to eternal life. Hence if we believe and know that we have eternal life in Jesus, we must assert the truth which is implied in this against any conception of history which denies it. Nor is it really difficult to do so. With the experience of nineteen centuries behind us, we have only to confront this particular historical reality, Jesus Christ, without prejudice; in evangelising, we have only to confront others with Him; and we shall find it still possible to see God in Him, the Holy Father who through the Passion of His Son ministers to sinners the forgiveness of their sins. In what has been said thus far by way of explaining the modern mind, emphasis may seem to have fallen mainly on those characteristics which make it less accessible than it might be to Christian truth, and especially to the Atonement. I have tried to point out the assailable side of its prepossessions, and to indicate the fundamental truths which must be asserted if our intellectual world is to be one in which the gospel may find room. But the modern mind has other characteristics. Some of these may have been exhibited hitherto mainly in criticising current representations of the Atonement; but in themselves they are entirely legitimate, and the claims they put forward are such as we cannot disown. Before proceeding to a further statement of the Atonement, I shall briefly refer to one or two of them: a doctrine of Atonement which did not satisfy them would undoubtedly stand condemned.

(1) The modern mind requires that everything shall be based on experience. Nothing is true or real to it which cannot be experimentally verified. This we shall all concede. But there is an inference sometimes drawn from it at which we may look with caution. It is the inference that, because everything must be based on experience, no appeal to Scripture has any authority. I have already explained in what sense it is possible to speak of the authority of Scripture, and here it is only necessary to make the simple remark that there is no proper contrast between Scripture and experience. Scripture, so far as it concerns us here, is a record of experience or an interpretation

of it. It was the Church's experience that it had its redemption in Christ; it was the interpretation of that experience that Christ died for our sins. Yet in emphasising experience the modern mind is right, and Scripture would lose its authority if the experience it describes were not perpetually verified anew.

(2) The modern mind desires to have everything in religion ethically construed. As a general principle this must command our unreserved assent. Anything which violates ethical standards, anything which is immoral or less than moral, must be excluded from religion. It may be, indeed, that ethical has sometimes been too narrowly defined. Ideas have been objected to as unethical which are really at variance not with a true perception of the constitution of humanity, and of the laws which regulate moral life, but with an atomic theory of personality under which moral life would be impossible. Persons are not atoms; in a sense they interpenetrate, though individuality has been called the true impenetrability. The world has been so constituted that we do not stand absolutely outside of each other; we can do things for each other. We can bear each other's burdens, and it is not unethical to say so, but the reverse. And again, it need not be unethical, though it transcends the ordinary sphere and range of ethical action, if we say that God in Christ is able to do for us what we cannot do for one another. With reference to the Atonement, the demand for ethical treatment is usually expressed in two ways. (a) There is the demand for analogies to it in human life. The demand is justifiable, in so far as God has made man in His own image; but, as has been suggested above, it has a limit, in so far as God is God and not man, and must have relations to the human race which its members do not and cannot have to each other. (b) There is the demand that the Atonement shall be exhibited in vital relation to a new life in which sin is overcome. This demand also is entirely legitimate, and it touches a weak point in the traditional Protestant doctrine. Dr. Chalmers tells us that he was brought up--such was the effect of the current orthodoxy upon him--in a certain distrust of good works. Some were certainly wanted, but not as being themselves salvation; only, as he puts it, as tokens of justification. It was a distinct stage in his religious progress when he realised that true justification sanctifies, and that the soul can and ought to abandon itself spontaneously and joyfully to do the good that it delights in. The modern mind assumes what Dr. Chalmers painfully discovered. An atonement that does not regenerate, it truly holds, is not an atonement in which men can be asked to believe. Such then, in its prejudices good and bad, is the mind to which the great truth of the Christian religion has to be presented.

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[1] Of course this does not touch the fact that the whole 'authority' of the Christian religion is in Jesus Himself--in His historical presence in the world, His words and works, His life and death and resurrection. He is the truth, the acceptance of which by man is life eternal.

02.2. CHAPTER II SIN AND THE DIVINE REACTION . . .

CHAPTER II SIN AND THE DIVINE REACTION AGAINST IT

We have now seen in a general way what is meant by the Atonement, and what are the characteristics of the mind to which the Atonement has to make its appeal. In that mind there is, as I believe, much which falls in with the Atonement, and prepares a welcome for it; but much also which creates prejudice against it, and makes it as possible still as in the first century to speak of the offence of the cross. No doubt the Atonement has sometimes been presented in forms which provoke antagonism, which challenge by an ostentation of unreason, or by a defiance of morality, the reason and conscience of man; but this alone does not explain the resentment which it often encounters. There is such a thing to be found in the world as the man who will have nothing to do with Christ on any terms, and who will least of all have anything to do with Him when Christ presents Himself in the character which makes man His debtor for ever. All men, as St. Paul says, have not faith: it is a melancholy fact, whether we can make anything of it or not. Discounting, however, this irrational or inexplicable opposition, which is not expressed in the mind but in the will, how are we to present the Atonement so that it shall excite the least prejudice, and find the most unimpeded access to the mind of our own generation? This is the question to which we have now to address ourselves. To conceive the Atonement, that is, the fact that forgiveness is mediated to us through Christ, and specifically through His death, as clearly and truly as possible, it is necessary for us to realise the situation to which it is related. We cannot think of it except as related to a given situation. It is determined or conditioned by certain relations subsisting between God and man, as these relations have been affected by sin. What we must do, therefore, in the first instance, is to make clear to ourselves what these relations are, and how sin affects them. To begin with, they are personal relations; they are relations the truth of which cannot be expressed except by the use of personal pronouns. We need not ask whether the personality of God can be proved antecedent to religion, or as a basis for a religion yet to be established; in the only sense in which we can be concerned with it, religion is an experience of the personality of God, and of our own personality in relation to it. 'O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me.' (Psa 139:1) 'I am continually with Thee! (Psa 73:23) No human experience can be more vital or more normal than that which is expressed in these words, and no argument, be it ever so subtle or so baffling, can weigh a feather's-weight against such experience. The same conception of the relations of God and man is expressed again as unmistakably in every word of Jesus about the Father and the Son and the nature of their communion with each other. It is only in such personal relations that the kind of situation can emerge, and the kind of experience be had, with which the Atonement deals; and antecedent to such experience, or in independence of it, the Atonement must remain an incredible because an unrealisable thing. But to say that the relations of God and man are personal is not enough. They are not only personal, but universal. Personal is habitually used in a certain contrast with legal, and it is very easy to lapse into the idea that personal relations, because distinct from legal ones, are independent of law; but to say the least of it, that is an ambiguous and misleading way of describing the facts. The relations of God and man are not

lawless, they are not capricious, incalculable, incapable of moral meaning; they are personal, but determined by something of universal import; in other words, they are not merely personal but ethical. That is ethical which is at once personal and universal. Perhaps the simplest way to make this evident is to notice that the relations of man to God are the relations to God not of atoms, or of self-contained individuals, each of which is a world in itself, but of individuals which are essentially related to each other, and bound up in the unity of a race. The relations of God to man, therefore, are not capricious though they are personal: they are reflected or expressed in a moral constitution to which all personal beings are equally bound, a moral constitution of eternal and universal validity, which neither God nor man can ultimately treat as anything else than what it is. This is a point at which some prejudice has been raised against the Atonement by theologians, and more, perhaps, by persons protesting against what they supposed theologians to mean. If one may be excused a personal reference, few things have astonished me more than to be charged with teaching a 'forensic' or 'legal' or 'judicial' doctrine of Atonement, resting, as such a doctrine must do, on a 'forensic' or 'legal' or 'judicial' conception of man's relation to God. It is all the more astonishing when the charge is combined with what one can only decline as in the circumstances totally unmerited compliments to the clearness with which he has expressed himself. There is nothing which I should wish to reprobate more whole-heartedly than the conception which is expressed by these words. To say that the relations of God and man are forensic is to say that they are regulated by statute--that sin is a breach of statute--that the sinner is a criminal--and that God adjudicates on him by interpreting the statute in its application to his case. Everybody knows that this is a travesty of the truth, and it is surprising that any one should be charged with teaching it, or that any one should applaud himself, as though he were in the foremost files of time, for not believing it. It is superfluously apparent that the relations of God and man are not those of a magistrate on the bench pronouncing according to the act on the criminal at the bar. To say this, however, does not make these relations more intelligible. In particular, to say that they are personal, as opposed to forensic, does not make them more intelligible. If they are to be rational, if they are to be moral, if they are to be relations in which an ethical life can be lived, and ethical responsibilities realised, they must be not only personal, but universal; they must be relations that in some sense are determined by law. Even to say that they are the relations, not of judge and criminal, but of Father and child, does not get us past this point. The relations of father and child are undoubtedly more adequate to the truth than those of judge and criminal; they are more adequate, but so far as our experience of them goes, they are not equal to it. If the sinner is not a criminal before his judge, neither is he a naughty child before a parent whose own weakness or affinity to evil introduces an incalculable element into his dealing with his child's fault. I should not think of saying that it is the desire to escape from the inexorableness of law to a God capable of indulgent human tenderness that inspires the violent protests so often heard against 'forensic' and 'legal' ideas: but that is the impression which one sometimes involuntarily receives from them. It ought to be apparent to every one that even the relation of parent and child, if it is to be a moral relation, must be determined in a way which has universal and final validity. It must be a relation in which--ethically speaking--some things are for ever obligatory, and some things for ever impossible; in other words, it must be a relation determined by law, and law which cannot deny itself. But law in this sense is not 'legal.' It is not 'judicial,' or 'forensic,' or 'statutory.' None the less it is real and vital, and the whole moral value of the relation depends upon it. When a man says--as some one has said--'There are many to whom the conception of forgiveness resting on a judicial

transaction does not appeal at all,' I entirely agree with him; it does not appeal at all to me. But what would be the value of a forgiveness which did not recognise in its eternal truth and worth that universal law in which the relations of God and man are constituted? Without the recognition of that law--that moral order or constitution in which we have our life in relation to God and each other--righteousness and sin, atonement and forgiveness, would all alike be words without meaning. In connection with this, reference may be made to an important point in the interpretation of the New Testament. The responsibility for what is called the forensic conception of the Atonement is often traced to St. Paul, and the greatest of all the ministers of grace is not infrequently spoken of as though he had deliberately laid the most insuperable of stumbling-blocks in the way to the gospel. Most people, of course, are conscious that they do not look well talking down to St. Paul, and occasionally one can detect a note of misgiving in the brave words in which his doctrine is renounced, a note of misgiving which suggests that the charitable course is to hear such protests in silence, and to let those who utter them think over the matter again. But there is what claims to be a scientific way of expressing dissent from the apostle, a way which, equally with the petulant one, rests, I am convinced, on misapprehension of his teaching. This it would not be fair to ignore. It interprets what the apostle says about law solely by reference to the great question at issue between the Jewish and the Christian religions, making the word law mean the statutory system under which the Jews lived, and nothing else. No one will deny that Paul does use the word in this sense; the law often means for him specifically the law of Moses. The law of Moses, however, never means for him anything less than the law of God; it is one specific form in which the universal relations subsisting between God and man, and making religion and morality possible, have found historical expression. But Paul's mind does not rest in this one historical expression. He generalises it. He has the conception of a universal law, to which he can appeal in Gentile as well as in Jew--a law in the presence of which sin is revealed, and by the reaction of which sin is judged--a law which God could not deny without denying Himself, and to which justice is done (in other words, which is maintained in its integrity), even when God justifies the ungodly. But when law is thus universalised, it ceases to be legal; it is not a statute, but the moral constitution of the world. Paul preached the same gospel to the Gentiles as he did to the Jews; he preached in it the same relation of the Atonement and of Christ's death to divine law. But he did not do this by extending to all mankind a Pharisaic, legal, forensic relation to God: he did it by rising above such conceptions, even though as a Pharisee he may have had to start from them, to the conception of a relation of all men to God expressing itself in a moral constitution--or, as he would have said, but in an entirely unforensic sense, in a law--of divine and unchanging validity. The maintenance of this law, or of this moral constitution, in its inviolable integrity was the signature of the forgiveness Paul preached. The Atonement meant to him that forgiveness was mediated through One in whose life and death the most signal homage was paid to this law: the very glory of the Atonement was that it manifested the righteousness of God; it demonstrated God's consistency with His own character, which would have been violated alike by indifference to sinners and by indifference to that universal moral order--that law of God--in which alone eternal life is possible.

Hence it is a mistake to say--though this also has been said--that 'Paul's problem was not that of the possibility of forgiveness; it was the Jewish law, the Old Testament dispensation: how to justify his breach with it, how to demonstrate that the old order had been annulled and a new order inaugurated.' There is a false contrast in all such propositions. Paul's problem was that of the

Jewish law, and it was also that of the possibility of forgiveness; it was that of the Jewish law, and it was also that of a revelation of grace, in which God should justify the ungodly, Jew or Gentile, and yet maintain inviolate those universal moral relations between Himself and man for which law is the compendious expression. It does not matter whether we suppose him to start from the concrete instance of the Jewish law, and to generalise on the basis of it; or to start from the universal conception of law, and to recognise in existing Jewish institutions the most available and definite illustration of it: in either case, the only Paul whose mind is known to us has completely transcended the forensic point of view. The same false contrast is repeated when we are told that, 'That doctrine (Paul's "juristic doctrine") had its origin, not so much in his religious experience, as in apologetic necessities.' The only apologetic necessities which give rise to fundamental doctrines are those created by religious experience. The apologetic of any religious experience is just the definition of it as real in relation to other acknowledged realities. Paul had undoubtedly an apologetic of forgiveness--namely, his doctrine of atonement. But the acknowledged reality in relation to which he defined forgiveness--the reality with which, by means of his doctrine of atonement, he showed forgiveness to be consistent--was not the law of the Jews (though that was included in it, or might be pointed to in illustration of it): it was the law of God, the universal and inviolable order in which alone eternal life is possible, and in which all men, and not the Jews only, live and move and have their being. It was the perception of this which made Paul an apostle to the Gentiles, and it is this very thing itself, which some would degrade into an awkward, unintelligent, and outworn rag of Pharisaic apologetic, which is the very heart and soul of Paul's Gentile gospel. Paul himself was perfectly conscious of this; he could not have preached to the Gentiles at all unless he had been. But there is nothing in it which can be characterised as 'legal,' 'judicial,' or 'forensic'; and of this also, I have no doubt, the apostle was well aware. Of course he occupied a certain historical position, had certain historical questions to answer, was subject to historical limitations of different kinds; but I have not the courage to treat him, nor do his words entitle any one to do so, as a man who in the region of ideas could not put two and two together. But to return to the point from which this digression on St. Paul started. We have seen that the relations of God and man are personal, and also that they are universal, that is, there is a law of them, or, if we like to say so, a law in them, on the maintenance of which their whole ethical value depends. The next point to be noticed is that these relations are deranged or disordered by sin. Sin is, in fact, nothing else than this derangement or disturbance: it is that in which wrong is done to the moral constitution under which we live. And let no one say that in such an expression we are turning our back on the personal world, and lapsing, or incurring the risk of lapsing, into mere legalism again. It cannot be too often repeated that if the universal element, or law, be eliminated from personal relations, there is nothing intelligible left: no reason, no morality, no religion, no sin or righteousness or forgiveness, nothing to appeal to mind or conscience. In the widest sense of the word, sin, as a disturbance of the personal relations between God and man, is a violence done to the constitution under which God and man form one moral community, share, as we may reverently express it, one life, have in view the same moral ends.

It is no more necessary in connection with the Atonement than in any other connection that we should have a doctrine of the origin of sin. We do not know its origin, we only know that it is here. We cannot observe the genesis of the bad conscience any more than we can observe the genesis of consciousness in general. We see that consciousness does stand in relief against the background of natural life; but though we believe that, as it exists in us, it has emerged from that

background, we cannot see it emerge; it is an ultimate fact, and is assumed in all that we can ever regard as its physical antecedents and presuppositions. In the same way, the moral consciousness is an ultimate fact, and irreducible. The physical theory of evolution must not be allowed to mislead us here, and in particular it must not be allowed to discredit the conception of moral responsibility for sin which is embodied in the story of the Fall. Each of us individually has risen into moral life from a mode of being which was purely natural; in other words, each of us, individually, has been a subject of evolution; but each of us also has fallen--fallen, presumably, in ways determined by his natural constitution, yet certainly, as conscience assures us, in ways for which we are morally answerable, and to which, in the moral constitution of the world, consequences attach which we must recognise as our due. They are not only results of our action, but results which that action has merited, and there is no moral hope for us unless we accept them as such. Now what is true of any, or rather of all, of us, without compromise of the moral consciousness, may be true of the race, or of the first man, if there was a first man. Evolution and a Fall cannot be inconsistent, for both enter into every moral experience of which we know anything; and no opinion we hold about the origin of sin can make it anything else than it is in conscience, or give its results any character other than that which they have to conscience. Of course when one tries to interpret sin outside of conscience, as though it were purely physical, and did not have its being in personality, consciousness, and will, it disappears; and the laborious sophistries of such interpretations must be left to themselves. The point for us is that no matter how sin originated, in the moral consciousness in which it has its being it is recognised as a derangement of the vital relations of man, a violation of that universal order outside of which he has no true good. In what way, now, let us ask, does the reality of sin come home to the sinner? How does he recognise it as what it is? What is the reaction against the sinner, in the moral order under which he lives, which reveals to him the meaning of his sinful act or state? In the first place, there is that instantaneous but abiding reaction which is called the bad conscience--the sense of guilt, of being answerable to God for sin. The sin may be an act which is committed in a moment, but in this aspect of it, at least, it does not fade into the past. An animal may have a past, for anything we can tell, and naturalistic interpreters of sin may believe that sin dies a natural death with time, and need not trouble us permanently; but this is not the voice of conscience, in which alone sin exists, and which alone can tell us the truth about it. The truth is that the spiritual being has no past. Just as he is continually with God, his sin is continually with him. He cannot escape it by not thinking. When he keeps silence, as the Psalmist says--and that is always his first resource, as though, if he were to say nothing about it, God might say nothing about it, and the whole thing blow over--it devours him like a fever within: his bones wax old with his moaning all day long. This sense of being wrong with God, under His displeasure, excluded from His fellowship, afraid to meet Him yet bound to meet Him, is the sense of guilt. Conscience confesses in it its liability to God, a liability which in the very nature of the case it can do nothing to meet, and which therefore is nearly akin to despair. But the bad conscience, real as it is, may be too abstractly interpreted. Man is not a pure spirit, but a spiritual being whose roots strike to the very depths of nature, and who is connected by the most intimate and vital relations not only with his fellow-creatures of the same species, but with the whole system of nature in which he lives. The moral constitution in which he has his being comprehends, if we may say so, nature in itself: the God who has established the moral order in which man lives, has established the natural order also as part of the same whole with it. In some profound way the two are one. We distinguish in man, legitimately

enough, between the spiritual and the physical; but man is one, and the universe in which he lives is one, and in man's relation to God the distinction of physical and spiritual must ultimately disappear. The sin which introduces disorder into man's relations to God produces reactions affecting man as a whole--not reactions that, as we sometimes say, are purely spiritual, but reactions as broad as man's being and as the whole divinely constituted environment in which it lives. I am well aware of the difficulty of giving expression to this truth, and of the hopelessness of trying to give expression to it by means of those very distinctions which it is its nature to transcend. The distinctions are easy and obvious; what we have to learn is that they are not final. It seems so conclusive to say, as some one has done in criticising the idea of atonement, that spiritual transgressing brings spiritual penalty, and physical brings physical; it seems so conclusive, and it is in truth so completely beside the mark. We cannot divide either man or the universe in this fashion into two parts which move on different planes and have no vital relations; we cannot, to apply this truth to the subject before us, limit the divine reaction against sin, or the experiences through which, in any case whatever, sin is brought home to man as what it is, to the purely spiritual sphere. Every sin is a sin of the indivisible human being, and the divine reaction against it expresses itself to conscience through the indivisible frame of that world, at once natural and spiritual, in which man lives. We cannot distribute evils into the two classes of physical and moral, and subsequently investigate the relation between them: if we could, it would be of no service here. What we have to understand is that when a man sins he does something in which his whole being participates, and that the reaction of God against his sin is a reaction in which he is conscious, or might be conscious, that the whole system of things is in arms against him.

There are those, no doubt, to whom this will seem fantastic, but it is a truth, I am convinced, which is presupposed in the Christian doctrine of Atonement, as the mediation of forgiveness through the suffering and death of Christ: and it is a truth also, if I am not much mistaken, to which all the highest poetry, which is also the deepest vision of the human mind, bears witness. We may distinguish natural law and moral law as sharply as we please, and it is as necessary sometimes as it is easy to make these sharp and absolute distinctions; but there is a unity in experience which makes itself felt deeper than all the antitheses of logic, and in that unity nature and spirit are no more defined by contrast with each other: on the contrary, they interpenetrate and support each other: they are aspects of the same whole. When we read in the prophet Amos, 'Lo, He that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, the Lord, the God of hosts, is His name,' this is the truth which is expressed. The power which reveals itself in conscience--telling us all things that ever we did, declaring unto us what is our thought--is the same which reveals itself in nature, establishing the everlasting hills, creating the winds which sweep over them, turning the shadow of death into the morning and making the day dark with night, calling for the waters of the sea, and pouring them out on the face of the earth. Conscience speaks in a still small voice, but it is no impotent voice; it can summon the thunder to give it resonance; the power which we sometimes speak of as if it were purely spiritual is a power which clothes itself spontaneously and of right in all the majesty and omnipotence of nature. It is the same truth, again, in another aspect of it, which is expressed in Wordsworth's sublime lines to Duty:

'Thou dost preserve the Stars from wrong, And the most ancient Heavens through Thee are fresh and strong.' When the mind sees deepest, it is conscious that it needs more than physical astronomy, more than spectrum analysis, to tell us everything even about the stars. There is a moral constitution, it assures us, even of the physical world; and though it is impossible for us to work it out in detail, the assumption of it is the only assumption on which we can understand the life of a being related as man is related both to the natural and the spiritual. I do not pretend to prove that there is articulate or conscious reflection on this in either the Old Testament or the New; I take it for granted, as self-evident, that this sense of the ultimate unity of the natural and the spiritual--which is, indeed, but one form of belief in God--pervades the Bible from beginning to end. It knows nothing of our abstract and absolute distinctions; to come to the matter in hand, it knows nothing of a sin which has merely spiritual penalties. Sin is the act or the state of man, and the reaction against it is the reaction of the whole order, at once natural and spiritual, in which man lives.

Now the great difficulty which the modern mind has with the Atonement, or with the representation of it in the New Testament, is that it assumes some kind of connection between sin and death. Forgiveness is mediated through Christ, but specifically through His death. He died for our sins; if we can be put right with God apart from this, then, St. Paul tells us, He died for nothing. One is almost ashamed to repeat that this is not Paulinism, but the Christianity of the whole Apostolic Church. What St. Paul made the basis of his preaching, that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, he had on his own showing received as the common Christian tradition. But is there anything in it? Can we receive it simply on the authority of the primitive Church? Can we realise any such connection between death and sin as makes it a truth to us, an intelligible, impressive, overpowering thought, that Christ died for our sins?

I venture to say that a great part of the difficulty which is felt at this point is due to the false abstraction just referred to. Sin is put into one world--the moral; death is put into another world--the natural; and there is no connection between them. This is very convincing if we find it possible to believe that we live in two unconnected worlds. But if we find it impossible to believe this--and surely the impossibility is patent--its plausibility is gone. It is a shining example of this false abstraction when we are told, as though it were a conclusive objection to all that the New Testament has to say about the relation of sin and death, that 'the specific penalty of sin is not a fact of the natural life, but of the moral life.' What right has any one, in speaking of the ultimate realities in human life, of those experiences in which man becomes conscious of all that is involved in his relations to God and their disturbance by sin, to split that human life into 'natural' and 'moral,' and fix an impassable gulf between? The distinction is legitimate, as has already been remarked, within limits, but it is not final; and what the New Testament teaches, or rather assumes, about the relation of sin and death, is one of the ways in which we are made sensible that it is not final. Sin and death do not belong to unrelated worlds. As far as man is concerned, the two worlds, to use an inadequate figure, intersect; and at one point in the line of their intersection sin and death meet and interpenetrate. In the indivisible experience of man he is conscious that they are parts or aspects of the same thing. That this is what Scripture means when it assumes the connection of death and sin is not to be refuted by pointing either to the third chapter of Genesis or to the fifth of Romans. It does not, for example, do justice either to Genesis or to St. Paul to say, as has been said, that according to their representation, 'Death--not spiritual, but natural death--is the direct

consequence of sin and its specific penalty.' In such a dictum, the distinctions again mislead. To read the third chapter of Genesis in this sense would mean that what we had to find in it was a mythological explanation of the origin of physical death. But does any one believe that any Bible writer was ever curious about this question? Or does any one believe that a mythological solution of the problem, how death originated--a solution which ex hypothesi has not a particle of truth or even of meaning in it--could have furnished the presupposition for the fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion, that Christ died for our sins, and that in Him we have our forgiveness through His blood? A truth which has appealed so powerfully to man cannot be sustained on a falsehood. That the third chapter of Genesis is mythological in form, no one who knows what mythology is will deny; but even mythology is not made out of nothing, and in this chapter every atom is 'stuff o' the conscience.' What we see in it is conscience, projecting as it were in a picture on a screen its own invincible, dear-bought, despairing conviction that sin and death are indissolubly united--that from death the sinful race can never get away--that it is part of the indivisible reality of sin that the shadow of death darkens the path of the sinner, and at last swallows him up. It is this also which is in the mind of St. Paul when he says that by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin. It is not the origin of death he is interested in, nor the origin of sin either, but the fact that sin and death hang together. And just because sin is sin, this is not a fact of natural history, or a fact which natural history can discredit. Scripture has no interest in natural history, nor does such an interest help us to understand it. It is no doubt perfectly true that to the biologist death is part of the indispensable machinery of nature; it is a piece of the mechanism without which the movement of the whole would be arrested; to put it so, death to the biologist is part of the same whole as life, or life and death are for him aspects of one thing. One can admit this frankly without compromising, because without touching, the other and deeper truth which is so interesting and indeed so vital alike in the opening pages of revelation and in its consummation in the Atonement. The biologist, when he deals with man, and with his life and death, deliberately deals with them in abstraction, as merely physical phenomena; to him man is a piece of nature, and he is nothing more. But the Biblical writers deal with man in the integrity of his being, and in his relations to God; they transcend the distinction of natural and moral, because for God it is not final: they are sensible of the unity in things which the everyday mind, for practical purposes, finds it convenient to keep apart. It is one great instance of this that they are sensible of the unity of sin and death. We may call sin a spiritual thing, but the man who has never felt the shadow of death fall upon it does not know what that spiritual thing is: and we may call death a natural thing, but the man who has not felt its natural pathos deepen into tragedy as he faced it with the sense of sin upon him does not know what that natural thing is. We are here, in short, at the vanishing point of this distinction--God is present, and nature and spirit interpenetrate in His presence. We hear much in other connections of the sacramental principle, and its importance for the religious interpretation of nature. It is a sombre illustration of this principle if we say that death is a kind of sacrament of sin. It is in death, ultimately, that the whole meaning of sin comes home to the sinner; he has not sounded it to its depths till he has discovered that this comes into it at last. And we must not suppose that when Paul read the third chapter of Genesis he read it as a mythological explanation of the origin of physical death, and accepted it as such on the authority of inspiration. With all his reverence for the Old Testament, Paul accepted nothing from it that did not speak to his conscience, and waken echoes there; and what so spoke to him from the third chapter of Genesis was not a mythical story of how death invaded Paradise, but the profound experience of the

human race expressed in the story, an experience in which sin and death inter-penetrates, interpret, and in a sense constitute each other. To us they are what they are only in relation to each other, and when we deny the relation we see the reality of neither. This is the truth, as I apprehend it, of all we are taught either in the Old Testament or in the New about the relation of sin and death. It is part of the greater truth that what we call the physical and spiritual worlds are ultimately one, being constituted with a view to each other; and most of the objections which are raised against it are special cases of the objections which are raised against the recognition of this ultimate unity. So far as they are such, it is not necessary to discuss them further; and so far as the ultimate unity of the natural and the spiritual is a truth rather to be experienced than demonstrated, it is not probable that much can be done by argument to gain acceptance for the idea that sin and death have essential relations to each other. But there are particular objections to this idea to which it may be worth while to refer.

There is, to begin with, the undoubted fact that many people live and die without, consciously at least, recognising this relation. The thought of death may have had a very small place in their lives, and when death itself comes it may, for various reasons, be a very insignificant experience to them. It may come in a moment, suddenly, and give no time for feeling; or it may come as the last step in a natural process of decay, and arrest life almost unconsciously; or it may come through a weakness in which the mind wanders to familiar scenes of the past, living these over again, and in a manner escaping by so doing the awful experience of death itself; or it may come in childhood before the moral consciousness is fully awakened, and moral reflection and experience possible. This last case, properly speaking, does not concern us; we do not know how to define sin in relation to those in whom the moral consciousness is as yet undeveloped: we only know that somehow or other they are involved in the moral as well as in the natural unity of the race. But leaving them out of account, is there any real difficulty in the others? any real objection to the Biblical idea that sin and death in humanity are essentially related? I do not think there is. To say that many people are unconscious of the connection is only another way of saying that many people fail to realise in full and tragic reality what is meant by death and sin. They think very little about either. Gen 3:1-24 could never have been written out of their conscience. Sin is not for them all one with despair: they are not, through fear of death, all their lifetime subject to bondage. Scripture, of course, has no difficulty in admitting this; it depicts, on the amplest scale, and in the most vivid colours, the very kind of life and death which are here supposed. But it does not consider that such a life and death are ipso facto a refutation of the truth it teaches about the essential relations of death and sin. On the contrary, it considers them a striking demonstration of that moral dulness and insensibility in man which must be overcome if he is ever to see and feel his sin as what it is to God, or welcome the Atonement as that in which God's forgiveness of sin is mediated through the tremendous experience of death. I know there are those who will call this arrogant, or even insolent, as though I were passing a moral sentence on all who do not accept a theorem of mine; but I hope I do not need here to disclaim any such unchristian temper. Only, it is necessary to insist that the connection of sin and death in Scripture is neither a fantastic piece of mythology, explaining, as mythology does, the origin of a physical law, nor, on the other hand, a piece of supernaturally revealed history, to be accepted on the authority of Him who has revealed it; in such revelations no one believes any longer; it is a profound conviction and experience of the human conscience, and all that is of interest is to show that such a conviction and experience can never be set aside by the protest of those who aver that they know nothing about it. One must

insist on this, however it may expose him to the charge of judging. Can we utter any truth at all, in which conscience is concerned, and which is not universally acknowledged, without seeming to judge?

Sometimes, apart from the general denial of any connection between death and sin, it is pointed out that death has another and a totally different character. Death in any given case may be so far from coming as a judgment of God, that it actually comes as a gracious gift from Him; it may even be an answer to prayer, a merciful deliverance from pain, an event welcomed by suffering human nature, and by all who sympathise with it. This is quite true, but again, one must point out, rests on the false abstraction so often referred to. Man is regarded in all this simply in the character of a sufferer, and death as that which brings suffering to an end; but that is not all the truth about man, nor all the truth about death. Physical pain may be so terrible that consciousness is absorbed and exhausted in it, sometimes even extinguished, but it is not to such abnormal conditions we should appeal to discover the deepest truths in the moral consciousness of man. If the waves of pain subsided, and the whole nature collected its forces again, and conscience was once more audible, death too would be seen in a different light. It might not indeed be apprehended at once, as Scripture apprehends it, but it would not be regarded simply as a welcome relief from pain. It would become possible to see in it something through which God spoke to the conscience, and eventually to realise its intimate relation to sin. The objections we have just considered are not very serious, because they practically mean that death has no moral character at all; they reduce it to a natural phenomenon, and do not bring it into any relation to the conscience. It is a more respectable, and perhaps a more formidable objection, when death is brought into the moral world, and when the plea is put forward that so far from being God's judgment upon sin, it may be itself a high moral achievement. A man may die greatly; his death may be a triumph; nothing in his life may become him like the leaving it. Is not this inconsistent with the idea that there is any peculiar connection between death and sin? From the Biblical point of view the answer must again be in the negative. There is no such triumph over death as makes death itself a noble ethical achievement, which is not at the same time a triumph over sin. Man vanquishes the one only as in the grace of God he is able to vanquish the other. The doom that is in death passes away only as the sin to which it is related is transcended. But there is more than this to be said. Death cannot be so completely an action that it ceases to be a passion; it cannot be so completely achieved that it ceases to be accepted or endured. And in this last aspect of it the original character which it bore in relation to sin still makes itself felt. Transfigure it, as it may be transfigured, by courage, by devotion, by voluntary abandonment of life for a higher good, and it remains nevertheless the last enemy. There is something in it monstrous and alien to the spirit, something which baffles the moral intelligence, till the truth dawns upon us that for all our race sin and death are aspects of one thing. If we separate them, we understand neither; nor do we understand the solemn greatness of martyrdom itself if we regard it as a triumph only, and eliminate from the death which martyrs die all sense of the universal relation in humanity of death and sin. No one knew the spirit of the martyr more thoroughly than St. Paul. No one could speak more confidently and triumphantly of death than he. No one knew better how to turn the passion into action, the endurance into a great spiritual achievement. But also, no one knew better than he, in consistency with all this, that sin and death are needed for the interpretation of each other, and that fundamentally, in the experience of the race, they constitute one whole. Even when he cried, 'O death, where is thy sting?' (1Co 15:55) he was conscious that 'the sting of death is sin.' Each, so to speak, had its

reality in the other. No one could vanquish death who had not vanquished sin. No one could know what sin meant without tasting death. These were not mythological fancies in St. Paul's mind, but the conviction in which the Christian conscience experimentally lived, and moved, and had its being. And these convictions, I repeat, furnish the point of view from which we must appreciate the Atonement, i.e. the truth that forgiveness, as Christianity preaches it, is specifically mediated through Christ's death.

02.3. CHAPTER III CHRIST AND MAN IN THE ATONEMENT

CHAPTER III CHRIST AND MAN IN THE ATONEMENT

What has now been said about the relations subsisting between God and man, about the manner in which these relations are affected by sin, and particularly about the Scripture doctrine of the connection between sin and death, must determine, to a great extent, our attitude to the Atonement. The Atonement, as the New Testament presents it, assumes the connection of sin and death. Apart from some sense and recognition of such connection, the mediation of forgiveness through the death of Christ can only appear an arbitrary, irrational, unacceptable idea. But leaving the Atonement meanwhile out of sight, and looking only at the situation created by sin, the question inevitably arises, What can be done with it? Is it possible to remedy or to reverse it? It is an abnormal and unnatural situation; can it be annulled, and the relations of God and man put upon an ideal footing? Can God forgive sin and restore the soul? Can we claim that He shall? And if it is possible for Him to do so, can we tell how or on what conditions it is possible? When the human mind is left to itself, there are only two answers which it can give to these questions. Perhaps they are not specially characteristic of the modern mind, but the modern mind in various moods has given passionate expression to both of them. The first says roundly that forgiveness is impossible. Sin is, and it abides. The sinner can never escape from the past. His future is mortgaged to it, and it cannot be redeemed. He can never get back the years which the locust has eaten. His leprous flesh can never come again like the flesh of a little child. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap, and reap for ever and ever. It is not eternal punishment which is incredible; nothing else has credibility. Let there be no illusion about this: forgiveness is a violation, a reversal, of law, and no such thing is conceivable in a world in which law reigns. The answer to this is, that sin and its consequences are here conceived as though they belonged to a purely physical world, whereas, if the world were only physical, there could be no such thing as sin. As soon as we realise that sin belongs to a world in which freedom is real--a world in which reality means the personal relations subsisting between man and God, and the experiences realised in these relations--the question assumes a different aspect. It is not one of logic or of physical law, but of personality, of character, of freedom. There is at least a possibility that the sinner's relation to his sin and God's relation to the sinner should change, and that out of these changed relations a regenerative power should spring, making the sinner, after all, a new creature. The question, of course, is not decided in this sense, but it is not foreclosed. At the opposite extreme from those who pronounce forgiveness impossible stand those who give the second answer to the great question, and calmly assure us that forgiveness may be taken for granted. They emphasise what the others overlooked--the personal character of the relations of God and man. God is a loving Father; man is His weak and unhappy child; and of course God forgives. As Heine put it, *c'est mon métier*, it is what He is for. But the conscience which is really burdened by sin does not easily find satisfaction in this cheap pardon. There is something in conscience which will not allow it to believe that God can simply condone sin: to take forgiveness for granted, when you realise what you are doing, seems to a live conscience impious and profane. In reality, the tendency to take

forgiveness for granted is the tendency of those who, while they properly emphasise the personal character of the relations of God and man, overlook their universal character--that is, exclude from them that element of law without which personal relations cease to be ethical. But a forgiveness which ignores this stands in no relation to the needs of the soul or the character of God.

What the Christian religion holds to be the truth about forgiveness--a truth embodied in the Atonement--is something quite distinct from both the propositions which have just been considered. The New Testament does not teach, with the naturalistic or the legal mind, that forgiveness is impossible; neither does it teach, with the sentimental or lawless mind, that it may be taken for granted. It teaches that forgiveness is mediated to sinners through Christ, and specifically through His death: in other words, that it is possible for God to forgive, but possible for God only through a supreme revelation of His love, made at infinite cost, and doing justice to the uttermost to those inviolable relations in which alone, as I have already said, man can participate in eternal life, the life of God Himself--doing justice to them as relations in which there is an inexorable divine reaction against sin, finally expressing itself in death. It is possible on these terms, and it becomes actual as sinful men open their hearts in penitence and faith to this marvellous revelation, and abandon their sinful life unreservedly to the love of God in Christ who died for them. From this point of view it seems to me possible to present in a convincing and persuasive light some of the truths involved in the Atonement to which the modern mind is supposed to be specially averse.

Thus it becomes credible--we say so not a priori, but after experience--that there is a divine necessity for it; in other words, there is no forgiveness possible to God without it: if He forgives at all, it must be in this way and in no other. To say so beforehand would be inconceivably presumptuous, but it is quite another thing to say so after the event. What it really means is that in the very act of forgiving sin--or, to use the daring word of St. Paul, in the very act of justifying the ungodly--God must act in consistency with His whole character. He must demonstrate Himself to be what He is in relation to sin, a God with whom evil cannot dwell, a God who maintains inviolate the moral constitution of the world, taking sin as all that it is in the very process through which He mediates His forgiveness to men.

It is the recognition of this divine necessity--not to forgive, but to forgive in a way which shows that God is irreconcilable to evil, and can never treat it as other or less than it is--it is the recognition of this divine necessity, or the failure to recognise it, which ultimately divides interpreters of Christianity into evangelical and non-evangelical, those who are true to the New Testament and those who cannot digest it. No doubt the forms in which this truth is expressed are not always adequate to the idea they are meant to convey, and if we are only acquainted with them at second hand they will probably appear even less adequate than they are. When Athanasius, e.g., speaks of God's truth in this connection, and then reduces God's truth to the idea that God must keep His word--the word which made death the penalty of sin--we may feel that the form only too easily loses contact with the substance. Yet Athanasius is dealing with the essential fact of the case, that God must be true to Himself, and to the moral order in which men live, in all His dealings with sin for man's deliverance from it; and that He has been thus true to Himself in sending His Son to live our life and to die our death for our salvation. Or again, when Anselm in the *Cur Deus Homo* speaks of the satisfaction which is rendered to God for the infringement of His honour by sin--a satisfaction apart from which there can be no forgiveness--we may feel again, and even more

strongly, that the form of the thought is inadequate to the substance. But what Anselm means is that sin makes a real difference to God, and that even in forgiving God treats that difference as real, and cannot do otherwise. He cannot ignore it, or regard it as other or less than it is; if He did so, He would not be more gracious than He is in the Atonement, He would cease to be God. It is Anselm's profound grasp of this truth which, in spite of all its inadequacy in form, and of all the criticism to which its inadequacy has exposed it, makes the *Cur Deus Homo* the truest and greatest book on the Atonement that has ever been written. It is the same truth of a divine necessity for the Atonement which is emphasised by St. Paul in the third chapter of Romans, where he speaks of Christ's death as a demonstration of God's righteousness. Christ's death, we may paraphrase his meaning, is an act in which (so far as it is ordered in God's providence) God does justice to Himself. He does justice to His character as a gracious God, undoubtedly, who is moved with compassion for sinners: if He did not act in a way which displayed His compassion for sinners, He would not do justice to Himself; there would be no [Greek] *endeixis* of His [Greek] *dikaiosis*: it would be in abeyance: He would do Himself an injustice, or be untrue to Himself. It is with this in view that we can appreciate the arguments of writers like Diestel and Ritschl, that God's righteousness is synonymous with His grace. Such arguments are true to this extent, that God's righteousness includes His grace. He could not demonstrate it, He could not be true to Himself, if His grace remained hidden. We must not, however, conceive of this as if it constituted on our side a claim upon grace or upon forgiveness: such a claim would be a contradiction in terms. All that God does in Christ He does in free love, moved with compassion for the misery and doom of men. But though God's righteousness as demonstrated in Christ's death--in other words, His action in consistency with His character--includes, and, if we choose to interpret the term properly, even necessitates, the revelation of His grace, it is not this only--I do not believe it is this primarily--which St. Paul has here in mind. God, no doubt, would not do justice to Himself if He did not show His compassion for sinners; but, on the other hand--and here is what the apostle is emphasizing--He would not do justice to Himself if He displayed His compassion for sinners in a way which made light of sin, which ignored its tragic reality, or took it for less than it is. In this case He would again be doing Himself injustice; there would be no demonstration that He was true to Himself as the author and guardian of the moral constitution under which men live; as Anselm put it, He would have ceased to be God. The apostle combines the two sides. In Christ set forth a propitiation in His blood--in other words, in the Atonement in which the sinless Son of God enters into the bitter realisation of all that sin means for man, yet loves man under and through it all with an everlasting love--there is an [Greek] *endeixis* of God's righteousness, a demonstration of His self-consistency, in virtue of which we can see how He is at the same time just Himself and the justifier of him who believes on Jesus, a God who is irreconcilable to sin, yet devises means that His banished be not expelled from Him. We may say reverently that this was the only way in which God could forgive. He cannot deny Himself, means at the same time He cannot deny His grace to the sinful, and He cannot deny the moral order in which alone He can live in fellowship with men; and we see the inviolableness of both asserted in the death of Jesus. Nothing else in the world demonstrates how real is God's love to the sinful, and how real the sin of the world is to God. And the love which comes to us through such an expression, bearing sin in all its reality, yet loving us through and beyond it, is the only love which at once forgives and regenerates the soul.

It becomes credible also that there is a human necessity for the Atonement: in other words, that apart from it the conditions of being forgiven could no more be fulfilled by man than forgiveness

could be bestowed by God.

There are different tendencies in the modern mind with regard to this point. On the one hand, there are those who frankly admit the truth here asserted. Yes, they say, the Atonement is necessary for us. If we are to be saved from our sins, if our hearts are to be touched and won by the love of God, if we are to be emancipated from distrust and reconciled to the Father whose love we have injured, there must be a demonstration of that love so wonderful and overpowering that all pride, alienation and fear shall be overcome by it; and this is what we have in the death of Christ. It is a demonstration of love powerful enough to evoke penitence and faith in man, and it is through penitence and faith alone that man is separated from his sins and reconciled to God. A demonstration of love, too, must be given in act; it is not enough to be told that God loves: the reality of love lies in another region than that of words. In Christ on His cross the very thing itself is present, beyond all hope of telling wonderful, and without its irresistible appeal our hearts could never have been melted to penitence, and won for God. On the other hand, there are those who reject the Atonement on the very ground that for pardon and reconciliation nothing is required but repentance, the assumption being that repentance is something which man can and must produce out of his own resources. On these divergent tendencies in the modern mind I should wish to make the following remarks.

First, the idea that man can repent as he ought, and whenever he will, without coming under any obligation to God for his repentance, but rather (it might almost be imagined) putting God under obligation by it, is one to which experience lends no support. Repentance is an adequate sense not of our folly, nor of our misery, but of our sin: as the New Testament puts it, it is repentance toward God. It is the consciousness of what our sin is to Him: of the wrong it does to His holiness, of the wound which it inflicts on His love. Now such a consciousness it is not in the power of the sinner to produce at will. The more deeply he has sinned, the more (so to speak) repentance is needed, the less is it in his power. It is the very nature of sin to darken the mind and harden the heart, to take away the knowledge of God alike in His holiness and in His love. Hence it is only through a revelation of God, and especially of what God is in relation to sin, that repentance can be evoked in the soul. Of all terms in the vocabulary of religion, repentance is probably the one which is most frequently misused. It is habitually applied to experiences which are not even remotely akin to true penitence. The self-centred regret which a man feels when his sin has found him out--the wish, compounded of pride, shame, and anger at his own inconceivable folly, that he had not done it: these are spoken of as repentance. But they are not repentance at all. They have no relation to God. They constitute no fitness for a new relation to Him. They are no opening of the heart in the direction of His reconciling love. It is the simple truth that that sorrow of heart, that healing and sanctifying pain in which sin is really put away, is not ours in independence of God; it is a saving grace which is begotten in the soul under that impression of sin which it owes to the revelation of God in Christ. A man can no more repent than he can do anything else without a motive, and the motive which makes evangelical repentance possible does not enter into his world till he sees God as God makes Himself known in the death of Christ. All true penitents are children of the Cross. Their penitence is not their own creation: it is the reaction towards God produced in their souls by this demonstration of what sin is to Him, and of what His love does to reach and win the sinful. The other remark I wish to make refers to those who admit the death of Christ to be necessary for us--necessary, in the way I have just described, to evoke penitence and trust in

God--but who on this very ground deny it to be divinely necessary. It had to be, because the hard hearts of men could not be touched by anything less moving: but that is all. This, I feel sure, is another instance of those false abstractions to which reference has already been made. There is no incompatibility between a divine necessity and a necessity for us. It may very well be the case that nothing less than the death of Christ could win the trust of sinful men for God, and at the same time that nothing else than the death of Christ could fully reveal the character of God in relation at once to sinners and to sin. For my own part I am persuaded, not only that there is no incompatibility between the two things, but that they are essentially related, and that only the acknowledgment of the divine necessity in Christ's death enables us to conceive in any rational way the power which it exercises over sinners in inducing repentance and faith. It would not evoke a reaction Godward unless God were really present in it, that is, unless it were a real revelation of His being and will: but in a real revelation of God's being and will there can be nothing arbitrary, nothing which is determined only from without, nothing, in other words, that is not divinely necessary. The demonstration of what God is, which is made in the death of Christ, is no doubt a demonstration singularly suited to call forth penitence and faith in man, but the necessity of it does not lie simply in the desire to call forth penitence and faith. It lies in the divine nature itself. God could not do justice to Himself, in relation to man and sin, in any way less awful than this; and it is the fact that He does not shrink even from this--that in the Person of His Son He enters, if we may say so, into the whole responsibility of the situation created by sin--which constitutes the death of Jesus a demonstration of divine love, compelling penitence and faith. Nothing less would have been sufficient to touch sinful hearts to their depths--in that sense the Atonement is humanly necessary; but neither would anything else be a sufficient revelation of what God is in relation to sin and to sinful men--in that sense it is divinely necessary. And the divine necessity is the fundamental one. The power exercised over us by the revelation of God at the Cross is dependent on the fact that the revelation is true--in other words, that it exhibits the real relation of God to sinners and to sin. It is not by calculating what will win us, but by acting in consistency with Himself, that God irresistibly appeals to men. We dare not say that He must be gracious, as though grace could cease to be free: but we may say that He must be Himself, and that it is because He is what we see Him to be in the death of Christ, understood as the New Testament understands it, that sinners are moved to repentance and to trust in Him. That which the eternal being of God made necessary to Him in the presence of sin is the very thing which is necessary also to win the hearts of sinners. Nothing but what is divinely necessary could have met the necessities of sinful men. When we admit this twofold necessity for the Atonement, we can tell ourselves more clearly how we are to conceive Christ in it, in relation to God on the one hand and to man on the other. The Atonement is God's work. It is God who makes the Atonement in Christ. It is God who mediates His forgiveness of sins to us in this way. This is one aspect of the matter, and probably the one about which there is least dispute among Christians. But there is another aspect of it. The Mediator between God and man is Himself man, Christ Jesus. What is the relation of the man Christ Jesus to those for whom the Atonement is made? What is the proper term to designate, in this atoning work, what He is in relation to them? The doctrine of Atonement current in the Church in the generation preceding our own answered frankly that in His atoning work Christ is our substitute. He comes in our nature, and He comes into our place. He enters into all the responsibilities that sin has created for us, and He does justice to them in His death. He does not deny any of them: He does not take sin as anything less or else than it is to God; in

perfect sinlessness He consents even to die, to submit to that awful experience in which the final reaction of God's holiness against sin is expressed. Death was not His due: it was something alien to One Who had nothing amiss; but it was our due, and because it was ours He made it His. It was thus that He made Atonement. He bore our sins. He took to Himself all that they meant, all in which they had involved the world. He died for them, and in so doing acknowledged the sanctity of that order in which sin and death are indissolubly united. In other words, He did what the human race could not do for itself, yet what had to be done if sinners were to be saved: for how could men be saved if there were not made in humanity an acknowledgment of all that sin is to God, and of the justice of all that is entailed by sin under God's constitution of the world? Such an acknowledgment, as we have just seen, is divinely necessary, and necessary, too, for man, if sin is to be forgiven. This was the basis of fact on which the substitutionary character of Christ's sufferings and death in the Atonement was asserted. It may be admitted at once that when the term substitute is interpreted without reference to this basis of fact it lends itself very easily to misconstruction. It falls in with, if it does not suggest, the idea of a transference of merit and demerit, the sin of the world being carried over to Christ's account, and the merit of Christ to the world's account, as if the reconciliation of God and man, or the forgiveness of sins and the regeneration of souls, could be explained without the use of higher categories than are employed in bookkeeping. It is surely not necessary at this time of day to disclaim an interpretation of personal relations which makes use only of sub-personal categories. Merit and demerit cannot be mechanically transferred like sums in an account. The credit, so to speak, of one person in the moral sphere cannot become that of another, apart from moral conditions. It is the same truth, in other words, if we say that the figure of paying a debt is not in every respect adequate to describe what Christ does in making the Atonement. The figure, I believe, covers the truth; if it did not, we should not have the kind of language which frequently occurs in Scripture; but it is misread into falsehood and immorality whenever it is pressed as if it were exactly equivalent to the truth. But granting these drawbacks which attach to the word, is there not something in the work of Christ, as mediating the forgiveness of sins, which no other word can express? No matter on what subsequent conditions its virtue for us depends, what Christ did had to be done, or we should never have had forgiveness; we should never have known God, and His nature and will in relation to sin; we should never have had the motive which alone could beget real repentance; we should never have had the spirit which welcomes pardon and is capable of receiving it. We could not procure these things for ourselves, we could not produce them out of our own resources: but He by entering into our nature and lot, by taking on Him our responsibilities and dying our death, has so revealed God to us as to put them within our reach. We owe them to Him; in particular, and in the last resort, we owe them to the fact that He bore our sins in His own body to the tree. If we are not to say that the Atonement, as a work carried through in the sufferings and death of Christ, sufferings and death determined by our sin, is vicarious or substitutionary, what are we to call it? The only answer which has been given to this question, by those who continue to speak of Atonement at all, is that we must conceive Christ not as the substitute but as the representative of sinners. I venture to think that, with some advantages, the drawbacks of this word are quite as serious as those which attach to substitute. It makes it less easy, indeed, to think of the work of Christ as a finished work which benefits the sinner ipso facto, and apart from any relation between him and the Saviour: but of what sort is the relation which it does suggest? It suggests that the sinners who are to be saved by Christ can put Christ forward in their name: they are not in the

utterly hopeless case that has hitherto been supposed; they can present themselves to God in the person and work of One on whom God cannot but look with approval. The boldest expression of this I have ever seen occurs in some remarks in the Primitive Methodist Quarterly Review on the doctrine of St. Paul. The reviewer is far from saying that a writer who finds a substitutionary doctrine throughout the New Testament is altogether wrong. He goes so far as to admit that 'if we look at the matter from what may be called an external point of view, no doubt we may speak of the death of Christ as in a certain sense substitutionary.' What this 'certain sense' is, he does not define. But no one, he tells us, can do justice to Paul who fails to recognise that the death of Christ was a racial act; and 'if we place ourselves at Paul's point of view, we shall see that to the eye of God the death of Christ presents itself less as an act which Christ does for the race than as an act which the race does in Christ.' In plain English, Paul teaches less that Christ died for the ungodly, than that the ungodly in Christ died for themselves. This is presented to us as something profound, a recognition of the mystical depths in Paul's teaching: I own I can see nothing profound in it except a profound misapprehension of the apostle. Nevertheless, it brings out the logic of what representative means when representative is opposed to substitute. The representative is ours, we are in Him, and we are supposed to get over all the moral difficulties raised by the idea of substitution just because He is ours, and because we are one with Him. But the fundamental fact of the situation is that, to begin with, Christ is not ours, and we are not one with Him. In the apostle's view, and in point of fact, we are 'without Christ' ([Greek] chôris Christou). It is not we who have put Him there. It is not to us that His presence and His work in the world are due. If we had produced Him and put Him forward, we might call Him our representative in the sense suggested by the sentences just quoted; we might say it is not so much He who dies for us, as we who die in Him; but a representative not produced by us, but given to us--not chosen by us, but the elect of God--is not a representative at all, but in that place a substitute. He stands in our stead, facing all our responsibilities for us as God would have them faced; and it is what He does for us, and not the effect which this produces in us, still less the fantastic abstraction of a 'racial act,' which is the Atonement in the sense of the New Testament. To speak of Christ as our representative, in the sense that His death is to God less an act which He does for the race than an act which the race does in Him, is in principle to deny the whole grace of the gospel, and to rob it of every particle of its motive power. To do justice to the truth here, both on its religious and its ethical side, it is necessary to put in their proper relation to one another the aspects of reality which the terms substitute and representative respectively suggest. The first is fundamental. Christ is God's gift to humanity. He stands in the midst of us, the pledge of God's love, accepting our responsibilities as God would have them accepted, offering to God, under the pressure of the world's sin and all its consequences, that perfect recognition of God's holiness in so visiting sin which men should have offered but could not; and in so doing He makes Atonement for us. In so doing, also, He is our substitute, not yet our representative. But the Atonement thus made is not a spectacle, it is a motive. It is not a transaction in business, or in book-keeping, which is complete in itself; in view of the relations of God and man it belongs to its very nature to be a moral appeal. It is a divine challenge to men, which is designed to win their hearts. And when men are won--when that which Christ in His love has done for them comes home to their souls--when they are constrained by His infinite grace to the self-surrender of faith, then we may say He becomes their representative. They begin to feel that what He has done for them must not remain outside of them, but be reproduced somehow in their own life. The mind of Christ in relation to God and sin,

as He bore their sins in His own body to the tree, must become their mind; this and nothing else is the Christian salvation. The power to work this change in them is found in the death of Christ itself; the more its meaning is realised as something there, in the world, outside of us, the more completely does it take effect within us. In proportion as we see and feel that out of pure love to us He stands in our place--our substitute--bearing our burden--in that same proportion are we drawn into the relation to Him that makes Him our representative. But we should be careful here not to lose ourselves in soaring words. The New Testament has much to say about union with Christ, but I could almost be thankful that it has no such expression as mystical union. The only union it knows is a moral one--a union due to the moral power of Christ's death, operating morally as a constraining motive on the human will, and begetting in believers the mind of Christ in relation to sin; but this moral union remains the problem and the task, as well as the reality and the truth, of the Christian life. Even when we think of Christ as our representative, and have the courage to say we died with Him, we have still to reckon ourselves to be dead to sin, and to put to death our members which are upon the earth; and to go past this, and speak of a mystical union with Christ in which we are lifted above the region of reflection and motive, of gratitude and moral responsibility, into some kind of metaphysical identity with the Lord, does not promote intelligibility, to say the least. If the Atonement were not, to begin with, outside of us--if it were not in that sense objective, a finished work in which God in Christ makes a final revelation of Himself in relation to sinners and sin--in other words, if Christ could not be conceived in it as our substitute, given by God to do in our place what we could not do for ourselves, there would be no way of recognising or preaching or receiving it as a motive; while, on the other hand, if it did not operate as a motive, if it did not appeal to sinful men in such a way as to draw them into a moral fellowship with Christ--in other words, if Christ did not under it become representative of us, our surety to God that we should yet be even as He in relation to God and to sin, we could only say that it had all been vain. Union with Christ, in short, is not a presupposition of Christ's work, which enables us to escape all the moral problems raised by the idea of a substitutionary Atonement; it is not a presupposition of Christ's work, it is its fruit. To see that it is its fruit is to have the final answer to the objection that substitution is immoral. If substitution, in the sense in which we must assert it of Christ, is the greatest moral force in the world--if the truth which it covers, when it enters into the mind of man, enters with divine power to assimilate him to the Saviour, uniting him to the Lord in a death to sin and a life to God--obviously, to call it immoral is an abuse of language. The love which can literally go out of itself and make the burden of others its own is the radical principle of all the genuine and victorious morality in the world. And to say that love cannot do any such thing, that the whole formula of morality is, every man shall bear his own burden, is to deny the plainest facts of the moral life.

Yet this is a point at which difficulty is felt by many in trying to grasp the Atonement. On the one hand, there do seem to be analogies to it, and points of attachment for it, in experience. No sin that has become real to conscience is ever outlived and overcome without expiation. There are consequences involved in it that go far beyond our perception at the moment, but they work themselves inexorably out, and our sin ceases to be a burden on conscience, and a fetter on will, only as we 'accept the punishment of our iniquity,' and become conscious of the holy love of God behind it. But the consequences of sin are never limited to the sinner. They spread beyond him in the organism of humanity, and when they strike visibly upon the innocent, the sense of guilt is deepened. We see that we have done we know not what, something deeply and mysteriously bad

beyond all our reckoning, something that only a power and goodness transcending our own avail to check. It is one of the startling truths of the moral life that such consequences of sin, striking visibly upon the innocent, have in certain circumstances a peculiar power to redeem the sinful. When they are accepted, as they sometimes are accepted, without repining or complaint--when they are borne, as they sometimes are borne, freely and lovingly by the innocent, because to the innocent the guilty are dear--then something is appealed to in the guilty which is deeper than guilt, something may be touched which is deeper than sin, a new hope and faith may be born in them, to take hold of love so wonderful, and by attaching themselves to it to transcend the evil past. The suffering of such love (they are dimly aware), or rather the power of such love persisting through all the suffering brought on it by sin, opens the gate of righteousness to the sinful in spite of all that has been; sin is outweighed by it, it is annulled, exhausted, transcended in it. The great Atonement of Christ is somehow in line with this, and we do not need to shrink from the analogy. 'If there were no witness,' as Dr. Robertson Nicoll puts it, 'in the world's deeper literature'--if there were no witness, that is, in the universal experience of man--'to the fact of an Atonement, the Atonement would be useless, since the formula expressing it would be unintelligible.' It is the analogy of such experiences which makes the Atonement credible, yet it must always in some way transcend them. There is something in it which is ultimately incomparable. When we speak of others as innocent, the term is used only in a relative sense; there is no human conscience pure to God. When we speak of the sin of others coming in its consequences on the innocent, we speak of something in which the innocent are purely passive; if there is moral response on their part, the situation is not due to moral initiative of theirs. But with Christ it is different. He knew no sin, and He entered freely, deliberately, and as the very work of His calling, into all that sin meant for God and brought on man. Something that I experience in a particular relation, in which another has borne my sin and loved me through it, may help to open my eyes to the meaning of Christ's love; but when they are opened, what I see is the propitiation for the whole world. There is no guilt of the human race, there is no consequence in which sin has involved it, to which the holiness and love made manifest in Christ are unequal. He reveals to all sinful men the whole relation of God to them and to their sins--a sanctity which is inexorable to sin, and cannot take it as other than it is in all its consequences, and a love which through all these consequences and under the weight of them all, will not let the sinful go. It is in this revelation of the character of God and of His relation to the sin of the world that the forgiveness of sins is revealed. It is not intimated in the air; it is preached, as St. Paul says, 'in this man'; it is mediated to the world through Him and specifically through His death, because it is through Him, and specifically through His death, that we get the knowledge of God's character which evokes penitence and faith, and brings the assurance of His pardon to the heart. From this point of view we may see how to answer the question that is sometimes asked about the relation of Christ's life to His death, or about the relation of both to the Atonement. If we say that what we have in the Atonement is an assurance of God's character, does it not follow at once that Christ's teaching and His life contribute to it as directly as His death? Is it not a signal illustration of the false abstractions which we have so often had cause to censure, when the death of Christ is taken as if it had an existence or a significance apart from His life, or could be identified with the Atonement in a way in which His life could not? I do not think this is so clear. Of course it is Christ Himself who is the Atonement or propitiation--He Himself, as St. John puts it, and not anything, not even His death, into which He does not enter. But it is He Himself, as making to us the revelation of God in relation to sin and to sinners; and apart from death, as that in which the

conscience of the race sees the final reaction of God against evil, this revelation is not fully made. If Christ had done less than die for us, therefore--if He had separated Himself from us, or declined to be one with us, in the solemn experience in which the darkness of sin is sounded and all its bitterness tasted,--there would have been no Atonement. It is impossible to say this of any particular incident in His life, and in so far the unique emphasis laid on His death in the New Testament is justified. But I should go further than this, and say that even Christ's life, taking it as it stands in the Gospels, only enters into the Atonement, and has reconciling power, because it is pervaded from beginning to end by the consciousness of His death. Instead of depriving His death of the peculiar significance Scripture assigns to it, and making it no more than the termination, or at least the consummation, of His life, I should rather argue that the Scriptural emphasis is right, and that His life attains its true interpretation only as we find in it everywhere the power and purpose of His death. There is nothing artificial or unnatural in this. There are plenty of people who never have death out of their minds an hour at a time. They are not cowards, nor mad, nor even sombre: they may have purposes and hopes and gaieties as well as others; but they see life steadily and see it whole, and of all their thoughts the one which has most determining and omnipresent power is the thought of the inevitable end. There is death in all their life. It was not, certainly, as the inevitable end, the inevitable 'debt of nature,' that death was present to the mind of Christ; but if we can trust the Evangelists at all, from the hour of His baptism it was present to His mind as something involved in His vocation; and it was a presence so tremendous that it absorbed everything into itself. 'I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished.' Instead of saying that Christ's life as well as His death contributed to the Atonement--that His active obedience (to use the theological formula) as well as His passive obedience was essential to His propitiation--we should rather say that His life is part of His death: a deliberate and conscious descent, ever deeper and deeper, into the dark valley where at the last hour the last reality of sin was to be met and borne. And if the objection is made that after all this only means that death is the most vital point of life, its intensest focus, I should not wish to make any reply. Our Lord's Passion is His sublimest action--an action so potent that all His other actions are sublated in it, and we know everything when we know that He died for our sins. The desire to bring the life of Christ as well as His death into the Atonement has probably part of its motive in the feeling that when the death is separated from the life it loses moral character: it is reduced to a merely physical incident, which cannot carry such vast significance as the Atonement. Such a feeling certainly exists, and finds expression in many forms. How often, for example, we hear it said that it is not the death which atones, but the spirit in which the Saviour died--not His sufferings which expiate sin, but the innocence, the meekness, the love to man and obedience to God in which they were borne. The Atonement, in short, was a moral achievement, to which physical suffering and death are essentially irrelevant. This is our old enemy, the false abstraction, once more, and that in the most aggressive form. The contrast of physical and moral is made absolute at the very point at which it ceases to exist. As against such absolute distinctions we must hold that if Christ had not really died for us, there would have been no Atonement at all, and on the other hand that what are called His physical sufferings and death have no existence simply as physical: they are essential elements in the moral achievement of the passion. It leads to no truth to say that it is not His death, but the spirit in which He died, that atones for sin: the spirit in which He died has its being in His death, and in nothing else in the world.

It seems to me that what is really wanted here, both by those who seek to co-ordinate Christ's life with His death in the Atonement, and by those who distinguish between His death and the spirit in which He died, is some means of keeping hold of the Person of Christ in His work, and that this is not effectively done apart from the New Testament belief in the Resurrection. There is no doubt that in speaking of the death of Christ as that through which the forgiveness of sins is mediated to us we are liable to think of it as if it were only an event in the past. We take the representation of it in the Gospel and say, "Such and such is the impression which this event produces upon me; I feel in it how God is opposed to sin, and how I ought to be opposed to it; I feel in it how God's love appeals to me to share His mind about sin; and as I yield to this appeal I am at once set free from sin and assured of pardon; this is the only ethical forgiveness; to know this experimentally is to know the Gospel." No one can have any interest in disputing another's obligation to Christ, but it may fairly be questioned whether this kind of obligation to Christ amounts to Christianity in the sense of the New Testament. There is no living Christ here, no coming of the living Christ to the soul, in the power of the Atonement, to bring it to God. But this is what the New Testament shows us. It is He who is the propitiation for our sins--He who died for them and rose again. The New Testament preaches a Christ who was dead and is alive, not a Christ who was alive and is dead. It is a mistake to suppose that the New Testament conception of the Gospel, involving as it does the spiritual presence and action of Christ, in the power of the Atonement, is a matter of indifference to us, and that in all our thinking and preaching we must remain within purely historical limits, if by purely historical limits is meant that our creed must end with the words "crucified, dead, and buried." To preach the Atonement means not only to preach One who bore our sins in death, but One who by rising again from the dead demonstrated the final defeat of sin, and One who comes in the power of His risen life--which means, in the power of the Atonement accepted by God--to make all who commit themselves to Him in faith partakers in His victory. It is not His death, as an incident in the remote past, however significant it may be; it is the Lord Himself, appealing to us in the virtue of His death, who assures us of pardon and restores our souls.

One of the most singular phenomena in the attitude of many modern minds to the Atonement is the disposition to plead against the Atonement what the New Testament represents as its fruits. It is as though it had done its work so thoroughly that people could not believe that it ever needed to be done at all. The idea of fellowship with Christ, for example, is constantly urged against the idea that Christ died for us, and by His death made all mankind His debtors in a way in which we cannot make debtors of each other. The New Testament itself is pressed into the service. It is pointed out that our Lord called His disciples to drink of His cup and to be baptized with His baptism, where the baptism and the cup are figures of His passion; and it is argued that there cannot be anything unique in His experience or service, anything which He does for men which it is beyond the power of His disciples to do also. Or again, reference is made to St. Paul's words to the Colossians: 'Now I rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church'; and it is argued that St. Paul here represents himself as doing exactly what Christ did, or even as supplementing a work which Christ admittedly left imperfect. The same idea is traced where the Christian is represented as called into the fellowship of the Son of God, or more specifically as called to know the fellowship of His sufferings by becoming conformed to His death. It is seen pervading the New Testament in the conception of the Christian as a man in Christ. And to descend from the apostolic age to our own, it has been put by an American theologian into the epigrammatic form that Christ redeems us by

making us redeemers. What, it may be asked, is the truth in all this? and how is it related to what we have already seen cause to assert about the uniqueness of Christ's work in making atonement for sin, or mediating the divine forgiveness to man?

I do not think it is impossible or even difficult to reconcile the two: it is done, indeed, whenever we see that the life to which we are summoned, in the fellowship of Christ, is a life which we owe altogether to Him, and which He does not in the least owe to us. The question really raised is this: Has Jesus Christ a place of His own in the Christian religion? Is it true that there is one Mediator between God and man, Himself man, this man, Christ Jesus? In spite of the paradoxical assertion of Harnack to the contrary, it is not possible to deny, with any plausibility, that this was the mind of Christ Himself, and that it has been the mind of all who call Him Lord. He knew and taught, what they have learned by experience as well as by His word, that all men must owe to Him their knowledge of the Father, their place in the Kingdom of God, and their part in all its blessings. He could not have taught this of any but Himself, nor is it the experience of the Church that such blessings come through any other. Accordingly, when Christ calls on men to drink His cup and to be baptized with His baptism, while He may quite well mean, and does mean, that His life and death are to be the inspiration of theirs, and while He may quite well encourage them to believe that sacrifice on their part, as on His, will contribute to bless the world, He need not mean, and we may be sure He does not mean, that their blood is, like His, the blood of the covenant, or that their sinful lives, even when purged and quickened by His Spirit, could be, like His sinless life, described as the world's ransom. The same considerations apply to the passages quoted from St. Paul, and especially to the words in Col 1:24. The very purpose of the Epistle to the Colossians is to assert the exclusive and perfect mediatorship of Christ, alike in creation and redemption; all that we call being, and all that we call reconciliation, has to be defined by relation to Him, and not by relation to any other persons or powers, visible or invisible; and however gladly Paul might reflect that in his enthusiasm for suffering he was continuing Christ's work, and exhausting some of the afflictions--they were Christ's own afflictions--which had yet to be endured ere the Church could be made perfect, it is nothing short of grotesque to suppose that in this connection he conceived of himself as doing what Christ did, atoning for sin, and reconciling the world to God. All this was done already, perfectly done, done for the whole world; and it was on the basis of it, and under the inspiration of it, that the apostle sustained his enthusiasm for a life of toil and pain in the service of men. Always, where we have Christian experience to deal with, it is the Christ through whom the divine forgiveness comes to us at the Cross--the Christ of the substitutionary Atonement, who bore all our burden alone, and did a work to which we can for ever recur, but to which we did not and do not and never can contribute at all--it is this Christ who constrains us to find our representative with God in Himself, and to become ourselves His representatives to men. It is as we truly represent Him that we can expect our testimony to Him to find acceptance, but that testimony far transcends everything that our service enables men to measure. What is anything that a sinful man, saved by grace, can do for his Lord or for his kind, compared with what the sinless Lord has done for the sinful race? It is true that He calls us to drink of His cup, to learn the fellowship of His sufferings, even to be conformed to His death; but under all the intimate relationship the eternal difference remains which makes Him Lord--He knew no sin, and we could make no atonement. It is the goal of our life to be found in Him; but I cannot understand the man who thinks it more profound to identify himself with Christ and share in the work of redeeming the world, than to abandon himself to Christ and share in the world's experience of being redeemed. And I am very sure that in the

New Testament the last is first and fundamental.

03.00. The Death Of Christ

The Death Of Christ By James Denney In this 9 chapter work on the death of Christ by Denney (Scotch Presbyterian), he presents us thongs from different parts of the NT, Synoptic Gospels, Earliest Christian Preaching, Epistles of Paul, Hebrews, Johannine writings, the importance of the death of Christ in preaching and theology, and the last three chapters are in a separate book also as the Atonement and the modern mind.

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Introduction Detailed Contents - Outline Of Study Chapter 1 : The Synoptic Gospels Chapter 2 : The Earliest Christian Preaching Chapter 3: The Epistles Of St. Paul Chapter 4 : The Epistle To The Hebrews Chapter 5 : The Johannine Writings Chapter 6 : The Importance of the Death of Christ in Preaching and in Theology Chapter 7 : The Atonement And The Modern Mind Chapter 8 : Sin And The Divine Reaction Against It Chapter 9 : Christ And Man In The Atonement

Preface THE first edition of The Death of Christ appeared in 1902. It contained the first six of the nine chapters in this book, and its purpose was to explain, in the light of modern historical study, the place held by the death of Christ in the New Testament, and the interpretation put upon it by the apostolic writers. In its motive, the work was as much evangelical as theological. Assuming that the New Testament presents us with what must be in some sense the norm of Christianity, the writer was convinced that the death of Christ has not in the common Christian mind the place to which its centrality in the New Testament entitles it. It gets less than its due both in ordinary preaching and in ordinary theology. It is not too much to say that there are many indications of aversion to the New Testament presentation of it, and that there are large numbers of people, and even of preachers, whose chief embarrassment in handling the New Testament is that they cannot adjust their minds to its pronouncements on this subject. They are under a constant temptation to evade or to distort what was evidently of critical importance to the first witnesses to the gospel. It was with this in mind that the writer conducted his study of the subject, and while claiming to be impartial and scientific in his treatment of New Testament documents and ideas, he nowhere affected an insensibility he did not feel. He was and remains convinced that the New Testament presents us with a view of Christ's death which is consistent with itself, true to the whole being and relations of God and man as these have been affected by sin, and vital to Christian religion; and that on the discovery and appreciation of this — or if we prefer it so, on the rediscovery and fresh appreciation of it — the future and the power of Christianity depend. Without it we can have no renewal of Christian life and no large or deep restoration of Christian thought. It is quite true that there is a difference between religion and theology, and it may be argued (as the writer himself has argued elsewhere) that it is possible to have the same religion as the apostles without having the same theology; but the distinction is not absolute. In a religion which has at its heart a

historical fact, it is impossible that the meaning of the fact should be a matter of indifference, and the whole question at issue here is the meaning of the fact that Christ died. The chapters in which the New Testament interpretation is examined have been carefully revised, but not essentially modified. A few sentences and paragraphs have been canceled and a few inserted, but in substance the work is what it was before. The Death of Christ, when published, was reviewed from various standpoints, and in particular it led to a considerable correspondence both with acquaintances and strangers which made still clearer to the writer the mental attitude and atmosphere to which the New Testament message has to be addressed. It was with this in view that the last three chapters were written. Originally delivered as lectures to a Summer School of Theology in Aberdeen, they appeared in The Expositor in the course of 1903, and were subsequently published under the title of The Atonement and the Modern Mind. No one could be more sensible than the writer of the disproportion between this title and what it covered; it could only be justified because, such as it was, the book was a real attempt, guided mainly by the correspondence referred to, to help the mind in which we all have and move to reach a sympathetic comprehension of the central truth in the Christian religion. As a rule, names are not mentioned in these chapters, but where opinions are stated or objections given within inverted commas, they are opinions and objections which have really been expressed, and they are given in the words of their authors, whether in print or manuscript. There are no men of straw among them, constructed by the writer merely to be demolished. The close connection of The Atonement and the Modern Mind with The Death of Christ makes them virtually one work, and it seemed desirable, for various reasons, that they should appear together. The present volume contains both. The title of the earlier has been retained for the two in combination, and the publishers have made it possible, by resetting the whole in a slightly different form, to issue the two at the original price of the first. The character and purpose of the book have not been affected by revision. It is not a complete dogmatic study of the subject, but it contributes something to the preliminaries of such a study. It is governed as much by interest in preaching as by interest in theology, and the writer still hopes that it may do something to make evangelists theologians and theologians evangelists. The full table of contents will enable the reader to dispense with an index.

Foreword In the chapel of Trinity College, Glasgow, there is a stained glass window honoring the life and labors of Dr. James Denney. Beside the window on a plaque is inscribed, in part, the following:

James Denney, D. D. (1856- 1917) Supreme alike as scholar,
teacher, administrator,
and man of God,

to whom many owed their souls. In paying tribute to Dr. Denney, Professor A. M. Hunter of Christ's College, Aberdeen, said,

"To scholarship of the first rank [Denney] brought a burning conviction of the truth and adequacy of the Gospel, and he would have no truck with those who, desiring to be in tune with the Zeitgeist, would have watered it down. In all his writing about the Christian faith he sought to be Biblical, real, whole, and clear, and he often declared that he had not the faintest interest in a theology which he could not preach."

Dr. Hunter goes on to point out that James Denney could write on all the chief doctrines of the Christian religion (though he evidenced a weakness when it came to eschatology) “but it was the Atonement which was the center of his thinking.” The cross, Dr. Denney believed was “the hiding place of God’s power and the inspiration of all Christian praise.”

Dr. Denney, however, died in 1917 and there are few today who know anything about him. A brief resume of his life, therefore, is in order.

Born in Paisley, Scotland, James Denney was reared a “Cameronian” or strict Reformed Presbyterian. His father was a deacon in the church, and all the fervor of Presbyterianism’s long fight for freedom flowed through his veins. It is not surprising that, when further disruptions rocked the denomination, John Denney and his family withdrew and, with a large group of loyal independents, joined the Free Church of Scotland. Such zeal and commitment to what was believed to be the truth were passed on to his son James.

Following his graduation from the local academy, James Denney enrolled in the University of Glasgow (1874) where he distinguished himself in both classical literature and philosophy. He graduated with honors and a Master of Arts degree in 1879 and immediately entered the Free Church College, Glasgow, where he had the good fortune to study under Robert S. Candlish, A. B. Bruce, and T. M. Lindsay. In 1883 he graduated with a Bachelor of Divinity degree.

Denney’s only pastorate was at Broughty Ferry (1886- 1897), where he took his young bride, the former Mary Brown. Their life together was one of happy companionship, and when she died in 1907 without bearing any children, James Denney found nothing to replace his keen sense of loss.

Mary Denney contributed much to her husband’s ministry. He was inclined to be authoritarian, and under her kindly encouragement he became more compassionate. In addition, James Denney was disposed by his training to be theologically “liberal,” and through her tender influence he became more evangelical. In fact, it was due to her recommendations that he began reading the writings of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, and the evangelical fervor of this British Baptist preacher radically changed the young Scot’s ministry. One biographer records Denney saying, “Though it is my business to teach, the one thing I covet is to be able to do the work of an evangelist, and that at all events is the work that needs to be done.” With stress upon expository preaching characterizing his ministry at Broughty Ferry, Denney was invited to contribute two commentaries to *The Expositor’s Bible*: “The Epistle to the Thessalonians” (1892) and “The Second Epistle to the Corinthians” (1894). In 1894, James Denney was invited to deliver a series of lectures in theology at the Chicago Theological Seminary. Two things are significant about this invitation. First, Denney was a pastor with a pastor’s heart, yet his abilities had brought him to the attention of those in need of a lecturer in theology; and second, the invitation extended to James Denney gives evidence of his influence beyond the borders of his native Scotland.

Before leaving for the United States, the University of Glasgow honored Denney with a Doctor of Divinity degree. Of Dr. Denney’s lectures at Chicago (later published under the title *Studies in Theology*) Dr. Hunter, writing in 1962, had this to say:

Though forty years have passed since he died, Denney’s work has not lost its relevance or its force. His writing has dated very little. In [him] you will find what you do not always find in our modern theologians — what is in fact one of the first virtues of great theological writing — perfect

lucidity of thought and expression. In honor of his lectureship, the Chicago Theological Seminary conferred on James Denney a further Doctor of Divinity degree. On his return to Scotland, Denney was soon called upon to succeed Dr. Robert S. Candlish as Professor of Systematic and Practical Theology in the Free Church College. Two years later, on the passing of Dr. A. B. Bruce, he was appointed to the chair of New Testament Language Literature, and Theology. Later, in 1915, he was invited to become principal of the college, succeeding Dr. T. M. Lindsay. his premature death brought his illustrious career to an untimely end.

While Professor Denney was at home expounding the text of a given book of the Bible, and was also a capable exegete (in 1900 he contributed a work on "The Epistle to the Romans" to The Expositor's Greek Testament), his greatest contribution was made as a theologian. In this respect, his *Death of Christ* (1902) may be regarded as his magnum opus.

Dr. Denney laid great stress upon Christ's physical sufferings. He emphasized the substitutionary nature of His sacrifice and expounded its effects to the believer with evangelical zeal. Such was his aversion to the teachings of certain mystics on the subject of the Atonement that: he avoided all identification with mystical belief. In spite of this, his work on the death of Christ remains one of the most definitive discussions produced to date. When James Denney died, Dr. H. R. McIntosh of Edinburgh was invited to pen a tribute to him. Here is part of what he wrote for The Expository Times (1917). His article is entitled "Principal James Denney as a Theologian." At the time of his death [he] was at the summit of his power [and] in his passing evangelical religion throughout English-speaking lands has suffered a loss greater, we may say with sober truth, than would have been inflicted by the withdrawal of any other mind.

James Denney deserves to be remembered. His books are his finest memorial. It is hoped that pastors as well as seminarians will purchase and read this excellent treatise, here produced in its unabridged format. Those who do so will find their lives and ministries stimulated and enriched by what this great man of God has to impart.

C. J. Barber

Introduction

Two assumptions must be made by any one who writes on the death of Christ in the New Testament. The first is, that there is such a thing as a New Testament; and the second, that the death of Christ is a subject which has a real place and importance in it. The first may be said to be the more important of the two, for the denial of it carries with it the denial of the other. At the present moment there is a strong tendency in certain quarters to depreciate the idea of a New Testament in the sense in which it has rightly or wrongly been established in the Church. It is pointed out that the books which compose our New Testament are in no real sense a unity. They were not written with a view to forming the volume in which we now find them, nor with any view of being related to each other at all. At first, indeed, they had no such relation. They are merely the chief fragments that have survived from a primitive Christian literature which must have been indefinitely larger, not to say richer. The unity which they now possess, and in virtue of which they constitute the New Testament, does not belong to them inherently; it is factitious; it is the artificial, and to a considerable extent the illusive result of the action of the Church in bestowing upon them canonical authority. The age to which they historically belong is an age at which the Church had

no 'New Testament,' and hence what is called New Testament theology is an exhibition of the manner in which Christians thought before a New Testament existed. As a self-contradictory thing, therefore, it ought to be abolished. The 'dogma' of the New Testament, and the factitious unity which it has created, ought to be superseded, and instead of New Testament theology we should aim at a history of primitive Christian thought and life. It would not be necessary for the purposes of such a history to make any assumptions as to the unity of the 'New Testament' books; but though they would not form a holy island in the sea of history, they would gain in life and reality in proportion as the dogmatic tie which binds them to each other was broken, and their living relations to the general phenomena of history revealed. 1

There is not only some plausibility in this but some truth: all I am concerned to point out here is that it is not the whole truth, and possibly not the main truth. The unity which belongs to the books of the New Testament, whatever be its value, is certainly not fortuitous. The books did not come together by chance. They are not held together simply by the art of the bookbinder. It would be truer to say that they gravitated toward each other in the course of the first century of the Church's life, and imposed their unity on the Christian mind, than that the Church imposed on them by statute — for when 'dogma' is used in the abstract sense which contrasts it with fact or history, this is what it means — a unity to which they were inwardly strange. That they are at one in some essential respects is obvious. They have at least unity of subject, they are all concerned with Jesus Christ, and with the manifestation of God's redeeming love to men in Him. There is even a sense in which we may say there is unity of authorship; for all the books of the New Testament are works of faith. Whether the unity goes further, and if so how far, are questions not to be settled beforehand. It may extend to modes of thought, to fundamental beliefs or convictions, in regard to Christ and the meaning of His presence and work in the world. It is not assumed here that it does, but neither is it assumed that it does not. It is not assumed, with regard to the particular subject before us, that in the different New Testament writings we shall find independent, divergent, or inconsistent interpretations of Christ's death. The result of an unprejudiced investigation may be to show that on this subject the various writings which go to make up our New Testament are profoundly at one, and even that their oneness on this subject, a oneness not imposed nor artificial, but essential and inherent, justifies against the criticism referred to above the common Christian estimate of the New Testament as a whole.

Without entering on abstract or general grounds into a discussion in which no abstract or general conclusion can be reached, it may be permitted to say, in starting, that in the region with which the New Testament deals we should be on our guard against pressing too strongly some current distinctions which, within their limits, are real enough, but which, if carried beyond their limits, make everything in the New Testament unintelligible. The most important of these is the distinction of historical and dogmatic, or of historico-religious and dogmatico-religious. If the distinction between historical and dogmatic is pressed, it runs back into the distinction between thing and meaning, or between fact and theory; and this, as we shall have occasion to see, is a distinction which it is impossible to press. There is a point at which the two sides in such contrast pass into each other. He who does not see the meaning does not see the thing; or to use the more imposing words, he who refuses to take a 'dogmatic' view proves by doing so that he falls short of a completely 'historical' one. The same kind of consideration has sometimes to be applied to the distinction of Biblical, or 'New Testament' and 'systematic' theology. Biblical or New Testament

theology deals with the thoughts, or the mode of thinking, of the various New Testament writers; systematic theology is the independent construction of Christianity as a whole in the mind of a later thinker. Here again there is a broad and valid distinction, but not an absolute one. It is the Christian thinking of the first century in the one case, and of the twentieth, let us say, in the other; but in both cases there is Christianity and there is thinking, and if there is truth in either there is bound to be a place at which the distinction disappears. It does not follow from the distinction, with the inevitable limitations, that nothing in the New Testament can be accepted by a modern mind simply as it stands. It does not follow that nothing in St. Paul or St. John — nothing in their interpretation of the death of Jesus, for example — has attained the character of finality. There may be something which has. The thing to be dealt with is one, and the mind, through the centuries, is one, and even in the first century it may have struck to a final truth which the twentieth will not transcend. Certainly we cannot deny this beforehand on the ground that Biblical theology is one thing and Systematic or Philosophical theology another. They may be taught in separate rooms in a theological school, but, except to the pedant or the dilettante, the distinction between them is a vanishing one. And the same may be said, finally, about the distinction of matter and form. There is such a distinction it is possible to put the same matter in different forms. But it does not follow that the form in which a truth or an experience is put by a New Testament writer is always unequal to the matter, or that the matter must always be fused again and cast into a new mold before it can be appropriated by us. The higher the reality with which we deal, the less the distinction of matter and form holds. If Christianity brings us into contact with the ultimate truth and reality, we may find that the 'form' into which it was cast at first is more essential to the matter than we had supposed. Just as it would be a rash act to venture to extract the matter of Lycidas, and to exhibit it in a more adequate form, it may be a rash act to venture to tell us what St. Paul or St. John meant in a form more equal to the meaning than the apostles themselves could supply. It is not necessary to say that it would be, but only that it may be. The mind seems to gain freedom and lucidity by working with such distinctions, but if we forget that they are our own distinctions, and that in the real world, in the very nature of things, a point is reached sooner or later at which they disappear, we are certain to be led astray. I do not argue against drawing them or using them, but against making them so absolute that in the long- run one of them must cease to be true, and forfeit all its rights in favor of the other. The chief use, for instance, to which many writers put them is to appeal to the historical against the dogmatic; the historical is employed to drive the dogmatic from the field. To do the reverse would of course be as bad, and my object in these introductory remarks is to deprecate both mistakes. It does not matter, outside the class- room, whether an interpretation is called historical or dogmatic, historico- religious or dogmatico- religious; it does not matter whether we put it under the head of Biblical or of philosophical theology; what we want to know is whether it is true. In the truth such distinctions are apt to disappear.

Without assuming, therefore, the dogmatic unity of the New Testament, either in its representation of Christianity as a whole, or of the death of Christ in particular, we need not feel precluded from approaching it with a presumption that it will exhibit some kind of coherence. Granting that the Church canonized the books, consciously or unconsciously, it did not canonize them for nothing. It must have felt that they really represented and therefore safeguarded the Christian faith, and as the Church of the early days was acutely conscious of the distinction between what did and what did not belong to Christianity, it must have had some sense at least of a consistency in its Christian Scriptures. 2 They did not represent for it two gospels or ten, but one. The view

Christians took of the books they valued was instinctively dogmatic without ceasing to be historical; or perhaps we may say, with a lively sense of their historical relations the Church had an instinctive feeling of the dogmatic import of the books in its New Testament. It is in this attitude, which is not blind to either side of the distinction, yet does not let either annul the other, that we ought to approach the study of New Testament problems.

It is hardly necessary to prove that in the New Testament the death of Christ is a real subject. It is distinctly present to the mind of New Testament writers, and they have much to say upon it. It is treated by them as a subject of central and permanent importance to the Christian faith, and it is incredible that it should have filled the place it does fill in the New Testament had it ever been regarded as of trifling consequence for the understanding, the acceptance, or the preaching of the Gospel. As little is it necessary to say that in using the expression 'the death of Christ,' we are not speaking of a thing, but of an experience. Whether we view it as action or as passion, whatever enters into personality has the significance and the worth of personality. The death of Christ in the New Testament is the death of one who is alive for evermore. To every New Testament writer Christ is the Lord, the living and exalted Lord, and it is impossible for them to think of His death except as an experience the result or virtue of which is perpetuated in His risen life. Nevertheless, Christ died. His death is in some sense the center and consummation of His work. It is because of it that His risen life is the hope which it is to sinful men; and it needs no apology, therefore, if one who thinks that it has less than its proper place in preaching and in theology endeavors to bring out as simply as possible its place and meaning in the New Testament. If our religion is to be Christian in any sense of the term which history will justify, it can never afford to ignore what, to say the least of it, is the primary confession of Christian faith. The starting-point in our investigation must be the life and teaching of Jesus Himself. For this we shall depend in the first instance on the synoptic gospels. Next will come an examination of primitive Christian teaching as it bears on our subject. For this we can only make use of the early chapters in Acts, and with a reserve, which will be explained at the proper place, of the First Epistle of Peter. It will then be necessary to go into greater detail, in proportion as we have more material at command, in regard to the teaching of St. Paul. Of all New Testament writers he is the one who has most deliberately and continually reflected on Christ's death; if there is a conscious theology of it anywhere it is with him. A study of the epistle to the Hebrews and of the Johannine writings — Apocalypse, Gospel, and Epistle — will bring the subject proper to a close; but I shall venture to add, in a concluding chapter, some reflections on the importance of the New Testament conception of Christ's death alike to the evangelist and the theologian. As typical instances of this mode of thought, reference may be made to Wrede's *Ueber Aufgabe und Methode der sogenannten neutestamentlichen Theologie*, and G. Kruger's *Das Dogma vom Neuen Testament*.

This, of course, does not exclude the idea that the native vigor of Christianity was shown in its power to assimilate as well as to reject extraneous matter.

03.000. Detailed Contents - Outline Of Study

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03.01. Chapter 1 : The Synoptic Gospels

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ALL the gospels describe the sufferings and death of Christ with a minuteness which has no parallel in their narratives of other events of His life, and they all, to a certain extent, by references to the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy or otherwise, indicate their sense of its meaning and importance. This, however, reveals the mind of the evangelists rather than that of the Lord. It is in His life, rather than in the record of His death itself, that we must look for indications of His mind. But here we are at once confronted with certain preliminary difficulties. Quite apart from the question whether it is possible at all to know what Jesus thought or spoke about His death — a question which it is taken for granted is to be answered in the affirmative ¹ — it has been asserted, largely upon general grounds, that Jesus cannot have entered on His ministry with the thought of His death present to Him; that He must, on the contrary, have begun His work with brilliant hopes of success; that only as these hopes gradually but irrevocably faded away did first the possibility and then the certainty of a tragic issue dawn upon Him; that it thus became necessary for Him to reconcile Himself to the idea of a violent death, and that in various ways, which can more or less securely be traced in the gospels, He did so; although, as the prayer in Gethsemane shows, there seemed a possibility to Him, even to the last, that a change might come, and the will of the Father be done in some less tragic fashion. This is what is meant by an historical as opposed to a dogmatic reading of the life of Jesus, a dogmatic reading being one which holds that Jesus came into the world in order to die; and it is insisted on as necessary to secure for that life the reality of a genuine human experience. To question or impeach or displace this interpretation is alleged to be docetism; it gives us a phantom as a Savior instead of the man Christ Jesus. In spite of its plausibility, I venture to urge that this reading of the gospels requires serious qualification. It is almost as much an a priori interpretation of the history of Jesus as if it were deduced from the Nicene creed. It is derived from the word 'historical,' in the sense which that word would bear if it were applied to an ordinary human life, just as abstractly as another reading of the facts might be derived from the words 'ομοούσιον τῷ πατρί.' If any one wrote a life of Jesus, in which everything was subordinated to the idea that Jesus was 'of one substance with the Father,' it would no doubt be described as dogmatic, but it is quite as possible to be 'dogmatic' in history as in theology. It is a dogma, and an unreasoned dogma besides, that because the life of Jesus is historical, it neither admits nor requires for its interpretation any idea or formula that cannot be used in the interpretation of the common life of man. The Christian religion rests on the fact that there is not only an identity but a difference between His life and ours; and we cannot allow the difference (and with it the Christian religion) to be abolished a priori by a 'dogmatic' use of the term 'historical.' We must turn to our historical documents — the gospels — and when we do, there is much to give us pause.

All the gospels, we remark in the first place, begin with an account of the baptism of Jesus. Whatever may be doubtful about this it cannot be doubtful that it was the occasion of a great spiritual experience to Jesus. Ideas, as Dr. Johnson says, must be given through something; and

Jesus, we must believe, gave His disciples an idea of what His experience at baptism was in the narratives which we now read in the gospels. The sum of that experience is often put by saying that He came then to the consciousness of His Sonship. But the manner in which Jesus Himself puts it is much more revealing. 'A voice came from heaven, Thou art My Son, the Beloved, in Thee I am well pleased.' A voice from heaven does not mean a voice from the clouds, but a voice from God; and it is important to notice that the voice from God speaks in familiar Old Testament words. It does not come unmediated, but mediated through psalm and prophecy. It is through the absorption of Old Testament Scripture that Jesus comes; to the consciousness of what He is; and the Scriptures which He uses to convey His experience to the disciples are Psa 2:1-12, and Isa 42:1-25. The first words of the heavenly voice are from the Psalm, the next from the prophet. Nothing could be more suggestive than this. The Messianic consciousness in Jesus from the very beginning was one with the consciousness of the Servant of the Lord. The King, to whom Jehovah says, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee (Psa 2:7), 2 is at the same time (in the mind of Jesus) that mysterious Servant of Jehovah — 'My beloved, in whom I am well pleased' — whose tragic yet glorious destiny is adumbrated in the second Isaiah (Isa 42:1 ff.). It is not necessary to inquire how Jesus could combine beforehand two lines of anticipation which at the first glance seem so inconsistent with each other; the point is, that on the evidence before us, which seems to the writer as indisputable as anything in the gospels, He did combine them, and therefore cannot have started on His ministry with the cloudless hopes which are sometimes ascribed to Him. However 'unhistorical' it might seem on general grounds, on the ground of the evidence which is here available we must hold that from the very beginning of His public work the sense of something tragic in His destiny — something which in form might only become definite with time, but in substance was sure — was present to the mind of Jesus. When it did emerge in definite form it brought necessities and appeals along with it which were not there from the beginning; it brought demands for definite action, for assuming a definite attitude, for giving more or less explicit instruction; but it did not bring a monstrous and unanticipated disappointment to which Jesus had to reconcile Himself as best He could. It was not a brutal dementi to all His hopes. It had a necessary relation to His consciousness from the beginning, just as surely as His consciousness from the beginning had a necessary relation to the prophetic conception of the Servant of the Lord. This is confirmed if we look from the baptism to that which in all the gospels is closely connected with it, and is of equal importance as illustrating our Lord's conception of Himself and His work — the temptation. Nothing can be more gratuitous than to ascribe this wonderful narrative to the 'productive activity' of the Church, and to allege that the temptations which it records are those which Jesus encountered during His career, and that they are antedated for effect, or for catechetical convenience. Psychologically, the connection of the temptations with the baptism is strikingly true, and two of the three are connected even for many with the divine voice, Thou art My Son (Mat 3:17 and Mat 4:3, Mat 4:6). The natural supposition is that Jesus spoke often to His disciples of a terrible spiritual experience which followed the sublime experience of the baptism — sometimes without detail, as in Mark, who mentions only a prolonged conflict with Satan, during which Jesus was sustained by the ministry of angels; sometimes, as in Matthew and Luke, with details which gave insight into the nature of the conflict. It does not matter that the temptations which are here described actually assailed Jesus at later stages in His life. Of course they did. They are the temptations of the Christ, and they not only assailed Him at particular moments, some of which we can still identify (Mat 16:22 f. and John 6:15), they must in

some way have haunted Him incessantly. 3 But they were present to His mind from the outset of His career; that is the very meaning of the temptation story, standing where it stands. The Christ sees the two paths that lie before Him, and He chooses at the outset, in spiritual conflict, that which He knows will set Him in irreconcilable antagonism to the hopes and expectations of those to whom He is to appeal. A soul which sees its vocation shadowed out in the Servant of the Lord, which is driven of the Spirit into the wilderness to face the dreadful alternatives raised by that vocation, and which takes the side which Jesus took in conflict with the enemy, does not enter on its life-work with any superficial illusions: it has looked Satan and all he can do in the face; it is prepared for conflict, it may shrink from death, when death confronts it in the path of its vocation, as hideous and unnatural, but it cannot be startled by it as by an unthought of, unfamiliar thing. The possibility, at least, of a tragic issue to His work — when we remember the Servant of the Lord, far more than the possibility — belongs to the consciousness of Jesus from the first. Not that His ultimate triumph is compromised, but He knows before He begins that it will not be attained by any primrose path. If there was a period in His life during which He had other thoughts, it is antecedent to that at which we have any knowledge of Him.

These considerations justify us in emphasizing, in relation to our subject, not merely the fact of Jesus' baptism, but its meaning. It was a baptism of repentance with a view to remission of sins, and there is undoubtedly something paradoxical, at a first glance, in the idea of Jesus submitting to such a baptism. Neither here nor elsewhere in the gospel does He betray any consciousness of sin. The opinion of a recent writer on the life of Jesus, 4 who ascribes to the fragments of the gospel according to the Hebrews an authority equal, and at this point superior, to that of the canonical gospels, is not likely to find many supporters. Jerome tells us that in this gospel, which in his day was still used by the Nazarenes, and could be seen in the library at Caesarea, the narrative ran, 'Behold the mother of the Lord and His brethren said to Him: John Baptist is baptizing with a view to remission of sins' let us go and be baptized by him. But He said to them, 'What sin have I done that I should go and be baptized by him? Unless, indeed, this very word I have spoken is ignorantia, ' i. e., a sin of ignorance or inadvertence (cf. *ajgnōhēma*, Heb 9:17, and *hēn;v* in Old Testament). 5 We should have to suppose in this case that Jesus went up to Jordan half reluctantly, His first thought being that a baptism like John's could mean nothing to Him, His next that possibly this proud thought, or the utterance of it, indicated that He might have something to repent of after all, and more perhaps than He knew. This mingling of what might not unfairly be called petulance with a sudden access of misgiving, as of one who was too sure of himself and yet not quite sure, is as unlike as anything could be to the simplicity and truth of Jesus; 6 and surely it needs no proof that it is another mood than this to which the heavens are opened, and on which divine assurance and divine strength are bestowed. We must abide by the canonical narratives as consistent in themselves, and consistent with the New Testament as a whole. What we see there is Jesus, who, according to all apostolic testimony, and according to the suggestion of the Baptist himself in Mat 3:14, knew no sin, submitting to a baptism which is defined as a baptism of repentance. It would not have been astonishing if Jesus had come from Galilee to baptize along with John, if He had taken His stand by John's side confronting the people; the astonishing thing is that being what He was He came to be baptized, and took His stand side by side with the people. He identified Himself with them. As far as the baptism could express it, He made all that was theirs His. It is as though He had looked on them under the oppression of their sin, and said, 'On Me let all that burden, all that responsibility descend. ' The key to the act is to be found in the great

passage in Isa 53:1-12 in which the vocation of the Servant of the Lord, which, as we have seen, was present to our Lord's mind at the moment, is most amply unfolded. The deepest word in that chapter, He was numbered with the transgressors, is expressly applied to our Lord by Himself at a later period (Luk 22:37); and however mysterious that word may be when we try to define it by relation to the providence and redemption of God — however appalling it may seem to render it as St. Paul does, Him who knew no sin, God made to be sin for us — here in the baptism we see not the word but the thing: Jesus numbering Himself with the transgressors, submitting to be baptized with their baptism, identifying Himself with them in their relation to God as sinners, making all their responsibilities His own. It was 'a great act of loving communion with our misery,' and in that hour, in the will and act of Jesus, the work of atonement was begun. It was no accident that now, and not at some other hour, the Father's voice declared Him the beloved Son, the chosen One in whom His soul delighted. For in so identifying Himself with sinful men, in so making their last and most dreadful responsibilities His own, Jesus approved Himself the true Son of the Father, the true Servant and Representative of Him whose name from of old is Redeemer. 7 It is impossible to have this in mind, and to remember the career which the fifty- third chapter of Isaiah sets before the Servant of the Lord, without feeling that from the moment He entered on His ministry our Lord's thoughts of the future must have been more in keeping with the reality than those which are sometimes ascribed to Him as alone consistent with a truly human career. His career was truly His own as well as truly human, and the shadow of the world's sin lay on it from the first. 8 Starting from this point, we may now go on to examine the facts as they are put before us in the gospels.

It is only, indeed, after the great day of Caesarea Philippi, on which Jesus accepts from the lips of His disciples the confession of Messiahship, that He begins expressly to teach the necessity of His death. But there are indications earlier than this that it was not alien to His thoughts, as indeed there was much to prompt the thought of it. There was the experience of ancient prophets, to which He refers from the sermon on the mount, at the opening of His ministry (Mat 5:10-12), to the great denunciation of the Pharisees at its close (Mat 23:37). There was the fate of John the Baptist, which, though the precise date of it is uncertain, was felt by Jesus to be parallel to His own (Mark 9:12-13). There was the sense underlying all His early success, to speak of it in such language, of an irreconcilable antipathy in His adversaries, of a temper which would incur the guilt of eternal sin rather than acknowledge His claims (Mark 3:20-30); there was the consciousness, going back, if we can trust the evangelic narrative at all, to very early days, that the most opposite parties were combining to destroy Him (Mark 3:6). And there is one pathetic word in which the sense of the contrast between the present and the future comes out with moving power.

'Can the children of the bride- chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. But days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in that day' (Mark 2:19 f.). The force of this exquisite word has been evaded in two ways.

(1) Hollmann 9 has argued that Mark 5:20, in which the taking away of the bridegroom is spoken of, is not really a word of Jesus, but due to the productive activity of the Church. It is irrelevant in the circumstances, and it is only made possible by the parable of Jesus being treated as an allegory. All that is apposite to the occasion is the first clause, 'Can the children of the bride-chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them?' But the allegory, which is thus used to discredit Mat 5:20, must, as Wellhausen has fairly pointed out, be assumed if we are to get any pertinent

meaning even for Mat 5:19; and few will follow him in expunging both verses alike. 10

(2) It has been argued that the words do not necessarily refer to a violent or premature or unnatural death, but merely to the parting which is inevitable in the case of all human relations, however joyful they may be, and which perhaps suggests itself the more readily the more joyful they are. 11 But there is nothing elsewhere in the words of Jesus so sentimental and otiose as this. He does not aim at cheap pathetic effects, like the modern romance writers, who studiously paint the brightness and gaiety of life against the omnipresent black background of death. The taking away of the bridegroom from the bridal party is not the universal experience of man, applied to an individual case; it is something startling, tragic, like sudden storm in a summer sky; and it is as such that it is present to the mind of Jesus as a figure of His own death. Even in the Galilean springtime, when His fortune seems to rise like the rising tide, there is this sad presentiment at His heart, and once at least He suffers it to break through.

It is not possible, for critical reasons, to insist in the same way on the saying about being three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly (Mat 12:40); in the parallel passage in Luk 11:29 f. the sign of Jonah must be interpreted without any such reference to the fortunes of Jesus. But even if Jesus did make an allusion of this sort to the issue of His life — an allusion which none of His hearers could understand — it does not carry us any way into the understanding of His death. It only suggests that it is not a final defeat, but has the true victory of His cause beyond it. What He came to do will be effectively done, not before He dies, but after He has come again through death. And this is the only sign which His enemies can have. 12 But leaving these allusive references to His death, let us proceed to those in which it is the express subject of our Lord's teaching.

All the synoptics introduce it, in this sense, at the same point (Mark 8:31, Mat 16:21 and Luk 9:22). Matthew lays a peculiar emphasis on the date, using it to mark the division of his gospel into two great parts. 'From that time Jesus began,' he says in Mat 4:17, 'to preach and to say — Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' 'From that time,' he says in Mat 16:21, 'Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go up to Jerusalem and be killed.' A comparison of the evangelists justifies us in saying broadly that a new epoch in our Lord's ministry had now begun. His audience is not so much the multitudes as the twelve; His method is not so much preaching as teaching; His subject is not so much the Kingdom as Himself, and in particular His death. All the evangelists mention three occasions on which He made deliberate and earnest efforts to initiate the disciples into His thoughts (Mark 8:31, Mark 9:31 and Mark 10:32, with parallels in Matthew and Luke). Mark, especially, whose narrative is fundamental, lays stress on the continued and repeated attempts He made to familiarize them with what was drawing near (notice the imperfects *ejdi>dasken* in Mark 9:31). There is no reason whatever to doubt this general representation. It is mere wantonness to eliminate from the narrative one or two of the three passages on the ground that they are but duplicates or triplicates of the same thing. In Mark, especially, they are distinctly characterized by the varying attitude of the disciples. Further, in the first we have the presumptuous protest of Peter, which guarantees the historicity of the whole, if anything could. In the second the disciples are silent. They could not make him out (*higno>oun to< rJh~ma*), and with the remembrance of the overwhelming rebuke which Peter had drawn down on himself, they were afraid to put any question to Him (9: 82). The third is attached to that never- to- be- forgotten incident in which, as they were on the way to Jerusalem, Jesus took the lead in some startling

manner, so that they followed in amazement and fear. If anything in the gospels has the stamp of real and live recollection upon it, it is this. It is necessary to insist on this repeated instruction of the disciples by Jesus as a fact, quite apart from what He was able to teach or they to learn. It is often said that the death of Christ has a place in the epistles out of all proportion to that which it has in the gospels. This is hardly the fact, even if the space were to be estimated merely by the number of words devoted to it in the gospels and epistles respectively; but it is still less the fact when we remember that that which, according to the gospels themselves, characterized the last months of our Lord's life was a deliberate and thrice-repeated attempt to teach His disciples something about His death. The critical questions which have been raised as to the contents of these passages need not here detain us. It has been suggested that they must have become more detailed in the telling — that unconsciously and involuntarily the Church put into the lips of the Lord words which were only supplied to its own mind by its knowledge of what actually took place — that the references to mocking, scourging, spitting, in particular, could not have been so explicit — above all, that the resurrection on the third day must, if spoken of at all, have been veiled in some figurative form which baffled the disciples at the moment. It has been suggested, on the other hand, that it may have been the idea of a resurrection on the third day, and not on the familiar great day at the end of all things, which put them out. It may not be possible, and it is certainly not necessary, to say beforehand that there is nothing in any of these suggestions. ¹³ But one may hold sincerely, and with good grounds, that there is very little in them, and that even that little is persuasive rather for dogmatic than for historical reasons. Surely we cannot imagine Jesus iterating and reiterating (as we know He did), with the most earnest desire to impress and instruct His followers, such vague, elusive, impalpable hints of what lay before Him as some critics would put in the place of what they regard, for extra- historical reasons, as impossibly definite predictions. Jesus must have had something entirely definite and sayable to say, when He tried so persistently to get it apprehended. He did not live in cloudland; what He spoke of was the sternest of realities; and for whatever reason His disciples failed to understand Him, it cannot have been that He talked to them incessantly and importunately in shadowy riddles, the thing could not be done. As far, however, as our present purpose is concerned, it is not affected by any reasonable opinion we may come to on the critical questions here in view. The one point in which all the narratives agree is that Jesus taught that He must go up to Jerusalem and die; and the one question it is of importance to answer is, What is meant by this must (dei~)?

There are obviously two meanings which it might have. It might signify that His death was inevitable; the must being one of outward constraint. No doubt, in this sense it was true that He must die. The hostile forces which were arrayed against Him were irreconcilable, and were only waiting their time. Sooner or later it would come, and they would crush Him without remorse. But it might also signify that His death was indispensable, the must being one of inward constraint. It might signify that death was something He was bound to accept and contemplate if the work He came to do was to be done, if the vocation with which he was called was to be fulfilled. These two senses, of course, are not incompatible; but there may be a question as to their relation to each other. Most frequently the second is made to depend upon the first. Jesus, we are told, came to see that His death was inevitable, such were the forces arrayed against Him; but being unable, as the well- beloved Son of the Father, merely to submit to the inevitable, merely to encounter death as a blind fate, He reconciled Himself to it by interpreting it as indispensable, as something which properly entered into His work and contributed to its success. It became not a thing to endure, but

a thing to do. The passion was converted into the sublimest of actions. We do not need to say that this reasoning has nothing in it; but it is too abstract, and the relation in which the two necessities are put to one another does not answer to the presentation of the facts in the gospels. The inward necessity which Jesus recognized for His death was not simply the moral solution which He had discovered for the fatal situation in which He found Himself. An inward necessity is identical with the will of God, and the will of God for Jesus is expressed, not primarily in outward conditions, but in that Scripture which is for Him the word of God. We have seen already that from the very beginning our Lord's sense of His own vocation and destiny was essentially related to that of the Servant of the Lord in the Book of Isaiah, and it is there that the ultimate source of the dei- is to be found. The divine necessity for a career of suffering and death is primary; it belongs, in however vague and undefined a form, to our Lord's consciousness of what He is and what He is called to do; it is not deduced from the malignant necessities by which He is encompassed; it rises up within Him, in divine power, to encounter these outward necessities and subdue them. This connection of ideas is confirmed when we notice that what Jesus began to teach His disciples is the doctrine of a suffering Messiah. As soon as they have confessed Him to be the Christ, He begins to give them this lesson. The necessity of His death, in other words, is not a dreary, incomprehensible somewhat that He is compelled to reckon with by untoward circumstances; for Him it is given, so to speak, with the very conception of His person and His work. When He unfolds Messiahship it contains death. This was the first and last thing He taught about it, the first and last thing He wished His disciples to learn. In Mat 16:21, Westcott and Hort read, 'From that time began Jesus Christ to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things, ' while Mark and Luke, in the corresponding passage, speak of the Son of Man. The official expressions, or, to use a less objectionable term, the names which denote the vocation of Jesus, 'the Christ' and 'the Son of Man, ' show that in this lesson He is speaking out of the sense of his vocation, and not merely out of a view of His historical circumstances. The necessity to suffer and die, which was involved in His vocation, and the dim sense of which belonged to His very being, so that without it He would not have been what He was, was now beginning to take definite shape in His mind. As events made plain the forces with which He had to deal, He could see more clearly how the necessity would work itself out. He could go beyond that early word about the taking away of the bridegroom, and speak of Jerusalem, and of rejection by the elders and chief priests and scribes. And this consideration justifies us in believing that these details in the evangelic narrative are historical. But the manner in which the necessity did work itself out, and the greater or less detail with which, from a greater or less distance, Jesus could anticipate its course, do not affect in the least the character of that necessity itself. It is the necessity involved in the divine vocation of one in whom the Old Testament prophecy of the Servant of the Lord is to be fulfilled.

It must be admitted that in none of the three summary references which the evangelists make to our Lord's teaching on His death do they say anything of explicitly theological import. They tell us (1) that it was necessary — in the sense, we now assume, which has just been explained;

(2) that it should be attended by such and such circumstances of pain and ignominy; and (3) that it should be speedily followed by His resurrection. The repeated assurances that His disciples could not understand Him must surely refer to the meaning and necessity which He wished them to see in His death. They cannot but have understood His words about dying and rising, unless, as has been suggested already, the date of the rising puzzled them. All that remains is to suppose that

the incomprehensible element in the new teaching of Jesus was the truths He wished to convey to them about the necessity, the meaning, the purpose, the power, of His death. But if we observe the unanimity with which every part of the early Church taught that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures — if, as will be shown below, we see how in Acts, in Peter, in Hebrews, in John, in Paul, passages referring to the Servant of the Lord, and especially to His bearing sin, and being numbered with the transgressors, are applied to Christ — it becomes very difficult to believe that this consent, in what might seem by no means obvious, can have any other source than the teaching of Jesus Himself. Hollmann, indeed, makes a remarkable attempt to prove that Jesus never applied the fifty- third chapter of Isaiah to Himself except in Luk 22:37, and that there, when He says (with singular emphasis), ‘that which is written must be fulfilled in Me, — the word’ and He was numbered with transgressors, ‘He is not thinking of His death at all as having expiatory value in relation to sin. He is only thinking of the dreary fact that His countrymen are going to treat Him as a criminal instead of as the Holy One of God. 14 But there is surely no reason why the most superficial sense of profound words, a sense, too, which evacuates them of all their original associations, should be the only one allowed to Jesus. If there is any truth at all in the connection we have asserted between His own consciousness of what He was and the Old Testament conception of the Servant of the Lord, it is surely improbable that He applied to Himself the most wonderful expression in Isa 53:1-12. in a shallow verbal fashion, and put from Him the great meanings of which the chapter is full, and which the New Testament writers embrace with one accord. On the strength of that quotation, and of the consent of the New Testament as a whole, which has no basis but in Jesus, we are entitled to argue from the dei- of the evangelists — in other words, from the divine necessity Jesus saw in His death — that what He sought in those repeated lessons to induce His disciples to do was to recognize in the Messiah the person who should fulfill the prophecy of Isa 53:1-12. The ideal in their minds was something far other than this, and there is no dead lift so heavy as that which is required to change an ideal. We do not wonder that at the moment it was too much for Him and for them. We do not wonder that at the moment they could not turn, one is tempted to say bodily round, so as to see and understand what He was talking about. And just as little do we wonder that when the meaning of His words broke on them later, it was with that overwhelming power which made the thing that had once baffled them the sum and substance of their gospel. The center of gravity in their world changed, and their whole being swung round into equilibrium in a new position. Their inspiration came from what had once alarmed, grieved, discomfited them. The word they preached was the very thing which had once made them afraid to speak. But we are not limited, in investigating our Lord’s teaching on His death, to inferences more or less secure. There are at least two great words in the gospels which expressly refer to it — the one contained in His answer to James and John when they asked the places at His right hand and His left in His kingdom, the other spoken at the Supper. We now proceed to consider these.

Part of the difficulty we always have in interpreting Scripture is the want of context; we do not know what were the ideas in the minds of the original speakers or hearers to which the words that have been preserved for us were immediately related. This difficulty has perhaps been needlessly aggravated, especially in the first of the passages with which we are concerned. Yet the context here, even as we have it, is particularly suggestive. Jesus and His disciples are on the way to Jerusalem, when Jesus takes the start of them, apparently under some overpowering impulse, and they follow in amazement and fear (Mark 10:32). He takes them aside once more, and makes

the third of those deliberate attempts to which reference has already been made, to familiarize them with His death.

'Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him unto the Gentiles: and they shall mock Him, and shall spit upon Him and scourge Him, and shall kill Him; and after three days He shall rise again' (Mark 10:33 f.).

It was while Jesus was in the grip of such thoughts — setting His face steadfastly, with a rapt and solemn passion, to go to Jerusalem — that James and John came to Him with their ambitious request. How was He to speak to them so that they might understand Him? As Bengel finely says, He was dwelling in His passion; He was to have others on His right hand and on His left before that; and their minds were in another world. How was He to bridge the gulf between their thoughts and his own? 'Are ye able, ' He asks, 'to drink the cup which I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?' The cup and the baptism are poetic terms in which the destiny which awaits Him is veiled and transfigured. They are religious terms, in which that destiny is represented, in all its awfulness, as something involved in the will of God, and involving in itself a consecration. The cup is put into His hand by the Father, and if the baptism is a flood of suffering in which He is overwhelmed, it has through the very name which He uses to describe it the character of a religious act assigned to it; He goes to be baptized with it, as He takes the cup which the Father gives Him to drink. That the reference in both figures is to His death, and to His death in that tragic aspect which has just been described in the immediately preceding verses, is not open to doubt. And just as little is it open to doubt that in the next scene in the gospel — that in which Jesus speaks to the disciples who were indignant with James and John for trying to steal a march upon them — a reference to His death is so natural as to be inevitable. True greatness, He tells them, does not mean dominance, but service. That is the law for all, even for the highest. It is by supremacy in service that the King in the Kingdom of God wins his place. 'Even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. '

It is not inept to insist on the sequence and connection of ideas throughout this passage, because when it is really understood it puts the last words — 'to give His life a ransom for many' — beyond assault. It is often asserted that these words are an indication of Pauline influence in the second evangelist. Let us hope that one may be forgiven if he says frankly that this is an assertion which he cannot understand. The words are perfectly in place. They are in line with everything that precedes. They are words in the only key, of the only fullness, which answers to our Lord's absorption at the time in the thought of His death. A theological aversion to them may be conceived, but otherwise there is no reason whatever to call them in question. There is no critical evidence against them, and their psychological truth is indubitable. So far from saying that Jesus could not have uttered anything so definitely theological, we should rather deny that the words are theological, in the technical question-begging sense of the term, yet maintain that in an hour of intense preoccupation with His death no other words would have been adequate to express the whole heart and mind of our Lord. From this point of view, we must notice a common evasion of their import even by some who do not question that Jesus spoke them. It is pointed out, for instance, that the death is here set in line with the life of our Lord. He came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and (in particular, and at last, as His crowning service) to give His life a ransom for many. His death is the consummation of His life, and the consummation of His ministry;

but it has no other end than His life, and we must not seek another interpretation for it. An extreme example of this is seen in Hollmann, 15 whose exegesis of the passage brings out the following result. Jesus came into the world to serve men, and especially to serve them by awakening them to that repentance which is the condition of entering the Kingdom of God and inheriting its blessings. So far, His ministry has not been without success; some have already repented, and entered into the Kingdom. But even where He has not proved successful, it is not yet necessary to despair: many will be won to repentance by His death who resisted all the appeal of His life. It is scarcely necessary to point out that the connection of ideas here is not in the least that which belongs to the words of Jesus. Hollmann actually speaks of a Glaubensurtheil, a conviction which Jesus held by faith, that even His death (tragic and disconcerting as we must suppose it to be) will, by the grace of the Father, nevertheless contribute to the success of His work, and win many whom He has yet failed to reach. But this completely leaves out the one thing to which the words of Jesus gives prominence — the fact, namely, that the Son of Man came expressly to do a service which involved the giving of His life a ransom for many. Hollmann's interpretation means that Jesus could by faith in the Father reconcile Himself to His death as something which would, though it is not clear how, contribute to the carrying out of His vocation — something which, in spite of appearances, would not prove inconsistent with it; but what the words in the gospel mean is that the death of Jesus, or the giving of His life a ransom for many, is itself the very soul of His vocation. He does not say that He can bear to die, because His death will win many to repentance who are yet impenitent, but that the object of His coming was to give His life a ransom for many. The same consideration discredits an interpretation like Wendt's, 16 which finds the key to the passage in Mat 11:29 f. Wendt lays all the stress on the effect to be produced on human character by realizing what the death of Jesus is. If men would only put on the yoke of Jesus and learn of Him — if they would drink of His cup and be baptized with His baptism — if, as St. Paul says, they would be conformed to His death, their souls would be liberated from the restless passions of pride and ambition by which James and John, and the other ten not less than they, were tormented, and death itself would cease to be a terror to them. However true this may be, one cannot look at the text without being impressed by its irrelevance as an interpretation. There is nothing in it to explain the introduction of Christ's death at all as the very end contemplated in His coming. There is nothing in it to explain either *lu>tron*, or *ajnti>*, or *pollw~n*, or *lu>tron ajnti< pollw~n*. In spite of the attention it has attracted, it is an ingenious vagary which has surely merited oblivion. In what direction, then, are we to seek the meaning? The only clue is that which is furnished by the passages in which our Lord Himself speaks of the soul and of the possibility of losing or ransoming it. Thus in Mark 8:34 f., immediately after the first announcement of His death, He calls the multitude to Him with His disciples, and says: 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoso will save his life (*yuch>n*) shall lose it: but whoso shall lose his life (*yuch>n*) for My sake and the gospel's, shall find it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life (*yuch>n*)? For what can a man give in exchange for his life (*ajnta>llagma th~v yuch~v aujtou~*)?' It is clear from a passage like this that Jesus was familiar with the idea that the *yuch>* or life of man, in the higher or lower sense of the term, might be lost, and that when it was lost there could be no compensation for it, as there was no means of buying it back. It is in the circle of such ideas that the words about giving His life a ransom for many must find their point of attachment, and it is not only for the simplest and most obvious interpretation, but for the most profound and the most consonant with the New Testament as a

whole, that Jesus in this passage conceives the lives of the many as being somehow under forfeit, and teaches that the very object with which He came into the world was to lay down His own life as a ransom price that those to whom these forfeited lives belonged might obtain them again. This was the supreme service the Son of Man was to render to mankind; it demanded the supreme sacrifice, and was the path to supreme greatness, Anything short of this is in the circumstances an anticlimax; it falls far beneath the passion with which our Lord condenses into a single phrase the last meaning of His life and death.

Nothing has been gained for the understanding of this passage by the elaborate investigation of the Hebrew or Aramaic equivalents of *lu>tron*. In truth it does not matter whether *rp,Ko* or *öwOyd]Pi*, whether *hL;auN] orryjim]* or *purkana* is most akin to it in the language which Jesus spoke; if *ifdou~nai th tron ajnti< pollw~n* does not convey His idea, it will certainly not be conveyed by any of the precarious equivalents for this Greek expression which are offered for our acceptance. The best fruit of these attempts to get behind the Greek has been Ritschl's reference to *Psa 49:7 f.* and *Job 33:23 f.*, as passages furnishing a real clue to the mind of Christ. In both of these the Hebrew word *rp,Ko* occurs, which Ritschl regards as the equivalent of *lu>tron*, and in both also the verb *hd;P;* is used, with which, rather than with *rp,Ko*, Hollmann would connect the word of Jesus. But the ideas which the words express are inseparable: *therp,Ko* is in both passages that by means of which, or at the cost of which, the action of the verb *hd;P;* (to deliver) is accomplished. 17 The Psalm makes it particularly plain. What no man can do for his brother — namely, give to God a ransom for him (*wOrP]K;*) so that he may still live always and not see corruption; what no man can do for his brother, because the redemption (*öwOyd]Pi*) of their soul is precious, and must be let alone for ever, this the Son of Man claims to do for many, and to do by giving His life a ransom for them. It seems hardly open to doubt that the world in which our Lord's mind moved as He spoke was that of the writer of the Psalm, and if this be so, it is possible to find in it confirmation for the meaning just assigned to His words. Dr. Driver 18 defines *rp,Ko* as 'properly a covering (viz. of an offense), hence a propitiatory gift, but restricted by usage to a gift offered to propitiate or satisfy the avenger- ofblood, and so the satisfaction offered for a life, i. e., a ransom.' Without going into meaningless questions as to how the ransom was fixed, or to whom it was paid, it is important to recognize the fact that our Lord speaks of the surrender of His life in this way. A ransom is not wanted at all except where life has been forfeited, and the meaning of the sentence unambiguously is that the forfeited lives of many are liberated by the surrender of Christ's life, and that to surrender His life to do them this incalculable service was the very soul of His calling. If we find the same thought in St. Paul, we shall not say that the evangelist has Paulinized, but that St. Paul has sat at the feet of Jesus. And if we feel that such a thought carries us suddenly out of our depth — that as the words fall on our minds we seem to hear the plunge of the lead into fathomless waters — we shall not for that imagine that we have lost our way. By these things men live, and wholly therein is the life of our spirit. We cast ourselves on them, because they outgo us; in their very immensity, we are assured that God is in them. 19

One almost despairs of saying anything about the Lord's Supper which will not seem invalid to some upon critical or more general grounds. Our main interest is in the words which Jesus spoke, and in the light which these words throw on His own conception of His death. Here we are confronted at once by the paradoxical view of Spitta that in what actually took place on the occasion there was no reference to the death of Christ at all. What Jesus did in the upper room (so

we are to suppose) was to anticipate with His disciples the Messianic Supper of the world to come. In that supper, according to Rabbinical and Apocalyptic writers, the good to be enjoyed is the Messiah Himself, and it is to this that Jesus refers when He speaks of the bread and wine as His own body and blood. He is preoccupied with the completion of His work, with the blessed prospect of the time when God shall have brought His kingdom to victory, and when from Him, the Messiah sent of God, the powers of knowledge and of eternal life shall flow unimpeded into the disciples as the gift of the meal which God prepares for those who are faithful to Him. The representation of the Supper in the evangelists is quite different, Spitta admits; but the form it there assumes; is due to the intervening death of Jesus, which compelled the disciples to give His words another turn. I do not feel it necessary to contest this construction of what took place. A conception of the Supper which sets aside the whole testimony of the New Testament to what it meant, which ignores its association with the Passover, the explicit references in every account of it to the shedding of Jesus' blood, and above all, the character expressly stamped upon it in the evangelists as a meal in which Jesus knew that He was sitting with the Twelve for the last time and was preoccupied with the idea of His parting from them, does not demand refutation. Nor is it entitled to forbid our asking — on the basis of the narratives in our hands — what Jesus said and did, and what is the bearing of this on the interpretation of His death? 20

There is at least a general consent in this, that Jesus took bread, and when He had broken it, or as He broke it, said, This is My body; that He took a cup with wine in it, or a cup into which He poured wine, saying as He did so, This is My blood, which is poured out for many. This is all that is admitted, e. g., by Hollmann, and it enables him to give the same interpretation to the supper as he gives to the word about the *lu>tron* 21 . Christ's death is in question, certainly, but it has no reference to those who are sitting at the table, and who are members of the Kingdom of God. The many in whose interest it takes place — the many who are to have benefit by it — are the same as the many for whom the ransom is to be given; they are the numbers, as yet impenitent, who will be won to penitence by the death of Jesus. According to this interpretation, the idea of a supper is a complete mistake. The persons at the table had really no interest in the death of Christ; they had already all that God could give. Hollmann, therefore, expunges from Mark as a liturgical insertion, intended to adapt the narrative to ecclesiastical custom, the very first word spoken by Jesus, Take (*la>bete*). In propriety, the disciples should not have taken, as His death meant nothing to them. He quotes, with approval, a remark of Schmiedel, 'The most significant thing is, at least in the first instance, the breaking of the bread and the pouring out of the wine, The distribution of these foods to be partaken of attaches itself to this as a second thing. So far as the main matter is concerned, it might have been treated as superfluous; but as they were sitting at table any how, it was natural. ' It is difficult to believe that this sort of thing is written seriously, if courtesy compels us to acknowledge that it is, we can only draw the melancholy conclusion that it is possible for the human mind to be serious even when it has completely lost contact with reality. The primary narrative of Mark begins by saying plainly, 'He took bread, and when He had given thanks He brake it and gave it to them and said, Take, this is My body. Then He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they drank of it every one (*pa>ntev* last and emphatic). And He said to them, This is My blood of the covenant shed for many. ' This is not qualified by any other of the New Testament authorities, nor by the practice of the Church as the New Testament reveals it; and I submit that it is not open to any one to go behind it, and to tell us blankly out of his own head (for that is; the only authority left) that the bearing of what took place was really quite

independent of this giving and taking, eating and drinking; and that while the death of Jesus was the subject of the symbolical actions of breaking the bread and pouring out the wine, and was no doubt meant to benefit some persons, it was a thing in which those who were present, and who at Jesus' word ate and drank the symbols of it, had no interest at all. Jesus made the bread and wine symbols of His death, this is not denied. He handed them to His disciples, pronouncing as He did so the very words in which He conferred on them this symbolical character. this also is not denied. But when He did so, it was not that the disciples might take them in this character. On the contrary, it was only because they were at their supper anyhow, and because bread and wine are naturally eaten and drunk. That is how bread and wine are disposed of in this world, but it has nothing to do with the story. If there is anybody in the world who finds this convincing, presumably it cannot be helped. But it is not only necessary to insist on the eating and drinking of the bread and wine, which as broken and outpoured symbolized Christ's death, and as eaten and drunk symbolized the interest of the disciples in that death, and their making it somehow their own; it is necessary to insist on what was further said by Jesus. All the evangelists in their narratives introduce the word 'covenant' (διαθήκη) in some construction or other. Mark has, This is My blood of the covenant (Mark 14:24). Matthew, according to some authorities (including that combination of Latin and Syriac versions to which critics seem inclined to ascribe a higher value than once seemed probable) has, This is My blood of the new covenant (Mat 26:28). Luke has what is apparently a Pauline form, This cup is the new covenant in My blood (Luk 22:20). For long it was an admitted point among critics that this was an indubitable word of Jesus. Brandt, whose criticism is skeptical enough, holds that the only historically certain words in the whole story are, This is My covenant blood, drink ye all of it. But even these words have lately been assailed in the determined effort to get behind the gospels. Three grounds have been assigned for questioning them. 22 The first is that the expression τοῦ νέου διαθήκης is awkward in Greek; the second, that it is impossible to translate it into Hebrew or Aramaic; and the third, that the conception of the covenant owes its place in Christianity to St. Paul. Of these reasons the last obviously begs the question. It does not follow that because St. Paul makes use of an idea he originated it. There are very great ideas, indeed, of which St. Paul says, I delivered unto you that which also I received (1Co 15:3 f.): why should not this be one of them? Does he not himself declare that it is one, when he prefaces his account of the supper — including in it the idea of the new covenant in the blood of Jesus — with the words, I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you? (1Co 11:23). The idea of a new covenant, and that of covenant blood, are Old Testament ideas; and if Jesus was conscious, nay, if it was the very essence of His consciousness, that, in relation both to law and prophecy, He came not to destroy but to fulfill, why should not He Himself have spoken the creative word? As for the other two reasons, that 'My blood of the covenant' is awkward in Greek, and that there are persons who cannot translate it into Hebrew, however true or interesting they may be, they are obviously irrelevant. It may be awkward in Greek or in any language to combine in one proposition the two ideas this is My blood, and this is covenant blood; but however awkward it may be, since they really are ideas which the mind can grasp, it must be possible to do it, in Greek or in any language. It does not, therefore, seem open to question, on any serious ground whatever, that Jesus at the last supper spoke of His blood as covenant blood. Now, what does this imply? To what set of ideas in the minds of His hearers, to what Old Testament associations does it attach itself, so as to be not merely a word, but an element in a living mind? We get the clue to the answer when we notice the form in which the words appear in Matthew, This is My blood of the

new covenant, shed for many unto remission of sins. The added words here may be no more than an interpretative expansion of what Jesus said, but if they are no more than this they are also no less. They are an interpretative expansion by a mind in a position naturally to know and understand what Jesus meant. The Old Testament twice speaks of 'covenant,' in the sense in which God makes a covenant with his people. There is the covenant made with sacrifice at Sinai, in the account of which we have the phrase, 'Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you upon all these conditions' (Exo 24:8).

Here, it is sometimes said, is the original of the words found in our evangelists; and as nothing is said in Exodus about the forgiveness of sins, and as the sacrifices mentioned there are not sin or guilt offerings, but burnt offerings and peace offerings, it is argued that the insertion in Matthew of the clause 'for forgiveness of sins' is a mistake. ²³ The inference is hasty. Covenant blood is sacrificial blood, and we have every reason to believe that sacrificial blood universally, and not only in special cases, was associated with propitiatory power. 'The atoning function of sacrifice,' as Robertson Smith put it, speaking of primitive times, 'is not confined to a particular class of oblation, but belongs to all sacrifices.' ²⁴ Dr. Driver has expressed the same opinion with regard to the Levitical legislation in which the key to the language of our passage must be found. Criticizing Ritschl's explanation of sacrifice and its effect, he says, 'It seems better to suppose that though the burnt-, peace-, and meat- offerings were not offered expressly, like the sin- and guilt- offerings, for the forgiveness of sin, they nevertheless (in so far as Kipper is predicated of them) were regarded as "covering," or neutralizing, the offerer's unworthiness to appear before God, and so, though in a much less degree than the sin- or guilt- offering, as effecting Kappara in the sense ordinarily attached to the word, viz. "propitiation." ²⁵ Instead of saying 'in a much less degree,' I should prefer to say 'with a less specific reference or application,' but the point is not material. What it concerns us to note is that the New Testament, while it abstains from interpreting Christ's death by any special prescriptions of the Levitical law, constantly uses sacrificial language to describe that death, and in doing so unequivocally recognizes in it, a propitiatory character— in other words, a reference to sin and its forgiveness. But there is something further to be said. The passage in Exodus is not the only one in the Old Testament to which reference is here made. In the thirty- first chapter of Jeremiah we have the sublime prophecy of a new covenant — a new covenant which is indeed but the efficacious renewal of the old, for there is but one God, and His grace is one — a new covenant, the very condition and foundation of which is the forgiveness of sins.

'They shall all know Me from the least to the greatest, for I will forgive their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more' (Jer 31:34).

It is this which is present to the mind of our Lord as He says of the outpoured wine, This is My blood of the covenant. He is establishing, at the cost of His life, the new covenant, the new religious relation between God and man, which has the forgiveness of sins as its fundamental blessing. He speaks as knowing that that blessing can only become ours through His death, and as the condition upon which it depends His death can be presented as a propitiatory sacrifice. It is as though He had pointed to the prophecy in Jeremiah, and said, This day is this Scripture fulfilled before your eyes. He had already, we might think, attached to Himself all that is greatest in the ideals and hopes of the Old Testament — the Messiah is sovereignty of Psa 2:12 and of Psa 110:1-7, and the tragic and glorious calling of the Servant of the Lord; but there is something which transcends both, and which gives the sublimest expression to our Lord's consciousness of Himself

and His work, when He says, This is My blood of the covenant. It is a word which gathers up into it the whole promise of prophecy and the whole testimony of the apostles; it is the focus of revelation, in which the Old Testament and the New are one. The power that is in it is the power of the passion in which the Lamb of God bears the sin of the world. It is no misapprehension, therefore, but a true rendering of the mind of Christ, when Matthew calls the covenant new, and defines the shedding of blood by reference to the remission of sins. There is really only one objection which can be made, and it is made unceasingly, to this interpretation of the words of Jesus. It is that it is inconsistent with what is elsewhere His unmistakable teaching. The very burden of His message, we are told, is that God forgives unconditionally, out of His pure fatherly love. This love reaches of itself deeper far than sin, and bestows pardon freely and joyfully on the penitent. It is nothing less than a direct contradiction of this gospel of the free love of God when we make forgiveness dependent upon a sacrificial, that is a propitiatory, virtue in the death of Christ. It misrepresents God's character, and in so doing destroys the gospel. We cannot, it is argued, on the strength of one word, and that a dubious word, run counter to the sense and spirit of our Lord's teaching as a whole. So, in substance, a large school of critics and theologians. How can we answer such a contention? As for the alleged dubiety of the word, we have said enough already; it only remains to deal with its alleged inconsistency with the rest of our Lord's teaching. This is usually asserted in the most unqualified fashion, but if we look back on what we have already seen to be our Lord's conception of Himself and His calling from the beginning we may well question it. The love of God, according to Jesus, is no doubt unconditionally free, but it is not an abstraction. It does not exist in vacuo: so far as the forgiveness of sins is concerned — and it is with the love of God in this relation that we have to do — it exists in and is represented by Jesus' own presence in the world: His presence in a definite character, and with a definite work to do, which can only be done at a definite cost. The freeness of God's love is not contradicted by these facts; on the contrary, it is these facts which enable us to have any adequate idea of what that love really is. To say that it is inconsistent with God's free love to make the forgiveness of sins dependent on the death of Jesus, is exactly the same (in one particular relation) as, to say (in general) that it is inconsistent with God's free love that entrance into His kingdom and participation in its blessings should only be possible through the presence of Jesus in the world, His work in it, and the attitude which men assume towards Him. Those who accept the latter should not deny the former. If we give any place at all to the idea of mediation, there is no reason why we should reject the idea of propitiation, for propitiation is merely a mode of mediation, a mode of it no doubt which brings home to us acutely what we owe to the Mediator, and makes us feel that though forgiveness is free to us it does not cost nothing to Him. Of course, if we choose to say that the Son has no place in the gospel at all, but only the Father, we may reject the great word about covenant- blood, or rather we must reject it; if He has no place in the gospel at all, we have no obligations to Him; we do not owe Him anything, least of all are we indebted to His death for the forgiveness of sins. But there is something in such language which when confronted with the gospels can only strike once as utterly abstract, unconvincing, and unreal. It does not answer to the relation of sinful souls to Jesus, to their devotion, their gratitude, their sense of undying obligation. It was not for a forgiveness with which He had in the last resort nothing to do that they poured their precious ointment on His head and wet His feet with tears. No; but in the depths of their being they had the dim sense of His passion in their pardon, and were conscious of an obligation for it to Him which they could never repay. The love of God, I repeat, free as it is to sinful men, unconditionally free, is

never conceived in the New Testament, either by our Lord Himself or by any of His followers, as an abstraction. Where the forgiveness of sin is concerned, it is not conceived as having reality or as taking effect apart from Christ. It is a real thing to us as it is mediated through Him, through His presence in the world, and ultimately through His death. The love of God by which we are redeemed from sin is a love which we do not know except as it comes in this way and at this cost; consequently, whatever we owe as sinners to the love of God, we owe to the death of Jesus. It is no more a contradiction of God's free love to the sinful, when we say that Christ's death is the ground of forgiveness, than it is a contradiction of God's fatherly goods will to men in general, when we admit the word of Jesus, No man cometh unto the Father but by me. In both cases equally, Christ stands between God and man; in both cases equally it is at cost to Him that God becomes our God. Why should we be loathe to become His debtors? The Christian faith is a specific form of dependence on God, and to cavil at the atonement is to begin the process of giving it away in bits. It is to refuse to allow it to be conditioned by Christ at the central and vital point, the point at which the sinner is reconciled to God; and if we can do without Christ there, we can do without Him altogether. The process which begins with denying that we owe to Him and to His death the forgiveness of sins, ends by denying that He has any proper place in the gospel at all. It is not either from His own lips, or from the lips of any of the apostles, that we so learn Christ.

See the writer's *Jesus and the Gospel*, pp. 320- 346. In Luk 3:22, Codex Bezae gives the heavenly voice in this form. Probably Jesus told the stories of His baptism and temptation often, giving more or less fully, with brief allusions to Old Testament words or fuller citation of them, such hints of His experience as His hearers could appreciate. Certainly there could be no truer index to His life than a combination of Psa 2:7 with Isa 42:1 ff.— the Son of God as King, and the Servant of the Lord; and this combination, if we go upon the evidence and not upon any dogmatic conception of what is or is not historical, dates from the high hour in which Jesus entered on His public work, and is not an afterbirth of disappointing experiences.

Wellhausen asserts that the temptation in Mark 1:12 f. is not Messianic; the Messianic temptation in Mark does not follow the baptism, but the Messianic confession of Peter at Mark 8:29; and it is Peter, not 'der leibhaftige Satan,' to whom the severe rebuke of Jesus is historically addressed. This is one of his main arguments for regarding Mark as older than Q, the source to which the temptation narratives of Matthew and Luke are traced. But it surely needs no proof that however summarily he may refer to it, the temptation associated by Mark with the baptism must have had its character determined by the baptism; and on Wellhausen's own showing the whole significance of the baptism for Mark is that it indicates the birth of the Messianic consciousness in Jesus. He entered the water an ordinary Israelite, and emerged the Messiah. A temptation in this context can have been nothing but a Messianic temptation. — *Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien* (2nd edition), 65 f.

O. Holtzmann.

Hier. *Contra Pelag.*, 3, 2. Nestle, *Novi Testamenti Graeci Supplementum* (77, 81), quotes in the same sense from Cyprian *De Rebaptismate*: 'Confictus liber qui inscribitur Pauli predicatio in quo libro contra omnes scripturas et de peccato proprio confitentem invenies Christum, qui solus omnino nihil deliquit et ad accipiendum Joannis baptismum paene invitum a matre sua esse compulsus.'

Soltau, Unsere Evangelien, p. 58: 'Der Zusatz ist nicht mehr naiv, sondern ganz kasuistisch. '

See Garvie's Studies in the Inner life of Jesus, ch. 4. 'The Vocation Accepted, ' pp. 117 ff. 'It is in His vicarious consciousness and the sacrifice which this would ultimately involve that Jesus fulfilled all righteousness. There is a higher righteousness than being justified by one's own works, a higher even than depending on God's forgiveness; and that belongs to Him who undertakes by His own loving sacrifice for sinners to bring God's forgiveness to them. '

Compare Kahler, Zur Lehre von der Versöhnung, 179: 'Die Taufe im Jordan nimmt jene Taufe voraus, der er mit Bangen entgegensieht, die letzte, schwerste Versuchung. '

Die Bedeutung des Todes Jesu, p. 16 ff.

See Jesus and the Gospel, 314 ff.

Cf. Haupt, Die eschatol. Aussagen Jesu, p. 108; Holtzmann, Neut. Theologie, 1. p. 287.

Cf. Rev. C. F. Burney in Contentio Veritas, p. 202. 'If, as is probable, Jonah represents the nation of Israel emerging as though by a miracle from the Exile in order to carry out its mission to the world at large, it may be noticed that the idea of the restoration from the exile as resurrection is elsewhere current in the prophetic writings (Hos 6:1-11 and Eze 37:1-28) and that it is thus highly fitting that the allegory of the death and resurrection of the nation should be also the allegory of the death and resurrection of the nation's true Representative. '

It is undoubtedly disappointing that in spite of the reiterated assertion that Jesus did teach His disciples about His death, Mark does not tell us even remotely what He taught. There is no memorable word of Jesus preserved from His teaching.

Die Bedeutung des Todes Jesu, 69 ff. Ritschl (Rechtf. u. Versöhnung, 2. 67) had already described as 'an unproved conjecture' the idea that Isa 53:1-12. had any decisive influence upon the mind of Jesus. He argues that the two express words of our Lord about His death (Mat 20:28 and Mat 26:28) have no connection with that chapter, and he discredits Luk 22:37 (which Hollmann accepts) as part of a passage (Luk 22:24-38) which he regards as 'eine Anschwemmung von unsicheren Erinnerungen. '

Die Bedeutung des Todes Jesu, 99 ff.

Lehre Jesu, 2. 509 ff.

Ritschl, Rechtf. u. Versöhnung, 2. 69 ff. Hollmann, Die Bedeutung des Todes Jesu, 99 ff. In Hastings' Bible Dictionary, s. v. Propitiation (vol. 4. 128).

Compare Kahler, Zur Lehre von der Versöhnung, 166: 'We put our whole faith in reconciliation into this word, and have a right to do so. ' I do not think anything whatever is gained by trying all possible permutations and combinations of the words in the text, and deciding whether *ajnti< pollw~n* is to be construed with *lu>tron* or with *dou~nai*, or with the two in combination, or in some other ingenious or perverse way. It is a sentence which leaves meaning on the mind, not the bits into which it can be broken. Ritschl sums up his interpretation thus: 'Der Sinn des Ausdrucks Jesu ist also: Ich bin gekommen anstatt derer, welche eine Werthgabe als Schutzmittel gegen das Sterben für sich oder für Andere an Gott zu leisten vergeblich erstreben wurden, dasselbe durch

die Hingebung meines Lebens im Tode an Gott zu verwirklichen, aber eben nur anstatt derer, welche durch Glauben und selbstverleugnende Nachfolge meiner Person die Bedingung erfüllen, unter der allein meine Leistung den erwarteten Schutz für sie vermitteln kann. ' — R. u. V. 2. 86. For a criticism of Ritschl's views on rp, Ko and rPeKi see in the last paragraph of Driver's article on Propitiation referred to above. Feine, in his *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 127 f., mentions four points of attachment for this ransom saying in Isa 53:1-12, which show in combination that we are justified in using the ideas of that prophecy as a key to it. (1) The words *dou~nai th<n yuch< naujtou~* recall the *paredo>qh eijv qa>naton hJ yuch< aujtou~* of Isa 53:12. (2) The general idea of service pervades both. The subject of Isa 53:1-12 is the humiliation and exaltation of the Servant of the Lord — His humiliation (as here that of Jesus) as the way to exaltation. (3) The peculiar use of 'many' in both: My righteous Servant shall justify 'many,' He bore the sin of 'many'; to give His life a ransom for 'many.' (4) The correspondence in meaning between the *lu>tron* as that by which a forfeited life is redeemed, and the giving of the life or soul as an *μν;a*; or guilt-offering by which legal satisfaction was rendered for an injury or wrong (Isa 53:10). There is a worth or goodness in Jesus' surrender of his life which outweighs the whole wrong which the world's sin inflicts upon God; and He came that at this cost the sin of the world might be outweighed.

Spitta's views are given in his treatise on *Die urchristlichen Traditionen über Ursprung und Sinn des Abendmahls* (zur Geschichte u. Litteratur des Urchristenthums).

Die Bedeutung des Todes Jesu, 133 ff.

See Preuschen's *Zeitschrift*, 1. 69 ff., and on the other side O. Holtzmann, *War Jesus Ekstatiker?* 110 ff.

Holtzmann, *Neut. Theologie*, 1. 302, says: 'The figure of covenant blood, which alone retains its validity, points, indeed, to a covenant sacrifice, but not necessarily also to an expiatory sacrifice, with which last alone have been combined the later ideas of exchange and substitution.'

Religion of the Semites, 219.

Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible, s. v. Propitiation, p. 132.

03.02. Chapter 2 : The Earliest Christian Preaching

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1. THUS far we have confined ourselves to the words of Jesus. The divine necessity of His death, indicated in the Old Testament and forming the basis of all His teaching regarding it, is the primary truth; the nature of that necessity begins to be revealed as the death is set in relation to the ransoming of many, and to the institution of a new covenant — that is, a new religion, having as its fundamental blessing the forgiveness of sins. I do not think this view of our Lord's mind as to His own death can be shaken by appealing to His experience in the garden, as though that proved that to the last day of His life the inevitableness of death remained for Him an open question. The divine necessity to lay down His life for men, which we have been led to regard as a fixed point in His mind, did not preclude such conflicts as are described in the last pages of the gospel; rather was it the condition of our Lord's victory in them. At a distance, it was possible to think of death in its heroic and ideal aspects only, as the fulfillment of a divine calling, an infinite service rendered in love to man; but as the fatal hour approached, its realistic and repellent aspects predominated over everything; it stood out before the mind and imagination of Jesus — we might almost say it obtruded itself upon His senses — as a scene and an experience of treachery, desertion, hate, mockery, injustice, anguish, shame. It is not hard to conceive that in these circumstances Jesus should have prayed as He did in the garden, O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me, even though the unmoved conviction of His soul was that He had come to give His life a ransom for many. It is one thing to have the consciousness of so high a calling, another to maintain and give effect to it under conditions from which all that is ideal and divine seems to have withdrawn. It is one thing not to count one's life dear, or to make much of it, in comparison with great ends which are to be attained by laying it down; it is another to lay it down, encompassed not by the gratitude and adoration of those for whom the sacrifice is made, but by mocking and spitting and scorn. This was what Jesus did, and He attained to it through the agony in the garden. The agony does not represent a doubt as to His calling, but the victorious assertion of His calling against the dreadful temptation to renounce it which came in the hour and with the power of darkness. Not that I should venture to say, as is sometimes said, that the realization, as they approached, of the sensible and moral horrors of the death He was to die was all that wrung from Jesus that last appeal to the Father, all that made His soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death, and put Him in agony — that is, in deadly fear: 1 this does not answer to what we know of the courage of martyrs. Though one shrinks from analyzing the cry of the heart to God in its anguish, it is difficult to avoid the impression that both here and in the experience of forsaking on the cross, we are in contact with something out of proportion to all that men could do to Jesus, something that seems to call for connection, if we would understand it, with realities more mysterious and profound. Language like Calvin's, 2 who says plainly that Jesus endured in His soul the dreadful torments of a condemned and lost man, may well be repellent to us; there is something unrealizable and even impious in such words. But it does not follow that there was nothing true, nothing in contact with reality, in the state of mind which inspired them. 3 Not with any logical

hardness, not as carrying out aggressively to its issue any theological theory, but sensible of the thick darkness in which, nevertheless (we are sure), God is, may we not urge that these experiences of deadly fear and of desertion are of one piece with the fact that in His death and in the agony in the garden through which He accepted that death as the cup which the Father gave Him to drink, Jesus was taking upon Him the burden of the world's sin, consenting to be, and actually being, numbered with 'the transgressors'? They cannot but have some meaning, and it must be part of the great meaning which makes the Cross of Christ the gospel for sinful men. No doubt there are those who reject this meaning altogether; it is dogmaticoreligious, not historico-religious, and no more is needed to? condemn it. But a dogmatico- religious interpretation of Christ's death — that is, an interpretation which finds in it an eternal and divine meaning, laden with gospel — is so far from being self evidently wrong, that it is imperatively required by the influence which that death has had in the history of the Christian religion. Such an interpretation carries out, through the experiences of His death, thoughts as to its significance which we owe to Jesus Himself, and connects these thoughts and experiences with the subsequent testimony of the apostles. In other words, to read the accounts of Gethsemane and Calvary in this sense is to read them in line at once with the words of Jesus and with the words of those who were first taught by His spirit; it is to secure at once the unity of the gospels with themselves, and their unity, in the main truth which it teaches, with the rest of the New Testament. To call such an interpretation dogmaticoreligious as opposed to historico- religious either has no meaning, or has a meaning which would deny to the Person and Work of Jesus any essential place in the Christian religion. But if the death of Jesus has eternal significance — if it has a meaning which has salvation in it for all men and for all times; a meaning which we discover in Scripture as we look back from it and look forward; a meaning which is the key to all that goes before and to all that comes after (and such a meaning I take it to have, indisputably) — then Gethsemane and Calvary cannot be invoked to refute, but only to illustrate, the 'dogmatic' interpretation. They are too great to be satisfied by anything else. 4

It does not follow, of course, that they were understood at once, even in the light of our Lord's words, by those whom He left as His witnesses. The mind can easily retain words the meaning of which it only imperfectly apprehends. It can retain words by which it is in the first instance moved and impressed, rather than enlightened. It can retain words which are sure, when reflection awakens, to raise many questions, to ask for definition in a great variety of relations; and it can retain them without at first having any consciousness of these questions whatever. It is in the highest degree probable that it was so with the disciples of Jesus. We can easily believe that they had right impressions from our Lord's words, before they had clear ideas about them. We can understand even that it might be natural enough for them to ascribe to Jesus directly what was only indirectly due to Him, because in the absence of philosophical reflection they were not conscious of the difference. Not that one would include under this head the creative words of Jesus already referred to about the ransom and the covenant blood; these bear the stamp of originality, not of reflection, upon them; it is their greatness to explain all things and to be explained by none. But before proceeding to examine the ideas of the primitive Christian Church on this subject, it is necessary to give an explicit utterance on the Resurrection, and the gospel presentation of it. The Resurrection of Jesus from the dead is here assumed to have taken place, and, moreover, to have had the character which is ascribed to it in the New Testament. It is not sufficient to say that there were appearances of the Jesus who had died to certain persons —

appearances the significance of which is exhausted when we say that they left on the minds of those who were favored with them the conviction that Jesus had somehow broken the banels of death. It is quite true that St. Paul, in setting before the Corinthians the historical evidence for the Resurrection, enumerates various occasions on which the Risen Lord was seen, and says nothing about Him except that on these occasions He appeared to Peter, to James, to the Twelve, to more than five hundred at once, and so on: this was quite sufficient for his purpose. But there is no such thing in the New Testament as an appearance of the Risen Savior in which He merely appears. He is always represented as entering into relation to those who see Him in other ways than by a flash upon the inner or the outer eye. He establishes other communications between Himself and His own besides those which can be characterized in this way. It may be that a tendency to materialize the supernatural has affected the evangelical narrative here or there — that Luke, for instance, who makes the Holy Spirit descend upon Jesus in bodily form as a dove went involuntarily beyond the apostolic tradition in making the Risen One speak of His flesh and bones, and eat a bit of roast fish before the disciples, to convince them that He was no mere ghost; it may be so, though the mode of Christ's being, in the days before His final withdrawal, is so entirely beyond our comprehension, that it is rash to be too peremptory about it; but even if it were so, it would not affect the representation as a whole which the gospels give of the Resurrection, and of the relation of the Risen One to His disciples. It would not affect the fact that He not only appeared to them, but spoke to them. It would not affect the fact that He not only appeared to them, but taught them, and in particular gave them a commission in which the meaning of His own life and work, and their calling as connected with it, are finally declared.

Without going in detail into the critical questions here involved, yet claiming to speak with adequate knowledge of them, I feel it quite impossible to believe that this representation of the gospels has nothing in it. How much the form of it may owe to the conditions of transmission, repetition, condensation, and even interpretation, we may not be able precisely to say, since these conditions must have varied indefinitely and in ways we cannot calculate; but the fact of a great charge, the general import of which was thoroughly understood, seems indisputable. All the gospels give it in one form or another; and even if we concede that the language in which it is expressed owes something to the Church's consciousness of what it had come to possess through its risen Lord, this does not affect in the least the fact that every known form of the evangelic tradition puts such a charge, or instruction, or commission, into the lips of Jesus after His Resurrection. 5

What, then, is the content of this teaching or commission of the Risen Savior, which all the evangelists give in one form or another? Luke has some peculiar matter in which he tells how Jesus opened the minds of His disciples to understand the Scriptures, recalling the words He had spoken while He was yet with them, how that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses and in the Prophets and in the Psalms concerning Him. If Jesus spoke to His disciples at all about what had befallen Him, all 'that we have already seen as to His teaching prepares us to believe that it was on this line. Alike for Him and for "the disciples the divine necessity for His death could only be made out by connecting it with intimations in the Word of God. But apart from this instruction, which is referred to by Luke alone, there is the common testimony with which mainly concerned. In Matthew it runs thus:

'Jesus came and spoke to them saying, All power has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you all the days until the end of the world' (Mat 28:18 ff.).

Here we notice as the essential things in our Lord's words (1) the universal mission;

(2) baptism;

(3) the promise of a spiritual presence. In Mark, as is well known, the original ending has been lost. The last chapter, however, was in all probability the model on which the last in Matthew was shaped, and what we have at present instead of it reproduces the same ideas.

'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned' (Mark 16:15 f.).

What follows, as to the signs which should attend on those who believe — 'in My name they shall cast out demons, they shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them, they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover' — shows how easy it was to expand the words of Jesus on the basis of experience, just as a modern preacher sometimes introduces Jesus speaking in His own person, and promising what the preacher knows by experience He can and will do; but it does not follow from this that the commission to preach and its connection with baptism are unhistorical. In Luke the commission is connected with the teaching above referred to. 'He said to them, Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer, and should rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance for remission of sins should be preached in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem' (Luk 24:46 f.). Here again we have (1) the universal commission;

(2) repentance and remission of sins. In John what corresponds to this runs as follows:

Jesus therefore said to them again, Peace be unto you. As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them and saith to them, 'Receive ye the Holy Spirit; whose soever sins ye forgive they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain they are retained' (John 20:21 f.).

Here once more we have (1) a mission, though its range is not defined;

(2) a message, the sum and substance of which has to do with forgiveness of sins; and (3) a gift of the Holy Ghost

'But what, ' it may be asked, ' has all this to do with the death of Jesus? The death of Jesus is not expressly referred to here, except in what Luke tells about His opening the minds of the disciples to understand the Scriptures, and that simply repeats what we have already had before us. ' The answer is apparent if we consider the context in which the ideas found in this commission are elsewhere found in the New Testament. In all its forms the commission has to do either with baptism (so in Matthew and Mark) or with the remission of sins (so in Luke and John). These are but two forms of the same thing, for in the world of New Testament ideas baptism and the remission of sins are inseparably associated. But the remission of sins has already been connected with the death of Jesus by the words spoken at the supper, or if not by the very words

spoken, at least by the significance ascribed to His blood as covenant- blood; and if the Risen Savior, in giving His disciples their final commission, makes the forgiveness of sins the burden of the gospel they are to preach, which seems to me indubitable, He at the same time puts at the very heart of the gospel His own covenant- founding, sin- annulling death. This inference from the evangelic passages which record the intercourse of the Risen Lord with His disciples may strike some, at the first glance, as artificial; but the air of artificiality will pass away, provided we admit the reality of that intercourse, and its relation both to the past teaching of Jesus and to the future work of the apostles. There is a link wanted to unite what we have seen in the gospels with what we find when we pass from them to the other books of the New Testament, and that link is exactly supplied by a charge of Jesus to His disciples to make the forgiveness of sins the center of their gospel, and to attach it to the rite by which men were admitted to the Christian society. In an age when baptism and remission of sins were inseparable ideas — when, so to speak, they interpenetrated each other — it is no wonder that the sense of our Lord's charge is given in some of the gospels in one form, in some in the other' that here He bids them baptize, and there preach the forgiveness of sins. It is not the form on which we can lay stress, but only the import. The import, however, is secure. Its historicity can only be questioned by those who reduce the resurrection to mere appearances of Jesus to the disciples — appearances which, as containing nothing but themselves, and as unchecked by any other relation to reality, are essentially visionary. And its significance is this' it is the very thing which is wanted to evince the unity of the New Testament, and the unity and consistency of the Christian religion, as they have been presented to us in the historical tradition of the Church. Here, where the final revelation is made by our Lord of all that His presence in the world means and involves, we find Him dealing with ideas — baptism and forgiveness — which alike in His own earlier teaching, and in the subsequent teaching of the apostles, can only be defined by relation to His death. When we pass from the gospels to the earliest period of the Church's life we are again immersed in critical difficulties. It is not easy to use the book of Acts in a way which will command universal agreement. Renan's remark that the closing chapters are the most purely historical of anything in the New Testament, while the opening ones are the least historical, is at least plausible enough to make one cautious. But while this is so, there is a general consent that in the early chapters there is a very primitive type of doctrine. The Christian imagination may have transfigured the day of Pentecost, and turned the ecstatic praise of the first disciples into a speaking in foreign languages, 6 but some source or sources of the highest value underlie the speeches of Peter. They do not represent the nascent catholicism of the beginning of the second century, but the very earliest type of preaching Jesus by men who had kept company with Him. It would be out of place here to dwell on the primitive character of the Christology, but it is necessary to refer to it as a guarantee for the historical character of the speeches in which it occurs. Consider, then, passages like these:

'Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by Him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know' (Acts 2:22);

'God hath made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified' (Acts 2:36);

'Jesus of Nazareth, how that God anointed Him with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him' (Acts 10:38).

It is impossible to deny that in words like these we have a true echo of the earliest Christian preaching. And it is equally impossible to deny that the soteriology which accompanies this Christology is as truly primitive. What then is it, and what, in particular, is the place taken in it by the death of Jesus?

It is sometimes asserted broadly that the real subject of these early speeches in Acts is not the death of Jesus but; the resurrection; the death, it is said, has no significance, assigned to it; it is only a difficulty to be got over. But there is a great deal of confusion in this. No doubt the apostles were witnesses of the resurrection, and the discourses in these chapters are specimens of their testimony. The resurrection is emphasized in them with various motives. Sometimes the motive may be called apologetic, the idea is that in spite of the death it is still possible to believe in Jesus as the Messiah; God by raising Him from the dead has exalted Him to this dignity. Sometimes it may be called evangelistic. You killed Him, the preacher says again and again (Acts 2:23 f., Acts 3:14 f. and Acts 5:30 f.), and God exalted Him to His right hand. In these two appreciations of Jesus lies the motive for a great spiritual change in sinful men. Sometimes, again, the resurrection is referred to in connection with the gift of the Spirit; the new life in the Church, with its wonderful manifestations, attests the exaltation of Jesus (Acts 2:33). Sometimes, once more, it is connected with His return, either to bring times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord (Acts 3:20 f.), or as Judge of the quick and the dead (Acts 10:42). But this preoccupation with the resurrection in various aspects and relations does not mean that for the first preachers of the gospel the death of Jesus had no significance, or no fundamental significance. Still less does it mean that the death of Jesus was nothing to them but a difficulty in the way of retaining their faith in His Messiahship, a difficulty which the resurrection enabled them to surmount — its sinister significance being discounted, so to speak, by the splendor of this supreme miracle. This last idea, that the cross in itself is nothing but a scandal, and that all the New Testament interpretations of it are but ways of getting over the scandal, cannot be too emphatically rejected.

1. It ignores, in the first place, all that has been already established as to our Lord's own teaching about the necessity and the meaning of His death — which has nothing to do with its being a scandal. And it ignores, in the second place, the spiritual power of Christ's death in those who believe in Him, alike as the New Testament exhibits it, and as it is seen in all subsequent ages of the Church. The gospel would never have been known as 'the word of the cross' if the interpretation of the cross had merely been an apologetic device for surmounting the theoretical difficulties involved in the conception of a crucified Messiah. Yet nothing is commoner than to represent the matter thus. The apostles, it is argued, had to find some way of getting over the difficulty of the crucified Messiah theoretically, as well as practically; the resurrection enabled them to get over it practically, for it annulled the death; and the various theories of a saving significance ascribed to the death enabled them to get over it theoretically — that; is all. Nothing, I venture to say, could be more hopelessly out of touch alike with New Testament teaching and with all Christian experience than such a reading of the facts. A doctrine of the death of Jesus, which was merely the solution of an abstract difficulty — the answer to a conundrum — could never have become what the doctrine of the death of Jesus is in the New Testament — the center of gravity in the Christian world. It could never have had stored up in it the redeeming virtue of the gospel. It could never have been the hiding- place of God's power, the inspiration of all Christian praise. Whatever the doctrine of Jesus' death may be, it is the feeblest of all misconceptions to trace, it to

the necessity of saying something about the death which should as far as possible remove the scandal of it. 'I delivered unto you first of all, ' says St. Paul to the Corinthians, ' that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures' (1Co 15:3). St. Paul must have received this doctrine from members of the primitive Church. He must have received it in the place which he gave it in his own preaching — that is, as the first and fundamental thing in the gospel. He must have received it within seven years — if we follow some recent chronologies, within a very much shorter period — of the death of Jesus. Even if the book of Acts were so preoccupied with the resurrection that it paid no attention to the independent significance of the death, it would be perfectly fair, on the ground of this explicit reference of St. Paul, to supplement its outline of primitive Christian doctrine with some definite teaching of atonement; but when we look closely at the speeches in Acts, we find that our situation is much more favorable. They contain a great deal which enables us to see how the primitive Church was taught to think and feel on this important subject.

Here we have to consider such points as these.

(1) The death of Christ is repeatedly presented, as in our Lord's own teaching, in the light of a divine necessity. It took place by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God' (Acts 2:23). That His Christ should suffer, was what God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets (Acts 3:18). In His death, Jesus was the stone which the builders rejected, but which God made the head of the corner (Acts 4:1). All the enemies of Jesus, both Jew and Gentile, could only do to Him what God's hand and counsel had determined before should be done (Acts 4:28). A divine necessity, we must remember, is not a blind but a seeing one. To find the necessity for the death of Jesus in the word of God means to find that His death is not only inevitable but indispensable, an essential part of the work He had to do. Not blank but intelligible and moral necessity is meant here.

Hence (2) we notice further the frequent identification, in these early discourses, of the suffering Messiah with the Servant of the Lord in the Book of Isaiah. 'The God of our Fathers hath glorified His Servant Jesus' (Acts 3:13).

'Of a truth, in this city, both Herod and Pontius Pilate were gathered together against Thy Holy Servant Jesus' (Acts 4:27). The same identification is involved in the account of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. The place of the Scripture which the eunuch had was the fifty- third chapter of Isaiah, and beginning from that Scripture Philip preached to him Jesus (Acts 8:35). We cannot forget that the impulse to this connection was given by our Lord Himself, and that it runs through His whole ministry, from His baptism, in which the heavenly voice spoke to Him words applied to the Servant of the Lord in Isa 43:1, to the last night of His life when He applied to Himself the mysterious saying, He was numbered with transgressors (Luk 22:37). The divine necessity to suffer is here elevated into a specific divine necessity, namely, to fulfill through suffering the vocation of one who bore the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. This connection of ideas in the primitive Church is made clearer still, when we notice (3) that the great blessing of the gospel, offered in the name of Jesus, is the forgiveness of sins. This is the refrain of every apostolic sermon. Thus in Acts 2:38 : 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto remission of your sins. ' In Acts 3:19, immediately after the words, the things that God declared before through the mouth of all the prophets, that Jesus Christ should suffer, He thus fulfilled, we read: 'Repent therefore and turn that your sins may be blotted out. ' In Acts 2:31

Jesus is exalted a Prince and a Savior to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. In Acts 10:43, after rehearsing in outline the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, Peter concludes his sermon in the house of Cornelius. 'To Him bear all the prophets witness, that every one who believes in Him shall receive forgiveness of sins through His name.' This prominence given to the remission of sins is not accidental, and must not be separated from the context essential to it in Christianity. It is part of a whole or system of ideas, and other parts which belong to the same whole with it in the New Testament are baptism and the death of Christ. The book of Acts, like all other books in the New Testament, was written inside of the Christian society, and for those who were at home inside; it was not written for those who had no more power of interpreting what stood on the page than the letter itself supplied. It does not seem to me in the least illegitimate, but on the contrary both natural and necessary, to take all these references to the forgiveness of sins and to baptism as references at the same time to the saving significance (in relation to sin) of the death of Jesus. This is what is suggested when Jesus is identified with the Servant of the Lord. This is what we are prepared for by the teaching of Jesus, and by the great commission; and we are confirmed in it by what we find in the rest of the New Testament. It is not a sufficient answer to this to say that the connection of ideas asserted here between the forgiveness of sins or baptism, on the one hand, and the death of Jesus on the other, is not explicit; it is self-evident to any one who believes that there is such a thing as Christianity as a whole, and that it is coherent and consistent with itself, and who reads with a Christian mind. The assumption of such a connection at once articulates all the ideas of the book into a system, and shows it to be at one with the gospels and epistles; and such an assumption, for that very reason, vindicates itself.

Besides the references to baptism and the forgiveness of sins, we ought to notice also

(4) the reference in Acts 2:42 to the Lord's Supper. 'They continued steadfastly. . .in the breaking of the bread.'

It may seem to some excessively venturesome to base anything on the Sacraments when everything connected with them is being brought into dispute, and their very connection with Jesus is denied. But without going into the infinite and mostly irrelevant discussions which have been raised on the subject, I venture to say that the New Testament nowhere gives us the idea of an unbaptized Christian — by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body (1Co 12:13) — and that Paul, in regulating the observance of the Supper at Corinth, regulates it as part of the Christian tradition which goes back for its authority, through the primitive Church, to Christ Himself. 'I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you' (1Co 11:23). In other words, there was no such thing known to Paul as a Christian society without baptism as its rite of initiation, and the Supper as its rite of communion. And if there was no such thing known to Paul, there was no such thing in the world. There is nothing in Christianity more primitive than the Sacraments, and the Sacraments, wherever they exist, are witnesses to the connection between the death of Christ and the forgiveness of sins. It is explicitly so in the case of the Supper, and the expression of St. Paul about being baptized into Christ's death (Rom 6:3) shows that it is so in the case of the other Sacrament too. The apostle was not saying anything of startling originality, when he wrote the beginning of Rom 6:1-23 — 'Know ye not that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?' Every Christian knew that in baptism what his mind was directed to, in connection with the blessing of forgiveness, was the death of Christ. Both Sacraments, therefore, are memorials of the death, and it is not due to any sacramentarian tendency in Luke, but only

brings out the place which the death of Christ had at the basis of the Christian religion, as the condition of the forgiveness of sins, when he gives the sacramental side of Christianity the prominence it has in the early chapters of Acts. From the New Testament point of view, the Sacraments contain the gospel in brief; they contain it in inseparable connection with the death of Jesus; and as long as they hold their place in the Church the saving significance of that death has a witness which it will not be easy to dispute.

It is customary to connect with the Petrine discourses in Acts an examination of the First Epistle of Peter. It is not, indeed, open to dispute that the First Epistle of Peter shows traces of dependence upon one or perhaps more than one epistle of Paul. There are different ways in which this may be explained. Peter and Paul were not at variance about the essentials of Christianity, as even the second chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians proves; if they had any intimate relations at all, it is a priori probable that the creative mind of Paul would leave its mark on the more receptive intelligence of Peter; something also may be due to an amanuensis, Silvanus (1Pe 5:12) or another, who had seen (as was possible enough in Peter's lifetime) letters of Paul like those to the Romans or Ephesians. But we must take care not to exaggerate either the originality of Paul, or the secondary character of Peter. Paul's originality is sometimes an affair rather of dialectic than invention; he is original rather in his demonstration of Christianity than in his statement of it. The thing about which he thinks and speaks with such independent and creative power is not his own discovery; it is the common tradition of the Christian faith; that which he delivers to others, and on which he expends the resources of his original and irrepressible mind, he has himself in the first instance received (1Co 15:3). And Peter may often be explained, where explanation is necessary, not by reference to Paul, but by reference to the memory of Jesus in the first instance, and to the suggestions of the Old Testament in the next. His antecedents, properly speaking, are not Pauline, but prophetic and evangelic. And if there are formal characteristics of his epistle which have to be explained by reference to his great colleague, the substance of it, so far as our subject is concerned, points not so much to Paul as to Jesus and the ancient Scriptures. What ideas, then, we may ask, does the First Epistle of Peter connect with the death of Jesus? To begin with, the death of Jesus has the central place in the writer's mind which it everywhere has in the New Testament. He describes himself as a 'witness of the sufferings of the Christ' (1Pe 5:1). *Ma>rtuv* is to be taken here in its full compass; it means not only a spectator of, but one who bears testimony to. The writer's testimony to the sufferings of the Christ is one in which their significance is brought out in various aspects; but though this sense of 'witness' is emphasized, it by no means excludes the other; rather does it presuppose it. Peter seems to prefer 'sufferings' to 'death' in speaking of the Christ, perhaps because he had been an eye-witness, and because 'sufferings' served better than 'death' to recall all that his Lord had endured. Death might be regarded merely as the end of life, not so much a moral reality, as a limit or termination to reality; but sufferings are a part of life, with moral content and meaning, which may make an inspiring or pathetic appeal to men. In point of fact it is the moral quality of the sufferings of the Christ, and their exemplary character, which first appeal to the apostle. As he recalls what he had seen as he stood by the great sufferer, what impresses him most is His innocence and patience. He had done no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered He did not threaten, but committed himself to Him who judges righteously (1Pe 2:22 f.). In this character of the patient and innocent sufferer Peter commends Jesus to Christians, especially to slaves, who were having their first experience of persecution, and finding how hard it was not only to suffer without cause, but

actually to suffer for doing well, for loving fidelity to God and righteousness. It is not necessary to press the parallel unduly, or to argue (as Seeberg has done 7) that the suffering of Christians in imitation of the Christ will have in all respects the same kind of result, or the same kind of influence, as His. Yet Peter identifies the two to some extent when he says, in 1Pe 4:13, Ye are partakers in the sufferings of the Christ. This is a genuinely evangelical point of view. Jesus calls on all His followers to take up their cross, and walk in His steps. The whole mass of suffering for righteousness' sake, which has been since the world began and will be to its close, is 'the sufferings of the Christ'; all who have any part in it are partners with Him in the pain, and will be partners also in the glory which is to be revealed. So far, it may be said, there is no theological reflection in the epistle; it occupies the standpoint of our Lord's first lesson on the Cross: I must suffer for righteousness' sake, and so must all who follow Me (Mat 16:21-24) — with the admonition annexed, Let it be in the same spirit and temper, not with amazement, irritation, or bitterness. But the epistle has other suggestions which it is necessary to examine. The first is found in the salutation. This is addressed to the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ (1Pe 1:1 f.). In this comprehensive address, a whole world of theological ideas is involved. Christians are what they are as elect according to the foreknowledge of God. Their position does not rest on assumptions of their own, or on any movable basis, but on the eternal goodwill of God which has taken hold of them. This goodwill, which they know to be eternal — that is, to be the last reality in the world — has come out in their consecration by the Spirit. The Spirit, standing as it does here between God the Father and Christ, must be the Holy Spirit, not the spirit of the Christian, the consecration is wrought not upon it but by it. The readers of the epistle would no doubt connect the words, and be intended by the writer to connect them, with their baptism; it was in baptism that the Spirit was received, and that the eternal goodwill of God became a thing which the individual (of course through faith) grasped in time. But what is in view in this eternal goodwill and its manifestation in time? It has in view 'obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.' We cannot miss the reference here to the institution of the covenant in Exo 24:1-18. There we find the same ideas in the same relation to each other. 'Moses took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people; and they said, All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people and said, Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you upon all these conditions.' Such a sprinkling with covenant blood, after a vow of obedience, is evidently in Peter's mind here. We have already seen, in connection with the institution of the Lord's Supper, what covenant blood means. As sacrificial, it is sin-covering; it is that which annuls sin as the obstacle to union with God. Within the covenant, God and man have, so to speak, a common life. God is not excluded from human life; He enters into it and achieves His ends in the world through it. Man is not excluded from the divine life; God admits him to His friendship and shows him what He is doing; he becomes a partaker in the divine nature, and a fellowworker with God. But the covenant is made by sacrifice; its basis and being are in the blood. In this passage, therefore, election and consecration have in view a life of obedience, in union and communion with God; and such a life, it is assumed, is only possible for those who are sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ. In other words, it is this only which has abiding power in it to annul sin as that which comes between God and man. It is sometimes said that the position of the blood in this passage — after obedience — points to its

sanctifying virtue, its power to cleanse the Christian progressively, or ever afresh, from all sin; but if we use technical language at all, we should rather say that its character as covenant- blood obviously suggests that on its virtue the Christian is perpetually dependent for his justification before God. With this blood on us we have peace with Him, and the calling to live in that peace. The second express reference to the saving significance of our Lord's death occurs in 1Pe 1:18 ff. Peter is exhorting those to whom he writes to a life of holiness, and he uses various arguments in support of his plea for sanctification. 8 First, it answers to the essential relations between man and God. 'As He who called you is holy show yourselves also holy in all your behavior' (1Pe 1:15). Second, it is required in view of the account they must render. (If ye invoke as Father Him who without respect of persons judges according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear' (1Pe 1:17). And, third, they have been put in a position to live a holy life by the death of Christ.

'Knowing that you were ransomed, not with corruptible things, silver and gold, from your vain manner of life, handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ' (1Pe 1:18 f.). A lamb without blemish and without spot is a sacrificial lamb, and the virtue here ascribed to the blood of Christ is some sort of sacrificial virtue. The preciousness of the blood cannot be otherwise explained than by saying that it was Christ's blood. But what is the virtue here ascribed to it? By it Christians were ransomed from a vain manner of life handed down from their fathers. The *ejlutrw>qhte* of this passage is no doubt an echo of the *lu>tron ajnti< pollw~n* in Mark 10:45. The effect of Christ's death was that for Christians a peculiar kind of servitude ended; when it told on them their life was no longer in bondage to vanity and to custom. The expression *ejk th~v matai>av uJmw~n ajnastrofh~v patroparado>tu* is a very striking one. Life before the death of Christ has touched it is *matai>a* i. e. it is futile, it is a groping or fumbling after something it can never find; it gets into no effective contact with reality; it has no abiding fruit. From this subjection to vanity it is redeemed by the blood of Christ. When the power of Christ's Passion enters into any life it is not futile any more: there is no more the need or the inclination to cry *mataio>thv mataioth>tw*n, all is vanity. Nothing can be more real or satisfying than the life to which we are introduced by the death of Christ; it is a life in which we can have fruit, much fruit, and fruit that abides; hence the introduction to it, as *ejlotrw>qhte* suggests, is a kind of emancipation. Similarly, life before the death of Christ has touched it is *patropara>dotov*; it is a kind of tradition or custom, destitute of moral originality or initiative. A man may think he is himself, and that he is acting freely and spontaneously, when he is only indulging self- will, or yielding to impulses of nature in him through which a genuine moral personality has never been able to emerge; but it is the power of Christ's passion descending into the heart which really begets the new creature, to whom moral responsibility — his own — is an original thing, a kind of genius, in virtue of which he does what nobody in the world ever did before, and feels both free and bound to do so. The moral originality of the New Testament life is a miracle that never grows old; and whatever in the form of this epistle may be due to a mind more creative than that of the writer, at this point, at any rate, we catch the note of an independent experience. Now this new life of the Christian, with its satisfying reality, and its wonderful freedom, was bought with the blood of Christ.

It is possible to argue that the new life is called forth immediately by the death of Christ — that is, that the impression produced by the spectacle of the cross, if we may so speak, quite apart from

its interpretation, emancipates the soul. But there is something unreal in all such arguments. The death of Christ was never presented to the world merely as a spectacle. It was never presented by any apostle or evangelist apart from an interpretation. It was the death of Christ so interpreted as to appeal irresistibly to the heart, the conscience, the imagination, perhaps we should sometimes include the very senses of men, which exercised the emancipating power. And the only hint which is here given of the line of interpretation is that which is involved in the reference to the sacrificial lamb. It was the death of Christ not uninterpreted (which is really equivalent to non-significant) but interpreted in some way as a death for our sins which exercised this beneficent power to liberate and to recreate the soul. A clearer light is cast on the nature of the connection between Christ's death and the moral emancipation of believers by the third passage in which the apostle makes a detailed reference to the subject. It is that in which the example of Christ in His sufferings is set before Christian slaves who are called to suffer unjustly. Peter pleads with them to be patient. 'What glory is it if what you do wrong and are beaten you take it patiently? But if when, you do good and suffer for it you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For this is what you were called for — for Christ also suffered for you (uJpe<r < their not is it slaves; wronged the to exhortation his point needed was than now, in more far saw he and habitually, it; by held fascinated being without moment a for Cross eyes turn could apostle though as It aspect. another put are they that transcended, or behind, left sufferings Christ's of character exemplary follows what clear equally clear. example appeal f.) 22 (2: this all In ' righteously. judges who Him cause His committed but threaten, did suffering under again, reviled He when — mouth found guile neither sin, no 'Who on: goes writer view Christ f. 20 2: So steps. follow should ye an you leaving e]paqen), uJmw~n>uJmw~n e]paqen), leaving you an example that ye should follow in His steps.' So 2:20f. It is the exemplary character of the sufferings of Christ that is in view when the writer goes on: 'Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth — who when He was reviled not again, under suffering did not threaten, but committed His cause to Him who judges righteously.' In all this (2:22f.) the appeal of the example is clear. It is equally clear that in what follows the exemplary character of Christ's sufferings is left behind, or transcended, and that they are put in another aspect. It is as though the apostle could not turn his eyes to the Cross for a moment without being fascinated and held by it; he saw far more in it habitually, and he saw far more in it now, than was needed to point his exhortation to the wronged slaves; it is not their interest in it, as the supreme example of suffering innocence and patience, but the interest of all sinners in it as the only source of redemption, by which he is ultimately inspired: 'Who His own self bare our sins in His body upon the tree, that we having died unto (the) sins might live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. ' The enlargement of view is shown by the change to the first person (He bore our sins, that we might live, etc.), the writer including himself and all Christians with those whom he addresses in the benefits of Christ's death; it is only in the last clause — 'by whose wound you were healed' — that he returns to his immediate subject, the slaves who were buffeted for doing well. What, then, precisely is it which is here affirmed of Christ in His death?

Literally, it is that He Himself bore our sins in His body on to the tree. The use of ajnafe>rein with aJmarti>an is not common, it occurs only in Isa 53:12 and Num 14:33, the more usual expression being lauba>nein. But it seems absurd for this reason, and for the reason that ajnafe>rein ti ejpi< to< qusiasth>rion is a common expression, to argue that here the tree or cross is regarded as an altar, to which sin was literally carried up to be slain. 9 That which is slain at the altar is always regarded as a gift acceptable to God, the slaying is only the method in which it is irrevocably made

His; and nothing is more perverse than the attempt to present sin in this light. The words of the apostle must be interpreted as the simple sense of Christians always has interpreted them, that Christ bore our sins in His body as He ascended the Cross, or ascended to it. There is something in the words ejn tw~| sw>mati and ejpi< to< xu>lon which leaves a singular and even poignant impression of reality on the mind. To us the Passion is idealized and transfigured; 'the tree' is a poetic name for the Cross, under which the hard truth is hidden. But sw~ma means flesh and blood, and xu>lon means timber. We may have wondered that an apostle and eye-witness should describe the sinlessness and the suffering of Jesus, as the writer of this epistle does, almost entirely in words quoted from the Old Testament; but even as we wonder, and are perhaps visited with misgivings, we are startled by these words in which the Passion is set before us as a spectacle of human pain which the writer had watched with his own eyes as it moved to its goal at the Cross. But this reminiscent pictorial turn which he has given to his expression does not alter the meaning of the principal words — 'Who His own self bore our sins. ' 10 This is the interpretation of the Passion' it was a bearing of sin. Now, to bear sin is not an expression for which we have to invent or excogitate a meaning, it is a familiar expression, of which the meaning is fixed. Thus, to take the instance referred to above (Num 14:34): 'After the number of the days in which ye spied out the land, even forty days, for every day a year, shall ye bear your iniquities' — the meaning clearly is, bear the consequences of them, take to yourselves the punishment which they involve. Or again, in Lev 5:17,

'If any one sin, and do any of the things which the Lord hath commanded not to be done, though he knew it not, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity'

— the meaning is as clearly, he shall underlie the consequences attached by the law to his act. Or again, in Exo 28:43, where the sons of Aaron are to observe punctually the laws about their official dress, 'that they bear not iniquity and die': to die and to bear iniquity are the same thing, death being the penalty here denounced against impiety. Expressions like these indicate the line on which we are to fill out the meaning of the words, 'Who His own self bare our sins. ' They are meant to suggest that Christ took on Him the consequences of our sins — that He made our responsibilities, as sin had fixed them, His own. He did so when He went to the Cross — i.e. in His death. His death, and His bearing of our sins, are not two things, but one. It may be true enough that He bore them on His spirit, that He saw and felt their exceeding sinfulness, that He mourned over them before God; but however true and moving such considerations may be, they are not what the apostle means in the passage before us. He means that all the responsibilities in which sin has involved us — responsibilities which are summed up in that death which is the wages of sin — have been taken by Christ upon Himself. His interpretation of the Passion is that it is a bearing of sin — more precisely, that it is the bearing of others' sin by one who is Himself sinless. (Num 30:15 and Hebrews 16.) The apostle does not raise the question whether it is possible for one to assume the responsibilities of others in this way; he assumes (and the assumption, as we shall see, is common to all the New Testament writers) that the responsibilities of sinful men have been taken on Himself by the sinless Lamb of God. This is not a theorem he is prepared to defend; it is the gospel he has to preach. It is not a precarious or a felicitous solution of an embarrassing difficulty — the death of the Messiah; it is the foundation of the Christian religion, the one hope of sinful men. It may involve a conception of what Christ is, which would show the irrelevance of the objection just referred to, that one man cannot take on him the responsibilities of others; but

leaving that apart for the moment, the idea of such an assumption is unquestionably that of this passage. It is emphasized by the very order of the words — οἱ τὰ ἁρτῶν ἡμῶν ἀντὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν; it was not His own but our sins that were borne at Calvary. To that which was so done Peter annexes the aim of it. He bore our sins, that having died to the sins, we might live to righteousness. It is not possible to argue from ἀπογενόμενοι that our death was involved in His — that we actually or ideally died when He did, and so have no more relation to sins. It is quite fair to render, 'that we might die to our sins and live to righteousness.' A new life involves death to old relations, and such a new life, involving such death, is the aim of Christ's bearing of our sins. How this effect is mediated the apostle does not say. Once we understand what Christ's death means — once we receive the apostolic testimony that in that death He was taking all our responsibilities upon Him — no explanation may be needed. The love which is the motive of it acts immediately upon the sinful; gratitude exerts an irresistible constraint; His responsibility means our emancipation; His death our life; His bleeding wound our healing. Whoever says 'He bore our sins' says substitution; and to say substitution is to say something which involves an immeasurable obligation to Christ, and has therefore in it an incalculable motive power. This is the answer to some of the objections which are commonly made to the idea of substitution on moral grounds. They fail to take account of the sinner's sense of debt to Christ for what He has done, a sense of debt which it is not too much to designate as the most intimate, intense, and uniform characteristic of New Testament life. It is this which bars out all ideas of being saved from the consequences of sin, while living on in sin itself. It is so profound that the whole being of the Christian is changed by it; it is so strong as to extinguish and to create at once; under apostle's words here, the aim fulfilled in us — we die to the sins and live to righteousness. This interpretation of the passage in the second chapter is confirmed when we proceed to the one in the third. The subject is still the same, the suffering of Christians for righteousness' sake. 'It is better,' says the apostle in 1Pe 4:19, 'if the will of God should have it so, to suffer doing well than doing ill. For Christ also died once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might conduct us to God.' Here, as in the previous passage, an exemplary significance in Christ's sufferings is assumed, and to it apparently the writer reverts in 1Pe 4:1 ('as Christ therefore suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind'), but it is not this exemplary significance on which he enlarges. On the contrary, it is a connection which the death of Christ, or His Passion, has with sins. Christ, he says, died in connection with sins once for all (ἀπαλλάξας); His death has a unique significance in this relation. What the special connection was is indicated in the words διὰ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν. It is the obvious implication of these words that the death on which such stress is laid was something to which the unrighteous were liable because of their sins, and that in their interest the Righteous One took it on Himself. When He died for them, it was their death which He died. His death has to be defined by relation to sin, but it is the sin of others, not His own. The writer no more asks here than he asked in the previous case, How can such filings be? He does not limit the will of love — he does not, in a world made and ruled by God, limit beforehand the power of love — to take on it to any extent the responsibility of others. This is his gospel, that a Righteous One has once for all faced and taken up and in death exhausted the responsibilities of the unrighteous, so that they no more stand between them and God; his business is not to prove this, but to preach it. The only difference is that whereas in the second chapter, if we can draw such a distinction in the New Testament, the aim is a moral one (that we may die to sin and live to righteousness), in the present case it is religious (that He might conduct us to God). The word προσάγειν has always a touch of formality in it; it is a great

occasion when the Son who has assumed our responsibilities for us takes us by the hand to bring us to the Father. We find the same idea of the prosagwgh> as the great Christian privilege in Rom 5:2 and Eph 2:18. Sin, it is implied, keeps man at a distance from God; but Christ has so dealt with sin on man's behalf that its separative force is annulled; for those who commit themselves to Christ, and to the work which He has done for them in His Passion, it is possible to draw near to God and to live in His peace. This is the end contemplated in His dying for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous. We can only repeat here what has just been said in connection with the previous passage. If Christ died the death in which sin had involved us — if in His death He took the responsibility of our sins upon Himself — no word is equal to this which falls short of what is meant by calling Him our substitute. Here also, as in the second chapter, the substitution of Christ in His death is not an end in itself: it has an ulterior end in view. And this end is not attained except for those who, trusting in what Christ has done, find access to God through Him. Such access, we must understand, is not a thing which can be taken for granted. It is not for the sinful to presume on acceptance with God whenever they want it. Access to God is to the Apostle the most sublime of privileges, purchased with an unspeakable price; for such as we are, it is only possible because for our sins Christ died. And just as in the ancient tabernacle every object used in worship had to be sprinkled with atoning blood, so all the parts of Christian worship, all our approaches to God, should consciously rest on the atonement. They should be felt to be a privilege beyond price; they should be penetrated with the sense of Christ's Passion, and of the love with which He loved us when He suffered for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, that He might conduct us to God.

There is no other passage in the First Epistle of Peter which speaks with equal explicitness of the saving significance of Christ's death. But the passages which have just been reviewed are all the more impressive from the apparently incidental manner in which they present themselves to us. The apostle is not avowedly discussing the theology of the Passion. There is nothing in his epistle like that deliberate grappling with the problem of the justification of the ungodly which we find, for example, in the third and fourth chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. His general purpose, indeed, is quite different. It is to exhort to patience and constancy Christians who are suffering for the first time severe persecution, and who are disposed to count it a strange thing that has befallen them; the suffering Christ is held up to them as an example. He is the first of martyrs, and all who suffer for righteousness' sake, as they share the suffering which He endured, should confront it in the same spirit which He displayed. But the imitation of Jesus is not an independent thing for the apostle; at least he never speaks of it by itself. It is the sense of obligation to Christ which enables us to lift our eyes to so high an example; and Peter glides insensibly, on every occasion, from Christ the pattern of innocence and patience in suffering to Christ the sacrificial lamb, Christ the bearer of sin, Christ who died, righteous for unrighteous men. It is here the inspiration is found for every genuine imitatio Christi, and the unforced, inevitable way in which the apostle falls regularly back on the profounder interpretation of the death of Christ, shows how central and essential it was in his mind. He does not dwell anywhere of set purpose on the attitude of the soul to this death, so as to make clear the conditions on which it becomes effective for the Christian's emancipation from a vain and custom-ridden life, for his death to sin, or for his introduction to God. As has been already remarked, the sense of obligation to Christ, the sense of the love involved in what he has done for men, may produce all these effects immediately. But there are two particulars in which the First Epistle of Peter makes a near approach to other New Testament books, especially to Pauline ones, in their conception of the conditions on which the blessings of

the gospel are enjoyed, and it may not be out of place to refer to them here. The first is the emphasis it lays on faith. The testing of the Christian life is spoken of as 'the trying of your faith' (1Pe 1:7); the salvation of the soul is 'the end of your faith' (1Pe 1:9); Christians are those 'who through Him' — that is, through Christ — 'have faith in God' (1Pe 1:21). The other is the formula 'in Christ,' which has sometimes been treated almost as if it were the signature of St. Paul. It occurs in the last verse of the epistle, 'Peace be to you all that are in Christ.' Probably it is not too bold to suggest that in these two ideas — -that of faith, and that of being, in Christ — -we have here, as elsewhere in the New Testament, a clue to the terms on which all the Christian facts, and most signally the death of Christ, as the apostle interprets it, have their place and efficacy in the life of men.

It is not possible to base anything on the Second Epistle ascribed to Peter. The one expression to be found in it, bearing on our subject, is the description of certain false teachers in 2Pe 2:1, as 'denying the Master who bought them' (to<n ajgora>santa aujtou<v despo>thn ajrnou>menoi). The idea of ajgora>zein is akin to that of lutrou~sqai, and the New Testament in other places emphasizes the fact that we are bought with a price (1Co 6:20 and 1Co 7:23), and that the price is the blood of Christ (Rev 5:9); but though these ideas no doubt underlie the words just quoted, there is no expansion or application of them in the context. The passage takes for granted the common faith of Christians in this connection, but does not directly contribute to its elucidation.

See Field, Notes on the New Testament, p. 77, where decisive proof of this is given; and Armitage Robinson, Gospel according to Peter, pp. 84, 87 (ajgwnia>w).

Institutio, II. 16. 10.

Calvin has, in point of fact, made more adequate utterances on this subject: 'Invisibile illud et incomprehensibile judicium quod coram Deo sustinuit'; 'neque tamen innuimus Deum fuisse unquam illi vel adversarium vel iratum'; 'illic personam nostram gerebat'; and especially the following: 'Atqui haec nostra sapientia est probe sentire quanti constiterit Dei filio nostra salus.'

Compare Kahler, Zur Lehre von der Versöhnung, pp. 181, 401. On the other side Fairbairn, Philosophy of the Christian Religion, p. 425 ff. For a fuller statement on this point see Jesus and the Gospel, 153 ff. For the best examination of this see Chase's Hulsean Lectures and Vernon Bartlett's Acts (Century Bible).

Seeberg, Der Tod Christi, p. 292.

Compare Kahler, Zur Lehre von der Versöhnung, p. 239.

See, for instance, Alford's note on the passage, and the qualified support given to it in Bigg's Commentary. In his Bible Studies (E. Tr. p. 88 ff.) Deissmann argues that there is no suggestion here of the special ideas of substitution or sacrifice: all that is meant is that when Christ bears up to the cross the sins of men, then men have their sins no more: the bearing up to is a taking away. In view of the other references in the epistle and of the Old Testament parallels, this is rather a refusal to think out the apostle's thoughts than a stricter interpretation of his words.

03.03. Chapter 3: The Epistles Of St. Paul

Chapter 3: The Epistles Of St. Paul WHEN we pass from primitive Christian preaching to the epistles of St. Paul, we are embarrassed not by the scantiness but by the abundance of our materials. It is not possible to argue that the death of Christ has less than a central, or rather than the central and fundamental place, in the apostle's gospel. But before proceeding to investigate more closely the significance he assigns to it, there are some preliminary considerations to which it is necessary to attend. Attempts have often been made, while admitting that St. Paul teaches what he does teach, to evade it — either because it is a purely individual interpretation of the death of Jesus, which has no authority for others; or because it is a theologoumenon, and not a part of the apostolic testimony; or because it is not a fixed thing, but a stage in the development of apostolic thought, which St. Paul was on the way to transcend, and would eventually have transcended, and which we (by his help) can quite well leave behind us; or because it is really inconsistent with itself, a bit of patchwork, pieced out here and there with incongruous elements, to meet the exigencies of controversy; or because it unites, in a way inevitable for one born a Pharisee, but simply false for those who have been born Christian, conceptions belonging to the imperfect as well as to the perfect religion — conceptions which it is our duty to allow to lapse. I do not propose to consider such criticisms of St. Paul's teaching on the death of Christ directly. For one thing, abstract discussion of such statements, apart from their application to given cases, never leads to any conclusive results; for another, when we do come to the actual matters in question, it often happens that the distinctions just suggested disappear; the apostolic words have a virtue in them which enables them to combine in a kind of higher unity what might otherwise be distinguished as testimony and theology. But while this is so it is relevant, and one may think important, to point out certain characteristics of St. Paul's presentation of his teaching which constitute a formidable difficulty in the way of those who would evade it. The first is, the assurance with which he expresses himself. The doctrine of the death of Christ and its significance was not St. Paul's theology, it was his gospel. It was all he had to preach. It is with it in his mind — immediately after the mention of our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present world with all its evils — that he says to the Galatians:

'Though we or an angel from heaven preach a gospel to you contravening the gospel which we preached, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, if any man is preaching a gospel to you contravening what you received, let him be anathema' (Gal 1:4, Gal 1:8 f.).

I cannot agree with those who disparage this, or affect to forgive it, as the unhappy beginning of religious intolerance. Neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament has any conception of a religion without this intolerance. The first commandment is, 'Thou shalt have none other gods beside Me, ' and that is the foundation of the true religion. As there is only one God, so there can be only one gospel. If God has really done something in Christ on which the salvation of the world depends, and if He has made it known, then it is a Christian duty to be intolerant of everything which ignores, denies, or explains it away. The man who perverts it is the worst enemy of God and

men; and it is not bad temper or narrow mindedness in St. Paul which explains this vehement language, it is the jealousy of God which has kindled in a soul redeemed by the death of Christ a corresponding jealousy for the Savior. It is intolerant only as Peter is intolerant when he says, 'Neither is there salvation in any other' (Acts 4:12), or John, when he says, 'He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life' (1Jn 5:12); or Jesus Himself when He says, 'No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him' (Mat 11:27).

Intolerance like this is an essential element in the true religion; it is the instinct of self-preservation in it; the unforced and uncompromising defense of that on which the glory of God and the salvation of the world depends. If the evangelist has not something to preach of which he can say, If any man makes it his business to subvert this, let him be anathema, he has no gospel at all. Intolerance in this sense has its counterpart in comprehension; it is when we have the only gospel, and not until then, that we have the gospel for all. It is a great argument, therefore, for the essential as opposed to the casual or accidental character of St. Paul's teaching on Christ's death — for it is with this that the Epistle to the Galatians is concerned — that he displays his intolerance in connection with it. To touch his teaching here is not to do something which leaves his gospel unaffected; as he understands it, it is to wound his gospel mortally.

Another consideration of importance in this connection is St. Paul's relation to the common Christian tradition. No doubt the apostle was an original thinker, and in the Epistle to the Galatians he is concerned to vindicate his originality, or at least his independence; but his originality is sometimes exaggerated. He did not invent Christianity; there were apostles and preachers and men in Christ before him. And he tells us expressly that in the fundamentals of Christianity he not only agreed with them, but was indebted to them.

'I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He hath been raised the third day, according to the Scriptures' (1Co 15:3).

It is impossible to leave out of the tradition which St. Paul had himself received, and which he transmitted to the Corinthians, the reference to the meaning of Christ's death — 'He died for our sins according to the Scriptures' — and to limit it to the fact: the fact needed no such authentication. It is the fact in its meaning for sinners which constitutes a gospel, and this, he wishes to assert, is the only gospel known.

'Whether it be I or they — whether it be I or the twelve apostles at Jerusalem — this is the way we preach, and it was thus that you became believers' (1Co 15:11). And the doctrinal tradition of Christianity, if we may call it so, was supplemented and guaranteed by the ritual one. In the same Epistle to the Corinthians St. Paul says again, speaking of the Supper, 'I received of the Lord this, which also I delivered unto you' (1Co 11:23). An immediate supernatural revelation of what took place on the last night of our Lord's life has no affinity to anything we know of revelations, we must understand St. Paul to say that what he had handed on to the Corinthians had before been handed on to him, and went back originally to the Lord Himself. The Lord was the point from which it started. But Paul could not receive this ritual tradition, and we know he did not, without receiving at the same time the great interpretative words about the new covenant in Christ's blood, which put the death of Christ, once for all, at the foundation of the Gospel. 1 It is not Paulinism which

does this, it is the Christianity of Christ. The point at issue between the apostle and his Jewish-Christian adversaries was not whether Christ had died for sins; every Christian believed that. It was rather how far this death of Christ reached in the way of producing or explaining the Christian life. To St. Paul it reached the whole way; it explained everything; it supplanted everything he could call a righteousness of his own; it inspired everything he could call righteousness at all. To his opponents, it did not so much supplant as supplement, but for the atoning death, indeed, the sinner is hopeless; but even when he has believed in it, he has much to do on his own account, much which is not generated in him by the sense of obligation to Christ, but must be explained on other principles — e.g., that of the authority of the Jewish law. It is not necessary to enter into this controversy here, but what may fairly be insisted upon is the fact, which is evident in all the epistles, that underneath the controversy St. Paul and his opponents agreed in the common Christian interpretation of Christ's death as a death in which sin had been so dealt with that it no longer barred fellowship between God and those who believed in Jesus. This, again, should make us slow to reject anything on this subject in St. Paul as being merely Pauline — an idiosyncrasy of the individual. We must remember that his great argument against Judaizing Christians is that they are acting inconsistently: they are unwittingly doing something which contravenes, not Paulinism, but the gospel they have already received of redemption through the death of Christ.

Again, the perception of St. Paul's place in Christian tradition, and of his debt to it, should make us slow to lay stress on the development which has been discovered in his writings. Leaving out the Pastorals, Paul wrote his other epistles within the space of ten years. But he had been preaching the gospel, in which the death of Christ had from the beginning the place and significance which we have just seen, at least fifteen years before any of the extant epistles were written. Is it credible that he had no intellectual life at all for those fifteen years, and that then, all of a sudden, his brain began to work at high pressure, and continued to work so till the end of his life? It is true that in the epistles of the imprisonment, as they may be conveniently called — Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians — we see the whole gospel in other relations than those in which it is exhibited in the epistles of the great missionary period — Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians, Romans. But this is something quite different from a development in the gospel itself; and in point of fact we cannot discover in St. Paul's interpretation of Christ's death anything which essentially distinguishes his earliest epistles from his latest. To suppose that a great expansion of his thoughts took place between the letters to the Thessalonians and those to the Corinthians is to ignore at once the chronology, the nature of letters, and the nature of the human mind. St. Paul tells us himself that he came to Corinth determined to know nothing among the Corinthians but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. But he came in that mood straight from Thessalonica, and in that mood he wrote from Corinth the letters to Thessalonica, in which, nevertheless, there is, as we shall see, only a passing allusion to Christ's death. Nothing could demonstrate more clearly how entirely a matter of accident it is — that is, how entirely it depends upon conditions which we may or may not have the means of discovering — whether any particular part of the apostle's whole conception of Christianity shall appear in any given epistle. If development might be asserted anywhere, on general grounds, it would be in this case and on this subject; there is far more about Christ's death, and far more that is explicit, in the First Epistle to the Corinthians than in the First to the Thessalonians. Yet precisely at this point our knowledge of St. Paul's mind when he reached Corinth (1Co 2:1 f.), and of the brief interval which lay between this and his visit to Thessalonica, puts the idea of development utterly out of the question. As far as the evidence goes — the

evidence including St. Paul's epistles on the one hand, and St. Paul's admitted relation to the doctrinal and ritual tradition of Christianity on the other — the apostle had one message on Christ's death from first to last of his Christian career. His gospel, and it was the only gospel he knew, was always 'the Word of the Cross' (1Co 1:18), or 'the Word of reconciliation' (2Co 5:19). The applications might be infinitely varied, for, as has been already pointed out, everything was involved in it, and the whole of Christianity was deduced from it; but this is not to say that it was in process of evolution itself.

There are two other sets of questions which might be raised here, either independently or in relation to each other — the questions involved in the experimental, and in the controversial or apologetic, aspects of St. Paul's theology. How much of what he tells us of the death of Christ is the interpretation of experience, and has value as such? How much is mere fencing with opponents, or squaring of accounts with his own old ways of thinking about God and the soul, but has no value now, because the conditions to which it is relative no longer exist? These questions, as has been already remarked, are not to be discussed abstractly, because taken abstractly the antitheses they present are inevitably tainted with falsehood. They assume an opposition which does not exist, and they ignore the capacity of the truth to serve a variety of intellectual and spiritual purposes. St. Paul could use his gospel, no doubt, in controversy and in apology, but it was not devised for controversial or apologetic ends. The truth always has it in itself to be its own vindication and defense. It can define itself in all relations, against all adversaries; but it is not constituted truth, it is only exhibited as truth, when it does so. The fact that Christ died for our sins — that His death is an atoning death — is a magnificent apology for the Cross, turning its shame into glory; but it is not philosophy or criticism, it is here unintelligence, to maintain that it was invented or believed just in order to remove the offense of the Cross. In St. Paul it is not an apologetic or a controversial truth, or a truth relative to the exigencies of Jewish prejudice; it is an independent, eternal, divine truth, the profoundest truth of revelation, which for that very reason contains in it the answer to all religious questions whether of ancient or of modern times. It is so far from being a truth which only a mind of peculiar antecedents or training could apprehend, that it is of all truths the most universal. It was the sense of it, in its truth, that made St. Paul a missionary to all men. When he thought of what it meant, it made him exclaim, Is God a God of Jews only? (Rom 3:29). Is the God who is revealed in the death of Christ for sin a God who speaks a language that only one race can understand? Incredible. The atoning death of Christ, as a revelation of God, is a thing in itself so intelligible, so correspondent to a universal need, so direct and universal in its appeal, that it must be the basis of a universal religion. It is so far from being a truth (if we can speak of truth on such terms) relative only to one race, or one upbringing, or one age, or one set of prejudices, that it is the one truth which for all races and in all ages can never admit of any qualification. In itself true, it can be used as a weapon, but it was no necessity of conflict which fashioned it. It is the very heart of revelation itself. The same attitude of mind to the Pauline teaching which would discount some of it as controversial or apologetic, as opposed to experimental or absolute, is seen in the disposition to distinguish in that teaching, as the expression is, fact from theory. In all probability this also is a distinction which it will not repay us to discuss in vacuo: everything depends on the kind of fact which we are supposed to be theorizing. The higher we rise in the scale of reality the more evanescent becomes the distinction between the thing 'itself' and the theory of it. A fact like the one with which we are here concerned, a fact in which the character of God is revealed, and in which an appeal is to be made to the reason, the

conscience, the heart, the whole moral being of man, is a fact which must be, and must be seen to be, full of rational, ethical, and emotional content. If instead of 'theory' we use an equivalent word, say 'meaning,' we discover that the absolute distinction disappears. The fact is not known to us at all unless it is known in its meaning, in that which constitutes it a revelation of God and an appeal to man; and to say that we know it in its meaning is to say that we know it theoretically, or in or through a theory of it. A fact of which there is no theory is a fact in which we can see no meaning; and though we can apply this distinction so far when we are speaking of physical facts, and argue that it is fire which burns and not the theory of heat, we cannot apply it at all when we are speaking of a fact which has to tell on us in other than physical ways: through conscience, through the heart, through the intelligence, and therefore in a manner to which the mind can really respond. St. Paul's own words in Rom 5:11 enable us to illustrate this. We have received, he says, or taken, the reconciliation. If we could take it physically, as we take a doctor's prescription, which would tell on us all the same whatever our spiritual attitude to it might be, then we might distinguish clearly between the fact and the theory of it, and argue that as long as we accepted the fact, the theory was neither here nor there; but if the fact with which we are dealing cannot be physically accepted at all — if it addresses itself to a nature which is higher than physical, a nature of which reason, imagination, emotion, conscience, are the elements, then the fact itself must be seen to be one in which there is that which appeals to all these elements; that is, to repeat the truth, it must be an interpreted fact, something in which fact and theory are indissolubly one. The Cross must be exhibited in οἱ ἰσχυροὶ σταυροῦ the Reconciliation in οἱ ἰσχυροὶ καταλλάγηται; and ἰσχυροὶ is always a rational, a theoretical word. It is much easier to say there is a distinction of fact and theory, a distinction between the testimony and the theology of St. Paul, than to prove it; it is much easier to imagine that one can preach the gospel without any theory of the death of Christ than, knowing what these words mean, to do so. The simplest preacher, and the most effective, is always the most absolutely theoretical. It is a theory, a tremendous theory, that Christ's death is a death for sin. But unless a preacher can put some interpretation on the death — unless he can find a meaning in it which is full of appeal — why should he speak of it at all? Is it the want of a theory that deprives it of its place in preaching?

There is one other subject to which also it is necessary to refer before going into detail on St. Paul's teaching — the connection between Christ's death and His resurrection. The tradition of Protestant theology undoubtedly tends to isolate the death, and to think of it as a thing by itself, apart from the resurrection; sometimes, one is tempted to say, apart even from any distinct conception of Him who died. But we know that St. Paul himself puts an extraordinary emphasis on the resurrection. Sometimes it is coordinated with the death. 'If we believe that Jesus died and rose again,' he writes to the Thessalonians, including in this the whole of the Christian faith (1Th 4:14). 'He was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification,' he says to the Romans, making the resurrection as essential as the death (Rom 4:25). It is the same with the summary of fundamental truths, which constituted the gospel as he preached it at Corinth, and which has been repeatedly referred to already:

'first of all that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures' (1Co 15:13 f.). But there are passages in which he gives a more exclusive emphasis to the resurrection. Thus in Rom 10:9 he writes: 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in thy heart that God raised Him from

the dead, thou shalt be saved'; and in 1Co 15:17 : 'If Christ is not risen, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.' It is possible, however, to do full justice to all such expressions without qualifying in the slightest the prominence given in St. Paul to Jesus Christ as crucified. It was the appearance of the Risen One to St. Paul which made him a Christian. What was revealed to him on the way to Damascus was that the Crucified One was Son of God, and the gospel that He preached afterwards was that of the Son of God crucified. There can be no salvation from sin unless there is a living Savior: this explains the emphasis laid by the apostle on the resurrection. But the Living One can only be a Savior because He has died: this explains the emphasis laid on the Cross. The Christian believes in a living Lord, or he could not believe at all; but he believes in a living Lord who died an atoning death, for no other can hold the faith of a soul under the doom of sin. The importance of St. Paul's teaching, and the fact that dissent from any specifically New Testament interpretation of Christ's death usually begins with it, may justify these preliminary observations; we now go on to notice more precisely what the apostle does teach. What then, let us ask, are the relations in which St. Paul defines the death of Christ? What are the realities with which he connects it, so that in these connections it becomes an intelligible thing — not a brute fact, like the facts of physics, while their laws are as yet unknown, but a significant, rational, ethical, appealing fact, which has a meaning, and can act not as a cause but as a motive? In other words, what is the doctrinal construction of this fact in virtue of which St. Paul can preach it to man as a gospel?

(1) To begin with, he defines it by relation to the love of God. The death of Christ is an illustration or rather a demonstration of that love. It is a demonstration of it which can never be surpassed. There are great, though rare examples of love among men, but nothing which could give any suggestion of this.

'Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; for the good man possibly one might dare even death, but God commends His love to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us' (Rom 5:7 f.).

We shall return to this, and to St. Paul's inferences from it, when the passage in Romans comes before us; but meanwhile we should notice that the interpretation of Christ's death through the love of God is fundamental in St. Paul. In whatever other relations he may define it, we must assume, unless the contrary can be proved, that they are consistent with this. It is the commonest of all objections to the propitiatory doctrine of the death of Christ that it is inconsistent with the love of God; and not only amateur, but professional theologians of all grades have rejected St. Paul's doctrine of propitiation as inconsistent with Jesus' teaching on the love of the Father; but if a mind like St. Paul teaches both things — if he makes the death of Christ in its propitiatory character the supreme demonstration of the Father's love — is there not an immense probability that there is misunderstanding somewhere? It may be a modern, it is certainly not a Pauline idea, that a death for sins, with a view to their forgiveness, is inconsistent with God's love. Whatever the process, St. Paul related that death to God's love as the supreme proof of it.

(2) Further, the apostle defines Christ's death by relation to the love of Christ.

'The Son of God loved me, ' he says, 'and gave Himself for me' (Gal 2:20).

'The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that one died for all' (2Co 5:14).

Walk in love, as Christ also loved us, and gave Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor' (Eph 5:2).

'Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify it to Himself' (Eph 5:25).

Christ is not an instrument, but the agent, of the Father in all that He does. The motive in which God acts is the motive in which He acts. The Father and the Son are at one in the work of man's salvation. It is this which is expressed when the work of Christ is described, as it is in Php 2:8 and Rom 5:19, as obedience — obedience unto death, and that the death of the Cross. The obedience is conceived as obedience to the loving will of the Father to save men — that is, it is obedience in the vocation of Redeemer, which involves death for sin. It is not obedience merely in the sense of doing the will of God as other men are called to do it, keeping God's commandments; it is obedience in this unique and incommunicable yet moral calling, to be at the cost of life the Savior of the world from sin. Hence it is in the obedience of Christ to the Father that the great demonstration of His love to men is given — 'He loved me,' as the apostle says, 'and gave Himself for me.' In His obedience, in which He makes His great sacrifice, Christ is fulfilling the will of God; and the response which He evokes by His death is a response toward God. It is at this point, in the last resort, that we become convinced of the deity of Christ. It is a work of God which He is working, and the soul that is won for it is won for God in Him.

(3) The relation of Christ's death to the love of God and of Christ is its fundamental relation on one side; on the other side, St. Paul relates it essentially to sin. It is a death for sin, whatever else may be said of it. 'First of all, Christ died for our sins.' It was sin which made death, and not something else, necessary as a demonstration of God's love and Christ's. Why was this so? The answer of the apostle is that it was so because sin had involved us in death, and there was no possibility of Christ's dealing with sin effectually except by taking our responsibility in it on Himself — that is, except by dying for it. Of course it is assumed in this that there is an ethical connection of some kind between death and sin, and that such a connection of words as, 'The wages of sin is death,' (Rom 6:23) really has meaning. No doubt this has been denied. Death, it is argued, is the debt of nature, not the wages of sin; it has no moral character at all. The idea of moral liability to death, when you look at the universality of death quite apart from moral considerations, is a piece of pure mythology. In spite of the assurance with which this argument is put forward it is not difficult to dissent from it. What it really does is to treat man abstractly, as if he were no more than a physical being; whereas, if we are to have either religion or morality preserved in the world, it is essential to maintain that he is more. The argument is one of the numberless class which proves nothing, because it proves too much. It is part of a vaster argument which would deny at the same time the spiritual nature and the immortality of man. But while it is right to say that death comes physically, that through disease, or accident, or violence, or mere physical exhaustion, it subdues to itself everything that lives, this does not touch the profounder truth with which St. Paul is dealing, that death comes from God, and that it comes in man to a being who is under law to Him. Man is not like a plant or an animal, nor is death to him what it is at the lower levels of life. Man has a moral nature in which there is a reflection of the holy law of God, and everything that befalls him, including death itself, must be interpreted in relation to that nature. Conscience, quickened by the law of God, has to look at death, and to become alive, not to its physical antecedents, but to its divine meaning. What is God's voice in death to a spiritual being? It is what the apostle represents it — death is the wages of sin. 2 It is that in which the divine judgment on sin comes home to the

conscience. The connection between the two things is real, though it is not physical; and because it is what it is — because death by God's ordinance has in the conscience of sinful men the tremendous significance which it does have — because it is a power by which they are all their lifetime held in bondage — because it is the expression of God's implacable and final opposition to evil — He who came to bear our sin must also die our death. Death is the word which sums up the whole liability of man in relation to sin, and therefore when Christ came to give Himself for our sins He did it by dying. It does not occur to St. Paul to ask how Christ could die the death which is the wages of sin, any more than it occurred to St. Peter to ask how He could bear the sins of others. If any one had argued that the death which Jesus died, since it had not the shadow of a bad conscience cast upon it, was not the death which is the wages of sin, can we not conceive him asking, 'What death, then, was it? Is there any other? The death He died was the only death we know; it was death in all that tragic reality that we see at Calvary; and the sinlessness of Jesus — when we take His love along with it — may have been so far from making it impossible for Him to know and feel it as all that it was, that it actually enabled him to realize its awful character as no sinful soul had ever done or could do. Instead of saying, He could not die the death which is the wages of sin, it may be far truer to say, None but He could. 3

It may not be amiss here to point out that analysis of the term 'death' as it is used by St. Paul almost invariably misleads. According to M. Menegoz, 4 the apostle's doctrine of the expiation of sin by death is fatally vitiated by the ambiguity of the term. Paul confounds in it two distinct things:

(1) death as *l'aneantissement complet et definitif*;

(2) death as *la peine de mort, le deces*.

If we take the word in the first sense, Christ did not die, for He was raised again, and therefore there is no expiation. If we take it in the second sense, there was no need that He should die, for we can all expiate our own sins by dying ourselves. This kind of penetration is hardly to be taken seriously. When Paul spoke of Christ's death as a death for sin, he had not a definition in his mind, whether *l'aneantissement complet et definitif*, or *la peine de mort*; but neither had he a vague or blurred idea which confused both; he had the awful fact of the crucifixion, with everything, physical and spiritual, which made it real; that was the bearing of sin and expiation of it, whether it answered to any one's abstract definition or not. The apostle would not have abandoned his gospel because some one demonstrated a priori, by means of definitions, that expiation of sin by death was either (1) impossible, or (2) unnecessary.

He lived in another region. With these general remarks on the different relations in which St. Paul defines the death of Christ, we may now proceed to consider the teaching of the epistles in detail, keeping as far as possible to chronological order.

(1.) The Epistles to the Thessalonians do not yield us much. The only indisputable passage is in the first epistle, 1Th 5:10 :

'God did not appoint us to wrath, but to the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep we should live together with Him. '

If the question is raised, What did Christ do for us with a view to our salvation, St. Paul has only one answer, He died for us. There is nothing in the epistles like the language of the hymn:—

'For us despised, for us He bore His holy fast, and hungered sore; For us temptations sharp He knew, For us the Tempter overthrew.' The only thing He is said to have done for us is to die, and this He did, because it was determined for Him by sin. The relation of sin and death in the nature of things made it binding on Him to die if He was to annul sin. The purpose here assigned to Christ's death, that whether we wake or sleep we should live together with Him, suggests that His power to redeem is dependent on His making all our experiences His own. If we are to be His in death and life, then He must take our death and life to Himself. If what is His is to become ours, it is only on the condition that what is ours He first makes His. There is the same suggestion in Rom 14:9 : 'To this end Christ died and lived, that He might be Lord both of dead and living. ' Not as though death made Him Lord of the dead, and rising again, of the living; but as One to whom no human experience is alien, He is qualified to be Lord of men through all. The particular character elsewhere assigned to death as the doom of sin is not here mentioned, but it does not follow that it was not felt. On the contrary, we should rather hold that St. Paul could never allude to the death of Christ without becoming conscious of its propitiatory character and of what gave it that character. The word would fill of its own accord with the meaning which it bears when he says, First of all, Christ died for our sins.

(2.) When we pass to the First Epistle to the Corinthians, we have much fuller references to the subject. For one thing, its supreme importance is insisted on when we find the gospel described as 'the word of the cross' (1Co 1:18), and the apostle's endeavors directed to this, 'that the cross of Christ may not be made void' (1Co 1:17). It is in the same spirit that he contrasts the true gospel with the miracles claimed by the Jews, and the wisdom sought by the Greeks: 'We preach Christ crucified, the power of God and the wisdom of God. ' So again in the second chapter he reminds the Corinthians how he came to Achaia determined to know nothing among them but. Jesus Christ and Him crucified: his whole gospel, the testimony of God, as he calls it, was in this (1Co 2:1 f.). In other passages he refers to the death of Christ in general terms which suggest the cost at which man's redemption was achieved. Twice over, in chapters 1Co 6:20, and 1Co 7:23, he writes, 'Ye were bought with a price; ' making it in the first instance the basis of an exhortation to glorify God in the nature He had made His own at so dear a rate; and in the other, of an exhortation to assume all the responsibilities of that freedom for which they had been so dearly ransomed, and not to become servants of men, i.e., not to let the conventions, or judgments, or consciences of others invade a responsibility which had obligations to the Redeemer alone. It may not be possible to work out the figure of a price, which is found in these passages, in detail; we may not be able to say what it answered to, who got it, how it was fixed, and so on. But what we may legitimately insist upon is the idea that the work of man's salvation was a costly work, and that the cost, however we are to construe it, is represented by the death of Christ. Ye were bought with a price, means, Ye were not bought for nothing. Salvation is not a thing which can be assumed, or taken for granted; it is not an easy thing, about which no difficulty can possibly be raised by any one who has any idea of the goodness of God. The point of view of the New Testament is the very opposite. Salvation is a difficult thing, an incredible thing, an impossible thing; it is the miracle of miracles that such a thing should be; the wonder of it never ceases, and it nowhere finds a more thrilling expression than in St. Paul's words, Ye were bought with a price. St. Paul will show us in other ways why cost was necessary, and the cost of Christ's death in particular; but it is a great step in initiation into the gospel he preached to see that cost, as Bushnell puts it in his book on Forgiveness and Law, had to be made, and actually was made, that men might be redeemed for

God.

There is another passage in the First Epistle to the Corinthians on which I should lay greater stress than is usually done in connection with the apostle's teaching on Christ's death: it is that in the tenth and eleventh chapters in which St. Paul speaks of the Sacraments. He is concerned about the recrudescence of immorality among the saints, about the presumptuous carelessness with which they go into temptation, relying apparently on their sacramental privileges to ensure them against peril. He points out that God's ancient people had had similar privileges, indeed identical ones, yet had fallen in the wilderness owing to their sins. You are baptized into Christ? Yes, and all our fathers were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; they formed one body with him, and were as sure of God's favor. You have supernatural meat and supernatural drink in the Holy Supper, meat and drink which have the assurance of a divine and immortal life in them? So had they in the manna and the water from the rock. They all ate the same supernatural meat as you do, they all drank the same supernatural drink; they drank of a supernatural rock which followed them, and the rock was Christ. 5 It is obvious from this passage (1Co 10:1-4) as well as from the references to baptism in 1Co 1:13 f. 1Co 12:13, and from the full explanation of the Supper in 1Co 11:23 ff., that the Sacraments had a large place in the church at Corinth, and not only a large place, but one of a significance which can hardly be exaggerated. And, as has been pointed out already, there is no interpretation of the Sacraments except by reference to the death of Christ. Baptism has always in view, as part at least of its significance, the forgiveness of sins; and as the rite which marks the believer's initiation into the new covenant, it is essentially related to the act on which the covenant is based, namely, that which Paul delivered first of all to this Church, that Christ died for our sins. When, in another epistle, Paul argues that baptism into Christ means baptism into His death, he is not striking out a new thought, of a somewhat venturesome originality, to ward off a shrewd blow suddenly aimed at his gospel; he is only bringing out what was all along to him the essential meaning of this ordinance. The Supper, again, of which he speaks at length in 1Co 10:1-33 and 1Co 11:1-34, bears an unmistakable reference to Christ's death. The cup is specially defined as the new covenant in His blood, and the apostle sums up the meaning of the Sacrament in the words, As often as ye eat this bread and drink the cup, ye publish the Lord's death until He come (1Co 11:26). In all probability *katagge* (publish) implies that the Sacrament was accompanied by words in which its significance was expressed; it was not only a picture in which the death of Christ was represented and its worth to the Church declared; there was an articulate confession of what it was, and of what the Church owed to it. If we compare the sixth chapter of Romans with the tenth and eleventh of 1st Corinthians, it seems obvious that modern Christians try to draw a broader line of distinction between the Sacraments than really exists. Partly, no doubt, this is owing to the fact that in our times baptism is usually that of infants, while the Supper is partaken of only by adults, whereas, in New Testament times, the significance of both was defined in relation to conscious faith. But it would not be easy to show, from St. Paul's epistles, that in contents and meaning, in the blessings which they represented and which were conveyed through them, there is any very great distinction. The truth seems rather to be that both the Sacraments are forms into which we may put as much of the gospel as they will carry; and St. Paul, for his part, practically puts the whole of his gospel into each. If Baptism is relative to the forgiveness of sins, so is the Supper. If Baptism is relative to the unity of the Church, so is the Supper. We are not only baptized into one body (1Co 12:13), but because there is one bread, we, many as we are who partake of it, are one body (1Co 10:17). If Baptism is relative to a new life in

Christ (Rom 6:4 f.), in the Supper Christ Himself is the meat and drink by which the new life is sustained (1Co 10:3 f.). And in both the Sacraments, the Christ to whom we enter into relation is Christ who died; we are baptized into His death in the one, we proclaim His death until the end of time in the other. I repeat, it is hardly possible to exaggerate the significance of these facts, though it is possible enough to ignore them altogether. The superstition that has gathered round the Sacraments, and that has tempted even good Christians to speak of abolishing them, probably showed itself at a very early date; there are unmistakable traces of it in the First Epistle to the Corinthians itself, especially in the tenth chapter; but instead of lessening, it increases our assurance of the place which these ordinances had in Christianity from the beginning. And although the rationale of the connection between the death of Christ and the blessings of the gospel is not elucidated by them, it is presupposed in them. In ordinances with which every Christian was familiar, and without which a place in the Christian community could neither be acquired nor retained, the death of Christ was perpetually kept before all as a death essentially related in some way to the forgiveness of sins. Not much light falls on our subject from the one sacrificial allusion to Christ's death in 1Co 5:7 : 'For our Passover also has been sacrificed — Christ. ' No doubt to< pa>sca here, as in Mark 14:12, means the paschal lamb, and the apostle is thinking of Christ as the Lamb of God, by whose sacrifice the Church is called and bound to a life of holiness. It is because of this sacrifice that he says, 'Let us therefore keep festival, not in old leaven, nor in leaven of malice and wickedness, but in the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. ' It is implied here certainly that there is an entire incongruity between a life of sin, and a life determined by a relation to the sacrificial death of Christ; but we could not, from this passage alone, make out what, according to St. Paul, was the ground of this incongruity. It would be wrong, in a passage with this simply allusive reference to the passover, to urge the significance of the lamb in the twelfth and thirteenth chapters of Exodus, and to apply this to interpret the death of Christ. There is no indication that the apostle himself carried out his thought on these lines.

We now come to the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, which is here of supreme importance. In one point of view, it is a defense of St. Paul's apostleship, and of his work in the apostolic office. The defense rests mainly on two pillars; first, his comprehension of the gospel; and second, his success in preaching it. There are one or two references in the earlier chapters to the sufferings and even the death of Jesus in an aspect with which we are not here specially concerned. Thus in 2Co 1:5, Paul says, 'The sufferings of Christ abound toward us'; meaning by this that in his apostolic work he suffered abundantly just as Christ had suffered; the weariness and peril from which Jesus could not escape haunted him too; the Lord's experience was continued in him. Similarly, in 2Co 4:10, when he speaks of always bearing about in the body th<n ne>krwsin tou~ jlhsou~ — the dying of Jesus — he means that his work and its attendant sufferings are killing him as they killed his Master; every day he feels his strength lessen, and the outer man perish. But it is not in these passages that the great revelation is made of what Christ's death is in relation to sin. It is in 2Co 5:1-21, in which he is defending his conduct in the apostolic office against the assaults of his enemies. Extravagant or controlled, the motive of his conduct was always the same. 'The love of Christ constrains us, ' he writes, 'because we thus judge, that one died for all (so then all died), and died for all that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them, and rose again. ' The importance of this passage is that it connects the two relations in which St. Paul is in the habit of defining Christ's death — its relation to the love in which it originated, and to the sin with which it dealt; and it shows us how to construe these two things in

relation to each other. Christ's death, we are enabled to see, was a loving death, so far as men are concerned, only because in that death He took the responsibilities of men upon Himself. Deny that, and it will be impossible to show any ground on which the death can be construed as a loving death at all. It is necessary to examine the passage in detail. The love of Christ, the apostle argues, constrains us, because we thus judge — i.e., because we put a certain interpretation on His death. Apart from this interpretation, the death of Christ has no constraining power. Here we find in St. Paul himself a confirmation of what has been said above about the distinction of fact and theory. It is in virtue of a certain theory of Christ's death that the fact has its power to constrain the apostle. If it were not susceptible of such an interpretation, if this theory were inapplicable to it, it would cease to constrain. What, then, is the theory? It is that one died for all; *ὁ ἓν ὑπὲρ πάντων* means that the interest of all was aimed at and involved in the death of the one. How it was involved in it these words alone do not enable us to say. They do not by themselves show the connection between Christ's death and the world's good. But St. Paul draws an immediate inference from them: 'so then all died.' In one sense, it is irrelevant and interrupts his argument. He puts it into a hurried parenthesis, and then eagerly resumes what it had suspended. 'One died for all (so then all died), and died for all that they who live should no longer live to themselves, but to Him who died for them and rose again.' Yet it is in this immediate inference, that the death of Christ for all involved the death of all — that the missing link is found. It is because Christ's death has this inclusive character — because, as Athanasius puts it, 'the death of all was fulfilled in the Lord's body' — that His death has in it a power which puts constraint on men to live for Him. 6 I cannot agree with Mr. Lidgett when he says that the words can only be understood in connection with the apostle's declaration elsewhere, that he has been 'crucified with Christ.' 7 That declaration is a declaration of Christian experience, the fruit of faith; but what the apostle is dealing with here is something antecedent to Christian experience, something by which all such experience is to be generated, and which, therefore, is in no sense identical with it. The problem before us is to discover what it is in the death of Christ which gives it its power to generate such experience, to exercise on human hearts the constraining influence of which the apostle speaks; and this is precisely what we discover in the inferential clause: 'so then all died.' This clause puts as plainly as it can be put the idea that His death was equivalent to the death of all; in other words, it was the death of all men which was died by Him. Were this not so, His death would be nothing to them. It is beside the mark to say, as Mr. Lidgett does, that His death is died by them rather than theirs by Him; the very point of the apostle's argument may be said to be that in order that they may die His death He must first die theirs. Our dying His death is not, in the New Testament, a thing which we achieve on our own initiative, or out of our own resources; it is the fruit of His dying ours. If it is our death that Christ died on the Cross, there is in the Cross the constraint of an infinite love; but if it is not our death at all if it is not our burden and doom that He has taken to Himself there — then what is it to us? His death can put the constraint of love upon all men, only when it is thus judged that the death of all was died by Him. When the apostle proceeds to state the purpose of Christ's death for any, that they which live should not henceforth live to themselves, but to Him who died for them and rose again' — he does it at the psychological and moral level suggested by the words: 'The love of Christ constrains us'. He who has done so tremendous a thing as to take our death to Himself has established a claim upon our life. We are not in the sphere of mystical union, of dying with Christ and living with Him; but in that of love transcendently shown, and of gratitude profoundly felt. 8 But it will not be easy for any one to be grateful for Christ's death,

especially with a gratitude which will acknowledge that his very life is Christ's, unless he reads the Cross in the sense that Christ there made the death of all men His own.

It is in this same passage that St. Paul gives the fullest explanation of what he means by reconciliation (katallagh>), and an examination of this idea will also illustrate his teaching on the death of Christ. Where reconciliation is spoken of in St. Paul, the subject is always God, and the object is always man. The work of reconciling is one in which the initiative is taken by God, and the cost borne by Him; men are reconciled in the passive, or allow themselves to be reconciled, or receive the reconciliation. We never read that God has been reconciled. God does the work of reconciliation in or through Christ, and especially through His death. He was engaged, in Christ, in reconciling the world — or rather, nothing less than a world — to Himself (2Co 5:19). He reconciled us to Himself through Christ (2Co 5:20). When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son (Rom 5:10). Men who once were alienated, and enemies in mind through wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death (Col 1:21 f.). It is very unfortunate that the English word reconcile (and also the German versöhnen, which is usually taken as its equivalent) diverge seriously, though in a way of which it is easy to be unconscious, from the Greek katalla>ssein. We cannot say in English, God reconciled us to Himself, without conceiving the persons referred to as being actually at peace with God, as having laid aside all fear, distrust, and love of evil, and entered, in point of fact, into relations of peace and friendship with God. But katalla>ssein, as describing the work of God, or katallagh>, as describing its immediate result, do not necessarily carry us so far. The work of reconciliation, in the sense of the New Testament, is a work which is finished, and which we must conceive to be finished, before the gospel is preached. It is the good tidings of the Gospel, with which the evangelists go forth, that God has wrought in Christ a work of reconciliation which avails for no less than the world, and of which the whole world may have the benefit. The summons of the evangelist is — 'Receive the reconciliation; consent that it become effective in your case.' The work of reconciliation is not a work wrought upon the souls of men, though it is a work wrought in their interests, and bearing so directly upon them that we can say God has reconciled the world to Himself; it is a work — as Cromwell said of the covenant — outside of us, in which God so deals in Christ with the sin of the world, that it shall no longer be a barrier between Himself and men. From this point of view we can understand how many modern theologians, in their use of the word reconciliation, come to argue as it were at cross purposes with the apostle. Writers like Kaftan, 9 for example, who do not think of the work of Christ as anything else than the work which Christ is perpetually doing in winning the souls of men for God, and who describe this as the work of reconciliation, though they may seem to the practical modern intelligence to be keeping close to reality, are doing all that can be done to make the Pauline, or rather the New Testament point of view, bewildering by a modern reader. Reconciliation, in the New Testament sense, is not something which is doing; it is something which is done. No doubt there is a work of Christ which is in process, but it has as its basis a finished work of Christ; it is in virtue of something already consummated on His cross that Christ is able to make the appeal to us which He does, and to win the response in which we receive the reconciliation. A finished work of Christ and an objective atonement — a katallagh> in the New Testament sense — are synonymous terms: the one means exactly the same as the other; and it seems to me self-evident, as I think it did to St. Paul, that unless we can preach a finished work of Christ in relation to sin, a katallagh> or reconciliation or peace which has been achieved independently of us, at an infinite cost, and to which we are called in a word or ministry of

reconciliation, we have no real gospel for sinful men at all. It is not in something Christ would fain do that we see His love, it is in something He has already done; nay, it is only through what He has already done that we can form any idea, or come to any conviction, of what He would fain do. He has died for us all, and by that death — not His own, properly speaking, but the death of the sinful race taken to Himself — He has so demonstrated the reality and infinity of the love of God to the sinful, as to make it possible for apostles and evangelists to preach peace to all men through Him. In the passage with which we are dealing, St. Paul appends to the apostolic message, abruptly and without any conjunction, the statement of the great truth of Christ's finished work which underlies it.

'On Christ's behalf, then, we are ambassadors, as though God were entreating you through us, we beg of you on Christ's behalf, Be reconciled to God. Him that knew no sin He made to be sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in Him' (2Co 5:20 f.). The want of a conjunction here does not destroy the connection; it only makes the appeal of the writer more solemn and thrilling. There need not be any misunderstanding as to what is meant by the words, Him that knew no sin He made to be sin for us. To every one who has noticed that St. Paul constantly defines Christ's death, and nothing but His death, by relation to sin, and who can recall similar passages in the Epistle to the Galatians or to the Romans, to which we shall presently come, it is obvious that these tremendous words cover precisely the same meaning as 'He died for our sins.' When the sinless one, in obedience to the will of the Father, died on the Cross the death of all, the death in which sin had involved all, then, and in that sense, God made Him to be sin for all. But what is meant by saying, 'in that sense.'? It means, 'in the sense of His death.' And what that means is not to be answered a priori, or on dogmatic grounds. It is to be answered out of the Gospel history, out of the experience of our Lord in the Garden and on the Cross. It is there we see what death meant for Him; what it meant for Him to make our sin, and the death in which God's judgment comes upon sin, His own; and it is the love which, in obedience to the Father, did not shrink from that for us which gives power and urgency to the appeal of the Gospel. We ought to feel that moralizing objections here are beside the mark, and that it is not for sinful men, who do not know what love is, to tell beforehand whether, or how far, the love of God can take upon itself the burden and responsibility of the world's sin; or if it does so, in what way its reality shall be made good. The premise of the Gospel is that we cannot bear that responsibility ourselves; if we are left alone with it, it will crush us to perdition. The message of the gospel, as it is here presented, is that Christ has borne it for us; if we deny that He can do so, is it not tantamount to denying the very possibility of a gospel? Mysterious and awful as the thought is, it is the key to the whole of the New Testament, that Christ bore our sins. Of this, God made Him to be sin for us is merely another equivalent; it means neither more nor less. The end contemplated — that we might become the righteousness of God in Him — is here stated religiously or theologically. Christ takes our place in death, and in so doing is identified with the world's sin; the end in view in this is that we should take His place in life, and in so doing stand justified in God's sight. By what psychological process this change in our position is mediated St. Paul does not here tell. What he does is to give a religious equivalent for the ethical and psychological representation of ver. 14:

'He died for all, that they which live should not live unto themselves, but to Him who died for them and rose again.'

It took no less than His death for them to bring into their life a motive of such creative and recreative power; and it takes no less than this being made sin for them to open for them the possibility of becoming God's righteousness in Him. To say so is not to bring different things into an artificial correspondence. The two statements are but the ethical and the theological representation of one and the same reality; and it confirms our interpretation of the passage, and our conviction of the coherence of the apostolic gospel, that under various and independent aspects we are continually coming on the same facts in the same relation to each other.

(3.) The closing verses of 2Co 5:1-21 may fairly be called the locus classicus on the death of Christ in St. Paul's writings. Yet in proceeding to the Epistle to the Galatians we are introduced to a document which, more exclusively than any other in the New Testament, deals with this subject, and its significance. Even in the salutation, in which the apostle wishes his readers grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, he expands the Savior's name by adding, in a way unexampled in such a connection elsewhere, 'who gave Himself for our sins that He might redeem us from the present world with all its ills, according, to the will of our God and Father' (2Co 1:4)

Reference has already been made to the vehement words in which he anathematizes man or angel who shall preach a different gospel. At the end of the second chapter he puts again, in the strongest possible form, his conviction that Christianity, the new and true religion, is a thing complete in itself, exclusive of everything else, incapable of compromise or of supplement, and that it owes this completeness, and if we choose to call it so, this intolerance, to the supreme significance and power which belong in it to the death of Christ.

'I have been crucified with Christ my life is no longer mine, it is Christ who lives in me; the life I now live in flesh I live in faith, faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me' (Gal 2:20). The whole of the Christian religion lies in that. The whole of Christian life is a response to the love exhibited in the death of the Son of God for men. No one can become right with God except by making the response of faith to this love — that is, except by abandoning himself unreservedly to it as the only hope for sinful men. To trust it wholly and solely is the only right thing a man can do in presence of it; and when he does so trust it he is completely, finally, and divinely right. To supplement it is, according to Paul, to frustrate the grace of God; it is to compromise the Christian religion in its very principle; and to such a sin St. Paul will be no party. If righteousness is by law, as he sums it up in one of his passionate and decisive words, then Christ died for nothing (Gal 2:21). St. Paul knew by experience that all he was, or could ever become as a Christian, came out of the Cross. This is why he could say to the Corinthians, 'I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified' (1Co 2:2); and why he repeats it in other words to the Galatians,

'God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world is crucified to me and I to the world' (Gal 6:14).

Put positively, then, we may say that the aim of the Epistle to the Galatians is to show that all Christianity is contained in the Cross; the Cross is the generative principle of everything Christian in the life of man. Put negatively, we may say its aim is to show that law, and especially, as it happened, the ritual side of the Jewish law, contributes nothing to that life. Now St. Paul, it might be argued, had come to know this experimentally, and independently of any theory. When it had

dawned on his mind what the Cross of Christ was, when he saw what it signified as a revelation of God and His love, everything else in the universe faded from his view. Newman speaks, in a familiar passage of the Apologia, of resting in 'the thought of two, and two only, absolute and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator'; in the relations and interaction of these two his religion consisted. A religion so generated, though it may be very real and powerful, is, of course, something far poorer than Christianity; yet in a somewhat similar way we might say of St. Paul that for him the universe of religion consisted of the soul and the Son of God giving Himself up for it; all that God meant for him, all that he could describe as revelation, all that begot within him what was at once religion, life, and salvation, was included in this act of Christ. No law, however venerable; no customs, however dear to a patriotic heart; no traditions of men, however respectable in effect or intention, could enter into competition with this. It was dishonoring to Christ, it was an annulling of the grace of God, to mention them alongside of it. To do so was to betray a radical misapprehension of Christ's death, such as made it for those who so misapprehended it entirely ineffective. 'Ye are severed from Christ,' St. Paul cries, 'ye who would be justified by law; ye are banished from grace' (Gal 5:4). But though St. Paul had learned this by experience, he does not, in point of fact, treat this subject of law empirically. He does not content himself with saying, 'I tried the law until I was worn out, and it did nothing for me; I made an exhaustive series of experiments with it, resultless experiments, and so I am done with it; through the law I have died to the law (Gal 2:19); it has itself taught me, by experience under it, that it is not the way to life, and so it is to me now as though it were not.' He does not content himself with giving this as his experience of the law; nor does he, on the other hand, content himself with giving us simply and empirically his experience of Christ. He does not say, 'Christ has done everything for me and in me. The constraint of His love is the whole explanation of my whole being as a Christian. By the grace of God, and by nothing else, I am what I am, and therefore the law is nothing to me: I am so far from finding myself obliged to acknowledge its claims still, that it is my deepest conviction that to acknowledge its claims at all is to frustrate the grace of God, to make void the Cross of Christ.' Probably if he had written thus — and he might truly have written thus — it would have seemed attractive and convincing to many who have misgivings about what he actually has written. But St. Paul could not, and did not remain at this empirical standpoint. He has a theory again — or let us say an understanding — of the relations of Christ and law, which enables him to justify and comprehend his experience. But for the truths of which this theory is the vehicle, the death of Christ would not be what it is, or exercise over the soul the power which it does. It is some dim sense of these truths, truths which the theory does not import but only unfolds, which in every case gives the death of Christ its constraining influence upon sinful men. What, then, is the theory?

Briefly, it is summed up in the words, Christ under the law. This is the expression used in Gal 4:4, and its indefiniteness, in this form, makes it seem unobjectionable enough. It signifies that when He came into the world Christ came under the same conditions as other men: all that a Jew meant when he said 'Law' had significance for him; the divine institutions of Israel had a divine authority which existed for him as well as for others. To say that the Son of God was made under the law would thus mean that He had the same moral problem in His life as other men; that He identified Himself with them in the spiritual conditions under which they lived; that the incarnation was a moral reality and not a mere show. But it is certain that this is not all that St. Paul meant; and to the writer, at least, it is not certain that St. Paul ever had this as a distinct and separate object of

thought present to his mind at all. What he really means by 'Christ under the law' comes out in its full meaning in Gal 3:13 : Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming curse for us. 'Under the law, ' in short, is an ambiguous expression, and it is necessary to be clear as to which of two possible interpretations it bears in this case. In relation to man in general, the law expresses the will of God. It tells him what he must do to please God. It is imperative, and nothing more. We may say, of course, that Christ was under the law in this sense it is self-evident. But as has just been hinted, it is doubtful whether St. Paul ever thought of this by itself. To be under the law in this sense did not to him at least yield the explanation of Christ's redeeming power. In the mere fact that Christ came to keep the law which was binding on all, there was no such demonstration of love to sinners as was sufficient, of itself, to make them new creatures. But this is not the only sense which can be assigned to the words, 'under the law. ' The law has not only a relation to man as such, in which it expresses the will of God; it has a relation to men as sinners, in which it expresses the condemnation of God. Now Christ is our Redeemer, according to the apostle, because He was made under the law in this sense. He not only became man, bound to obedience — it is not easy to say where the omnipotent loving constraint is to be discovered in this; but He became curse for us. He made our doom His own. He took on Him not only the calling of a man, but our responsibility as sinful men; it is in this that His work as Redeemer lies, for it is in this that the measure, or rather the immensity, of His love is seen. To say, 'He became a curse for us, ' is exactly the same as to say, 'He was made sin for us,' or 'He died for us' but it is infinitely more than to say, 'He was made man for us' — or even man bound to obedience to the law — a proposition to which there is nothing analogous in the New Testament. The conception of obedience, as applicable to the work of Christ, will recur in other connections; here it is enough to say that if we wish to put the whole work of Christ under that heading, we must remember that what we have to do with is not the ordinary obedience of men, but the obedience of a Redeemer. Christ had an ethical vocation, as St. Paul reminds us in the very first reference to His death in this epistle, 'He gave Himself for our sins, to deliver us from the present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father'; but His vocation, in carrying out that redeeming will, was a unique one; and, according to St. Paul, its uniqueness consisted in this, that one who knew no sin had, in obedience to the Father, to take on Him the responsibility, the doom, the curse, the death of the sinful. And if any one says that this was morally impossible, may we not ask again, What is the alternative? Is it not that the sinful should be left alone with their responsibility, doom, curse, and death? And is not that to say that redemption is impossible? The obedience of the Redeemer transcends morality, if we will; it is something to which morality is unequal; from the point of view of ordinary ethics, it is a miracle. ¹⁰ But it is the very function of the Redeemer to do the thing which it is impossible for sinful men to do for themselves or for each other; and St. Paul's justification of the miracle is that it creates all the genuine and victorious morality — all the keeping of God's commandments in love — which the world can show.

There have been many attempts, if not to evade this line of argument, and this connection of ideas, then to find something quite different in Galatians, which shall dispense with the necessity of considering it. Thus it is argued that St. Paul in the whole epistle is dealing with Jews, or with people who wanted to be Jews, and with their relation to the ceremonial law — a situation which no longer has reality for us. But this is hardly the case. St. Paul nowhere draws any distinction in the law between ceremonial and moral; the law for him is one, and it is the law of God. It is owing to accidental circumstances that the ceremonial aspect of it is more prominent in this epistle, as

the ethical aspect is in Romans. But we shall find the same line of argument repeated in Romans, where it is the moral law which is at stake; and when the apostle tells us that through the law he has died to the law (Gal 2:16), or that we have died to the law through the body of Christ (Rom 7:4), or that we are not under law but under grace (Rom 6:14), he has not the moral law any less in view than the ceremonial. He means that nothing in the Christian life is; explained by anything statutory, and that everything in it is explained by the inspiring power of that death in which Christ made all our responsibilities to the law His own. There is a sense, of course, in which the law is Jewish, but St. Paul had generalized it in order to be able to preach the Gospel to the gentiles; 11 he had found analogues of it in every society and in every conscience; in his evangelistic preaching he defined all sin by relation to it; in the utmost extent of meaning that could be given to the term, 'law' had significance for all men; and it was a gospel for all men that St. Paul preached when he declared that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming curse for us. No doubt when he wrote the words, 'Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming curse for us, ' he was thinking, as his antecedents and circumstances compelled him to think, of himself and his fellow- countrymen, who had known so well the yoke of bondage; that is, it is an exegetical result that hJma~v means us Jews; but that does not alter the fact that the universal gospel underlies the expression, and is conveyed by it; it only means that here a definite application is made of that gospel in a relevant case. The same considerations dispose of the attempts that are made to evacuate the 'curse' of meaning by identifying it with the 'Cross. ' No doubt Paul appeals in support of his idea that Christ became a curse for us to the text in Deu 21:23, which he quotes in the form 'Cursed is everyone who hangs upon a tree. ' No doubt he avoids applying to Christ the precise words of the text, Accursed of God (kekathrame>nov uJpo< tou~ qeou~ (LXX.) μυηλοαÔAt!"l"qj). So do we, because the words would be false and misleading. Christ hung on the tree in obedience to the Father's will, fulfilling the purpose of the Father's love, doing a work with which the Father was well pleased, and on account of which the Father highly exalted Him; hence to describe Him as accursed of God would be absurd. It is not because St. Paul shrinks from his own logic that he says He became a curse for us, instead of saying He became a curse of God, or accursed of God, for us; it is because he is speaking in truth and soberness. Death is the curse of the law. It is the experience in which the final repulsion of evil by God is decisively expressed; and Christ died. In His death everything was made His that sin had made ours — everything in sin except its sinfulness. There is no essential significance in the crucifixion, as if it would have been impossible to say that Christ became a curse for us, if He had died in any other way. The curse, in truth, is only one of St. Paul's synonyms for the death of Christ — one which is relative, no doubt, to the conception of Christ as 'under the law, ' but which for its meaning is entirely independent of the passage in Deuteronomy. The New Testament has many analogies to this use of the Old. Christ rode into Jerusalem on an ass, and declared Himself a King in doing so, but no one supposes that His sovereignty is constituted or exhausted in this; it is entirely independent of it, though in connection with a certain prophecy (Zec 9:9) it can be identified with it. So again He was crucified between two thieves, and an evangelist says that there the Scripture was fulfilled — He was numbered with transgressors; but we know that the Scripture was fulfilled in another and profounder sense, and would have been fulfilled all the same though Jesus had been crucified alone (Mark 15:28 Rec., Luk 22:37).. And so also with the Deuteronomic quotation in Gal 3:13. The Old Testament here gave Paul an expression — an argumentum, if we will; it did not give him his gospel. He had said already, e.g. in 2Co 5:21, and will say again in other forms, all he has to

say here, that in His death Christ was made under the law, not merely as that which laid its imperative, but as that which laid its sentence, upon man; that He took to Himself in His death our responsibility, our doom, our curse, as sinful men, and not merely our obligation to be good men. And though it is Christian, it is not illogical, to avoid such an expression as accursed of God. For in so making the doom of men His own in death Christ was doing God's will. The other passages in Galatians which deal with our subject bring to view the ethical rather than the theological import of the death of Christ. One occurs at Gal 5:24 : 'They that are of Christ Jesus crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts. ' Ideally, we must understand, this crucifixion of the flesh is involved in Christ's crucifixion; really, it is effected by it. Whoever sees into the secret of Calvary — whoever is initiated into the mystery of that great death — is conscious that the doom of sin is in it; to take it as real, and to stand in any real relation to it, is death to the flesh with its passions and desires. So with the last passage in the epistle at which the subject recurs (Gal 6:14): 'Never be it mine to boast but in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ' Here the apostle reiterates with new emphasis at the end of his letter what he has enforced from the beginning, that the Cross is the explanation of everything Christian. Of course it is the Cross interpreted as he has interpreted it; apart from this interpretation, which shows it to be full of a meaning that appeals irresistibly to man, it can have no rational or moral influence at all. But with this interpretation it is the annihilative and the creative power in Christianity; the first commandment of the new religion is that we shall have no God but Him, who is fully and finally revealed there.

(4.) The Epistle to the Romans is not so directly controversial as that to the Galatians; there are no personal references in it and no temper. But the Gospel is defined in it in relation to law, in very much the same sense as in Galatians; the completeness of the Christian religion, its selfcontainedness, its self- sufficiency, the impossibility of combining it with or supplementing it from anything else, are assumed or proved in much the same way. The question of religion for St. Paul is, How shall a man, a sinful man, be righteous with God? The Gospel brings the answer to that question. It is because it does so that it is a Gospel. It tells sinful men of a righteousness which is exactly what they need. It preaches something on the ground of which, sinners as they are, God the Judge of all can receive them — a righteousness of God, St. Paul calls it, naming it after Him who is its source, and at the same time characterizing it as divinely perfect and adequate — a righteousness of God which is somehow identified with Jesus Christ (Rom 3:22; cf. 1Co 1:30). In particular it is identified somehow with Jesus Christ in His death (Rom 3:25), and therefore in Romans as in Galatians this death of Christ is the source of all that is Christian. All Christian inferences about God are deduced from it. Once we are sure of it and of its meaning, we can afford a great deal of ignorance in detail. We know that it covers everything and guarantees everything in which we are vitally interested; that it disposes of the past, creates the future, is a security for immortal life and glory (Rom 3:9 ff. and Rom 8:31 ff.). What, then, does St. Paul say of the righteousness of God, and of the death of Christ in relation to it? The critical passage is that in Rom 3:21 ff. To give a detailed exegesis of it would be to do what has been perhaps too often done already, and would raise questions to distract; as well as to aid intelligence. As is well known, there are two principal difficulties in the passage. The one is the meaning of ἵλασις (propitiation) in Rom 3:25. The other is that which is raised by the question whether the righteousness of God has the same meaning throughout, or whether it may not have in one place — say in Rom 3:22 — the half- technical sense which belongs to it as a summary of St. Paul's

gospel; and in another — say in Rom 3:26 — the larger and more general sense which might belong to it elsewhere in Scripture as a synonym for God's character, or at least for one of His essential attributes. Not that these two principal difficulties are unrelated to each other, on the contrary, they are inextricably intertwined, and cannot be discussed apart. It is an argument for distinguishing two senses of *dikaiousu>nh qeou~* (the righteousness of God) that when we do so we are enabled to see more clearly the meaning of *iJlasth>riov*. It is the very function of Jesus Christ, set forth by God as a propitiation in His blood, to exhibit these two senses (which are equally indispensable, if there is to be a religion for sinful men), in their unity and consistency with each other. And, on the other hand, the term *iJlasth>riov*, to say the least, is relative to some problem created by sin for a God who would justify sinners; and the distinction of two senses in which *dikaiousu>nh qeou~* is used enables us to state this problem in a definite form.

Assuming, then, that both difficulties will come up for consideration, there is a certain convenience in starting with the second — that which is involved in the use of the expression 'the righteousness of God.' It is used in Rom 3:21-22, Rom 3:25-26; and the use of it is implied in Rom 3:24 : 'being justified freely by His grace.' It seems to me a strong argument for the double sense of this expression that when the apostle brings his argument to a climax the two senses have sifted themselves out, so to speak, and stand distinctly, side by side, the end of all God's action in His redeeming revelation of Himself to men is that He may be just Himself, and justify him who believes in Jesus' (*eijv to< ei+nai aujto< di>kaion kai< dikaiou~nta tostewv jlhsou~*, Rom 3:26). The first part of this end — God's being righteous Himself — might quite fairly be spoken of as *asdikaiousu>nh* (God's righteousness); it is, indeed, what under ordinary circumstances is meant by the words. Compare, for example, the use of them in Rom 3:5. But God's appearance in the character of *oJ dikaiw~n* (he who justifies) is also the manifestation of a righteousness of God, and indeed of the righteousness of God in the sense in which it constitutes St. Paul's gospel — a righteousness of God which stands or turns to the good of the believing sinner. Both things are there: a righteousness which comes from God and is the hope of the sinful, and God's own righteousness, or His character in its self-consistency and inviolability. In virtue of the first, God is *oJ dikaiw~n*, the Justifier; in virtue of the second, He is *di>kaiov*, Just. What St. Paul is concerned to bring out, and what by means of the conception of Christ in His blood as *iJlasth>riov* (endued with propitiatory power) he does bring out, is precisely the fact that both things are there, and there in harmony with each other. There can be no gospel unless there is such a thing as a righteousness of God for the ungodly. But just as little can there be any gospel unless the integrity of God's character be maintained. The problem of the sinful world, the problem of all religion, the problem of God in dealing with a sinful race, is how to unite these two things. The Christian answer to the problem is given by St. Paul in the words: 'Jesus Christ whom God set forth a propitiation (or, in propitiatory power) in His blood.' In Jesus Christ so set forth there is the manifestation of God's righteousness in the two senses, or, if we prefer it, in the complex sense, just referred to. Something is done which enables God to justify the ungodly who believe in Jesus, and at the same time to appear signally and conspicuously a righteous God. What this something is we have still to consider; but meanwhile it should be noted that this interpretation of the passage agrees with what we have already seen — that justification of the ungodly, or forgiveness of sins, or redemption, or whatever we are to call it, is a real problem for St. Paul. Gospel is the last thing in the world to be taken for granted: before there can be any such thing a problem of tremendous difficulty has to be solved, and according to the apostle of the Gentiles it has received at God's

hands a tremendous solution.

Before entering into this, it is only fair to refer to the interpretations of the passage which aim at giving the righteousness of God precisely the same force all through. In this case, of course, it is the technical, specifically Pauline sense which is preferred; the *dikaïosunē qeou* is to be read always as that by which sinful man is justified. This is done by different interpreters with very various degrees of insight.

(1) There are those who seem unconscious that there is any problem, any moral problem, in the situation at all. The righteousness of God, they argue, is essentially self-imparting; it 'goes out' and energizes in the world; it takes hold of human lives and fills them with itself; it acts on the analogy of a physical force, like light or heat, diffusing itself and radiating in every direction, indiscriminately and without limit. Legal religion, no doubt, conceives of it otherwise; to legalism, God's righteousness is a negative attribute, something in which God, as it were, stands on the defensive, maintaining His integrity against the sin of the world; but that is only a mistake. God's righteousness is effluent, overflowing, the source of all the goodness in the world; and we see in Jesus Christ that this is so. The truth in all this is as obvious as the irrelevance. Of course all goodness is of God; no man would less have wished to question this than St. Paul. But St. Paul felt that the sin of the world made a difference to God; it was a sin against His righteousness, and His righteousness had to be vindicated against it; it could not ignore it, and go on simpliciter 'justifying' men as if nothing had happened. Such an interpretation of the passage ignores altogether the problem which the sin of the world (as St. Paul looked at it) presented to God. It makes no attempt whatever to define the relation, on which everything in the passage turns, between the divine righteousness and the death of Christ as a *last thing*; and in missing altogether the problem, it misses as completely the solution — that is, it misses the Gospel. We cannot keep Christianity, or any specifically Christian truth, if we deny its premises, nor can we either state or solve a moral problem if we confine ourselves to physical categories.

(2) There are those who assimilate the righteousness of God in this passage to the *dikaïosunē qeou* of the Psalms and later Isaiah, those familiar passages in which it is so often found as a parallel to *swthra* (salvation). It is in these, they argue, that the real antecedents are found both of St. Paul's thoughts and of his language. What, for instance, could be closer to his mind than Psa 96:2 : 'The Lord hath made known His salvation; His righteousness hath He openly showed in the sight of the heathen'? In the Gospel we have the manifestation of the righteousness of God in this sense, a righteousness which is indistinguishable from His grace, and in which He shows Himself righteous by acting in accordance with His covenant obligations — receiving His people graciously, and loving them freely. 12 There is something attractive in this, and something true; but it is as completely irrelevant to St. Paul's thought in the passage before us as the more superficial view already referred to. For one thing, St. Paul never refers to any of these passages in connecting his gospel with the Old Testament. He must have been perfectly aware that they were written on another plane than that on which he stood as a sinful man and a preacher to sinners. They were written for God's covenant people, to assure them that God would be true to the obligations of the covenant, and would demonstrate His righteousness in doing so; God's righteousness, in all these passages, is that attribute to which His people appeal when they are wronged. The situation which St. Paul has before him, however, is not that of God's people, wronged by their enemies, and entitled to appeal to His righteousness to plead their cause and put

them in the right; it is that of people who have no cause, who are all in the wrong with God, whose sins impeach them without ceasing, to whom God as Righteous Judge is not, as to a wronged covenant people, a tower of hope, but a name which sums up all their fears. The people for whom Isaiah and the Psalms were written were people who, being put in the wrong by their adversaries on earth, had a supreme appeal to God, before whom they were confident they should be in the right; the people to whom St. Paul preaches are people who before God have no case, so that the assurances of the prophet and the psalmists are nothing to them. Of course there is such a thing as a New Covenant, and it is possible for those who are within it to appropriate these Old Testament texts; there is, for example, a clear instance of such appropriation in the First Epistle of John 1:9 :

'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ' In other words, He is true to the obligations of His covenant with us in Christ. These glorious Old Testament Scriptures, therefore, are not without their meaning for the New, or their influence in it; but it is a complete mistake, and it has been the source of the most far-reaching and disastrous confusion, to try to deduce from them the Pauline conception of the righteousness of God. And it must be repeated that in such interpretations, as in those already referred to, there is again wanting any sense of a problem such as St. Paul is undoubtedly grappling with, and any attempt to define explicitly and intelligibly the relation between the righteousness of God, conceived as it is here conceived, and the propitiation in the blood of Christ. Indeed, it is not too much to say that for St. Paul there is no such thing as a *dikaiousu>nh qeou~* except through the propitiation; whereas here the *dikaiousu>nh qeou~* is fully explained, with no reference to the propitiation whatever.

(3) It is worth while to refer to one particular construction of the passage, in which an attempt is made to keep the same sense of *dikaiousu>nh qeou~* throughout, and at the same time to do justice to the problem which is obviously involved. It is that which is given by Dr. Seeberg of Dorpat in his book, *Der Tod Christi*. Seeberg as a writer is not distinguished either by lucidity or conciseness, but, put briefly, his interpretation is as follows: Righteousness means acting according to one's proper norm, doing what one ought to do. God's proper norm, the true rule of action for Him, is that He should institute and maintain fellowship with men. He would not be righteous if He did not do so; He would fail of acting in His proper character. Now, in setting forth Christ as a propitiation, God does what the circumstances require if fellowship is to be instituted and maintained between Himself and sinful men; and it is in this sense that the propitiation manifests or demonstrates His righteousness. It shows God not unrighteous, not false to Himself and to the true norm of His action, as He would have been if in the face of sin He had simply let the idea of fellowship with man go; but manifesting Himself as a righteous God, who is true to Himself and to His norm most signally and conspicuously in this, that over sin and in spite of it He takes means to secure that fellowship between Himself and men shall not finally lapse. This is ingenious and attractive, though whether the conception of the righteousness of God from which it starts would have been recognized by St. Paul or by any Scripture writer is another matter; but apart from this, it obviously leaves a question unanswered, on the answer to which a great deal depends. That question is, What is the means which God takes to secure fellowship with sinful men, i.e., to act toward them in a way which does justice to Himself? It is implied in Seeberg's whole argument that sin does create a problem for God; something has to be done, where sinful

men are concerned, before fellowship with God can be taken for granted; and that something God actually does when He sets forth Christ a propitiation, through faith in His blood. The question, therefore, is — if we are going to think seriously at all — What is the propitiation, or more precisely, How is the propitiation to be defined in relation to the sin of the world, in view of which God provided it, that He might be able still to maintain fellowship with man? This is a question which, so far as I am able to follow him, Seeberg never distinctly answers. He says that God set forth Christ in His blood as 'ein solches . . . welches durch den Glauben ein suhnhafte wirkendes ist' (a thing or power of such a sort that through faith it comes to have an atoning efficacy). 13 He refuses to explain the propitiatory character of Christ's death by regarding it as sacrificial; he refuses to explain it as in any sense vicarious; neither of these ideas, according to him, is supported by St. Paul. What St. Paul taught was rather this. Christ comprehended in Himself the whole human race, as Adam did (this idea St. Paul is supposed to have borrowed from the Jewish doctrine of original sin); and through the death of Christ humanity has suffered that which the holy God in grace claimed from it as the condition of its entering again into fellowship with Him. As the Holy One, He has made this re-entrance dependent upon death, and as the Gracious One He has consented to be satisfied with that suffering of death which He has made possible for humanity in Christ. 14 It is not easy to regard this as real thinking. It does not set the death of Christ in any real relation to the problem with which the apostle is dealing. The suffering of death is that which God in His grace is pleased to claim from the sinful race as the condition of restored fellowship, and He has been further pleased to accept as satisfying this condition that particular suffering of death which Christ endured, and which can be reproduced in individuals through faith; but everything is of mere good pleasure, there is no rational necessity at any point. One can only repeat it, this is a medium in which thinking is impossible, and it is not the medium in which St. Paul's mind moved. It was not an arbitrary appointment of God that made the death of Christ iJlath>tion; it was the essential relation, in all human experience, of death and sin. Christ died for our sins, because it is in death that the divine judgment on sin is finally expressed. Once we put law and necessity out of the relations between Christ's death and our sin, we dismiss the very possibility of thinking on the subject; we may use words about it, but they are words without meaning. It is a significant feature of all such explanations, to call them so, of Christ's death, that they do not bring it into any real relation to the Christian's freedom from the law, or to the controversies which raged round this in the Pauline churches; and this is only one of the ways in which it, appears that though using certain Pauline words they have gone off the rails of Pauline thought. The passage in Romans becomes simple as soon as we read it in the light of those we have already examined in 2 Corinthians and in Galatians. It is Christ set forth in His blood who is a propitiation; that is, it is Christ who died. In dying, as St. Paul conceived it, He made our sin His own; He took it on Himself as the reality which it is in God's sight and to God's law: He became sin, became a curse for us. It is this which gives His death a propitiatory character and power; in other words, which makes it possible for God to be at once righteous and a God who accepts as righteous those who believe in Jesus. He is righteous, for in the death of Christ His law is honored by the Son who takes the sin of the world to Himself as all that it is to God; and He can accept as righteous those who believe in Jesus, for in so believing sin becomes to them what it is to Him. I do not know any word which conveys the truth of this if 'vicarious' or 'substitutionary' does not, nor do I know any interpretation of Christ's death which enables us to regard it as a demonstration of love to sinners, if this vicarious or substitutionary character is denied.

There is much preaching about Christ's death which fails to be a preaching of Christ's death, and therefore to be in the full sense of the term gospel preaching, because it ignores this. The simplest hearer feels that there is something irrational in saying that the death of Christ is a great proof of love to the sinful, unless there is shown at the same time a rational connection between that death and the responsibilities which sin involves, and from which that death delivers. Perhaps one should beg pardon for using so simple an illustration, but the point is a vital one, and it is necessary to be clear. If I were sitting on the end of the pier, on a summer day, enjoying the sunshine and the air, and some one came along and jumped into the water and got drowned 'to prove his love for me,' I should find it quite unintelligible. I might be much in need of love, but an act in no rational relation to any of my necessities could not prove it. But if I had fallen over the pier and were drowning, and some one sprang into the water, and at the cost of making my peril, or what but for him would be my fate, his own, saved me from death, then I should say, 'Greater love hath no man than this.' I should say it intelligibly, because there would be an intelligible relation between the sacrifice which love made and the necessity from which it redeemed. Is it making any rash assumption to say that there must be such an intelligible relation between the death of Christ — the great act in which His love to sinners is demonstrated — and the sin of the world for which in His blood He is the propitiation? I do not think so. Nor have I yet seen any intelligible relation established between them except that which is the key to the whole of New Testament teaching, and which bids us say, as we look at the Cross, He bore our sins, He died our death. It is so His love constrains us. Accepting this interpretation, we see that the whole secret of Christianity is contained in Christ's death, and in the believing abandonment of the soul to that death in faith. It is from Christ's death, and the love which it demonstrates, that all Christian inferences are drawn. Once this is accepted, everything else is easy and is secure.

'When we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; much more then being justified now in His blood shall we be saved through Him from the wrath. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved in His life' (Rom 5:8 ff.). The much more implies that in comparison with this primary, this incredibly great proof of God's love, everything else may be taken for granted. It is the same argument which is employed again in Rom 8:32 :

'He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?' And as it includes everything else on the part of God, so does it also on the part of man. The propitiatory death of Christ, as an all- transcending demonstration of love, evokes in sinful souls a response which is the whole of Christianity. The love of Christ constraineth us: whoever can say that can say all that is to be said about the Christian life. This is not the way in which St. Paul's gospel is usually represented now. Since Pfleiderer's first book on Paulinism was translated, some thirty years ago, it has become almost an axiom with many writers on this subject, that the apostle has two doctrines of reconciliation — a juridical and an ethico- mystical one. There is, on the one hand, the doctrine that Christ died for us, in a sense like that which has just been explained; and on the other, the doctrine that in a mystical union with Christ effected by faith we ethically die with Him and live with Him — this dying with Christ and living with Him, or in Him, being the thing we call salvation.

What the relation of the two doctrines is to each other is variously represented. Sometimes they are added together, as by Weiss, as though in spite of their independence justice had to be done

to both in the work of man's salvation a doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ who died for us finding its indispensable supplement in a doctrine of spiritual regeneration through baptism, in which we are vitally united to Christ in His death and resurrection. Weiss holds that it is not Pauline to say that the fellowship of life with Christ is established by faith; it is only established, according to his view, by baptism. 15 But Paul, it is safe to say, was incapable of divorcing his thoughts so completely from reality as to represent the matter thus. He was not pedantically interpreting a text, he was expounding an experience; and there is nothing in any Christian experience answering to this dead or inert justification by faith, which has no relation to the new life, nor again is there anything in Christian experience like this new life which is added by baptism to the experience of justification by faith, but does not spring out of it. It is a moral wrong to any serious-minded person to construe his words in this way. Ritschl does not add the two sides of the Pauline gospel together as Weiss does. For him they stand side by side in the apostle, and though salvation is made equally dependent on the one and the other they are never combined. Romans sixth has nothing to do with Romans third. The conception of the new life, derived from union to Christ in His death and resurrection, is just as indifferent to justification by faith, as the representation of Christ's death in the sixth chapter of Romans is to the sacrificial representation of the same thing in the third. The new life or active righteousness of the sixth chapter bears the same name as the divine righteousness of the third, but materially they have nothing in common, and the diversity of their contents stands in no relation to the origination of the one from the other. 16 Ritschl says it is for dogmatic, not biblical, theology to define the problem created by these two ways of salvation and the apparent contradiction between them — and to attempt its solution; and Holtzmann is disposed to censure Weiss for overlooking this, and attempting an adjustment in his Biblical Theology of the New Testament. 17 But this is manifestly unfair to St. Paul. The apostle knew nothing about the distinctions which Theological Encyclopaedia draws between biblical and dogmatic; he was a man of intellectual force and originality engaged in thinking out a redeeming and regenerative experience, and the presumption surely is that his thought will represent somehow the consistency and unity of his experience. If it does so, it is for his interpreters to make the fact clear without troubling themselves whether the result is to be labeled biblical or dogmatic. There are too many people who refuse to take biblical theology seriously, because it is incoherent, and who refuse to take dogmatic seriously, because its consistency is artificially produced by suppressing the exuberant variety of the New Testament. Perhaps if New Testament experience had justice done to it, the incoherence of New Testament thinking would not be so obvious. Holtzmann himself attempts to find points of contact, or lines of connection, or to borrow from another field an expression of Dr. Fairbairn's, 'developmental coincidences' between the two gospels, though in a haphazard way; ideas like *pi>stiv*, *pneu~ma*, and *ajpolu>trwsiv*, it is pointed out, find a place in the unfolding of both. 18 In spite of such high authorities, I venture to put in a plea for the coherence of St. Paul. If we found the one theory, as it is called, at one period of his life, and the other at another, there might be a *prima facie* case for inconsistency; but when both are set out in full detail, in a definite sequence, in the same letter, and that the most systematic of all the apostle's writings, and one which aims unambiguously at exhibiting his gospel as a whole, the presumption is all the other way. There are cases in which it is fallacious to say *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*, but this is not one. There could not be a greater mistake than to assume that in the sixth chapter of Romans St. Paul makes a new beginning, forgetting all that he has said, and meeting objections to that gospel which we have been expounding by introducing ideas which

have no relation to it, and which may indeed be described as a correction of it, or a supplement to it, or a substitute for it, but which are in no sense whatever a vindication of it. A vindication of it is clearly what St. Paul means to give, and we are bound to assume that he saw what he was doing. He had preached that sinful men are justified freely through faith in Jesus set forth by God as a propitiation in His blood, and his adversaries had brought against this gospel the accusation that it tempted to and even justified continuance in sin. What is his answer? To begin with, it is an expression of moral horror at the suggestion. *mh< ge>noito!* But, in the next place, it is a demonstration of the inconsistency of such a line of action with what is involved in justification. 'Men who like us died to sin, how shall we still live in it?' (Rom 6:2).

Why should it be taken for granted that 'dying to sin' is a new idea here, on a new plane, an idea which startles one who has been following only that interpretation of justification which we find in Rom 3:1-31, Rom 4:1-25, Rom 5:1-21? It may be a new idea to a man who takes the point of view of St. Paul's opponents, and who does not know what it is to be justified through faith in the propitiation which is in Christ's death; but it is not a new idea to the apostle, nor to any one who has received the reconciliation he preaches; nor would he be offering any logical defense of his gospel if it were a new idea. But it is no new idea at all; it is Christ dying for sin — St. Paul reminds the objectors to his doctrine — it is Christ dying our death on the tree, who evokes the faith by which we become right with God; and the faith which He evokes answers to what He is and to what He does: it is faith which has a death to sin in it. Of course, if Christ's death were not what it has been described to be, it would be nothing to us; it would evoke no faith at all; but being what it has been described to be, the faith which is the response to it is a faith which inevitably takes moral contents and quality from it. The very same experience in which a man becomes right with God — that is, the experience of faith in Christ who died for sins — is an experience in which he becomes a dead man, so far as sin is concerned, a living man (though this is but the same thing in other words), so far as God is concerned. As long as faith is at its normal tension the life of sin is inconceivable. For faith is an attitude and act of the soul in which the whole being is involved, and it is determined through and through by its object. This, I repeat, is what is given in experience to the man who believes in Christ as St. Paul preaches Him in Rom 3:25 f., and this is the ethical justification of his gospel. What is fundamental here is Christ in the character of propitiation, Christ bearing our sin in His death, it is this Christ and no other who draws us in faith to Himself, so that in and through faith His death and life become ours. The forensic theory of atonement, as it is called, is not unrelated to the ethico- mystical; it is not parallel to it; it is not a mistaken *ad hominem* or rather *ad Pharisaeum* mode of thought which ought to be displaced by the other; it has the essential eternal truth in it by which and by which alone the experiences are generated in which the strength of the other is supposed to lie. I do not much care for the expression 'mystical union' with Christ, for it has been much abused, and in St. Paul especially has led to much hasty misconstruction of the New Testament; but if we are to use it at all, we must say that it is something which is not a substitute for, but the fruit of, the vicarious death of Christ. It owes its very being to that atonement outside of us, that finished work of Christ, which some would use it to discredit. And it is because this is so, that St. Paul can use it, so far as he does so, not to replace, or to supplement, or to correct, but to vindicate and show the moral adequacy of his doctrine of justification. Of course, in the last resort, the objection brought against St. Paul's gospel can only be practically refuted. It must be lived down, not argued down; hence the hortatory tone of Rom 6:1-23. But the new life is involved in the faith evoked by the sin- bearing death of Christ, and in

nothing else; it is involved in this, and this is pictorially presented in baptism. Hence the use which St. Paul makes of this sacrament in the same chapter. He is able to use it in his argument in the way he does because baptism and faith are but the outside and the inside of the same thing. If baptism, then, is symbolically inconsistent with continuance in sin, as is apparent to every one, faith is really inconsistent with it. But faith is relative to the *dikaiosis* *ne* *theou*, the divine justification which is St. Paul's gospel, and therefore that gospel in turn is beyond moral reproach. 19 The true connection of the apostle's ideas is perfectly put in the glorious lines of that great mystic, St. Bernard —

Propter mortem quam tulisti Quando pro me defecisti;

Cordis mei cor dilectum In te meum fer affectum! As a comment on the connection between Rom 3:1-31, Rom 4:1-25, Rom 5:1-21 and Rom 6:1-23, Rom 7:1-25, Rom 8:1-39 — on the relation of the substitution of Christ to ethical identification with Him — of Christ for us to Christ in us or we in Him — this for truth and power will never be surpassed. But blot out the first two lines, and the inspiration of the third and fourth is gone. Precisely so, if we blot out the 'forensic' gospel of St. Paul we shall find that the 'ethico- mystical' one has the breath of its life withdrawn.

It is possible to go more into detail here on lines suggested by St. Paul himself. Christ died our death on the cross, and the faith which that death evokes has a death in it also. But how are we to interpret this? By relation to what are we to define the death which is involved in faith? We may define it by relation to anything by relation to which Christ's death has been defined. Thus, following the apostle, we can say that the death involved in faith is

(1) a death to sin. Christ's death on the cross was a death to sin, the apostle tells us, in the sense that it introduced Him to a condition in which He had no longer any responsibility in relation to it (Rom 6:10). He had assumed the responsibility of it in love, but He had also discharged it, and sin had no claim on Him further. For us, dying to sin may seem to have a different meaning; it is not only a discharge from its responsibilities that is wanted, but a deliverance from its power. But this can only come on the foundation of the other; it is the discharge from the responsibilities of sin involved in Christ's death and appropriated in faith, which is the motive power in the daily ethical dying to sin. It really is such a motive power, and the only one in the world, when we realize what it is. But just as death to the law — to anticipate for a moment another experience involved in faith in the death of Christ — needs to be realized by ceaseless vigilance against all that would enslave the conscience, and against everything in our nature that makes us seek external supports, and authorities to relieve us of the responsibility of becoming a law to ourselves under the constraint of the cross, so must death to sin also be realized by moral effort. It is involved in faith, so far as the principle and the motive power are concerned; the man who plants his whole hope in the revelation of God made in Christ the propitiation is a man who in the act and for the time is taking sin, death, the law, and the judgment of God, as all that they are to Christ; that is, he is owning sin, and disowning it utterly; acknowledging it as unreservedly in all its responsibility, and separating himself as entirely from it, as Christ did when He died. Such faith, involving such a relation to sin as can be called a death to it, covers the whole life, and is a moral guarantee for it; yet the death to sin which is lodged in it has to be carried out in a daily mortification of evil, the initial crucifixion with Christ in a daily crucifixion of the passions and lusts.

(2) It may even be said more specifically that the death involved in faith is a death to the flesh. This is the point of the difficult passage in Rom 8:3 f. St. Paul is there describing the way of salvation from sin, and says that the law was impotent in the matter owing to the flesh. The flesh virtually means sin in its constitutional and instinctive character — sin as the nature or the second nature of man, it does not here matter which.

What the law could not do God took another way of doing. He sent His Son in the likeness of flesh of sin, and as a sin-offering, and in so doing condemned sin in the flesh. oJmoi>wma here no doubt emphasizes Christ's likeness to us: it is not meant to suggest difference or unreality in His nature. He was all that we are, short of sin. Yet He came in connection with sin, or as a sin-offering, and it is through this that we must interpret the expression, condemned sin in the flesh. ' It does not mean that Christ showed sin to be inexcusable, by Himself leading a sinless life; there is no salvation, no emancipation from sin in that. The condemnation is the act of God, and in sending His own Son in connection with sin — which must mean in the one connection with it which St. Paul ever refers to, i.e. as a propitiation for it — God condemned it in the flesh. His judgment came on it in the death which Christ died in our nature, and with that judgment its right and its power in our nature came to an end. I say its right and its power, for the things are related. Until the responsibilities involved in sin have been fully acknowledged and met, as they are acknowledged and met in the death of Christ, its power remains; to express the truth psychologically, until sin is expiated, the sinner has a bad conscience, and as long as a man has a bad conscience, he cannot begin to be a good man. It is because Christ's death deals effectually with the responsibility of sin, and puts right with God the man who believes in Him, that it can do for our nature what law could never do — break sin's power. Weiss and others have argued that it is a mistake to find here the idea of expiation: the context is interested only in the moral deliverance from evil. But from the point of view of St. Paul, this is not a reasonable objection- it is setting the end against the means. He knew by experience that sin could only have its power broken by being expiated, and that is precisely what he teaches here. Only, he gives it a peculiar turn. The fact that expiation has been made through Christ's death for sin in the very nature which we wear, is used to bring out the idea that in that nature, at all events, sin can have no indefeasible right and no impregnable seat. The death involved in faith in Christ is a death not only to sin generally, but to sin in the constitutional and virulent character suggested by the flesh. But like the other 'deaths,' this one too needs to be morally realized. 'Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth. '

(3) Further, the death involved in faith is repeatedly defined by St. Paul as a death to the law, or to law in general (Gal 2:19; Rom 6:14 and Rom 7:4). There is undoubtedly something paradoxical in this, and it is the point at which St. Paul's gospel, from the beginning, was most misunderstood and most assailed. On the one hand, when Christ died, justice was done to the law of God, both as an imperative and as a condemning law, as it had never been done before. The will of God had been honored by a life of perfect obedience, and the awful experience of death in which God's inexorable judgment on sin comes home to the conscience had been borne in the same obedience and love by His sinless Son. On the other hand, when this death evokes the faith for which it appeals, the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in the believer; the law gets its clue in his life also, or, as the apostle puts it, it is established by faith. How is it, then, that faith involves a death to the law? It is through the assurance, given to faith at the cross, that so far as doing the will of God is concerned, a new and living way has been found. It is not the law in its old legal form

— the law of statutory injunctions and prohibitions — which is to generate goodness in sinful man; it is the law glorified in the atonement. The whole inspiration of the Christian life lies here, and it is an inspiration, not a statutory requirement. Nothing is to count in the life of a Christian which does not come with perfect freedom from this source. This explains the extraordinary emphasis which St. Paul everywhere lays on liberty. Liberty is the correlative of responsibility; man must be perfectly free that the whole weight of his responsibilities may come upon him. But this weight of responsibility cannot be faced, and would not sanctify even if it could be faced, in vacuo; it can be faced only when we know God in Christ crucified; and it does sanctify, when the constraint of the atonement, with its awful homage, to the holiness of God, descends upon the heart. But this is all that is required, for this is too great to be compromised by alliance with anything else. Perfect freedom, with entire responsibility to the Redeemer — the obligation to be a law to oneself, with the power of Christ's passion resting upon the spirit — that is the death to law which St. Paul contemplates. No statutes, no traditions of men, no dogmata, intellectual or moral, no scruples in the consciences of others, are to have legal obligations for us any longer. Not even the letters written by the finger of God on the tables of stone constitute a legal obligation for the Christian. All that he is to be must come freely out of the atoning death of Christ. He is dead to the law — in the widest sense of the word, he is dead to law — through the body of Christ. From this freedom we are always being tempted to relapse. We are always establishing for ourselves, or letting others impose upon us, customs — whether intellectual, as creeds; or ethical, as the conventional ways of being charitable or of worshipping God — which though good in themselves, tend to corrupt the world just because they are customs- in other words, we are always tacitly denying that the death of Christ does full justice to law in every sense of the term, and that for those who believe in it law exists henceforth only in the divine glory of the atonement, and in the life which it inspires.

It may seem astonishing that in all this no reference has been made to the Spirit, but the omission, I think, can be justified. 20 For one thing, St. Paul himself discusses the whole subject of the Christian's death with Christ, as involved in Christ's death and the Christian's faith in it, without reference to the Spirit. The Spirit is not mentioned in the sixth chapter of Romans. I do not say it is not implied — for instance, in the allusions to baptism; but it is implied in all that the apostle says; it is not implied as something to be added to it. Theologically, the Spirit is the divine correlative of faith, and of the dying with Christ and living with Christ, of which we have been speaking; it is the power of God which is manifested in every Christian experience whatever. It is not something specifically divine which comes in through baptism and has no relation to faith and justification; it is related in the same way to all; it is the divine factor in all that restores man to, and maintains him in, the life of God. But the Spirit does not work in vacuo. He glorifies Christ. He works through the propitiation, interpreting, revealing, applying it; and when we talk of the Spirit as an abstractly supernatural power, a power of God not working through the gospel and its appeal to the reason, conscience, and will of man, we are not on Christian ground. Without the Spirit — that is, without God — all that has been said about the meaning of Christ's death could not win upon men; but just because the action of the Spirit is implied as the correlative of faith at every point, it is illegitimate to call it in to explain one Christian experience more than another — for instance, to derive regeneration from it, or the new life, but not justification. Either Spirit or Faith may truly be said to be co- extensive with Christianity, and therefore they are co- extensive with each other. But if we are speaking of the new moral life of the Christian, and ask what we mean by the Spirit psychologically — that is, what form it takes as an experience — I should say it is indistinguishable

from that infinite assurance of God's love, given in Christ's death, through which the Christian is made more than conqueror in all the difficulties of life, inward or external. It is with this assurance the Spirit is connected when St. Paul opens his discussion of the subject in Rom 5:5 :

'The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us. '

It is with this same assurance he concludes his discussion, Rom 8:35 : 'Who shall separate us from the love of God? ' The triumphant certainty of this love, a certainty always recurring to and resting on that miracle of miracles, the sin-bearing death of Christ, is the same thing as joy in the Holy Spirit, and it is this joy which is the Christian's strength. From the Spirit, then, or from the love of God as an assured possession, the Christian life may equally be explained. And it is not another, but the same explanation, when we say that it is begotten and sustained from beginning to end by the virtue which dwells in the propitiatory death of Jesus.

(4) When we come to the epistles of the Imprisonment a new range seems to be given to Christ's death, and to the work of reconciliation which is accomplished in it. This holds, at least, of the Epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians; so far as Philippians is concerned, we find ourselves in the same circle of ideas as in Galatians and Romans. The close parallel, indeed, of Php 3:9 f. with the exposition of the apostolic gospel in these earlier letters is a striking proof of the tenacity and consistency of St. Paul's thought. But in Colossians we are confronted with a new situation. 'The world' which is the object of reconciliation is no longer as in 2Co 5:19, or Rom 3:19, the world of sinful men; it is a world on a grander scale.

'God has been pleased through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross, through Him, whether they be things on earth or things in heaven' (Col 1:20). The reconciliation of sinful men is represented as though it were only a part of this vaster work.

'And you, ' it is added, 'who were once estranged, and enemies in mind by wicked works, He has now reconciled in the body of His flesh through death' (Col 1:21 f.). The same ideas are found in the Epistle to the Ephesians (Eph 1:7 ff.). Here we start with the historical Christ, 'in whom we have our redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of our trespasses'; but when the mystery of Christ's work is revealed to the Christian intelligence, it is seen to have as its end 'the gathering together in one of all things in Him, both things in (or above) the heavens and things on the earth' (Eph 1:10). This enlargement of the scope of Christ's death, or, if we prefer to call it so, this extension of its virtue into regions where we cannot speak of it from experience, has sometimes had a disconcerting effect, and the bearings of it are not quite clear. It is argued by some, who naturally wish to be as precise as possible in interpreting their author, that 'the things in heaven and the things on earth, ' which are referred to in the passages just quoted, must be spiritual beings; only such can be the objects of reconciliation, for only such can have estranged themselves from God by sin. But where do we find the idea of any such estrangement in Scripture, except in the case of disobedient angels to whom the idea of reconciliation is never applied? For answer we are pointed to various passages in the Old and the New Testament, not to mention Jewish literature outside, in which there is the conception of spiritual beings whose fortunes are somehow bound up with those of men. Thus in Isa 24:21, a late passage in which apocalypse begins to displace prophecy, we read,

'It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.' The two sets of persons here referred to somehow correspond to each other; there is a counter- part in the unseen world of the characters and fortunes visible on earth. Again, in the book of Daniel we hear of 'the prince of the kingdom of Persia' (Dan 10:13), 'the prince of Grecia' (Dan 10:20), and 'your prince' (Dan 10:21), meaning the prince of the children of Israel, the princes, as the name Michael in Dan 10:21 shows, being in all cases angelic beings, who in some way or other were identified with the nations, representing them in the unseen world, pleading their cause, fighting their battles, and mysteriously involved in their fortunes. It is something quite analogous to this that we find in the early chapters of Revelation, where the epistles of the risen Lord are addressed to the angels of the churches. The angel is not a bishop; he is, so to speak, the personification of the church in the world unseen; the spiritual counterpart of it, conceived as a person on whom its character and responsibilities will be visited somehow. It is the same idea, with an individual application, that we find in our Lord's word about the angels of the little ones, who in heaven do always behold the face of His heavenly Father (Mat 18:10), and again in the book of Acts (Acts 12:15), where the people who would not believe that Peter had been released from prison said, 'It is his angel. ' On such a background of Jewish belief the interpretation of these passages has been essayed. It is not man only, we are asked to believe, who has been involved in sin, and in the alienation from God which is its consequence; the sin of man has consequences which reach far beyond man himself. It stretches downward through nature, which has been made subject to vanity because of it, and it stretches upward into a spiritual world which we may not be able to realize, but which, like nature, is compromised somehow by our sin, and entangled in our responsibility to God. For these higher beings, then, as well as for man, Christ has done His reconciling work, and when it is finished they as well as we will be gathered together in one in Him.

It would perhaps be going too far to say that there is nothing in this, and that no such ideas ever floated vaguely before the apostle's imagination. The people to whom he wrote believed in 'thrones and dominions and principalities and powers'; and although there is a touch of indifference, not to say scorn, in some of his own allusions to the high- sounding names — for instance, in Eph 1:22 f. — they had some sort of reality for the too. There are passages like Col 2:15, or those in which he refers to τα< stoicei~a tou~ ko>smou (Gal 4:3 and Col 2:8), where he seems to connect the spiritual beings in question with the angels through whom the law was given (Gal 3:19, Acts 7:53 and Gal 2:2), and to represent the superseding of Judaism by Christianity as a victory of Jesus over these inferior but refractory powers to whom for a while the administration of human affairs, and especially of the immature, materialistic and legal stages of religion had been committed. But if he had definitely held such a view as has just been expounded, the probabilities are that it would have told more decidedly on his thinking, and found less ambiguous expression in his writings. He could not, for example, have given that complete account of his gospel — of the need for a righteousness of God, of the provision of it, and of the vindication of it — which he does give in Rom 1:1-32, Rom 2:1-29, Rom 3:1-31, Rom 4:1-25, Rom 5:1-21, Rom 6:1-23, Rom 7:1-25, Rom 8:1-39, without so much as alluding to these vaguely conceived beings. 21 At best they could belong only to the quasipoetical representation of his faith, not to the gospel which he preached on the basis of experience, nor to the theology or philosophy which was its intellectual expression. And when we look at the epistles of the Captivity generally, our minds are rather drawn in another direction. The enlarged scope of the work of reconciliation is part of that

expansion, so to speak, of Christ's person from a historical to a cosmical significance which is characteristic of these epistles as a whole. Christ is no longer a second Adam, the head of a new humanity, as in the earlier letters (Rom 5:12 ff. and 1Co 15:45 ff.); He is the center of the universe. He is a person so great that St. Paul is obliged to reconstruct His whole world around Him. He is the primary source of all creation, its principle of unity, its goal (Col 1:15 ff.). In consistency with this, the meaning and efficacy of what He has done extends through it all. His Person and work have absolute significance; wherever we have to speak of revelation or of reconciliation, in whatever world, in whatever relations, it is of Him we have to speak. Whether St. Paul would have presented this genuinely Christian truth to his imagination in the somewhat fantastic fashion just explained may be more or less doubtful; in any case it is of little consequence. What is of consequence is his conviction that in Jesus Christ dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead — all that makes God in the full sense of the term God — bodily, that is, in organic unity and completeness; and that the same completeness and finality belong to His reconciling work, 'The blood of His cross': It is in this we find the resolution of all discords, not only in the life of man, but in the universe at large. It is in this we see a divine love which does not shrink from taking on itself to the uttermost the moral responsibility for the world it has made, and for all the orders of being in it, and all their failures and fortunes. The eternal truth of this different ages and circumstances will picture to themselves in different ways; all we need to care for is that ways of picturing it which are uncongenial to our imaginations do not deprive us of the truth itself.

It is a smaller but not a less attractive application of the idea of reconciliation, as accomplished in Christ's death, when we find it in the second chapter of Ephesians as the reconciliation of Jew and Gentile in the one body of Christ (Eph 2:11-22). The application may to us seem casual, but this is one of the great thoughts of St. Paul. 'Is God a God of Jews only?' he asks in Rom 3:29 as he contemplates Christ set forth as a propitiation in His blood. Is the great appeal of the Cross one which is intelligible only to men of a single race, or to which only those who have had a particular training can respond? On the contrary, there is nothing in the world so universally intelligible as the Cross; and hence it is the meeting-place not only of God and man, but of all races and conditions of men with each other. There is neither Greek nor Jew, male nor female, bond nor free, there. The Cross is the basis of a universal religion, and has in it the hope of a universal peace. But of all Christian truths which are confessed in words, this is that which is most outrageously denied in deed. There is not a Christian church nor a Christian nation in the world which believes heartily in the Atonement as the extinction of privilege, and the leveling up of all men to the same possibility of life in Christ, to the same calling to be saints. The spirit of privilege, in spite of the Cross, is obstinately rooted everywhere even among Christian men. An examination of the pastoral epistles, quite apart from the critical questions that have been raised as to their authorship, does not introduce us to any new ideas on our subject. It is at all events genuinely Pauline when we read in 1Ti 2:5,

'There is one God, one Mediator also between God and men, Himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all (ajnti>lutron uJpe<r pa>ntwn). '

It is the ransoming death in virtue of which Jesus does mediate between God and sinners; but for it, He would not be a mediator in any sense relevant to man's situation. This, as Holtzmann has noticed, is in harmony with the use of mediator in the Epistle to the Hebrews. There also Jesus is Mediator, but it is of a covenant which is characterized as *krei>ttwn, kainh>*, and *ne>a*; He is the

means through which, at the cost of His death, sinners enter into the perfect religious relation to God. But though this idea is found in Hebrews, it does not follow that it is unpauline in itself, nor even (though *ajnti>lutron* found here only in the New Testament) that it is unpauline in expression. The dying with Christ, referred to in 2Ti 2:6, is akin rather to what we have found in 2Co 1:1-24 and 2Co 4:1-18 than to Rom 6:1-23 : it is a share in martyr sufferings which is meant, not for many the mortification of the old man. In Titus there are two passages which require to be mentioned. The first is in Rom 2:14, where we read of our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all unrighteousness (*ajnomi>av*) and purify for Himself a people of His own, zealous of good works. ' It is somewhat peddling to suggest, as Holtzmann does, 22 that Paul would rather have said we were redeemed from *no>mov* than from *ajnomi>a*, and that even in touching on a Pauline thought an unpauline expression is used (*lutrw>shtai* for 'redeem'). The whole expression, *lutrou~sqai* as well as *ajnomi>a*, comes from Psa 130:8, and St. Paul might have liberty to quote the Old Testament as well as anybody else. Nevertheless, the general impression one gets from the pastoral epistles is, that as a doctrine Christianity was now complete and could be taken for granted; it is not in process of being hammered out, as in the Epistle to the Galatians; there is nothing creative in the statement of it; and it is the combination of fullness and of something not unlike formalism that raises doubts as to the authorship. St. Paul was inspired, but the writer of these epistles is sometimes only orthodox. One feels this with reference to the second passage in Titus (Tit 3:4 ff.):

'When the kindness of God our Savior, and His love toward man, appeared, not by works done in righteousness which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior that, being justified by His grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.'

St. Paul could no doubt have said all this, but probably he would have said it otherwise, and not all at a time. In any case, it adds nothing to the New Testament teaching on the death of Christ as we have already examined it.

Cf. Soltau, *Unsere Evangelien*, S. 85: 'The apostles and evangelists who went about two by two from church to church preaching everywhere the Word of God, must have had a fixed basis for the instruction they gave. And when Paul (1Co 11:23) declares of his account of the Supper, 'I have received it from the Lord, ' he points in doing so to a formulation of Christian teaching once for all fixed and definite. ' In a note he adds that St. Paul's words, 'the Lord Jesus on the night on which He was betrayed, ' even show an affinity to the synoptic narrative.

Compare Kahler, p. 399. In *Empfindung, Mythos, Bild, Religion und Betrachtung ist der Tod, wie wir Sunder ihn sterben, der Prediger der Verantwortlichkeit geblieben*.

Compare Kahler, *Zur Lehre von der Versöhnung*, 397 ff.

Le Peche et la Redemption, p. 258 f.

I have rendered *pneumatiko* because it suggests better the element of mystery, or rather of divineness, which all through this passage is connected with the Sacraments. Baptism is not a common washing, nor is the Supper common meat and drink; it is a divine cleansing, a divine nourishment, with which we have to do in these rites; there is a mysterious power of God in them,

which the Corinthians were inclined to conceive as operating like a charm for their protection in situations of moral ambiguity or peril. This is so far suggested to the Greek reader by *pneumatiko* for *pneu~ma* and its derivatives always involve a reference to God; but as it is not necessarily suggested to the English reader by 'spiritual,' I have ventured on the other rendering. The indefiniteness of 'supernatural' is rather an advantage in the context than a drawback.

De Incarnatione, c. xx section. 5.

J. S. Lidgett, *The Spiritual Principle of the Atonement*, p. 39. The way in which theologians in love with the 'mystical union' depreciate gratitude must be very astonishing to psychologists. See Juncker, *Die Ethik des Ap. Paulus*, 161, and Rothe, *Dogmatik* 2. 1. 223 (a remark on this passage in 2Co 5:1-21): ohne Ihn und seinen Tod hatten Alle sterben müssen; das Leben das sie leben verdanken sie also gänzlich Ihm, und müssen es deshalb ganz und gar Ihm widmen.

Kaftan holds that nothing is to be called *Erlosung* or *Versöhnung* (redemption or reconciliation) unless as men are actually liberated and reconciled; *Erlosung* and *Versöhnung* are to be understood, as the Reformers rightly saw (?), as *Wirkungen Gottes in und an den Glaubigen*. But he overlooks the fact that whatever is to liberate or reconcile men must have qualities or virtues in it which, in view of their normal effect, whether that effect be in any given case achieved or not, can be called reconciling or liberative; and that the determination of these qualities or virtues — that is, as he calls it, an 'objective Heilslehre' — is not only legitimate but essential in the interpretation of the work of Christ. See his *Dogmatik*, Sections 52 ff.

See *Expositor* for June 1901, p. 449 ff.

See *Expositor*, March 1901, p. 176 ff. This is the view of Ritschl, who decides that everywhere in Paul the righteousness of God means the mode of procedure which is consistent with God's having the salvation of believers as His end (*Rechtf. u. Vers.* 2 footnote 1, 117). In the same sense he argues that the correlative idea to the righteousness of God is always that of the righteousness of His people (*ibid.* 108, 110). He seems to forget here that the God of the Gospel is defined by St. Paul in terms which expressly contradict this view, as 'He who justifies the ungodly' (Rom 5:5); and that a reference to sin rather than to righteousness in the people is the true correlative of the Pauline *dikaio~nh qeou~*. Ritschl's treatment of the passage in Rom 3:3 ff., where God's righteousness is spoken of in connection with the judgment of the world, and with the infliction of the final wrath upon it, and where it evidently includes something other than the gracious consistency to which Ritschl would limit it, is an amusing combination of sophistry and paradox.

Der Tod Christi, p. 187.

Ibid. p. 286.

Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments, Section 84 b. (English Translation, 1. p. 456 ff.).

Rechtf u. Versöhnung, 2. pp. 338 f.

Neut. Theologie, 2. p. 141.

Ibid. 2. p. 137 ff. For a fuller treatment of this point, see article in *Expositor*, October 1901, 'The Righteousness of God and the New Life.' For a fuller treatment of the Spirit and the New Life, see

article in *Expositor*, December 1901.

Rom 8:38 f. does not refute this, for the apostle's exposition of his thoughts is already complete, and this is an emotional utterance in which there is no more need or possibility of defining Christ's death by relation to angels and principalities and powers, than by relation to abstractions like height and depth. The only thought in the passage is that God's love in Christ is the final reality from which nothing can separate the believer.

Neut. Theologie, 2. 265 f.

03.04. Chapter 4 : The Epistle To The Hebrews

Chapter 4: The Epistle To The Hebrews THE Epistle to the Hebrews is in many ways one of the most perplexing books of the New Testament. It stands quite alone and is peculiarly independent, yet it has affinities with almost every strain of thought to be found elsewhere in primitive Christianity, and points of historical attachment for it have been sought all round the compass. 1 Thus there are those who think its true line of descent is to be traced to James, Cephas, and John — the three apostles who seemed to be pillars in the mother church of Jerusalem. It is the last and finest product of that type of Christian mind which we see at work in the fifteenth chapter of Acts. Perhaps this was the feeling of the person to whom the address — *προϋεβραίοις* — is due. When we examine the epistle closely, however, we discover that there is very little to be found in this direction to explain its peculiarities. Others, again, would trace it to the school of St. Paul. This, no doubt, has a greater plausibility. Discounting altogether the alleged Pauline authorship, the epistle has many points of contact with St. Paul in language, and some in thought. But we cannot fail to be struck with the fact that where the language coincides with St. Paul's, the thought does not; and that where the minds of the authors meet, their language is independent. Thus both St. Paul and the writer to the Hebrews speak of the law, of what the law cannot do (Rom 8:3 and Heb 10:1), of the superseding of the law (Rom 10:4 and Heb 7:12), of faith (Rom 4:1-25 and Heb 11:1-40), of a righteousness according to faith (Rom 1:17 and Heb 11:7), and so on; but when they use the same words they do not mean the same thing. The law to St. Paul is mainly the moral law, embodying God's requirements from man; in this epistle, it is the religious constitution under which Israel lived, and which gave it a certain though an imperfect access to God. In St. Paul and in this epistle alike the law is superseded in the Christian religion, but the relation between them is differently defined in the two cases. St. Paul defines law and gospel mainly by contrast; in Hebrews they are set in a more positive relation to one another. It used to be life under external statutory authority, now it is life under inspiration, and the two are mutually exclusive — such is St. Paul's conception: see Rom 6:1-23 and 2Co 3:1-18. It used to be life under the shadowy, the unreal, that which could bring nothing to perfection; now it is life under the real, the eternal, that which makes perfect for ever; the shadow is abandoned, because the coming good which cast it is here: see Heb 7:1-28, Heb 8:1-13, Heb 9:1-28, Heb 10:1-39. No doubt such contrasts as; this (between St. Paul and the Epistle to the Hebrews) require qualification, but broadly they are true, and they could be illustrated at many other points. At the present moment the favorite tendency among critics is to explain the peculiarities of the epistle by attaching it neither to the primitive Christianity of Jerusalem, nor in the first instance to the characteristic thoughts of St. Paul (thought both of course are implied), but to the quasi- philosophical mind of Alexandrian Judaism. It is there we find the contrast of seen and unseen, of sensible and intelligible, of this world and the world to come, of the transitory and the abiding, of earth and heaven, of which this epistle makes so much; and there also the *λογος*, which mediates between God and the world, is presented in many of the aspects (e.g. as Intercessor, as Mediator, as High Priest) in which Jesus figures here. But here again the differences outweigh the resemblances. The Son of God does exercise in this epistle many of the functions which in Philo are assigned to the Logos; but in order to exercise them He

must assume human nature and pass through all human experience — conceptions which are a direct contradiction of all that Logos in Philo means. Evidently the author of this epistle, whatever his intellectual affinities, combined with an extraordinary sensitiveness to all that was being thought and said in the world in which he lived an extraordinary power of holding fast his own thoughts, of living in his own mind, and letting it work along its own lines. Of all New Testament writers he is the most theological — that is, he is most exclusively occupied with presenting Christianity as the final and absolute religion; not a religion, in the sense in which it might concede a legitimate place to others, but religion simpliciter, because it does perfectly what all religion aims to do. This is what is expressed in his favorite word *aiōnios* (eternal). St. John in his gospel and epistles uses this word twenty- three times, but invariably to qualify life, and with him it is rather the combination than the adjective which is characteristic. But in Hebrews *aiōnios* is used far more significantly, though less frequently. Jesus is author of 'eternal' salvation (Heb 5:9), i.e., of final salvation, which has no peril beyond; all that salvation can mean is secured by Him. The elements of Christianity include preaching on 'eternal' judgment (Heb 6:2), i. e., a judgment which has the character of finality, from which there is no appeal, beyond which there is no fear or no hope. Christ has obtained 'eternal' redemption for us (Heb 9:12): not a redemption like that which was annually achieved for Israel, and which had to be annually repeated, as though its virtue faded away, but a redemption the validity of which abides for ever. Christ has offered Himself through 'eternal' spirit (Heb 9:14), i.e., in Christ's sacrifice we see the final revelation of what God is, that behind which there is nothing in God; so that the religion which rests on that sacrifice rests on the ultimate truth of the divine nature, and can never be shaken. Those who are called receive the promise of the 'eternal' inheritance (Heb 9:15), not an earthly Canaan, in which they are strangers and pilgrims, and from which they may be exiled, but the city which has the foundations, from which God's people go no more out. And finally, the blood of Christ is the blood of an 'eternal' covenant (Heb 13:20), i.e., in the death of Christ a religious relation is constituted between God and men which has the character of finality. God, if it may be so expressed, has spoken His last word; He has nothing in reserve; the foundation has been laid of the kingdom which can never be removed. It is this conception of absoluteness or finality in everything Christian which dominates the book. The conception, of course, is involved in all Christian experience, but to make it as explicit as it is in this epistle does not come naturally to every one. There are minds to which a less reactive religion seems warmer and more congenial, they miss in a writing like this the intimacy and glow which pervade the epistles of St. Paul. Those in whom theological interest preponderates over religious may call the Epistle to the Hebrews the high water- mark of inspiration; those whose religion makes them averse to theology can call it the high watermark of uninspired writing.

Speaking generally, the epistle may be said to give a description of the Person and Work of Christ as constituting the perfect religion for men, and to define this religion in relation to the ancient religion of the Jews as embodied in the Tabernacle or Temple service. Curiously enough, the Person and Work of Christ thus interpreted have been looked at, so to speak, from both ends. Some theologians, of whom Westcott may be taken as a type, begin at the beginning, or rather at Heb 1:3. They start with the pre- existent, the eternal Son of God. They point to what He essentially is — the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His substance. They point to His providential action — He bears or guides all things by the word of His power. They point to the work He did as incarnate — He made purgation of sins. They point to the exaltation

which followed — He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty in the Heavens. And then they draw the general conclusion that what Christ did, according to the epistle, was to fulfill man's destiny under the conditions of the fall. That destiny, it is assumed, He would have fulfilled in any case. The incarnation is part of the original plan of the world; only, in the peculiar circumstances of the case in hand — that is, under the conditions of the fall — the incarnation had to be modified into an atonement. This is one way of construing the writer's ideas. Another is represented by writers like Seeberg, who begins, if one may say so, at the end. The Christ of the author is essentially Christ the High Priest, in the heavenly sanctuary, mediating between God and men, securing for sinful men access to God and fellowship with Him. Christ exercises His High Priestly function in heaven, but it rests upon the death which He died on earth. Though Seeberg does not include Christ's death in His priestly ministry, he frankly admits that His priestly ministry is based on His death, and that but for His death He could not be a priest at all. Hence his argument runs in exactly the opposite direction from Westcott's. Christ is essentially a priest, the work of bringing sinners into fellowship with God is essentially the work He has to do, and the work He does. It is in that work alone that we know Him. But to do it He had to die, and in order to die He had to have a body prepared for Him, i.e., He had to become incarnate (Heb 10:5). It is not the incarnation which is taken for granted, and the atonement which in the peculiar circumstances of man's case is wrought into it or wrought out of it to meet an emergency; it is the actual fact of an atonement and a reconciling priestly ministry which is made the foundation of everything; the incarnation is defined solely by relation to it. The atonement, and the priestly or reconciling ministry of Christ, are the end, to which the incarnation is relative as the meal is. That this last is the view of the epistle and of the New Testament in general I do not doubt: it is the only view which has an experimental, as opposed to a speculative, basis; and I venture to say that the other shifts the center of gravity in the New Testament so disastrously as to make great parts of it, and these most vital parts, unintelligible. One could not go to the New Testament with a more misleading schematism in his mind than that which is provided by the conception of the incarnation, and its relation to the atonement, to which Westcott's influence has given currency in many circles. But leaving this larger question on one side, we may start with the fact that both schools of interpreters meet in the middle, and find the real content of the epistle, religious and theological, in what it has to say of the historical Christ. And that, beyond a doubt, is concentrated in what it has to say of His death. It was with 'the suffering of death' in view that He became incarnate; it is because of 'the suffering of death' that He is crowned with that glory and honor in which He appears in the presence of God on our behalf. Here then we come to our proper subject again, and may ask, as in the case of St. Paul, in what relations the death of Christ is defined by the writer so as to bring out its meaning. In the first place, it is defined by relation to God, and especially, as in St. Paul, by relation to His love. It is by the grace of God that Jesus tastes death for every man (Heb 2:9). God is not conceived in this epistle, or in any part of the New Testament, as a malignant or hostile being who has to be won by gifts to show His goodwill to man: whatever the death of Christ is or does, it is and does in the carrying out of His purpose. It is the grace of God to sinners which is demonstrated in it. This is involved also in two other ideas emphasized in the epistle. One is the idea that no man takes the honor of priesthood to himself of his own motion, he must be called of God, as Aaron was (Heb 5:4). Christ has had this call; we hear it in Psa 110:7, which He Himself applied to Himself (Mark 12:35 ff.). 'Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec.' It is true that the priest represents the people toward God, but he can only do so by God's appointment, and consequently

it is a work of God which he does, a gracious work, in which he is not persuading God, as it were, against His will, but on the contrary carrying out His will for the good of men. The other idea used in the interpretation of Christ's work, and especially of His death, which connects them in a similar way with God, is the idea of obedience. Jesus, though He were Son, yet learned obedience through the things which He suffered (Mark 5:8). When He appeared in the body which God had prepared for Him, it was with the words on His lips, 'Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God' (Mark 10:7). There is nothing in Christ's life and death of irresponsibility or adventure. It is all obedience, and therefore it is all revelation. We see God in it because it is not His own will but the will of the Father which it accomplished. Even when we come to consider its relation to sin, this must be borne in mind. Atonement is not something contrived, as it were, behind the Father's back; it is the Father's way of making it possible for the sinful to have fellowship with Him. The author introduces one idea, not very easy to define, in this connection. In speaking of the actual course of Christ in life and death, he says,

'It became Him (e]prepen ga<r aujtw~l) for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings' (Mark 2:10).

What e]prepen suggests is not so much the kind of necessity we have found in other places in the New Testament's moral congruity or decorum. Suffering and death are our lot; it is congruous with God's nature — we can feel, so to speak, the moral propriety of it — when He makes suffering and death the lot of Him who is to be our Savior. He would not be perfect in the character or part of Savior if He did not have this experience. What this suggests is the interpretation of Christ's death by moral aesthetics rather than by moral law, by a rule to be apprehended in feeling rather than in conscience. It is moving and impressive, this action in congruity with God's nature and our state, whether we see a more inevitable necessity for it or not. In all these ways, at all events, the writer attaches Christ's death to the grace, the will, and the character of God; and in all these ways, therefore, he warns us against setting that death and God in any antagonism to each other. But besides defining it by relation to God, the writer defines Christ's death also by relation to sin. At the very beginning, in the sublime sentence in which He introduces the Son, His earthly work is summed up in the phrase, 'having made purgation of sins' (Heb 1:3). How this is done, he does not tell at this point, but the sequel makes it indubitable. It was done by His sacrificial death. So, again, he speaks of Christ as being once offered to bear the sins of many (Heb 9:28); as having been once manifested at the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb 9:26); as being a merciful and faithful high priest in our relations to God to make propitiation for the sins of the people (Heb 2:17); as having offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, and having perfected for ever by that sacrifice those who are being sanctified (Heb 10:12-14). There is the same sacrificial conception in all the references in the epistle to the blood of Christ. He entered into the most holy place with (dia<) His own blood (Heb 9:12). The blood of Christ shall purge your conscience from dead works (Heb 9:14). We have boldness to enter into the holiest in the blood of Jesus (Heb 10:19). His blood is the blood of the covenant with which we are sanctified, and to lapse from the Christian religion is to be guilty of the inconceivable, the unpardonable sin, of counting that blood a profane thing (Heb 10:29). In all these ways the death of Christ is defined as a sacrificial death, or as a death having relation to sin, the two things are one. It is quite possible to lose ourselves here by trying to give to details in the sacrificial language of the epistle an

importance which they will not bear. The writer refers to sacrifices of different kinds in his interpretation of the death of Christ. Sometimes he speaks of it in connection with the Old Testament sin offerings; at others in connection with the covenant sacrifices at Sinai, on which the ancient relation of God to His people was based; more than all, in connection with the annual sacrifices on the great day of atonement, when the earthly sanctuary was purged of its defilement, and the high priest entered into the most holy place, representing and embodying Israel's access to God and fellowship with Him. But no emphasis is laid on the distinguishing features of these various sacrifices, they are looked at simply in the expiatory or atoning significance which is common to them all. They represent a divinely appointed way of dealing with sin, in order that it may not bar fellowship with God; and the writer thinks of them broadly in this light. I do not feel at liberty to belittle this, as is sometimes done, and to say with Holtzmann that the convincing power of the writer's arguments reaches precisely as far as our conviction of the divine origin of the Mosaic cultus, of the atoning power of sacrificial blood, and of the typical significance of the sacrificial ritual; the tacit assumption being that in regard to all these things rational conviction can reach but a very little way. As we have seen already, the death of Christ is defined by relation to sin in many places in the New Testament where no use, at least no explicit use, is made of sacrificial phraseology. Such phraseology is not essential either to reach or to express the truth held by Christian faith as to the relation of Christ's death to sin. Neither is it forced by the author of the epistle: he only expresses by means of it, and that, as we have seen, with the greatest freedom, the conviction of all New Testament Christians, that in the death of Christ God has dealt effectually with the world's sin for its removal. It is easy to disparage too lightly what Wellhausen has called the pagan element in the religion of Israel; but it is probably truer to hold with this writer that the sacrificial system had something in it which trained the conscience and helped man to feel and to express spiritual truths for which he had no adequate articulate language.

Important, however, as his reference to sacrifice may be, it is not so much through the idea of sacrifice that we are initiated into the writer's mind as through the idea of priesthood. Now in relation to the priest the various conceptions of sacrifice are unified; the distinctions of sin offerings, burnt offerings, peace offerings, and so forth, disappear; sacrifice is reduced to this — it is the characteristic function of the priest, the indispensable means to the fulfillment of his calling. A priest is the essential figure in religion as it is conceived in the Epistle to the Hebrews; when the priesthood is changed there is necessarily also a change of law — the whole religious constitution is altered (Heb 7:12); in other words, the priest determines what the religion is. Hence if we wish to know what Christianity is, in which Christ is priest, we must investigate the priesthood as it is discharged by Him. The priest's function, speaking generally, is to establish and to represent the fellowship of God and man. That fellowship must exist, it must be incorporated and made visible, in the priest's own person; and through his ministry it must be put within reach of the people for whom he acts as priest. Through his ministry they must be put in a position to draw near to God themselves, to worship, to have fellowship with God; in a word, to become God's people. If we ask why a priest and a priestly work of mediation are necessary, why men cannot immediately and in their own right, as it were, draw near to God, the answer is self-evident. It is because their sin stands in the way, and cannot be ignored. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, as everywhere in the New Testament, sin is a problem, and the burden of the book is that God has dealt with the problem in a way answering to its magnitude. He has instituted a priesthood to deal with it. He has appointed His Son a priest with this very end in view, that He should make propitiation for the sins of the

people (Heb 2:17). If we ask how this priest deals with sin in order to make propitiation for it, the answer, as has already been observed, is given in Old Testament terms. He deals with it by the way of sacrifice. This is the only method of propitiation, known to the Old Testament, which is of a piece with the idea of priesthood. It is irrelevant to argue, as is sometimes done by persons who are anxious that the grace of the gospel should not be abused, that the Old Testament only provides propitiation for certain kinds of sin, and these not the more serious; such thoughts are not present to the writer's mind. Propitiation must be made for sin, if sinful men are to have fellowship with God at all; the only propitiation known to scripture, as made by a priest, is that which is made through sacrifice (apart from shedding of blood there is no remission, Heb 9:22); and the writer has no conception beforehand of sins with which the priest and the sacrifice present to his mind are unable to deal. He does recognize the possibility that men may condemn the gospel altogether, and even after they have known its power may trample under foot the blood of the covenant with which they were sanctified, and so commit a sin for which in the nature of the case there can be no further propitiation — as he puts it, for which there is no more a sacrifice in reserve (Heb 10:26); but that is another matter. His position, speaking generally, is that in Christ and His death we have a priest and a sacrifice capable of dealing effectively with sin as the barrier between God and man, and actually dealing with it in such a way that in despite of it God has a worshipping people among sinful men. Can we, now, get any way under the surface here? Sacrifice is not a familiar nor a self-interpreting idea to us, whatever it may have been to the author and to those whom he addressed; can we penetrate or explain it at all, so as to make intelligible to ourselves any relation which the death of Christ had to sin, or to the will of God in regard to sin?

Sometimes the attempt is made to do this by looking immediately at the effect of Christ's work in the souls of men, and deducing its relation to sin, as a secondary thing, from this. The epistle, of course, does not ignore the effect of Christ and His sacrifice upon men: it has, indeed, a variety of words to describe it. Sometimes the word employed is *agiazō* (to sanctify). The priestly Christ and His people are He who sanctifies, and they who are sanctified (Heb 2:11). Christians have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Heb 10:10). By one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified (Heb 10:14). It was Christ's object in dying to sanctify the people through His own blood (Heb 13:12). There has been much discussion as to what sanctification in such passages means, and especially as to whether the word is to be taken in a religious or an ethical sense. Probably the distinction would not have been clear to the writer; but one thing is certain, it is not to be taken in the sense of Protestant theology. The people were sanctified, not when they were raised to moral perfection — a conception utterly strange to the New Testament as to the Old — but when, through the annulling of their sin by sacrifice, they had been constituted into a people of God, and in the person of their representative had access to His presence. The word *agiazō* in short, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, corresponds as nearly as possible to the Pauline *dikaioūn*; the sanctification of the one writer is the justification of the other; and the *prosagōgē* or access to God, which St. Paul emphasizes as the primary blessing of justification (Rom 5:2 and Eph 2:18, Eph 3:12), appears everywhere in Hebrews as the primary religious act of drawing near, to God through the great High Priest (Heb 4:16, Heb 7:19-25, and Heb 10:22). It seems fair then to argue that the immediate effect of Christ's death upon men is religious rather than ethical; in technical language, it alters their relation to God, or is conceived as doing so, rather than their character. Their character, too, alters eventually, but it is on the basis of that initial and primary religious change; the religious change is not a result of

the moral one, nor an unreal abstraction from it. A similar result follows if we consider another of the words used to explain the effect of Christ's priestly and sacrificial work upon men — the word *teleioun*, rendered 'to make perfect.' It is widely used in the epistle in other connections. Christ Himself was made perfect through sufferings (Heb 2:10); that is, He was made all that a high priest, or a captain of salvation, ought to be. It does not mean that suffering cured Him of moral faults; but that apart from suffering and what He learned in it He would not have been completely fitted for His character of representing, and succoring, mortal men. So again when we read, the law made nothing perfect (Heb 7:19); the meaning is, that under the ancient religion of Israel nothing reached the ideal. The sanctuary was a worldly or material sanctuary (Heb 9:1); the priests were sinful mortal men, ever passing on their unsatisfactory functions to their successors (Heb 7:23); the sacrifices were of irrational creatures — the blood of bulls and goats, which could never make the worshipper perfect as touching the conscience (Heb 9:9); that is, they could never completely lift the load from within, and give him *parjrhysi* and joy in the presence of God; the access to the holiest of all was not abiding; as represented in the High Priestly ministry of the day of atonement, the way to God was open only for a moment, and then shut again (Heb 9:7.). There was nothing perfect there, nothing in that religious constitution which could be described *asteleion* or *aijwnion*. But with Christ, all this is changed. By one offering He has perfected for ever those who are being sanctified (Heb 10:14). The word cannot mean that He has made them sinless, in the sense of having freed them completely from all the power of sin, from every trace of its presence; it means obviously that He has put them into the ideal religious relation to God. Because of His one offering, their sin no longer comes between them and God in the very least; it does not exclude them from His presence or intimidate them; they come with boldness to the throne of grace; they draw near with a true heart and in full assurance of faith; they have an ideal, an unimpeachable standing before God as His people (Heb 4:16 and Heb 10:22). In Pauline language, there is now no condemnation; instead of standing afar off, in fear and trembling, they have access to the Father; they joy in God through the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom they have received the atonement (Rom 8:1, Rom 5:2-11).

Once more, if we examine the passage in which the verb *kaqarizein* is used to express the result of Christ's work in relation to man, we shall be led to the same conclusion. It is in Heb 9:14, and occurs in the sentence contrasting the efficacy of the ancient sacrifices with that of the sacrifice of Christ. 'For if the blood of goats and bulls and ashes of a heifer sprinkling the defiled sanctifies to the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through eternal spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.' The Old Testament sacrifices had an outward efficacy; they removed such defilements as excluded a man from the communion of Israel with God in its national worship. The New Testament sacrifice has an inward efficacy; it really reaches to the conscience, and it puts the man in a position to offer religious service (*latreuon*) to a living God. In some way it neutralizes or annuls sin so that religious approach to God is possible in spite of it. The examination of these words justifies us in drawing one conclusion. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews does not conceive of a regenerating, or, in the modern sense of the term, sanctifying, effect of Christ's death upon the soul as immediate or primary. He does not conceive it as directly emancipating the soul from sin, as an immoral power operative in it; nor does he regard this experience of emancipation as the only reality with which we have to deal. It is a reality, but it is an effect, and an effect to be traced to a cause. That cause is not simply Christ's death; it is Christ's death as a

reality capable of being so interpreted as to yield the rational explanation of such an effect. It is often argued that the idea of an antecedent relation of Christ's death to sin — antecedent, that is, to the emancipation of the soul from sin's power — is essentially unreal, nothing more than the *caput mortuum* of this great experience. This is certainly not the view of the writer to the Hebrews. On the contrary, he has, like St. Paul and others to whom reference has been, and will yet be made, the conception of a finished work of Christ, a work finished in His death, something done in regard to sin once for all, whether any given soul responds to it or not. As he puts it at the beginning of the epistle, He made purgation of sins — the thing was done — before He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in the Heavens. As he puts it later, He has offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, and by the one offering He has brought for ever into the perfect relation to God those who are being sanctified. And though the epistle does not use the once familiar language about the risen Savior pleading the merits of His sacrifice, it does undoubtedly represent this sacrifice, offered through eternal spirit, as the basis on which the eternal priesthood of Christ is exercised, and the sinner's access to God assured. Now, a finished work of Christ and an objective atonement are the same thing, and the question once more presents itself, What is it, in Christ's death, which gives it its atoning power? Why is it that, on the ground of this death, God, with whom evil cannot dwell, allows sinners unimpeded, joyful, assured access to Himself, and constitutes them a people of His own?

It is possible to answer this question too vaguely. It is too vague an answer when we look away from Christ's death, and its specific relation to sin, and emphasize broadly Christ's identification of Himself with us as laying the basis for our identification of ourselves with Him, in which acceptance with God is secured. No doubt the epistle does give prominence to Christ's identification of Himself with those whose priest He is to become. He who sanctifies and they who are being sanctified — He who constitutes others into a people of God, and they who are so constituted — are all of one (Heb 2:11). He is not ashamed to call them brothers. He takes their nature on Him, becoming with them a partaker of flesh and blood (Heb 2:14). He takes their experience to Himself, being tempted in all things like as they are (Heb 2:16). Even in death He does not stand aloof from them; He dies because they have to die; He dies that through death He may destroy him who has the power of death, and free them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Heb 2:14). But all this, not excepting the death itself in this aspect, belongs, from the point of view of the epistle, rather to the preparation for priesthood than to the discharge of priestly functions. The priest must undoubtedly be kindred to the people for whom he acts; he must know their nature and life; he must be taught by experience like theirs to have compassion on the ignorant and erring; nay, he must have sounded the tragic depths of mortal fear if he is to bring weak, sinful, dying men to God. All this Christ has done. He has qualified Himself by the immeasurable condescension of the Incarnation and the life in the flesh to be all that a priest should be. But when we come to the supreme act of His priesthood, the offering of Himself to God in death, the entering into the holiest of all through His own blood, the question recurs: What is it which gives this in particular its efficacy in regard to sin? The one hint of an answer to this question offered by the epistle itself is that which we find in the words of Heb 9:14 : 'Christ who through eternal spirit offered Himself without spot to God. ' The sinlessness of Jesus entered into the Atonement: only one who knew no sin could take any responsibility in regard to it which would create a new situation for sinners. But more important even than this is the suggestion contained in the words 'through eternal spirit. ' This is not the same as through 'indissoluble life' (Heb 7:16), as though the

idea were that the life offered to God on the Cross was one which death could not hold, but was rather by death 'liberated' and 'made available' for others. Neither is it the same as 'through His divine nature, ' as though the idea were that the divine nature or the divine personality through which Christ surrendered His human life to God gave the sacrifice an immeasurable value. These are forms of words rather than forms of thought, and it is difficult to attach to them any intelligible or realizable meaning. If we follow the line of thought suggested by the use of *aiw>niov* (eternal) in other passages of the epistle, we shall rather say that what is meant here is that Christ's offering of Himself without spot to God had an absolute or ideal character; it was something beyond which nothing could be, or could be conceived to be, as a response to God's mind and requirements in relation to sin. It was the final response, a spiritual response, to the divine necessities of the situation. Something of what is included in this may be suggested by the contrast which is here drawn in the epistle between Christ's offering of Himself through eternal spirit and the sacrifices of the Old Testament. As opposed to these, His sacrifice was rational and voluntary, an intelligent and loving response to the holy and gracious will of God, and to the terrible situation of man. But what we wish to understand is why the holy and gracious will of God, and the terrible situation of man, demanded and were satisfied by this particular response of Christ's death, and not by anything else. So far as I can see, there is no explanation of this whatever, unless we can assume that the author shared the view of St. Paul and of primitive Christianity generally, that sin and death were so related to one another — were in some sense, indeed, so completely one — that no one could undertake the responsibility of sin who did not at the same time submit to death. As has been already said, it is not necessary to suppose that this relation of sin and death was established arbitrarily; if it existed for the human conscience, as part of the actual order of the world, the situation would be before us which required Christ to die in order to take really upon Him our responsibility in this relation. That it does thus exist, the New Testament elsewhere, and something in human experience as well, combine to prove; and that the writer to the Hebrews was conscious of this is shown by the fact that he, like other New Testament writers, makes the death of Christ the very thing by which sin is annulled as a power barring man's approach to God. His idea is not that Christ by His death, or in virtue of it, acts immediately upon the sinful soul, turning it into a righteous one, and in that sense annulling sin; it is rather that sin is annulled and, in its character as that which shuts man out from God's presence and makes worship impossible, ceases to be, through the once for all accomplished sacrifice of Christ. And though his dominant thought may be said to be that Christ by His death removes sin, as an obstacle standing in our path bears it away, so that it blocks our road to God no longer — still He does not do this except by dying; in other words, He bears sin away because He bears it; He removes the responsibility of it from us because He takes it upon Himself. The connection of ideas which is here suggested is often controverted by appeal to the passage at the beginning of the tenth chapter. There the writer is contrasting the sacrifices of the old covenant with that of the new. 'The law, ' he says, 'having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things, could never with the same sacrifices which they offer year by year continually make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise would they not have ceased to be offered, owing to the worshippers, having been once purged, having no longer conscience of sins? So far from this being the case, sins are brought to mind in them year by year. It is impossible for blood of bulls and goats to remove them. Accordingly, at His entrance into the world, He says, "Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire, but a body didst Thou prepare for me. In whole burnt offerings and offerings for sin Thou hadst no pleasure." Then I

said, "Behold I come; in the volume of the Book it is written concerning Me; to do Thy will, O God." Above, in saying "sacrifices and offerings, and whole burnt offerings, and offerings for sin Thou didst not desire nor take pleasure in" — that is, God had no delight in such sacrifices as are offered according to the law — then His Word stands, "Lo, I come to do Thy will." He removes the first to establish the second. ' This passage is often read as if it signified that sacrifice was abolished in favor of obedience, and the inference is drawn that no use can be made of the conception of sacrifice in the interpretation of Christ's death, or as it is sometimes put, that no significance can be assigned to His death which does not belong equally to every part of His life. His obedience is what atones, and His obedience is the same from first to last. But to argue thus is to ignore the very words with which the writer proceeds: 'in which will— that is, the will of God which Christ came to do — we have been sanctified, i.e. constituted a worshipping people of God, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ' We cannot here, any more than in other passages of the New Testament, make the original sense of Old Testament words a key to their meaning when they are quoted in the New. What is contrasted in this passage is not sacrifice and obedience, but sacrifice of dumb creatures, of bulls and goats and such like, with sacrifice into which obedience enters, the sacrifice of a rational and spiritual being, which is not passive in death, but in dying makes the will of God its own. The will of God, with which we are here concerned, is not satisfied by an obedience which comes short of death. For it is not merely the preceptive will of God, His will that men should do right and live according to His holy law, which Christ came to fulfill; it is His gracious will, a will which has it in view that sinful men should be constituted into a people to Himself, a will which has resolved that their sin should be so dealt with as no longer to keep them at a distance from Him; a will, in short, that sinners should find a standing in His sight. And in that will we are sanctified, not merely by Christ's fulfillment of the law of God as it is binding on man in general, but by His fulfillment of the law as it is binding on sinful men, by His obedient suffering of death as that in which God's mind in relation to sin finds its final expression, to use the words of the writer himself, 'through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ' There is an ambiguity in saying that obedience is the principle of the atonement, or its spiritual principle, or that which gives the work of Christ its value. 2 It is no doubt true to say so, but after we have said so the essential question remains — that question the answer to which must show whether, when we say 'obedience, ' we have seen any way into the secret of the Atonement: viz. obedience to what? It is not enough to say, Obedience to the will of God; for the will of God is one thing when we think of man abstractly, another when we think of man under the definite conditions produced by sin. It is one thing when we conceive of it as an imperative will, having relation only to man as God's creature; it is another when we conceive it as a redeeming, restorative, gracious will, of which the human race is in reality the object, not the subject, the subject by whom the will is carried out being Christ. In both cases, of course, obedience, the free fulfillment of the divine will, is that which has moral value. But just because, in both cases, the attitude of the human will is for many the same — just because we can say 'obedience, ' whether we are thinking of God's will generally, or thinking of it as a will specially directed to the redemption of the sinful — just for this reason it is inadequate, ambiguous, and misleading to speak of obedience as the principle of the Atonement. Christ's obedience is not merely that which is required of all men, it is that which is required of a Redeemer; and it is its peculiar content, not the mere fact that it is obedience, which constitutes it an atonement. He had a moral vocation, of course; but it was not this — and this is all that obedience means — which made Him a

Redeemer: it was something unique in His vocation, something that pertained to Him alone. Christ did not come into the world to be a good man: it was not for this that a body was prepared for Him. He came to be a great High Priest, and the body was prepared for Him that by the offering of it He might put sinful men for ever into the perfect religious relation to God. In determining the meaning of obedience, and of the will of God, in this passage, we touch the quick of the great question about the relations of Incarnation and Atonement. If we have read it correctly, it confirms what has been already said about the ideal priority of the latter. It is the Atonement which explains the Incarnation: the Incarnation takes place in order that the sin of the world may be put away by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ. The obedience of the Incarnate One, like all obedience, has moral value — that is, it has a value for Himself; but its redemptive value, i.e. its value for us, belongs to it not simply as obedience, but as obedience to a will of God which requires the Redeemer to take upon Himself in death the responsibility of the sin of the world. That this is done obediently implies that in dying the Son of God acknowledges the justice of God in connecting death and sin, as they are connected for the human conscience; He does right, as it has been put, by the divine law which is expressed in that connection. And in doing so He does perfectly, and therefore finally and once for all, something through which sinful men can enter into fellowship with God. He lays the basis of the new covenant; He does what sinners can look to as a finished work; He makes an objective atonement for sin — exactly what St. Paul describes askatallagh> or reconciliation. There is peace now between God and man; we can draw near to the Holy One. The Epistle to the Hebrews does not make as clear to us as the Pauline epistles how it is that Christ's death becomes effective for men. The author was not an evangelist so much as a pastor, and it is not the initiation of Christianity but its conservation with which he deals throughout. But the answer to the question is involved in the conception of Christ as Priest. The priest is a person who acts as the representative of a people: he does something which it properly falls to them to do, but which they cannot do for themselves; by God's grace he does it, and on the strength of it they draw near to God. The epistle lays great stress on the fact that Christ has identified Himself with man; in substance, therefore, it may be said, His work must be appropriated by men's identifying themselves with Him. The writer never uses the Pauline expression 'in Christ' to express this identification or its result; he has the vaguer conception of being 'partakers of Christ, ' me>to coi tou~ Cristou~, which so far answers to it (Heb 3:14, cf. Heb 3:1, Heb 4:4 and Heb 12:8). Christ is not represented, as He is by St. Paul, as the object of faith; He is rather the great exemplar of faith. Yet He is the object of the Christian confession, both as apostle and High Priest (Heb 3:1); it is to those who obey Him that He is the author of eternal salvation (Heb 5:9); and He is the center to which the eyes and hearts of Christians are steadily directed. It does not, therefore, exhaust the meaning of the writer to say that He is our representative, and that He does nothing for us which it is not for us to do over again. It is true that He is our representative; but He not only acts in our name, and in our interest; in His action He does something for us which we could never have done for ourselves, and which does not need to be done over again; He achieves something which we can look to as a finished work, and in which we can find the basis of a sure confidence toward God. He achieves, in short, 'purgation of sins' (Heb 1:3). This is the evangelical truth which is covered by the word 'substitute, ' and which is not covered by the word 'representative'; and it is the consciousness of this truth that makes the Evangelical Church sensitive and even jealous of a too free and easy use of the ideas that Christ becomes one with us in all things, and we in all things one with Him. There is an immense qualification to be made in this oneness on both sides

— Christ does not commit sin, and we do not make atonement. The working in us of the mind of Christ toward sin, which presumably is what is meant by our identification with Him in His death, is not the making of atonement, nor the basis of our reconciliation to God; it is the fruit of the Atonement, which is Christ's finished work. Seeberg's elaborate essay on the death of Christ in Hebrews is an admirable illustration of the confusion which results from the hazy use of words like 'identification,' *Zusammenschluss*, etc., or the idea (to call it an idea) that Christ and the Christian are one person, and that this is what makes access to God and forgiveness of sins possible. It leads to expressions like this: 'Forgiveness of sins therefore presupposes that the life of him who has experience of it comes to have the standing of a life which has passed sinless through death.' 3 The forgiveness of sins may come to this in the end; it may beget a life which shares in Christ's victory over sin and death; but it is surely a subversion of the very idea of forgiveness to say that it presupposes it. A life that has passed sinless through death, whatever else it may know, knows nothing of forgiveness; and therefore forgiven, whatever it may be, is not a participation in any part of such a life's experience, whether by the method of 'identification' or by any other. Or again, from another side, the hazy use of such language leads to utterances like this: 'The thing Christ has done (*die Leistung Christi*), though it has not been done by the sinner, is yet a thing which he might or would fain have done, and is therefore in principle his doing.' 4 This is not wrestling with mysteries, or sounding great deeps; it is trifling with words, or trying to say 'Yes and No' in the same breath. Let the passion of Christ draw us to the utmost to share in His mind toward God and toward sin, and the fact remains that its power to do so is dependent on the clear recognition of the truth that Christ did something for us in His death which we could not do for ourselves, and which we do not need to do after Him. By His one offering He put us for ever in the perfect relation to God. This is the vital point in Christianity, and to deny the debt to Christ at this point is eventually to deny it altogether. The process which starts with rejecting the objective Atonement — in other words, the finished work: of Christ and the eternal dependence on Him and obligation to Him which this involves — has its inevitable and natural issue in the denial that Christ has any essential place in the Gospel. We can only assent to such a view by renouncing the New Testament as a whole.

Although faith is not defined in the epistle directly by relation to Christ, it is nevertheless faith which saves (Heb 10:22, Heb 10:38 f., Heb 13:7), and the well-known description or definition in the eleventh chapter can easily be applied in the Christian religion. Faith is there said to be the assurance of things hoped for, the proof of things not seen (Heb 11:1). It is to the invisible world what sight is to the visible; it is the means of realizing it, so that its powers and motives enter into the life of men, and enable them after patient endurance and fulfillment of God's will to inherit the promises. What, then, is the unseen world which is realized by Christian faith? It is a world in which Christ holds the central place, and in which, in the virtue of that death in which He made purgation of sins, He appears perpetually in the presence of God on our behalf. It is a world in which everything is dominated by the figure of the great High Priest, at the right hand of the Majesty in the Heavens, clothed in our nature, compassionate to our infirmities, able to save to the uttermost, sending timely succor to those who are in peril, pleading our cause. It is this which faith sees, this to which it clings as the divine reality behind and beyond all that passes, all that tries, daunts, or discourages the soul; it is this in which it finds the *ens realissimum*, the very truth of things, all that we mean when we speak of God. It is holding fast to the eternal realities revealed in Christ, and not some indefinable 'identification' with Him, on which all that is Christian depends.

And it is this, more than anything, which, in spite of differences of form, makes the writer akin to St. Paul. For he too builds everything on Jesus Christ, crucified and exalted. For a full discussion on this point, see Holtzmann, Neut. Theologie, 2. 281 ff.

Cf. Non mors sed voluntas placuit sponte morientis (Bernard).

Der Tod Christi, p. 92 f.

Ibid. p. 99.

03.05. Chapter 5 : The Johannine Writings

Chapter 5 : The Johannine Writings BY the Johannine writings are meant the Apocalypse and the fourth gospel, as well as the three catholic epistles to which the name of John is traditionally attached. It is not possible to enter here into a review of the critical questions connected with them, and especially into the question of their authorship. The most recent criticism, while it seems to bring the traditional authorship into greater uncertainty, approaches more nearly than was once common to the position of tradition in another respect: it ascribes all these writings to the same locality, to pretty much the same period, and to the same circle of ideas and sympathies. This is a nearer approach than would once have been thought probable to ascribing them all to the same hand. When a writer like Weizsacker concludes that the Apocalypse and the fourth gospel have so many points of contact that they must have come from one school, while they are nevertheless so distinct that they must have come from different hands, 1 it is probably quite legitimate to treat the two in connection, if not to regard them as at one. Thirty years ago it would have been uncritical to speak of them except as the extremist opposites to each other. As for the connection between the gospel and the epistles, or at least the first epistle, with which alone we shall be concerned, that seems to me indubitable. No doubt there are differences between them, and a difference touching closely on our subject — the epistle, like all epistles in contrast with all gospels, having more of what may be called reflection upon Christ's death, or interpretation of it, than the kindred gospel. But that does not prove, as J. Reville argues, 2 that they were due to different hands; it only proves that the gospel, however much it may be subdued in form to the style of the writer's own thoughts, is true to its character as a gospel, and the epistle to its character as an epistle. If these two books cannot be ascribed to the same pen, literary criticism is bankrupt. The whole of the Johannine writings, it may be safely assumed, belongs to the region of Asia Minor, to a school, let us say, which had its headquarters in Ephesus, and to the last quarter, or perhaps the last decade, of the first century of our era. The opening words of the Apocalypse carry us at once to the heart of our subject. John interweaves with the address of his book to the seven churches a sudden doxology:

'To Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins in His blood, and He made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever' (Rev 1:5 f.).

What is before his mind as he speaks is Christ in His exaltation — the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, the prince of the kings of the earth; but he cannot contemplate Him, nor think of the grace and peace which he invokes on the churches from Him, without recurring to the great deed of Christ on which they ultimately depend. Christ's love is permanent and unchanging, and John thinks of it as such (tw~| ajgapw~nti hJma~v, to Him that loveth us); but the great demonstration of it belongs to the past (kai< lu>santi hJma~v ejk tw~n aJmartiw~n hJmw~n ejn tw~| ai[mati autou~). He does not say, 'who liberates us from our sins,' as though a progressive purification were in view; but 'who liberated us,' pointing to a finished work. It seems to me far the most probable interpretation of ejn tw~| ai[mati to make ejn represent the Hebrew B] of price: Christ's blood was the cost of our liberation, the ransom price which He paid. This agrees with the word of our Lord Himself in the Gospel about giving His life a ransom for many (Mat 20:28), and with other

passages in the Apocalypse in which the notion of 'buying' a people for God finds expression (Rev 5:9 and Rev 14:3 f.). Sin, or rather sins, held men in bondage; and from this degrading servitude Christ purchased their freedom at no less a cost than that of His own life. It is not any undefined goodwill, it is the love revealed in this dear-bought emancipation of the sinful, which inspires the doxology, 'to Him that loveth us.' Redemption, it may be said, springs from love, yet love is only a word of which we do not know the meaning until it is interpreted for us by redemption. 3 The result of the liberty, bought by Christ's blood, is that those who were once held by sin are made a kingdom, even priests, to His God and Father. These words are borrowed from the fundamental promise of the Old Covenant in Exo 19:6. 'He made us a kingdom' does not mean 'He made us kings' (so some MSS. and AV.). It means, 'He constituted us a people over whom God reigns', the dignity conferred on us is not that of sovereignty, but of citizenship. 'He made us priests' means that in virtue of His action we are constituted a worshipping people of God; on the ground of it we have access to the Father. Both words together imply that it is the action of Christ, who died for our redemption, to which we owe our standing in God's sight, and our whole relation to Him so far as it is anything in which we can rejoice. All dignity and all privilege rest on the fact that He set us free from our sins at the cost of His blood. A doxology is not the place at which to seek for the rationale of anything, and we do not find the rationale of these things here. It is the fact only which is brought into view. The vision of Christ calls out the whole contents of the Christian consciousness; the Christian heart is sensible of all it owes to Him, and sensible that it owes it all in some way to His death.

Next in significance to this striking passage come the frequent references in the Apocalypse to the Lamb, and especially to the Lamb as it had been slain. In all, this name occurs twenty-nine times. The most important passages are the following:

(1) Rev 5:6-14. Here the Lamb is represented as sovereign — the object of all praise; as a Lamb which had been sacrificed — *ejsfagme>non* means 'with the throat cut'; as living and victorious — *eJsthko>v* (standing). It has the character which sacrifice confers, but it is alive; it is not dead, but it has the virtue of its death in it. It is on the ground of this; death, and of the redemption (or purchase of men for God) effected by it, that all praise is ascribed to the Lamb, and the knowledge and control of all providence put into His hands, 'Worthy art Thou to take the book and to open the seals of it, for Thou wast slain and didst purchase to God by Thy blood (*ejn tw~| ai[mati> sou*) out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and didst make them to our God a kingdom and priests, and they shall reign upon the earth.' Here we have the ideas of Rev 1:5 repeated, with the further thought that love like that displayed in Christ's death for man's redemption is worthy not only of all praise, but of having all the future committed to its care. It is really a pictorial way of saying that redeeming love is the last reality in the universe, which all praise must exalt, and to which everything else must be subordinate.

(2) The next passage is that in Rev 7:14, about the martyrs in the Neronian (or Domitianic?) persecution. 'One of the elders answered me, saying, These that are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and whence did they come? and I said to Him, My Lord, Thou knowest. And He said to me, These are they that come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white *ejn tw~| ai[mati tou~ ajrni>ou* (in the blood of the Lamb).' Here what is referred to is evidently the power of Christ's death to sanctify men, though how it is exercised we are not told. The people seen in this vision, the endless procession coming out of the great tribulation,

were martyrs and confessors. They had taken up their cross and followed Jesus to the end. They had drunk of His cup, and been baptized with His baptism. They had resisted unto blood, striving against sins, and now they were pure even as He was pure. But the inspiration to all this, and the strength for it, was not their own, they owed it to Him. They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; it was the power of His Passion, descending into their hearts, which enabled them to do what they did. Once more, the rationale is wanting. Some may feel that none is needed — that the Cross acts immediately in this way on those who are of the truth: none, at all events, is given. We can only feel that the Cross must have some divine meaning in it when it exercises so overwhelming a constraint.

(3) The third passage has also a relation to martyrdom, or at least to fidelity in a time of terrible persecution.

‘And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony, and they loved not their life unto death’ (Rev 12:11).

It is implied in this that but for the blood of the Lamb they would not have been able to overcome; the pressure put on them would have been too great, and they would inevitably have succumbed to it. 4 But with a motive behind them like the blood of the Lamb they were invincible. Now nothing can be a motive unless it has a meaning; nothing can be a motive in the line and in the sense implied here unless it has a gracious meaning. To say that they overcame, because of the blood of the Lamb, is the same as to say that the love of Christ constrained them. They dared not, with the Cross on which He died for them before their eyes, betray this cause by cowardice, and love their own lives more than He had loved His. They must be His, as He had been theirs. It is taken for granted here that in the blood of the Lamb there had been a great demonstration of love to them; in other words, that the death of Christ was capable of being defined in such a way, in relation to their necessities, as to bear this interpretation. It is because it is an incomparable demonstration of love that it is an irresistible motive. And though the relation is not thought out nor defined here — where it would have been utterly out of place — it is not forcing the language in the least to assume that it must have existed in fact for the author.

There are two other passages which might be brought into connection with our subject — Rev 13:8, and Rev 21:27 — in which reference is made to ‘the Lamb’s book of life.’ In this book the names are written of those who are to inherit life everlasting: those whose names are not found there die the second death. Nothing could express more strongly the writer’s conviction that there is no salvation in any other than the Lamb: that in Jesus Christ and Him crucified is the whole hope of a sinful world. It is very common to take the first of the two passages just quoted as though it spoke of ‘the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,’ and to argue from it that atonement is no afterthought, that redemption belongs to the very being of God and the nature of things; but though these are expressions upon which a Christian meaning can be put, they find no support in this passage. The words ‘from the foundation of the world’ are not to be construed with ‘slain,’ but with ‘written,’ as the parallel passage proves; it is the names of the redeemed that stand from eternity in the Lamb’s book of life, not the death or sacrifice of the Lamb which is carried back from Calvary and is vested with an eternal, as distinct from its historical, reality. An apostle would probably have felt that the historical reality was compromised by such a conception, or that something was taken away from its absolute significance. But even discounting this, it has no

exegetic support. 5 If we try to put together the various lights which the Apocalypse casts on the death of Jesus, we may say:

(1) That death is regarded as a great demonstration of love (Rev 1:5).

(2) It is a death which once for all has achieved something — the aorists *lu>santi* (Rev 1:5), *ejsfa>ghv kai< hjgo>rasav ejn tw~| ai[mati* (Rev 5:9), prove this. There is a finished work in it.

(3) It is a death which has an abiding power — *ajrni>on wJv ejsfagme>non* (Rev 5:6), not *sfage>n*.
6

(4) This abiding power is exercised in this, that it enables men to be faithful to Christ under persecution, to suffer with Him rather than sin, finally, rather to die than sin (Rev 12:11). Christ Himself was a martyr, and the typical Christian is a martyr too. To be a martyr is to furnish the decisive proof that the abiding power of Christ's blood is being exercised over one's life.

(5) Hence the blood of Christ both does something once for all — in breaking the bond which sin holds us by, and bringing us into such a relation to God that we are a people of priests — and does something progressively, in assuring our gradual assimilation to Jesus Christ the faithful witness. In both respects the Christian life is absolutely indebted to it; without it, it could neither begin nor go on. There is the same experience, it may be said, of Christ's death, the same practical appreciation of it, and the same exultant and devout utterance of that appreciation in the language of worship, which we find in St. Paul; but, as we might expect, when the nature of the composition is taken into account, we do not find any such dialectic treatment of this Christian experience, and of the ideas it involves, as in the writings of the apostle of the Gentiles.

We may now proceed to the examiJoh 1:11-18. The general conception of the fourth gospel is that what we owe to Christ is life, eternal life; and this life, it may further be said, we owe to the Person rather than to anything He does. This is true without any qualification of the prologue (Rev 1:1-18), and it is true of the gospel so far as the influence of the prologue can be traced through it. If we use the word redemption at all — and it occurs naturally to us as we come from the Apocalypse — we must say that redemption is conceived in the gospel as taking place through revelation. Jesus redeems men, or gives them life, by revealing to them the truth about God. The revelation is made in His own Person — by His words and deeds, no doubt, but supremely by what He is.

'This is life eternal, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send, Jesus Christ' (John 17:3). The work of redemption, to borrow the dogmatic category, is interpreted through the prophetic office of Christ almost exclusively. It is on this basis that the ordinary contrasts are drawn between the theology of St. Paul and that of the four gospels and if we do not look too closely they can be drawn in very broad lines; to change the figure, they can be put in epigrammatic and striking forms. Thus it may be said that in St. John the great and fundamental idea is revelation; God makes Himself known to men, and in making Himself known He redeems them; to see Him in His true nature is to be withdrawn from the world of sin. In St. Paul, on the other hand, revelation is through redemption. It is because God in Jesus Christ takes the responsibilities of the sinful world upon Himself, so reconciling the world to Himself, that we know what He is the relation of revelation and redemption is reversed. It agrees with this, again, that as Schultz has put it, 7 in St. John the death of Jesus only comes, though it comes inevitably,

because of the flesh; the Word was made flesh, and therefore must share the fate of all flesh, fulfill the destiny of man by a perfect death as by a perfect life. In St. Paul, on the contrary, it is the death which is the primary thing; except for the purpose of dying for man's redemption Christ would never have been here in the flesh at all. It agrees with this further, so it is said, that whereas in St. Paul (as in the synoptic gospels) the people in whom Jesus is most interested, and who are most interested in Him, are the sinners who need redemption and whom He died to redeem, in St. John the sinners have practically disappeared, and the persons who have an interest in Jesus are the relatively good people who are prepared to appreciate the revelation He has brought. 'He that doeth the truth cometh to the light' (John 3:21). 'Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice' (John 18:37). A sentence like John 10:26, 'Ye do not believe, because ye are not of My sheep, ' would, according to Holtzmann, have been exactly reversed in the synoptics; it would have been, 'You are not of My sheep, because you do not believe. ' 8 The trick of such contrasts is easily learned, but does not strike one as very valuable. It depends for its plausibility on those generalities in which there is always some delusion hidden. It depends in this case, for example, on taking the somewhat abstract and speculative standpoint of the prologue, and allowing that to dominate the historical parts of the gospel. But if we turn from the prologue to the gospel itself, in which Jesus actually figures, and in which His words and deeds are before us, we receive a different impression. There is a great deal which resists the speculative solvent supposed to be contained in the Logos theory. There is, in particular, a great deal bearing upon the death of Christ and its significance, which goes to discredit those abstract contrasts which have just been illustrated. When we do take such a closer look at the gospel, what do we find?

We find that the death of Christ in a great variety of ways comes to the front, as something which is of peculiar significance for the evangelist.

(1) The first allusion to it is that which is put into the lips of John the Baptist in John 1:29 : 'Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. ' If these are not the words of the Baptist, they are all the more the words of the evangelist, and define his standpoint from the outset. That they refer to the death of Jesus does not seem to me open to question. Granting that *oJ aJrwn th<n aJmarti>an tou~ ko>smou* is rightly rendered *qui tollit* or *qui aufert peccatum mundi* — who takes away, not who takes on him, the sin of the world — we have to take the subject of the sentence into consideration, the Lamb. When sin is taken away by a lamb, it is taken away sacrificially; it is borne off by being in some sense — in the case of an unintelligent sacrifice, only a figurative sense — borne. It is not too much to say that the conception of Christ's death as a sacrifice for sin, put thus, at the very beginning of the gospel, into the lips of the great witness to Jesus, is meant to convey decisively the evangelist's own conception of Jesus and His work. He is here to put away sin — that sums up His vocation; and He does not put it away by the method of denunciation, like the Baptist, but by the sacrificial method, in which it has to be borne. 9

(2) There is a further allusion to the death of Jesus in John 2:19 : 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will build it up. ' This, according to the evangelist, He spoke concerning the temple of His body. The evangelist's interpretation has been treated with very little respect by critics of all schools. It is not necessary to defend it; but I repeat, that if this is not what Jesus meant, all the more must we recognize the preoccupation of the evangelist himself with the idea. He drags it in, we must believe, where it is out of place, only because it is the center of all his thoughts about Jesus; it is in it he instinctively seeks the key to anything mysterious in the Master's words.

(3) The third reference is indisputable, though the terms in which it is expressed may not be free from ambiguity. It is that in John 3:14 in which Jesus is represented as comparing Himself to the brazen serpent, 'Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.' The expression 'lifted up' occurs in one or two other places, and the same happy or unhappy ambiguity attaches to it in all. Thus in John 8:28 Jesus says to the Jews, 'When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am He,' etc. In John 12:32 we have: 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.' Here the evangelist again has a note which has excited the contempt of critics. 'This He said, indicating by what kind of death He was to die' (John 12:33). All that the Jews seem to have taken out of the word was the idea of 'removal'; for they contrast the inevitable 'uplifting' of the Son of Man with the 'abiding of the Christ for ever.' Here it is by no means necessary to join in the common censure of the evangelist. Where the 'uplifting' is spoken of indefinitely, it may be conceived, properly enough, to include the exaltation; but where it is spoken of as the act of the Jews (John 8:28), and compared to the elevation of the brazen serpent on a pole (John 3:14 f.), the allusion to the Cross is unmistakable. There is, indeed, an exact parallel to it in Ezr 6:11 (RV.), though the word *uJyou~n* is not used: 'Also I have made a decree that whosoever shall alter this word, let timber be pulled down from his house, and let him be lifted up and fastened thereon.' That was the death which Jesus died, and to such a death the evangelist understood Him to refer when he used the word which he represents by *uJyou~n*. The word had the advantage — for no doubt it was counted an advantage — of carrying a double meaning, of raising the mind at once to the cross and to the heavenly throne. But nothing is more characteristic of the writer, or of Jesus as He is set before us in this gospel, than the unification of these two things. They are inseparable parts of the same whole. Hence the peculiar use of the term 'glorify' (e.g., 'Now is the Son of Man glorified,' John 13:31) to express what happens to Christ in His death. There is no conception of a humiliation in death followed and rewarded by an exaltation; on the contrary, Christ is lifted up and ascends through His death, His glory is revealed in that whole experience which death initiates, and into which it enters, more than in all His miracles. The mere fact that words like *uJywqh~nai* and *doxasqh~nai* are the evangelist's chosen words to describe Christ's death shows how thought had been preoccupied with it, and how, the prologue notwithstanding, the Christian soul felt itself here at the heart of the revelation and of the redeeming power of God.

(4) The death of Christ is again alluded to, in all probability, in chap. 6, and that in close connection with the life which is His supreme gift to men; He speaks there of His flesh, which He will give for the life of the world, and of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man (John 6:51-53). If it were possible, as I do not think it is, to deny that there is any reference in this chapter to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, it might be possible also to deny that it contained any reference to Christ's death. Verses like those just quoted would merely be an enigmatic and defiant manner (such as we frequently find at the close of a discussion in the fourth gospel) of putting the general truth of John 6:57: 'He that eateth Me, he it is who shall live because of Me.' 'My flesh' and 'My blood' would in this case only be a more concrete and pictorial 'Me'; there would not of necessity be any reference to the death. But when we remember the period at which the gospel came into use, the sacramental allusion (see below), both here and in the third chapter, seems to me quite indisputable; and this carries with it the allusion to Christ's death as in some way or other the life of the world.

(5) In the tenth chapter we again come upon passages in which there is nothing equivocal.

'I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep' (John 10:11).

This, it might be said, is only an ideal way of putting it; it is what the Good Shepherd would do if the situation emerged which required it. But it is not put so by the evangelist. The need has emerged, and the laying down of His life with a view to its resumption is made the sum and substance of the vocation of Jesus.

'Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again. This commandment have I received from My Father' (John 10:17 f.).

Christ's death is not an incident of His life, it is the aim of it. The laying down of His life is not an accident in His career, it is His vocation; it is that in which the divine purpose of His life is revealed.

(6) A peculiar solemnity attaches in the gospel to a sixth allusion to Christ's death, that which is made in the unconscious prophecy of Caiaphas. A prophecy is that which a man speaks under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, and the evangelist means us to understand that a divine authority attaches for once to the words of this bad man. 'Being high priest that fateful year, he prophesied that Jesus was to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad. ' Some interest of the nation, and this great interest of the family of God, were conditioned by the death of Jesus, however that death may be related to the ends it was to achieve.

(7) In John 12:1-50 there are several significant allusions. There is the corn of wheat which, unless it fall into the ground and die, abides alone, but if it die, bears much fruit (John 12:24) — a similitude in which the influence of Jesus is made to depend directly on His death; and in close connection with this there is the anticipation of the near and awful future, the shadow of which struck dark and cold upon the Savior's soul.

'Now is My soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour' (John 12:27).

'This hour' is the great crisis in the life of Jesus, the hour which no one could anticipate (John 7:30 and John 8:20), but from which, now that it has come, He will not shrink. It has come, in the sense already explained, as the hour in which the Son of Man is to be glorified: the hour in which He is to drink the cup which the Father gives Him to drink, and to crown the work the Father has given Him to do. The way in which He is moved by it, shrinks from it, accepts it, reveals the place it holds in His mind, and in that of the evangelist also.

(8) Just as the Lamb of God at the beginning of the gospel (John 1:29) connected it with Isa 53:1-12, so does the quotation in John 12:38 give us the same key to its interpretation at the end. 'Though He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe on Him, that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled which he said: Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? ' Taken alone, this passage could not be made to bear any special reference to the death of Christ or to its interpretation; but occurring as it does after the triple and unmistakable references of the corn, of wheat, the dreaded hour, and the lifting up from the earth (John 12:24, John 12:27, John 12:32), it seems to me rather probable than otherwise that it is meant to bring before the reader's mind, by a sufficient hint, the fifty- third chapter of

Isaiah, as the Old Testament, and therefore the divine, solution of the mysteriously disappointing career of Jesus.

(9) If this instance is reckoned doubtful, there can be no doubt about the one in the fifteenth chapter:

'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends' (John 15:13).

It is characteristic of St. John, we are told, as opposed to St. Paul, that in St. John Jesus died for His friends; St. Paul thinks of Him as dying for His enemies (Rom 5:10). It is an inept remark. Jesus at the moment is speaking to His friends, and about the supreme pledge of love He is going to give them. In other places, St. John, like St. Paul, represents Him as giving His flesh 'for the life of the world' (John 6:51), and lays stress on the fact that it is God's love for the world, in its all-inclusive yet individualizing intensity, which explains His 'lifting up' (John 3:14). This is the great thing on which they agree: the highest revelation of love is made in the death of Jesus.

(10) A singular and striking allusion to His death has been found in our Lord's intercessory prayer: 'For their sakes I sanctify Myself that they also may be sanctified in truth' (John 17:19). The meaning of this will be considered presently (see below). And finally (11) there is the story of the Passion itself. A peculiar significance attaching to the death of Jesus is implied (a) by the fullness with which the story is told;

(b) by the references in it to the fulfillment of prophecy, which mean that a divine purpose was being carried out by it (John 19:24 = Psa 22:18-19; Psa 22:28 f. = Psa 69:21; John 19:36 f. = Exo 12:46, Zec 12:10); and

(c) by the peculiarly emphatic attestation given to some mysterious circumstances attendant on it, the sense of which might have remained hidden from us but for the interpretation of them provided in the first epistle. 'One of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and there came out immediately blood and water. And he that hath seen hath borne witness, and his witness is true, and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye also may believe. For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: A bone of Him shall not be broken. And again, another Scripture says: They shall look on Him whom they pierced' (John 1:1 f., cf. 1Jn 5:6). This series of passages has not been cited at random, but to dissipate the impression which many people have, and which some writers on New Testament theology propagate, that the death of Christ has no place in the fourth gospel corresponding to that which it has elsewhere in the New Testament. I think they are sufficient to dissipate such an impression. No doubt there is much in the fourth gospel which makes it plausible to say, St. Paul deals with the work of Christ, St. John with His person; for St. Paul, Christ only lives to die; for St. John, He dies because death is the only issue from life; but such contrasts do as much to mislead as to illumine. As soon as we are past the prologue, into the scenery of what Jesus actually said, did, thought, feared, and suffered, we see that His death really fills the place it does everywhere in the New Testament, and has the same decisive importance. Indeed, the constant complaint of commentators is that the evangelist drags it in at inappropriate places, a complaint which, so far as it is justified, only shows how completely his mind was absorbed and dominated by the Cross. But does this prominence of the death of Jesus in the gospel throw any light upon its meaning? Is it defined by St. John (or by Jesus in the fourth gospel) in any such relations as by St. Paul? Allowing for the fact that the writer's mind is not of a

dialectical turn like that of St. Paul, but given rather to intuition than to reflection — in other words, to the contemplation of results rather than of processes, of ends rather than of means or conditions — we must answer these questions in the affirmative. In St. John, as in St. Paul, Christ's death is set in relation to the love and saving will of God.

'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life'(John 3:16).

Again, in St. John as in St. Paul, Christ's death is related to His own love: 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends' (John 15:13). This is the favorite text of Abaelard, quoted again and again as having the whole secret of the atonement in it: everything, according to Abaelard, lies in this, that there is love in Christ's death, with power in it to evoke love, the response of love being the whole experience of salvation. The more fully Christ's love wins from us the answer of love, the more fully are we justified and saved; that is all. Without raising the question whether the act of Christ in laying down His life must not be related in some real way to our real necessities before it can either be or be conceived to be an act of love at all, we may notice that its character as connected with His love is again emphasized in the allegory of the Good Shepherd. The perfect freedom with which Christ acts the shepherd's part, on to the final sacrifice which it demands, is apparently the characteristic of His work to which He attaches the greatest importance. And it is so because it is through the freshness with which the surrender of life is made that the love which is its motive is revealed. 'I lay down My life of Myself. No one taketh it from Me. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again' (John 10:17 f.). This spontaneity on the part of Jesus, when it is put in relation to the love of the Father in giving the Son, appears as obedience. The authority or liberty He has to lay down His life and to take it again is a commandment He has received from the Father. Equally with St. Paul or with the writer to the Hebrews, St. John could use the term 'obedience' to describe the whole work of Christ; but just as with them, with him too it is loving obedience to a will of love, an attitude at once to God's purpose and to man's need which makes the Passion the sublimest of actions, and justifies the paradox of the gospel that the Cross is a 'lifting up' or a glorifying of Jesus.

It is possible, however, to go further in defining the death of Christ in the fourth gospel. Proceeding as it does from the love of the Father and the Son, it is nevertheless not conceived as arbitrary. It is free, but there is a rational necessity for it. The Son of Man must be lifted up if He is to save those who believe. The corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die if it is not to abide alone. Not much, indeed, is said to explain this. The various ends secured by Christ's death — the advantage of the flock for which as the Good Shepherd He lays down His life (John 10:11), the eternal life of those who believe in Him (John 3:14 f.), the rallying round Him as a center of the scattered children of God, so that He becomes the head of a new humanity (John 11:52): these, no doubt, are all dependent upon it somehow; but how, the evangelist is at no pains to tell. But we do no violence to his thought when we put this and that in the gospel together in order to discern what he does not explicitly say. Everything, we have seen, comes from the love of God; the death of Christ is to be construed in harmony with this, not in any antagonism to it. But the love of God to the world is never conceived in Scripture abstractly. It is not manifested in some evolutionary process which is necessarily determined a priori, as might be hastily inferred from the prologue to the fourth gospel; to conceive it so would be to deny its grace. It is conceived, practically, in relation to definite needs of man which it meets; it is manifested not on the analogy of natural

forces, which simply are what they are, but on the analogy of the free actions of men, which are determined by specific motives. To deny this is to lose the living and gracious God of revelation, and to take in His place a metaphysical phantom. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. The giving of the Son at least includes the giving of Him to that death which, as we have seen, pervades the gospel from beginning to end; indeed, the death is emphasized in the immediate context (John 3:14 f.). Nor are we left without sufficiently clear hints as to the necessity which determined the gift. In the passage just referred to (John 3:16), we see that apart from it men are lost; they perish, instead of having eternal life. St. John's mind revolves round these ultimate ideas, death and life, rather than their moral equivalents or presuppositions, sin and righteousness; but we cannot suppose that he did not include in 'death' and 'life' all that we mean by these latter words. That he did include all this we see when the consequence of refusing the gift of God is presented in the terrible word of Jesus, 'If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins' (John 8:24); or when the evangelist himself writes,

'He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; he that disobeyeth the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him' (John 3:36). The love of God, then, represented in the gift of Christ, has in view, according to the fourth gospel, the sin of the world, its exposure to the divine wrath, its perishing if left to itself; and the gift in which that love is embodied, if it is to be intelligently apprehended at all, must also have a definite relation to this concrete case. If it delivers men from perishing under the wrath of God, and from the sin by which that wrath is evoked, then an intelligible relation to sin and to the divine wrath is implicit in the writer's consciousness of it, whether he has given articulate expression to such a relation or not. It is quite legitimate here to emphasize such passages as John 1:29, where, as has been already shown, a sacrificial deliverance from sin is represented as the sum and substance of the gospel; and John 20:23, where the power which the Risen Lord confers on His disciples in virtue of all that He has achieved is a power connected with the forgiveness of sins. It may seem to some a less obvious instance, but the striking word of Jesus in John 17:19 points in the same direction. 'For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.' What men needed was to be sanctified, that is, to be consecrated to God. It was not in their power — surely no reason can be conceived for this but that which lies in their sin — to consecrate themselves, and what they were not able to do for themselves Christ did for them in His own Person. He consecrated Himself to God in His death. That the reference is to His death does not seem open to question; the present tense, ἀγιάζω, which suggests something going on at the moment, and the circumstances of the Speaker, whose mind is full of what is at hand, put out of court the idea that the word is intended to describe His life as a whole. His life was past, and now, in His own Person, through death, He is about to establish between God and man a relation which men could never have established for themselves, but into which they can truly enter, and into which they will be drawn once it is established by Him. This seems to me the exact equivalent of the Pauline doctrine that Christ dies our death that we may be drawn into the fellowship of His death, and so put right with God. He acts — 'I sanctify Myself'; men are acted on — 'that they also may be sanctified.' He establishes the reconciliation; they, to use Pauline language, receive it (Rom 5:11).

I have spoken of the gospel throughout as if it expressed the mind of the writer rather than that of the subject. The necessity of such a concession to the current criticism is shaken when we pass to the epistle, for there we find the death of Christ and its significance put in a light which more

imperatively recalls the other New Testament epistles, and which differentiates this one to a considerable extent from the gospel. The contrast with the epistle on this very point is one of the evidences that the gospel is truer to its assumed historical position than many would admit; it is not his own mind the writer wishes to impart, but the mind of Christ; and though it is certainly by the same hand as the epistle, he does not feel at liberty to say everything in it that the epistle allows him to say. For example, we frequently find in the epistle explicitly stated, what we have as a rule to infer in the gospel, the connection between the death of Christ and sin. Thus in 1Jn 1:7 : 'The blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin. ' In 1Jn 2:1 f.:

'These things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any one sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world. ' In 1Jn 2:12 : 'I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. ' In 1Jn 3:5 : 'Ye know that He was manifested to take away sins. ' In 1Jn 4:10 : 'Not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son a propitiation for our sins. ' The whole Person and Work of Christ, we see here, His whole manifestation in the world, but in some signal way His death, are set in relation to sin. It is characteristic of the writer, here as in the gospel, that his interest is in the end or result, the actual cleansing of the soul from sin, its sanctification not in the sense of 1Co 6:11, or of Heb 10:29, but in the sense of modern Protestant theology. This sanctification is dependent on the death of Christ. If we walk in the light as God is in the light, the blood of Jesus His Son continuously and progressively cleanses us from all sin: our sanctification is gradually achieved under its influence (1Jn 1:7). It is the removal of sin in this sense which is referred to also in 1Jn 3:5 : 'He was manifested, that He might put sins away. ' It is by no means necessary, for the understanding of the evangelist here, that we should adopt the strange caprice which fascinated Westcott, and distinguish with him in the blood of Christ (1) His death, and (2) His life; or (1) His blood shed, and (2) His blood offered; or (1) His life laid down, and (2) His life liberated and made available for men. 11 No doubt these distinctions were meant to safeguard a real religious interest, they were meant to secure the truth that it is a living Savior who saves, and that He actually does save, from sin, and that He does so in the last resort by the communication of His own life; but I venture to say that a more groundless fancy never haunted and troubled the interpretation of any part of Scripture than that which is introduced by this distinction into the Epistle to the Hebrews and the First Epistle of John. The New Testament writers, though they speak often of Christ's death, never think of a dead Christ: their Christ is One who became dead and is alive for evermore, and in His immortal life the virtue of His death is present. He did something when He died, and that something He continues to make effective for men in His Risen Life; but there is no meaning in saying that by His death His life — as something other than His death — is 'liberated' and 'made available' for men: on the contrary, what makes His risen life significant and a saving power for sinners is neither more nor less than this, that His death is in it; it is the life of one who by dying has dealt with the fatal necessities of man's situation, and in doing so has given a supreme demonstration of His love. This connection of ideas becomes apparent when we notice that St. John uses a word akin to St. Paul's *ἵλασις* in describing the relation of Christ to sin. Jesus Christ the righteous, he says, is the *ἵλας* for our sins (1Jn 2:2); and again, he says, God of his own accord loved us, and sent His Son a propitiation for our sins (1Jn 4:10). It is impossible to suppose that St. John used this word in any other relations than those in which it is found (or in which the cognate terms are found) in Hebrews or in St. Paul. The characteristic words of religion cannot be applied in new ways at will. Now the idea of *ἵλας* or

propitiation is not an insulated idea — indeed there cannot be any such thing. It is part of a system of ideas, which we have to reconstruct with the means at our disposal. It is related, for one thing, to the idea of sin. It is sin, according to the uniform teaching of the New Testament, which creates the necessity for it, and which is in some sense the object of it. In other words, sin is the problem with which *1Jn 1:8-10* deals. St. John agrees with all New Testament writers in regarding sin as a problem. It cannot simply be ignored or suppressed; something has to be done with it, and the effective something (when its removal is in view) has been done by Christ the *1Jn 1:9*. Again, the idea of *1Jn 1:9* is related to the ideas of sacrifice and intercession. When St. John says that Jesus Christ the righteous is the propitiation for our sins, this is implied. He has spoken almost immediately before about the blood of Jesus cleansing from all sin; he speaks further on with significant emphasis about His coming in blood as well as in water (*1Jn 5:6*); and he no doubt conceived Jesus as set forth, as St. Paul has it (*Rom 3:25*), in His blood in this propitiatory character. Further, the idea of *1Jn 1:9* by being related to sin is related also to some divine law or order which sin has violated, and which is acknowledged in its inviolable rights by *1Jn 1:9*. This is what is meant when the propitiation is described as Jesus Christ the Righteous. All that is divine, all the moral order of the world, all that we mean by the Law of God, has right done by it in the death of Christ. Sin, in that sense, is neutralized by the propitiation, and if men could enter into it, or if the benefit of it could come to them, sin would no more be a barrier to their fellowship with God. The propitiation would draw them to God and put them right with Him, and as it held their hearts more closely it would more effectually and thoroughly cleanse them from every taint of sin. The power of sanctification is lodged in it as well as the condition of the sinner's primary acceptance with God. The first of these — the power of sanctification — preponderates in the epistle; but it would be as complete a negation of its teaching, as of that of every New Testament writing, to say that the second — the sinner's acceptance with God — is dependent upon it. The very reverse is the case. The sin of the whole world has been atoned for, as the apostle expressly asserts (*1Jn 2:2*); and it is on the basis of this work finished for all, and assumed to underlie everything, that the progressive purification of the Christian proceeds. It is the virtue of the *1Jn 1:9*, in which all sin has been dealt with for its removal, and dealt with according to the realities of the divine law involved in the case, which eventually effects sanctification.

Perhaps the most striking thing in the first Epistle of St. John is the manner in which the propitiation of Christ is related to the love of God. The connection of the two things is, as we have seen, universal in the New Testament. No one could teach more emphatically than St. Paul, for example, that it is to the love of God we owe the presence of Jesus in the world and His work for men. No one could contrast what the love of God has done for us in Christ more emphatically than St. Paul does with the utmost which men will do from love for each other. But St. John rises above all comparisons to an absolute point of view at which propitiation and love become ideas which explain each other, and which have no adequate illustration apart from each other. He not only defines the propitiation by relation to love — God Himself loved us and sent His Son a propitiation for our sins (*1Jn 4:10*); He defines love by relation to the propitiation — in this have we come to know what love is, that He laid down His life for us (*1Jn 3:16*). The emphasis in this last sentence is on the expressly contrasted words

It is the contrast of what He is and of what we are, of the sinless Son of God and the sinful sons of men, in which the nerve of the proposition lies. So far from finding any kind of contrast between

love and propitiation, the apostle can convey no idea of love to any one except by pointing to the propitiation — love is what is manifested there; and he can give no account of the propitiation but by saying, Behold what manner of love. For him, to say 'God is love' is exactly the same as to say 'God has in His Son made atonement for the sin of the world.' If the propitiatory death of Jesus is eliminated from the love of God, it might be unfair to say that the love of God is robbed of all meaning, but it is certainly robbed of its apostolic meaning. It has no longer that meaning which goes deeper than sin, sorrow, and death, and which recreates life in the adoring joy, wonder, and purity of the first Epistle of St. John. In speaking of the death of Christ, it would not be just either to the gospel or to the Epistle of St. John to ignore the place held in both by the sacraments. That place has been ignored by some and disputed by others; but if we realize the date at which both documents were written, the place which the sacraments had in Christian worship at the time, and the inevitableness with which ordinary Christians must have thought, and as we know did think, of the sacraments when they read, it seems to me indisputable. Baptism and the Lord's Supper, it is no exaggeration to say, were full in the writer's view at many points. He must have thought of baptism when he wrote in the third chapter of the gospel the words about being born of water and spirit; he must have thought of the Supper as he wrote in the sixth about eating the flesh of the Son of Man and drinking His blood. I cannot doubt that he thought of both when he told in John 19:34 of the blood and water that issued from the pierced side of Jesus, and again in the epistle (1Pe 5:6) urged that Jesus Christ came through water and blood, adding, with unambiguous emphasis, not in the water only, but in the water and in the blood. The water and the blood were always present in the church in the form of the sacraments, and the evangelist uses the sacraments here as witnesses to the historical reality of the life and experiences of Jesus. Christian baptism answers to His baptism; the Christian feast in which faith partakes of His body and blood is a perpetual testimony to His passion. It is in this last that St. John is peculiarly interested as he writes the epistle. There were teachers abroad, of whom Cerinthus is a type, who preached a Christ that had come in the water only, not in the blood. The redeeming love and power of God, they held, had descended on Jesus at His baptism, and been with Him in His ministry of teaching and healing: there is a divine reality in this, therefore, on which we can depend. But they had withdrawn from Him before the Passion; there is therefore no corresponding divine reality there. It is against such a view that the apostle makes the elaborate and emphatic protest of 1Jn 5:6 f., 'not in the water only, but in the water and in the blood.' To deny the divine reality and saving significance of the Passion was to rob the most sacred rite of the Christian religion at once of its basis and its import; it was to abolish the Lord's Supper. The apostle appeals to the Lord's Supper against such a view. A Christ who did not come by blood — a Christ whose flesh was not the true meat and His blood the true drink, as the celebration of the Supper and the liturgical language used at it implied — a Christ who did not by His death bring life to men — was not the Christ known to the faith and acknowledged in the worship of the church. The sacraments, but especially the sacrament of the Supper, are the stronghold of the New Testament doctrine concerning the death of Christ. But there is another side to this. While the apostle sees in the sacraments a testimony to the historicity of the baptism and death of Christ, and to the perpetual presence in the church of the saving power of the Lord's Passion, and while he insists upon their historicity as against those who denied that Jesus Christ had come in flesh, and who made the life on earth, and especially the death, phantasmal, so far as a revelation of God was concerned, he protests on the other hand against those who would materialize the

history. He checks them at every point by introducing and emphasizing the Spirit. Thus in the gospel, John 3:1-36, he speaks once of being born of water and spirit, but from that point onward the water is ignored, we hear of the Spirit alone; of its breathing where it will, of being born of the Spirit, of every one who is so born. So also in the sixth chapter, after using the strongest language about eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man — language in which enigmatic defiance to antipathetic minds is carried to the furthest point — he precludes all possibility of religious materialism by the words.

'It is the Spirit which gives life; the flesh is of no use for this; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life' (John 6:63).

Words and speech address man on the spiritual side of his nature, and it is on this side that everything included in Christ — 'he that eateth Me,' He says — finds access to us. And finally, in the epistle, after laying the stress we have seen on the water and the blood, he concludes: 'And the Spirit is that which beareth witness, for the Spirit is the truth. For three are they that bear witness, the Spirit and the water and the blood, and the three agree in one.' In every case the historical is asserted, but care is taken that it shall not be materialized, a primacy is given to the spiritual. On the other hand, there is no such spiritualizing as would leave to the historical merely a position of vanishing or relative importance. There is no sublimation of Christianity into 'ethical' or 'spiritual principles,' or into 'eternal facts,' which absolve us from all obligation to a Savior who came in blood. Except through the historical, there is no Christianity at all, but neither is there any Christianity until the historical has been spiritually comprehended. This is closely connected with our subject. Christianity is as real as the blood of Christ: it is as real as the agony in the garden and the death on the Cross. It is not less real than this, nor more real; it has no reality whatever which is separable from these historical things. Yet it is not in their mere externality, as events in past time, that they establish Christianity or save men from their sins. It is as their spiritual meaning is recognized, and makes a spiritual appeal to men, and awakes a spiritual response. It is when that awful experience of Jesus is revealed as a propitiation for sins, an assumption of our responsibilities by One who does right by the eternal law which we have wronged, and does it for us at this tremendous cost; it is then that the soul of man is reached by the divine love, and through penitence and faith drawn away from evil, and born again of God. It is then that the blood of Jesus, God's Son, cleanses from all sin. It is then that in His death the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. A friendly critic of this book pointed out what he regarded as a serious omission in it — the want of any reference to the death of Christ as a victory over Satan. This is a point of view which is principally found in the fourth gospel. Thus it is with His death and its consequences in view that Jesus says,

'Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out; and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself' (John 12:31 f.). As his hour comes nearer He says again,

'I shall no longer speak much with you, for the prince of the world cometh, and in Me he hath nothing' (John 14:30). And finally, in the description of the work and power of the Spirit, who is to take His place in the hearts of the disciples after His departure, the same conception recurs.

'He when He is come will convict the world... of judgment, because the prince of this world has been judged' (John 16:11). A mind which does not naturally personalize the principle of evil —

turning the principle into a prince — has the same embarrassment in dealing with these passages as with the Pauline ones referred to earlier in this work. Possibly we get out too easily with our abstract nouns. The evil in the world may be represented as a principle, or an atmosphere, or an abstraction of some kind, by a spectator who is not engaged in conflict with it; but for One whose life is spent in conflict, for One who resists unto blood in the strife against it and finds it impossible not to do so, evil may assume a more malignant, and therefore a more personal aspect. It is not an unconscious but a willful and wicked force. It is not a *vis inertiae* in the moral world, but an awful Enemy of God. It reveals the intensity of the conflict, the stress of the battle which Jesus fought, that the power which He vanquished is represented thus. There is no suggestion in the fourth gospel that the Prince of this World had any rights in it — even relative and temporary rights, such as might be supposed to belong to the angels who gave the law, and who were superseded in their authority by Christ; the Prince of this World has no rights at all, and that is what Jesus demonstrates by His death. He has nothing in Christ; he is judged, he is cast out; through the death on the Cross the kingdom of this world is taken from him, and becomes the kingdom of God and of His Christ.

Das apostolische Zeitalter, p. 484.

Le quatrieme Evangile, p. 51 ff. See also Moffatt, Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament, 589 ff. *lou>santi* (washed) is the reading familiar to us from the Received Text and the Vulgate. It also, as well as *lu>santi*, has analogies in the book: cf. John 7:14 and the Text. Rec. at 22: 14; and Bousset calls attention to the frequent mention of white robes without any particular reference to the blood of Christ. The sacrament of baptism made the figure of washing an obvious one to Christians, quite apart from such suggestions as are given by Psa 1:4 and Isa 1:16, Isa 1:18, and its influence is apparent in 1Co 6:11 and Tit 2:14. On the whole, *lu>santi* is much the better- supported reading: for the meaning which would go with *lou>santi* see below on John 7:14.

Compare Moffatt ad loc. in Expositor's Greek Testament: 'In opposition to the contemporary Jewish tradition (Ap. Bar. 2. 2, 14. 12; 4 Esd. 7. 77 etc.), it is not reliance on works but the consciousness of redemption which enables them to bear witness and to bear the consequences of their witness. ' The use of this text which is here rejected is found e. g. in Contentio Veritatis, p. 298, where Mr. Inge writes: 'These [the death and resurrection of Christ] are eternal acts, even as the generation of the Son of God is an eternal act. They belong to the unchangeable and everoperating counsels of God. So it is possible for the New Testament writers to say that the Lamb was slain for us from the foundation of the world, and that the rock which followed the Israelites through the wilderness was Christ. The passion of Christ was itself (as the Greek Fathers called it) a sacrament of mystery of an eternal truth: it was the supreme sacrament of human history; the outward and visible sign of a great supra- temporal fact. ' This point of view, whatever its legitimacy or illegitimacy, is certainly much more characteristic of the Greek Fathers than of the New Testament writers. To the latter Christ is the equivalent of absolute spiritual reality. They never raise the abstract question of the relation of time to eternity; and though the eternal import of the historical, in the life and death of Jesus, is the foundation of all their thinking, they never describe the Passion as the sacrament or symbol of any reality beyond itself.

Compare St. Paul's use of the perfect participle *ejstaurwme>non*, 1Co 1:23, 1Co 2:2 and Gal 3:1.

Die Gottheit Christi, 447. 'Also nicht als ein Einzelereigniss, nicht in Beziehung auf das Gesetz, nicht als Opfer in gewöhnlichem Sinne hat der Tod Christi seine Bedeutung (sc. in John). Nicht um des Todes willen ist das Fleisch Christi nothig gewesen, sondern der Tod ist nothig gewesen um des Fleisches willen.

Neut. Theologie, 2. p. 492. On this passage, see Garvie, Studies in the inner Life of Jesus, p. 125.

See Abaelard in Migne, vol. 178, p. 836: 'Justior quoque, id est amplius Dominum diligens, quisque fit post passionem Christi quam ante, quia amplius in amorem accendit completum beneficium quam speratum. Redemptio itaque nostra est illa summa in nobis per passionem Christi dilectio quae non solum a servitute peccati liberat, sed veram nobis libertatem filiorum Dei acquirit, ut amore ejus potius quam timore cuncta impleamus, qui nobis tantam exhibuit gratiam qua major inveniri ipso attestante non potest.' He then refers to John 15:13, Luk 12:49 and Rom 5:5.

See Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, p. 34 ff.; Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 293 ff.

03.06. Chapter 6 : The Importance of the Death of Christ in Preaching and in Theology

Chapter 6 : The Importance of the Death of Christ in Preaching and in Theology

IF the series of studies which we have now completed has reproduced with any adequacy or accuracy the mind of the New Testament writers, certain conclusions of importance may fairly be deduced from it. One is that there really is such a thing as the New Testament. There is, as we were disposed to assume, a real and substantial unity of thought in the books which we call by that name. They were not written with a view to incorporation in a canon; to repeat the paradox referred to in the introduction, New Testament theology is the theology of the Church at a time when as yet it had no New Testament. But the New Testament books have a unity, nevertheless, which is not external or imposed, nor due to the accident of their being approximately contemporary, but which is inward, essential, and spiritual, and which qualifies them to be canonical. Another conclusion to which we are led is that the death of Christ is the central thing in the New Testament, and in the Christian religion as the New Testament understands it. And when we say the death of Christ, we include, of course, the significance which the New Testament ascribes to it. Apart from that significance the death of Christ has no more right to a place in religion than the death of the penitent or the impenitent thief. The Cross and the word of the Cross — the Cross and the rationale of it in relation to the love of God and the sin of Man — are for religion one thing. This being so, it is apparent that both for the propagation and for the scientific construction of the Christian religion the death of Christ is of supreme importance. Not that I should draw too abstract a distinction. The propagation of Christianity and its interpretation by intelligence — in other words, preaching and theology — should never be divorced. At the vital point they coincide. The simplest truth of the gospel and the profoundest truth of theology must be put in the same words — He bore our sins. If our gospel does not inspire thought, and if our theology does not inspire preaching, there is no Christianity in either. Yet vitally related as they are, there is a sufficiently clear distinction between them, and in considering some consequences, for preaching and theology, of New Testament teaching on Christ's death, it will be convenient to take preaching first.

It is an immediate inference, then, from all that we have seen in the New Testament, that where there is no Atonement there is no gospel. To preach the love of God out of relation to the death of Christ — or to preach the love of God in the death of Christ, but without being able to relate it to sin — or to preach the forgiveness of sins as the free gift of God's love, while the death of Christ has no special significance assigned to it — is not, if the New Testament is the rule and standard of Christianity, to preach the gospel at all. Many ministers have suffered from the charge of not preaching the gospel, and have resented it as an injustice. In any given case it may quite well have been so. There are those who are unable to separate form from substance in thinking, and who are only too ready to believe that if the familiar form in which the truth has been expressed is varied, the substance is being injured or dissipated. But it is not saying a hard or unjust thing to

say that in some cases the charge may not be groundless. It may be made not merely by the unintelligent, who fail to distinguish form from substance, but by the simple Christian spirit which has the anointing from the Holy One, and knows instinctively whether that by which it lives is present in the message it hears or not. There is such a thing as preaching in which the death of Christ has no place corresponding to that which it has in the New Testament. There is preaching in which the New Testament interpretation of Christ's death is ignored, or carped at, or exploded. We do not need to argue that no man can preach the gospel until he has absorbed into his mind and heart the whole significance of Christ's death as the New Testament reveals it; in that case, who could preach at all? But it is not unjust to say that no man will so preach as to leave the impression that he has the Word of God behind him if he is inwardly at war with the idea of atonement, constantly engaged in minimizing it, maintaining an attitude of reserve, or even of self-defense, in relation to it. We may take it or leave it, but it is idle to attempt to propagate the Christian religion on the basis and with the authority of the New Testament, unless we have welcomed it with our whole heart.

It is proper to remember in this connection that very often it is the simplest expressions, and those most open to abstract criticism, in which the profoundest truth is most tellingly expressed and most really apprehended; and that when this is the case, if we are compelled to criticize, we should be careful that we do not discredit the essential truth as well as the inadequate form. It is easy, for instance, to criticize the insufficiency of any commercial figure, like that of 'debt,' to exhibit the personal and spiritual relations subsisting between man and God; yet Christ used this figure habitually, and the whole impression which it makes upon the conscience is sound. The words of the revival hymn, 'Jesus paid it all, All to Him I owe,' have the root of the matter in them; and, however inadequate they may be to the interpretation of Christ's work and of Christian experience as a whole, they are infinitely truer than the most balanced, considerate, or subtle statement which denies them. Hence, whatever the motive which prompts criticism of such forms, we should be sensitive to the meaning they bear. Even if we think they are morally inadequate, and leave the new life unprovided for, we should remember that in the New Testament the new life is the immediate response to the very truth which such forms convey. The new life springs out of the sense of debt to Christ. The regenerating power of forgiveness depends upon its cost: it is the knowledge that we have been bought with a price which makes us cease to be our own, and live for Him who so dearly bought us. And we should remember also that it is not always intellectual sensitiveness, nor care for the moral interests involved, which sets the mind to criticize statements of the Atonement. There is such a thing as pride, the last form of which is unwillingness to become debtor even to Christ for forgiveness of sins; and it is conceivable that in any given case it may be this which makes the words of the hymn stick in our throats. In any case, I do not hesitate to say that the sense of debt to Christ is the most profound and pervasive of all emotions in the New Testament, and that only a gospel which evokes this, as the gospel of Atonement does, is true to the primitive and normal Christian type. Not only must Atonement by the death of Christ be preached if we would preach the New Testament gospel, but the characteristics of the Atonement must be clearly reflected in the preaching if justice is to be done to the gospel. As the finished work of Christ the Atonement is complete, and the perfection which belongs to it belongs also to the new relation to God into which we enter when the Atonement is appropriated by faith. There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Their relation to God is not determined now in the very least by sin or law, it is determined by Christ the propitiation and by faith. The position of the

believer is not that of one trembling at the judgment seat, or of one for whom everything remains somehow in a condition of suspense; it is that of one who has the assurance of a divine love which has gone deeper than all his sins, and has taken on itself the responsibility of them, and the responsibility of delivering him from them. A relation to God in which sin has nothing to say, but which is summed up in Christ and His perfect Atonement for sin — in John Wesley's words, full salvation now — is the burden of the gospel. If it is not easy to believe this or to preach it, it is because, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are God's thoughts higher than our thoughts, and His ways than our ways. In the New Testament itself there is always something startling, something almost incredible, which breaks again and again on the soul with a sense of wonder, in the experience of reconciliation through the death of Christ. But it is this great gospel which is the gospel to win souls — this message of a sin- bearing, sin- expiating love, which pleads for acceptance, which takes the whole responsibility of the sinner unconditionally, with no preliminaries, if only he abandon himself to it. Only the preaching of full salvation now, as Wesley tells us — and who knew better from experience than he? — has any promise in it of revival.

Further, preaching which would do justice to the Atonement must hold out in the gospel an assurance corresponding to the certainty of Christ's death and to the sin- bearing love demonstrated in it. Nothing is more characteristic of churches than their attitude to assurance, and the place they give it in their preaching and in their systems of doctrine. Speaking broadly, we may say that in the Romish church it is regarded as essentially akin to presumption; in the Protestant churches it is a privilege or a duty; but in the New Testament religion it is simply a fact. This explains the joy which, side by side with the sense of infinite obligation, is the characteristic note of apostolic Christianity. The great invincible certainty of the reconciling love of God, which even when we were enemies made peace for us, this underlies all things, embraces all things, makes all things work together for good to those who love God, makes us more than conquerors in all things; take away the certainty of it, and the New Testament temper expires. Joy in this certainty is not presumption; on the contrary, it is joy in the Lord, and such joy is the Christian's strength. It is the impulse and the hope of sanctification; and to deprecate it, and the assurance from which it springs, is no true evangelical humility, but a failure to believe in the infinite goodness of God, who in Christ removes our sins from us as far as the east is from the west, and plants our life in this eternal reconciling love. The New Testament spirit is not meant for our despair, but for our inspiration; that assurance of sin- bearing love, that sanctifying strength and gladness, are the type of genuine Christian life.

We can understand and appreciate the motive which, both in the Romish and in the Protestant churches, has fostered in relation to assurance a temper which is not that of the New Testament, and which does not answer to the completeness and certainty of Christ's finished work. The motive is in both cases a desire to safeguard moral interests and to put a check upon self-deception. The Romish church safeguards moral interests by making justification and the new life identical: men are justified as, and only in proportion as, they are actually and morally renewed. The objection to this method is that the security is too good. An absolute justification is needed to give the sinner a start. He must have the certainty of no condemnation of being, without reserve or drawback right with God through God's gracious act in Christ, before he can begin to live the new life. As Chalmers put it with magnificent simplicity, 'What could I do if God did not justify the ungodly?' It is not by denying the gospel outright, from the very beginning, that we are to guard

against the possible abuse of it. In the Protestant churches, on the other hand, the attempt to check presumption and to safeguard moral interests was usually made by laying stress on the proper kind of faith. The German Pietists, in opposition to a dead orthodoxy, in which faith had come to mean no more than the formal recognition of sound doctrine, spoke with emphasis of penitent faith, living faith, true faith, obedient faith, and so on. It is somewhat against qualifications like these that they are foreign to the New Testament. What they come to in practice is this: Before the mercy of God in Christ the propitiation can be available for you, O sinful man, you must have a sufficient depth of penitence, a sufficiently earnest desire for reconciliation and holiness, a sufficient moral sincerity; otherwise grace would only minister to sin. But such qualifications do infringe upon the graciousness of the gospel — I mean on its absolute freeness — as something to be explained out of the love of God and the necessity, not the merits, of men. Christ did not die for those who were sufficiently penitent. He is the propitiation for the whole world, and He bore the sins of all that all might believe and receive through Him repentance and remission. To try to take some preliminary security for the sinner's future morality before you make the gospel available for him is not only to strike at the root of assurance, it is to pay a very poor tribute to the power of the gospel. The truth is, morality is best guaranteed by Christ, and not by any precautions we can take before Christ gets a chance, or by any virtue that is in faith except as it unites the soul to Him. Now the Christ who is the object of faith is the Christ whose death is the Atonement, and the faith which takes hold of Christ as He is held out in the gospel conducts, if we may use such a figure, the virtue of the Atonement into the heart. The mercy of God which we welcome in it, and welcome as the first and last of spiritual realities with invincible assurance, is a mercy which has deep in the heart of it God's judgment upon sin; and such a mercy, absolutely free as it is, and able to evoke in sinful men a joy unspeakable and full of glory, can never foster either immorality or presumption. But when its certainty, completeness, and freeness are so qualified or disguised that assurance becomes suspect and joy is quenched, the Christian religion has ceased to be. 1

There is one other characteristic of the Atonement which ought to be reflected in gospel preaching as determined by it, and which may for want of a better word be described as its finality. Christ died for sins once for all, and the man who believes in Christ and in His death has his relation to God once for all determined not by sin but by the Atonement. The sin for which a Christian has daily to seek forgiveness is not sin which annuls his acceptance with God, and casts him back into the position of one who has never had the assurance of the pardoning mercy of God in Christ; on the contrary, that assurance ought to be the permanent element in his life. The forgiveness of sins has to be received again and again as sin emerges into act; but when the soul closes with Christ the propitiation, the assurance of God's love is laid at the foundation of its being once for all. It is not to isolated acts it refers, but to the personality; not to sins, but to the sinner; not to the past only, in which wrong has been done, but to time and eternity. There will inevitably be in the Christian life experiences of sinning and being forgiven, of falling and being restored. But the grace which forgives and restores is not some new thing, nor is it conditioned in some new way. It is not dependent upon penitence, or works, or merit of ours; it is the same absolutely free grace which meets us at the Cross. From first to last, it is the blood of Jesus, God's Son, which cleanses from sin. The daily pardon, the daily cleansing, are but the daily virtue of that one all-embracing act of mercy in which, while we were yet sinners, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. To say that there is no gospel without Atonement, and that the characteristics of the Atonement must be impressed upon Christian preaching and reflected in the completeness, assurance, and joy of

the Christian life which is the response to it, does not mean that the preacher is always to be expressly and formally engaged with the death of Christ, nor does it determine in what way that death in its redeeming significance is to be presented to men. It is impossible to forget the example of our Lord, though we are bound to remember that what was natural and inevitable before the Passion and the Resurrection may not be either wise or natural now. But looking to the gospels, we cannot but see that our Lord allowed His disciples every opportunity to become acquainted with Him, and to grow into confidence in Him, before He began to teach them about His death. He allowed them to catch the impression of His Personality before He initiated them into the mystery of His Passion. As for outsiders, He seems not to have spoken to them on the subject at all. Yet it would be a mistake, as we have seen, to suppose that the death of Jesus was not present — in His mind and in His life — even where nothing was said of it. The more we study the gospels, and the more thoroughly we appreciate such incidents as the Baptism, the Temptation, and the Transfiguration, with the heavenly voices attendant on them — not to mention the occasions on which His death rises even in early days to the surface of our Lord's mind — the more we shall be convinced that the sense and the power of it pervade everything we know of Him. He lived in the same spirit in which He died, and in a true sense we are in contact with the Passion and the Atonement whenever we are in contact with the soul of Jesus. To preach the gospels, therefore, it may be said, is to preach the gospel. On the other hand we must; remember, and allow the remembrance its full weight as a directory for teaching and preaching, that a time came when Jesus set Himself deliberately, systematically, and with unwearied reiteration to bring home to His disciples the meaning of His death. Everything conspires to make us see how deeply it moved Him, and how deeply He was concerned to have it apprehended by the disciples as what it was. The very names by which He names it — My baptism, My cup; the profound virtue He ascribes to it as a ransom, and as the basis of a new covenant between God and man; the striking ordinances of baptism and the Supper which He associated with it, and which in spite of intelligible yet misconceived protests will guard its meaning while the world stands; all these separately, and still more in combination, warn us that whatever method may be prescribed in any given case by pedagogic considerations, it must not be one which leaves it optional to us to give the death of Christ a place in our gospel or not, as we please. It is as certain as anything can be that He meant us to be His debtors and to feel that we are so. He meant to represent Himself as the mediator between God and sinners, and to evoke in sinners an infinite sense of obligation to Himself as they realized that they had peace with God. And it always comes to this in the long- run. Men may come into contact with Christ at different places; they may approach Him from all quarters of the compass, under various impulses, yielding to a charm and constraint in Him as manifold as the beatitudes or as the gracious words and deeds of the gospel. But if they are in dead earnest as He is, they will come sooner or later to the strait gate; and the ultimate form the strait gate assumes — for it is a gate that goes on straitening until the demand for death is made as the price of life — is that to which Jesus leads up His disciples in His last lessons: are you willing to humble yourselves so as to owe to Me, and to My death for you, the forgiveness of sins and the life which is life indeed? There is a straight line from every point in the circumference of a circle to the center, and when we get to the quick of almost anything in the relations of men to Jesus, it leads with wonderful directness to this decisive point. A striking passage from Kierkegaard's diary may help to reconcile in our minds what seem to be conflicting assertions: the one, that there is no preaching of the gospel unless the Atonement is preached; the other, which, as we have seen, has

a superficial support in the life and practice of Jesus, that the Atonement is the last thing in Christ to which the mind can be opened or reconciled. In general, Kierkegaard says, 2 'the relation between God and man is represented thus: Christ leads us to God; man requires a mediator in order to have access to the Father. ' But this, he argues, is not how the New Testament puts it. Nor can this by any possibility be the true way of putting it if, as he further argues, our relation to God is to become continually higher and more real; for it can only become such through a continual experience on our part of being more deeply humbled in God's presence. But there is no sense of being deeply humbled in the first stages of our religion. We begin, in short, with the Father, quite easily and naturally, and without any mediator. This and nothing else is the childlike way of beginning. For the child nothing is too high; he says Du to the Kaiser just as he does to his nurse, and finds it perfectly intelligible and proper that God should be his Father. It would have no meaning to him if he heard a voice which said, 'No man cometh unto the Father but by Me. ' But as soon as man has attained to a certain degree of maturity, God's greatness or sublimity, moral as well as metaphysical, becomes so overwhelming to him that it is no longer natural or easy to call Him Father. There is something presumptuous in it, or something quite unreal. Now this sense of the relation between himself and God, which grows upon man as his moral consciousness matures, is true, and there is that which answers to it in the mind of God Himself. Hence at this stage God points us to His Son, the Mediator. 'It is written in the prophets, ' says Jesus (John 6: 45),

'And they shall all be taught of God. Every one who has heard from the Father and has learned comes to Me. ' This is the remedy for the presumption and unreality just referred to. It is as though God said: You must not assert or claim sonship in your own right; you must not take Fatherhood for granted; but through the Mediator I can be your Father. This, however, is not all. The Mediator also, like the Father at first, is apt to be taken for granted with the assurance of youth, if not of childhood. For the Mediator is at first conceived as example; it is in imitation of Him, in likeness to Him — to use the phrase which is most popular in our own day, and is charged to the full with this unreflecting youthful assurance, it is in self identification with Him — that we must realize the Fatherhood of God. There is an amiable youthfulness, says Kierkegaard, the token of which is that it finds nothing too high for it. It seems to it quite natural and becoming that it should have such an infinitely lofty example as Jesus, the Son of God; among its amiable illusions is to be counted a pious conviction that it is within its power to attain to this example; it takes for granted that the example and he who is striving to follow it are in such a sense of one kind that nothing can really come between them. But once more, as the moral consciousness matures, a change comes. The example towers to such a height before man's eyes — the sinless Son of God is so remote and inaccessible in His sinlessness and sonship — that man can no longer think of imitating it, or of trying to do so, in the independent style of good comradeship. He cannot take it for granted that he can make himself what Christ is: that he can 'identify' himself with Christ offhand, simply because he wants to do so. And Christ, too, is of this opinion; it is another and a more dependent relation, with a deeper sense of obligation in it, which He requires from His followers. The example has another side, of which amiable and aspiring youth is at first ignorant: He is also the Reconciler. This it is which brings us to the point. Partly, Kierkegaard argues, there is a stage in life — the stage of amiable and aspiring youth — which is without the moral categories necessary for appreciating the example; it does not see, feel, nor understand how Christ transcends all that it is, and how He must in some profound way be of another as well as of the same nature; partly, he

thinks, it has an illusory conception of its own powers, and of what it is in it to be. But whatever the reason, the fact remains; experience reveals to one who is trying to imitate Jesus, or to identify himself with Him, that he needs reconciliation first: he must become debtor to Jesus for this one thing needful before he can have a sound start in the final life. He must owe it to Christ as Reconciler, and owe it from the very beginning, if he is ever to stand in the relation of a son to the Father. He may think at first that he can identify himself with the Son of God at any point over the whole area of his life, but he discovers experimentally that this is not so. He finds out in a way surer than any logical demonstration that Christ is in the last resort as inaccessible to him as the God to whom he would draw near by imitating Christ, and that the only hope he has of getting to God in this way depends upon Christ's making Himself one with him in that responsibility for sin which separates him from the Father. His one point of contact with Christ, when his whole situation is seriously taken, is Christ's character as a propitiation for sin; and sooner or later he is driven in upon that. The type of experience here described may be common enough in Christian lands, but what, it may be asked, is its relation to such a practice as St. Paul describes in 1Co 15:3 : 'I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures? ' Is this consistent with what has just been said, or with what we have seen of our Lord's method of teaching? Is there a rule in it for all evangelistic preaching?

St. Paul's expression, *ejn prw>toiv*, is not quite so pointed as 'first of all. ' It is certainly to be taken, however, in a temporal sense: among the first things the apostle transmitted to the Corinthians were the fundamental facts of the Christian religion, the death and resurrection of Jesus in the significance which belonged to them 'according to the Scriptures, ' that is, in the light of the earlier revelation. And among these first things the death of Christ in its relation to sin had a foremost place. It is, I think, a fair inference from this that in preaching the gospel the main appeal is to be made to the conscience, and that it cannot be made too soon, too urgently, too desperately, or too hopefully. It is because the Atonement is at once the revelation of sin and the redemption from sin, that it must inspire everything in preaching which is to bring home to the conscience either conviction of sin or the hope and assurance of deliverance from it. 'Eternity, ' Halyburton said, 'is wrapt up in every truth of religion'; the Atonement, it is not too much to say, is wrapt up in every truth of the Christian religion, and should be sensible through every word of the Christian preacher. In this sense at least it must be delivered *ejn prw>toiv*.

We may begin as wisely as we please with those who have a prejudice against it, or whose conscience is asleep, or who have much to learn both about Christ and about themselves before they will consent to look at such a gospel, to say nothing of abandoning themselves to it; but if we do not begin with something which is essentially related to the Atonement, presupposing it or presupposed by it or involved in it, something which leads inevitably, though it may be by an indirect and unsuspected route, to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, we have not begun to the gospel at all. This may seem a hard saying to those who have listened to weariness to the repetition of orthodox formulae on this subject, and have realized that even under the New Covenant there are conditions which compel us to say, *The letter killeth*. But it is not because the formulae are orthodox that they weary, it is because they are formal; the vital interest of the great realities which they enshrine has slipped from an unbelieving grasp, and left the preacher with nothing to deliver but words. A fresh realization of the truth which they embody would bring new words or put new life into the old; and in any case the fact remains that there is

nothing which is so urgently and immediately wanted by sinful men, nothing which strikes so deep into the heart, which answers so completely to its need, and binds it so irrevocably and with such a sense of obligation to God, as the atoning death of Jesus. Implicit or explicit, it is the Alpha and Omega of Christian preaching.

Most preachers in any sympathy with this line of thought have deplored in the present or the last generation the decay of the sense of sin. 3 Now, the Atonement is addressed to the sense of sin. It presupposes the bad conscience. Where there is no such thing, it is like a lever without a fulcrum; great as its power might be, it is actually powerless, and often provokes resentment. The phenomenon is a curious one, and though it cannot be permanent, it calls for explanation. Possibly the explanation is partly to be found in the circumstance that the Atonement itself was once preached too much as though it had relation only to the past, and had no assurance or guarantee in it for man's future. It contained the forgiveness of sins, but not the new life. Where this was the case we can understand that it ceased to be interesting to those whose hearts were set on holiness. We can understand how Bushnell could speak of the forgiveness of sins as 'only a kind of formality, or verbal discharge, that carries practically no discharge at all.' But it is not easy to understand how this could be brought into any kind of relation to the New Testament. There, as we have seen, the forgiveness of sins, and the Atonement which is its ground, are no formality. They are the supreme miracle of revelation, the hardest, most incredible, most wonderful work of the God who alone does wondrous things; the whole promise and potency of the new life are to be found in them alone. The Atonement, or God's justification of the ungodly, which takes effect with the acceptance of the Atonement, regenerates, and there is no regeneration besides. But while a defective appreciation of the New Testament may have done something to discredit the Atonement, and to make men think of forgiveness, and of the sense of sin which demands it, as alike 'formalities' in contrast with actual sanctification, the deadening of conscience is probably to be traced on the whole to other causes. It is due in great part to the dominance in the mind for the last forty or fifty years of the categories of natural science, and especially of a naturalistic theory of evolution. All things have been 'naturalized,' if we may so speak; the spiritual being no longer retains, in the common consciousness, his irreducible individuality; he has lapsed to some extent into the vast continuity of the universe. Even to speak of the individual is to use language which is largely unreal, and with individuality individual responsibility has lost credit. It is the race which lives, and it is the qualities and defects of the race which are exhibited in what we call the virtues and vices of men. When we look at the lives of others, the last thing we now think of is the responsibility which attaches to each of them for being what he is; and it is apt to be the last thing also which we think of when we look at ourselves. Heredity and environment — these are the dominant realities in our minds; and so inevitable, so importunate is their pressure, that what was once known as freedom passes out of view. We are afraid to speak as the Bible speaks about personal responsibility — we are afraid to say the tremendous things it says about sin and sinful men — both because we would not be unjust to others, and because we wish to be considerate to ourselves. For the same reason we are afraid to give that decisive importance to the atoning death of Christ which it carries in the New Testament. But of one thing we may be certain: sooner or later there will be a reaction against this mental condition. When our sense of the unity of the race in itself, and of its unity with the 'nature' which is the theater of its history, has done its work — when the social conscience has been quickened — when the feeling of corporate responsibility has attained adequate intensity, so that the duties of society to the individual shall be no longer

overlooked, the responsibility of the individual will come back in new strength. The naturalistic view of the world cannot permanently suppress the moral one. Even while it has seemed to threaten it, it has been preparing for its revival in a more profound and adequate form. The sense of personal responsibility, when it does come back, will be less confined, more far-reaching and mysterious; it will be more than ever such a sense of responsibility as will make the doctrine of a divine atonement for sin necessary, credible, and welcome.

Meanwhile, surely, the preaching of the atonement has something to do with producing the very state of mind on which its reception depends. It is the highest truth of revelation; and the highest truth is like the highest poetry — it has to generate the intellectual and moral atmosphere in which alone it can be appreciated and taken to the heart. To say that there is no sense of sin, or that the sense of sin is defective, is only to say in other words that there is no repentance, or no adequate repentance; no returning of the mind upon itself deeply enough, humbly enough, tenderly and hopefully enough, to have any healing or restoring effect. But how is this spiritual condition to be altered? What is the cure for it? There are those who cannot be convinced that any cure is necessary. In spite of all Christian confession to the contrary, they cling to the idea that such a returning of the mind upon itself as would constitute repentance unto life and be the proper condition of pardon and acceptance with God, is an experience which the sinful soul can produce out of its own resources, and clothed in which it can come hopefully to meet God. But true repentance — that is, repentance which is not self-centered, but which realizes that sin is something in which God has an interest as well as we; repentance which is not merely a remorseful or apathetic or despairing regret, but a hopeful, healing, sanctifying sorrow — such repentance is born of the knowledge of God, and of what God has done for us in our sins. It is not a preliminary to the Atonement, nor a substitute for it, nor a way in which we can be reconciled to God without being indebted to it; it is its fruit. It is born at the Cross where we see sin put away, not by our own regret, however sincere and profound, but by the love of God in the Passion of His dear Son. Hence we lose the only chance of seeing it, and of seeing in its true intensity the sense of individual responsibility which is part and parcel of it, if we give the Atonement anything less than the central place in our preaching. No one is really saved from sin until he has in relation to it that mind which Christ had when He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. And no motive is potent enough to generate that mind in sinful men but the love with which Christ loved us when He so gave Himself for us. It is true to say that the Atonement presupposes conscience and appeals to it, but it is truer still to say that of all powers in the world it is the supreme power for creating and deepening conscience. One remembers again and again the story of the first Moravian missionaries to Greenland, who, after twenty years of fruitless toil in indirect approaches to the savage mind, found it suddenly responsive to the appeal of the Cross. Probably St. Paul made no mistake when he delivered to the Corinthiansejn prw>toiv the message of the Atonement. No one can tell how near conscience is to the surface, or how quickly in any man it may respond to the appeal. We might have thought that in Corinth much preliminary sapping and mining would have been requisite before the appeal could be made with any prospect of success; but St. Paul judged otherwise, and preached from the very outset the great hope of the gospel, by which conscience is at once evoked and redeemed. We might think that in a Christian country conscience would be nearer the surface, more susceptible, more conscious of its needs, more quickly responsive to the appeal of the atonement; and if we do not always find it so, it is only, as St. Paul himself puts it, because all men have not faith. We cannot get behind this melancholy fact, and give the rationale

of what is in itself irrational. Yet all experience shows that the gospel wins by its magnitude, and that the true method for the evangelist is to put the great things in the forefront. If this is not the way to the conscience, this sublime demonstration of the love of God in Christ, in which our responsibility as sinful men is taken by Him in all its dreadful reality and made His own, what is? In what, if not in this, can we find the means of appealing to all men, and to that which is deepest in all?

One other characteristic ought to distinguish evangelical preaching, as preaching determined by the Atonement, it ought to have a deep impression of the absoluteness of the issues in faith and unbelief, or let us say in the acceptance or rejection of the reconciliation. In one way, it may be said, this is always the note of religion. It is a form of the absolute consciousness, and deals not with a sliding scale but with the blank, unqualified antithesis of life or death, weal or woe, salvation or perdition, heaven or hell. This is true, yet of no religion is it more emphatically true than of that which is exhibited in the New Testament. It is a life and death matter we are concerned with when we come face to face with Christ and with what He has done for us. It is quite possible to preach with earnestness, and even with persuasiveness, from another standpoint. It is quite possible to have a very sincere admiration for goodness, and a very sincere desire to be better men than we are and to see others better; it is quite possible even to see the charm and beauty of Christ's goodness, and to commend it in the most winning way to men, and yet to want in preaching the very note which is characteristic both of Christ and the apostles. Christ knew that He was to give His life a ransom; the apostles knew that He had done it, and had made peace through the blood of His Cross; and their preaching, though it is never overbearing or unjust, though it never tries to intimidate men, or (as one may sometimes have been tempted to think in a mission service) to bully them into faith, is as urgent and passionate as the sense of the atoning death can make it. To receive the reconciliation, or not to receive it — to be a Christian, or not to be a Christian — is not a matter of comparative indifference; it is not the case of being a somewhat better man, or a man, perhaps, not quite so good; it is a case of life or death. It is difficult to speak of this as it ought to be spoken of, and to urge it in any given situation may easily expose the preacher to the charge of intolerance, uncharitableness, or moral blindness; but difficult as it may be to preach the gospel in the spirit of the gospel, with a sense at the same time of the infinite love which is in it, and the infinite responsibility which it puts upon us, it is not a difficulty which the preacher's vocation will allow him to evade. He may easily be represented as saying that he is making the acceptance of his own theology the condition of acceptance with God, and arrogating to himself the right to judge others; but while he repudiates such charges as inconsistent with his whole relation both to God and man, he will not abandon his conviction that the apostolic sense of the infinite consequences determined by man's relation to the gospel is justified, and that it is justified because it is in harmony with all that the New Testament teaches about: the finished work of Christ. God has spoken His last word in His Son; He has done all that He can do for men; revelation and redemption are complete, and the finality on which the Epistle to the Hebrews lays such emphasis as characteristic of everything belonging to the new covenant ought to have an echo in every proclamation of it. If therefore we are conscious that this note is wanting in our preaching — that it fails in urgency and entreaty — that it is expository merely, or attractive, or hortatory — that it is interpretative or illuminative, or has the character of good advice, very good advice indeed, when we come to think of it, — it is probably time to ask what place in it is held by the Atonement. The proclamation of the finished work of Christ is not good advice, it is good news, good news that

means immeasurable joy for those who welcome it, irreparable loss for those who reject it, infinite and urgent responsibility for all. The man who has this to preach has a gospel about which he ought to be in dead earnest just because there is nothing which concentrates in the same way the judgment and the mercy of God, there is nothing which has the same power to evoke seriousness and passion in the preacher.

Leaving out of account its importance to the sinner, the supreme interest of the doctrine of the Atonement is, of course, its interest for the evangelist; without a firm grasp of it he can do nothing whatever in his vocation. But what is central in religion must be central also in all reflection upon it, and the theologian no less than the evangelist must give this great truth its proper place in his mind. I have no intention of outlining a system of theology in which the atonement made in the death of Christ should be the determinative principle; but short of this, it is possible to indicate its bearing and significance in regard to some vital questions. For example, if we have been correct in our appreciation of its place in the New Testament, it is not too much to say that as the focus of revelation it is the key to all that precedes. It may not always be historically true, but it will always be divinely true — that is, it will answer to God's mind as we can see it now, if not as it was apprehended from stage to stage in the history of revelation — if we let the light of the final revelation of the New Testament fall all along upon the Old. The nature of the unity which belongs to Scripture has always been a perplexing question — so perplexing, indeed, that the very existence of any unity at all has been denied; yet there is an answer to it. Scripture converges upon the doctrine of the Atonement; it has the unity of a consentient testimony to a love of God which bears the sin of the world. How this is done we do not see clearly until we come to Christ, or until He comes to us; but once we get this insight from Him, we get it for revelation as a whole. To Him bear all the Scriptures witness; and it is as a testimony to Him, the Bearer of sin, the Redeemer who gave His life a ransom for us, that we acknowledge them. This is the burden of the Bible, the one fundamental omnipresent truth to which the Holy Spirit bears witness by and with the word in our hearts. This, at bottom, is what we mean when we say that Scripture is inspired.

It is worth while to insist on this in view of the widespread confusion which prevails in regard to inspiration; the apparent readiness, on the part of some, to give it up as an insignificant or irrelevant idea, if not an utterly discredited one; and the haphazard attempts, on the part of others, to save it piece meal, after abandoning it as a whole. The truth is, the unity of the Bible and its inspiration are correlative terms. If we can discover a real unity in it — as I believe we can and do when we see that it converges upon and culminates in a divine love bearing the sin of the world — then that unity and its inspiration are one and the same thing. And it is not only inspired as a whole, it is the only book in the world which is inspired. It is the only book in the world to which God sets His seal in our hearts when we read in search of an answer to the question, How shall a sinful man be righteous with God? It is mere irrelevance and misunderstanding to talk in this connection of the 'inspiration' of great minds like Aeschylus or Plato, not to speak of those who have been born and bred in the Christian atmosphere, like Dante or Shakespeare. We do not believe in inspiration because we find something in Isaiah which we do not find in Aeschylus — though we do; nor because we find something in St. Paul which we do not find in Plato — though again, and more emphatically, we do; we believe in inspiration because in the whole Bible, from Isaiah to St. Paul, and earlier and later, there is a unity of mind and spirit and purpose which shines out on us at last in the atoning work of Christ. When we approach the greatest of human

minds with the problem of religion, How shall a sinful man be just with God? we shall, no doubt, find sympathy, for the problem of religion is a universal problem; we find sympathy, for instance, of the profoundest in writers like Aeschylus and Sophocles. But when we approach Scripture with this problem, we not only find sympathy, but a solution; and with the solution is identified all that we mean by inspiration. All the suggestions of the Bible with reference to this problem converge upon the Cross. The Cross dominates everything. It interprets everything. It puts all things in their true relations to each other. Usually those who are perplexed about the inspiration of the Bible discuss their difficulties with no consideration of what the Bible means as a whole; and yet it is only as a whole that we can attach any meaning to its being inspired. There is no sense in saying that every separate sentence is inspired: we know that every separate sentence is not. There are utterances of bad men in the Bible, and suggestions of the devil. Neither is there any sense in going through the Bible with a blue pencil, and striking out what is not inspired that we may stand by the rest. This may have the apologetic or educational advantage of compelling some people to see that after all abatements are made there is a great deal which retains its authority, and imposes responsibility; but it is precarious and presumptuous in the highest degree. And though it may have the appearance of greater plausibility, it is just as futile to attempt to graduate the inspiration of Scripture, to mark the ebb and flow of the divine presence in the heart of a writer, or the gradual rise of the tide from the remote beginnings of revelation until it reaches its height in Christ. No doubt it is a task for the historian to trace the gradual progress of revelation and to indicate its stages, but the historian would be the first to acknowledge that the questions so often raised about the inspiration of persons or books or sentences or arguments are mostly unreal. We will never know what inspiration is until Scripture has resolved itself for us into a unity. That unity, I venture to say, will be its testimony to a love in God which we do not earn, which we can never repay, but which in our sins comes to meet us with mercy, dealing, nevertheless, with our sins in all earnest, and at infinite cost doing right by God's holy law in regard to them; a love which becomes incarnate in the Lamb of God bearing the sin of the world, and putting it away by the sacrifice of Himself. It is in its testimony to this that the unity of Scripture and its inspiration consists, and whoever believes in this believes in inspiration in the only sense which can be rationally attached to the word. The doctrine of the atonement, in the central place which Scripture secures for it, has decisive importance in another way: it is the proper evangelical foundation for a doctrine of the Person of Christ. To put it in the shortest possible form, Christ is the person who can do this work for us. This is the deepest and most decisive thing we can know about Him, and in answering the questions which it prompts we are starting from a basis in experience. There is a sense in which Christ as the Reconciler confronts us. He is doing the will of God on our behalf, and we can only look on. It is the judgment and the mercy of God in relation to our sins which we see in Him, and His Presence and work on earth are a divine gift, a divine visitation. He is the gift of God to men, not the offering of men to God, and God gives Himself to us in and with Him. We owe to Him all that we call divine life. On the other hand, this divine visitation is made, and this divine life is imparted, through a life and work which are truly human. The presence and work of Jesus in the world, even the work of bearing sin, does not prompt us to define human and divine by contrast with each other: there is no suggestion of incongruity between them. Nevertheless, they are both there, and the fact that they are both there justifies us in raising the question as to Jesus' relation to God on the one hand, and to men on the other. We become sensible, as we contemplate this divine visitation, this achievement of a work so necessary to man yet so transcending his powers,

that Jesus is not in the human race one man more to whom our relation may be as fortuitous as to any other. Rather does the whole phenomenon justify us in putting such a question as Dale's: What must Christ's relation to men be in order to make it possible that He should die for them? — a question leading to an essentially evangelical argument, that Christ must have had an original and central relation to the human race and to every member of it. Whether this is the best way to express the conclusion need not here be considered, but that this is the final way to approach the problem is not open to doubt. In this connection I venture to emphasize again a point referred to at the close of the first chapter. It is the doctrine of the Atonement which secures for Christ His place in the gospel, and which makes it inevitable that we should have a Christology or a doctrine of His Person. Reduced to the simplest religious expression, the doctrine of the Atonement signifies that we owe to Christ and to His finished work our whole being as Christians. We are His debtors, and it is a real debt; a debt infinite, never to be forgotten, never to be discharged. The extraordinary statement of Harnack — as extraordinary, perhaps, in its ambiguity as in its daring — that in the gospel as Jesus preached it the Son has no place but only the Father, owes whatever plausibility it has under the most favorable construction to the assumption that in the gospel as Jesus preached it there is no such thing as an atoning work of Jesus. Jesus did nothing in particular by which men become His debtors; He only showed in His own life what the state of the case was between God and men, quite apart from anything He did or had to do. He was 'the personal realization and the power of the gospel, and is ever again experienced as such.' One might be tempted to criticize this from Kierkegaard's point of view, and to urge that it betrays no adequate appreciation of the gulf between Christ and sinful men, and of the dreadful difficulty of bridging it; but it is sufficient to say that it departs so widely not only from the consciousness of primitive Christianity as it is reflected in the epistles, but from the mind of Christ as we have seen cause to interpret it through the gospels, that it is impossible to assent to it. Christ not only was something in the world, He did something. He did something that made an infinite difference, and that puts us under an infinite obligation: He bore our sins. That secures His place in the gospel and in the adoration of the church. That is the impulse and the justification of all Christologies. Harnack's statement, quoted above, is meant to give a religious justification for lightening the ship of the church by casting Christological controversy overboard; but the Atonement always says to us again, Consider how great this Man was! As long as it holds; its place in the preaching of the gospel, and asserts itself in the church, as it does in the New Testament, as the supreme inspiration to praise, so long will Christians find in the Person of their Lord a subject of high and reverent thought. It is a common idea that Socinianism (or Unitarianism) is specially connected with the denial of the Incarnation. It began historically with the denial of the Atonement. It is with the denial of the Atonement that it always begins anew, and it cannot be too clearly pointed out that to begin here is to end, sooner or later, with putting Christ out of the Christian religion altogether.

It is the more necessary to insist on this point of view because there is in some quarters a strong tendency to put the Atonement out of its place, and to concentrate attention on the Incarnation as something which can be appreciated in entire independence of it. The motives for this are various. Sometimes they may not unfairly be described as speculative. 'The great aim of the Christian Platonists,' says Mr. Inge, 'was to bring the Incarnation into closest relation with the cosmic process. It need hardly be said that no Christian philosophy can have any value which does not do this.' 4 Those, therefore, whose interest is in the cosmic process, or in articulating all that is known as Christian into the framework of the universe, devote their attention to the Person of

Christ, and seek in it the natural consummation, so to speak, of all that has gone before. Without that Person the universe would be without a crown or a head. It is so constituted that only He gives it unity and completeness. That its unity had been broken before He came to earth, and that He completed it by a work of reversal and not of direct evolution — -a work which, however truly it may be said to have carried out the original idea of God, is yet in the strictest sense supernatural, a redemption, not a natural consummation — is practically overlooked. With others, again, the motive may be said to be ethical. To put the Atonement at the foundation of Christianity seems to them to narrow it morally in the most disastrous way. It is as though they lost the breadth and variety of interest and motive which appeal to the conscience from the life of Christ in the pages of the evangelists. But there is a misconception here. Those who make the Atonement fundamental do not turn their backs on the gospels. They are convinced, however, that the whole power of the motives which appeal to us from the life of Jesus is not felt until we see it condensed, concentrated, and transcended in the love in which He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. Others displace the Atonement for what may be called a dogmatic reason. It is a fixed point with them that so great a thing as the Incarnation could not be in any proper sense contingent; the presence of the Son of God in the world cannot be an 'after- thought' or an 'accident'; the whole intent of it cannot be given in such an expression as 'remedial. ' The universe must have been constituted from the first with a view to it, and it would have taken place all the same even though there had been no sin and no need for redemption. When it did take place, indeed, it could not be exactly as had been intended; under the conditions of the fall, the Incarnation entailed a career which meant Atonement; it was Incarnation into a sinful race, and the Atonement was made when the Son of God accepted the conditions which sin had determined, and fulfilled man's destiny under them. Perhaps the truth might be put within the four corners of such a formula, but the tendency in those who adopt this point of view is to minimize all that is said in the New Testament about the death of Christ in relation to sin. The specific assertions and definitions of the apostolic writings are evaded. They are interpreted emotionally but not logically, as if the men who say the strong things on this subject in the New Testament had said them without thinking, or would have been afraid of their own thoughts. The most distinguished representative of this tendency in our own country was Bishop Westcott. Not that what has just been said is applicable in its entirety to him; but the assumption that the Incarnation is something which we can estimate apart from the Atonement, something which has a significance and a function of its own, independent of man's redemption from sin, underlies much of his writing, and tends to keep him from doing full justice to apostolic ideas on this subject. The logic of the position becomes apparent in a writer like Archdeacon Wilson, who frankly merges the Atonement in the Incarnation, assures us that in making a distinct problem of the former we have been asking meaningless questions, getting meaningless answers, and repelling men from the gospel. 'Let us say boldly that the Incarnation, that is the life and death of the Christ, for the life and death were equally necessary — is the identification of the human and the divine life. This identification is the atonement. There is no other. ' 5 One can only regret that this short and easy method was not discovered until the close of the nineteenth century; anything less like the terrible problem sin presented to the apostles, and their intense preoccupation with it, it would not be easy to conceive.

There are three broad grounds on which the interpretation of the Atonement as a mere incident, or consequence, or modification of the Incarnation — the Incarnation being regarded as something in itself natural and intelligible on grounds which have no relation to sin, ought to be discounted by

the evangelist and the theologian alike.

(1) It shifts the center of gravity in the New Testament. The Incarnation may be the thought round which everything gravitates in the Nicene Creed, and in the theology of the ancient Catholic Church which found in that creed its first dogmatic expression; but that only shows how far the first ecclesiastical apprehension of Christianity was from doing justice to New Testament conceptions. Even in the Gospel and the Epistles of St. John, as has been shown above, the Incarnation cannot be said (without serious qualification) to have the character here claimed for it, and it cannot be asserted with the faintest plausibility for the synoptic gospels or the Epistles of St. Paul. The New Testament knows nothing of an incarnation which can be defined apart from its relation to atonement; it is to put away sin, and to destroy the works of the devil, that even in the evangelist of the Incarnation the Son of God is made manifest. It is not in His being here, but in His being here as a propitiation for the sins of the world, that the love of God is revealed. Not Bethlehem, but Calvary, is the focus of revelation, and any construction of Christianity which ignores or denies this distorts Christianity by putting it out of focus.

(2) A second ground for resisting the tendency to put the Incarnation into the place which properly belongs to the Atonement is that it is concerned under these conditions with metaphysical, rather than with moral problems. Now Scripture has no interest in metaphysics except as metaphysical questions are approached through and raised by moral ones. The Atonement comes to us in the moral world and deals with us there; it is concerned with conscience and the law of God, with sin and grace, with alienation and peace, with death to sin and life to holiness; it has its being and its efficacy in a world where we can find our footing, and be assured that we are dealing with realities. The Incarnation, when it is not defined by relation to these realities — in other words, when it is not conceived as the means to the Atonement, but as part of a speculative theory of the world quite independent of man's actual moral necessities — can never attain to a reality as vivid and profound. It can never become thoroughly credible, just because it is not essentially related to anything in human or Christian experience sufficiently great to justify it. It does not answer moral questions, especially those which bring the sinful man to despair; at best it answers metaphysical questions about the relation of the human to the divine, about the proper way to define these words in relation to each other, whether it be by contrast or by mutual affinity, about the divine as being the truth of the human and the human as being the reality of the divine, and so forth. It does not contain a gospel for lost souls, but a philosophy for speculative minds. Now the New Testament is a gospel for lost souls, or it is nothing; and whatever philosophy it may lead to or justify, we cannot see that philosophy itself in the light in which it demands to be seen, unless we keep the gospel in its New Testament place. If we start in the abstract speculative way there is no getting out of it, or getting any specifically Christian good out of it either; it is only when the Person of Christ is conceived as necessarily related to a work in which we have a life and death moral interest, that it has religious import, and can be a real subject for us. There is in truth only one religious problem in the world — the existence of sin; and one religious solution of it — the Atonement, in which the love of God bears the sin, taking it, in all its terrible reality for us, upon itself. And nothing can be central or fundamental either in Christian preaching or in Christian thinking which is not in direct and immediate relation to this problem and its solution.

(3) The third ground on which we should deprecate the obtrusion of the Incarnation at the cost of the Atonement is that in point of fact — whether it is an inevitable result or not need not be inquired

— it tends to sentimentality. It is dangerous to bring into religion anything which is not vitally related to morals, and Incarnation not determined by Atonement is open to this charge. The Christmas celebrations in many churches supply all the proof that is needed: they are an appeal to anything and everything in man except that to which the gospel is designed to appeal. The New Testament is just as little sentimental as it is metaphysical, it is ethical, not metaphysical; passionate, not sentimental. And its passionate and ethical character are condensed and guaranteed in that atoning work of Christ which is in every sense of the word its vital center.

If it is a right conception of the Atonement which enables us to attain to a right conception of the Person of Christ, similarly we may say it is through a right conception of the Atonement that we come to a right conception of the nature or character of God. In the Atonement revelation is complete, and we must have it fully in view in all affirmations we make about God as the ultimate truth and reality. The more imperfect our conceptions of God, the more certainly they tend to produce skepticism and unbelief; and nothing presents greater difficulties to faith than the idea of a God who either gives no heed to the sin and misery of man, or saves sinners, as it were, from a distance, without entering into the responsibility and tragedy of their life and making it His own. To put the same thing in other words, nothing presents greater difficulties to faith than a conception of God falling short of that which the New Testament expresses in the words, God is love. Not that this conception is self- interpreting or selfaccrediting, as is often supposed. There is no proposition which is more in need both of explanation and of proof. We may say God is love, and know just as little what love means as what God means. Love is like every word of moral or spiritual import; it has no fixed meaning, like a word denoting a physical object or attribute; it stands, so to speak, upon a sliding scale, and it stands higher or lower as the experience of those who use it enables them to place it. St. John, when he placed it where he did, was only enabled to do so by the experience in which Christ was revealed to him as the propitiation for sins. It is with this in his mind that he says, Hereby perceive we love. The word love, especially in such a proposition as God is love, has to fill with its proper meaning before it can be said to have any meaning at all; it is used in a thousand senses which in such a proposition would only be absurd or profane. Now the person who first uttered that sublime sentence felt his words fill with meaning as he contemplated Christ sent by God a propitiation for the whole world. A God who could do that — a God who could bear the sin of the world in order to restore to man the possibility of righteousness and eternal life — such a God is love. Such love, too, is the ultimate truth about God. But apart from this the apostle would not have said that God is love, nor is it quite real or specifically Christian for any one else to say so. There is no adequate way of telling what he means. Until it is demonstrated as it is in the Atonement, love remains an indeterminate sentimental expression, with no clear moral value, and with infinite possibilities of moral misunderstanding; when it fills with meaning through the contemplation of the Atonement, the danger of mere sentimentalism and other moral dangers are provided against, for love in the Atonement is inseparable from law. The universal moral elements in the relations of God and man are unreservedly acknowledged, and it is in the cost at which justice is done to them in the work of redemption that the love of God is revealed and assured. We see then its reality and its scale. We see what it is willing to do, or rather what it has done. We see something of the breadth and length and depth and height which pass knowledge. We believe and know the love which God has in our case, and can say God is love. And it is from the vantage- ground of this assurance that we look out henceforth on all the perplexities of the world and of our own life in it. We are certain that it is in God to take the burden and responsibility

of it upon Himself. We are certain that it is in the divine nature not to be indifferent to the tragedy or human life, not to help it from afar off, not to treat as unreal in it the very thing which makes it real to us — the eternal difference of right and wrong — but to bear its sin, and to establish the law in the very act and method of justifying the ungodly. It is a subordinate remark in this connection, but not for that reason an insignificant one, that this final revelation of love in God is at the same time the final revelation of sin: for sin, too, needs to be revealed, and there is a theological doctrine of it as well as an experience antecedent to all doctrines. Love is that which is willing to take the responsibility of sin upon it for the sinner's sake, and which does so; and sin, in the last resort — sin as that which cuts man finally off from God — is that which is proof against the appeal of such love.

There is another great department of Christian science to which the Atonement is of fundamental importance — the department of Christian ethics, the scientific interpretation of the new life. It has undoubtedly been a fault in much systematic theology, that in dealing with the work which Christ finished in His death it has shown no relation, or no adequate and satisfactory relation, between that death and the Christian life which is born of faith in it. There must be such a relation, or there would be no such thing in the world as Christian life or the Christian religion. The only difficulty, indeed, in formulating it is that the connection is so close and immediate that it might be supposed to be impossible to hold apart, even in imagination, the two things which we wish to define by relation to each other. But it may be put thus. The death of Christ, interpreted as the, New Testament interprets it, constitutes a great appeal to sinful men. It appeals for faith. To yield to its appeal, to abandon oneself in faith to the love of God which is manifested in it, is to enter into life. It is the only way in which a sinful man can enter into life at all. The new life is constituted in the soul by the response of faith to the appeal of Christ's death, or by Christ's death evoking the response of faith. It does not matter which way we put it. We may say that we have received the Atonement, and that the Atonement regenerates; or that we have been justified by faith, and that justification regenerates; or that we have received an assurance of God's love which is deeper than our sin, and extends to all our life past, present, and to come; and that such an assurance, which is the gift of the Spirit shed abroad in our hearts, regenerates: it is all one. It is the same experience which is described, and truly described, in every case. But both the power and the law of the new life, the initiation of which can be so variously expressed, are to be found in the atoning death of Christ, by which faith is evoked, and there only; and the Atonement, therefore, is the presupposition of Christian ethics as it is the inspiring and controlling force in Christian life. Nothing can beget in the soul that life of which we speak except the appeal of the Cross, and what the appeal of the Cross does beget is a life which, in its moral quality, corresponds to the death of Christ itself. It is a life, as it has been put already, which has that death in it, and which only lives upon this condition. It is a life to which sin is all that sin was to Christ — law, and holiness, and God, all that law and holiness and God were to Christ as He hung upon the tree; a life which is complete and self-sufficing, because it is sustained at every moment by the inspiration of the Atonement. This is why St. Paul is not afraid to trust the new life to its own resources, and why he objects equally to supplementing it by legal regulations afterwards, or by what are supposed to be ethical securities beforehand. It does not need them, and is bound to repel them as dishonoring to Christ. To demand moral guarantees from a sinner before you give him the benefit of the Atonement, or to impose legal restrictions on him after he has yielded to its appeal, and received it through faith, is to make the Atonement itself of no effect. St. Paul, taught by his own experience,

scorned such devices. The Son of God, made sin for men, so held his eyes and heart, entered into His being with such annihilative, such creative power, that all he was and all he meant by life were due to Him alone. He does not look anywhere but to the Cross for the ideals and motives of the Christian, they are all there. And the more one dwells in the New Testament, and tries to find the point of view from which to reduce it to unity, the more is he convinced that the Atonement is the key to Christianity as a whole. 'The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many. ' 'Christ died for the ungodly. ' 'He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. ' 'He is the propitiation for the whole world. ' 'I beheld, and lo, a lamb as it had been slain. ' It is in words like these that we discover the open secret of the new creation.

I venture to quote two sentences in illustration of this paragraph. Dr, Dale (Life, p. 666), who read Pusey's life 'with a deep impression of the nobleness and massiveness of his nature, and feeling more than ever that the power of God was with him, ' had nevertheless to add: 'The absence of joy in his religious life was only the inevitable effect of his conception of God's method of saving men; in parting with the Lutheran truth concerning justification (it might equally well be said with the New Testament truth of Christ's finished work) he parted with the springs of gladness. ' It is in the same line that Dr. Fairbairn has said of Pusey, that the sense of sin was 'more a matter for himself to bear than for grace to remove' (Philosophy of the Christian Religion, p. 333). The other sentence is from Chalmers, a great nature who had an original experience of the New Testament religion and often found original utterance for it: 'Regaled myself with the solidity of the objective part of religion, and long to enter a field of enlargement in preaching on the essential truths of the gospel' (Life, by Hanna, vol. 2. p. 417).

Aus den Tiefen der Reflexion: aus Soren Kierkegaards Tagebuchen, 1833-1855: aus dem Danischen ubersetzt von F. Venator. For a typical illustration, see Dale's Christian Doctrine, pp. 251 ff.

Contentio Veritatis, p. 74. The Gospel of the Atonement, p. 89.

03.07. Chapter 7 : The Atonement And The Modern Mind

Chapter 7 : The Atonement And The Modern Mind

IT will be admitted by most Christians that if the Atonement, quite apart from precise definitions of it, is anything to the mind, it is everything. It is the most profound of all truths, and the most recreative. It determines more than anything else our conceptions of God, of man, of history, and even of nature; it determines them, for we must bring them all in some way into accord with it. It is the inspiration of all thought, the impulse and the law of all action, the key, in the last resort, to all suffering. Whether we call it a fact or a truth, a power or a doctrine, it is that in which the differentia of Christianity, its peculiar and exclusive character, is specifically shown; it is the focus of revelation, the point at which we see deepest into the truth of God, and come most completely under its power. For those who recognize it at all it is Christianity in brief; it concentrates in itself, as in a germ of infinite potency, all that the wisdom, power and love of God mean in relation to sinful men.

Accordingly, when we speak of the Atonement and the modern mind, we are really speaking of the modern mind and the Christian religion. The relation between these two magnitudes may vary. The modern mind is no more than a modification of the human mind as it exists in all ages, and the relation of the modern mind to the Atonement is one phase — it may be a specially interesting or a specially well- defined phase — of the perennial relation of the mind of man to the truth of God. There is always an affinity between the two, for God made man in His own image, and the mind can only rest in truth; but there is always at the same time an antipathy, for man is somehow estranged from God, and resents divine intrusion into his life. This is the situation at all times, and therefore in modern times; we only need to remark that when the Atonement is in question, the situation, so to speak, becomes acute. All the elements in it define themselves more sharply. If there is sympathy between the mind and the truth, it is a profound sympathy, which will carry the mind far; if there are lines of approach, through which the truth can find access to the mind, they are lines laid deep in the nature of things and of men, and the access which the truth finds by them is one from which it will not easily be dislodged. On the other hand, if it is antagonism which is roused in the mind by the Atonement, it is an antagonism which feels that everything is at stake. The Atonement is a reality of such a sort that it can make no compromise. The man who fights it knows that he is fighting for his life, and puts all his strength into the battle. To surrender is literally to give up himself, to cease to be the man he is, and to become another man. For the modern mind, therefore, as for the ancient, the attraction and the repulsion of Christianity are concentrated at the same point; the cross of Christ is man's only glory, or it is his final stumbling- block.

What I wish to do in the following pages is so to present the facts as to mediate, if possible, between the mind of our time and the Atonement — so to exhibit the specific truth of Christianity as to bring out its affinity for what is deepest in the nature of man and in human experience — so to appreciate the modern mind itself, and the influences which have given it its constitution and temper, as to discredit what is false in it, and enlist on the side of the Atonement that which is

profound and true. And if any one is disposed to marvel at the ambition or the conceit of such a program, I would ask him to consider if it is not the program prescribed to every Christian, or at least to every Christian minister who would do the work of an evangelist. To commend the eternal truth of God, as it is finally revealed in the Atonement, to the mind in which men around us live and move and have their being, is no doubt a difficult and perilous task; but if we approach it in a right spirit, it need not tempt us to any presumption; it cannot tempt us, as long as we feel that it is our duty. 'Who is sufficient for these things?... Our sufficiency is of God.' The Christian religion is a historical religion, and whatever we say about it must rest upon historical ground. We cannot define it from within, by reference merely to our individual experience. Of course it is equally impossible to define it apart from experience; the point is that such experience itself must be historically derived; it must come through something outside of our individual selves. What is true of the Christian religion as a whole is pre-eminently true of the Atonement in which it is concentrated. The experience which it brings to us, and the truth which we teach on the basis of it, are historically mediated. They rest ultimately on that testimony to Christ which we find in the Scriptures and especially in the New Testament. No one can tell what the Atonement is except on this basis. No one can consciously approach it — no one can be influenced by it to the full extent to which it is capable of influencing human nature — except through this medium. We may hold that just because it is divine, it must be eternally true, omnipresent in its gracious power; but even granting this, it is not known as an abstract or eternal somewhat; it is historically, and not otherwise than historically, revealed. It is achieved by Christ, and the testimony to Christ, on the strength of which we accept it, is in the last resort the testimony of Scripture. In saying so, I do not mean that the Atonement is merely a problem of exegesis, or that we have simply to accept as authoritative the conclusions of scholars as to the meaning of New Testament texts. The modern mind here is ready with a radical objection. The writers of the New Testament, it argues, were men like ourselves; they had personal limitations and historical limitations; their forms of thought were those of a particular age and upbringing; the doctrines they preached may have had a relative validity, but we cannot so benumb our minds as to accept them without question. The intelligence which has learned to be a law to itself, criticizing, rejecting, appropriating, assimilating, cannot deny its nature and suspend its functions when it opened the New Testament. It cannot make itself the slave of men, not even though the men are Peter and Paul and John; no, not even though it were the Son of Man Himself. It resents dictation, not willfully nor wantonly, but because it must; and it resents it all the more when it claims to be inspired. If, therefore, the Atonement can only be received by those who are prepared from the threshold to acknowledge the inspiration and the consequent authority of Scripture, it can never be received by modern men at all. This line of remark is familiar inside the Church as well as outside. Often it is expressed in the demand for a historical as opposed to a dogmatic interpretation of the New Testament, a historical interpretation being one that which we can sit freely, because the result to which it leads us is the mind of a time which we have survived and presumably transcended; a dogmatic interpretation, on the other hand, being one which claims to reach an abiding truth, and therefore to have a present authority. A more popular and inconsistent expression of the same mood may be found among those who say petulant things about the rabbinizing of Paul, but profess the utmost devotion to the words of Jesus. Even in a day of overdone distinctions, one might point out that interpretations are not properly to be classified as historical or dogmatic, but as true or false. If they are false, it does not matter whether they are called dogmatic or historical; and if they are true, they may quite well be

both. But this by the way. For my own part, I prefer the objection in its most radical form, and indeed find nothing in it to which any Christian, however sincere or profound his reverence for the Bible, should hesitate to assent. Once the mind has come to know itself, there can be no such thing for it as blank authority. It cannot believe things — the things by which it has to live — simply on the word of Paul or John. It is not irreverent, it is simply the recognition of a fact, if we add that it can just as little believe them simply on the word of Jesus. ¹ This is not the sin of the mind, but the nature and essence of mind, the being which it owes to God. If we are to speak of authority at all in this connection, the authority must be conceived as belonging not to the speaker but to that which he says, not to the witness but to the truth. Truth, in short, is the only thing which has authority for the mind, and the only way in which truth finally evinces its authority is by taking possession of the mind for itself. It may be that any given truth can only be reached by testimony — that is, can only come to us by some historical channel; but if it a truth of eternal import, if it is part of a revelation of God the reception of which is eternal life, then its authority lies in itself and in its power to win the mind, and not in any witness however trustworthy.

Hence in speaking of the Atonement, whether in preaching or in theologizing, it is quite unnecessary to raise any question about the inspiration of Scripture, or to make any claim of authority, either for the Apostles or for the Lord. Belief in the inspiration of Scripture is neither the beginning of the Christian life nor the foundation of Christian theology; it is the last conclusion — a conclusion which becomes every day more sure — to which experience of the truth of Scripture leads. When we tell, therefore, what the Atonement is, we are telling it not on the authority of any person or persons whatever, but on the authority of the truth in it by which it has won its place in our minds and hearts. We find this truth in the Christian Scriptures undoubtedly, and therefore we prize them; but the truth does not derive its authority from the Scriptures, or from those who penned them. On the contrary, the Scriptures are prized by the Church because through them the soul is brought into contact with this truth. No doubt this leaves it open to any one who does not see in Scripture what we see, or who is not convinced as we are of its truth, to accuse us here of subjectivity, of having no standard of truth but what appeals to us individually, but I could never feel the charge a serious one. It is like urging that a man does not see at all, or does not see truly, because he only sees with his own eyes. This is the only authentic kind of seeing yet known to mankind. We do not judge at all those who do not see what we do. We do not know what hinders them, or whether they are at all to blame for it; we do not know how soon the hindrance is going to be put out of the way. Today, as at the beginning, the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness comprehends it not. But that is the situation which calls for evangelists; not a situation in which the evangelist is called to renounce his experience and his vocation.

What, then, is the Atonement, as it is presented to us in the Scriptures, and vindicates for itself in our minds the character of truth, and indeed, as I have said already, the character of the ultimate truth of God? The simplest expression that can be given to it in words is: Christ died for our sins. Taken by itself, this is too brief to be intelligible; it implies many things which need to be made explicit both about Christ's relation to us and about the relation of sin and death. But the important thing, to begin with, is not to define these relations, but to look through the words to the broad reality which is interpreted in them. What they tell us, and tell us on the basis of an incontrovertible experience, is that the forgiveness of sins is for the Christian mediated through the death of Christ. In one respect, therefore, there is nothing singular in the forgiveness of sins: it is in the same

position as every other blessing of which the New Testament speaks. It is the presence of a Mediator, as Westcott says in one of his letters, which makes the Christian religion what it is; and the forgiveness of sins is mediated to us through Christ, just as the knowledge of God as the Father is mediated, or the assurance of a life beyond death. But there is something specific about the mediation of forgiveness; the gift and the certainty of it come to us, not simply through Christ, but through the blood of His Cross. The sum of His relation to sin is that He died for it. God forgives, but this is the way in which His forgiveness comes. He forgives freely, but it is at this cost to Himself and to the Son of His love.

This, it seems to me, is the simplest possible statement of what the New Testament means by the Atonement, and probably there are few who would dispute its correctness. But it is possible to argue that there is a deep cleft in the New Testament itself, and that the teaching of Jesus on the subject of forgiveness is completely at variance with that which we find in the Epistles, and which is implied in this description of the Atonement. Indeed there are many who do so argue. But to follow them would be to forget the place which Jesus has in His own teaching. Even if we grant that the main subject of that teaching is the Kingdom of God, it is as clear as anything can be that the Kingdom depends for its establishment on Jesus, or rather that in Him it is already established in principle; and that all participation in its blessings depends on some kind of relation to Him. All things have been delivered to Him by the Father, and it is by coming under obligation to Him, and by that alone, that men know the Father. It is by coming under obligation to Him that they know the pardoning love of the Father, as well as everything else that enters into Christian experience and constitutes the blessedness of life in the Kingdom of God. Nor is it open to any one to say that he knows this simply because Christ has told it. We are dealing here with things too great to be simply told. If they are ever to be known in their reality, they must be revealed by God, they must rise upon the mind of man experimentally, in their awful and glorious truth, in ways more wonderful than words. They can be spoken about afterwards, but hardly beforehand. They can be celebrated and preached — that is, declared as the speakers experience, delivered as his testimony — but not simply told. It was enough if Jesus made His disciples feel, as surely He did make them feel, not only in every word He spoke, but more emphatically still in His whole attitude toward them, that He was Himself the Mediator of the new covenant, and that all the blessings of the relation between God and man which we call Christianity were blessings due to Him. If men knew the Father, it was through Him. If they knew the Father's heart to the lost, it was through Him. Through Him, be it remembered, not merely through the words that He spoke. There was more in Christ than even His own wonderful words expressed, and all that He was and did and suffered, as well as what He said, entered into the convictions He inspired. But He knew this as well as His disciples, and for this very reason it is beside the mark to point to what He said, or rather to what He did not say, in confutation of their experience. For it is their experience — the experience that the forgiveness of sins was mediated to them through His cross that is expressed in the doctrine of Atonement: He died for our sins. The objection which is here in view is most frequently pointed by reference to the parable of the prodigal son. There is no Atonement here, we are told, no mediation of forgiveness at all. There is love on the one side and penitence on the other, and it is treason to the pure truth of this teaching to cloud and confuse it with the thoughts of men whose Master was over their heads often, but most of all here. Such a statement of the case is plausible, and judging from the frequency with which it occurs must to some minds be very convincing, but nothing could be more superficial, or more unjust both to Jesus and the apostles. A parable is a

comparison, and there is a point of comparison in it on which everything turns. The more perfect the parable is, the more conspicuous and dominating will the point of comparison be. The parable of the prodigal illustrates this. It brings out, through a human parallel, with incomparable force and beauty, the one truth of the freeness of forgiveness. God waits to be gracious. His pardoning love rushes out to welcome the penitent. But no one who speaks of the Atonement ever dreams of questioning this. The Atonement is concerned with a different point — not the freeness of pardon, about which all are agreed, but the cost of it; not the spontaneity of God's love, which no one questions, but the necessity under which it lay to manifest itself in a particular way if God was to be true to Himself, and to win the heart of sinners for the holiness which they had offended. The Atonement is not the denial that God's love is free; it is that specific manifestation or demonstration of God's free love which is demanded by the situation of men. One can hardly help wondering whether those who tell us so confidently that there is no Atonement in the parable of the prodigal have ever noticed that there is no Christ in it either — no elder brother who goes out to seek and to save the lost son, and to give his life a ransom for him. Surely we are not to put the Good Shepherd out of the Christian religion. Yet if we leave Him His place, we cannot make the parable of the prodigal the measure of Christ's mind about the forgiveness of sins. One part of His teaching it certainly contains — one part of the truth about the relation of God the Father to His sinful children; but another part of the truth was present, though not on that occasion rendered in words, in the presence of the Speaker, when 'all the publicans and sinners drew near to Him for to hear Him.' The love of God to the sinful was apprehended in Christ Himself, and not in what He said as something apart from Himself; on the contrary, it was in the identity of the Speaker and the word that the power of the word lay; God's love evinced itself to men as a reality in Him, in His presence in the world, and in His attitude to its sin, it so evinced itself, finally and supremely, in His death. It is not the idiosyncrasy of the apostle, it is the testimony of the Church, a testimony in keeping with the whole claim made by Christ in His teaching and life and death: 'in Him we have our redemption, through His blood, even the forgiveness of our trespasses.' And this is what the Atonement means: it means the mediation of forgiveness through Christ, and specifically through His death. Forgiveness, in the Christian sense of the term, is only realized as we believe in the Atonement: in other words, as we come to feel the cost at which alone the love of God could assert itself as divine and holy love in the souls of sinful men. We may say, if we please, that forgiveness is bestowed freely upon repentance; but we must add, if we would do justice to the Christian position, that repentance in its ultimate character is the fruit of the Atonement. Repentance is not possible apart from the apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ. It is the experience of the regenerate — *penitentiam interpretor regenerationem*, as Calvin says — and it is the Atonement which regenerates.

This, then, in the broadest sense, is the truth which we wish to commend to the modern mind: the truth that there is forgiveness with God, and that this forgiveness comes to us only through Christ, and signally or specifically through His death. Unless it becomes true to us that Christ died for our sins, we cannot appreciate forgiveness at its specifically Christian value. It cannot be for us that kind of reality, it cannot have for us that kind of inspiration, which it unquestionably is and has in the New Testament. But what, we must now ask, is the modern mind to which this primary truth of Christianity has to be commended? Can we diagnose it in any general yet recognizable fashion, so as to find guidance in seeking access to it for the gospel of the Atonement? There may seem to be something presumptuous in the very idea, as though any one making the attempt assumed a

superiority to the mind of his time, an exemption from its limitations and prejudices, a power to see over it and round about it. All such presumption is of course disclaimed here; but even while we disclaim it, the attempt to appreciate the mind of our time is forced upon us. Whoever has tried to preach the gospel, and to persuade men of truth as truth is in Jesus, and especially of the truth of God's forgiveness as it is in the death of Jesus for sin, knows that there is a state of mind which is somehow inaccessible to this truth, and to which the truth consequently appeals in vain. I do not speak of unambiguous moral antipathy to the ideas of forgiveness and atonement, although antipathy to these ideas in general, as distinct from any given presentation of them, cannot but have a moral character, just as a moral character always attaches to the refusal to acknowledge Christ or to become His debtor; but of something which, though vaguer and less determinate, puts the mind wrong, so to speak, with Christianity from the start. It is clear, for instance, in all that has been said about forgiveness, that certain relations are presupposed as subsisting between God and man, relations which make it possible for man to sin, and possible for God, not indeed to ignore his sin, but in the very act of recognizing it as all that it is to forgive it, to liberate man from it, and to restore him to Himself and righteousness. Now if the latent presuppositions of the modern mind are to any extent inconsistent with such relations, there will be something to overcome before the conceptions of forgiveness or atonement can get a hearing. These conceptions have their place in a certain view of the world as a whole, and if the mind is preoccupied with a different view, it will have an instinctive consciousness that it cannot accommodate them, and a disposition therefore to reject them ab initio. This is, in point of fact, the difficulty with which we have to deal. And let no one say that it is transparently absurd to suggest that we must get men to accept a true philosophy before we can begin to preach the gospel to them, as though that settled the matter or got over the difficulty. We have to take men as we find them; we have to preach the gospel to the mind which is around us; and if that mind is rooted in a view of the world which leaves no room for Christ and His work as Christian experience has realized them, then that view of the world must be appreciated by the evangelist, it must be undermined at its weak places, its inadequacy to interpret all that is present even in the mind which has accepted it — in other words, its inherent inconsistency — must be demonstrated; the attempt must be made to liberate the mind, so that it may be open to the impression of realities which under the conditions supposed it could only encounter with instinctive antipathy. It is necessary, therefore, at this point to advert to the various influences which have contributed to form the mind of our time, and to give it its instinctive bias in one direction or another. Powerful and legitimate as these influences have been, they have nevertheless been in various ways partial, and because of their very partiality they have, when they absorbed the mind, as new modes of thought are apt to do, prejudiced it against the consideration of other, possibly of deeper and more far-reaching, truths.

First, there is the enormous development of physical science. This has engrossed human intelligence in our own times to an extent which can hardly be over-estimated. Far more mind has been employed in constructing the great fabric of knowledge, which we call science, than in any other pursuit of men. Far more mind has had its characteristic qualities and temper imparted to it by scientific study than by study in any other field. It is of science — which to all intents and purposes means physical science — of science and its methods and results that the modern mind is most confident, and speaks with the most natural and legitimate pride. Now science, even in this restricted sense, covers a great range of subjects; it may be physics in the narrowest meaning of the word, or chemistry, or biological science. The characteristic of our own age has been the

development of the last, and in particular its extension to man. It is impossible to dispute the legitimacy of this extension. Man has his place in nature; the phenomena of life have one of their signal illustrations in him, and he is as proper a subject of biological study as any other living being. But the intense preoccupation of much of the most vigorous intelligence of our time with the biological study of man is not without effects upon the mind itself, which we need to consider. It tends to produce a habit of mind to which certain assumptions are natural and inevitable, certain other assumptions incredible from the first. This habit of mind is in some ways favorable to the acceptance of the Atonement. For example, the biologist's invincible conviction of the unity of life, and of the certainty and power with which whatever touches it at one point touches it through and through, is in one way entirely favorable. Many of the most telling popular objections to the idea of Atonement rest on an atomic conception of personality — a conception according to which every human being is a closed system, incapable in the last resort of helping or being helped, of injuring or being injured, by another. This conception has been finally discredited by biology, and so far the evangelist must be grateful. The Atonement presupposes the unity of human life and its solidarity; it presupposes a common and universal responsibility. I believe it presupposes also such a conception of the unity of man and nature as biology proceeds upon; and in all these respects its physical presuppositions, if we may so express ourselves, are present to the mind of today, thanks to biology, as they were not even so lately as a hundred years ago. But this is not all that we have to consider. The mind has been influenced by the movement of physical and even of biological science, not only in a way which is favorable, but in ways which are prejudicial to the acceptance of the Atonement. Every physical science seems to have a boundless ambition; it wants to reduce everything to its own level, to explain everything in the terms and by the categories with which it itself works. The higher has always to fight for its life against the lower. The physicist would like to reduce chemistry to physics; the chemist has an ambition to simplify biology into chemistry; the biologist in turn looks with suspicion on anything in man which cannot be interpreted biologically. He would like to give, and is sometimes ready to offer, a biological explanation of self-consciousness, of freedom, of religion, morality, sin. Now a biological explanation, when all is done, is a physical explanation, and a physical explanation of self-consciousness or the moral life is one in which the very essence of the thing to be explained is either ignored or explained away. Man's life is certainly rooted in nature, and therefore a proper subject for biological study; but unless it somehow transcended nature, and so demanded other than physical categories for its complete interpretation, there could not be any study or any science at all. If there were nothing but matter, as M. Naville has said, there would be no materialism; and if there were nothing but life, there would be no biology. Now it is in the higher region of human experience, to which all physical categories are unequal, that we encounter those realities to which the Atonement is related, and in relation to which it is real; and we must insist upon these higher realities, in their specific character, against a strong tendency in the scientifically trained modern mind, and still more in the general mind as influenced by it, to reduce them to the merely physical level.

Take, for instance, the consciousness of sin. Evidently the Atonement becomes incredible if the consciousness of sin is extinguished or explained away. There is nothing for the Atonement to do; there is nothing to relate it to; it is as unreal as a rock in the sky. But many minds at the present time, under the influence of current conceptions in biology, do explain it away. All life is one, they argue. It rises from the same spring, it runs the same course, it comes to the same end. The life of man is rooted in nature, and that which beats in my veins is an inheritance from an immeasurable

past. It is absurd to speak of my responsibility for it, or of my guilt because it manifests itself in me, as it inevitably does, in such and such forms. There is no doubt that this mode of thought is widely prevalent, and that it is one of the most serious hindrances to the acceptance of the gospel, and especially of the Atonement. How are we to appreciate it? We must point out, I think, the consequence to which it leads. If a man denies that he is responsible for the nature which he has inherited — denies responsibility for it on the ground that it is inherited — it is a fair question to ask him for what he does accept responsibility. When he has divested himself of the inherited nature, what is left? The real meaning of such disowning of responsibility is that a man asserts that his life is a part of the physical phenomena of the universe, and nothing else; and he forgets, in the very act of making the assertion, that if it were true, it could not be so much as made. The merely physical is transcended in every such assertion; and the man who has transcended it, rooted though his life be in nature, and one with the life of the whole and of all the past, must take the responsibility of living that life out on the high level of self-consciousness and morality which his very disclaimer involves. The sense of sin which wakes spontaneously with the perception that he is not what he ought to have been must not be explained away; at the level which life has reached in him, this is unscientific as well as immoral; his sin — for I do not know another word for it — must be realized as all that it is in the moral world if he is ever to be true to himself, not to say if he is ever to welcome the Atonement, and leave his sin behind. We should have no need of words like sin and atonement — we could not have the experiences which they designate — unless we had a higher than merely natural life; and one of the tendencies of the modern mind which has to be counteracted by the evangelist is the tendency induced by physical and especially by biological science to explain the realities of personal experience by sub-personal categories. In conscience, in the sense of personal dignity, in the ultimate inability of man to deny the self which he is, we have always an appeal against such tendencies, which cannot fail; but it needs to be made resolutely when conscience is lethargic and the whole bias of the mind is to the other side.

Passing from physical science, the modern mind has perhaps been influenced most by the great idealist movement in philosophy — the movement which in Germany began with Kant and culminated in Hegel. This idealism, just like physical science, gives a certain stamp to the mind; when it takes possession of intelligence it casts it, so to speak, into a certain mold; even more than physical science it dominates it so that it becomes incapable of self-criticism, and very difficult to teach. Its importance to the preacher of Christianity is that it assumes certain relations between the human and the divine, relations which foreclose the very questions which the Atonement compels us to raise. To be brief, it teaches the essential unity of God and man. God and man, to speak of them as distinct, are necessary to each other, but man is as necessary to God as God is to man. God is the truth of man, but man is the reality of God. God comes to consciousness of Himself in man, and man in being conscious of himself is at the same time conscious of God. Though many writers of this school make a copious use of Christian phraseology, it seems to me obvious that it is not in an adequate Christian sense. Sin is not regarded as that which ought not to be, it is that which is to be transcended. It is as inevitable as anything in nature; and the sense of it, the bad conscience which accompanies it, is no more than the growing pains of the soul. On such a system there is no room for atonement in the sense of the mediation of God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ. We may consistently speak in it of a man being reconciled to himself, or even reconciled to his sins, but not, so far as I can understand, of his being reconciled to God, and still less, reconciled to God through the death of His Son. The penetration of Kant saw from the

first all that could be made of atonement on the basis of any such system. What it means to the speculative mind is that the new man bears the sin of the old. When the sinner repents and is converted, the weight of what he has done comes home to him; the new man in him — the Son of God in him — accepts the responsibility of the old man, and so he has peace with God. Many whose minds are under the influence of this mode of thought do not see clearly to what it leads, and resent criticism of it as if it were a sort of impiety. Their philosophy is to them a surrogate for religion, but they should not be allowed to suppose (if they do suppose) that it is the equivalent of Christianity. There can be no Christianity without Christ; it is the presence of the Mediator which makes Christianity what it is. But a unique Christ, without whom our religion disappears, is frankly disavowed by the more candid and outspoken of our idealist philosophers. Christ, they tell us, was certainly a man who had an early and a magnificently strong faith in the unity of the human and the divine; but it was faith in a fact which enters into the constitution of every human consciousness, and it is absurd to suppose that the recognition of the fact, or the realization of it, is essentially dependent on Him. He was not sinless — which is an expression without meaning, when we think of a human being which has to rise by conflict and self-suppression out of nature into the world of selfconsciousness and right and wrong; He was not in any sense unique or exceptional; He was only what we all are in our degree; at best, He was only one among really great men who have contributed in their place and time to the spiritual elevation of the race. Such, I say, is the issue of this mode of thought as it is frankly avowed by some of its representative men; but the peculiarity of it, when it is obscurely fermenting as a leaven in the mind, is that it appeals to men as having special affinities to Christianity. In our own country it is widely prevalent among those who have had a university education, and indeed in a much wider circle, and it is a serious question how we are to address our gospel to those who confront it in such a mental mood.

I have no wish to be unsympathetic, but I must frankly express my conviction that this philosophy only lives by ignoring the greatest reality of the spiritual world. There is something in that world — something with which we can come into intelligible and vital relations — something which can evince to our minds its truth and reality, for which this philosophy can make no room: Christ's consciousness of Himself. It is a theory of the universe which (on principle) cannot allow Christ to be anything else than an additional unit in the world's population; but if this were the truth about Him, no language could be strong enough to express the self-delusion in which He lived and died. That He was thus self-deluded is a hypothesis I do not feel called to discuss. One may be accused of subjectivity again, of course, though a subjective opinion which has the consent of the Christian centuries behind it need not tremble at hard names; but I venture to say that there is no reality in the world which more inevitably and uncompromisingly takes hold of the mind as a reality than our Lord's consciousness of Himself as it is attested to us in the Gospels. But when we have taken this reality for all that it is worth, the idealism just described is shaken to the foundation. What seemed to us so profound a truth — the essential unity of the human and the divine — may come to seem a formal and delusive platitude; in what we once regarded as the formula of the perfect religion — the divinity of man and the humanity of God — we may find quite as truly the formula of the first, not to say the final, sin. To see Christ not in the light of this speculative theorem, but in the light of His own consciousness of Himself, is to realize not only our kinship to God, but our remoteness from Him; it is to realize our incapacity for self-realization when we are left to ourselves; it is to realize the need of the Mediator if we would come to the Father; it is to realize, in principle, the need of the Atonement, the need, and eventually the fact. When the

modern mind therefore presents itself to us in this mood of philosophical competence, judging Christ from the point of view of the whole, and showing Him His place, we can only insist that the place is unequal to His greatness, and that His greatness cannot be explained away. The mind which is closed to the fact of His unique claims, and the unique relation to God on which they rest, is closed inevitably to the mediation of God's forgiveness through His death.

There is one other modification of mind, characteristic of modern times, of which we have yet to take account — I mean that which is produced by devotion to historical study. History is, as much as science, one of the achievements of our age; and the historical temper is as characteristic of the men we meet as the philosophical or the scientific. The historical temper, too, is just as apt as these others, perhaps unconsciously, perhaps quite consciously, but under the engaging plea of modesty, to pronounce absolute sentences which strike at the life of the Christian religion, and especially, therefore, at the idea of the Atonement. Sometimes this is done broadly, so that every one sees what it means. If we are told, for example, that everything historical is relative, that it belongs of necessity to a time, and is conditioned in ways so intricate that no knowledge can ever completely trace them; if we are told, further, that for this very reason nothing historical can have absolute significance, or can condition the eternal life of man, it is obvious that the Christian religion is being cut at the root. It is no use speaking about the Atonement — about the mediation of God's forgiveness to the soul through a historical person and work — if this is true. The only thing to be done is to raise the question whether it is true. It is no more for historical than for physical science to exalt itself into a theory of the universe, or to lay down the law with speculative absoluteness as to the significance and value which shall attach to facts. When we face the fact with which we are here concerned — the fact of Christ's consciousness of Himself and His vocation, to which reference has already been made — are we not forced to the conclusion that here a new spiritual magnitude has appeared in history, the very differentia of which is that it has eternal significance, and that it is eternal life to know it? If we are to preach the Atonement, we cannot allow either history or philosophy to proceed on assumptions which ignore or degrade the fact of Christ. Only a person in whom the eternal has become historical can be the bearer of the Atonement, and it must be our first concern to show, against all assumptions whether made in the name of history or of philosophy, that in point of fact there is such a person here. This consideration requires to be kept in view even when we are dealing with the modern mind inside the Church. Nothing is commoner than to hear those who dissent from any given construction of the Atonement plead for a historical as opposed to a dogmatic interpretation of Christ. It is not always clear what is meant by this distinction, nor is it clear that those who use it are always conscious of what it would lead to if it were made absolute. Sometimes a dogmatic interpretation of the New Testament means an interpretation vitiated by dogmatic prejudice, an interpretation in which the meaning of the writers is missed because the mind is blinded by prepossessions of its own: in this sense a dogmatic interpretation is a thing which no one would defend. Sometimes, however, a dogmatic interpretation is one which reveals or discovers in the New Testament truths of eternal and divine significance, and to discredit such interpretation in the name of the historical is another matter. The distinction in this case, as has been already pointed out, is not absolute. It is analogous to the distinction between fact and theory, or between thing and meaning, or between efficient cause and final cause. None of these distinctions is absolute, and no intelligent mind would urge either side in them to the disparagement of the other. If we are to apprehend the whole reality presented to us, we must apprehend the theory as well as the fact, the meaning as well as

the thing, the final as well as the efficient cause. In the subject with which we are dealing, this truth is frequently ignored. It is assumed, for example, that because Christ was put to death by His enemies, or because He died in the faithful discharge of His calling, therefore He did not die, in the sense of the Atonement, for our sins: the historical causes which brought about His death are supposed to preclude that interpretation of it according to which it mediates to us the divine forgiveness. But there is no incompatibility between the two things. To set aside an interpretation of Christ's death as dogmatic, on the ground that there is another which is historical, is like setting aside the idea that a watch is made to measure time because you know it was made by a watchmaker. It was both made by a watchmaker and made to measure time. Similarly it may be quite true both that Christ was crucified and slain by wicked men, and that He died for our sins. But without entering into the questions which this raises as to the relation between the wisdom of God and the course of human history, it is enough to be conscious of the prejudice which the historical temper is apt to generate against the recognition of the eternal in time. Surely it is a significant fact that the New Testament contains a whole series of books — the Johannine books — which have as their very burden the eternal significance of the historical eternal life in Jesus Christ, come in flesh, the propitiation for the whole world. Surely also it is a significant fact of a different and even an ominous kind that we have at present in the Church a whole school of critics which is so far from appreciating the truth in this that it is hardly an exaggeration to say that it has devoted itself to a paltry and peddling criticism of these books in which the impression of the eternal is lost. But whether we are to be indebted to John's eyes, or to none but our own, if the eternal is not to be seen in Jesus, He can have no place in our religion; if the historical has no dogmatic content, it cannot be essential to eternal life. Hence if we believe and know that we have eternal life in Jesus, we must assert the truth which is implied in this against any conception of history which denies it. Nor is it really difficult to do so. With the experience of nineteen centuries behind us, we have only to confront this particular historical reality, Jesus Christ, without prejudice; in evangelizing, we have only to confront others with Him; and we shall find it still possible to see God in Him, the Holy Father who through the Passion of His Son ministers to sinners the forgiveness of their sins. In what has been said thus far by way of explaining the modern mind, emphasis may seem to have fallen mainly on those characteristics which make it less accessible than it might be to Christian truth, and especially to the Atonement. I have tried to point out the assailable side of its prepossessions, and to indicate the fundamental truths which must be asserted if our intellectual world is to be one in which the gospel may find room. But the modern mind has other characteristics. Some of these may have been exhibited hitherto mainly in criticizing current representations of the Atonement; but in themselves they are entirely legitimate, and the claims they put forward are such as we cannot disown. Before proceeding to a further statement of the Atonement, I shall briefly refer to one or two of them: a doctrine of Atonement which did not satisfy them would undoubtedly stand condemned.

(1) The modern mind requires that everything shall be based on experience. Nothing is true or real to it which cannot be experimentally verified. This we shall all concede. But there is an inference sometimes drawn from it at which we may look with caution. It is the inference that, because everything must be based on experience, no appeal to Scripture has any authority. I have already explained in what sense it is possible to speak of the authority of Scripture, and here it is only necessary to make the simple remark that there is no proper contrast between Scripture and experience. Scripture, so far as it concerns us here, is a record of experience or an interpretation

of it. It was the Church's experience that it had its redemption in Christ; it was the interpretation of that experience that Christ died for our sins. Yet in emphasizing experience the modern mind is right, and Scripture would lose its authority if the experience it describes were not perpetually verified anew.

(2) The modern mind desires to have everything in religion ethically construed. As a general principle this must command our unreserved assent. Anything which violates ethical standards, anything which is immoral or less than moral, must be excluded from religion. It may be, indeed, that ethical has sometimes been too narrowly defined. Ideas have been objected to as unethical which are really at variance not with a true perception of the constitution of humanity, and of the laws which regulate moral life, but with an atomic theory of personality under which moral life would be impossible. Persons are not atoms; in a sense they interpenetrate, though individuality has been called the true impenetrability. The world has been so constituted that we do not stand absolutely outside of each other; we can do things for each other. We can bear each other's burdens, and it is not unethical to say so, but the reverse. And again, it need not be unethical, though it transcends the ordinary sphere and range of ethical action, if we say that God in Christ is able to do for us what we cannot do for one another. With reference to the Atonement, the demand for ethical treatment is usually expressed in two ways.

(a) There is the demand for analogies to it in human life. The demand is justifiable in so far as God has made man in His own image; but, as has been suggested above, it has a limit, in so far as God is God and not man, and must have relations to the human race which its members do not and cannot have to each other.

(b) There is the demand that the Atonement shall be exhibited in vital relation to a new life in which sin is overcome. This demand also is entirely legitimate, and it touches a weak point in the traditional Protestant doctrine. Dr. Chalmers tells us that he was brought up — such was the effect of the current orthodoxy upon him — in a certain distrust of good works. Some were certainly wanted, but not as being themselves salvation; only, as he puts it, as tokens of justification. It was a distinct stage in his religious progress when he realized that true justification sanctifies, and that the soul can and ought to abandon itself spontaneously and joyfully to do the good that it delights in. The modern mind assumes what Dr. Chalmers painfully discovered. An atonement that does not regenerate, it truly holds, is not an atonement in which men can be asked to believe. Such then, in its prejudices good and bad, is the mind to which the great truth of the Christian religion has to be presented. Of course this does not touch the fact that the whole 'authority' of the Christian religion is in Jesus Himself — in His historical presence in the world, His words and works, His life and death and resurrection. He is the truth, the acceptance of which by man is life eternal.

03.08. Chapter 8 : Sin And The Divine Reaction Against It

Chapter 8 : Sin And The Divine Reaction Against It

WE have now seen in a general way what is meant by the Atonement, and what are the characteristics of the mind to which the Atonement has to make its appeal. In that mind there is, as I believe, much which falls in with the Atonement, and prepares a welcome for it; but much also which creates prejudice against it, and makes it as possible still as in the first century to speak of the offense of the cross. No doubt the Atonement has sometimes been presented in forms which provoke antagonism, which challenge by an ostentation of unreason, or by a defiance of morality, the reason and conscience of man; but this alone does not explain the resentment which it often encounters. There is such a thing to be found in the world as the man who will have nothing to do with Christ on any terms, and who will least of all have anything to do with Him when Christ presents Himself in the character which makes man His debtor for ever. All men, as St. Paul says, have not faith: it is a melancholy fact, whether we can make anything of it or not. Discounting, however, this irrational or inexplicable opposition, which is not expressed in the mind but in the will, how are we to present the Atonement so that it shall excite the least prejudice, and find the most unimpeded access to the mind of our own generation? This is the question to which we have now to address ourselves. To conceive the Atonement, that is, the fact that forgiveness is mediated to us through Christ, and specifically through His death, as clearly and truly as possible, it is necessary for us to realize the situation to which it is related. We cannot think of it except as related to a given situation. It is determined or conditioned by certain relations subsisting between God and man, as these relations have been affected by sin. What we must do, therefore, in the first instance, is to make clear to ourselves what these relations are, and how sin affects them. To begin with, they are personal relations; they are relations the truth of which cannot be expressed except by the use of personal pronouns. We need not ask whether the personality of God can be proved antecedent to religion, or as a basis for a religion yet to be established; in the only sense in which we can be concerned with it, religion is an experience of the personality of God, and of our own personality in relation to it. 'O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me.' 'I am continually with Thee.' No human experience can be more vital or more normal than that which is expressed in these words, and no argument, be it ever so subtle or so baffling, can weigh a feather's- weight against such experience. The same conception of the relations of God and man is expressed again as unmistakably in every word of Jesus about the Father and the Son and the nature of their communion with each other. It is only in such personal relations that the kind of situation can emerge, and the kind of experience be had, with which the Atonement deals; and antecedent to such experience, or in independence of it, the Atonement must remain an incredible because an unrealizable thing. But to say that the relations of God and man are personal is not enough. They are not only personal, but universal. Personal is habitually used in a certain contrast with legal, and it is very easy to lapse into the idea that personal relations, because distinct from legal ones, are independent of law; but to say the least of it, that is an ambiguous and misleading way of describing the facts. The relations of God and man are not lawless, they are not capricious,

incalculable, incapable of moral meaning; they are personal, but determined by something of universal import; in other words, they are not merely personal but ethical. That is ethical which is at once personal and universal. Perhaps the simplest way to make this evident is to notice that the relations of man to God are the relations to God not of atoms, or of self-contained individuals, each of which is a world in itself, but of individuals which are essentially related to each other, and bound up in the unity of a race. The relations of God to man therefore are not capricious though they are personal: they are reflected or expressed in a moral constitution to which all personal beings are equally bound, a moral constitution of eternal and universal validity, which neither God nor man can ultimately treat as anything else than what it is. This is a point at which some prejudice has been raised against the Atonement by theologians, and more, perhaps, by persons protesting against what they supposed theologians to mean. If one may be excused a personal reference, few things have astonished me more than to be charged with teaching a 'forensic' or 'legal' or 'judicial' doctrine of Atonement, resting, as such a doctrine must do, on a 'forensic' or 'legal' or 'judicial' conception of man's relation to God. It is all the more astonishing when the charge is combined with what one can only decline as in the circumstances totally unmerited compliments to the clearness with which he has expressed himself. There is nothing which I should wish to reprobate more wholeheartedly than the conception which is expressed by these words. To say that the relations of God and man are forensic is to say that they are regulated by statute — that sin is a breach of statute — that the sinner is a criminal — and that God adjudicates on him by interpreting the statute in its application to his case. Everybody knows that this is a travesty of the truth, and it is surprising that any one should be charged with teaching it, or that any one should applaud himself, as though he were in the foremost files of time, for not believing it. It is superfluously apparent that the relations of God and man are not those of a magistrate on the bench pronouncing according to the act on the criminal at the bar. To say this, however, does not make these relations more intelligible. In particular, to say that they are personal, as opposed to forensic, does not make them more intelligible. If they are to be rational, if they are to be moral, if they are to be relations in which an ethical life can be lived, and ethical responsibilities realized, they must be not only personal, but universal; they must be relations that in some sense are determined by law. Even to say that they are the relations, not of judge and criminal, but of Father and child, does not get us past this point. The relations of father and child are undoubtedly more adequate to the truth than those of judge and criminal; they are more adequate, but so far as our experience of them goes, they are not equal to it. If the sinner is not a criminal before his judge, neither is he a naughty child before a parent whose own weakness or affinity to evil introduces an incalculable element into his dealing with his child's fault. I should not think of saying that it is the desire to escape from the inexorableness of law to a God capable of indulgent human tenderness that inspires the violent protests so often heard against 'forensic' and 'legal' ideas: but that is the impression which one sometimes involuntarily receives from them. It ought to be apparent to every one that even the relation of parent and child, if it is to be a moral relation, must be determined in a way which has universal and final validity. It must be a relation in which — ethically speaking — some things are for ever obligatory, and some things for ever impossible; in other words, it must be a relation determined by law, and law which cannot deny itself. But law in this sense is not 'legal.' It is not 'judicial,' or 'forensic,' or 'statutory.' None the less it is real and vital, and the whole moral value of the relation depends upon it. When a man says — as some one has said — 'There are many to whom the conception of forgiveness resting on a judicial transaction does not

appeal at all, ' I entirely agree with him; it does not appeal at all to me. But what would be the value of a forgiveness which did not recognize in its eternal truth and worth that universal law in which the relations of God and man are constituted? Without the recognition of that law — that moral order or constitution in which we have our life in relation to God and each other — righteousness and sin, atonement and forgiveness, would all alike be words without meaning. In connection with this, reference may be made to an important point in the interpretation of the New Testament. The responsibility for what is called the forensic conception of the Atonement is often traced to St. Paul, and the greatest of all the ministers of grace is not infrequently spoken of as though he had deliberately laid the most insuperable of stumbling- blocks in the way to the gospel. Most people, happily, are conscious that they do not look well talking down to St. Paul, and occasionally one can detect a note of misgiving in the brave words in which his doctrine is renounced, a note of misgiving which suggests that the charitable course is to hear such protests in silence, and to let those who utter them think over the matter again. But there is what claims to be a scientific way of expressing dissent from the apostle, a way which, equally with the petulant one, rests, I am convinced, on misapprehension of his teaching. This it would not be fair to ignore. It interprets what the apostle says about law solely by reference to the great question at issue between the Jewish and the Christian religions, making the word law mean the statutory system under which the Jews lived, and nothing else. No one will deny that Paul does use the word in this sense; the law often means for him specifically the law of Moses. The law of Moses, however, never means for him anything less than the law of God; it is one specific form in which the universal relations subsisting between God and man, and making religion and morality possible, have found historical expression. But Paul's mind does not rest in this one historical expression. He generalizes it. He has the conception of a universal law, to which he can appeal in Gentile as well as in Jew — a law in the presence of which sin is revealed, and by the reaction of which sin is judged — a law which God could not deny without denying Himself, and to which justice is done (in other words, which is maintained in its integrity), even when God justifies the ungodly. But when law is thus universalized, it ceases to be legal; it is not a statute, but the moral constitution of the world. Paul preached the same gospel to the Gentiles as he did to the Jews; he preached in it the same relation of the Atonement and of Christ's death to divine law. But he did not do this by extending to all mankind a Pharisaic, legal, forensic relation to God: he did it by rising above such conceptions, even though as a Pharisee he may have had to start from them, to the conception of a relation of all men to God expressing itself in a moral constitution — or, as he would have said, but in an entirely unforensic sense, in a law — of divine and unchanging validity. The maintenance of this law, or of this moral constitution, in its inviolable integrity was the signature of the forgiveness Paul preached. The Atonement meant to him that forgiveness was mediated through One in whose life and death the most signal homage was paid to this law: the very glory of the Atonement was that it manifested the righteousness of God; it demonstrated God's consistency with His own character, which would have been violated alike by indifference to sinners and by indifference to that universal moral order — that law of God — in which alone eternal life is possible.

Hence it is a mistake to say — though this also has been said — that 'Paul's problem was not that of the possibility of forgiveness; it was the Jewish law, the Old Testament dispensation, how to justify his breach with it, how to demonstrate that the old order had been annulled and a new order inaugurated. ' There is a false contrast in all such propositions. Paul's problem was that of the Jewish law, and it was also that of the possibility of forgiveness; it was that of the Jewish law, and

it was also that of a revelation of grace, in which God should justify the ungodly, Jew or Gentile, and yet maintain inviolate those universal moral relations between Himself and man for which law is the compendious expression. It does not matter whether we suppose him to start from the concrete instance of the Jewish law, and to generalize on the basis of it; or to start from the universal conception of law, and to recognize in existing Jewish institutions the most available and definite illustration of it: in either case, the only Paul whose mind is known to us has completely transcended the forensic point of view. The same false contrast is repeated when we are told that, 'That doctrine (Paul's "juristic doctrine") had its origin, not so much in his religious experience, as in apologetic necessities. ' The only apologetic necessities which give rise to fundamental doctrines are those created by religious experience. The apologetic of any religious experience is just the definition of it as real in relation to other acknowledged realities. Paul had undoubtedly an apologetic of forgiveness — namely, his doctrine of atonement. But the acknowledged reality in relation to which he defined forgiveness — the reality with which, by means of his doctrine of atonement, he showed forgiveness to be consistent — was not the law of the Jews (though that was included in it, or might be pointed to in illustration of it): it was the law of God, the universal and inviolable order in which alone eternal life is possible, and in which all men, and not the Jews only, live and move and have their being. It was the perception of this which made Paul an apostle to the Gentiles, and it is this very thing itself which some would degrade into an awkward, unintelligent, and outworn rag of Pharisaic apologetic, which is the very heart and soul of Paul's Gentile gospel. Paul himself was perfectly conscious of this; he could not have preached to the Gentiles at all unless he had been. But there is nothing in it which can be characterized as 'legal, ' 'judicial, ' or ' forensic'; and of this also, I have no doubt, the apostle was well aware. Of course he occupied certain historical position, had certain historical questions to answer, was subject to historical limitations of different kinds; but I have not the courage to treat him, nor do his words entitle any one to do so, as a man who in the region of ideas could not put two and two together. But to return to the point from which this digression on St. Paul started. We have seen that the relations of God and man are personal, and also that they are universal, that is, there is a law of them, or, if we like to say so, a law in them, on the maintenance of which their whole ethical value depends. The next point to be noticed is that these relations are deranged or disordered by sin. Sin is, in fact, nothing else than this derangement or disturbance: it is that in which wrong is done to the moral constitution under which we live. And let no one say that in such an expression we are turning our back on the personal world, and lapsing, or incurring the risk of lapsing, into mere legalism again. It cannot be too often repeated that if the universal element, or law, be eliminated from personal relations, there is nothing intelligible left: no reason, no morality, no religion, no sin or righteousness or forgiveness, nothing to appeal to mind or conscience. In the widest sense of the word, sin, as a disturbance of the personal relations between God and man, is a violence done to the constitution under which God and man form one moral community, share, as we may reverently express it, one life, have in view the same moral ends.

It is no more necessary in connection with the Atonement than in any other connection that we should have a doctrine of the origin of sin. We do not know its origin, we only know that it is here. We cannot observe the genesis of the bad conscience any more than we can observe the genesis of consciousness in general. We see that consciousness does stand in relief against the background of natural life; but though we believe that, as it exists in us, it has emerged from that background, we cannot see it emerge; it is an ultimate fact, and is assumed in all that we can ever

regard as its physical antecedents and presuppositions. In the same way, the moral consciousness is an ultimate fact, and irreducible. The physical theory of evolution must not be allowed to mislead us here, and in particular it must not be allowed to discredit the conception of moral responsibility for sin which is embodied in the story of the Fall. Each of us individually has risen into moral life from a mode of being which was purely natural; in other words, each of us, individually, has been a subject of evolution; but each of us also has fallen — fallen, presumably, in ways determined by his natural constitution, yet certainly, as conscience assures us, in ways for which we are morally answerable, and to which, in the moral constitution of the world, consequences attach which we must recognize as our due. They are not only results of our action, but results which that action has merited, and there is no moral hope for us unless we accept them as such. Now what is true of any, or rather of all, of us, without compromise of the moral consciousness, may be true of the race, or of the first man, if there was a first man. Evolution and a Fall cannot be inconsistent, for both enter into every moral experience of which we know anything; and no opinion we hold about the origin of sin can make it anything else than it is in conscience, or give its results any character other than that which they have to conscience. Of course when one tries to interpret sin outside of conscience, as though it were purely physical, and did not have its being in personality, consciousness, and will, it disappears; and the laborious sophistries of such interpretations must be left to themselves. The point for us is that no matter how sin originated, in the moral consciousness in which it has its being it is recognized as a derangement of the vital relations of man, a violation of that universal order outside of which he has no true good. In what way, now, let us ask, does the reality of sin come home to the sinner? How does he recognize it as what it is? What is the reaction against the sinner, in the moral order under which he lives, which reveals to him the meaning of his sinful act or state? In the first place, there is that instantaneous but abiding reaction which is called the bad conscience — the sense of guilt, of being answerable to God for sin. The sin may be an act which is committed in a moment, but in this aspect of it, at least, it does not fade into the past. An animal may have a past, for anything we can tell, and naturalistic interpreters of sin may believe that sin dies a natural death with time, and need not trouble us permanently; but this is not the voice of conscience, in which alone sin exists, and which alone can tell us the truth about it. The truth is that the spiritual being has no past. Just as he is continually with God, his sin is continually with him. He cannot escape it by not thinking. When he keeps silence, as the Psalmist says — and that is always his first resource, as though, if he were to say nothing about it, God might say nothing about it, and the whole thing blow over — it devours him like a fever within: his bones wax old with his moaning all day long. This sense of being wrong with God, under His displeasure, excluded from His fellowship, afraid to meet Him yet bound to meet Him, is the sense of guilt. Conscience confesses in it its liability to God, a liability which in the very nature of the case it can do nothing to meet, and which therefore is nearly akin to despair. But the bad conscience, real as it is, may be too abstractly interpreted. Man is not a pure spirit, but a spiritual being whose roots strike to the very depths of nature, and who is connected by the most intimate and vital relations not only with his fellow- creatures of the same species, but with the whole system of nature in which he lives. The moral constitution in which he has his being comprehends, if we may say so, nature in itself: the God who has established the moral order in which man lives, has established the natural order also as part of the same whole with it. In some profound way the two are one. We distinguish in man, legitimately enough, between the spiritual and the physical; but man is one, and the universe

in which he lives is one, and in man's relation to God the distinction of physical and spiritual must ultimately disappear. The sin which introduces disorder into man's relations to God produces reactions affecting man as a whole — not reactions that, as we sometimes say, are purely spiritual, but reactions as broad as man's being and as the whole divinely constituted environment in which it lives. I am well aware of the difficulty of giving expression to this truth, and of the hopelessness of trying to give expression to it by means of those very distinctions which it is its nature to transcend. The distinctions are easy and obvious; what we have to learn is that they are not final. It seems so conclusive to say, as some one has done in criticizing the idea of atonement, that spiritual transgressing brings spiritual penalty, and physical brings physical; it seems so conclusive, and it is in truth so completely beside the mark. We cannot divide either man or the universe in this fashion into two parts which move on different planes and have no vital relations; we cannot, to apply this truth to the subject before us, limit the divine reaction against sin, or the experiences through which, in any case whatever, sin is brought home to man as what it is, to the purely spiritual sphere. Every sin is a sin of the indivisible human being, and the divine reaction against it expresses itself to conscience through the indivisible frame of that world, at once natural and spiritual, in which man lives. We cannot distribute evils into the two classes of physical and moral, and subsequently investigate the relation between them, if we could, it would be of no service here. What we have to understand is that when a man sins he does something in which his whole being participates, and that the reaction of God against his sin is a reaction in which he is conscious, or might be conscious, that the whole system of things is in arms against him.

There are those, no doubt, to whom this will seem fantastic, but it is a truth, I am convinced, which is presupposed in the Christian doctrine of Atonement, as the mediation of forgiveness through the suffering and death of Christ — and it is a truth also, if I am not much mistaken, to which all the highest poetry, which is also the deepest vision of the human mind, bears witness. We may distinguish natural law and moral law as sharply as we please, and it is as necessary sometimes as it is easy to make these sharp and absolute distinctions; but there is a unity in experience which makes itself felt deeper than all the antitheses of logic, and in that unity nature and spirit are no more defined by contrast with each other — on the contrary, they interpenetrate and support each other, they are aspects of the same whole. When we read in the prophet Amos, 'Lo, He that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, the Lord, the God of hosts, is His name, ' this is the truth which is expressed. The power which reveals itself in conscience — telling us all things that ever we did, declaring unto us what is our thought — is the same which reveals itself in nature, establishing the everlasting hills, creating the winds which sweep over them, turning the shadow of death into the morning and making the day dark with night, calling for the waters of the sea, and pouring them out on the face of the earth. Conscience speaks in a still small voice, but it is no impotent voice; it can summon the thunder to give it resonance; the power which we sometimes speak of as if it were purely spiritual is a power which clothes itself spontaneously and of right in all the majesty and omnipotence of nature. It is the same truth, again, in another aspect of it, which is expressed in Wordsworth's sublime lines to Duty:

'Thou dost preserve the Stars from wrong, And the most ancient Heavens through Thee are fresh and strong. ' When the mind sees deepest, it is conscious that it needs more than physical

astronomy, more than spectrum analysis, to tell us everything even about the stars. There is a moral constitution, it assures us, even of the physical world, and though it is impossible for us to work it out in detail, the assumption of it is the only assumption on which we can understand the life of a being related as man is related both to the natural and the spiritual. I do not pretend to prove that there is articulate or conscious reflection on this in either the Old Testament or the New; I take it for granted, as self-evident, that this sense of the ultimate unity of the natural and the spiritual — which is, indeed, but one form of belief in God — pervades the Bible from beginning to end. It knows nothing of our abstract and absolute distinctions; to come to the matter in hand, it knows nothing of a sin which has merely spiritual penalties. Sin is the act or the state of man, and the reaction against it is the reaction of the whole order, at once natural and spiritual, in which man lives.

Now the great difficulty which the modern mind has with the Atonement, or with the representation of it in the New Testament, is that it assumes some kind of connection between sin and death. Forgiveness is mediated through Christ, but specifically through His death. He died for our sins; if we can be put right with God apart from this, then, St. Paul tells us, He died for nothing. One is almost ashamed to repeat that this is not Paulinism, but the Christianity of the whole Apostolic Church. What St. Paul made the basis of his preaching, that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, he had on his own showing received as the common Christian tradition. But is there anything in it? Can we receive it simply on the authority of the primitive Church? Can we realize any such connection between death and sin as makes it a truth to us, an intelligible, impressive, overpowering thought, that Christ died for our sins?

I venture to say that a great part of the difficulty which is felt at this point is due to the false abstraction just referred to. Sin is put into one world — the moral; death is put into another world — the natural; and there is no connection between them. This is very convincing if we find it possible to believe that we live in two unconnected worlds. But if we find it impossible to believe this — and surely the impossibility is patent — its plausibility is gone. It is a shining example of this false abstraction when we are told, as though it were a conclusive objection to all that the New Testament has to say about the relation of sin and death, that 'the specific penalty of sin is not a fact of the natural life, but of the moral life.' What right has any one, in speaking of the ultimate realities in human life, of those experiences in which man becomes conscious of all that is involved in his relations to God and their disturbance by sin, to split that human life into 'natural' and 'moral,' and fix an impassable gulf between? The distinction is legitimate, as has already been remarked, within limits, but it is not final; and what the New Testament teaches, or rather assumes, about the relation of sin and death, is one of the ways in which we are made sensible that it is not final. Sin and death do not belong to unrelated worlds. As far as man is concerned, the two worlds, to use an inadequate figure, intersect; and at one point in the line of their intersection sin and death meet and interpenetrate. In the indivisible experience of man he is conscious that they are parts or aspects of the same thing. That this is what Scripture means when it assumes the connection of death and sin is not to be refuted by pointing either to Gen 3:1-24 or to Rom 5:1-21. It does not, for example, do justice either to Genesis or to St. Paul to say, as has been said, that according to their representation, 'Death — not spiritual, but natural death — is the direct consequence of sin and its specific penalty.' In such a dictum, the distinctions again mislead. To read Gen 3:1-24 in this sense would mean that what we had to find in it was a mythological explanation of the origin of

physical death. But does any one believe that any Bible writer was ever curious about this question? or does any one believe that a mythological solution of the problem, how death originated — a solution which ex hypothesi has not a particle of truth or even of meaning in it — could have furnished the presupposition for the fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion, that Christ died for our sins, and that in Him we have our forgiveness through His blood? A truth which has appealed so powerfully to man cannot be sustained on a falsehood. That the third chapter of Genesis is mythological in form, no one who knows what mythology is will deny; but even mythology is not made out of nothing, and in this chapter every atom is 'stuff o' the conscience.' What we see in it is conscience, projecting as it were in a picture on a screen its own invincible, dear-bought, despairing conviction that sin and death are indissolubly united — that from death the sinful race can never get away — that it is part of the indivisible reality of sin that the shadow of death darkens the path of the sinner, and at last swallows him up. It is this also which is in the mind of St. Paul when he says that by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin. It is not the origin of death he is interested in, nor the origin of sin either, but the fact that sin and death hang together. And just because sin is sin, this is not a fact of natural history, or a fact which natural history can discredit. Scripture has no interest in natural history, nor does such an interest help us to understand it. It is no doubt perfectly true that to the biologist death is part of the indispensable machinery of nature; it is a piece of the mechanism without which the movement of the whole would be arrested; to put it so, death to the biologist is part of the same whole as life, or life and death are for him aspects of one thing. One can admit this frankly without compromising, because without touching, the other and deeper truth which is so interesting and indeed so vital alike in the opening pages of revelation and in its consummation in the Atonement. The biologist, when he deals with man, and with his life and death, deliberately deals with them in abstraction, as merely physical phenomena; to him man is a piece of nature, and he is nothing more. But the Biblical writers deal with man in the integrity of his being, and in his relations to God; they transcend the distinction of natural and moral, because for God it is not final, they are sensible of the unity in things which the everyday mind, for practical purposes, finds it convenient to keep apart. It is one great instance of this that they are sensible of the unity of sin and death. We may call sin a spiritual thing, but the man who has never felt the shadow of death fall upon it does not know what that spiritual thing is: and we may call death a natural thing, but the man who has not felt its natural pathos deepen into tragedy as he faced it with the sense of sin upon him does not know what that natural thing is. We are here, in short, at the vanishing point of this distinction — God is present, and nature and spirit interpenetrate in His presence. We hear much in other connections of the sacramental principle, and its importance for the religious interpretation of nature. It is a somber illustration of this principle if we say that death is a kind of sacrament of sin. It is in death, ultimately, that the whole meaning of sin comes home to the sinner; he has not sounded it to its depths until he has discovered that this comes into it at last. And we must not suppose that when Paul read the third chapter of Genesis he read it as a mythological explanation of the origin of physical death, and accepted it as such on the authority of inspiration. With all his reverence for the Old Testament, Paul accepted nothing from it that did not speak to his conscience, and waken echoes there; and what so spoke to him from the third chapter of Genesis was not a mythical story of how death invaded Paradise, but the profound experience of the human race expressed in the story, all experience in which sin and death interpenetrate, interpret, and in a sense constitute each other. To us they are what they are only in relation to each other,

and when we deny the relation we see the reality of neither. This is the truth, as I apprehend it, of all we are taught either in the Old Testament or in the New about the relation of sin and death. It is part of the greater truth that what we call the physical and spiritual worlds are ultimately one, being constituted with a view to each other; and most of the objections which are raised against it are special cases of the objections which are raised against the recognition of this ultimate unity. So far as they are such, it is not necessary to discuss them further; and so far as the ultimate unity of the natural and the spiritual is a truth rather to be experienced than demonstrated, it is not probable that much can be done by argument to gain acceptance for the idea that sin and death have essential relations to each other. But there are particular objections to this idea to which it may be worth while to refer.

There is, to begin with, the undoubted fact that many people live and die without, consciously at least, recognizing this relation. The thought of death may have had a very small place in their lives, and when death itself comes it may, for various reasons, be a very insignificant experience to them. It may come in a moment, suddenly, and give no time for feeling; or it may come as the last step in a natural process of decay, and arrest life almost unconsciously; or it may come through a weakness in which the mind wanders to familiar scenes of the past, living these over again, and in a manner escaping by so doing the awful experience of death itself; or it may come in childhood before the moral consciousness is fully awakened, and moral reflection and experience possible. This last case, properly speaking, does not concern us; we do not know how to define sin in relation to those in whom the moral consciousness is as yet undeveloped: we only know that somehow or other they are involved in the moral as well as in the natural unity of the race. But leaving them out of account, is there any real difficulty in the others? any real objection to the Biblical idea that sin and death in humanity are essentially related? I do not think there is. To say that many people are unconscious of the connection is only another way of saying that many people fail to realize in full and tragic reality what is meant by death and sin. They think very little about either. The third chapter of Genesis could never have been written out of their conscience. Sin is not for them all one with despair: they are not, through fear of death, all their lifetime subject to bondage. Scripture, of course, has no difficulty in admitting this; it depicts, on the amplest scale, and in the most vivid colors, the very kind of life and death which are here supposed. But it does not consider that such a life and death are ipso facto a refutation of the truth it teaches about the essential relations of death and sin. On the contrary, it considers them a striking demonstration of that moral dullness and insensibility in man which must be overcome if he is ever to see and feel his sin as what it is to God, or welcome the Atonement as that in which God's forgiveness of sin is mediated through the tremendous experience of death. I know there are those who will call this arrogant, or even insolent, as though I were passing a moral sentence on all who do not accept a theorem of mine; but I hope I do not need here to disclaim any such unchristian temper. Only, it is necessary to insist that the connection of sin and death in Scripture is neither a fantastic piece of mythology, explaining, as mythology does, the origin of a physical law, nor, on the other hand, a piece of supernaturally revealed history, to be accepted on the authority of Him who has revealed it; in such revelations no one believes any longer; it is a profound conviction and experience of the human conscience, and all that is of interest is to show that such a conviction and experience can never be set aside by the protest of those who aver that they know nothing about it. One must insist on this, however it may expose him to the charge of judging. Can we utter any truth at all, in which conscience is concerned, and which is not universally acknowledged, without seeming to

judge?

Sometimes, apart from the general denial of any connection between death and sin, it is pointed out that death has another and a totally different character. Death in any given case may be so far from coming as a judgment of God, that it actually comes as a gracious gift from Him; it may even be an answer to prayer, a merciful deliverance from pain, an event welcomed by suffering human nature, and by all who sympathize with it. This is quite true, but again, one must point out, rests on the false abstraction so often referred to. Man is regarded in all this simply in the character of a sufferer, and death as that which brings suffering to an end; but that is not all the truth about man, nor all the truth about death. Physical pain may be so terrible that consciousness is absorbed and exhausted in it, sometimes even extinguished, but it is not to such abnormal conditions we should appeal to discover the deepest truths in the moral consciousness of man. If the waves of pain subsided, and the whole nature collected its forces again, and conscience was once more audible, death too would be seen in a different light. It might not indeed be apprehended at once, as Scripture apprehends it, but it would not be regarded simply as a welcome relief from pain. It would become possible to see in it something through which God spoke to the conscience, and eventually to realize its intimate relation to sin. The objections we have just considered are not very serious, because they practically mean that death has no moral character at all; they reduce it to a natural phenomenon, and do not bring it into any relation to the conscience. It is a more respectable, and perhaps a more formidable objection, when death is brought into the moral world, and when the plea is put forward that so far from being God's judgment upon sin, it may be itself a high moral achievement. A man may die greatly; his death may be a triumph; nothing in his life may become him like the leaving it. Is not this inconsistent with the idea that there is any peculiar connection between death and sin? From the Biblical point of view the answer must again be in the negative. There is no such triumph over death as makes death itself a noble ethical achievement, which is not at the same time a triumph over sin. Man vanquishes the one only as in the grace of God he is able to vanquish the other. The doom that is in death passes away only as the sin to which it is related is transcended. But there is more than this to be said. Death cannot be so completely an action that it ceases to be a passion; it cannot be so completely achieved that it ceases to be accepted or endured. And in this last aspect of it the original character which it bore in relation to sin still makes itself felt. Transfigure it, as it may be transfigured, by courage, by devotion, by voluntary abandonment of life for a higher good, and it remains nevertheless the last enemy. There is something in it monstrous and alien to the spirit, something which baffles the moral intelligence, until the truth dawns upon us that for all our race sin and death are aspects of one thing. If we separate them, we understand neither; nor do we understand the solemn greatness of martyrdom itself if we regard it as a triumph only, and eliminate from the death which martyrs die all sense of the universal relation in humanity of death and sin. No one knew the spirit of the martyr more thoroughly than St. Paul. No one could speak more confidently and triumphantly of death than he. No one knew better how to turn the passion into action, the endurance into a great spiritual achievement. But also, no one knew better than he, in consistency with all this, that sin and death are needed for the interpretation of each other, and that fundamentally, in the experience of the race, they constitute one whole. Even when he cried, 'O death, where is thy sting?' he was conscious that 'the sting of death is sin.' Each, so to speak, had its reality in the other. No one could vanquish death who had not vanquished sin. No one could know what sin meant without tasting death. These were not mythological fancies in St.

Paul's mind, but the conviction in which the Christian conscience experimentally lived, and moved, and had its being. And these convictions, I repeat, furnish the point of view from which we must appreciate the Atonement, i. e., the truth that forgiveness, as Christianity preaches it, is specifically mediated through Christ's death.

03.09. Chapter 9 : Christ And Man In The Atonement

Chapter 9 : Christ And Man In The Atonement OUR conception of the relations subsisting between God and man, of the manner in which these relations are affected by sin, and particularly of the Scripture doctrine of the connection between sin and death, must determine, to a great extent, our attitude to the Atonement. The Atonement, as the New Testament presents it, assumes the connection of sin and death. Apart from some sense and recognition of such connection, the mediation of forgiveness through the death of Christ can only appear an arbitrary, irrational, unacceptable idea. But leaving the Atonement meanwhile out of sight, and looking only at the situation created by sin, the question inevitably arises, What can be done with it? Is it possible to remedy or to reverse it? It is an abnormal and unnatural situation; can it be annulled, and the relations of God and man put upon an ideal footing? Can God forgive sin and restore the soul? Can we claim that He shall? And if it is possible for Him to do so, can we tell how or on what conditions it is possible? When the human mind is left to itself, there are only two answers which it can give to these questions. Perhaps they are not specially characteristic of the modern mind, but the modern mind in various moods has given passionate expression to both of them. The first says roundly that forgiveness is impossible. Sin is, and it abides. The sinner can never escape from the past. His future is mortgaged to it, and it cannot be redeemed. He can never get back the years which the locust has eaten. His leprous flesh can never come again like the flesh of a little child. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap, and reap for ever and ever. It is not eternal punishment which is incredible; nothing else has credibility. Let there be no illusion about this: forgiveness is a violation, a reversal, of law, and no such thing is conceivable in a world in which law reigns. The answer to this is, that sin and its consequences are here conceived as though they belonged to a purely physical world, whereas, if the world were only physical, there could be no such thing as sin. As soon as we realize that sin belongs to a world in which freedom is real — a world in which reality means the personal relations subsisting between man and God, and the experiences realized in these relations — the question assumes a different aspect. It is not one of logic or of physical law, but of personality, of character, of freedom. There is at least a possibility that the sinner's relation to his sin and God's relation to the sinner should change, and that out of these changed relations a regenerative power should spring, making the sinner, after all, a new creature. The question, of course, is not decided in this sense, but it is not foreclosed. At the opposite extreme from those who pronounce forgiveness impossible stand those who give the second answer to the great question, and calmly assure us that forgiveness may be taken for granted. They emphasize what the others overlooked — the personal character of the relations of God and man. God is a loving Father; man is His weak and unhappy child; and of course God forgives. As Heine put it, *c'est son metier*, it is what He is for. But the conscience which is really burdened by sin does not easily find satisfaction in this cheap pardon. There is something in conscience which will not allow it to believe that God can simply condone sin: to take forgiveness for granted, when you realize what you are doing, seems to a live conscience impious and profane. In reality, the tendency to take forgiveness for granted is the tendency of those who, while they properly emphasize the personal character of the relations of God and man, overlook their

universal character, that is, exclude from them that element of law without which personal relations cease to be ethical. But a forgiveness which ignores this stands in no relation to the needs of the soul or the character of God.

What the Christian religion holds to be the truth about forgiveness — a truth embodied in the Atonement — is something quite distinct from both the propositions which have just been considered. The New Testament does not teach, with the naturalistic or the legal mind, that forgiveness is impossible; neither does it teach, with the sentimental or lawless mind, that it may be taken for granted. It teaches that forgiveness is mediated to sinners through Christ, and specifically through His death: in other words, that it is possible for God to forgive, but possible for God only through a supreme revelation of His love, made at infinite cost, and doing justice to the uttermost to those inviolable relations in which alone, as I have already said, man can participate in eternal life, the life of God Himself — doing justice to them as relations in which there is an inexorable divine reaction against sin, finally expressing itself in death. It is possible on these terms, and it becomes actual as sinful men open their hearts in penitence and faith to this marvelous revelation, and abandon their sinful life unreservedly to the love of God in Christ who died for them. From this point of view it seems to me possible to present in a convincing and persuasive light some of the truths involved in the Atonement to which the modern mind is supposed to be specially averse.

Thus it becomes credible — we say so not a priori, but after experience — that there is a divine necessity for it; in other words, there is no forgiveness possible to God without it if He forgives at all, it must be in this way and in no other. To say so beforehand would be inconceivably presumptuous, but it is quite another thing to say so after the event. What it really means is that in the very act of forgiving sin — or, to use the daring word of St. Paul, in the very act of justifying the ungodly, God must act in consistency with His whole character. He must demonstrate Himself to be what He is in relation to sin, a God with whom evil cannot dwell, a God who maintains inviolate the moral constitution of the world, taking sin as all that it is in the very process through which He mediates His forgiveness to men.

It is the recognition of this divine necessity — not to forgive, but to forgive in a way which shows that God is irreconcilable to evil, and can never treat it as other or less than it is — it is the recognition of this divine necessity, or the failure to recognize it, which ultimately divides interpreters of Christianity into evangelical and non- evangelical, those who are true to the New Testament and those who cannot digest it. No doubt the forms in which this truth is expressed are not always adequate to the idea they are meant to convey, and if we are only acquainted with them at second hand they will probably appear even less adequate than they are. When Athanasius, e.g., speaks of God's truth in this connection, and then reduces God's truth to the idea that God must keep His word — the word which made death the penalty of sin — we may feel that the form only too easily loses contact with the substance.

246 Yet Athanasius is dealing with the essential fact of the case, that God must be true to Himself, and to the moral order in which men live, in all His dealings with sin for man's deliverance from it; and that He has been thus true to Himself in sending His son to live our life and to die our death for our salvation. Or again, when Anselm in the *Cur Deus Homo* speaks of the satisfaction which is rendered to God for the infringement of His honor by sin — a satisfaction apart from which there

can be no forgiveness — we may feel again, and even more strongly, that the form of the thought is inadequate to the substance. But what Anselm means is that sin makes a real difference to God, and that even in forgiving God treats that difference as real, and cannot do otherwise. He cannot ignore it, or regard it as other or less than it is; if He did so, He would not be more gracious than He is in the Atonement, He would cease to be God. It is Anselm's profound grasp of this truth which, in spite of all its inadequacy in form, and of all the criticism to which its inadequacy has exposed it, makes the *Cur Deus Homo* the truest and greatest book on the Atonement that has ever been written. It is the same truth of a divine necessity for the Atonement which is emphasized by St. Paul in the third chapter of Romans, where he speaks of Christ's death as a demonstration of God's righteousness. Christ's death, we may paraphrase his meaning, is an act in which (so far as it is ordered in God's providence) God does justice to Himself. He does justice to His character as a gracious God, undoubtedly, who is moved with compassion for sinners: if He did not act in a way which displayed His compassion for sinners, He would not do justice to Himself; there would be no evidence of His righteousness: it would be in abeyance: He would do Himself an injustice, or be untrue to Himself. It is with this in view that we can appreciate the arguments of writers like Diestel and Ritschl, that God's righteousness is synonymous with His grace. Such arguments are true to this extent, that God's righteousness includes His grace. He could not demonstrate it, He could not be true to Himself, if His grace remained hidden. We must not, however, conceive of this as if it constituted on our side a claim upon grace or upon forgiveness: such a claim would be a contradiction in terms. All that God does in Christ He does in free love, moved with compassion for the misery and doom of men. But though God's righteousness as demonstrated in Christ's death — in other words, His action in consistency with His character — includes, and, if we choose to interpret the term properly, even necessitates, the revelation of His grace, it is not this only — I do not believe it is this primarily — which St. Paul has here in mind. God, no doubt, would not do justice to Himself if He did not show His compassion for sinners; but, on the other hand — and here is what the apostle is emphasizing — He would not do justice to Himself if He displayed His compassion for sinners in a way which made light of sin, which ignored its tragic reality, or took it for less than it is. In this case He would again be doing Himself injustice; there would be no demonstration that He was true to Himself as the author and guardian of the moral constitution under which men live; as Anselm put it, He would have ceased to be God. The apostle combines the two sides. In Christ set forth a propitiation in His blood — in other words, in the Atonement in which the sinless Son of God enters into the bitter realization of all that sin means for man, yet loves man under and through it all with an everlasting love — there is an evidence of God's righteousness, a demonstration of His self-consistency, in virtue of which we can see how He is at the same time just Himself and the justifier of him who believes on Jesus, a God who is irreconcilable to sin, yet devises means that His banished be not expelled from Him. We may say reverently that this was the only way in which God could forgive. He cannot deny Himself, means at the same time He cannot deny His grace to the sinful, and He cannot deny the moral order in which alone He can live in fellowship with men; and we see the inviolableness of both asserted in the death of Jesus. Nothing else in the world demonstrates how real is God's love to the sinful, and how real the sin of the world is to God. And the love which comes to us through such an expression, bearing sin in all its reality, yet loving us through and beyond it, is the only love which at once forgives and regenerates the soul.

It becomes credible also that there is a human necessity for the Atonement: in other words, that apart from it the conditions of being forgiven could no more be fulfilled by man than forgiveness could be bestowed by God.

There are different tendencies in the modern mind with regard to this point. On the one hand, there are those who frankly admit the truth here asserted. Yes, they say, the Atonement is necessary for us. If we are to be saved from our sins, if our hearts are to be touched and won by the love of God, if we are to be emancipated from distrust and reconciled to the Father whose love we have injured, there must be a demonstration of that love so wonderful and overpowering that all pride, alienation and fear shall be overcome by it; and this is what we have in the death of Christ. It is a demonstration of love powerful enough to evoke penitence and faith in man, and it is through penitence and faith alone that man is separated from his sins and reconciled to God. A demonstration of love, too, must be given in act; it is not enough to be told that God loves: the reality of love lies in another region than that of words. In Christ on His cross the very thing itself is present, beyond all hope of telling wonderful, and without its irresistible appeal our hearts could never have been melted to penitence, and won for God. On the other hand, there are those who reject the Atonement on the very ground that for pardon and reconciliation nothing is required but repentance, the assumption being that repentance is something which man can and must produce out of his own resources. On these divergent tendencies in the modern mind I should wish to make the following remarks.

First, the idea that man can repent as he ought, and whenever he will, without coming under any obligation to God for his repentance, but rather (it might almost be imagined) putting God under obligation by it, is one to which experience lends no support. Repentance is an adequate sense not of our folly, nor of our misery, but of our sin. As the New Testament puts it, it is repentance toward God. It is the consciousness of what our sin is to Him: of the wrong it does to His holiness, of the wound which it inflicts on His love. Now such a consciousness it is not in the power of the sinner to produce at will. The more deeply he has sinned, the more (so to speak) repentance is needed, the less is it in his power. It is the very nature of sin to darken the mind and harden the heart, to take away the knowledge of God alike in His holiness and in His love. Hence it is only through a revelation of God, and especially of what God is in relation to sin, that repentance can be evoked in the soul. Of all terms in the vocabulary of religion, repentance is probably the one which is most frequently misused. It is habitually applied to experiences which are not even remotely akin to true penitence. The self-centered regret which a man feels when his sin has found him out — the wish, compounded of pride, shame, and anger at his own inconceivable folly, that he had not done it: these are spoken of as repentance. But they are not repentance at all. They have no relation to God. They constitute no fitness for a new relation to Him. They are no opening of the heart in the direction of His reconciling love. It is the simple truth that that sorrow of heart, that healing and sanctifying pain in which sin is really put away, is not ours in independence of God; it is a saving grace which is begotten in the soul under that impression of sin which it owes to the revelation of God in Christ. A man can no more repent than he can do anything else without a motive, and the motive which makes evangelic repentance possible does not enter into any man's world until he sees God as God makes Himself known in the death of Christ. All true penitents are children of the Cross. Their penitence is not their own creation, it is the reaction towards God produced in their souls by this demonstration of what sin is to Him, and of what His

love does to reach and win the sinful. The other remark I wish to make refers to those who admit the death of Christ to be necessary for us — necessary, in the way I have just described, to evoke penitence and trust in God — but who on this very ground deny it to be divinely necessary. It had to be, because the hard hearts of men could not be touched by anything less moving: but that is all. This, I feel sure, is another instance of those false abstractions to which reference has already been made. There is no incompatibility between a divine necessity and a necessity for us. It may very well be the case that nothing less than the death of Christ could win the trust of sinful men for God, and at the same time that nothing else than the death of Christ could fully reveal the character of God in relation at once to sinners and to sin. For my own part I am persuaded, not only that there is no incompatibility between the two things, but that they are essentially related, and that only the acknowledgment of the divine necessity in Christ's death enables us to conceive in any rational way the power which it exercises over sinners in inducing repentance and faith. It would not evoke a reaction Godward unless God were really present in it, that is, unless it were a real revelation of His being and will: but in a real revelation of God's being and will there can be nothing arbitrary, nothing which is determined only from without, nothing, in other words, that is not divinely necessary. The demonstration of what God is, which is made in the death of Christ, is no doubt a demonstration singularly suited to call forth penitence and faith in man, but the necessity of it does not lie simply in the desire to call forth penitence and faith. It lies in the divine nature itself. God could not do justice to Himself, in relation to man and sin, in any way less awful than this; and it is the fact that He does not shrink even from this — that in the Person of His Son He enters, if we may say so, into the whole responsibility of the situation created by sin — which constitutes the death of Jesus a demonstration of divine love, compelling penitence and faith. Nothing less would have been sufficient to touch sinful hearts to their depths — in that sense the Atonement is humanly necessary; but neither would anything else be a sufficient revelation of what God is in relation to sin and to sinful men — in that sense it is divinely necessary. And the divine necessity is the fundamental one. The power exercised over us by the revelation of God at the Cross is dependent on the fact that the revelation is true — in other words, that it exhibits the real relation of God to sinners and to sin. It is not by calculating what will win us, but by acting in consistency with Himself, that God irresistibly appeals to men. We dare not say that He must be gracious, as though grace could cease to be free, but we may say that He must be Himself, and that it is because He is what we see Him to be in the death of Christ, understood as the New Testament understands it, that sinners are moved to repentance and to trust in Him. That which the eternal being of God made necessary to Him in the presence of sin is the very thing which is necessary also to win the hearts of sinners. Nothing but what is divinely necessary could have met the necessities of sinful men. When we admit this twofold necessity for the Atonement, we can tell ourselves more clearly how we are to conceive Christ in it, in relation to God on the one hand and to man on the other. The Atonement is God's work. It is God who makes the Atonement in Christ. It is God who mediates His forgiveness of sins to us in this way. This is one aspect of the matter, and probably the one about which there is least dispute among Christians. But there is another aspect of it. The Mediator between God and man is Himself man, Christ Jesus. What is the relation of the man Christ Jesus to those for whom the Atonement is made? What is the proper term to designate, in this atoning work, what He is in relation to them? The doctrine of Atonement current in the Church in the generation preceding our own answered frankly that in His atoning work Christ is our substitute. He comes in our nature, and He comes into our place. He enters into

all the responsibilities that sin has created for us, and He does justice to them in His death. He does not deny any of them: He does not take sin as anything less or else than it is to God; in perfect sinlessness He consents even to die, to submit to that awful experience in which the final reaction of God's holiness against sin is expressed. Death was not His due: it was something alien to One who did nothing amiss; but it was our due, and because it was ours He made it His. It was thus that He made Atonement. He bore our sins. He took to Himself all that they meant, all in which they had involved the world. He died for them, and in so doing acknowledged the sanctity of that order in which sin and death are indissolubly united. In other words, He did what the human race could not do for itself, yet what had to be done if sinners were to be saved: for how could men be saved if there were not made in humanity an acknowledgment of all that sin is to God, and of the justice of all that is entailed by sin under God's constitution of the world? Such an acknowledgment, as we have just seen, is divinely necessary, and necessary, too, for man, if sin is to be forgiven. This was the basis of fact on which the substitutionary character of Christ's sufferings and death in the Atonement was asserted. It may be admitted at once that when the term substitute is interpreted without reference to this basis of fact it lends itself very easily to misconstruction. It falls in with, if it does not suggest, the idea of a transference of merit and demerit, the sin of the world being carried over to Christ's account, and the merit of Christ to the world's account, as if the reconciliation of God and man, or the forgiveness of sins and the regeneration of souls, could be explained without the use of higher categories than are employed in bookkeeping. It is surely not necessary at this time of day to disclaim an interpretation of personal relations which makes use only of sub- personal categories. Merit and demerit cannot be mechanically transferred like sums in an account. The credit, so to speak, of one person in the moral sphere cannot become that of another, apart from moral conditions. It is the same truth, in other words, if we say that the figure of paying a debt is not in every respect adequate to describe what Christ does in making the Atonement. The figure, I believe, covers the truth; if it did not, we should not have the kind of language which frequently occurs in Scripture; but it is misread into falsehood and immorality whenever it is pressed as if it were exactly equivalent to the truth. But granting these drawbacks which attach to the word, is there not something in the work of Christ, as mediating the forgiveness of sins, which no other word can express? No matter on what subsequent conditions its virtue for us depends, what Christ did had to be done, or we should never have had forgiveness; we should never have known God, and His nature and will in relation to sin; we should never have had the motive which alone could beget real repentance; we should never have had the spirit which welcomes pardon and is capable of receiving it. We could not procure these things for ourselves, we could not produce them out of our own resources: but He by entering into our nature and lot, by taking on Him our responsibilities and dying our death, has so revealed God to us as to put them within our reach. We owe them to Him; in particular, and in the last resort, we owe them to the fact that He bore our sins in His own body to the tree. If we are not to say that the Atonement, as a work carried through in the sufferings and death of Christ, sufferings and death determined by our sin, is vicarious or substitutionary, what are we to call it? The only answer which has been given to this question, by those who continue to speak of Atonement at all, is that we must conceive Christ not as the substitute but as the representative of sinners. I venture to think that, with some advantages, the drawbacks of this word are quite as serious as those which attach to substitute. It makes it less easy, indeed, to think of the work of Christ as a finished work which benefits the sinner ipso facto, and apart from any relation between

him and the Savior: but of what sort is the relation which it does suggest? A representative, in all ordinary circumstances, is provided or appointed by those whom he represents, and it is practically impossible to divest the term of the associations which this involves, misleading as they are in the present instance. The case for representative as opposed to substitute was put forward with great earnestness in an able review of *The Death of Christ*. The reviewer was far from saying that a writer, who finds a substitutionary doctrine throughout the New Testament is altogether wrong. He was willing to admit that 'if we look at the matter from what may be called an external point of view, no doubt we may speak of the death of Christ as in a certain sense substitutionary.' What this, 'certain sense' is he does not define. But no one, he held, can do justice to Paul who fails to recognize that the death of Christ was a racial act; and 'if we place ourselves at Paul's point of view, we shall see that to the eye of God the death of Christ presents itself less as an act which Christ does for the race than as an act which the race does in Christ.' In plain English, Paul teaches less that Christ died for the ungodly, than that the ungodly in Christ died for themselves. This brings out the logic of what representative means when representative is opposed to substitute. The representative is ours, we are in Him, and we are supposed to get over all the moral difficulties raised by the idea of substitution just because He is ours, and because we are one with Him. But the fundamental fact of the situation is that, to begin with, Christ is not ours, and we are not one with Him. In the apostle's view, and in point of fact, we are 'without Christ' (χωρις Χριστου). It is not we who have put Him there. It is not to us that His presence and His work in the world are due. If we had produced Him and put Him forward, we might call Him our representative, in the sense suggested by the sentences just quoted; we might say it is not so much He who dies for us, as we who die in Him; but a representative not produced by us, but given to us — not chosen by us, but the elect of God — is not a representative at all in the first instance, but a substitute. He stands in our stead, facing all our responsibilities for us as God would have them faced and it is what He does for us, and not the effect which this produces in us, still less the fantastic abstraction of a 'racial act,' which is the Atonement in the sense of the New Testament. To speak of Christ as our representative, in the sense that His death is to God less an act which He does for the race than an act which the race does in Him, is in principle to deny the grace of the gospel, and to rob it of its motive power. To do justice to the truth here, both on its religious and its ethical side, it is necessary to put in their proper relation to one another the aspects of reality which the terms substitute and representative respectively suggest. The first is fundamental. Christ is God's gift to humanity. He stands in the midst of us, the pledge of God's love, accepting our responsibilities as God would have them accepted, offering to God, under the pressure of the world's sin and all its consequences, that perfect recognition of God's holiness in so visiting sin which men should have offered but could not; and in so doing He makes Atonement for us. In so doing, also, He is our substitute, not yet our representative. But the Atonement thus made is not a spectacle, it is a motive. It is not a transaction in business, or in bookkeeping, which is complete in itself; in view of the relations of God and man it belongs to its very nature to be a moral appeal. It is a divine challenge to men, which is designed to win their hearts. And when men are won — when that which Christ in His love has done for them comes home to their souls — when they are constrained by His infinite grace to the self-surrender of faith, then we may say He becomes their representative. They begin to feel that what He has done for them must not remain outside of them, but be reproduced somehow in their own life. The mind of Christ in relation to God and sin, as He bore their sins in His own body to the tree, must become their mind; this and nothing else is

the Christian salvation. The power to work this change in them is found in the death of Christ itself; the more its meaning is realized as something there, in the world, outside of us, the more completely does it take effect within us. In proportion as we see and feel that out of pure love to us He stands in our place — our substitute — bearing our burden — in that same proportion are we drawn into the relation to Him that makes Him our representative. But we should be careful here not to lose ourselves in soaring words. The New Testament has much to say about union with Christ, but I could almost be thankful that it has no such expression as mystical union. The only union it knows is a moral one — a union due to the moral power of Christ's death, operating morally as a constraining motive on the human will, and begetting in believers the mind of Christ in relation to sin, but this moral union remains the problem and the task, as well as the reality and the truth, of the Christian life. Even when we think of Christ as our representative, and have the courage to say we died with Him, we have still to reckon ourselves to be dead to sin, and to put to death our members which are upon the earth; and to go past this, and speak of a mystical union with Christ in which we are lifted above the region of reflection and motive, of gratitude and moral responsibility, into some kind of metaphysical identity with the Lord, does not promote intelligibility, to say the least. If the Atonement were not, to begin with, outside of us — if it were not in that sense objective, a finished work in which God in Christ makes a final revelation of Himself in relation to sinners and sin — in other words, if Christ could not be conceived in it as our substitute, given by God to do in our place what we could not do for ourselves, there would be no way of recognizing or preaching or receiving it as a motive; while, on the other hand, if it did not operate as a motive, if it did not appeal to sinful men in such a way as to draw them into a moral fellowship with Christ — in other words, if Christ did not under it become representative of us, our surety to God that we should yet be even as He in relation to God and to sin, we could only say that it had all been vain. Union with Christ, in short, is not a presupposition of Christ's work, which enables us to escape all the moral problems raised by the idea of a substitutionary Atonement; it is not a presupposition of Christ's work, it is its fruit. To see that it is its fruit is to have the final answer to the objection that substitution is immoral. If substitution, in the sense in which we must assert it of Christ, is the greatest moral force in the world — if the truth which it covers, when it enters into the mind of man, enters with divine power to assimilate him to the Savior, uniting him to the Lord in a death to sin and a life to God — obviously, to call it immoral is an abuse of language. The love which can literally go out of itself and make the burden of others its own is the radical principle of all the genuine and victorious morality in the world. And to say that love cannot do any such thing, that the whole formula of morality is, every man shall bear his own burden, is to deny the plainest facts of the moral life.

Yet this is a point at which difficulty is felt by many in trying to grasp the Atonement. On the one hand, there do seem to be analogies to it, and points of attachment for it, in experience. No sin that has become real to conscience is ever outlived and overcome without expiation. There are consequences involved in it that go far beyond our perception at the moment, but they work themselves inexorably out, and our sin ceases to be a burden on conscience, and a fetter on will, only as we 'accept the punishment of our iniquity, ' and become conscious of the holy love of God behind it. But the consequences of sin are never limited to the sinner. They spread beyond him in the organism of humanity, and when they strike visibly upon the innocent, the sense of guilt is deepened. We see that we have done we know not what, something deeply and mysteriously bad beyond all our reckoning, something that only a power and goodness transcending our own avail

to check. It is one of the startling truths of the moral life that such consequences of sin, striking visibly upon the innocent, have in certain circumstances a peculiar power to redeem the sinful. When they are accepted, as they sometimes are accepted, without repining or complaint — when they are borne, as they sometimes are borne, freely and lovingly by the innocent, because to the innocent the guilty are dear — then something is appealed to in the guilty which is deeper than guilt, something may be touched which is deeper than sin, a new hope and faith may be born in them, to take hold of love so, wonderful, and by attaching themselves to it to transcend the evil past. The suffering of such love (they are dimly aware), or rather the power of such love persisting through all the suffering brought on it by sin, opens the gate of righteousness to the sinful in spite of all that has been; sin is outweighed by it, it is annulled, exhausted, transcended in it. The great Atonement of Christ is somehow in line with this, and we do not need to shrink from the analogy. 'If there were no witness, ' as Dr. Robertson Nicoll puts it, 'in the world's deeper literature' — if there were no witness, that is, in the universal experience of man — 'to the fact of an Atonement, the Atonement would be useless, since the formula expressing it would be unintelligible. ' It is the analogy of such experiences which makes the Atonement credible, yet it must always in some way transcend them. There is something in it which is ultimately incomparable. When we speak of others as innocent, the term is used only in a relative sense; there is no human conscience pure to God. When we speak of the sin of others coming in its consequences on the innocent, we speak of something in which the innocent are purely passive; if there is moral response on their part, the situation is not due to moral initiative of theirs. But with Christ it is different. He knew no sin, and He entered freely, deliberately, and as the very work of His calling, into all that sin meant for God and brought on man. Something that I experience in a particular relation, in which another has borne my sin and loved me through it, may help to open my eyes to the meaning of Christ's love; but when they are opened, what I see is the propitiation for the whole world. There is no guilt of the human race, there is no consequence in which sin has involved it, to which the holiness and love made manifest in Christ are unequal. He reveals to all sinful men the whole relation of God to them and to their sins — a sanctity which is inexorable to sin, and cannot take it as other than it is in all its consequences, and a love which through all these consequences and under the weight of them all, will not let the sinful go. It is in this revelation of the character of God and of His relation to the sin of the world that the forgiveness of sins is revealed. It is not intimated in the air; it is preached, as St. Paul says, 'in this man'; it is mediated to the world through Him and specifically through His death, because it is through Him, and specifically through His death, that we get the knowledge of God's character which evokes penitence and faith, and brings the assurance of His pardon to the heart. From this point of view we may see how to answer the question that is sometimes asked about the relation of Christ's life to His death, or about the relation of both to the Atonement. If we say that what we have in the Atonement is an assurance of God's character, does it not follow at once that Christ's teaching and His life contribute to it as directly as His death? Is it not a signal illustration of the false abstractions which we have so often had cause to censure, when the death of Christ is taken as if it had art existence or a significance apart from His life, or could be identified with the Atonement in a way in which His life could not? I do not think this is so clear. Of course it is Christ Himself who is the Atonement or propitiation — He, Himself, as St. John puts it, and not anything, not even His death, into which He does not enter. But it is He, Himself, as making to us the revelation of God in relation to sin and to sinners; and apart from death, as that in which the conscience of the race sees the final reaction of God against evil, this revelation is not fully made.

If Christ had done less than die for us, therefore — if He had separated Himself from us, or declined to be one with us, in the solemn experience in which the darkness of sin is sounded, and all its bitterness tasted, there would have been no Atonement. It is impossible to say this of any particular incident in His life, and in so far the unique emphasis laid on His death in the New Testament is justified. But I should go further than this, and say that even Christ's life, taken as it stands in the Gospels, only enters into the Atonement, and has reconciling power, because it is pervaded from beginning to end by the consciousness of His death. Instead of depriving His death of the peculiar significance, Scripture assigns to it, and making it no more than the termination, or at least the consummation, of His life, I should rather argue that the Scriptural emphasis is right, and that His life attains its true interpretation only as we find in it everywhere the power and purpose of His death. There is nothing artificial or unnatural in this. There are, plenty of people who never have death out of their minds an hour at a time. They are not cowards, nor mad, nor even somber: they may have purposes and hopes and gaieties as well as others; but they see life steadily and see it whole and of all their thoughts the one which has most determining and omnipresent power is the thought of the inevitable end. There is death in all their life. It was not, certainly, as the inevitable end, the inevitable 'debt of nature,' that death was present to the mind of Christ; but if we can trust the Evangelists at all, from the hour of His baptism it was present to His mind as something involved in His vocation; and it was a presence so tremendous that it absorbed everything into itself. 'I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished.' Instead of saying that Christ's life as well as His death contributed to the Atonement — that His active obedience (to use the theological formula) as well as His passive obedience was essential to His propitiation — we should rather say that His life is part of His death: a deliberate and conscious descent, ever deeper and deeper, into the dark valley where at the last hour the last reality of sin was to be met and borne. And if the objection is made that after all this only means that death is the most vital point of life, its intensest focus, I should not wish to make any reply. Our Lord's Passion is His sublimest action — an action so potent that all His other actions are sublated in it, and we know everything when we know that He died for our sins. The desire to bring the life of Christ as well as His death into the Atonement has probably part of its motive in the feeling that when the death is separated from the life it loses moral character: it is reduced to a merely physical incident, which cannot carry such vast significance as the Atonement. Such a feeling certainly exists, and finds expression in many forms. How often, for example, we hear it said that it is not the death which atones, but the spirit in which the Savior died — not His sufferings which expiate sin, but the innocence, the meekness, the love to man and obedience to God in which they were borne. The Atonement, in short, was a moral achievement, to which physical suffering and death are essentially irrelevant. This is our old enemy, the false abstraction, once more, and that in the most aggressive form. The contrast of physical and moral is made absolute at the very point at which it ceases to exist. As against such absolute distinctions we must hold that if Christ had not really died for us, there would have been no Atonement at all, and on the other hand that what are called His physical sufferings and death have no existence simply as physical, they are essential elements in the moral achievement of the Passion. It leads to no truth to say that it is not His death, but the spirit in which He died, that atones for sin, the spirit in which He died has its being in His death, and in nothing else in the world.

It seems to me that what is really wanted here, both by those who seek to co- ordinate Christ's life with His death in the Atonement, and by those who distinguish between His death and the spirit in

which He died, is some means of keeping hold of the Person of Christ in His work, and that this is not effectively done apart from the New Testament belief in the Resurrection. There is no doubt that in speaking of the death of Christ as that through which the forgiveness of sins is mediated to us we are liable to think of it as if it were only an event in the past. We take the representation of it in the Gospel and say, 'Such and such is the impression which this event produces upon me; I feel in it how God is opposed to sin, and how I ought to be opposed to it; I feel in it how God's love appeals to me to share His mind about sin; and as I yield to this appeal I am at once set free from sin and assured of pardon; this is the only ethical forgiveness; to know this experimentally is to know the Gospel.' No one can have any interest in disputing another's obligation to Christ, but it may fairly be questioned whether this kind of obligation to Christ amounts to Christianity in the sense of the New Testament. There is no living Christ here, no coming of the living Christ to the soul, in the power of the Atonement, to bring it to God. But this is what the New Testament shows us. It is He who is the propitiation for our sins — He who died for them and rose again. The New Testament preaches a Christ who was dead and is alive, not a Christ who was alive and is dead. It is a mistake to suppose that the New Testament conception of the Gospel, involving as it does the spiritual presence and action of Christ, in the power of the Atonement, is a matter of indifference to us, and that in all our thinking and preaching we must remain within purely historical limits if by purely historical limits is meant that our creed must end with the words 'crucified, dead, and buried.' To preach the Atonement means not only to preach One who bore our sins in death, but One who by rising again from the dead demonstrated the final defeat of sin, and One who comes in the power of His risen life — which means, in the power of the Atonement accepted by God — to make all who commit themselves to Him in faith partakers in His victory. It is not His death, as an incident in the remote past, however significant it may be; it is the Lord Himself, appealing to us in the virtue of His death, who assures us of pardon and restores our souls.

One of the most singular phenomena in the attitude of many modern minds to the Atonement is the disposition to plead against the Atonement what the New Testament represents as its fruits. It is as though it had done its work so thoroughly that people could not believe that it ever needed to be done at all. The idea of fellowship with Christ, for example, is constantly urged against the idea that Christ died for us, and by His death made all mankind His debtors in a way in which we cannot make debtors of each other. The New Testament itself is pressed into the service. It is pointed out that our Lord called His disciples to drink of His cup and to be baptized with His baptism, where the baptism and the cup are figures of His Passion; and it is argued that there cannot be anything unique in His experience or service, anything which He does for men which it is beyond the power of His disciples to do also. Or again, reference is made to St. Paul's words to the Colossians, 'Now I rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church'; and it is argued that St. Paul here represents himself as doing exactly what Christ did, or even as supplementing a work which Christ admittedly left imperfect. The same idea is traced where the Christian is represented as called into the fellowship of the Son of God, or more specifically as called to know the fellowship of His sufferings by becoming conformed to His death. It is seen pervading the New Testament in the conception of the Christian as a man in Christ. And to descend from the apostolic age to our own, it has been put by an American theologian into the epigrammatic form that Christ redeems us by making us redeemers. What, it may be asked, is the truth in all this? and how is it related to what we have already seen cause to assert about the uniqueness of Christ's work in making atonement

for sin, or mediating the divine forgiveness to man?

I do not think it is impossible or even difficult to reconcile the two: it is done, indeed, whenever we see that the life to which we are summoned, in the fellowship of Christ, is a life which we owe altogether to Him, and which He does not in the least owe to us. The question really raised is this, Has Jesus Christ a place of His own in the Christian religion? Is it true that there is one Mediator between God and man, Himself man, this man, Christ Jesus? In spite of the paradoxical assertion of Harnack to the contrary, it is not possible to deny, with any plausibility, that this was the mind of Christ Himself, and that it has been the mind of all who call Him Lord. He knew and taught, what they have learned by experience as well as by His word, that all men must owe to Him their knowledge of the Father, their place in the Kingdom of God, and their part in all its blessings. He could not have taught this of any but Himself, nor is it the experience of the Church that such blessings come through any other. Accordingly, when Christ calls on men to drink His cup and to be baptized with His baptism, while He may quite well mean, and does mean, that His life and death are to be the inspiration of theirs, and while He may quite well encourage them to believe that sacrifice on their part, as on His, will contribute to bless the world, He need not mean, and we may be sure He does not mean, that their blood is, like His, the blood of the covenant, or that their sinful lives, even when purged and quickened by His Spirit, could be, like His sinless life, described as the world's ransom. The same considerations apply to the passages quoted from St. Paul, and especially to the words in Col 1:24. The very purpose of the Epistle to the Colossians is to assert the exclusive and perfect mediatorship of Christ, alike in creation and redemption; all that we call being, and all that we call reconciliation, has to be defined by relation to Him, and not by relation to any other persons or powers, visible or invisible; and however gladly Paul might reflect that in his enthusiasm for suffering he was continuing Christ's work, and exhausting some of the afflictions — they were Christ's own afflictions — which had yet to be endured ere the Church could be made perfect, it is nothing short of grotesque to suppose that in this connection he conceived of himself as doing what Christ did, atoning for sin, and reconciling the world to God. All this was done already, perfectly done, done for the whole world; and it was on the basis of it, and under the inspiration of it, that the apostle sustained his enthusiasm for a life of toil and pain in the service of men. Always, where we have Christian experience to deal with, it is the Christ through whom the divine forgiveness comes to us at the Cross — the Christ of the substitutionary Atonement, who bore all our burden alone, and did a work to which we can never recur, but to which we did not and do not and never can contribute at all — it is this Christ who constrains us to find our representative with God in Himself, and to become ourselves His representatives to men. It is as we truly represent Him that we can expect our testimony to Him to find acceptance, but that testimony far transcends everything that our service enables men to measure. What is anything that a sinful man, saved by grace, can do for his Lord or for his kind, compared with what the sinless Lord has done for the sinful race? It is true that He calls us to drink of His cup, to learn the fellowship of His sufferings, even to be conformed to His death; but under all the intimate relationship the eternal difference remains which makes Him Lord — He knew no sin, and we could make no atonement. It is the goal of our life to be found in Him; but I cannot understand the man who thinks it more profound to identify himself with Christ and share in the work of redeeming the world, than to abandon himself to Christ and share in the world's experience of being redeemed. And I am very sure that in the New Testament the last is first and fundamental.

* About the author: James Denney (1856-1917) was a prominent New Testament scholar and theologian of the United Free Church, Scotland. His other books include: Jesus and the Gospel and Studies In Theology.

04.1. The Historical Basis Of The Christian Faith

The Historical Basis of the Christian Faith: The Resurrection of Jesus by James Denney* Does Jesus, as He is revealed to us in history, justify the Christian religion as we have had it exhibited to us in the New Testament? The question which has just been stated might be approached in various ways. We might begin with an investigation of the sources to which we owe our knowledge of Jesus, build up by degrees such an acquaintance with Him as could be formed in this way, and then consider what relation it bore to the place He holds in New Testament faith. A moment's reflection on what has preceded will show the insufficiency and the impropriety of this method. The primary testimony of the disciples to Jesus was their testimony to His resurrection: except as Risen and Exalted they never preached Jesus at all. It was His Resurrection and Exaltation which made Him Lord and Christ, and gave Him His place in their faith and life; and unless their testimony to this fundamental fact can be accepted, it is not worth while to carry the investigation further. Nothing that Jesus was or did, apart from the Resurrection, can justify or sustain the religious life which we see in the New Testament. Those who reject the apostolic testimony at this point may, indeed, have the highest appreciation for the memory of Jesus; they may reverence the figure preserved for us by the evangelists as the ideal of humanity, the supreme attainment of the race in the field of character; but they can have no relation to Jesus resembling that in which New Testament Christians lived and moved and had their being. The general question, therefore, whether Jesus, as He is known to us from history, can sustain the Christian religion as it is exhibited to us in the New Testament, takes at the outset this special form: Can we accept the testimony which we have to the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus? The Resurrection

It is possible, as every one knows, to decline to raise this question. There is a dogmatic conception of history which tells us beforehand that there cannot be in history any such event as the resurrection of Jesus is represented in the New Testament to be: no possible or conceivable evidence could prove it. With such a dogma, which is part of a conception of reality in general, it is impossible to argue; for he who holds it cannot but regard it as a supreme standard by which he is bound to test every argument alleged against it. It is not for him an isolated and therefore a modifiable opinion; it is part of the structure of intelligence to which all real opinions will conform. But, though it is vain to controvert such a dogma by argument, it may be demolished by collision with facts; and it is surely the less prejudiced method to ask what it is that the New Testament witnesses assert, and what is the value of their testimony. Men's minds have varied about the structure of intelligence and about its constitutive or regulative laws, and it is one of the elementary principles of learning to recognise that reality is larger than any individual intelligence, and that the growth of intelligence depends on its recognition of this truth. It is quite conceivable that the fundamental fact on which the life of New Testament Christianity rests, is abruptly rejected by many, under the constraint of some such dogma, while yet they have no clear idea either of, the fact itself, as the New Testament represents it, or of the evidence on which it was originally believed and has been believed by multitudes ever since. And if it is important, looking to those who deny that such an event as the resurrection of Jesus can have taken place, or is capable of

proof, to present the facts bearing on the subject as simply, clearly, and fully as possible, it is no less important to do so in view of those who are so preoccupied with the spiritual significance of the resurrection that they are willing (it might seem) to ignore the fact as of comparatively little or, indeed, of no account. When Harnack, for example, distinguishes the Easter Faith from the Easter Message, he practically takes this latter position. The Easter Faith is "the conviction of the victory of the crucified over death, of the power and the righteousness of God, and of the life of Him who is the first-born among many brethren." This is the main thing, and just because it is a faith it is not really dependent on the Easter Message, which deals with the empty grave, the appearances to the disciples, and so forth. We can keep the faith without troubling about the message. "Whatever may have happened at the grave and in the appearances, one thing is certain: from this grave the indestructible faith in the conquest of death and in an eternal life has taken its origin." Sympathizing as we must with Harnack's genuinely evangelistic desire to leave nothing standing between the mind of the age and the hope of the gospel which can possibly be put away, we may nevertheless doubt whether the Easter Faith and the Easter Message are so indifferent to each other. They were not unrelated at the beginning, and if we reflect on the fact that they are generally rejected together, it may well seem precipitate to assume that they are independent of each other now. To say that the faith produced the message -- that Jesus rose again in the souls of His disciples, in their resurgent faith and love, and that this, and this alone, gave birth to all the stories of the empty grave and the appearances of the Lord to His own -- is to pronounce a purely dogmatic judgment. What underlies it is not the historical evidence as the documents enable us to reach it, but an estimate of the situation dictated by a philosophical theory which has discounted the evidence beforehand. It is not intended here to meet dogma with dogma, but to ask what the New Testament evidence is, what it means, and what it is worth.

Much of the difficulty and embarrassment of the subject is due to the fact that the study of the evidences for the resurrection has so often begun at the wrong end. People have started with the narratives in the evangelists and become immersed in the details of these, with all the intricate and perhaps insoluble questions they raise, both literary and historical. Difficulties at this point have insensibly but inevitably become difficulties in their minds attaching to the resurrection, and affecting their whole attitude to New Testament religion. It ought to be apparent that, so far as the fact of the resurrection of Jesus is concerned, the narratives of the evangelists are quite the least important part of the evidence with which we have to deal. It is no exaggeration to say that if we do not accept the resurrection on grounds which lie outside this area, we shall not accept it on the grounds presented here. The real historical evidence for the resurrection is the fact that it was believed, preached, propagated, and produced its fruit and effect in the new phenomenon of the Christian Church, long before any of our gospels was written. This is not said to disparage the gospels, or to depreciate what they tell, but only to put the question on its true basis. Faith in the resurrection was not only prevalent but immensely powerful before any of our New Testament books was written. Not one of them would ever have been written but for that faith. It is not this or that in the New Testament -- it is not the story of the empty tomb, or of the appearing of Jesus in Jerusalem or in Galilee -- which is the primary evidence for the resurrection; it is the New Testament itself. The life that throbs in it from beginning to end, the life that always fills us again with wonder as it beats upon us from its pages, is the life which the Risen Saviour has quickened in Christian souls. The evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is the existence of the Church in that extraordinary spiritual vitality which confronts us in the New Testament. This is its own explanation

of its being. 'He,' says Peter, 'hath poured forth this which ye both see and hear' (Acts 2:33); and, apart from all minuter investigations, it is here the strength of the case for the resurrection rests. The existence of the Christian Church, the existence of the New Testament: these incomparable phenomena in human history are left without adequate or convincing explanation if the resurrection of Jesus be denied. If it be said that they can be explained, not by the resurrection itself but by faith in the resurrection, that raises the question, already alluded to, of the origin of such faith. Does it originate in the soul itself, in memories of Jesus, in spiritual convictions about what must have been the destiny of a spirit so pure? Or were there experiences of another kind, independent historical matters of fact, by which it was generated and to which it could appeal? Was it, in short, a self-begotten Easter Faith, which produced the Easter Message in the way of self-support or self-defence; or was there an independent God-given Easter Message which evoked the Easter Faith? We could not ask a more vital question, and fortunately there are in the New Testament abundant materials to answer it. The oldest testimony we have to the resurrection of Jesus, apart from that fundamental evidence just alluded to as pervading the New Testament, is contained in 1Co 15:1-58. The epistle is dated by Sanday [1] in the spring of 55, and represents what Paul had taught in Corinth when he came to the city for the first time between 50 and 52; but these dates taken by themselves might only mislead. For what Paul taught in Corinth was the common Christian tradition (1Co 15:3 ff.); he had been taught it himself when he became a Christian, and in his turn he transmitted it to others. But Paul became a Christian not very long after the death of Christ -- according to Harnack one year after, to Ramsay three or four, to Lightfoot perhaps six or seven.[2] At a date so close to the alleged events we find that the fundamental facts of Christianity as taught in the primitive circle were these -- that Christ died for our sins; that He was buried; that He rose on the third day and remains in the state of exaltation; and that He appeared to certain persons. The mention of the burial is important in this connection as defining what is meant by the rising. We see from it that it would have conveyed no meaning to Paul or to any member of the original Christian circle to say that it was the spirit of Christ which rose into new life, or that He rose again in the faith of His devoted followers, who could not bear the thought that for Him death should end all. The rising is relative to the grave and the burial, and if we cannot speak of a bodily resurrection we should not speak of resurrection at all. In the same connection also we should notice the specification of the third day. This is perfectly definite, and it is perfectly guaranteed. The third day was the first day of the week, and every Sunday as it comes round is a new argument for the resurrection. The decisive event in the inauguration of the new religion took place on that day -- an event so decisive and so sure that it displaced even the Sabbath, and made not the last but the first day of the week that which Christians celebrated as holy to the Lord. The New Testament references to the first day of the week as the Lord's day (Acts 20:7, Rev 1:10) are weighty arguments for the historical resurrection; that is, for a resurrection which has a place and weight among datable events. An important light is cast on Paul's conception of the resurrection of Jesus by his use, in speaking of it, of the perfect tense (Greek characters omitted) -- 'He hath been raised.' Christ rose, it signifies, and remains in the risen state. Death has no more dominion over Him. His resurrection was not like the raisings from the dead recorded in the gospels, where restoration to the old life and its duties and necessities is even made prominent, and where the final prospect of death remains. Jesus does not come back to the old life at all. As risen, He belongs already to another world, to another mode of being. The resurrection is above all things the revelation of life in this new order, a life which has won the final

triumph over sin and death. This was thoroughly understood by the original witnesses; the resurrection of Jesus, or the anticipated resurrection of Christians as dependent upon it, was no return to nature and to the life of the world; it was the manifestation, transcending nature, of new life from God. In the passage with which we are dealing, indeed, Paul enters into no further particulars of any kind. He recites a list of persons to whom Jesus had appeared -- Cephas, the Twelve, more than five hundred brethren at once, James, all the apostles, himself. It is a fair inference from the mode of this enumeration that the appearances are given in their chronological order, but it is quite unwarranted to say [1] that Paul in this list guarantees not only chronological order but completeness. The list gives us no ground for saying that when Paul was in contact with the Jerusalem Church its testimony to the resurrection included no such stories of the appearing of Jesus to women as are now found in our gospels. Neither did the purpose for which Paul adduced this series of witnesses require him to do more than mention their names as those of persons who had seen the Lord. It was the fact of the resurrection which was denied at Corinth -- the resurrection of Christians, in the first instance, but by implication, as Paul believed, that of Jesus also -- and a simple assertion of the fact was what he wanted to meet the case. This is adequately given when he recites in succession a series of persons to whom the Lord had appeared. That he says nothing more than that to these persons the Lord did appear is no proof that he had nothing more to say. He could, no doubt, have told a great deal more about that last appearance which the Lord had made to himself, if he had thought it relevant; and the probabilities are that in this outline of his gospel and of the evidence on which it rested, he is merely reminding the Corinthians in a summary fashion of what he had enlarged upon in all its circumstances and significance when he was among them. The term [Greek characters omitted] (He appeared), which is used alike in speaking of Christ's appearing to Paul and to the others who had the same experience, does not enable us to define that experience with any precision. It is used elsewhere, certainly, of 'visionary' seeing, but it is used equally, for example, in Acts 7:26 of seeing which is in no sense visionary. What it suggests in almost every case is the idea of something sudden or unexpected; that which is seen is conceived to be so, not because one is looking at it or for it, but because it has unexpectedly thrust itself upon the sight. The translation 'He appeared,' rather than 'He was seen,' adequately represents this. But though Paul can use the active form, as in Acts 9:1 -- 'Have not I seen Jesus our Lord ?' -- neither by that nor by the passive does he do more than convey the fact that he had had, in what he can only describe in terms of vision, an experience in which he was conscious of the presence of the Risen Saviour.

Into this experience we may not be able to penetrate, but we are entitled to reject explanations of it which assume it to be a mere illusion. Such as it was, it left Paul in no doubt that Jesus of Nazareth, who had been crucified at Calvary, was exalted to the right hand of God in divine power and glory. Power and glory are the two words which the apostle most frequently uses in speaking of the resurrection. The Risen Jesus is the Lord of glory (1Co 2:8). He was declared or constituted Son of God in power by the resurrection from the dead (Rom 1:4). He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father (Rom 6:4). The working of the strength of His might which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this world but also in that which is to come -- this was the supreme manifestation of what the power of God could do. Paul has no abstract term like omnipotence, and when he wishes to give a practical religious equivalent for it he points to the power which has

raised Christ from the grave and set Him on the throne with all things under His feet. The power which has done this is the greatest which the apostle can conceive; it is the power which works in us, and it is great enough for every need of the soul (Eph 3:20, Eph 1:19 f.). In one passage he uses the expression 'the body of His glory' (Php 3:21). The Risen Lord, in contrast with mortal men upon the earth, who bear about a 'body of humiliation' or 'lowliness,' lives in the splendour and immortality of heaven. It is no use asking for a definition of such words: Paul could no more have given them than we can. It is no use asking for an explanation of the precise relation between the body of humiliation and the body of glory; such an explanation was entirely out of his reach. All, he could have asserted, and what he undoubtedly did assert, was that the same Jesus whose body had been broken on the cross had manifested Himself to him in divine splendour and power; and though he should never be able to say anything about the connection of the two modes of being further than this, that Jesus had been raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, it would not in the least affect his assurance that the exaltation of Jesus was as real as His crucifixion. If any one wished to argue that for Paul's belief in the resurrection of Christ, the empty tomb in Joseph's garden is immaterial, he might make a plausible case; the apostle's certainty of the resurrection rested immediately and finally on the appearing of Jesus to himself, and he would have possessed that certainty and lived in it though he had never become acquainted with the circumstances of the death and burial of Jesus, and with the subsequent events as they are recorded in the gospels. But the whole of the discussion in the fifteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians shows that, though a plausible case could be stated on these lines, it is not the case for which we could claim the support of the apostle himself. Unable as he is to explain the relation of the natural to the spiritual body, of the body of humiliation to the body of glory -- a 'mystery' (1Co 5:1) can only be announced, it cannot be explained -- his assumption throughout is certainly not that the two have nothing to do with each other. It is the body of humiliation itself which in the case of Christians is transformed and fashioned like the body of Christ's glory; and it is this, rather than the idea that there is no connection between the two bodies, which suggests the line on which the apostle's own thoughts would run.

But what, it may be said, is the value, historically speaking, of such evidence as this to the resurrection of Jesus? Grant that Paul and the other persons whom he enumerates had experiences which they announced to the world in the terms, 'We have seen the Lord,' the question as to the nature of these experiences remains. In the Christian religion one interpretation has been put upon them. They have been regarded as historical and independent guarantees of a transcendent world, a life beyond death, the sovereignty of Jesus, the reconciliation of the sinful world and God. But is this interpretation necessary? No one any longer questions the honesty of the apostolic testimony to the resurrection: the only question is as to its meaning and value. There can be no doubt that appearances did appear to certain persons; the problem is how are we to give such appearances their proper place and interpretation in the whole scheme of things? Is it not much more probable that they are to be explained from within, from the moods of thought and feeling in the souls which experienced them, than from anything so inconceivable, and so incommensurable with experience, as the intrusion of another world into this? Is it not much more probable, in short, that they were what philosophers call 'subjective,' states or products of the soul itself, and not 'objective,' realities independent of the soul? This is not equivalent to denying them any reality, though it relieves us from the necessity of discussing such questions as the empty tomb. Neither does it impair the greatness of Jesus. On the contrary, it may even be urged that it

magnifies Jesus. How great this man must have been who could not be extinguished even by death, but who had made an impression on the minds of His friends so profound and ineffaceable, who had inspired them with faith and hope in Himself so vivid and invincible, that He rose in their hearts out of the gloom and despair of the crucifixion to celestial glory and sovereignty! This is a line of argument which is constantly and powerfully urged at the present time, and that too by many who are far from wanting sympathy with the life and teaching of Jesus. This is of itself a reason which entitles it to the most careful consideration. But it demands attention further because it is clear that, if it leaves anything at all which can be called Christian religion, it is not that form of Christianity which alone we have been able to discover in the New Testament.

Without professing or feeling any undue sympathy with the Paley or Old Bailey school of apologetics, we may surely have our doubts as to whether the testimony of the first witnesses can be so easily disposed of. Practically this estimate of it means that it is to be treated as a pathological phenomenon: it belongs to the disease and disorder, not to the health and sanity of the human spirit. Paul and the other apostles no doubt had visions of Jesus in power and glory, but they ought not to have had them. Unless their brains had been overheated they would not have had them. It can never be anything but a pity that they did have them. There are people who say such things because their philosophy constrains them, and there are people also, equally entitled to have an opinion, who would not say such things for any philosophy. It is not easy to discredit off hand, as mere illusion, what has meant so much in the life of the human race. It is not easy to suppose that men, who in other respects were quite of sound mind, were all in this extraordinary experience victims of the same delusion. There are, of course, things which no testimony could establish; but where there is, as here, a great mass of testimony, and that in conditions which compel us to treat it seriously, it is, to say the least, rash to put upon it an interpretation which annuls completely the significance it had for the witnesses themselves.

It is at this point, therefore, that we must take into account those considerations which gave weight from the beginning to the apostolic testimony, and won acceptance for it. If the resurrection of Jesus could be treated purely as a question in metaphysics, and the witness of the apostles purely as a question in psychology, we should find ourselves confronted with insoluble difficulties. A theory of the universe which had no room for the resurrection would find in psychology the means of reducing the evidence; those who could not reduce the evidence would plead for a more elastic view of the universe; but the issue would never be decided. If, however, we leave these abstractions behind us, and come face to face with the facts, the situation is entirely changed. The resurrection is not attested to metaphysicians or psychologists as a thing in itself; it is preached to sinful men, in its divine significance for their salvation, and it is in this concrete reality alone that it exists or has interest for the primitive witnesses. 'Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins' (Acts 5:31). 'And He charged us to preach unto the people, and to testify that this is He which is ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead' (Acts 10:42). The considerations which are thus brought into the scale, it is easy to caricature and easy to abuse, but fatal to neglect. Any one who appeals to them is sure to be charged with shifting his ground, with evading the issue, with [greek characters omitted] and all the other devices of the apologist at his wits' end; nay, he may even be represented as saying to his supposed adversary, 'I believe this because I am accessible to spiritual considerations, and you disbelieve it because you are not; if you were as good a man as I

am, you would believe it too.' But it is surely possible, without being either complacent or censorious, certainly without making any personal comparisons, to view the testimony to the resurrection not as an abstract or insulated phenomenon, but in the totality of the relations in which it was delivered; and if these relations include some which are specifically moral, so that the attitude of men to the evidence was from the beginning and must ever be, in part at least, morally conditioned, it is surely possible to say so without being either a Pharisee or an intellectually dishonest man.

Now there are three ways in which the testimony to the resurrection is morally qualified, if one may so speak, and therefore needs to be morally appreciated. In the first place, it is the resurrection of Jesus. If the witnesses had asserted about Herod, or about any ordinary person, what they did about Jesus, the presumption would have been all against them. The moral incongruity would have discredited their testimony from the first. But the resurrection was that of one in whom His friends had recognised, while He lived, a power and goodness beyond the common measure of humanity, and they were sensible when it took place that it was in keeping with all they had known, hoped, and believed of Him. When Peter is reported to have said that God loosed the pangs of death because it was not possible that He should be holden of it (Acts 2:24), it is not too much to infer that this was the truth present to his mind. Is it too much to infer that sometimes, when the resurrection of Jesus is rejected, the rejecter forgets that it is this resurrection which is in question? He thinks of resurrection in general, the resurrection of any one; possibly he thinks of it really as the re-animation of a corpse; and he judges quite confidently, and if this be all that is in his mind quite rightly, that it is not worth while weighing anything so light against a well-founded conception of reality in general. But if he realised what 'Jesus' means -- if he had present to his mind and conscience, in His incomparable moral value, the Person whose resurrection is declared -- the problem would be quite different. He might find himself far more ready, under the impression of the worth of such a person, to question the finality of his scheme of the universe; more willing to admit that if there was not to be a perpetual contradiction at the heart of things, a perpetual extinction of the higher by the lower, such a personality must find it possible somehow to transcend the limitations of nature and its laws. This consideration, it may be said, is capable of being turned in the opposite direction. Those who hold that Jesus only rose again in the hearts of His disciples may assert that they put to the proper account whatever truth it contains. They admit that only Jesus could have risen, only a person who had so wonderfully impressed Himself on the memory and affections of His followers; but it was this wonderfully deep and vivid impression which itself produced the resurrection. Death, for a moment, so to speak, had extinguished Jesus in their lives, but the extinction could not be lasting. Very soon He reasserted His power. He came to life again more triumphant than ever. One may venture to think that in all this there is much confusion, and even much playing with words, in a style quite unworthy of what is at stake. To lose a dear and valued friend is no uncommon experience, and we know how to describe what follows. Those who do not forget their departed friends remember them. But to remember them means to recall them as they were; it means to have them present to our minds in the familiar associations of the past. We may say if we please that they live in our memory; if we have been so unhappy as to forget them, and then remember them once more, we may say that they have come to life again in our memory; but it is the old familiar friend who so comes to life. There is no revelation here, no suggestion of being in a new and higher order, nothing, in spite of the language of life and death in which it is expressed, which has any analogy whatever with the resurrection of Jesus. Hence we

may say confidently that no brooding of His friends on the memory of Jesus would have given that revival to His personality which they asserted when they preached the resurrection. Their sense of the greatness and the worth of Jesus, in all probability, would come back on them and fill their minds in the hours which followed His death; but though this prepared them in a manner for His appearance, it had no tendency whatever to produce it. Jesus did not appear as they had known Him, in the lowliness and familiarity of the life they had shared in Galilee; He appeared as one exalted to the right hand of God, and having all power given Him in heaven and on earth. Their belief that such an appearing was no illusion, but the revelation of the final truth about Jesus, was morally conditioned, no doubt, by their previous knowledge and appreciation of Him; but it is hardly short of unmeaning to say that their previous knowledge and appreciation of Him evoked it in their minds. It was no coming to life again in memory of the dear familiar friend whom even death could not dislodge from the heart; it was something transcendentally and unimaginably new, and it needs a cause proportioned to it to explain its presence. To say that the testimony to the resurrection is morally qualified by the mere fact that it is the resurrection of Jesus which is attested does not exhaust the truth. The apostles did not preach the resurrection of Jesus itself as a mere fact; what they preached was the gospel of the resurrection. It was the fact read out to the mind, heart, and conscience of men in its divine significance -- the fact and its interpretation as indissolubly one, and constituting a supreme appeal on the part of God to man. If we could imagine a person to whom all the ideas and experiences which for the first witnesses were part and parcel of their faith in the exaltation of Jesus were meaningless or unreal; a person who had no interest in the forgiveness of sins or in judgment to come; to whom a life like that of Jesus, ending in a death like His, presented no problem, or none that much disturbed his soul; to whom it was not a matter of any moment to be assured that sin and death were not the final realities in the universe, but were destined to be swallowed up in victory -- if one could imagine such a person, we should have imagined one to whom the resurrection must be permanently incredible. He could not believe it, because, to begin with, he could not even conceive it. He could have no idea of what those who attested it had in their minds; and even if he accepted something which did not transcend his conception of the 'purely' historical, some bare fact with none but a metaphysical significance, it would not amount to believing in the resurrection in the sense of the New Testament. No one can really appreciate the testimony unless the moral conditions under which its meaning is realised are to some extent real for him.

It is possible, as has been already noticed, to caricature this truth on the one side, and to abuse it on the other. Those who reject the resurrection caricature it when they say that it is a mere evasion, an attempt to prove what is either a historical fact or nothing by evidence which is not historical at all; and those who accept the resurrection abuse it when they presume to judge others on the ground of it, and insinuate that their unbelieving attitude is due to their insensibility to the spiritual truths which the gospel of the resurrection embodies. But when we bring into view the fact that the testimony to the resurrection is morally qualified in the way which has just been described, we do not disregard the testimony itself. The primary fact is that we have such testimony. There were really men in the world who stood forth before their fellows and said 'We have seen the Lord.' That is fundamental, and must "always be so. There is no attempt to make inward evidence take the place of outward -- no argument that the witness of the Spirit, as theologians have called it, can establish a historical fact; what is asserted is that the historical testimony to the resurrection of Jesus is testimony to a fact of moral significance, a fact of such a kind that the testimony to it

cannot be duly appreciated, even in respect to its credibility, by a person for whom its moral significance has no interest. This is not a way of asserting that the resurrection is historical, and at the same time securing it against historical criticism; it is only pointing out, what is surely the case, that the historical fact with which we are here concerned must be taken as what the historical witnesses represent it to be, and not as something different -- as the concrete and significant reality which it was for them, and not as an abstract and isolated somewhat, which has no significance 'whatever. Perhaps if 'man' could be reduced to 'historian' or 'natural philosopher' the resurrection might remain for ever a mere puzzle to the brain; all that the considerations with which we are here concerned import is that this reduction is impossible. 'Man' is more than 'natural philosopher' or 'historian.' His relations to reality are more various and complex than those of such scientific abstractions, and, therefore, his power of responding to it, of apprehending and comprehending it, is greater. Neither nature nor history is invaded in its rights by the resurrection, but both are transcended. Neither natural science nor history can deny the resurrection except by claiming for themselves to exhaust the truth and reality of the universe -- a claim the untruth of which is self-evident. It is just because of its moral significance -- because of its meaning and purpose in the relations of God and man -- that the resurrection, as the apostles preached it, rises above what is called the purely historical; it makes a kind of appeal to men which a purely historical event, if we could realise such an abstraction, never makes; it is on our susceptibility to this appeal that our appreciation of the testimony to it depends, and yet the testimony itself, in the last resort, is historical testimony. There would be nothing to go upon whatever if there were not men who had seen the risen Jesus -- here is the point of attachment with history; but what the testimony of these men shall amount to for us -- what weight it shall have in our minds -- whether we shall take it as simply as it is given, or feel ourselves obliged to attempt the reduction of it to something by which the equilibrium of our world shall be maintained and disturbing revelations excluded -- here is the point at which the moral elements in the case exert their legitimate influence. To see this and to say it is not to be Pharisaical, even if one believes in the resurrection. It gives no right to judge others. It is necessary, however, that the preacher of the resurrection should be conscious of it, otherwise he may preach something which is out of touch with the apostolic gospel of the Risen Christ -- something which attempts more than the first witnesses attempted, a demonstration of the fact apart from its significance; something, too, which is less interesting than their message, a fact so emptied of divine and human meaning that it defies the intelligence instead of appealing to the whole man.

About the third way in which the evidence for the resurrection is morally qualified there can hardly be any dispute. If the alleged fact had been insulated in human history, if it had been ineffective and fruitless, it might well have been questioned whether it were a fact at all. But from the very beginning men were persuaded that the resurrection was a fact, because they saw it operate as a moral power. It has been said already that the supreme evidence for the resurrection is the existence of the Church in the fulness of that exuberant life which we see in the apostolic writings. And this was understood from the first. The sermon of Peter in Acts 2:1-47 is conscious of all the moral qualifications which we have reviewed. The primary historical fact of course is that the Lord had appeared to Peter and those for whom he spoke: they were witnesses of His resurrection. But Peter knew the weight which his word would receive from his appreciation of the character of Jesus: 'it was not possible that He should be holden of death.' He knew the added power with which it would tell when the Risen Christ was preached at the author of reconciliation to God:

'repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for remission of your sins.' He knew that he gave conclusive evidence of the exaltation of Jesus when he pointed to the spiritual phenomena of the early Christian days: 'He hath poured forth this which ye both see and hear.' We must not narrow unduly the application of the last words. If we thought of nothing but speaking with tongues, and took our ideas of this from Paul, we should probably not rate it very high. But 'this that ye both see and hear' covers the whole phenomena of that eventful time. The wonder of it was not that the apostles spoke in foreign languages, but that they spoke; men who had till then been silent or rather dumb opened their lips, and preached with tongues of fire. With great power they gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. This is the truly significant thing, the transformation of the apostles and the birth of the Church. What we think of the apostolic testimony to the resurrection cannot but be influenced by our estimate of these moral phenomena and of the mode of their causation. The greater they appear, the more valuable in their spiritual contents, the more decisive in the history of humanity, so much the more inevitable must it seem that what lies behind them is not an illusion or a morbid experience misunderstood, but the highest reality and truth which have ever told with regenerating power on the life of man. Yet here again a straightforward mind is bound to guard the argument from reproach by making it quite clear that there is no desire to evade any historical issue. There are historical witnesses: to that we must always recur. The moral phenomena to which reference has been made are transacted on the stage of history. But something in our appreciation of the witnesses will always depend on our appreciation of the moral phenomena; and it is not scientific conscientiousness, but philosophical perversity, which tries to ignore the obvious truth. Surely it only needs to be stated that the man to whom Christian history and the New Testament life are the divinest things he can conceive, and the man to whom they are meaningless or even pathological phenomena, must take different views of what their earliest representatives attest as their cause. In this sense, it is fair enough to say that belief in the resurrection is a value-judgment. But it is not implied, when the word is used in this sense, that the resurrection never took place, and that we cannot speak of historical evidence in connection with it.

It is well worth remarking that in the earliest great discussion of this subject -- that in the first epistle to the Corinthians -- Paul does justice to both the historical and the spiritual evidence for the resurrection, and sets the two in their proper relation to each other. The historical evidence comes first. 'He appeared to Peter, then to the Twelve... He appeared to me also.' It cannot be repeated too often that this is fundamental. If there had not been men who could say this, there would never have been such a thing in the world as Christian life, with the evidence for the resurrection which it brings. Unless the apostolic testimony among men, supported as it was by the spiritual power with which it was delivered, had commanded faith, the Christian religion could never have come to be. There is the exaggeration of paradox in a saying like Mr. Inge's 1 that 'religion, when it confines itself strictly to its own province, never speaks in the past tense. It is concerned only with what is, not with what was. History as history is not its business.' Paul spoke in the past tense when he said, 'He appeared unto me.' If we drop what was out of what is, how much is left ? The true case of any one who believes in the resurrection is not that 'history as history' is not the business of religion; but that, as Paul says about older idols, 'history as history' is nothing in the world. If Jesus actually rose, as Paul attests on the ground that He appeared to him in His exaltation, we may require to enlarge our conception of the historical, but we cannot say that religion and history are independent of each other. This is very far from the mind of Paul. The

apostle never argues that 'the real basis of our belief in the resurrection of Christ is a great psychological fact -- a spiritual experience'.² The resurrection must certainly be attested, if it is to win faith, by witnesses like Peter and Paul who have been spiritually transformed by it; if the appearing of Jesus had made no difference to them, if it had left them the men they were before, no one would have believed them when they told He had appeared. But testimony does not cease to be testimony when it is delivered by men who have been themselves transformed by what they attest. The truth does not cease to be independently true when its power is demonstrated in its moral workings, and we must take care that the desire to put Christianity on a basis independent of history, a basis beyond the reach of historical doubt, does not lead us to withdraw from under it the only basis on which it has ever been sustained. Premising this, however, it is of extreme interest to notice how Paul adds to the direct historical testimony for the resurrection an indirect spiritual evidence which in its place is of the highest value. To put it broadly, Christian experience in all its forms implies the resurrection. State the content of this experience as you will, take any aspect or illustration of it you please, and if you deny the resurrection, instead of being the highest and truest form of human life, such experience must be considered a thing illegitimate, abnormal, delusive. All through his argument Paul employs the *reductio ad absurdum*. At first he states his case quite indefinitely: 'if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain, and your faith is vain too' (1Co 15:14). Vain, [greek characters omitted] means empty, with nothing in it. Whatever is to be said of Paul's preaching, we surely cannot say this. A nature so powerful and passionate as his cannot be raised to the most intense action, and sustained in it through life, by that which has nothing in it. A preaching that so stimulated the intelligence of the preacher himself, that put the irresistible constraint on him which he so often describes,' that carried away the auditors as it swept upon them 'in power and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance' (1Th 1:5) must have had something in it. It must have had behind it a power corresponding in character and in force to the effects which it produced both in the apostle and his audience; and that power, as Paul apprehended it, was the power of the Risen Saviour. But the apostle proceeds to give a more special point to this general truth. 'If Christ is not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins.' Vain is in this place not futile or to no purpose, rather than having nothing in it. Your faith means your Christianity, your new religion. The great blessing it has brought you is, as you imagine, reconciliation to God; as believers, you are no longer in your sins; in the consciousness of reconciliation to God they are annulled both in their guilt and in their power; the regenerative pardon of God in Christ has made you new creatures. But this regenerative pardon is the pardon of God in Christ: it is preached to men in the Risen Lord who died for sin, and who sends His spirit to those who believe in Him; apart from this Risen Lord it has no legitimacy, no reality at all. But who will dare to say that the consciousness of reconciliation to God, which is the essence of all Christian experience, the inspiration of all Christian praise, the spring of all Christian life, is no more than an illusion? To Christians, at all events, it is more real than anything else which human beings call reality, and its reality stands and falls with that of the resurrection. There may be morbid phenomena in the Christian life, as in life on every plane, and no doubt there are; but to say that the Christian life itself, in that which is most intimately characteristic of it, is nothing but a morbid phenomenon, is too much. At all events it was too much for Paul. For him the doxologies in which men who were no longer in their sins celebrated the living Lord who had redeemed them were not wild and whirling words: they were the only words in which utterance was given to the final truth of life. And he has still other ways in which he can press his case. If Christ is not risen,

'then they also who have fallen asleep in Christ are perished.' Paul had seen men fall asleep in Christ. He had watched Stephen stoned, and heard him cry, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' He had seen our poor human nature, in mortal weakness, lay hold of the immortal love of God in Christ, and through faith in Him triumph over the last enemy. He believed that. there was nothing on earth so priceless as such faith, nothing so real and so honouring to God. He could not believe that it was in vain. God would be ashamed of such people, to be called their God, unless their hope of immortality was made good. He would be unworthy of their trust. But such hope was inspired by the resurrection of Jesus; it is only through the resurrection it can be satisfied; and therefore for Paul who so judges, and for all who share his appreciation of the dying Christian's faith, the resurrection is as certain as the fidelity of God to those who trust Him even in death. The final turn which the apostle gives to his argument has been much censured by superior moralists: 'if in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.' The enlightened multitude which has advanced so far as to know that virtue is its own reward has been very severe upon this. A man, we are told, ought to live the highest life quite irrespective of whether there is a life beyond or not. It is hardly profitable, however, to discuss the kind of life a man will live quite irrespective of conditions. Life is determined by the kind of motives which enter into it. If a man believes as Paul did in the Risen Christ and in the immortal life beyond death, motives from that sphere of reality will enter into his life here, and give it a new character; and it will be time enough to disparage the morality of this verse when we find the people who dispense with the apostolic motive leading the apostolic life. That man would be of ill men most miserable who ran a race for a hope set before him, and found when he had reached the goal that he himself and the hope and all that had inspired him crumbled into dust. It is in the same temper that the apostle writes immediately afterwards: 'If after the manner of men I fought with beasts at Ephesus, what doth it profit me ? If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.' This is not a childish petulance, as if he had said, 'I will not be good unless I get to heaven'; it is rather the passionate expression of the feeling that if goodness and all that is identified with it is not finally victorious -- in a word, is not eternal -- there is no such thing as goodness at all. If life is bounded by time, men will live in one way; if it has an outlook beyond death, they will live in another way, for the range and balance of their motives will be different. Paul is concerned about the Corinthian denial of the resurrection, because it seems to him to spring from a moral preference for the limited view and the narrower range of motives, a preference by which life is inevitably degraded. He does not argue that a man who rejects the resurrection is a bad man, sensual or petty in his morals, but he does assume that the mind of a bad man, whether it be sensual or only small, is weighted against the evidence for the resurrection; and in that he is undoubtedly right. Such a man does not so easily see or sympathize with the meaning of the resurrection; he does not relish what it stands for, and is so far disqualified from doing justice to the evidence on which it rests.

It is not possible to present the various ways in which the evidence for the resurrection is morally qualified without saying or assuming things which to some minds will seem unfair. But this seeming unfairness is not to be imputed to the person who presents the case; it is involved in the necessities of every case in which moral considerations come into play. If a man can easily assume that the Christian consciousness of reconciliation to God, the Christian hope of immortality, the Christian devotion of the apostolic life, are things which have no proper place in the moral experience of human beings; if it is easy for him to argue that they must be eliminated, reduced or discounted somehow, to bring the mind to moral sanity; if he can seriously think that

the New Testament is no more than the wonderful monument of an immense delusion, he will not easily be persuaded to believe in the resurrection of Jesus. Not that he is invited to believe in it on the ground of these moral phenomena, in the appreciation of which men may conceivably differ. But with these phenomena present to his mind, or rather, as we must say of all moral phenomena, to his conscience -- with some sense of the character of Jesus, with some perception of the gospel of the resurrection, the appeal which God makes through it to sinful man, with some knowledge of what it has produced in human life -- he is invited to accept the testimony of witnesses who say, 'We have seen the Lord.' It is the whole of this complex of facts taken together which constitutes the evidence for the resurrection; and the moral qualifications of it, which the writer has tried to explain, may be said at once to impair and to strengthen its appeal. They impair it for those whose estimate of the moral phenomena involved is low; they strengthen it for those whose estimate of these phenomena is high. If there were no such phenomena at all -- if the alleged resurrection of Jesus were an insulated somewhat, with neither antecedents nor consequences -- no one could believe it; that which has neither relations nor results does not exist. But the mere fact that the phenomena with which the alleged resurrection is bound up are moral phenomena, which will be differently appreciated by different men, makes it impossible to give a demonstration of it as we give a demonstration in mathematics or in natural science. As far as demonstration can be given in history, it is given by the word of credible and competent witnesses like Peter and Paul. No historian questions that Paul had the experience which he described as seeing the Lord; the open question is, what is the worth of the experience which he so describes? Was it an illusion? was it the accompaniment of an epileptic fit? was it a self-begotten vision of an overheated brain? Or was it a real manifestation of the exalted Lord, with all the significance which Paul discovered in it? There is no value in an off hand answer prescribed by the general view of what is or is not possible in nature or in history. The only answer which has value is that which takes into account, first, the confirmation -- if there be such a thing -- of the testimony of Paul by that of other witnesses; and second, the other realities of experience which stand in necessary relation to the alleged fact. It is on its estimate of this evidence as a whole that the Christian Church has since the beginning based its faith in the resurrection of Jesus, and the writer cannot feel that any philosophy or criticism has diminished in the least its convincing and persuasive power. To present the evidence for the resurrection in this way will not surprise those who have thought about the subject. The broad facts on which the certainty of it rests are that it is attested by men who declare that Jesus appeared to them, and that it stands in such relation to other realities as guarantees that it is itself real. Of course this leaves a great many questions unanswered. It does not tell us anything we can realize as to the mode of being in which Jesus appeared: it does not enable us to interpret the appearances scientifically, and to relate the Risen Saviour to the constitution and course of nature with which we are familiar. The original witnesses like Paul never bring Him back into this world, so as to be a part of it as He was before death; His appearing is the revelation of a transcendent life, and of another world which eludes the resources of physical science. But it is on the broad foundation of the certainty which the resurrection of Jesus had for Paul, and which it has for all who accept the primitive testimony in the large scope given to it above, that we have to investigate such narratives of the appearances of Jesus, and of His intercourse with His disciples, as we find in the synoptic gospels and the book of Acts. Though we should find these full of difficulties which elude all attempts at explanation -- nay, though there should turn out to be features in them to which we could not assign any historical value -- our faith in the resurrection, firmly established

beforehand on its proper basis, would not be disturbed. We should know less than we thought we did about how the resurrection life was manifested, but we should be as sure as ever that the manifestation was made, and that is all in which we are concerned. The strict sequence of the argument, therefore, does not require us to enter into such details, but they have been so prominent in most discussions of the resurrection that it is worth while to refer to them in passing. The principal difficulties have been found in connection with three features in the narratives. The first concerns the sequence of the appearances of Jesus; the second, the progressive materialising, or what is alleged to be such, in the representations of the Risen One; and the third, the place of His appearing. As for the first, it has to be frankly admitted that no one has ever succeeded in constructing a harmony which combines without inconsistency or contradiction all that we read in the Gospels, in Acts, and in 1st Corinthians, on this subject. He who wishes to see the best case that can be stated for the accuracy and credibility of the New Testament witnesses may find it in the Essay of Dr. Chase'; he who wishes to see the strongest case that can be made against them may consult Schmiedel's article in the Encyclopedia Biblica. Whether the time over which these appearances extended were longer or shorter -- and everything in the New Testament favours the idea that it was comparatively short -- it must have been a time of intense excitement for all concerned. The agitation of the actors, their emotions, their amazement, incredulity, fear, joy, are vividly reflected in the stories. If their depositions had been taken on oath immediately afterwards, it is certain that discrepancies in detail would have appeared; but no one who knows what evidence is would maintain that discrepancies of this kind discredit the main fact which is attested. We do not know how soon accounts of the resurrection appearances of Jesus began to be put on record; but, as has been already observed, the gospels as we have them were not written till after the death of Paul, and it was too late then to find out with any precision how this or that appearing preserved in tradition was related in time to the others. The series in 1st Corinthians xv. is no doubt chronological, but it does not profess to be complete, and it leaves us perfectly free to combine other appearances with those it records as best we can. One of the greatest difficulties connected with the temporal aspect of the resurrection is that which rises out of the apparent inconsistency of one and the same writer -- the author of the third gospel and of Acts. The first impression left upon the mind by the gospel is that it was on the day of the resurrection itself that Jesus appeared to the two disciples on His way to Emmaus, to Peter, and to the company in Jerusalem; and that on that same day, after giving this company His final charge, He led them out to Bethany and there parted from them with blessing (and ascended into heaven). But this, notoriously, is not what we find in Acts. There the parting and the ascension at Bethany do not take place till six weeks after the resurrection. It is not easy to believe that Luke in writing the sequel to his gospel which he had in view from the beginning, which is indeed only the second chapter of the same work, and which was in all probability produced continuously with it, was conscious of any such inconsistency in his own mind. He did not write for people who knew nothing of his story, but for a circle -- for his work was never intended for Theophilus alone -- which was acquainted with him and the tradition he represented; and not to insist on the fact that a day of impossible length would be required to take in all the events of the last chapter of the gospel, the probabilities are that its earliest readers, who may never have read it apart from Acts, knew that its closing section was essentially an abridgment or summary, and that whether it was to be interrupted at this point or that -- after ver. 43 or after ver. 49 -- it covered a much longer period than twelve or eighteen hours. There is much to be said for the idea that in the last verses of the

gospel Luke condenses into a few lines what he is able in the opening of Acts to expand in some detail, just as in the last verses of Acts he condenses into a sentence two whole years of Paul's preaching in Rome, which he would have expanded in a third book had he been able to bring his history of Christianity down to a provisional termination with the fall of Jerusalem and the death of his two great figures, Peter and Paul. But however this may be, no chronological difficulty impairs in the slightest degree the value of the testimony to the resurrection on which faith has rested from the first. We see how such difficulties would arise; we see how inevitably they must have arisen; and seeing this we know how to discount them.

04.2. The Resurrection continued

We now come to the third of the difficulties connected with the gospel narratives of the resurrection, that which concerns the place of Jesus' appearing. If we take the gospels as they stand, and attempt to harmonise them, we may think at first that there are sufficient facilities for doing so. If in Matthew Jesus appears to His disciples only in Galilee, and in Luke only in Jerusalem, in John He appears to them in both; and it may seem reasonable to apply to difficulties about space the same considerations which have already enabled us to discount the difficulties about time. But a closer scrutiny reveals to us that in their representation of the scene of Jesus' appearances the evangelists do not differ from each other merely as men might differ who were recording the testimony of agitated observers. In this case there might no doubt be divergences, but they would be of an accidental character; they would explain themselves, or would need no explanation. What we find in the gospels is far more conscious, deliberate, and serious than this, and there is something perplexing, not to say disconcerting about it, until we understand the evangelists' point of view. What are the facts, then, under this head, and how are we to look at them? In the gospel according to Mat 26:31 f., we have the remarkable word of Jesus spoken to His disciples as they left the upper room for the garden of Gethsemane. 'All ye shall be offended in Me this night; for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee.' This is not the only passage, as we shall afterwards see, in which Jesus predicts His resurrection, but it is the only one in which He connects it with the immediate future of His disciples, and gives what is in a sense the programme of His appearances. There is no reason to suppose that Jesus did not speak these words. It is not always safe to lean on internal evidence, but the truly poetic conception of the Good Shepherd rallying His dispersed flock and going before them (cf. John 10:4) to the old familiar fields is at least in keeping with the occasion and its mood. The evangelist certainly takes the words seriously, and his resurrection narrative carries out the scheme which they suggest. When the 'A omen visit the tomb on the first day of the week, an angel says to them: 'Go quickly, and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him' (Mat 28:7). The same message is repeated by Jesus when He appears to these women on their way to execute the charge of the angel: 'Go tell My brethren that they depart into Galilee, and there shall they see Me' (Mat 28:10). It is not necessary to consider whether Mat 28:9-10 are no more than a 'doublet' of what precedes -- the tradition of the same fact in another form; the point is that this is the programme which is carried out in the first gospel. The eleven disciples departed into Galilee (Mat 28:16), and saw Jesus there. There also they received the great commission, Go and make disciples of all nations. Not only is there no appearance of Jesus to the disciples at Jerusalem, but any such appearance is carefully excluded. The disciples are promptly directed away from Jerusalem -- go quickly and tell them -- both by the angel and by Jesus, and we must assume that they left at once. As far as they are concerned the appearing of Jesus is an experience which is connected with Galilee alone.

If we turn to the gospel of Mark, we find there also at Mark 14:27, the prophetic words of Jesus quoted above.. It can hardly be doubted that for him also, as for Matthew, they determined the character of his resurrection narrative. He reproduces them in his account of what took place at the grave. The angel says to the woman, Go tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto You. The gospel of Mark, like everything in the New Testament, was written by a believer in the resurrection; and it is inconceivable that it broke off without the fulfilment of this programme. The consternation of the women described in Mark 14:8 -- 'And they went out and fled from the tomb: for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to any one; for they were afraid' -- is not the end of the story; and in spite of the ingenious comment of Wellhausen can never have been the end of it. As it stands at present, the gospel according to Mark records no appearance of Jesus whatever; but it is no rash assumption that with the same prophetic intimation as Matthew (Mark 14:28, Mat 26:32), and the same or an even more emphatic reproduction of it by the angel at the tomb (Mark 16:7, Mat 28:7), the original conclusion ran on the same lines as that of our first gospel. The fear-stricken women may have been met, as in Matthew, and reassured by the, Risen Jesus Himself; and when they did their errand the eleven would start for Galilee and see the Lord there. Indeed, the relation of the two evangelists is such that the only plausible construction of the facts is that the last chapter of Matthew, barring what is said about bribing the soldiers, which corresponds to a passage earlier in Matthew and with no parallel in Mark, is based throughout on Mark's original conclusion. Had this been preserved, it would have answered to Mat 28:16-20; that is, it would have given a Galileean appearance of Jesus to the eleven, and would have excluded an appearance at Jerusalem. When we turn to Luke, it is of the first importance to remember that he wrote with Mark before him. It is not possible here to give the proof of this; but though there are still scholars who hold that the evangelists had no literary relation to one another, and that each wrote immediately and only from oral tradition, the writer can only express his own conviction of the entire inadequacy of any such view to do justice to the phenomena. Assuming, therefore, that Luke knew Mark, we notice in the first place that he does not give the words of Jesus on leaving the upper room. There is nothing about the smiting of the shepherd, the scattering of the flock, the rising and going before into Galilee. This is not because Luke was ignorant of the words, or accidentally overlooked them, for we can see when we come to his resurrection narrative that the sound of them was in his ears. His two angels say to the women, 'He is not here, but is risen; remember how He spake unto you while He was yet in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered up into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.' Here a general reference to Jesus' predictions of His death and resurrection, made while He was yet in Galilee, is substituted for the direction to the disciples to go into Galilee and meet Him there. We may say 'substituted' without hesitation; for there is nothing accidental about it. Luke had what he thought sufficient reasons for omitting altogether what he read in Mark 14:27 f.; and for giving what he read in Mark 16:7 an entirely different turn. A reader unfamiliar with the minute comparison of the gospels may think these reckless statements, but no one who has been at pains to examine the way in which Luke habitually makes use of Mark will find any difficulty in them. The only question they raise is, Can we find out the reasons on the strength of which Luke felt entitled or bound to treat these passages as he has done? The answer is obvious. Luke omitted or modified these passages because they connected the appearances of the Risen Jesus with Galilee, whereas everything he had to tell about Him was connected with Jerusalem. Hence he not only

records appearances only at Jerusalem or in its vicinity, but he 'takes as much pains to confine the disciples to Jerusalem as Matthew takes to get them away. The women do not, as in Matthew, see Jesus on the way from the tomb, but He appears on the very day of the resurrection to Cleophas and his friend, to Peter, and to the eleven and those with them. He bids them, apparently on this occasion, continue in the city until they are clothed in power from on high (Mat 24:49). They are not only not represented as going to Galilee and seeing Jesus there, according to His commandment: His commandment is reversed; they are forbidden to leave Jerusalem; and it is there, and not amid the scenes of His early fellowship with them, that they receive the great commission. These are the facts: what do they signify, and how are they to be explained?

If we were merely dealing with texts, the relation of which to reality was indeterminable except from themselves, we might be hopelessly baffled. We should have to say that both these ways of representing the case could not be true, and that quite possibly neither was. If one witness says, Jesus appeared to His disciples in Galilee only, not in Jerusalem; and another, He appeared to them in Jerusalem only, not in Galilee; the temptation is strong to say that we cannot depend on anything that is said about His appearing. But here it is necessary to remember the evidence for the resurrection which is quite independent of Matthew and Luke. Those manifestations of the Risen Saviour which in themselves and in the spiritual quickening which accompanied them created the Christian Church and the New Testament retain their original certainty even under the extreme supposition that we can make nothing whatever of the testimony of the evangelists. But there is no need even to contemplate a case so extreme. The faith of the evangelists themselves did not rest on the isolated stories they told of the appearing of Jesus, whether in one place or another; it rested where such faith must always rest, on the basis of the apostolic testimony in general, and on the powerful working in the Church of the spirit sent from Christ. The apostolic testimony, however, was much broader and more comprehensive than anything we find in the evangelists, as a glance at 1Co 15:4-8 is sufficient to show. Of this, the writer believes, the evangelists themselves were as well aware as we; they could not have been ignorant of a tradition which was common, when Paul wrote, to all Christendom -- handed over to him at Jerusalem, and by him transmitted to the Gentile churches. The question suggested by the phenomena of the gospels accordingly takes another form. It is not, How are we to believe in the resurrection in face of the indubitable and intentional inconsistencies of Matthew and Luke? but, What was the interest which guided an evangelist in what he wrote about the resurrection? What did he conceive to be his duty in this matter, and how were Matthew and Luke led to do their duty in a way which at first sight is so disconcerting to the reader? In view of the facts which have just been presented, it is not too rash to suggest that in their resurrection narratives the evangelists did not conceive themselves to be stating systematically or exhaustively the evidence for the resurrection. Not that these narratives are not evidence, but, as the writers must have been aware, they are quite inadequate to represent the evidence as a whole. The aim of the various writers -- their conception of an evangelist's function -- seems rather to have been this: believing in the resurrection themselves, and writing for those who believed in it, they aimed at giving such an account of it as should bring out its permanent significance for the Church. The main thing in all the resurrection narratives in the gospels is the appearing of Jesus to the eleven, and His final charge or commission. This is obviously the case in Matthew, where apart from the appearance to the women in Mat 28:9 f., which is only used to prepare for this, there is no other manifestation of Jesus at all. To the writer, it is not doubtful that in the original form of Mark it would have been the

same. Even the later conclusion to Mark, which mentions appearances to Mary of Magdala and to 'two of them as they walked, on their way into the country,' has nothing to tell of these borrowings from Luke and John; in keeping with the true conception of a gospel narrative it enlarges only on the appearance to the eleven, and on what Jesus said to them. Luke, no doubt, in his exquisite story of the two disciples at Emmaus, represents the Lord as interpreting to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself, but he too concentrates attention on an appearance to the eleven and on the great commission given on that occasion. If we leave out of account the supplementary Luk 21:1-38, and regard the fourth gospel as closing according to the original intention of the writer with Luk 20:31, we see that there also the same holds good. What John is interested in is to be seen in John 20:19-23. Incidentally an evangelist might mention this or that with regard to an appearing of Jesus to an individual; he might tell expressly that He was seen of Mary Magdalene, as John does; or of more women than one, as Matthew does; he might imply, without expressly telling, or having any details to tell, that He had appeared to Peter, as Luke does; but it was not in these incidents that he was interested, and it is not on the precision of his knowledge as to their time, place, or circumstances, that his belief in the resurrection or his sense of its significance depends. The one main thing is that Jesus appeared to the disciples, the men whom He had chosen to be with Him, and whom He had trained to continue His work; and that in His intercourse with these chosen men their minds were opened to the meaning of the resurrection both for Him and for themselves. His greatness rose upon them as it had never done in the days of His flesh. They became conscious of His exaltation, of His entrance into the sphere of the divine. They saw Him seated at the right hand of God. He had all power given to Him in heaven and on earth, and in the strength of this exaltation He sent them forth to win the world for Him.

It is not in the least improbable -- or so, at least, it seems to the writer -- that in the great appearing of Jesus to the eleven recorded in all the gospels (Mat 28:16-20, Mark 16:14-18, Luk 24:36-49, John 20:19-23) we have not the literal record of what took place on a single occasion, but the condensation into a representative scene of all that the appearances of Jesus to His disciples meant. These appearances may well have been more numerous -- with 1Co 15:1-58 in our hands we may say quite freely that they were more numerous -- than the evangelists enable us to see; but it is not separate appearances, nor the incidental phenomena connected with them, nor the details of time and place, in which the evangelists and the Church for which they write are interested. It is the significance of the resurrection itself. If for the purpose of bringing out this significance the whole manifestation of Jesus to His disciples was condensed into a single representative or typical scene, and if Jesus nevertheless had in point of fact appeared in different places, we can understand how one evangelist should put this typical scene in Galilee and another in Jerusalem. When we see what is being done we should rather say that both are right than that either is wrong. If the gospel according to Matthew rests on the authority of an original disciple of Jesus, it is very natural that he should make Galilee the scene of the appearing; Galilee, as we have seen, had been prepared for by the word of Jesus, and it would be endeared by old associations. Luke, on the other hand, knew Christianity only as a faith which had its cradle and capital at Jerusalem, and it was as natural that he should put the representative appearing there. In either case, however, it is a representative appearing that is meant, and with whatever relative right it is located in Jerusalem or in Galilee, it is not in the location that the writer's interest lies. It is in the revelation which is made of the exaltation of Jesus and the calling of the Church. This, too, has a representative character, as is evident from the fact that, though the meaning is substantially

the same in all the gospels, the language in which it is conveyed is surprisingly different. If we compare the words which Jesus speaks in the four passages just referred to -- all of which unquestionably serve the same purpose in the gospels in which they respectively stand -- it is evident that we have no literal report of words of the Lord. We have an expression of the significance of His exaltation for Himself and for the Church. What this significance was we have considered already in speaking of the place of Christ in the faith of the synoptic evangelists; it covered their assurance that He was Lord of all, that He was exalted a Prince and a Saviour, that forgiveness was to be preached to all men in His name; it included the gift of the Holy Spirit and His own spiritual presence. This is what an evangelist is concerned to attest, and if the difficulties which a literal and formal criticism finds in his narrative had been presented to him, the probability is that he would not have taken them seriously. He might cheerfully have admitted that with a perfectly honest mind he had been mistaken about a detail here or there; but that he had been mistaken about the main thing -- that the Lord had appeared to His own, and that this great commission was what His appearing signified -- he could not possibly admit. Nor need we. The resurrection is not attested in the gospels by outside witnesses who had inquired into it as the Psychical Research Society inquires into ghost stories; it is attested -- in the only way in which it can be attested at all -- by people who are within the circle of realities to which it belongs, who share in the life it has begotten, and who therefore know that it is, and can tell what it means. To see this is to get the right point of view for dealing with the difficulties in the narratives; it is not too much to add, that it takes away from these difficulties any religious importance. Whether we can tell precisely how they originated or not, the testimony of the apostles and the Church to the resurrection is unimpaired: Jesus lives in His exaltation, and He holds from the beginning in the faith of His disciples that incomparable place which He can never lose. The question with which we are ultimately concerned -- whether the Christian faith which we see in the New Testament has a basis of fact sufficient to sustain it -- is in part answered by what has now been said. The New Testament life would have no sufficient basis, indeed it would never have been manifested in history, but for the resurrection. It is in a sense the fulfilment of the word of Jesus in the fourth gospel: Because I live, ye shall live also; we could never have seen or known it if the creed had ended, as some people think a Christian creed might end, with 'crucified, dead, and buried.' But though without the resurrection the New Testament attitude to Christ would have no justification, and would in point of fact be plainly impossible, the resurrection, taken by itself, is not that complete historical justification of Christianity which our ultimate question had in view. The resurrection is the resurrection of Jesus, and though it lifts Jesus, as it were, into His place of incommunicable greatness, it is this Person and no other who is thus transcendently exalted, and there must be some inner relation between what He is and what He was. There must be some proportion between the life which He now lives at God's right hand, and that which He lived among men upon the earth; there must, if Christian faith is to be vindicated, be some congruity between His present significance for God and man, as faith apprehends it, and that which can be traced in His historical career. It is in the life He lived on earth that His mind is mainly revealed to us; and if His mind, as we there come in contact with it -- His mind, in particular, with regard to Himself, and the significance of His being and work in the relations of God and man -- did not stand in essential relation to the believing Christian attitude towards Him, we should feel that Christian faith, historically speaking, had an insecure foundation. The New Testament estimate of Christ can only be vindicated if we can show that the historical Person, whose resurrection is attested by the

apostles, explicitly or virtually asserted for Himself, during His life in the world, a place in the relations of God and man as incommunicable and all-determining as that which we have seen bestowed upon Him in the primitive Christian books. The question, therefore, we have now to answer is, What do we know of Jesus? In particular, what place -- in His own apprehension -- did Jesus fill in the relations of men to God?

04.3. Notes

Notes:

(1) This article is taken from section two of James Denney's book, *Jesus & The Gospel*, originally published in 1908 (Eaton & Mains, NY).

(2) The footnotes were not preserved in the conversion of this text (3) This work is in the Public Domain.

* About the author: James Denney (1856-1917) was a prominent New Testament scholar and theologian of the United Free Church, Scotland. His other books include, *The Death of Christ* <DeathOfChrist-Denney.htm> and *Studies In Theology*.

05.00.00. THE WAY EVERLASTING

THE

WAY EVERLASTING by James Denny, D.D.

Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever HODDER AND STOUGHTON New York and London

1911

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License: Creative Commons License (CC-BY-NC-SA). This book may be freely copied and distributed worldwide. This eSword module may be freely copied and distributed, without cost or charge worldwide. This book may be acquired in PDF and text format from the Internet Archive. <http://www.archive.org/details/wayeverlastinge00denn> MAY God be glorified and his Body encouraged with the contemplation of this text. " Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. 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. " (Psa 73:24-26)

05.01. Elemental Religion

Chapter 1 ELEMENTAL RELIGION "O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me." - Psa 139:1

I ONCE heard a well-known man, speaking of difficulties in the Bible, express himself between jest and earnest in this fashion: "The Gospels are a story, and a story may conceivably be untrue; the epistles are arguments, and arguments may conceivably be unsound; but the Psalms are the immediate reflection of personal experiences, and we can take them as they stand without asking any questions." Certainly that is true of Psa 139:1-20, which even in the Psalter has an eminence of its own, and brings us into contact with elemental religion, with the soul's direct and overwhelming experience of God. None of us could have written it, but there is none of us in whom there is not an echo to its sublime and solemn utterance; and that echo is the spirit of God, bearing witness by and with His word in our hearts. The Psalm has four strophes, each of six verses; and in each of the four an essential aspect or element in the soul's experience of God absorbs the mind of the writer. It will repay us if in following his thought his experience in any degree becomes ours.

1. First, he is overpowered by the experience of God's perfect knowledge of him.

We are apt to speak in this connexion of God's omniscience, but there is nothing about omniscience in the Psalm. Omniscience is an abstract noun, and abstract nouns are unequal to the intense feeling of the passage. The important thing in religion is not the belief that God is omniscient, but the experience that God knows me, and it is on this the Psalmist dwells. It is almost implied in the connexion of his words that in the heart of the writer there was a kind of passive resistance to this experience, a resistance which God's spirit overcame, piercing and discovering all his inner life. We are slow to know ourselves, and sometimes do not wish to; purposes form in the background of our minds, of which we are hardly conscious; latent motives actuate us; perhaps our own words or deeds, in which they suddenly issue, startle us; we are amazed that we should have said or done such a thing. But it is no surprise to Him. "Thou understandest my thought afar off." Such knowledge of man by God is quite different from omniscience. Omniscience is a divine attribute, but what is here experienced is a divine action - it is God through His searching knowledge of us entering with power into our lives. It is God besetting us behind and before, and laying His hand upon us. The Psalmist does not dwell particularly on the divine motive, so to speak, in this searching of man. It might be felt as the shadowing of the soul by an enemy, or as the over-shadowing presence of a friend. The one thing on which he does dwell is its reality and its completeness. It is too wonderful for him; it baffles him when he tries to understand it; but incomprehensible as it is, it is real. He only knows himself as he is conscious of being searched and known by God.

I suppose most of us have wrestled with arguments intended to prove the existence or the personality of God. Well, I am not going to raise any philosophical question about the powers or the incapacities of human reasoning in this matter. No religion ever took its origin in such reasoning, however it may have succeeded or been baffled in trying to justify itself at reason's bar.

The being and the personality of God, so far as there is any religious interest in them, are not to be proved by arguments; they are to be experienced in the kind of experience here described. The man who can say, O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me, does not need any arguments to prove that God is, and that He is a person, and that He has an intimate and importunate interest in his life. If that is a real experience - as who will deny that it is? - and if it is not a morbid phenomenon, but one which is sane and normal, then the thou in it is just as real as the me. The Psalmist is as certain of God as he is of his own existence; indeed it is not too much to say that it is only as he is conscious of being searched and known by God - only as he is overwhelmed by contact with a spirit which knows him better than he knows himself - that he rises to any adequate sense of what his own being and personality mean. He is revealed to himself by God's search; he knows himself through God. Speaking practically - and in religion everything is practical - God alone can overcome atheism, and this is how He overcomes it. He does not put arguments within our reach which point to theistic conclusions; He gives us the experience which makes this Psalm intelligible, and forces us also to cry, O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me. "After that ye have known God," says St. Paul to the Galatians, "or rather" - correcting himself - "have been known by God." Yes, it is the overpowering sense that we are known through and through by another which seals upon our hearts that knowledge of God on which religion rests.

2. The second strophe of the Psalm deals with another aspect or element in the writer's experience of God.

There is indeed something unreal in calling it another, for all experiences of God are interdependent. Still, it inspires the Psalmist anew; his soul, which has sunk exhausted under the thought of God's absolute knowledge of him, rallies itself to speak of God's wonderful and inevitable presence with him. And here again we should take care not to lose ourselves and the profit of this high experience by speaking of God's omnipresence. No doubt if we were constructing a doctrine of God, we should have need and room for such a term; but in religion the important thing is not the idea that God is everywhere, but the experience that wherever I am God is with me. "Whither shall I go from Thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?" Why, it may be asked, should we want to go anywhere? Why should we try to escape from God? The answer does not need to be given, because every one can give it for himself. The first man tried to hide from God, and so have all his children, but always in vain. Wilful boys try, experimenting with their new-found liberty, and God makes His presence felt through all their riot. Worldly men try, absorbed in affairs they had rather keep to themselves, renouncing church and sabbath, Bible and reflexion; but when they least expect it, a light or a shadow falls on their path, and they know that God is there; sensual men try it in dissipation, and desperate men even in death; but there is no height nor depth nor distance nor darkness that can shut Him out of our life. As St. Augustine says, the only way to flee from God is to flee to Him. The voice which says in our hearts, Where art thou? is not meant to drive us from Him, but to make us conscious of His presence, and to urge us to turn consciously to Him. There is only one thing which can really separate us from God, and that is a secret. A secret always divides. It divides more in proportion as the relation which it annuls is close. It may divide fatally husband and wife; it divides fatally the soul and God, raising an invisible but insuperable wall between them, and keeping us far from Him even while He is intimately near to us. Do not cut yourself off from God by any unconfessed sin, by any unavowed hope, by anything that makes you restrain prayer or try to avoid His presence. It is not far to seek and to find

Him. He is near to all that call upon Him in truth. To find His presence not a dread but an inspiration, He asks nothing of us but that we should walk in the light as He is in the light, and have no secrets from Him.

3. The third strophe of the Psalm, the third element in the Psalmist's experience of God, seems at the first glance to be of a different character, yet it is closely connected with what precedes.

Observe how it is linked on by *for*. "For Thou hast formed my reins: Thou hast knit me together in my mother's womb." Here, it may be said, we are not dealing with immediate experience; there is an element of inference in the writer's conviction which is introduced by the *for*. God is at first, so to speak, an observer, and then a companion; but what is implied in an observer so searching, in a companion so close and inseparable? To the mind of the Psalmist what is implied is that his very being has its ground in God, and that the whole marvel and mystery of what he is go back to Him. If it were not so, God could not have the knowledge of him or the nearness to him by which he is so deeply impressed. At first he thinks of himself as an inhabitant of the moral world, and there God is an awful observer, an inevitable presence; now he thinks of himself as a native of what we call the physical universe, only to realize that there also the presence and action of God are as pervasive as in the higher sphere. It is not exaggerating or misrepresenting him if we say that the truth to which expression is given in the third section of the Psalm is the truth that the physical and the moral worlds, as we call them, are one in God - that He whose moral sovereignty has been so deeply felt and so wonderfully described in the world of conscious life is the author of nature too - and that nature and human nature, in each individual human being, through all variations of condition and circumstance, are determined by Him and are continually in His hand. "My frame was not hidden from Thee when I was made in secret . . . in Thy book were they all written, even the days which were ordained, when as yet there was none of them." In all that we are, in the very frame and texture of our being; in all that befalls us, in the length of our life and its vicissitudes, we are absolutely dependent on God. That in a manner explains how we can have the wonderful experiences of God before described; only the author of our being could have such a close and unremitting interest in us.

There are few things more to be desired at the present moment than the power to realize this truth. Partly we have got into the habit of defining the physical and the moral worlds simply by contrast with each other, as if we had not to live at the same time in both, and as if that did not imply their ultimate unity; and partly we are accustomed to appeal to the lower against the higher. How, a man asks, can I, a creature with such a nature, face a spiritual calling? How can I ever be anything but what I am? There is no proportion between the constitution which nature has given me and the vocation with which God summons me. Or the same thing is said about circumstances. How can anyone born in the conditions in which I was, and compelled to live in the environment in which I live, be anything but the miserable creature you see? These are dangerous things to say. No one ever says them for himself with quite a good conscience, and their moral unsoundness is shown by the fact that the compassion for others which they inspire turns only too easily into contempt. Surely the Psalmist has the deep truth in his grasp when he reminds us that God is not only intimately with us in our moral life, but that He is in and behind our nature and our circumstances - that He fashioned us in the womb and that all our days were written in His book - that He commits us to no conflict in which He does not stand behind us - that no nature is so disabled, no circumstances so disabling, as to shut a man out from the care and the providence of his Maker.

One of the striking things in the Psalm is the tone in which the writer speaks of this at the close of this strophe. The omniscience and omnipresence of God, as they come home to the individual conscience in the moral world, have something oppressive in them; they awe and overwhelm us; but as resting on God's creation of us, and His providential ordering of our lives, they are transfigured with tenderness; the Psalmist is not haunted by God, but abandons himself with joy to His care. "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God; how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with Thee." No doubt these words repeat in a new connexion what has been already said in the first section - "such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it" - but they contain something more. They are an echo of the touching words in the 103rd Psalm: "Like as a father pitieth his children, the Lord pitieth them that fear Him"; they are an anticipation of St. Peter's words in the New Testament - "Commit your souls to Him in well doing as to a faithful Creator." Whoever betrays us, our Creator will not. With all its disabilities and limitations, and in spite of all its corruptions, human nature is dear to its author. "I will give thanks unto Thee, for I am awfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well." It is only when we shut God out of nature - as no one can do who has had in his nature the experience out of which man cries, O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me - that we can look on it in ourselves or others with contempt or despair. For the human creature to know the faithful Creator is to know that he has not been made in vain, and to be assured that through whatever conflicts he can rise and live in a world where inspired utterances like those of this Psalm will fall upon his ear through nature and awaken echoes in his inmost soul.

4. And now we come to the last strophe of the Psalm.

I have spoken of all the others as expressing some aspect or element of religion in its simplest and deepest form - as uttering the soul's fundamental experiences of God - but can we say the same of this? or does it not carry us into another world when we read: "Oh that thou wouldst slay the wicked, God! Depart from me, therefore, ye bloodthirsty men. Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee, and do not I loathe them that rise up against Thee? I hate them with perfect hatred, I count them mine enemies." How, it may be asked, can a soul which has been flooded with the consciousness of God, of His intimate nearness, of His all penetrating love, how can such a soul be overcome by such a temper? Surely these are not pious prayers; but savage and inhuman, a melancholy illustration of the inconsistencies which lower human nature even at its height.

I cannot think that in a mind so great as that of the writer of this Psalm - and one might even say in a work of art so perfect - there should be an unprovoked and sudden lapse into mere inconsistency. There must be a connexion in thought between these passionate words and what precedes, and I believe it is not hard to find. The Psalmist has been dwelling on what I have called the unity of the natural and the moral worlds, the truth that God is behind both, that it is the same power which speaks in conscience, revealing man to himself, and which originates and sustains that physical being in which man lives his moral life. These are real truths and experiences, and religion depends for its very being on the recognition of them. But it is possible to recognize them in a way which is fatal to religion. It is possible to lose in the sense of the unity of nature and the moral life as alike dependent on God the sense of the vital differences with which they confront us. It is possible to become insensible to the fact that God is not only the source of all being, but of the distinction between good and evil, and that to assert the distinction is as essential to religion as to

assert the unity of God and the dependence of all things on Him. Christ, says a French writer, has two great enemies, the God Priapus and the God Pan, and the latter is the more impracticable of the two. The most dangerous enemy of religion is the mood in which all the differences in the world seem to become unreal in face of the unity of God. The difference between nature and spirit, between the personal and the impersonal, between freedom and necessity, between what we are born and what we make of ourselves, between corporate responsibility and the responsibility of the individual - the difference in the last resort of right and wrong - all these are relative, evanescent, never to be fixed; they dissolve, when we try to grasp them, in a kind of moral or non-moral haze. This is the supreme illustration of the truth that the corruption of the best is worst; for there is no better or more inspiring truth than that of the dependence of all being, natural and moral, upon God; and no error more deadly or degrading than that to God all things are alike. It is against the temptation to let the truth which he has just recognized in such moving words sink into this deadly falsehood that the soul of the Psalmist reacts with instinctive and passionate vehemence. He knows that the world and every human being in it are absolutely dependent upon God; but he knows also that what is going on in the world is a battle, and that it is the Lord's battle, and that it is vital to be on the Lord's side. No doubt the passion with which he casts himself into the battle is less than Christian passion. He is ready to kill in the battle, and perhaps not ready to die. But in the Lord's battle the sign under which we conquer is the cross. It is not by shedding the blood of others, but by the sacrifice of our own life, that we can contribute to the Lord's victory. But where the Psalmist is right, and where we must not fall beneath his insight, is in the clear perception that the reality of religion involves conflict - that what is going on among men in the world is a battle in which the cause of God is at stake - a battle, and not a sham fight. God is not in the same sense on both sides. It is not a game of draughts in which the same hand moves the blacks and the whites. It is a matter of life and death, and the Psalmist is in it for life or death, with his whole heart. So must every one be who would prove what the presence of God in life means. The cross of Christ, where He died for the difference between right and wrong, and declared it to be as real as His agony and passion, teaches the same truth as the vehement Psalmist, and makes the same appeal. "Who is on the Lord's side?" it calls to us as we look out upon life. And it is only as we enlist under that ensign, and commit ourselves to fight the good fight to the last, that we can share in the experiences which inspired this wonderful Psalm.

There is something peculiarly touching in the closing lines. "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." It is as if the Psalmist shrank suddenly from his own impetuosity, felt his rashness in judging others, and realized that it is easier to slay the wicked than to be inwardly separated from sin. In this humbler mood he does not shrink from God's eye, but longs for it. He feels that for God to take knowledge of him is his hope. Salvation does not come from his zeal, but from the Lord, who knows him altogether. It is exactly in the key in which the Samaritan woman speaks of Jesus: "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" It is only one who knows us better than we know ourselves who can give us the life which is life indeed.

05.02. Man's Claims in Religion and God's Response

Chapter 2 MAN'S CLAIMS IN RELIGION, AND GOD'S RESPONSE

"Jews ask for signs, and Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified....Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."- 1Co 1:22-24

MANY men, many minds, says the proverb, and there is no department of human affairs in which it is more true than the spiritual. It is not, as it has been sceptically put, that everyone constructs his own roman de l'infini to suit his taste, but that men who are quite serious have their own ideas of what religion ought to be. They know what they want it to do for them, and they think they know the proper kind of evidence by which it ought to be supported. If it does not meet the conditions they prescribe, they feel at liberty to withhold their assent from it. This is not done with any sense of arrogance, but naturally and as a matter of course. If religion does not meet our needs, if it does not come supported by what we regard as the indispensable evidence, how can we have anything to do with it? It does not occur to those who think thus, that they are prescribing to God the manner in which He shall make Himself known, or giving Him notice of the only terms on which they will recognize Him. Yet this is what it amounts to. And while in all such operations of the mind man's need of God is attested, there may quite possibly be something in them which God cannot meet in the way required. In his work as a preacher of the Gospel, Paul encountered many types of mind, and in this text he describes the two chief. "Jews claim signs, and Greeks are in quest of wisdom". The very form of the sentence shows that Jews and Greeks are to be taken, not in their nationality, but as representative of intellectual types; and it is because such types survive among ourselves that we can make a profitable application of the words.

1. Jews claim signs. - For them the evidence of religion was to be given in works of power. They would not believe in God unless He appealed to their senses by doing something extraordinary - something which He was not doing meanwhile. We know how constantly this demand was made upon our Lord. It was a temptation which beset Him from the very beginning of His ministry. If He had cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple He would have provided the kind of evidence for His mission that some people required. Show us a sign from Heaven, they said to Him again and again. Even in His agony they taunted Him with His inability to produce that proof that He was from God which they were entitled to claim. "If He be the King of Israel let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him." The modern equivalent of all this is commoner than many people think. When Carlyle said of God, the God in whom Christians believe, "He does nothing," he gave expression to precisely this mental temper. It is the temper of all to whom it is a religious difficulty that there is a constitution and course of nature and of human life in which things go on according to general laws, and in which there is much that is baffling, mysterious, and unjust. If we are to believe in God, they say, let Him do something. Let Him signalize His presence in the world by wonderful works of power. "We see not our signs." Let Him make bare His holy arm; let Him break the oppressor in pieces, heal the terrible diseases that fill us with fear and humiliation, interpose visibly and decisively to arrest wrong; let Him satisfy this

natural and legitimate demand for an exhibition of His power, and we will believe in Him. But apparently He does not do so. As far as such signal demonstrations are concerned, all things go on as they have done since the beginning of the creation. Some people call this a trial to faith; others describe it as an objection to religion; but there it is. God does not accept the dictation of the Jew in us as to the way in which He is to make Himself known.

2. Greeks seek after wisdom. - As distinct from natures which crave a demonstration of power, there are those which long for nothing so much as a key to the world and to the life of man. This is what they want in religion, and they will not look at anything as religion which does not put such a key into their hands. The Greeks are a type of this class. They are the most intellectual people known to history. We owe to them all that we call philosophy and science. They believed in the mind, in its powers, its duties, its right to be sincerely dealt with and to have its legitimate demands met. Even in religion they sought intellectual satisfaction. They wanted its preachers to have excellency of speech and of wisdom. They required of religion itself to give them an intellectual grasp of the world in which they lived, an intelligible interpretation of it; what was it good for if it did not do so, justifying the ways of God to man, solving the problems which vexed both brain and conscience, reconciling man intellectually to his environment? It hardly needs to be stated that this type of mind is common enough. It is represented more or less adequately by every one who has what are called intellectual difficulties about religion. A poet of our own day speaks about the burden and the mystery of all this unintelligible world, and what many really crave in religion is such a light upon its nature and destiny as will alleviate the burden and dissipate the mystery. A religion that does not bring such a light, that does not yield a rational explanation of nature and of human life, is not for them. Perhaps the most signal illustration of this is that great estrangement from the Christian faith commonly known as Agnosticism. The Agnostic is a man who has been baffled in the Greek quest for wisdom, and has given up religion as the sphere of insoluble problems. He is a Greek, with a natural instinct for wisdom, which disappointment has paralyzed. He no longer seeks wisdom; he has abandoned such vain adventures; he stays at home and realizes, with such resignation as he can command, how poorly the house is furnished. God does not meet his claim, any more than that of the Jew, in the way which he prescribes. There may be a key to all mysteries, but it is not put in his hand to start with. This apparently negative attitude of the Gospel to the claims of Jew and Greek has, I believe, misled many. The impression left on their minds is that the true religion has nothing to do with signs or with wisdom: it reveals a God to whom miracles and philosophy are alike indifferent. He does not signalize His presence by works of power; He does not cast an interpretative light on the mystery of the world. But this is a mistake, due to breaking off in the middle of the Apostle's sentence. The demands of the Jew and of the Greek are in a sense just, and a true religion must be able to meet them. There must be power in God, and therefore in the true religion; there must be wisdom in God, and therefore the true religion must have a key to the world, a way of looking at life in which the mind can rest. These are not presumptuous but legitimate demands, and the Apostle does not repel them: the very claim he makes for his Gospel is that it meets them. It meets them indeed in a way so startling as to be at first sight almost incredible, but it does meet them. "We preach Christ crucified . . . Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" - the very thing which Jews and Greeks required. Jews claim signs? Well, if you want to see all that God can do, the supreme demonstration of His power, look at Christ on His cross, and at what God accomplishes through Him. Greeks are in quest of wisdom? Once more, if you want to find the key to the world's perplexities, to see the very

splendour of the light with which God lightens up its gloomiest and most oppressive mysteries, look at Christ on His cross. The one heart-breaking and hopeless mystery of life is sin; the one thing in presence of which it vanishes is redeeming love, the love revealed in the crucified Son of God. Man's claim upon God for a demonstration of power and wisdom is not repelled; it is fully met and satisfied - but at the cross. No doubt it is very difficult to take this in, and it was probably more difficult for those who could distinctly envisage crucifixion and its horrors than it is for us. Crucifixion was public execution, the shameful death of the lowest criminals. The Jewish name of contempt for Jesus was "the hanged". But the repulsiveness has been felt under all circumstances, and the temptation has often come to the church to ignore or to spiritualize what the Apostle here puts into the forefront as God's answer to man's need - the real person, and the real and shameful death of Christ, recorded in the Gospels. One of the purposes served by the Lord's Supper, which we celebrate to-day, is to provide a check to such tendencies. At first sight it seems strange to find this material element, so to speak, in a spiritual religion. It is so inconsistent, apparently, with the worship of God in spirit and in truth, that some Christians like the Quakers disregard it, and many in all the churches are embarrassed by it, and even when they observe it do not know what to think of it, and could wish they did not need to think of it at all. But in any case it does this for us: it brings us back whether we will or not to the heart of the revelation on which our religion rests: Christ crucified. As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup we show the Lord's death. We are withdrawn from all our prepossessions about God, from all the requirements we address to Him, from all our preconceptions as to the way in which He must or ought to act, and are set down before the reality which shows us how it has actually pleased Him to display His power and His wisdom to men. Here, however startling it may be, is the seat of God's omnipotence; here and nowhere else is the key to all that is mysterious in life.

We must notice that the power is uniformly put first: it is of it that we first have experience, and it is only through it that we have access to the wisdom. You want an almighty God, the Apostle says. Where then can you find God exerting omnipotent power, doing what it baffles every other power in the universe to do, except here? If a child were asked to point to the signs of God's power, he might naturally think of the storm which tosses the sea and the ships; or of the earthquake which levels cities in a moment and engulfs the pride of man; or of the lightning flash which shatters trees and towers. Those who are no longer children know better than this even about the forces of nature. They know that the fiercest storm which ever swept the ocean has no power in it at all compared with the silent irresistible swell of the tide. They know that the earthquakes which appalled the world at Lisbon and Messina were insignificant forces compared with the invisible pull of the sun which holds the planets in their orbits. They know that no thunderbolt has potency in it to compare with the sunshine in which we bask on a summer morning. And they know also, if they know anything of themselves and their necessities, that God has more wonderful and difficult things to do than can be done by storm or tide, by earthquake or gravitation, by lightning or sunshine. He has to make bad men good. He has to win again those who have been alienated from him by an evil life. He has to reach their hearts through a bad conscience, and without weakening conscience, nay while vindicating all its claims, He has to prevail with them to come to Himself. He has to overcome the distrust and fear of men, and to evoke their confidence. He has to subdue them to penitence, to faith, to devotion. He has to do this not for one, but for all; He has to reconcile the world to Himself. It needs an inconceivable power to do that - a power far more wonderful than any that could be exerted through nature, whether in mercy or in wrath. To fill

men's hearts with food and gladness would not do it; to blight them with pestilence and famine would not do it. But God does it through Christ crucified. There, at the cross, he wields a power far more wonderful than any of which the Jews dreamed - a supernatural power transcending everything that could have been displayed in such signs as they claimed - an unmistakable, immeasurable. Divine power: a final guarantee of the presence of God.

Paul knew this from his experience as a preacher, and it was because he knew it he magnified his calling. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is a Divine power to save all who believe." He had seen its efficacy, when he wrote to the Corinthians, through a ministry of more than twenty years. We have entered now on the twentieth Christian century, and as we look back on that long stretch of time we can say that the supreme power in the world for good from the beginning of it till this day has been the power of Christ crucified. All reconciling, regenerating, healing influences which have blessed the world have had their seat and centre in the cross. And is it not possible for us to add our individual testimony to the great testimony borne by history? When we are bad - when we are selfish, angry, indolent, indulgent, ungodly - can we keep it up in the presence of Christ crucified? Or if we are determined to keep it up, must we not shut our eyes to this great sight, or go to some place where it sinks below the horizon? To give it the opportunity of telling upon us - to expose ourselves to the power which issues from it - is to give it the victory. This is what we profess to-day as we gather round the Lord's Table. We long to be better men and women, to get dominion over our sins, to be thoroughly right with God. We long for truer penitence, for more whole-hearted, loving, devoted obedience to God. Where in all the world is the Divine power to be found which can work these miracles in us? It is to be found - this is the very meaning of the Supper - in Christ crucified. Our one hope for all this is that He may become dominant in us, establishing His ascendancy in our hearts. The power of God to save, the highest and divinest power God can exercise, is the power manifested in His Passion and operating through it. The Lord reigns from the tree. This is the paradoxical but sufficient answer of God to all who ask signs. He is working wonders all the time which transcend any of which nature could be the scene; and to them, the miracles wrought by the Passion of Jesus, the final appeal lies.

Let us look now at the Gospel as God's response to those who seek wisdom: Christ crucified . . . the wisdom of God. Wisdom is always a hard word, and perhaps it is not possible for us to be sure of what precisely it meant to the Apostle. But we know in what direction to look for the meaning. We know generally that wisdom is that which enables us to recognize the end if not the plan of life - that it is that which brings light to its mysteries, and even in our dark strivings makes us conscious of the right way. The great mystery of life, in presence of which the others hardly count, is sin. This is the one thing which after all speculation remains opaque and impenetrable. No reason can cast the faintest gleam of real light upon it. Those who explain it as a mere negation, an unreality - those who regard it simply as an imperfection, and to be outgrown - those who tell us it is but good in the making, and that a bad conscience is the growing pains of the soul - are all alike, when the conscience listens to them, madmen. It is they who are unreal, and whose ingenuities appal by their frivolity and irrelevance the soul which is actually at grips with evil. But though no philosophy as such has ever been able to rationalize sin, though in a world created and sustained by a good God it is and remains an enigma to the mind, at the cross some light falls upon it: we see that whatever its origin, God takes the burden of it on Himself. He does not stand afar off, and decline to have anything to do with the sinful world which owes to Him its being. He

bears its sin. He enters into the situation sin has created. He takes the pain, the shame, the death it involves, upon Himself: and in so doing He overcomes it and enables us to overcome. The only thing which goes any way to make sin intelligible - in other words, the only thing which in this connexion puts wisdom even imaginably within our reach - is redemption. It is not a new thought, or a new combination of thoughts; it is not anything which the mind could compass by its own efforts; it is a new fact; a new revelation of reality given in a mighty act of God. Here is wisdom for a world baffled and stupefied by sin: here, in the redemption which is in Christ crucified, sin gets at last a meaning as a foil to grace, and God's love shines out with a power and splendour which but for sin we could not have conceived.

Difficult as the idea of wisdom is, there are two ideas which are always involved in it - unity and purpose; and Christ crucified appears as the wisdom of God in this respect also, that through the power which issues from Him unity and purpose are brought into our lives. Many people are conscious that their life has neither; it is fragmentary and aimless; they do one thing and then another, but they have no dominant motive, no chief end. Life is a thing of shreds and patches, dissipated in a hundred inconsistent directions: there is no wisdom in it, no worthy end, method, or plan. They will never be happy, they will never feel that they have found the key to life, nay they never will find it, till something enters into their being which enables them to say: This one thing I do. And this they will never say till their life comes under the power of Christ crucified. The life consummated in that death is great enough, comprehensive enough, commanding enough, to gather our little lives into its vast eternal sweep, and to bear them on to God. It has absolute unity, absolute certainty of itself and of its goal, absolute consistency and worth. When Christ crucified subdues and impels us - when we can say with the Apostle, I live no longer but Christ liveth in me - we are delivered from inconsistency, futility, and folly, and made wise with the wisdom of God.

Under the guidance of the Apostle we may take one step further, and try to look not at the blackness of sin, nor at the perplexed individual life, but at the whole world of nature in the light cast by the cross. We are quite familiar with the interpretation of nature which is given by science, and in which everything is explained by reference to antecedent conditions. In the nature of things such explanation is endless. Science can never answer all its own questions, and even if it had done so a further question remains, the only question the answer to which raises us from the world of science into that of wisdom: What is all this world of nature for? We are overwhelmed by its vastness - its boundless spaces, its immeasurable duration, its inexhaustible life: is there any key to it? Has it any unity or purpose? is there any intelligible law which pervades it all and directs it to one end? Paul is bold enough, and I admit it is the utmost reach of boldness of which the human mind is capable, to answer all these questions in the affirmative, and to say that he knows the supreme law of the world, and that he has found it at the cross. What is revealed there is redeeming love, and it is revealed as the last reality in the universe, the eternal truth of what God is. It is before the foundation of the world; nay the very foundations of the world are laid in it. Christ is the key to creation; nature is constituted to be the Redeemer's kingdom. This is not science, but wisdom - this conviction that in Him were all things created, and that all things therefore work together for good to them that love Him; this assurance that things visible and invisible, things past and to come, all times and spaces and all that fill them, are the destined inheritance of the crucified Christ.

If anyone is disposed to repel all this in words like the Psalmist's - such knowledge is too strange for me; it is high; I cannot attain unto it - I admit it is not easy. But the simple fact about Christ crucified is that when He enters into our life it is to fill all things. He will be everything or nothing. It is His destiny to have all things put under His feet, and it is our only wisdom to look at all things in this light. Think what it means to say: We preach Christ crucified. Here, in this place, at this hour, he is held up on His cross, the Son of God, bearing the sin of the world. You wish to know the final truth about God? Here it is, eternal love, bearing sin. Can you think of a power so wonderful as that which bears the sin of the whole world? a power so able to regenerate you, and to put the key of life, and of all the mysteries with which it confronts you, into your hand? Can you want anything better to trust, anything worthier to inspire, anything abler to throw upon all the dark places of life the light of hope and joy? There is not anything. It is here or nowhere we must learn what the power and wisdom of God mean; and whatever we may have been seeking or expecting or claiming, it is here, in the presence of Christ crucified, that the voice of God comes to us at last: "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: I am God, and there is none else."

05.03. Knowledge, Not Mystery, the Basis of Religion

Chapter 3 KNOWLEDGE, NOT MYSTERY, THE BASIS OF RELIGION

"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."- Deu 29:29 THE secret things spoken of in this verse are in the first instance the destiny of the Jewish people. After the law has been proclaimed, the lawgiver enlarges upon the consequences of obedience and disobedience; he pronounces blessings on those who keep it, and curses on those who disregard it; in particular, he threatens the most terrible judgments upon the moral scepticism which laughs at the promise or the menace of God, and confidently takes its own way as though God had never spoken or would not keep His word. He declares frankly that we do not know how or when the promises or threatenings will take effect: that is the secret thing which belongs to God alone; but the nation is under law to God nevertheless, a law which is perfectly well known; and it is this which determines its duty. Ignorant as men are of the course of providence, of the means which God will employ to react against rebellion and crush it, of the quarter of the sky in which the thunder clouds of His judgment will accumulate; ignorant as they are also of a thousand things which at once solicit and baffle the mind, and by doing so seem to disable it for action, there is one thing of which they are not ignorant - the law of God. This has been revealed to us and to our children for ever. It is an unchanging and infallible guide through worlds and ages yet unborn. And it is given to us that we may do it. The fortune or the destiny of nations is always an interesting subject for speculation. The story of the rise and fall of powers like Babylon, Egypt, Tyre, Carthage, Rome, Venice, fascinates the historian and the moralist; even for the thoughtless it is a magnificent picture, and for the wise it is a revelation. It verifies the word of God which speaks to us in this chapter; it shows us in a thousand ways that vice is the worm at the root of a nation's strength, and that righteousness alone makes nations great. Often we meet with speculations on the future of our own country or of its contemporaries and rivals. We are invited to see a greater Britain grow continually greater, until a federation of English-speaking peoples controls the affairs of the world, with a pleasing consciousness of having only obtained their due; or to see the worn-out British race, stripped of its ships, its colonies and its commerce, sinking to an inglorious end. These speculations are precisely what is meant here when we read, the secret things belong unto the Lord our God: as far as we are concerned, the book of the future is sealed with seven seals. But our duty is not affected by that. Though we cannot tell the fortunes of the nation beforehand, we can tell on what they depend. We know that obedience to the law of God has the promise of the future. We know that industry, sobriety, justice, charity, are the strength of the community; we know that pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness, are its death. We know that no nation can prosper in drunkenness and uncleanness, in luxury and insolence, in the deification of might and the contempt of right; and this knowledge is given for our guidance. It never goes out of fashion. It is as true now as in the days of Moses - as true in Britain as in Israel - as true in the capitals of modern commerce as in Carthage or in Venice - as true of nations as of individuals, that only those who do the will of God abide for ever.

It is permissible to generalize this truth, and to point the applications of it which are pertinent to ourselves. Religion, it means, does not depend on the things we are ignorant of, but on the things we know. Its basis is revelation, not mystery; and it is not affected by the fact that mysteries abound. Little as we know, and much as we are ignorant of, our responsibility for what we know is unqualified. I do not think it is possible to overstate either the dimensions of our ignorance, or the urgency of our responsibility for acting up to what we know. There is always a temptation to let the first of these depress our interest in the second; ignorance - sometimes erected into a principle and designated Agnosticism - falls like a heavy frost on morality and religion. It takes the pith and virtue out of them. Now what Scripture here teaches is that this is wrong. The most perplexed and baffled man, the man who has most certainly come to the limit of his insight and who is most appalled by the opaqueness of the future, knows something; and it is on his action in view of that knowledge that his relation to God depends. He is not to be tested by what he does not understand in the infinite scheme of the universe, but by how he faces the responsibility imposed on him by what he knows. A few illustrations will make plain what this means.

Many of us are interested not only in our country, but in the Church, and much as we should like to see into the future must acknowledge that it is very impenetrable. How long can the Churches go on upon the present footing, and in their present relations to each other? What prospect is there of closer relations between them? Do such closer relations depend in any degree on all Christians being gathered into one organization, or may they come to pass through the discovery that modes of organization are matters of comparative indifference, and that Christians may be thoroughly one, in the only sense in which Christ is interested in their unity, though they are organized in many different and independent ways? Are the masses of the population which are at present outside all the Churches going to be brought within the existing organizations, or will the Gospel perhaps take root among them in ways unexampled hitherto, developing new types of thought, of organization, and of moral effort? Will Christ establish His ascendancy upon the earth in ways no one has dreamt of? Will the words He spoke of the temple at Jerusalem - "There shall not be left one stone upon another" - be spoken of our Churches? or what will their future be? These are simply questions which we cannot answer. They are like the question the disciples put to Jesus after the Resurrection: "Lord, dost Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" The answers belong to the things which the Father has kept in His own power. But our ignorance does not in the least affect our duty, and when such questions rise in our minds, we have only to recall how Jesus answered the disciples: "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me". Even if the future were revealed to us beforehand it would not be intelligible: it is only as we grow up to things and live through them that they enter into our minds. I once heard a missionary say, "I don't know how India is to be evangelized, but I know we are evangelizing it"; and we must say something similar of our own country. We cannot predict and cannot effectually plan the future of the Christian societies in Britain; but if we use them to penetrate life with testimony to Jesus, we may be sure they will not fail, and that no future will leave the soul without a home.

Cognate to this is a question which has also exercised many minds and has had serious practical consequences - the question of the future of those who die without having heard the Gospel. It was once believed in the Church that the heathen who die in their heathen state perish everlastingly, without exception and without hope. Every time the clock ticks, it was said, a soul passes out of time into eternity, and all over heathendom that means passes from earth to hell.

Every twenty-four hours from eighty to a hundred thousand souls die this awful death. This belief was regarded if not as the only, yet as the most urgent and imperative motive of missions; it was under the constraint of it that missions were first organized in modern times, and it was assumed as an unquestionable piece of Christian faith. No one, we are well aware, would give it this place any longer. What the future of the heathen is, and how it is related to their present, we simply cannot tell. The curtain that falls at death is as impenetrable for us as it was for the first man, and we cannot see past it a single inch. But our duty to the heathen does not depend upon what we do not know, but upon what we do; and that is clear enough to supply all the motives for missions that we need. We know the life that human beings lead where the name of Jesus is unknown: its darkness, poverty, degradation, despair. We know what our own Life would be if everything were taken out of it which it owes to Him - all our Christian convictions, our Christian hopes, our Christian ideals, affections, and energies. We know how much Christ could be to the heathen, and experience has taught us how much they could be to Him. We know what treasures of devotion, of faith and love and obedience, he has already found in the hearts of men of all races - black and red and yellow as well as white. We know that God will have all men to be saved. We know that it is our Lord's will that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations. We know what the dictate of love is. We are debtors to all our brethren of mankind; we owe them the Gospel. And whatever it may mean to them in the future not to have heard it while they lived - a question to which we can give no answer whatever - it is certainly a grave sin in us if we have it and keep it to ourselves. We have every motive to missions in what we know, and as against this our ignorance does not count at all. To pass to a somewhat different illustration, many people are exercised about the future of their children more than about anything else that God has kept to Himself. They would like to know how their sons will bear themselves in the battle of life, and especially how they will face its temptations. Will they pass victorious where their fathers stumbled and fell? or will their fathers be humbled and horrified to see their old sins looking out on them from the eyes of their sons? What kind of settlement will their daughters have in the days to come? Will they marry, and happily? or will it be necessary to make them independent of any resources but their own? If only we knew what to provide against! Of all these things we neither know nor can know anything: the future is wholly in the hand of God. But we do know what is the will of God both for ourselves and for those who come after us; and it is what we know that fixes our duty. Above all other books in the Bible, Deuteronomy is the book of religious education and of the promises attached to it. "These words which I command thee this day shall be upon thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." No duty could be enforced more urgently, and in our blank ignorance of the future there is none upon which so much depends. If we want to have any insurance against its painful possibilities, it is here we must find it. What God requires of parents is not a provision for the future of their children which enables them to defy Providence, but such a training of their children in the knowledge of God and in obedience to Him as will make them secure of God's friendship. It is a training to do all the words of this law, and where it has been effectively given the future may be safely left with God.

Apart from these particular cases, in which ignorance of the future does not affect our present duty, there is ignorance of a more fundamental kind which has sometimes perplexed men in their religious life, and sometimes even had fatal consequences. I mean the kind of ignorance in which

we are not only without knowledge, but are oppressed with the idea of mystery; as though we were in contact with something which was not simply unknown, but never could come within the sphere of knowledge. I will give two illustrations on this point. The text which we are considering is quoted in the Westminster Confession in connexion with what it calls the "high mystery of predestination" - the doctrine that "God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass"; or in its particular application to responsible creatures, that "by the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death". The time has been, we know, when these tremendous assertions exercised a powerful influence over many minds; there was something in them which overawed and humbled perhaps, but which as certainly shocked and paralyzed the spirits of men. For better or worse that time has passed. We have sailed into latitudes where such statements have lost their authority: in the form just cited no one is perturbed by them any more. But the facts and the motives which originally inspired them have not vanished from the world, and the trouble which they once produced still vexes souls which do not see that under another guise it is still the same. Here are two men living side by side, sons of the same parents, running to all appearance the same course: one is arrested by the Gospel, the other is not. The one who is arrested has no doubt how it happened. God arrested him. Christ stretched out His strong hand and apprehended him. It is the sovereign will of God the Redeemer which is manifested in his salvation. "Not unto us, Lord, not unto us," he says, "but unto Thy name be the glory." No question of duty or responsibility seems to be raised at all: there is no apparent actor in the case but God. But what of the man who is still leading the old life, and who has had no such experience? Is he at liberty to say: Till God saves me as He has saved my brother, I have no responsibility in this region? No. He knows nothing of how or why God acted as He has done in his brother's case, and therefore the motives of religion cannot lie there for him. The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; it is in the things that are revealed, in the realities which are patent to our minds, that all religious motives lie. Is it possible, then, for such a man to trace back the difference between himself and his brother to an original difference of constitution, to a distinction in nature, the responsibility for which belongs in such wise to God that no responsibility in connexion with it can ever be attached to him? No: this is not possible either. No doubt the immense original differences between men, which determine so much in their life, are important; no doubt some will of God is revealed in them, some Divine purpose; but just because it is a will and a purpose that are so far hidden from us, our responsibility in religion cannot be affected by it. Our religious responsibility depends on the revealed will of God: it depends simply and solely on what we know. We know that eternal life has come into the world in Christ. We know that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. If we may say so reverently, it is a high mystery to Him, a thing He cannot understand, that men should refuse His salvation: "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" We know that the scope of the Gospel is not a matter for speculation but for action, and that the answer to the question, Are there few that be saved? is: Strive to enter in by the strait gate. We know that no one here dare stand up and say: God has never spoken to me, never laid His hand on me, never called me to Himself by the voice of Jesus. He has. And against this knowledge and experience, no ignorance however profound, no mystery however impenetrable, weighs for a single instant. The other illustration is in substance very close to this one, but is worth stating separately. It is concerned with the mystery arising out of the complex nature of man which seems open always to inconsistent interpretations. We have only one

experience, yet we can read it in ways which seem directly to contradict each other. We can read it, so to speak, from the outside, through the body. Then everything in it appears subject to a law of necessity, and responsibility is shut out. Every change in the body, including the brain, is dependent on antecedent changes, and these again on others, all being bound in an endless chain of adamant links. Yet on these changes, which are entirely beyond our control, depends all our inner life - our thoughts, our emotions, our affections, our pieties, our impieties, our prayers, our blasphemies: they are what they are, and that they should be anything else is inconceivable. But we can read that self-same experience again from the inner side - not through the body, but through the soul - and then everything is changed. There is no necessity now, no compulsion which has simply to be recognized, or rather which is so all-encompassing that it is not felt; everything is free, spontaneous, responsible, charged throughout with the character and value of personality. How are these opposites to be brought together? How is experience, which is undoubtedly one, to be seen in its unity, and rescued from this incoherence which is so paralyzing to the will? Here is a mystery over which the mind has brooded since thinking began. It is put in all sorts of ways. It is the problem of the unity yet distinction of soul and body, of spirit and nature, of freedom and necessity, of religion and science, of God and the universe; all these are different ways of naming the same thing. Perhaps, after all, it is too much to consider this a high mystery with power in it to suspend life and arrest responsibility. Perhaps it is not a mystery, but a conundrum. Perhaps the mind will some day expand a little and outreach it. Perhaps some mental readjustment, or some change of our point of view, may give us a stereoscopic look at life in which the two aspects shall coalesce into one clearer and more complete. We cannot tell. But one thing we are sure of: it is not by the baffling problems and unsolved mysteries of life that our conduct is to be determined: it is to be determined by what we know. We cannot make our inability to answer the questions just referred to a plea for disowning the responsibilities of life altogether. We cannot make them a plea for renouncing liberty, and consenting to exist as if nature and its necessities were all. We cannot do this, because our responsibilities are fixed by what we know, and to put it simply, we know better. We know that man is made not to be lost in nature but to rise above it - not to be a part of the physical universe, but to be its sovereign - not to live the life of rocks and stones and trees and dumb creatures, but even while rooted in nature to live a life eternal and Divine. It is as we accept this responsibility in the sight of God that God is on our side. It is as we assert our liberty at all costs, and only so, that we enter into life. The general import of the text is summed up if we say that, like so much else in Scripture, it is a lesson on the simplicity of real religion. It has a place for Agnosticism, doubtless; so far from being a rival to religion. Agnosticism is an element in it. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Such is the noble scorn with which it meets the man whose creed is only too complete. But though it has room for Agnosticism, it rests on what we know. Its basis is not the secret things, but the things which are revealed. It is as plain as the will of God - as the Ten Commandments, as the builders on the rock and the sand, as the example of Jesus, as the appeal of His love. The difficulties which arise out of our ignorance, no matter how far-reaching they may be, are not in the proper sense religious difficulties. They are often called so, but it is a mistake. They may be theological, or scientific, or philosophical difficulties; but they are not religious, for religion rests simply on what we know. There is only one real religious difficulty, the difficulty of being religious; just as there is only one real difficulty about the word of God, the difficulty of keeping it. To see this does not make religion in itself easier, but it keeps us from fretting our strength away on obstacles which are not

on our path at all.

05.04. The Exile's Prayer

Chapter 4 THE EXILE'S PRAYER "I am a stranger in the earth: hide not Thy commandments from me." - Psa 119:19 THE text expresses with great simplicity man's position in the world, and the prayer which rises in his heart as the position is realized. He is a stranger here, a resident alien in a land which is not his home; and when he feels the strangeness of the place, he feels at the same time the need of God's guidance if he is to pass through it with safety and honour. "I am a sojourner in the earth: hide not Thy commandments from me." This is not, indeed, our first thought when our minds begin to open upon life, nor is it meant to be. The earth is kind to us at first. Love makes ready for us before we are born; we open our eyes upon faces that look on us with passionate fondness, and draw our breath in an atmosphere of love. God makes us dwell in families, and as long as the family is to all intents and purposes our world, the sense of strangeness or homelessness cannot overcome us. The years during which we are too weak to bear this sore trial are mercifully shielded from it, and if the hearts of very young children are sometimes pierced with the sense of loneliness and neglect, as though home had quite ceased to be homely, this is due to the fault of others and not to the purpose of God. The same holds true, more or less, of the whole period of our growth. It is part of our very nature to grow up into membership of a society, into citizenship of a country. We connect our individual life with what stretches behind us into the past, and with what lies around us in the present. We naturalize ourselves, so to speak, in the earth. If our individual life is but a moment in time, we give it duration and dignity by connecting it with its roots in the past, and by serving ourselves heirs to the great inheritance which our race has accumulated; if it shrinks into a point in space, we think of the innumerable ties which bind it to others, of the innumerable lines along which influences enter it from, or pass from it to, the universal life of humanity; we try in imagination and in reality not to be strangers in the earth, but to make the world a spacious, rich, and satisfying home.

It is impossible to doubt that this is God's will. It is He who has given man the earth to dwell in. It is He who has made nature and man's mind on the same model, so that we can understand our dwelling place. It is He who has established the laws of nature, apart from which a reasonable and ordered life would be impossible, and home an idea which could never rise upon the mind. It is He who has created the parental instincts out of which the family and the home have grown in which we are received at birth. It is His government which supports and is reflected in the great communities in which the moral life of man finds all but its highest expression. And He who has created and who sustains this manifold order as plainly designs that we should live in it and enjoy it. He designs us, as far as the order of nature and the harmony of society permit, to be at home in the world. The vast wealth of nature, and the fitness of the social organism to nourish, to exhilarate, and to gladden all the spiritual faculties of man, are of God. He who cuts himself off from these, who does not know how God has prepared in nature and in society a place for the mind and heart of man to dwell in, may say that he is a stranger in the earth, but it is a vain saying on such lips. He does not know whether he is a stranger or not; he has not tried whether earth may not be a home. But there are those who have tried, and strange to say, the more complete the

experiment, the less satisfying it proves. The more life is found to contain, the more the desires or rather the necessities of the soul expand. Somehow or other, light breaks in upon a good man from above. Let him use to the full and enjoy without stint the wealth of nature and the wealth of society - let him live in the light of science and in the glow of virtue and of love - let him naturalize himself and strike root on earth as thoroughly as he will: and in the very hour of his tranquility, disquieting thoughts will come. Deeper than everything is the feeling of dependence, not on nature or society, but on God - the sense of the infinite, of the transitoriness of all that lies around, of the Divine kinship and immortality of the soul. When this wakes up in its strength, man cannot but feel, This is not my rest. The world is a rich and nobly furnished abode; human society, as it is organized here, is a defence, an inspiration, a delight, for which no words could be too strong; but neither the one nor the other, nor both together, represent that for which man was made. The soul must have other relations, other guidance, other joys; it is a stranger in the earth. The word "stranger" or "sojourner" is properly speaking a political one; it signifies a resident alien, a person living in a country to which he does not belong, and excluded therefore from the rights of citizenship in it. Such exclusion does not prejudice the fact that the resident alien may in his native country be a person of great account; the citizenship of those among whom he lives an exile may be one which he would scorn to compare with his own. It is, in point of fact, in this sense that a man of God like the Psalmist finds himself a stranger in the earth; and that the New Testament, which speaks of our citizenship as in heaven, describes Christians as strangers and sojourners. The Psalms describe elsewhere the life of those who are not strangers here, but have their home and all their hopes on earth, and are unvisited by thoughts of anything beyond. "Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names." It is this life, of the earth earthy, which makes the Psalmist feel from home. He cannot naturalize himself in it. As he sees its prevalence all around him, he can only say with a certain shrinking: "I am a stranger on the earth". Those who sympathize with his feeling of loneliness or homelessness will appreciate his prayer: "Hide not Thy commandments from me".

Let us consider what this means. It implies that there is a Divine law for this peculiar situation. The man of God is not to suppress that sense of being a stranger, and to conform to the world's ways. He is not to try to smother the intimations which remind him that he is made for more than the world yields, and to do at Rome as the Romans do. No doubt the best men are the most tolerant, and can most easily give the world's conventions a conventional respect. Some time ago I saw a description of the character of a saint which is perhaps worth quoting in this connexion. "The saint," said the writer, the late Mr. Coventry Patmore, "has no fads; and you may live in the same house with him and never find out that he is not a sinner like yourself, unless you rely on negative proofs, or obtrude lax ideas on him, and so provoke him to silence. He may impress you indeed by his harmlessness and imperturbable good temper, and probably by some lack of appreciation of modern humour, and ignorance of some things which men are expected to know, and by never seeming to have much use for his time when it can be of any service to you; but on the whole he will give you an agreeable impression of general inferiority to yourself." Certainly it was no New Testament saint who stood or sat for this portrait; nothing could be less like Paul or John. But it has this much truth in it: The man who is a stranger in the earth and who knows it, though he does not distinguish himself by loud rebellion against the ways of the land he lives in, lives nevertheless a life of his own, inspired by higher laws, and knows without violence how to maintain his

independence. The law of this higher life, according to the Psalmist, is to be found in the commandments of God: whoever knows them knows what will bring order, peace, and stability into his existence, and turn his place of exile into a home in which he dwells with God. The heart, conscious that it is an alien in this passing world, cries out for contact with the eternal to which it is akin. It longs to know God, to see God, to be right with God, to live in union and communion with Him; it longs as a citizen of heaven to obey the heavenly laws, even while a resident alien on the earth. Browning in one of his best-known poems has illustrated this with great force. He shows us the man whom Jesus had raised from the dead, in knowledge increased beyond the earthly faculty - Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth, Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing heaven: and what is the result?

He holds on firmly to some thread of life (It is the life to live perforce) Which runs across some vast distracting orb Of glory on either side that meagre thread, Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet - The spiritual life around the earthly life: The law of that is known to him as this, His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here. To imagine a man who has passed within the veil, and seen the things that are eternal, and after that returned again to earth, is the most striking way of presenting one who must feel himself a stranger in the earth, and bound to live by another law; but it is not the only way. Every man in whom the sense of the infinite has awakened knows what is meant by "the spiritual life around the earthly life," and longs to hold the thread of that higher life in this land of exile; every such man longs in this alien world to live under the law, the inspiration, the memory, and the hope of God. The Psalmist's prayer: "Hide not Thy commandments from me," gives a peculiar turn to this truth. It shows us that the contact with the element for which our hearts cry out, the hold upon the thread of life which is a matter of death or life to us, is granted in the shape of obedience to the revealed will of God. We know God when we know what God would have us do, and the Psalmist had been taught of God when he prayed, "Hide not Thy commandments from me". The knowledge of God that we need is a knowledge for action and obedience. Earth is a place of exile when we do no more than think of God, but the Divine life is to be introduced into the earth by the keeping of God's commandments, and even in exile we are to be loyal to our heavenly citizenship. All nature, including human nature, is to be made the organ and the revelation of God. The flesh with its instincts is to be spiritualized. The kingdoms of the world are to become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. The commandments of God are to be obeyed in them. It is as we work at this task - as we do the commandments of God - that the sense of insecurity and unreality passes away. If earth does not become our home, at all events God is our home even while we are on earth. As St. John says: "The world passes away, and the longing it inspires; but he who does the will of God abides for ever". A far truer and more striking example than Lazarus, of the stranger on earth who longs for God's commandments, is Jesus Himself. He is the great inhabitant of another world who passed a life of exile here, and though He incorporated Himself in the human race and naturalized Himself on earth, it must always have remained a strange place to Him. He says expressly that it was so. "Ye are from beneath, I am from above"; it is as much as if He had said: We belong to different worlds. If this is your home, it cannot be Mine; you may do your own will, but I am bound to do the commandments of God. A prophecy in Isaiah represents God as opening the ear of His Servant morning by morning, giving Him as every new day came the heavenly revelation He needed. Other words in the prophecy are directly applied to Jesus, and we know that this is applicable too. How often He withdrew into solitude, as one who felt that the influence of earth tended only to make life aimless, and spent

hours with the Father, nourishing His exiled life with the life eternal. We know that the Psalms were familiar to Him and were used in His prayers even on the cross, and it does not seem to me fanciful to think of Him using this prayer: "I am a stranger in the earth, hide not Thy commandments from me". He tells us the secret of His life: does it not imply that He presented this prayer and had it answered daily? "I do nothing of Myself, but as My Father hath taught Me I speak these things." "The Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth." "If ye keep My commandments ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." The Divine law which was essential to His life in union with the Father was perpetually revealed to Him: and even in this place of exile, as He did always the things which pleased Him, he could say: "I am not alone, for the Father is with Me".

Religion, when it is reduced to its simplest elements, is the same in all ages. Christ and his Apostles used the Psalms in their devotions, we ourselves use them, and they will be used till the end of time. As years pass, and the certainty that this is not our home becomes more importunate, do we feel more than we once did the need of the presence and direction of God? It is not in us who walk to direct our own steps in this foreign land. Many of you must be familiar with them, but I will venture to quote again the well-known words of the greatest of Greek philosophers under which the very same need of God beats as we find here in the Psalmist, and in our own hearts. He is speaking particularly of the end of life and of what comes after, but his words have a wider application. "A man," he says, "should persevere until he has achieved one of two things. Either he should discover or be taught the truth; or, if that is impossible, I would have him take the best and most irrefragable of human theories, and let this be the raft upon which he sails through life - not without risk, as I admit, if he cannot find some word of God which will more surely and safely carry him." This craving for some word of God: what is it but the Psalmist's prayer, "Hide not Thy commandments from me"? Do we feel, as life becomes more obviously a pilgrimage, and earth an alien land, that our deepest need is to be sure of God, and that the way in which such security is granted is the way of obedience to a Divine law?

There are one or two practical considerations with which I shall conclude: if we take them seriously, they will help us to attain to that certainty of God which we need. The first is this: our situation, as strangers on the earth, requires us to seek communication with God. It demands and necessitates prayer. When it is realized and weighs upon us, it inspires prayer. The presupposition of all prayer is that there is such a thing as a will of God applicable to my situation, a Divine commandment bearing on the very circumstances in which I have to act, and by obeying which my exiled uncertain life is united to the eternal life of God. Prayer is not always the presenting of defined requests to God: we may not know what we need or even what we want - except that it is God. Prayer may be the effort of the soul, oppressed by the sense of its isolation, its impotence, or its exile in the world, to connect itself again effectively with Him. It is not an attempt to lay down the law to God; it is the longing of the soul to be sure of the law which He has laid down for it. And this particular kind of prayer, in which the soul, conscious of its darkness, its weakness, its incapacity to face life alone, cries to God in the pathetic appealing tone of this text, has a peculiar promise connected with it in Scripture. "Call unto Me and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and hidden things that thou knowest not." This is what we need - to have the Divine law, which eludes us, made plain for our actual situation. It may be made plain to us, as to Jeremiah, to whom this promise was given, in marvels of providential wisdom and goodness, in great and hidden things

that we know not: but it is in any case made plain in answer to prayer. A second consideration is this: our situation, as strangers on the earth, requires us to think about the law of God. We pray: "Hide not Thy commandments"; but in great part they are not hidden. God has spoken, and shown us the path of life. The prayer of the text is in effect very much that of the preceding verse in the Psalm: "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law". I am not speaking at random when I say that even in the Christian Church and in Christian homes there is an extraordinary lack of appreciation for the Bible as a means of initiation into the wisdom of God, and of true union and communion with Him. We do not need to raise any critical questions to be assured that if a revelation of God's will is given anywhere it is given here. If a man will only read his Bible for the sake of God's commandments, he will never encounter any difficulty in it but the difficulty of keeping them. To bring the mind, the conscience, the heart, into harmony with the mind of God, so that even in a world which largely ignores God a man may be able to live in practical union with Him, the habitual use of the Bible is indispensable. Let us read it more steadily than we have done, with more reflection, with more purpose. Let us think out, as best we can, its bearing on our life and calling. Let us come regularly to the church, where the word of God is ministered, and at least an effort is made to read its lessons for our conduct. Let us commend the word of God and the ministry of the word, at least by our example. The more we are in earnest to lead a life in which we shall have the assurance of God's presence, and in which the exile of earth shall not deprive us of our home in Him, the more we shall prize this revelation of His will, and the less shall we allow trivial causes to keep us away when the ministry of the word is within our reach.

Finally, our situation as strangers in the earth calls us to the imitation of Jesus. As we are, so was He in the world; and as He was, so ought we to be in it. In His case, as I have said, the Psalmist's prayer was answered. He was a stranger in the earth from whom God did not hide His commandments. He is the pattern, the captain, the head of all who are exiles here, and whose home is in God. When we look to Him, we see what this prayer really means; and the answer is given to it when His voice comes to us: "Follow Me." Follow Me - that is the sum of all God's commandments. What it means is not revealed in an instant, it is only revealed as we follow. But as we do so, beginning where we stand with the minutest act of obedience, the great revelation incarnate in Jesus begins to open up to us; we discover that in Him there shines not a casual ray of Divine light, but the very brightness of the Father's glory; that God Himself has come to dwell with man, and that earth is a place of exile no more. Let us set our hearts to follow Jesus, steadfastly, soberly, joyfully. It is our supreme duty, because it answers to God's supreme grace. All our prayers are transcended by the experiences it opens to us. What is the exile of earth any more to those who can say: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; and of His fulness we all received"?

05.05. The Happiness of the Christian Era

Chapter 5 THE HAPPINESS OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA

"Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you. That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."- Mat 16:16-17.

Two things are conspicuous in this passage. First, there is the congratulation addressed by Jesus to His disciples: "Blessed are the eyes which see the things which ye see"; and next, there is the compassion with which Jesus looks back on those who had longed for such happiness and been denied it: "Many prophets and kings and righteous men have desired to see the things which ye see and have not seen them". It is of this congratulation and this compassion I wish to speak.

1. Most of us have heard panegyrics pronounced upon our own age, as compared with earlier ages in the world's history, though perhaps they are neither so common nor so confident as they were a generation ago. Happy, we have heard it said, are those who live in an age in which science has so far mastered nature and put its forces at man's disposal; happy are those who are born to political freedom, to citizenship in a great nation, with inspiring memories, responsibilities, and hopes; happy are those who have not the rudest of the world's work to do, but inherit conditions in which leisure is possible, and the enjoyment of literature, art, and refined social intercourse; happy, in short, are we, living in Scotland in the twentieth century, the heirs of all the ages. There is no century behind to which we should willingly return.

It is quite right to be appreciative of such blessings, but it is not on things like these that Jesus congratulates His disciples. They had none of our modern improvements; no steam engine, or telegraph or telephone; they had no self-government, no votes, no economic security; they had not even words in their language for science or art; they had never seen any of the things which are spread before our eyes in the great exhibitions in which our age parades the consciousness of its immense superiority to all that have gone before. Yet Jesus says to them: "Blessed are the eyes that see the things which ye see". What was in His mind when He broke into this benediction? What was it the disciples saw on which they were so much to be congratulated? The answer is plain from the very form of the sentence. Jesus does not say, "Blessed are our eyes for they see," as if the ground of congratulation were something in the circumstances of the time common to Him and His disciples. On the contrary. He says: "Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears, for they hear"; and it is abundantly clear from the context both in Matthew and Luke that the real ground of His felicitation was that the disciples lived in the age in which He had made His appearance in the world. What their eyes saw, they saw in Him; what their ears heard, they heard from His lips; and it was something so wonderful and priceless that that generation might well have been the envy of all that went before. One of the things that come upon us with a perpetually new astonishment in the Gospels is the way in which Jesus thinks and speaks of Himself. He was meek and lowly of heart, the one perfect pattern of humility, utterly remote from boasting; but again and again He reveals, we might almost say unconsciously or unintentionally, a sense of what He is

which fills us with amazement. This is one of the most striking passages in which this is done. Jesus does not assert anything here, nor make any particular claim; He only makes us feel that in His own mind He was one whose coming would have satisfied all the unfulfilled yearnings of the best of men in the past, one whose presence in the world entitled His own generation to congratulate itself above all its predecessors. It is far more wonderful than any title, and far more impressive, to feel - as these words make us feel - that in the mind of Jesus the world's felicity was at heart dependent on Him. Is it possible for us to put the meaning of this more precisely? If what the eyes of the disciples saw and their ears heard were reduced to a unity, what would it be? Their eyes and ears were the recipients of a revelation: can we put the revelation into a word? If we look at the connexion in which this word of Jesus is given in Luke, I think we are justified in so doing. As the disciples looked on Jesus, and saw all that He did - as they listened to Him, and heard the words of grace and truth, of mercy and judgment, that proceeded out of His mouth - the conviction gradually took form within them that this was the Son of the Father. They felt that nothing ever came between Him and God, and that nothing need ever come between Him and themselves. He was as Divine as the Father, and as human as they. He was the Son who was all the time in the bosom of the Father, and who all the time also trod the earth which they trod, breathed the air which they breathed, shared the poverty which was their lot, went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the devil - He was the Son in whom the Father was revealed in a redeeming love and power to which there was no limit. This was what they came to feel and believe about Jesus, and the congratulation or beatitude of this passage shows us that this is how Jesus felt about Himself. He did not say what I have said in so many words: it would not have been of any use. We cannot learn the truth about Him by being told it in set terms: it has to be revealed to us as we look on Him and listen to Him; it has to be discovered by us as the revelation takes possession of our souls. But when it is discovered - when we see and hear in Jesus what the Apostles saw and heard - when the whole manifestation of this wonderful Person is unified and focused in the Son of the Father, the Son in whom the Father Himself is revealed to our faith - then the truth of the beatitude appears. Happy, O thrice and four times happy, are those whose eyes see and whose ears hear the revelation of God in Jesus! This is what the best of earlier days have longed for. This is the one ground of self-congratulation that lies too deep for any trouble to touch. And I say again how wonderful it is, what a solemn awe falls upon our hearts as we think of it, that this is not only how the Apostles thought of Jesus, but is how Jesus thought of Himself.

Many are asking at the present moment whether the revelation which the Apostles enjoyed, and on which Jesus congratulated them, is still accessible to men. Can our eyes see or our ears hear what they saw and heard? Or are we not rather to be condoled with than congratulated because our knowledge of Jesus is necessarily so remote, slight, and uncertain? Can we truly say that we know much or anything at all about Him? I am reluctant to refer in the church to questions that have so much unreality and confusion in them, but perhaps something should be said. It is quite true that there are many things about Jesus which we do not know and never can know. We do not know exactly when He was born or died; we do not know anything of at least thirty years of His life; we do not know anything of His private relations to other people; we have no materials for writing a biography of Him. But we have the Gospels, and what really concerns us is not whether we can know about Jesus, but whether we can know Him; and that is a question which every one can and must answer for himself. The greatest scholar in the world is not in a better position to answer it than the simplest and most untutored mind. For my own part, I say with confidence that it is not

only possible to know Jesus through the Gospels, but that it is impossible for a sincere human being not to know Him. We not only know Him, we know Him better than anybody that ever lived, better even than we know our fluctuating, inconstant, half-moulded selves. The one thing that strikes a live mind in reading the Gospels, is the simplicity of Jesus. There is never any rift or schism in His being, any want of equivalence between what He says and what He is. The character and the words are one harmonious and indissoluble whole. Jesus does not stand apart and speak about the truth; He speaks the truth simply, and it is the revelation of Himself. No other person has ever been able to make this kind of impression by His words. The Apostles do not make it. They bear witness to a truth which is independent of them; they know in part; they wrestle, as they speak, with something which is beyond them and greater than they. But with Jesus it is not so. His words do not reveal something from which He stands at a distance, as those may do who hear Him; it is He Himself who is expressed in them. The whole of Jesus is in every word He speaks. Think of the parable of the prodigal son, to take an utterance with which every one is familiar. Is there any sense in saying that we do not know the person to whom this wonderful story served as self-expression and as self-defence? We do know Him. We know Him as the true Son of the Father - of such a father as he who when he saw the lost son afar off, ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him; we know Him through and through, and there is no limit to which we cannot trust Him. We may have a thousand difficulties about the Gospels, a thousand unanswered questions about what is or is not precisely historical in them; but if we are simple and sincere in our approach to them, I do not see how we can fail to know Jesus. And is not this our happiness? Is it not on this we are really to be congratulated, that through the Apostles' testimony to Jesus, and the testimony of the Spirit to that, our eyes can see and our ears hear the revelation on which Jesus felicitated them? How dark our world would be and dismal if the image of Jesus faded from our minds, if we could not see Him in whom we see the Father, if we had no story of the prodigal son, no good Samaritan, no great Physician, no life given as a ransom, no strong Son of God seeking and saving the lost, receiving sinners, a Captain of salvation to lead all who fight the good fight, one who in every word and deed reveals the Father in whom He lived and moved and had His being! But how bright our life is, how radiant, how full of reasons for congratulation, if Jesus has entered into it! The world into which His presence has come is another world. The people that sit in darkness have seen a great light; to them that sit in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

2. But turn now to the second aspect of this text - the revelation in it of the compassion of Jesus. It has always been one of the perplexities about the Gospel - one of the arguments alleged against it - that it was so late of appearing. If it is really the way of God's salvation, why was it not revealed from the beginning? Why were men allowed to sit for centuries and millenniums in darkness and the shadow of death? Why, indeed, are they allowed to sit in such darkness still? How few of all the children of men who live to-day, or who have ever lived, can have this beatitude of Jesus applied to them? These questions have received very different answers.

There have been Calvinistic theologians who answered them coldly. They saw in the actual course of human history the whole expression of the will of God, and raised no question further. If innumerable multitudes of men have never known Jesus and the Gospel, it is by the will of God that this is so; they are not among His elect - that is the obvious fact - but it is idle to seek for any explanation of it. This way of turning time into eternity, and regarding what we see at any given

moment as the fixed and eternal will of God, is only apparently philosophical, and is really possible only when we refuse to think and feel in sympathy with Jesus.

St. Paul, who thought about all human history, thought about this question also, but also rather formally. The times before the Gospel are to him "times of ignorance"; God "winked at" them; rather, overlooked them, did not press during them the responsibilities of men, as He does now when the Gospel and its call have come. Though He did not leave Himself without a witness. He allowed all the nations in the past generations to walk in their own ways; He was kind, forbearing, had the Gospel in view; but Paul himself does not enter into the situation with much sympathy.

Still less do we get anything out of the avowedly philosophical people who tell us that you cannot have a world at all unless you have differences in it - that if it is to have a history at all it must want in one age what it has in another, and that if human beings are to be knit into one society it must be by the mutual supplying of each other's needs, which means (of course) that some must always want what others have. This may be true, but it is one of the formal truths which do not reach the vital facts in which men are interested.

How different from all these is the tone in which Jesus speaks of the past. "I say unto you that many prophets and kings and righteous men have desired to see the things which ye see and have not seen them, and to hear the things which ye hear and have not heard them." For Him the dark immeasurable past is not filled with races and generations, but with men and their spiritual experiences. They are individualized in His mind, and His heart is touched into sympathy with their spiritual yearnings. He embraces in His compassion not only the multitudes around Him, who were like sheep without a shepherd, but those who in distant ages had seen the promise of God, and embraced it, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. This is one of the most consoling and inspiring words in the Gospel - this word which reveals the sympathy of Jesus with souls yearning for the revelation of the Father. Who implanted that yearning in them? Surely it was God Himself, from whom they came. It is His creative mark upon them, and He is a faithful Creator, who will not disappoint the longings He has kindled. We do not know all the wonders of His working, but if we trust the revelation of His love in this sympathetic word of Jesus we can only believe that they and we who live in the light of the Gospel shall be made perfect together.

It is passages like this which show the universality of the Gospel, and furnish the real justification for Christian missions. Jesus Himself was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and He never offered Himself to the wider world beyond. But though He was only sent to Israel, He was sent for the world. And the proof of it lies in a saying like this which shows His yearning sympathy with those who under unfavourable conditions are nevertheless longing for the Father. Here He is only comparing present time with the past - the age in which He revealed the Father to men with the darker and less happy ages that lay behind; but if He were standing in the midst of us to-day - as we who know Him believe He is - would He not look out with the same yearning sympathy on the dim multitudes which lie beyond the borders of Christendom? They are not dim multitudes to Him. They are not inferior or alien races. They are human souls - some of them great souls, prophets and righteous men - who are seeking God if haply they may feel after Him and find Him, and whose restless hearts will not be satisfied till they see Jesus, and believe in God through Him. They are His, though they do not yet know it, and all that longing of their hearts is the Father drawing them to the Son. It is because there are such souls in the world that the work of missions

is a Divine and hopeful work. God is preparing the way of His messengers everywhere. The Good Shepherd has sheep that are to be gathered into His fold from the north and the south, from the east and the west. He has the most vivid sympathy with them in all the outgoing of their souls to God. They can be so much to Him, and He can be so much to them. What a joyful hour it is when the supreme revelation breaks upon them through the preaching of the Gospel, and He can say again, "Happy are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear".

We have all heard a good deal lately of the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh. By far the strongest impression it made on my mind was that there is no real difference between the work of missions and the work of the Church at home, and that what we need is not a greater interest in missions but a greater interest in the Gospel - that is, in the truth that Christ has come into the world, the revelation of the Father, and that no deep or satisfying happiness can enter human hearts but that which enters with Him. Of course there are differences of men, racial, historical, cultural, but in the long run they do not count. It is not to the Briton or the German the Gospel is preached in Europe, or to the Chinaman or the Hindu in Asia; it is to the soul yearning for God, or perhaps hardened against God; it is with the same inspiration, the same hidden allies, the same antagonists, the same soul travail, the same hope, everywhere. And with this word "hope" I will conclude, returning from the compassionate to the congratulatory side of our Saviour's word. It is only a joyful religion which has a right to be missionary: only one which is conscious of having found the supreme good will be eager to impart it. But surely if we are conscious of having found the supreme good, or rather of being found by Him, it should make us glad and confident. Some one said to me not long ago that he was struck with the number of hopeless ministers. There were so many men who had everything against them, who had an uphill fight, who despaired of making any more of it; they were pithless, apathetic, resigned; they entered beaten into the battle, or did not enter into it at all. I will say nothing unsympathetic of men whom it is not for their brethren to judge, but I will say this to every one who has accepted this vocation - that when we preach the Gospel it must be in the spirit of the Gospel. It must be with the sympathy of Jesus for all who are yearning after God, and with the certainty of Jesus that in Him there is the revelation of God which will bring happiness to all yearning souls. So preached, it cannot be in vain. In Bengal and in Scotland, in our own race, and in the races most remote from our own, there are souls desiring to see the things that we see, and destined to be blessed with the vision. The evangelist's is no calling for a joyless and dispirited man. "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance."

05.06. Learning From the Enemy

Chapter 6 LEARNING FROM THE ENEMY “And David said....let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him.” 2Sa 16:11

IT would be hard to imagine a provocation more exasperating than that which David met in this chastened spirit. As the old King of Israel, once the darling of his people, was making his escape from Jerusalem, a man who had some family connexion with Saul came out to gloat over his downfall. “Come out, come out,” he cried, “thou man of blood, thou man of Belial; the Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul in whose stead thou hast reigned.” Nothing could have been more malignant and unjust. If David had exterminated the house of Saul when he came to the throne, he would only have done what was common in those times upon a change of dynasty; but in point of fact he had shown for his friend Jonathan’s sake a rare and distinguished generosity to the descendants of his predecessor. He was slandered in the very point on which he might well have prided himself, and we cannot wonder that the combined insolence and falsehood of Shimei provoked the soldiers in his escort. Abishai would have made short work of the malignant Benjamite if only David had allowed him. But David had other thoughts in his heart, and it was the words of Shimei that had roused them. He was not a man of blood, in general terms, but there was blood on his conscience for all that. He was not a man of Belial, in general terms, a worthless vicious character, but there was a hideous tragedy in which he was the villain. It was not the tragedy of the house of Saul, but of the house of Uriah the Hittite. The words of Shimei brought vividly to his remembrance things which touched him more deeply than any human malice could conceive - so deeply that in presence of them resentment could not live. David knew worse about himself than Shimei’s bitter tongue could ever tell. And it is the same with us. The most malignant taunts of our enemies wound us, not by what they are, but by what they remind us of And in bringing our real sins to remembrance, they not only silence resentment on our part, but call us to reflection, to patience, to humility, to penitence. It is only so that the wistful hope of David may be fulfilled for us: “It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for His cursing this day”.

I wish to speak of some accusations - in the main false accusations - that have been brought against such people as ourselves, such Churches and such Christians as we are; and of the manner in which we ought to find spiritual profit in them. Not long ago, in the appeal of a French missionary society for a week of self-denial, I found the following description of Protestantism by a well-known Roman Catholic teacher. “Protestantism is essentially the abolition of sacrifice. To abolish mortification, abstinence, and fasting; to abolish the necessity of good works, effort, struggle, virtue; to shut up sacrifice in Jesus alone, and not to let it pass over upon ourselves; no longer to say with St. Paul, ‘I suffer that which remains to be suffered of the sufferings of the Saviour’; but rather to say to the crucified Jesus, ‘Suffer alone, O Lord’ - there you have Protestantism.” Let us put it quite definitely and apply it to ourselves: “There you have your religion, a religion without renunciation, without sacrifice, without that self-crucifixion which is the very essence of the religion of Jesus”. This is how it actually appears to some people, and how

they actually speak of it; but how are we to take it? It is easy to reply to the injustice it contains, and even to retort upon it. The Roman Catholic Church, we are apt to say, provides careers of renunciation for some of its members which are only too visible - not visible only but ostentatious. The orders of men and women who take vows of poverty, celibacy, and obedience - who explicitly give up property of their own, a family life of their own, even a will of their own, in the daily ordering of their life - are conspicuous enough. Their sacrifices are not hidden; whatever they are, every one can see them. But history has anything but a favourable verdict to pass on this type of renunciation, and we have no disposition to be humble because we do not produce monastic orders. We are more inclined to rake up the scandalous chronicle of monastic history, and to thank God that Christianity in this form is with us a thing of the past. But that will not do us much good. The question remains, how comes it that Protestant Christianity ever made on a Romanist like Père Gratry the impression which it apparently did make. Granting that the religious orders have all the demerits and drawbacks that history reveals, are they not wrong forms of a right thing? And have we got that right thing in our life, in the place and the power which are its due? In plain English, has the cross its proper place in our religion? Probably the cross of Christ has. We have all been brought up to believe in Jesus Christ and Him crucified: to us as to St. Paul this is the epitome of Christianity. He bore the cross alone, and no one could help Him; He finished there the work of atonement which nothing men can do can ever supplement. This is quite true, but quite irrelevant. Jesus not only spoke of His cross, but of ours. "If any man will come after Me," he said, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." Our principal hymns about the cross are in the strain, "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling". I do not find fault with that; it is the suffering love of Christ which must always be the inspiration of the Church's praise, and of the Christian's cross-bearing. But what about our own cross, not the one to which we cling, but the one which we bear, and on which we are crucified? Is there really such a thing? I do not ask whether anybody else knows of it - it is nobody else's business - but whether we ourselves know. Is there really such a thing as self-denial in our lives? Have we ever made for Christ's sake renunciations and sacrifices which are painfully felt? Can we go back to some hour in our life, or is there something present in our experience even now, in virtue of which we can say that we know what is meant by the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, or that we have been able to drink of His cup? I believe it is a slander to say that Protestantism means the abolition of sacrifice, but it is a slander that should call to remembrance much self-indulgence, much complacency, much contentment with the average moral standard of the world around us, much forgetfulness of Christ's demand for a denied and crucified self. It is not resentment or retaliation it requires, but the spirit in which David said, "Let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him".

Here is another illustration. Two years ago our churches, in common with the churches of the Reformation everywhere, were celebrating the quarter-centenary of the birth of Calvin. Innumerable speeches were delivered in appreciation of the work and influence of that great man. Among others there was a speech by a French man of letters which contained a notable criticism of the Calvinistic type of Christianity. The speaker made the amplest acknowledgment of what Calvinism had done not only for political liberty, but in particular for enlightenment, for education, and for science generally. But incidentally, he argued, it had intellectualized Christianity. It had laid stress on clear views of truth, and on the building up of such systems of theology as we have in our catechisms and confessions of faith. And in doing so it had made Christianity, perhaps unconsciously, a thing for men only, and even for educated men in whom the logical faculties are

properly developed; it had destroyed or impaired its poetry, its power of appeal to children, to the uneducated, to imaginative and emotional natures. Here, again, I have no doubt there are answers to be given. We know that the children in our homes do get into the secret of our religion, and to those who have been brought up on the open Bible and who know all its finest pages by heart it is absurd to speak of the poetry of religion being lost. Nevertheless, we do not profit spiritually by speaking back, but by laying it to heart when even the curse of a Shimei touches our conscience. Is it not true, after all, that the stalwart forms of Protestantism - those which, as Burke has it, represent the dissidence of dissent, the Protestantism of the Protestant religion - do tend to lose social power? Intelligence is cultivated, and independence, and the sense of individual responsibility - all good things, yet all things capable of degeneration and disproportion - and the sense of solidarity tends to be lost. It is one of the imperfections of our Church, even though it be an unfriendly voice which reminds us of it, that it does not conspicuously provide a spiritual atmosphere which all pious souls can breathe alike, whatever their intellectual inequalities or even disagreements may be. There is something wrong here, and I believe it is correctly diagnosed in the charge that we have intellectualized our religion to excess. Religion is no doubt truth, and it is right for all who believe in it to try to find the most precise and adequate expression for the truth, but the value of such intellectual definitions is always secondary. The truth of which the Bible speaks is not only an intellectual truth which can be exhibited in doctrinal propositions; it is a truth, according to the Apostles, which has not only to be believed and known, but to be loved and done. It is something which has a spell in it to command affection and submission; it is something of which we have only an imperfect apprehension till we realize that it is identical with Jesus - "I am the truth"; and who does not feel that the sense of this personal, winning, commanding truth is too easily lost by those who are zealous (as we all should be) for sound doctrine? Perhaps this number is not very large in our time; far more of us care nothing for Christian truth than too much. But it is not improbable that the charge of intellectualizing Christianity may come home to some consciences in another way. It is not that we exalt the logical faculties in religion at the expense of the imaginative or emotional, sacrificing the poetry of the Gospel to our orthodoxy, but that we give doctrinal soundness the primacy over moral. Which would shock you most, to hear that some member of this Church had become a Unitarian or a Roman Catholic, or to hear that he had been seen drunk, or that his books would not balance? I think I understand that state of mind to which the moral seems less heinous than the doctrinal defection, but surely the most malignant voice that can make us conscious of it, and shake us out of it, is the voice of God. How profoundly inconsistent it is with all the great fundamental utterances of the New Testament on the true nature of Christianity. "Not every one that saith unto Me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in Heaven." "If we know that He is righteous, we know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him." "Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God." Words like these, in which our Lord and the greatest of His Apostles unite, put us at the true point of view for judging what is and is not vital in the Church, and God requites us good for any curse which compels us to lay them to heart.

There is something akin to this in another criticism of the Church, with which we are all familiar. Nothing is commoner than to hear the church, and especially its office-bearers, denounced as guilty of downright dishonesty with regard to its creed. They profess to believe it, we are told, but they do not and cannot believe it. They sign it on important occasions with solemn declarations of

sincerity, and it is notorious that they are not sincere. No person of ordinary intelligence and education could possibly accept in the twentieth century the intellectual statement of religion which suited the sixteenth or seventeenth. The whole thing is revolting in its untruthfulness. Now it is quite easy here also to repel what is most offensive in such charges. They are often made by people who reject Christianity altogether, and who cannot understand that it still has power to win the assent and allegiance even of educated men. They are often made by those who forget that assent by an individual to what is part of the constitution of a society does not mean that the individual is to be annihilated in the interest of the society. A man may be thoroughly loyal in accepting the constitution of his country though he thinks it capable of amendment, and thoroughly loyal in accepting the creed of his Church though he would like to see it cleared or simplified. In point of fact our Church expressly gives those who sign its confession liberty to dissent from it on matters not entering into the substance of the Reformed faith: which is as ample a liberty perhaps as can be granted to those who wish to maintain their connexion with Christian history. But when everything has been said in defence of the present situation which can be said, is there not something even in the sneers and slanders of outsiders which should go to our conscience? Why should it be necessary to make any excuses at all? Why should the Christian Church, which is spoken of in Scripture as the pillar and buttress of the truth, of all institutions in the world have to be perpetually defending itself against charges of insincerity, or even of downright falsehood? Why do we ask men still to sign what needs always a certain amount of explaining away? Why do we rack our brains to invent elastic formulae which will seem to bind us to certain doctrinal statements but really leave us a good deal of rope? Why should it be possible for anyone to say that the Church of Scotland declares its acceptance of the Westminster Confession in language the whole recommendation of which is that it is thoroughly equivocal, or that in the United Free Church acceptance of the Confession is eased by a declaratory act which declares with regard to certain main doctrines of the Confession what the Confession itself does not declare? Ought we not to get out of the doubtful situations which give even plausibility to such impeachments of our honesty? Ought we not to find a broad and simple expression for our faith in Christ and loyalty to Him which could be sincerely accepted by all who call Jesus Lord, and trust in Him for salvation? People say this is not a creed-making age. Neither it is. But what if there should never be a creed-making age, in the sense of the seventeenth century, again? Even a good Christian, I think, might be content to believe that the Gospel would perpetuate its power in society and in individual souls without burdening anyone with such a complete intellectual outfit. It creates needless difficulties, and sometimes does tempt to equivocation and insincerity. And when we are denounced for such vices by unsympathetic outsiders, let us remember what David said about Shimei. It may be done in despite and hatred, yet it is God who is calling on us to enter into our conscience, and to make our ways clear and simple before Him. There would not be the possibility of such cursing if we were walking in the light as He is in the light.

I will take one example more. The Church is cursed at the present time with great heartiness by many who profess themselves the friends of the poor. There is a socialist criticism which denounces it as essentially a capitalist institution, an inhuman thing. It is always on the side of the rich, or at least of the well-to-do. The working classes are lost to it just because they have gradually come to see that it has no interest in them. It is the abode of the selfish, who may well be content with things as they are, and who care nothing for the disinherited, the hopeless, and the wronged. You will not imagine that I am going to discuss the relations of the Church and socialism,

or even to discuss what might be said in reply to such charges. We all know the amount of falsehood and malice which is in them. I preach in a different church almost every Sunday, but I have never preached in a church of capitalists yet. There are churches and individual Christians, we are well aware, that are distinguished for their sympathy with the poor, and for their works of practical beneficence. But instead of resenting or retaliating, let us ask what is the voice of God which becomes audible in our hearts through such slanders or beneath them. What is our real attitude to the poor? Is it the least like the fraternal attitude of Jesus in the Gospel? or do we not rather incline to judge them with a certain hardness of heart? If we are not poor ourselves, we think we have earned it; we have made our position of moderate comfort, or of modest independence; we have been diligent, self-denying, thrifty, independent; and we see no reason why others should not be so, or take the consequences. If people are poor, they have earned that also: let them be poor. It is impossible to alter the laws under which God administers human affairs, and this is one of them. Of course there is such a thing as bad health, and even perhaps as bad luck, and we do not wish to be unsympathetic; but, broadly speaking, people get in the world what they work for, and if we take our own responsibilities we must not be asked to take other people's as well. This is the line on which much of our thinking and feeling spontaneously moves, but simply to follow it is not the way to get the good out of curses. I am sure it would be very difficult to follow it in the presence of Jesus. When we think of it, the economical principles by which men get on in the world are not identical with His teaching in this region. They do not contain everything which it contained. In the staple of our thoughts, in our ordinary temper, there is much inhumanity, much disinclination to think of the burdens and disabilities of others, much reluctance to give practical effect to the idea that society is truly Christianized only in proportion as the things which we value most are shared by all. This is the truth which the cursing of the Church by socialism should teach us, and it is to teach it, doubtless, that God has permitted the cursing. Can anyone deny, for example, that the mind of Christ about money, and the mind of the ordinary Christian about money, are worlds apart? The one thing most of us are afraid of is to be poor; the one thing which He really dreaded for men was to be rich. How hardly, He said, that is, with what difficulty, shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of Heaven! "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." The socialist criticism of the Church may be malignant or absurd, but do any of us believe that? Is there one of us who, if he had the opportunity to become rich, would decline it because he was risking his soul? Is there one of us who could be sure that to come into the possession of wealth would not intensify his love of wealth, and make him not only less liberal, but less humane, more on his guard against impostors, more rigorous and self-righteous in his judgment of the poor, more exclusive and self-centred, less expansive, sympathetic, and kind? It is bitter to be charged falsely with vices which may be quite alien to our character, but it is rarely that even a false charge does not bring something to our remembrance to humble us in the presence of God. It is of no profit to us to be angered by slander, and to retort upon those who utter it; very likely the one may be as easy as the other. The real profit is when it brings us into contact with something in our life to which in our self-complacency we have been blind - something of which the slanderer knows nothing, but which we feel before God more deeply than any wound He could inflict - and when we give ourselves in God's presence with penitence and humility to set it right with Him. There are such things, such memories, in the lives of all men; and perhaps in surveying the unjust and malignant things said about the Church or about Christians in general we have all been secretly reminded of

some of them. It is good to be reminded. It is good to take them to heart. It is good to put resentment away, and with a contrite heart seek forgiveness and amendment from God. It is thus he brings good out of evil, and requites blessing for the curse.

05.07. Creation

Chapter 7

CREATION "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." - Gen 1:1 THE Bible begins with God: that is one of the marks which distinguish it not only from much ordinary thinking, but even from many of what are called religious books. It never attempts to prove that God exists: the existence of God is for it the primary certainty. It never seeks to rise through nature up to nature's God; for the Bible writers, God is far nearer, far surer, far more vividly real than nature. A heathen writer who wished to give such an account of the universe as we find in this chapter would start with the world, or with the dim confusion of elements out of which the world was to emerge; and in due time, as the confusion settled into order, the gods would appear in their proper place among the other beings constituting the universe. To such a writer, in short, his gods are part of the world; they belong to the glory and beauty which he sees around him; but to the Israelite his God is before the world and above it; He is its Creator; from beginning to end it is absolutely dependent on Him. A modern mind, again, is apt to think of the world without thinking of God or of gods at all. The idea of creation has been displaced in it by that of nature. Nature means the world regarded as a system of things having its life in itself, and capable of being interpreted without looking beyond it. In this there is no doubt a relative truth. Such as it is, the world is there, and it has an independence of its own. But the Bible point of view is that it owes this independence to God. He has given to it to have life in itself, yet it lives and moves and has its being in Him. The main aspects in which creation is viewed in Scripture are two. In the first place, it is creation out of nothing. The world is originally and for ever dependent on a power beyond itself. It has no value, no reality, no being, but what it owes to Him who created and who sustains it. It is passing, passing, passing, but from everlasting to everlasting He is God. In the second place, it is creation in Christ. This is an idea on which great stress is laid in the later New Testament books. For Him who sees into the heart of things, in the light of the Christian revelation, the world is not merely a vast system of natural phenomena, it has a Divine and indeed a Christian meaning. It is all here with Christ in view. Nature is destined from the first to rise into a human and spiritual kingdom; embedded in its original constitution is a reference to the Person and the Sovereignty of Christ. There is not only the seal of God upon it, but in some deep mysterious way there is the promise of Christ in it. It is nearly a generation now since Professor Drummond's "Natural Law in the Spiritual World" profoundly impressed a wide circle of Christian readers; but what the Bible doctrine of creation in Christ implies is something far more wonderful and Divine - it is spiritual law in the natural world, the tokens of Christ's presence and working in the whole field of being. It is not, however, these general aspects of Bible teaching on creation which I wish to consider at present, but rather the religious significance of the doctrine of creation as Scripture reveals it. This may be put under four heads.

1. To begin with, creation in Scripture constantly appears as an inspiration to worship. The contemplation of heaven and earth fills the mind with adoring thoughts of God. We see it in Psa 8:1-9, Psa 19:1-14, Psa 29:1-11, Psa 36:1-12, Psa 104:1-35, and many more. "The heavens

declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night teacheth knowledge. There is no speech nor language; their voice is not heard. Their line is gone into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." The Psalmist does not mean that he came to know God by studying astronomy; on the contrary, his mind was full of God when he looked up at the heavens over his head; but the changing splendours of night and day gave him a new sense of God's greatness, and opened his lips in adoration. Every one who knows God at all knows that He is great, but it is through the works of God in nature that imagination is quickened to apprehend His greatness, and that all that is within us is stirred up to magnify His name. We do not praise Him as we should till Nature, too, inspires our praise, and we join our voices to those who cry: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory". This inspiration to worship is peculiarly needed at present for two reasons. One is the accidental reason that such a vast proportion of men now dwell in cities, where Nature, it may almost be said, has ceased to be an appreciable part of the environment of their life. They do not see the face of the earth, and very often not the face of the sky. "Thou hast made summer and winter," says the worshipping Psalmist, but summer and winter are all one in our blank stony streets. "Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness," he says again; but the townsman's year has no crown; unless he gets a holiday in the country, it is one monotonous strip of time. No doubt it is in the providence of God that city life has developed, but whatever the virtues it evokes in man, whatever the stimulus it applies to his intellect, his ambition, his faculty for government, it will hardly be contended that it is favourable to worship. It is rather in the face of nature than amid the importunate pressures of society that we can lose ourselves in the adoring contemplation of God. And when we get the opportunity to do so, surely it is a sin as well as a folly to carry as much as we can of the city's drawbacks into the country, and to prefer holiday resorts haunted by the same excitements which make it hard to realize God's presence when we are at home. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills." The second reason why we need that inspiration for worship which comes from nature is more serious: it is that our religion is specifically a religion of redemption. The question in which it originates on our side is. What must I do to be saved? and when that question has once been seriously asked, we soon realize that nature can do nothing to answer it. Neither earth nor sky nor sea - neither sun, moon, nor stars - have a word to say to the man who is suffering from a bad conscience. Hence when such a man finds the Healer and the Saviour he requires, he is apt to concentrate his religion in the sphere of conscience. What is worse, he is tempted to concentrate it upon himself. He may sink so far as to imagine that God only exists to minister to him, and that he and not God is the centre of spiritual interest in the universe. There are other checks upon this repulsive degeneration of what should be the highest type of religion - the religion of the man who has been redeemed by the passion of a Divine love - but they need not be considered here. All I wish to say is that one of the preservatives against it is the surrender of the soul to those impulses to worship which come from the contemplation of nature. What must I do to be saved? is a question apart from which there is no Christianity, but it is not the only question which rises spontaneously in the soul made for God. "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?" These also are religious questions, and it is a poor religion which does not ask them, and find in that which prompts them a new motive for worship. There is something pedantic in Sir John Seeley's idea that the God worshipped by the astronomer and the geologist, dwelling as they do in

the immensities of space and time, is greater and more wonderful than the God of the average Christian. I do not believe that even Kepler or Newton was more profoundly impressed by the starry heaven, or by the unsearchable greatness of God revealed in it, than Job or Homer or the Psalmists. It is not science that is needed to enrich religion here- though no question it has its contribution to make - but contact with nature and sensibility to it. It is through the senses, not through science, that imagination is impressed; but we need this impression to give elevation, dignity, and calm to worship, and to free it from settling feverishly on ourselves. The New Testament is not to be cut off from the Old, and it would be an immense enrichment of worship in many churches if they abridged their hymn-books, in which "personal" religion has run wild, and praised God oftener in Psalms like those just mentioned.

2. To go on to a second point: creation appears in Scripture not only as an inspiration to worship, but as an inspiration to trust in God. This is perhaps the point on which most stress is laid in the Bible itself: the doctrine of creation is called up to reassure those whose faith is being almost too severely tried. We find a striking instance of this in Jeremiah. God bids Jeremiah buy and pay for a field on which the Chaldean armies were encamped, with the assurance that it was quite a safe investment; in spite of its occupation by an irresistible enemy, houses and fields and vineyards should yet again be bought in that land. Jeremiah completed the bargain half despairing, and then, not to fall wholly into despair, he prayed, "Ah, Lord God! behold, Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and by Thy stretched out arm; there is nothing too hard for Thee". That is the use of this doctrine. When we let it sink into our minds, heaven and earth become a kind of picture of God's omnipotence; they are reassuring to all who trust in Him; they tell them with a sublime communicative confidence that God is able to keep His word. And is it not this which explains the peculiar appeal to God in a prayer of Jesus uttered at a crisis in His career? "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." To judge by outward signs, it was an unprosperous and disappointing time for Jesus; but He can contentedly and even joyfully accept the will of the Father, disconcerting as it seems, because it is a sovereign and omnipotent will, which cannot fail to achieve its purpose in the way which seems good to it. Just because creation is an index to God's resources, it teaches us not to despair because we have come to the end of our own. But nature, according to Scripture, is an invitation to trust on another ground. It is a revelation not only of the infinite power of God, but of His constancy. It is probably quite true to say that the people who wrote the Bible had no idea of what we mean by a law of nature; most of us have no very distinct idea ourselves. But they had a strong impression of the faithfulness of God as exhibited in all the great aspects of nature, and of the unreservedness with which He might be trusted. The alternation of day and night is God's covenant, and it is the very type of what can be depended on. It is because God is true to His word that we can count upon seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, cold and heat. "For ever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations; Thou hast established the earth and it abideth. They continue this day according to Thine ordinances; for all are Thy servants." The laws of nature, as we call them, are the will of God the immutability of its laws, so far as it is a fact and a fact capable of interpretation, means the constancy of His character. They all invite us to trust in Him as a God who is worthy of trust, and will not put us to confusion. It is a bad conscience that sometimes makes us take them otherwise. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Why do we so often read this as a threat? Why do we not as instinctively read it as a promise? It is not one any more than the other, but a

declaration confirmed by nature on every hand that God is faithful and can be counted on under all circumstances. He will not deny Himself nor fail His creatures. Do we ever stay our faith thus in times of despondency, or win for our religion the amplitude and calm which belong to such a sense of God? Not even a New Testament believer, fervent as his trust in the Father may be, can afford to lose such a sublime inspiration to faith as Isaiah found in the midnight sky. "Lift up your eyes on high, and see who hath created these, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by name; by the greatness of His might, and for that He is strong in power, not one is lacking. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed away from my God? He has forgotten to do me justice." If God is faithful there, He will be faithful here. That is the very description of what He is - a faithful Creator, as Peter calls Him. We may be sure that He will prove true to every hope He inspires, to every promise He implants, to every trust He evokes. The laws of nature do not restrain His freedom: they proclaim His trustworthiness. They say to us, in the voice which goes out to the ends of the world, "Fret not thyself in any wise". "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him." He that believeth shall not make haste, but a peace and constancy like that of nature will fill his heart even as he trusts in God the Creator.

3. In a third way the doctrine of creation is important to religion: it contains a religious motive for the study of the world around us. Perhaps it was of history rather than of nature the Psalmist was thinking when he said, "The works of the Lord are great: sought out of all them that have pleasure therein"; but we may legitimately apply his words to our subject. A philosopher of our own has compared the face of nature to visual language - language addressed not to the ear but the eye. It is like the page of a book, a book written by the finger of God, and meant by God to be read; and surely of all people in the world those who believe that God has written it - those who believe that in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth - ought to be most eager to read it. Yet in point of fact this is not the case. We owe our religion to Israel, but not our science; and often among ourselves we find that those who are absorbed in religion are indifferent to science, and those who are devoted to science are indifferent to religion. Sometimes in both cases the indifference passes into hostility, and histories have been written of the conflict between science and religion. I am not going to discuss this here, but surely it should be plain to the religious, at all events, that they can have no quarrel with science. If God created all that is, whoever finds out anything about the world is finding out the truth of God. He may not know this, but it is the fact, nevertheless. The truths of astronomy with its infinite spaces and of geology with its measureless times, the truths of chemistry with its wonderful combinations and of physiology with its secrets of life and death, the truths of the higher and harder sciences of mind and history, they are all the truths of God. They are there to enlarge our knowledge and to exalt our thoughts of Him, and every man of science is in this sense a minister of religion. God, in the works of His hands around us, is calling us to enter into His thoughts; He is putting his own powers and resources at our disposal, and it is not impious, but a part of true religion, to try to follow God's thoughts as they are embodied in creation, and to use in His service the powers which He has there placed within our reach. But since this is so, and since it is so plain, why should there have been the friction which has undoubtedly existed between men devoted to science and men devoted to religion? Why have religious people suspected science, and why has science sometimes proclaimed war on religion? I suppose the reason must be in the main that they have misunderstood one another - failed to appreciate each other's interest in the world. The scientific man looks at the world and calls it

nature. Nature means the world regarded as having its life in itself; there it is, and he takes it as it stands, raising no question as to its origin, its end, or its relation to anything beyond. But nature in this sense is not a Bible word at all; the very idea of it is foreign to the Bible; what we find there is creation, and creation means the world regarded as having life not in itself, but only in and through God. Nature is self-subsistent, but creation subsists through the Creator. Nature is there for itself, but creation is there as the scene of a spiritual life, the theatre of the acts and government of God. The scientific man, who takes nature one piece at a time, is apt to feel that at no particular point is God essential. But when we see how every science leads out of itself into another, as every department of nature issues into the whole - when we feel that all the truths of all the sciences are parts of one truth, and that that truth can only live and move and have its being in an eternal mind which is akin to our own - then we realize that nature is not without God, and without compromising the integrity of our science we can bring it into a living connexion with our religion. It is only in this connexion that the study of nature is truly reverent, and uplifting to the soul. It is conscious at once of the nearness of God in nature, and of his transcendence - of the intelligibleness of things, and of their unsearchable mystery. In both these characteristics it is akin to religion: religion also knows God, and knows that He passes knowledge. If religious people had always done their part in the study of the works of God, that sincere and reverent study which their Divine origin demands; and if scientific people had always remembered that every separate truth becomes false when it is cut off from relation to truth as a whole - that is, to the mind of God - we might have been spared much misunderstanding and strife, and a more noble and intelligent praise would have gone up to God from the hearts of all His children. This great reconciliation has yet to be fully accomplished, but the key to it lies in the very first sentence of the Bible.

4. Our last inference from the creation of all things by God remains: the life of man - his life as a free moral being - must have in the last resort a positive relation to the world; or rather man must recognize that in the last resort nature is positively related to his moral calling. In other words, it is a system of things which will be found to be on the side of man's higher life, and from which it is fatal for him to cut himself off. It is necessary to say "in the last resort," for in ourselves, nature is no longer what God made it; without professing to solve the mystery of evil, we must acknowledge that in us nature is rather what we have made it, that it casts a deforming shadow on what is in itself perfect, and puts the world out of joint. Even if it were not so, there would be a certain disproportion between what we are and what we are called to make of ourselves in the world - such a disproportion as implies effort and strain in a developing moral being - in a word, the denial of self. We cannot imagine any other situation for ourselves than one in which the moral life has to be conquered in and from nature; every inch of morality has to be won in incessant and resolute conflict. But though we must fight this good fight till our last breath, though we must deny the evil nature that is in us, and put to death, as Paul says, our members that are on the earth, we must not because of this excommunicate the good creation which is the work of God. The world as God has made it - the actual world into which we are born, and for which on every side of our nature we have affinities - that whole of nature into which we strike our roots to the centre - that and no other is the world in which we have to live a spiritual life. It is very natural when we feel the strain of the conflict to think that the sure way to victory is to renounce the world altogether, to cut the connexion with nature at the root, to cultivate a goodness which owes nothing to the world as God made it, and is a purely spiritual, sublimed, and supernatural thing. It is very natural to do this, but all experience proves it to be both a mistaken and a disastrous course. The virtue that is not

rooted in nature - that has not the sap of nature in it - that does not articulate itself into the great life of the world and rejoice in God's presence and goodness there, is an impotent and ineffective thing; it does not tell on the world to any intent of which God approves; it tends inevitably to be Pharisaic, and is destitute of redeeming power. There is a place for asceticism, undoubtedly, in every spiritual life, but it is not a principle which can claim the whole sphere of morality for its own. In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth, and every creature of God is good, and to be received with thanksgiving. It is the morality which rests on this basis, and not that which makes it a principle to abstain from marriage and from meats, which can really establish the kingdom of God in the natural world which God has made. We must rectify the perversions which are due to ourselves, and once right with our Creator we shall know how to be right with all His works. We shall be able to say with St. Paul, "All things are ours; all things work together for good to them that love God". When we have passed all these things in review - the inspirations it yields to worship, to trust, to knowledge, and to a rich moral life - we still cannot keep the insignificance of nature from returning on our minds. Nature without God is nothing. Even man without God is nothing. To learn this is to learn one of the greatest truths of religion. It has inspired the loftiest poetry, or all but the loftiest. The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces, The solemn temples, the great globe itself And all which it inherit shall dissolve, And like an insubstantial pageant faded Leave not a wrack behind. We are such stuff As dreams are made on, and our little life Is rounded with a sleep. This is nature by itself. But the higher truth of nature - the positive truth on which its place in religion depends - has been expressed in poetry if possible still more sublime, because in it God is present in His world, and all creation attests His presence. "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts: all the earth contains is His glory." No worship is complete that has not in it an amen to the voice of the seraphim.

05.08. The Great Charter

Chapter 8 THE GREAT CHARTER

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” - Gen 1:26 THE Bible begins with the story of creation, and invites us to think of the religious import of the truth that the whole universe is dependent upon God. But its main interest is not in creation, or as we now say in nature, but in man; and in this ancient narrative man has a place apart. His creation is no doubt part of the creation of all things, but it is preceded by a Divine deliberation, it is carried out after a Divine pattern, and it is accompanied by a great charter: “Let them have dominion over all the earth”.

These things need to be emphasized. Within the last generation, more than at any earlier period, our minds have been trained to look mainly at the connexion between man and nature. Man, it cannot be denied, is a natural being, a part of the physical universe, like everything else that we see. He has a physical ancestry, originates in physical processes, is subject to the same conditions of life as the other animals, needs the same air, light, heat, food, and so forth, is subject to the same diseases, and succumbs at last to the same death. His being is part of the one vast web of life which is perpetually being woven and unravelled in the world. This is truth, and cannot be put too strongly. It is what the Bible means when it says, He also is flesh. But is it the whole truth? Is man merely a piece of nature? is he merely the last term in an ascending series of animals, the consummation or crown of the natural process? No one who has really reflected would answer in the affirmative. It is true that all forms of life are akin; it is true that we are blood relations of everything that breathes: it is true that there is only one chemistry, one physiology, for the interpretation of life in every degree from the amphioxus up to man. But if this is a humbling and perhaps a depressing truth - if it casts the shadow of physical necessity over what we are accustomed to regard as the realm of human freedom - let us consider on the other hand that the only chemist, the only physiologist, the only interpreter of nature in her one and pervasive life is man. Man is not only a part of nature, he confronts nature as nothing which is only a part of it could do. He confronts it and includes it at the same time. He is not only the crown of nature, he is in some sense its king. It is his territory, his inheritance. He confronts it with a sovereign self-consciousness. He is not only, like other living creatures, a subject which science studies; unlike other living creatures he is the creator of the very science by which this study is carried on. Though he lives in time, he is not time's fool; a relation to God, to eternal truth, to inviolable duty, to a free calling in which nature is subject to him, is just as much a part or characteristic of his being as his kinship to nature as a whole, and the rooting of his life in the physical system around him. This is not only recognized in every sound philosophy: it stands on the first page of the Bible as part of its conception of the true constitution of man. It is what the Bible means when it tells us that God created man in His own image and gave him dominion over all the earth.

If we meant to study the image of God in man, the best plan would probably be to go directly to the New Testament. The beginnings of human life and history lie beyond our reach, and all that anthropology can do for us seems to illustrate rather the natural than the supernatural in man, rather his relation to nature than what is just as certain, though not so easily traced, his relation to God. When our minds are turned to this last, it is the second Adam, not the first, to whom we must look. It is He alone - Jesus Christ our Lord - who is expressly called in Scripture "the image of the invisible God". It is in Him we see the Divine likeness in which - or, as some people would now prefer to say, for which - we were made. To see Him, and especially to believe in Him, evokes those capacities in us through which our life is connected with God, and so enables us to attain the ends for which we are created. But it is not the Divine image in particular that I wish to speak of, but the Divine charter which was given to our race along with it. This is expressed here in the words, "Have dominion . . . over all the earth". It is not a peculiarity of the Old Testament: on the contrary, it is precisely the same thought which we find in the New, where St. Paul writes to the Corinthians, "All things are yours . . . the world, or life, or death, things present or things to come; all are yours". The sovereign self-consciousness of man in presence of the world is part of the true religion from beginning to end, and it is well worth while, therefore, to consider the ways in which it is exercised.

Speaking generally, it may be said that this sovereign self-consciousness of man, resting as it does on his relation to God, binds him to exercise his sovereignty over nature in accordance with what he knows to be God's will. Man is not an absolute or irresponsible king; his sovereignty is delegated to him by God; it belongs to him only as he is made in the image of God, and it must be exercised within the limits of the Divine charter. Where God is unknown or forgotten - where the true religion is unknown or debased - man may live in childish terror of the world and its forces, or he may use and abuse them in ways which are merely degrading to himself; but in his true sovereignty he is at once free, and under responsibility to God. Creation is the realm in which his sovereignty is exercised, and he exercises it in a way which reveals at once his kinship to the Creator and his sense of responsibility to Him. What, then, let us ask in more detail, are the ways in which man avails himself of the charter which God has written on his nature, "Have dominion"?

1. Originally, no doubt, man exercised his sovereignty in the world instinctively, that is, without conscious reflection. There is something in him always which impels him to regard the earth as his in an exclusive sense. He finds it preoccupied by other creatures, but that does not embarrass him. He believes it is meant for his abode, and that his claim to it is superior to every other. He feels quite justified in exterminating some animals, in domesticating others to do him service, and in using others again to support his life. No doubt in this general exercise of sovereignty man may have erred, just as those smaller sovereigns have erred whose rule did not extend to "all the earth," but only to one little corner of human society; no doubt he may have been, and may still be, selfish, tyrannical, and cruel. To say that all things, and in particular all forms of life, are lower than humanity, and therefore have value only in relation to it, is not to say that human beings can lawfully use other forms of life in any way they please. It is only as made in God's image that man is entitled to exercise sovereignty, and he dare not exercise it in a way that debases or denies that image itself. A higher race of men is not exercising its dominion legitimately - it is not exercising it in a way congruous to the charter and to the Divine relationship of man on which it is based - when it virtually denies the image of God in a lower, and treats its members as if they were brutes or

tools. It is not exercising its dominion legitimately when it brutalizes its own nature - in other words, defaces and insults the Divine image in man - by torturing dumb creatures for its recreation, as in bull fighting, pigeon shooting, and many so-called sports. Cruelty to animals is not justified by the Divine charter which says, "Have dominion". Even the infliction of pain in the pursuit of knowledge which has the assumed good of humanity in view has moral dangers which it is not safe to ignore. If vivisection makes a man inhuman, it is for that man an illegitimate exercise of man's dominion over the creatures. The creatures belong to God, and they are ours only as we are His. We can do as we will with them, and with the whole world around us, so long as our doings contribute to the building up in the world the kingdom of Him whose right it is to reign. But arrogance, heartlessness, inhumanity, arbitrary self-will, are no part of the Divine charter God has granted to our race. We can have no "dominion over all the earth" except as partaking in and contributing to His sovereignty, who is just and good in all His ways.

2. It marks a more advanced stage in human progress when man begins to exercise his delegated sovereignty over all the earth through science. Science is the methodical interpretation of nature, the mapping out of our great inheritance, the cataloguing of its resources and of our treasures in them. Nothing more clearly reveals the truth that man is made, and is continually being more completely made, in the Divine image. Kepler spoke of the aim of all his scientific efforts as the thinking of God's thoughts after Him. To think God's thoughts after Him is to that extent to be initiated into His secrets and to obtain command of His resources. He who learns to think God's thoughts learns at the same time, in a corresponding measure, to wield God's power. And so far at least as nature is concerned, there seems to be no limit set to the extent to which we may do either. In this sense we may go on extending our dominion over the creatures indefinitely. For the last three hundred years, this has been increasingly the task of man. The proportion of human intelligence devoted to the enlargement of science and to its practical applications becomes continually greater; more minds are educated in this way, and more intelligence is given to this pursuit, than at any earlier period. The sciences of nature have been created - astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology. The forces in nature have been studied, mastered, and applied. Dominion over all the earth in a true and lofty sense is easily and widely exercised. The astronomer enables man to make the trackless seas his pathway to distant lands. The physicist masters the laws of heat, and the steam engine toils for us in every factory, on every railroad, on almost every ship in the world. The laws of light are mastered, and even a child can play with a camera, and make the sun take pictures for him. The laws of electricity are mastered, and not to speak of light and power, we send messages by the telegraph, or speak through the telephone, as though space had ceased to be. The human mind has never done anything over which it has been so elated. No triumph has ever been attended by such an incessant blowing of trumpets. And in a way this is quite legitimate, for all this interpretation and exploitation of nature is the fulfilment of the great charter - Have dominion. But more and more with the years there has become audible behind this song of triumph a strain of misgiving, and sometimes even of disappointment and despair. It is as though man were burdened by his very achievements - wearied, as the prophet says, with the greatness of his way. He has captured nature, but captive nature has in turn made him her captive. His train can run sixty miles an hour, and no matter how the pace shakes his nerves, he dare not travel more slowly. He can speak across the four hundred miles which separate Glasgow from London, and he must do business at that tension, or make room for those who can. Nature has revenged herself by getting dominion over him. What shelter to grow ripe has he, what leisure to grow wise?

It is as though we could do everything with our inheritance except have dominion over it.

Disconcerting as this may be for the moment, there is no reason why we should be discouraged by it. It is only the reappearance in our own time of an experience which has haunted the whole history of advancing knowledge. He that increaseth knowledge, the preacher tells us, increaseth sorrow; to master the laws and the resources of nature is not (in this mood) a high calling with which God has called us, a noble charter which He has bestowed upon our kind; it is a sore travail which God has given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith. Always, too, from time to time in the history of science there have been on this ground what may be called Puritanic reactions against it - protests, which their authors no doubt regarded as spiritual, against man's intoxication with it, against the strain which its practical applications put upon human nerves, against the luxuries and conveniences which it multiplies and makes necessary, so that the hardy simplicity and composure of a manlier age are lost. Even the Bible, in which all human experiences are reflected, reflects this one also. Genesis itself shows us that Babylon is only built at the cost of Eden, and Jeremiah holds up the impracticable virtue of the Rechabites, which would have extinguished not only drunkenness but civilization, as a pattern to his degenerate contemporaries. The true inference to draw from such moral phenomena is that science and its applications are not the ultimate fulfilment of the charge - Have dominion. In one sense they do fulfil it, but in another they only set it for us over again. They reveal more clearly the world in which man's sovereignty is to be exercised: he sees his task (or his privilege) on a higher plane, in a more exacting form. It was easier - or we think it was - to have the sense of sovereignty in a simple, narrow, leisurely world; it is hard to achieve and hard to retain it in that complicated and swiftly moving world in which science compels us to live. But this only means that in such a world as ours it is peculiarly necessary to hear God say, Have dominion, as made in the image of God. Remember your relation to Me. Remember the supernatural likeness in which you are made, and in the sense of your connexion with God, whose all these things are and whom they all serve, do not be overborne by them; be their sovereign, not their slave. Strengthen yourself in God, and reflect that it is only by making the task harder and harder that it is possible for God to give you a larger and larger possession of the image in which you were made.

3. Instinctive impulse, and science with its wonderful applications, are modes in which man exercises a dominion over nature, but his sovereignty is even more wonderfully demonstrated in art. In art, as contrasted with applied science, there is always something creative. It is the nearest approach which man can make to working as God works. Man's dominion over the world, his power to appropriate and to use for his own ends all the glory and beauty of nature, all the joy and sorrow, all the splendour and the mystery of life, is nowhere more signally displayed than in the great works of painters and sculptors, musicians and poets. They demonstrate the freedom and sovereignty of the spiritual being in a way hardly less than Divine, and they help all who can appreciate them to partake in the same dominion. We are lifted above the world and every sort of bondage to the necessities with which it encompasses us, when we enter into the genius to which nature and the Life of man are but the raw material or the unconscious prompting for works of enduring truth and beauty. The gifted minds to whom the rest of us are debtors in this region show us in one conspicuous way how the Divine charter is made good - Have dominion over all the earth. But if this cannot be easily denied, it can just as little be put forward as the whole solution of the problem. How many men of genius could be named who were so far from having this universal

sovereignty that they were not even masters of themselves? Genius may be used to assert and display man's dominion over the world, but it may lie neglected and unused, or it may be used to unworthy ends. It is a gift, and like every other gift it needs guidance. It is not genius which is made in the Divine image, but man; and apart from a sense of responsibility to God and humanity, genius may quite well be prostituted and wasted. It may be used in a way which enslaves man to what is beneath him in nature, instead of helping him to realize dominion over it; and when this happens, the power it exerts in degrading is as great as that which it might have exerted in uplifting and inspiring man. It is hardly true to say that in such cases the light that leads astray is light from heaven. Genius is not of itself a light from heaven. It is rather part of the nature over which man is to have dominion, as well as a power of asserting dominion over other parts; and man, in virtue of his nature as made in the Divine image, is entitled to judge all natural gifts, even the supreme gifts of genius, and the use to which they are put. Genius helps us to attain the sovereignty to which we are called only when he who is endowed with it has won the same sovereignty over his genius itself - in other words, when he uses it in the sense of responsibility to God, and in view of man's chief end. It is always the altar which sanctifies the gift. What can be truly said at last is that when gifts of genius are laid on the altar of God they help us, as no other powers or efforts do, to attain to the sovereignty set before us in our creation.

4. In conclusion, the sovereignty which was bestowed on man at the beginning, in virtue of his creation in the image of God, is only exercised effectively as that image is renewed and realized in us. It is only exercised effectively through true religion, or the life in God. If we wish to see it in its normal operation we have to look to Jesus, who was "the image of the invisible God," or to those who have been redeemed by Him and are fulfilling the Divine calling of the race in His strength. Who can truly say that the great charter - Have dominion - has been made good to him? Who can truly say that it is being made good? Only the man who through Christ has been made right with God to the very depth of his being, and who has the inward assurance that henceforth everything in God's world is his ally. It is he who has the consciousness of superiority to all outward things, and who knows that all that befalls him, however untoward it may seem, must contribute to his life toward God. If it is not an echo of this text which we find in Rom 8:1-39, it is the Christian key to it. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." "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 in Christ Jesus our Lord." All things are ours when we are His. This is the form in which our sovereignty is asserted in the New Testament. But who is equal to such utterances as these? In Gen 1:1-31 we have the Divine ideal for man; in Rom 8:1-39 the Divine fulfilment of it, amid all the trials of life, by the way of redemption. But the ordinary life we live, and by which we are apt to measure reality, is too little in contact with either. Often we feel that the world is our enemy, that all things are against us, and that they are too hard for us. The growing sense that man is implicated in nature makes it harder to believe in his sovereignty over it. Once men thought of the world mainly as the scenery of their life, the stage on which the moral drama was transacted, and then it was easy enough to feel independent; but now we know it is not only scenery, but soil; the roots of our being are interwoven with it, and we do not know how to conceive of freedom, not to speak of dominion. In proportion, too, as the merely physical conditions of existence are mastered, the moral task seems to become more complicated. Few of us here need to fear cold or hunger; to that extent our dominion over the earth has been made good. But the organized and elaborate

system of life through which this has been secured has a new power of its own to bring us into bondage, and it is a new and not an easier task to live a free and sovereign life in it in the image of God. It is a task we can only fulfil if we have the assurance of a present love of God reaching deeper into life than its most distressing and hopeless conditions. The whole message of the New Testament is that there is such a love, and that it has been made sure to us in Christ. The one thing which makes the world impracticable to us, which baffles every attempt on our part to live a free and sovereign life in it, is sin; we face it with an evil conscience and a corrupt nature, and all things are against 'us. It is not every one who can say, We know that all things work together for good to them that love God. It is they only who have learned, as St. Paul had, that in Christ a love of God has come into the world which has gone to the very depth of our need, which has taken on itself the strain of the problem our sin had created, which has given us a new standing ground from which to face our calling, and has made us more than conquerors. Civilization, science, and art do not themselves establish man's dominion in the world; they rather challenge man again and again, at higher and higher levels, under more and more exacting conditions, to establish his dominion if he can. And he can, when at the cross of Christ, where the love of God bears even the sin of the world, he takes hold of that last and deepest reality which subdues all things to itself. His sovereignty comes back to him when he is united to Christ, whom God has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.

05.09. The Ideal Church

Chapter 9 THE IDEAL CHURCH

“And they continued stedfastly in the Apostles’ teaching and in the fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and the prayers.” - Acts 2:42

There are two ways in which the New Testament exhibits to us the ideal of the Church. One is doctrinal, and is illustrated in the epistle to the Ephesians. There the Church is set forth as the end of all the ways of God - the body of Christ which is filled with his fullness - the new humanity in which all the enmities and divisions of the old are transcended - the glorious bride of Christ, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. The other is historical, and is illustrated in this passage of Acts. Here we see the Church, as Luke saw it in his mind’s eye, in the days of its splendid prime, when the memory of Jesus was vivid and the gift of the Spirit new. Beginnings may not always be perfect, but there is always something inspiring about them, and something authoritative as well. To a Romanist, the doctrine of the Church is in a very real sense the only doctrine of Christianity; if he is right about this, he cannot be wrong about anything else. Protestants give the Church a very different place both in their thoughts and their faith; but as we all, in point of fact, have some relation to the Church, it is well that we should realize its significance in the New Testament. This passage presents us with four notes of the true Church as they impressed an early disciple, and I shall say a few words in explanation and enforcement of each.

1. They continued stedfastly in the teaching of the Apostles - rather, they waited assiduously upon their teaching. Some connexion with the Apostles is necessary if the Church is to be true to its ideal, for the Church is Christ’s Church, and the Apostles are the ultimate witnesses to Christ. A society which repudiated the teaching of the Apostles would not be the Christian Church nor entitled to the Christian name. Sometimes the connexion with the Apostles, apart from which a Church cannot be Christian, is supposed to be secured by what is called the apostolic succession of the ministry. The Apostles, it is asserted, ordained men to continue their office in the Church, and they in turn ordained others in an unbroken line reaching to our own time. It is this official continuation of the ministry on which the apostolic and therefore the Christian character of the Church depends. About this there are two things to be said. The first is, that there is not a Christian minister in the world, from the Bishop of “Rome up or down, who can prove that he himself stands in any such unbroken succession. And the second is, that even if it could be proved, it would be quite irrelevant as a mark of the true Church. Such an external, legal, formal continuity, even if it existed, could guarantee nothing spiritual, and it is on spiritual consanguinity with the Apostles and their testimony to Jesus that everything depends. A historical succession, could it be really traced, would have something imposing for the imagination; it would not be without interest for the intelligence: but to conscience it could never mean anything at all. The connexion with the Apostles which marks the Church as Christian is not to be sought in any external continuity of church officers, but in fidelity to apostolic teaching. Wherever such fidelity is found we have the

primary note of the apostolic Christian Church.

What then, we naturally ask, did the Apostles teach? A little further on in this book their enemies describe them as unlearned and ignorant men; but they took knowledge of them, we are told, that they had been with Jesus. This gives us the answer to our question. They had been with Jesus; they knew Jesus better than anybody else did; they never wearied telling about Him, and the Church never wearied hearing. That is what is meant by, "They continued stedfastly in the teaching of the Apostles"; it means they could never hear enough about Jesus. Our authorized version renders the words, "They continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine"; but that is both too narrow in itself, and to the ordinary reader suggests something false. No doubt the Apostles had doctrine even in the current sense: they had facts and interpretations of facts which constituted their Gospel, and apart from which they could not have borne their testimony to Jesus at all. St. Paul tells us what these were at the very beginning - the primary truths of the Gospel in which He and the Twelve had always been at one. "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures - He was buried - the third day He rose from the dead according to the Scriptures." But though this was no doubt accepted by all the disciples, something wider is meant here. The teaching of the Apostles would include their whole testimony to Jesus, and we have every reason to believe that it is truly represented in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. This is the primitive deposit of the apostolic testimony. We must remember in particular that it contained not only doctrines in the narrower sense of the word, but the revelation of a new life to which Christians were called. "Go and make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. Everything that is covered by the name of Jesus, the whole appeal made to men by His words and life and death, is included in the teaching of the Apostles to which the early Church was devoted. And it is the mark of the true Church always that it remains devoted to this teaching, and can never hear too much of the life and death, of the love and will, of its Lord.

There are plenty of people, of course, outside the Church who have a sincere contempt for sermons. There are plenty of people inside who would like, as they put it, to enlarge the field of interest, and to hear the minister of the Church on all sorts of literary, economical, or political questions. There are even people who disparage preaching on the plea of devotion: we do not go to church to hear sermons, they say, but to worship God. The mouths of all these people would be shut in a church waiting assiduously on the teaching of the Apostles, always eager to hear more about Jesus. Preaching is much more likely to fail, even in interest, from want of concentration than from want of range. There are plenty of people to talk politics and literature, and not too many to bear witness to Jesus who will yet extend His sceptre over every field. If the sermon in church is what it ought to be - if it is not an exhibition of the preacher but of Jesus - there should be nothing in it even conceivably in contrast with worship, but the very reverse. What can be more truly described as worship than hearing the word of God as it ought to be heard, hearing it with penitence, with contrition, with faith, with self-consecration, with vows of new obedience? If this is not worship in spirit and in truth, what is? We may sorrowfully confess that in all our churches there is too little worship, that adoration is rare, that while singing is enjoyed the sacrifice of praise is hardly conceived, and the ardour and concentration of prayer strangely unfamiliar, but we will not mend these deficiencies by thrusting into the background the testimony to Jesus. Such a testimony is the only inspiration to worship in the Christian sense of the term, and it is the primary

mark of the true Church that it gathers round this testimony and is unreservedly loyal to it.

2. The second mark of the Church in its early beauty was that they continued stedfastly in the fellowship. Fellowship is a word that has now been practically appropriated to religious uses, which means, unhappily, that it has lost any distinct significance for the ordinary reader. But its meaning here is tolerably plain. (Strictly it signifies joint participation, or mutual giving and receiving, and it refers to the peculiar conditions of life in that early society as they are described in the opening chapters of Acts. "They were together"; "they had all things common"; "no one said that any of the things he possessed was his own"; "there was no one in want among them"; "distribution was made to every one according as he had need." The Church was a family in which the new law of love was actually kept - so the historian puts it - even in regard to the outward necessities of life. This, and not something intangible or merely spiritual is in his mind when he says, "They continued stedfastly in the fellowship". And this, we must not forget, is a note of the ideal Church.

We need not be astonished that it has been criticized. Students of the New Testament have sometimes thought that Luke both exaggerated the teaching of Jesus about riches and poverty - being a lover of voluntary poverty himself - and that he exaggerates in these passages the extent to which community of goods existed or was approved in the early Church. So far as it was produced, too, in a moment of enthusiasm, they find it comparatively easy to disparage it. It meant no great sacrifice, they suggest, in a community in which practically every one was poor - with a climate in which the body could be satisfied with one garment, and with one meal a day - in a civilization which was not dependent like ours on accumulation of wealth - and above all, in a world which might at any moment come to an end. Further, it was a failure. Even the presence of Jesus could not secure "the fellowship" of the Twelve from the inevitable risks: Judas the treasurer was a thief and pilfered the paltry funds of the society. The fellowship of the primitive Church was responsible for Ananias and Sapphira. It was responsible for the poverty of the Jerusalem Christians which made them a burden on the Gentile Churches in Galatia and Asia, in Macedonia and Achaia. The saints sank under it into paupers, and as Paul discovered at last, into ungrateful paupers. What they ought to have been taught was that independence is as much a part of the Christian ideal as charity, and that it is short-sighted policy which forgets this. In speaking of "the fellowship" of these early believers as a mark of the ideal Church, I am not careful to answer the advocatus diaboli who urges such arguments against it. The problem of poverty is not so simple - certainly it is not so simple with us - nor is the solution of it so easy, as the early Christians supposed. But the instinct which impelled them in dealing with it was genuinely Christian, and apart from that instinct we shall never be able to deal with it at all. We must not disparage on any ground whatever the first bona fide attempt to make human brotherhood real. There is no true Church where the effort to do this has ceased. "Let brotherly love continue." "Love the brotherhood." "Be kindly affectioned one to another in brotherly love." "Remember the poor." The more things we have in common, material as well as spiritual, the more we realize the ideal of a Christian Church. Within the Church, there ought not to be such a thing as neglected and unsuccoured poverty, and so far as I can judge there is not much. The Church does not neglect its poor members, and perhaps those who complain that it neglects the poor in general - that is, neglects to help them in their poverty - forget how difficult it is to help those who refuse to have any relation with others except that of holding out their hand. The people who are here said to have

continued stedfastly in the fellowship were all alike members in a society where personal relations of every kind were intimate, and it was this which made "the fellowship," such as it was, possible. It was one feature in a society where, thanks to the influence of Jesus, many were willing to say. All that is mine is yours; but it cannot be reproduced, even with its drawbacks, in a society where the only cry is. All that is yours is mine. Do not let us forget that with all its drawbacks it was an inspiration of love, and that though love needs wisdom to guide it, without love - active, sacrificing, positive love - there is no Church at all.

3. The next note of the Church is of another kind, yet closely connected with this. "They continued stedfastly in the breaking of the bread." To break bread means in the Bible to eat, or to take food; but it came to be appropriated very early to the sacred meal in which Christians declared the Lord's death. It is synonymous, for all practical purposes, with the Lord's Supper; and it is another mark of the ideal Church, as Luke apprehended it, that the Lord's Supper has a central place in its worship. The history of the Supper, or perhaps it should be said of the sacraments in general, is the most heartbreaking and discreditable chapter in the whole story of Christianity. Those who call themselves Catholic Christians no doubt give the sacraments a great place in their religion. But the doctrine of the sacraments, in its so-called Catholic form, is a mere defiance to the mind of man - a mixture of religious materialism, of superstition, of magic, of impossible metaphysics, with no indubitable result but that of the enslavement of the Church to the priesthood. It is not wonderful that in repelling, as they are bound to repel, a system of ideas and practices which is not only thoroughly unchristian but thoroughly irrational, Protestants should sometimes have been tempted to lose patience with the whole subject round which it has been constructed. Some have dispensed with sacraments; some have proposed to suspend them for a generation or two till the superstition which has grown about them has died down; and many, to say the least, are embarrassed. Baptism is supported by sentimental as much as by Christian convictions. In "Catholic" churches the number of communicants as compared with the whole number of church people is very small, and among Protestants there are many to whom the Communion Sunday is rather a day of misgiving than of peculiar joy. The popular apprehension of the sacraments has shrunk, in fact, in many cases, to something purely negative. The ordinary church member does not believe that baptism regenerates, and he does not believe in a real presence of Christ in the bread and wine. It would be renouncing the very faculties God has given him to believe such things; it would be renouncing all that he means by faith in God Himself. And however he may be embarrassed by the sacraments, he finds it quite impossible to depart from this position. But surely mere negation cannot comprehend the whole truth. Surely Christ did not institute ordinances of any kind only that those who believe in Him might confess themselves baffled by them. If we negate one thing, it must be to affirm another. With the negations just referred to - that is, with the unqualified rejection of what claims to be the Catholic doctrine of the sacraments - I find myself in entire agreement. I do not and cannot believe either that Christ is in the water of baptism, or that He is in the bread and wine of the Supper. But I am quite sure that the New Testament suggests a real presence and working of Christ in the celebration of the sacraments, when they are celebrated as they originally were, and were always intended to be, in penitence and faith. It is not a presence in the elements, but a presence in the sense of the elements, and to the intent signified by them. It is not a presence which is explained by transubstantiation or by consubstantiation; both these theories are meaningless answers to meaningless questions. It is not a presence before which we must simply stand with minds paralysed, as if mental paralysis were identical with adoration, or

even with the sense of the mysterious. What the New Testament suggests, and what experience confirms, is that when baptism is celebrated in penitence and faith Christ is present, not in the water, but in the sense signified by it - that is, in the power of His spirit to wash our sinful nature and to renew it to life in God; and that when the Supper is celebrated He is again present, really present, not indeed in the sacramental elements, but in the sense of them; that is. He is present as the Lord whose body was broken and His blood shed for men, present in the power of His atonement, present to be the meat and drink of the soul. If any one says that this reduces the elements to mere symbols, I entirely agree; they can never be anything else. But they are Christ's pledge of His real presence in the sense of the symbols, and it is this which gives the sacraments their place of honour in the Church. They are not explanations, or theories, but facts; they remind us that faith rests not on any doctrine or wisdom of men, but on the presence and the action of a redeeming God. When the Communion Sabbath comes, then, let us celebrate the Supper not with superstition which would fain be reverent, and not with embarrassment which would fain be rid of something so perplexing in a spiritual faith, but with solemn, joyous, grateful appropriation of the Lord who is present with us, and who still gives Himself to us in the virtue of that sacrifice in which He once gave Himself for us. There is no true Church in which the soul is not nourished on a present Christ, and that Christ the very one whose body was broken and whose blood was shed for us. This is what the Sacrament declares.)

4. Finally, the ideal Church of early days had this mark: they continued stedfastly in the prayers. The expression implies public and stated prayers: they had such in the temple, and the custom was born again in the Church. Prayer became a new thing when it became prayer in the name of Jesus, prayer prompted by the contemplation of Jesus and by faith in Him. On the one hand, Jesus was an inspiration to prayer: men could ask God for all they saw in Him - for part in His purity. His obedience. His faith, His patience. His victory. On the other hand, Jesus was a limit to prayer: men could not ask, as children of God, exemption from experiences which He was not spared; they could not ask to have no poverty, no misunderstanding, no weariness, no cross. They could only present in Jesus' name prayers which He would present in their name; they could ask everything to which He would say. Amen, but nothing else. It is a mark of the true Church to continue stedfastly in such prayers, to know that its life must be fed from heavenly springs, and to cherish its communications with God. Dr. Chalmers A says that the reason why ministers fail in their work, I when they do fail, is not that they do not preach, or visit, or study, but that they do not pray. They go to do by themselves alone what no man can do unless God is with him. Every minister who knows anything knows that this witness is true. But it is true of congregations and of individual Christians exactly as it is of ministers. The life to which the Church is called in Christ is a life which it cannot live alone. It can only address itself to it as it is uplifted and strengthened by contact with God. Yet who could tell whether our inability to pray, or our unwillingness, is greater, an inability and unwillingness all the more astonishing when we consider how much we need and how much God in Christ has to give. How many of us hold on so earnestly to the sense of the prayers in church that we can even add a sympathetic Amen? Is there any note of the ideal Church in which more of our Churches would be found wanting than this - they continued stedfastly in the prayers?

Luke tells us some of the consequences which attended the possession of these striking notes, and it is worth while to mention them in closing. One was fear: fear fell upon every soul. This is

Luke's token of the presence of the supernatural. A church in which men are not awed by the unquestionable presence of God will never be a power in the world. Another was joy: they did eat their meat with gladness. There are family meals spoiled by low spirits, bad temper, sullenness; and nothing will drive these miseries away but a part in Christ and in the new life of His Church. This will brighten the very meals we eat, and there are unhappy homes that will never be made happy by anything else. The last is increase: the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved. Only the Lord can do it; and in a Church devoted to the testimony of the Apostles, to brotherly love, to adoring worship in which it appropriates the present Redeemer, and to fervent prayer, we have the conditions in which His power works. Let us pray for these things, and that God may make us, more than we have ever been, representative of that early Church, His sanctuary and His witnesses in a world which needs the Gospel as much as ever.

05.10. A Chosen Generation

Chapter 10 A CHOSEN GENERATION "Beloved of God, called to be saints."- Rom 1:7 THIS is Paul's description of the Church at Rome, the address upon his letter. The address upon a letter naturally consists of something which will guide the bearer to those for whom it is meant; it gives their names, or their business, or the place at which they live. Probably the bearer of this letter to Rome would have to seek out its recipients in the Jewish quarter; for though the Church was mainly Gentile, like every primitive Church it originated among the Jews, and only by degrees became quite independent of them. The Jewish quarter was poor and squalid, and even among its poor and squalid inhabitants the Christians held an inconspicuous place. When Paul came to Rome himself, a few years later, the representatives of his people either knew nothing or affected to know nothing of the new sect except that it was everywhere spoken against. But to Paul its external circumstances and its repute in the world were nothing; he saw not the outward appearance but the reality: to him it consisted of persons who could be addressed in this wonderful style, "Beloved of God, called to be saints". Beloved of God- what a rock to lean upon! Called to be saints - what a height to aspire to!

It is chiefly about the second I wish to speak at present- our calling to be saints. It is necessary to notice that it is the second, and that it depends upon the first. It is as the objects and possessors of God's love that we are called with so high a calling. If we stood alone and unsupported in the world we should not dare to lift our eyes or our hearts so high. Many of us never think of it because we have not taken to ourselves that on which it depends. But the Gospel has come to us, and the very meaning of the Gospel is that we are not alone in the world. God is here, Christ is here, the Atonement is here, the gift of the Holy Spirit is here, and they are all here for us. They are all here, bringing into our hearts the assurance of the redeeming love of God; and as that love, incredible at first, becomes real and ever more real to our wondering spirits, a new world rises before our eyes in its marvellous light. A day begins to dawn for us that we had never hoped for. Out of the darkness, confusion, weakness, and despair that overlay our life, something begins to shine clear, steady, hopeful, inspiring - something which is as incredible at first as the love of God, yet which may fill us at last with as deep and grateful a joy - our high calling in Christ Jesus. This is what the love of God makes possible for us and puts within our reach. Those who know that they are God's beloved know also that in consequence of being so they are called to be saints. To be saints is not now a dream or a madness; with the love of God beneath us it is our calling. In other words, it is at once a clear duty, and a sure and glorious hope. The text has only two words in it - called and saints - and to get into the heart of it we must explore them both. It is best to begin with the second, so that we have two main questions to answer. First, What is meant by saints? Second, What is meant further when saints are regarded as such in virtue of a call, or as saints by vocation?

1. What is meant by saints? It is easy to answer the question formally. Saints means holy people, and in Scripture this means people belonging to God. When Paul speaks of Christians as called to be saints, he means that they are called to be His. The negative side of the idea is, "Ye are not

your own"; the positive side of it is, "You are God's, you are His people. His representatives in the world". The oldest and perhaps the profoundest way in which religion is conceived in the Bible is as a covenant between God and man. The covenant has to be made. It has to be instituted by God, and entered into by man. Before it is made, God and man, so to speak, stand apart; God is there and man is here, and there is a sense in which both are frustrated. God is excluded from the life of the world, and man knows that the life he lives in himself - the natural secular life - is not eternal or Divine, a life which is life indeed. But when God draws near to us in His redeeming love, and enters into covenant with us in Christ, there is a real union of the human and the Divine; God fulfils Himself in the world through us, and we in our mortal life, with all its imperfections and failures, represent not our own cause or interest in the world but His. In the great city to which this letter was sent there were men to be found representing the most diverse interests, pleasure, pride, business, literature, art, science, law, government; but amidst its thronging myriads the Apostle's heart was pledged to the little company which represented, however unworthily, the cause and interest of God the Redeemer. It is they who are in his mind when he says, "called to be saints".

We should not pass this point without saying: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us". Is it not wonderful, when we think of what we have been, that God should call us to be His? to live in union and communion with Him, and to stand for Him in the world? Is it not wonderful that in His condescension He should so trust and honour us?

If we ask how we are to aim at carrying out our calling to be God's people, it is part of its very greatness that there is no short and easy answer. Of course we can say that God's people must be a distinct people in the world; in some way or other they must be recognizedly and even separately His. But if we ask in what way, we find that any definite answer invariably breaks down at some point. In the course of Christian history there have been two great and typical attempts made to determine the kind of separateness which belongs or ought to belong to the saints as the people of God. The first is the Roman Catholic, which may be said to proscribe the world as a whole, to excommunicate nature and society, and to renounce, as inconsistent with the calling of the saint, the common relations and duties of life. Only a person who goes out of the world altogether and who lives in a hermitage or a monastery, renouncing property, family ties, and individual will, is a "religious," and may become a "saint". On this view the saints are only a class of Christians, a very small class, to whose calling the others are sacrificed; for the others must be more in the world than their own needs would require in order to maintain the saints as well as themselves. This conception was certainly not the one in Paul's mind. He did not think of some Christians as called to be saints, and of others - of the great mass, indeed - as condemned to be content with some lower life; on the contrary, he writes, "to all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints"; to him a saint and a Christian are the same thing. Every person whom the love of God touches is called to be His and completely His; and a separation from the world which is not in its full extent possible for every Christian is not that on which our calling to be saints depends. The other type of separateness which has been illustrated in history may without injustice be called the evangelical one, if we use that term in its conventional rather than its New Testament meaning. It proscribes the world, not as a whole, like the Roman Catholic view, but piecemeal - in such and such parts and aspects of it as are judged by earnest Christians to be inconsistent with devotion to God. It says, not of the world as a whole, but of some things in it,

“Touch not, taste not, handle not”; and it makes of the corresponding abstentions the badge of the people of God. When the great evangelical revival of the eighteenth century took place, it was accompanied with a conception of the saints’ calling, or of the duty of God’s people, of this kind. For those who took this calling seriously, there could be no dancing, no novel reading, no card parties, no theatre going: these things were all of the world, not of God, and those who took part in them could claim to be God’s people no longer. Doubtless this judgment, for those who first framed it and made it the rule of their own Life, was sound enough. I do not wish to suggest that it has nothing in it worth thinking of now. Who will question that if we were in earnest with our calling to be saints such things would have a different complexion and a different proportion in some of our lives from that which they have at present? Nevertheless, to try to fulfil the saint’s calling, simply by observing such abstentions as the circumstances of one particular age or one particular revival have pronounced obligatory, is futile. Experience condemns it as unequivocally as it does the Roman Catholic plan. When it has its perfect work, it does not produce the New Testament saint, but a character conventional, ungrounded, inconsistent, ineffective, and insincere. But what other way, it may be asked, is left? The answer is that the New Testament way is left; and that it can be characterized intelligibly enough for anyone who wishes to make trial of it. Perhaps it may be said of it generally that the separateness from the world which it implies is not the means to saintliness, but the manifestation or result of it. Saintliness is not produced by separation; it is expressed in separateness, but it is produced by the love of God. All the separation which is required will be apparent in lives in which the love of God is the supreme and all-embracing motive; but separations which have another motive or have an end in themselves are essentially unsound. It is possible, I think, to indicate positively the characteristics of the life of the saint as a life determined throughout by the love of God in Christ; and it is only as we succeed in doing so that we do justice to the New Testament view.

It is a life of inner unity and consistency - the life of the man who can say at last, “This one thing I do”. Much of the sin and misery of common life is literally dissipation. We do this and do that, are busy here and there, but our energies do not converge upon anything; we do not know what we are doing. This is one of the things which impresses many with the futility of life, and makes them cry, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity”. But it disappears from the life of those in whom the redeeming love of God absorbs all good motives into itself and dominates everything. And it is a mark of the true saint to have the assurance that nothing in his life is vain, and that God from whom it all comes is using it all.

Further, the life of the saint is one in which perfect freedom and full responsibility are combined. There is no law laid down for the saint beforehand: there is no such thing as statutory obedience in his life, whether the statutes be conceived as Divine or human. Under God, or rather under the consciousness of the redeeming love of God, and of all it has done for him, the saint is a law to himself. Remember that other expression: “beloved of God”. The whole of Christianity, all that is meant by the calling to be a saint, is in that; but everybody has to find out what it involves for himself, in the peculiar relations and conditions of his own life. He has to say to himself, “Here I stand, encompassed by the love of God - not my own, but His. Here I stand, believing that my Life is dear to Him, and that through it His will and purpose are to be fulfilled in the world. Here I stand, under the constraint of the atoning death of Jesus, and the gift of His Holy Spirit - not my own, I repeat, but His. It is out of this conviction, out of the sense of obligation involved here, that my

whole life must flow. It is only what does come, freely yet irresistibly, spontaneously yet with a necessity leaving me no alternative, out of this sense of obligation, which belongs to my calling as a saint or fulfils it." In one word, what makes the saint is responsibility freely faced in the sense of the love of God. Naturally we shrink from responsibility. Either we are self-willed, which virtually means that we deny that there is such a thing as responsibility, or we are timid, and glad to have some one relieve us of our most exacting responsibility by telling us what our duty is. The Romanist can put it on his spiritual director; the Protestant can evade it by being conventional, and doing what other people do; but it is impossible to fulfil the calling of the saint on such cheap terms. To fulfil that calling we must realize that we are not under law but under grace, and that it is all between ourselves and God. We must face our circumstances - which for us are the world - ourselves, in the full sense of the love which God has to us; and we must decide on our own responsibility what we have to do or to abstain from doing, what we have to resign or to keep, if we would abide in that love, and prove ourselves not our own, but His. In truth, there is no difference in this respect between a man and a saint. It is responsibility which makes a man; and the saint is just a man who takes the whole of life's responsibilities upon his conscience - as one beloved of God. The life of the saint, according to the New Testament, will also be marked by moral originality. He has been redeemed from all that is conventional in conduct - from the vain conversation, we should say the empty Life, received by tradition from the fathers. He is not the repetition of other men, nor the observer of alien rules. To live under a rule, as people live in a monastic order, is the very antithesis of the saint's calling. Every act of the saint is an act of creation in the moral world. The like of it was never seen before. No law prescribed it, yet once it is done we see it is supremely right. The great illustration of this is Jesus Himself, the only person who is spoken of in the New Testament as "the saint (or holy one) of God". Nothing strikes us more in Jesus than His incalculableness, the startling newness and freshness of all His words and deeds. Who could imagine Him living under a monastic rule? Who could imagine Him observing the moral conventions of any denomination or sect? Yet He is the only inspiration of the saint's life, and He left us an example that we should follow in His steps. But who does follow except the man who in the sense of God's redeeming love is no longer a slave but a son, and does in a way which is all his own the will of the Father? To add one further characteristic: the life of the saint is morally effective. It tells upon the world as genuine goodness tells, and the will and purpose of God are fulfilled by it. The saint is a person living in the consciousness of the love of God, and everything that is in him, so far as he is a saint, is in correspondence with that love. His holiness, that which makes him a saint, must be in correspondence with it. There must be something redemptive in it, something which appeals to and wins men. There is such a thing as holiness which is not inspired by the sense of God's love, but by selfishness, or by the desire to put God under obligations to us; and such holiness can always be detected as a sham by this - it has no redeeming power. It does not touch the sinful, and waken in their unhappy hearts a longing to share in it; it does not stretch out helpful hands of which they can take hold. But those who are called to be saints are called to be holy as God is holy - that God whose redeeming power has lifted them up and set so great a hope before them; and if they are fulfilling their calling, then all through their life men will feel the presence of God the Redeemer. Holiness, the character of saints, of those who are God's, is born of the sense of God's love; and it brings the sense of that love in all its redeeming power, and in all the new hopes which it inspires, to those who behold it.

2. The greatness of this life may well seem too great, and, indeed, we may hear professedly Christian people saying, "Of course I don't pretend to be a saint". How odd such a sentence would look in the New Testament, where the saints and the Christians are the same thing. "I don't pretend to be a saint" can only mean "I don't take the Christian religion quite seriously". It is as if a man said, "I don't mean to deny that there is something in what is said of the love of God, and the atonement for sin, and the gift of the Spirit; but to take it all in simple earnest, as literal truth, and to take it with all the obligations this would imply - no, I certainly don't do that, and don't think of doing so". Could anything be more profane than to respond in this equivocal way to the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us? Better be irreligious outright than mock with this deliberate want of earnestness the redeeming love of God. But sometimes special causes discourage us from taking our calling to be saints with seriousness and hope. There is the past which we can never forget, which haunts us with shame. Yes, but God knows it better than we, and yet His love has come to us in Christ, and there is nothing too hard for it to deal with. "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depth of the sea." There is the ever-present sin which still defeats us - which surprises and humbles us even while we look to the love of God. But to speak truly, is it not when we look away from God's love that we fall? We dare not say that the evil that is in us is stronger than He; it is written, "He will subdue their iniquities". Then there is the discouraging wisdom of this world, what those who have lived without God call the teaching of experience. It is needless and hopeless (it tells us) to aim so high; you must be sensible; you must remember what human nature is both in yourself and in other people, and not expect too much from it. To be a saint may be a calling in the New Testament, but it is not a calling in the streets of a modern city, and the less lofty your language, the less absurd you will appear. Of course those who do not believe in God and His love cannot speak in any other strain. If there is no God, or if we are not beloved of God, then we are not called to be His, or called to be saints. All I would say of this worldly wisdom may be said in the Apostle's word: "This persuasion cometh not of Him who calleth you". As against all such discouraging thoughts, let us turn to the final and conclusive encouragement which we have in the other word of the text - called. What does it mean to say that we are called to be saints, or are saints in virtue of a call? When we remember that for the Apostle it is always God who calls, we may surely say such things as these. First, our calling to be saints is not a matter of indifference. There are things in the world which are of little consequence: it hardly matters what our relation to them is. But a Divine calling cannot be one of such things. Remember, it is God who calls. He calls through the Gospel; He calls through the life and words, through the death and resurrection of His Son; He calls through the gift and ministry of His Spirit; and He never calls us to anything else or less than this - to be saints. It cannot be a matter of no consequence how we respond to such a call. Further, in view of God's call we can say that when we aspire to be saints, or to be His people in this world, it is not a matter of presumption on our part. It is not a life for which we volunteer, or on which we adventure of our own motion, or which we have to carry through on our own resources; it is a life to which we have a Divine summons, and that summons is our justification. Paul in the first sentence of this epistle describes himself as "called to be an Apostle". No one could become an Apostle just by wishing or resolving to be one: he required to have a call from God. It is the same with being a Christian - that is, a saint. It would be presumption if we looked at it as an adventure, but when God calls us the presumption is to hold back. Most important of all: to have a calling to be saints is to be assured that the issue of the life to which we are pledged is not a matter of uncertainty. We can face it not only with humility but with hope. In his history of the

early church, Dr. Rainy sets this down as the great change which came upon the world with the appearance of Christianity: the life of goodness became an assured career. Before the Gospel came, despair had fallen upon the ancient world; society had abandoned the very idea and hope of goodness; "deep weariness and sated lust made human life a hell". But suddenly a change came. Men appeared in that lost world with an infinite hope in their hearts - an assured and triumphant hope, to be holy as God is holy; and it spread from heart to heart till in the Christian Church a new people of God became visible upon earth, a society which with all its imperfections was a communion of saints. What was it that made the change? It was the sense of a Divine call that had come to men. And how had it come? It came through the revelation of the love of God. If we are ignorant of this, then any life like that which the saints set before them must appear fantastic and unreal. But if we know what that word means, "beloved of God," it will open to us the meaning of the other, "called to be saints". And that brings us back to the point from which we started. It is because we have this to lean upon that we dare aspire so high. It is only as we lean upon it that our calling to be God's becomes credible, practicable, real. They are the two most wonderful things in the world, the most incredible to start with, the most humbling, the most uplifting, the most Divine - "beloved of God," "called to be saints". In the celebration of the Supper to-day we have been reassuring ourselves of the first. We have been taking the redeeming love of God to ourselves again in all its fulness, the love manifested in the passion of our Lord; shall we not take it also in its infinite obligation, in its infinite hope? For to be the people of God in the world is for those who are so called to it not only a duty but a hope. It is a thing to lift up our hearts to with humility, assurance, and joy. And when we are discouraged by the remembrance of what we have been or what we are, let us remember that it is not on this our calling rests; it rests on the solemn and wonderful truth that we are beloved of God. Underneath all our sinfulness and weakness, underneath our past, our present, and our future, lies a finished work of Christ, a great deep of love on which our wrecked and stranded lives can be floated into the assurance of hope, and filled with all the fulness of God. We cannot speak of these things as they should be spoken of. We cannot fix our hearts on all that is involved in them as they should be fixed. But as we think of how God loves us and of how He has shown His love - as we clasp these gracious words to our hearts and claim our inheritance in them: beloved of God, called to be saints - we can say, "Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood, and made us a kingdom, even priests to His God and Father: to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

05.11. Loyalty to the Saints

Chapter 11 LOYALTY TO THE SAINTS

"If I had said, I will speak thus; Behold, I had dealt treacherously with the generation of thy children."- Psa 73:15 THE Old Testament does not often speak of children of God, yet no one would have any difficulty in understanding to whom the Psalmist here refers. In the Book of Deuteronomy the Israelites generally are described by this title: "ye are children to Jehovah your God; ye shall not follow any heathen custom". But even in ancient times it had become plain that they were not all Israel that were of Israel; within the wide circle of the nation there was a narrower circle of those who really were what it was called to be. It is this narrower circle, the true people of God, who are here described as the generation of His children. A similar expression is found in the twenty-fourth Psalm. The Psalmist asks: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in His holy place?" "He that hath clean hands," he answers, "and a pure heart: who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, and hath not sworn deceitfully." Such he assures of the blessing of God, and then proceeds: "This is the generation of them that seek Him, that seek Thy face, O God of Jacob". In other words, this is the generation of God's children. Substantially also, in the last half of the Book of Isaiah, it is this Israel within Israel which is meant by the Servant of the Lord. In spite of apostasy and all its painful consequences, there ever remains in Israel a seed to serve God, a spiritual succession of men and women true to Him. They have a character of their own; they have hopes and convictions peculiar to themselves; they form a party and an interest distinct from everything else in the world. This was not only true when the Psalms were written; it is true to-day. At this moment, there is such a thing in the world as the generation of God's children, the spiritual successors of those to whom the Psalmist refers; they inherit the same hopes, and represent the same ideals and beliefs. It is a great matter to recognize this. For one thing, it is an important part of our moral security to have our place among God's children. They alone are perpetuated from age to age: the cause with which they are identified is the only one against which time does not prevail. For another, it is a great test of the soundness of our judgment in spiritual things when we find ourselves in agreement with them. "I love," says one of the fathers of the Scottish Church, "I love to walk in the steps of the flock"; that is, I love to find myself at one with the generation of God's children. The individual cannot but have misgivings if he feels inclined to set his own wavering judgment, his own unstable faith, his own brief and limited experience, against the age-long experience and the immemorial convictions of the people of God. It is one of God's warnings that he is on a wrong track when he finds himself at variance with them. To dissent from them is somehow or other to be disloyal to them. "If I say, I will speak thus" - that is, I will indulge in sceptical, unbelieving, God-disowning thoughts and words- "behold, I shall be a traitor to the generation of thy children". The one mark of the children of God which never varies is that they believe in Him. From generation to generation they perpetuate the sublime tradition of faith. In various modes, through all sorts of discouragement, they look unceasingly to Him, believing that He is, and that He is the rewarder of those who seek Him. The Old Testament does not contain any doctrines, and this faith is the whole of its religion. It is the element in the life of our race which

ennobles it and makes it great. It is that which has inspired every kind of virtue - patience, self-denial, self-sacrifice, superiority to the senses and to the world in which they live. Could there be a more fatal symptom of a bad heart than that one should be a traitor to those who represent this great cause upon the earth? Could there be a surer sign that a way of feeling, thinking, speaking, or acting was wrong than this, that it separated a man from those who in all ages had stood for God and for faith in Him?

It will enable us to appreciate this more truly if we consider some of the ways in which faith in God is manifested, and in which we may prove untrue to it.

1. Faith in God implies faith in His government of the world. This is the particular aspect of faith with which the Psalmist is here concerned. No doubt it belongs to the nature of faith that it should be tried; if there were not appearances against it, it would not be faith; it would be sight. The contrary appearances are what challenges faith and puts it to the proof, and it is in asserting itself against them that faith shows its genuineness and strength. It is manifest that the Psalmist had had more than enough to try his faith in the Divine government. When he looked abroad upon the earth, it was as though God had abandoned it, or rather as though there were no God at all. He saw all power and prosperity in the hands of the wicked, and he saw this power and prosperity generate in them an arrogant and godless confidence which language almost fails to describe. "They scoff, and in wickedness utter oppression: they speak loftily. They have set their mouth in the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth . . . and they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?" It is the reign of atheism at once practical and theoretical - not confined to the disregard of God's will in action, but advancing impiously to flout the very idea that He knows or cares for what is done on earth. When such a situation lasts long, it undoubtedly brings with it the temptation to doubt the government of God. Even believing men like the Psalmist find sceptical thoughts rising involuntarily in their minds. What is the use of trying to be good? What profit is it to serve God? It gains nothing. It exempts from nothing. "Surely in vain have I cleansed my heart, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." Goodness is a mere futility which in the life of the world does not count at all. Such is the hot, impatient, despairing speech which bursts from this good man's lips as he looks round him on the moral confusions of earth, and the seeming absence of God. But all of a sudden it is checked. The "behold" in the text reveals how he was startled by the thought which flashed into his mind. What, it was suggested to him, does the indulgence of this sceptical temper mean? It means that I am betraying the cause for which the children of God have fought the good fight from generation to generation, that I am deserting the forlorn hope of the good to side with the enemies of God and man. God forbid! Be my soul with the saints, and shall my mind cherish thoughts, shall my lips speak words, that are disloyal to their faith, their hopes, their sacrifices? To choose your creed is to choose your company, and the feeling that such scepticism would range him in base opposition to the Israel of God is the first thing which rallies the Psalmist again to assert his faith.

Surely the lesson of this is plain. The things that tried the Psalmist's faith have not yet vanished from the world. Those who can form any conception of what is involved in the government of the Armenians and the Macedonians by the Turks - those who followed through weary years the indescribable barbarities perpetrated systematically by a so-called Christian government on the Congo - those who realize what is involved in the position and influence of the liquor trade in this

country - those who see how human beings are dehumanized alike by the excessive wealth and the extreme poverty which our civilization seems to engender: all these may well be tempted to wonder whether God does govern the world, or whether He cares at all for what happens here. But let no one think that the trials of faith are arguments for unbelief. No: they are trumpet calls for witnesses for God; for soldiers, for martyrs, for men and women who will fight God's battle against all odds, and though they die fighting die assured of victory at last. All the hope of the world lies in them, not in the cynical or sceptical who say, How doth God know? And in our own private concerns, as well as in the larger outlook upon life, this temptation has to be encountered and overcome. There are people who seem haunted by misfortune - "plagued," as the Psalmist says, "all day long, and chastened every morning". They are not bad people either; they may be sincere, well-meaning, devout. For a while, they bear up against their troubles, and ascribe them to chance or to some mismanagement of their own; but as courage fails they are tempted to say, The strife is useless; there is no care taken by God of human life, or we could never fare thus. But to speak so is to desert the faith of all the good. It is to desert the conviction which has made numberless lowly, suffering, and disappointed lives beautiful with a beauty beyond that of earthly success. It is to separate ourselves from those to whose patience and hope all that is finest in human character is due. Surely this is the proof that it is a great mistake. Surely the true course is to remain loyal to the generation of God's children, and to add something of our own to the most priceless treasure of our race - the inherited conviction that God is everywhere present in the life of man, directing it to Divine ends, and in spite of disconcerting appearances making all things work together for good to them that love Him. This is the patience and the faith of the saints; do not, however you are tried, betray or belie it, but by your own faith and patience set a new seal to its truth.

2. Faith in God's government of the world is what the Psalmist is fighting for, but faith in God has other aspects. It involves faith in the authority of His law. It means the conviction that there is an eternal distinction between right and wrong which can never be explained away. It means that the right is something absolutely binding - not something to be deduced from other things essentially variable, and therefore liable to vary with them; and that the wrong is in the same way absolutely to be repelled. There are, as we know, philosophers who refuse to accept any such distinction. On the ground that the moral consciousness in man has developed, they hold that all definitions of right and wrong are relative; things are right at one stage which would be wrong at another; they are right for one man when they would be wrong for another; a right and wrong which are not to be argued about, but merely recognized - in which there can be no room for adjustment whatever, but only submission to the absolute will of God - these are ideas which the subtle modern intelligence has outgrown. Nor is it only philosophers or professional moralists who speak thus. A vast proportion of the general literature which deals with human life takes this sceptical attitude. It takes it avowedly and of set purpose. It lays itself out to show that the man who asserts the absolute authority of what he calls the law of God - or rather of what the generation of God's children have always recognized as His law - is a dull and narrow-minded man, with no flexibility of intellect, no sensitiveness to the multiplicity of nature. He needs to be mentally emancipated, and once he is, his moral austerity will see that it has no ground.

I will refer to two instances of this, from quite different quarters of the moral world. Every one who has been brought up in the Christian Church knows the law of personal purity which is constituted by the teaching and the life of Jesus. He knows that this is the will of God, even our sanctification,

that every one should keep his body in purity and honour. But he will very soon discover that there are philosophies of morality which cannot vindicate and do not promulgate any such law. An ostentatiously anti-Christian writer, like the late Sir Leslie Stephen, frankly acknowledges that those thinkers who have sought to explain morality on utilitarian grounds have shown as a rule a strong tendency to relaxed ideas on this vital subject. And how many novelists there are, exhibiting their criticism of life in all languages, who seem to have it as their one motive to show that there is nothing absolute in the seventh commandment. A man is to be true to his wife, naturally; but it is a poor kind of truth to sacrifice to his legal obligations to one woman the genuine love for another in which his true being would attain its full realization. What should we say when we encounter ideas of this kind, in philosophy or in literature, in cruder or in subtler forms? Let them be met on their own ground, by all means; let bad philosophy be confuted by good; let the inadequacy of such theories to explain the actual moral contents of life be made clear; but before everything, let the soul purge itself from every shadow of complicity in them in the indignant words of the Psalm, "If I spoke thus, I should be false to the generation of God's children." I should desert those who have done more than all others to lift the life of man from the natural to the spiritual level. I should betray the cause of Christ and of all the saints to strengthen the cause, at best of David Hume, at worst of the brute in man. The second illustration will seem to many frivolous by comparison, but that may itself be a proof of its seriousness. The fourth commandment is, Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy - that is, remember the day of rest to keep it unto God. We are all aware that this is a subject on which there is a remarkable laxity or even an entire absence of conscience among ordinarily good people. The day is remembered, certainly; it is a day off, and in that sense is not likely to be overlooked; but it is not, as the commandment requires, kept unto God. It is often kept to ourselves - to amusement, to indolence, to idle reading. Those who believe in having a day off once a week are hardly at liberty to say that the fourth commandment is annulled by the higher principle which claims every day for God. It is common ground between them and the saints that to make one day in seven exceptional is an excellent thing, and the only question that remains to be settled is what exceptional use of it is the best which can be made. Of course this is left for decision to every man's conscience: let no man judge you in respect of a Sabbath, as St. Paul says. But it is conscience which is to judge - conscience, and not the caprice of the man whose real thought is that this is a matter in which conscience has nothing to say. Once let conscience speak, and the ancient law which claims the day peculiarly for rest and for God will soon assert its authority. If you are in doubt as to what is or is not legitimate on the exceptional day of the week, call up to your mind the best people you have known, the generation of God's children, and let their conscience and practice weigh with you. Distrust yourself if your conduct makes you disloyal to them. Do not speak about the Sabbath, or if you prefer to call it so, the Sunday - do not speak about what Christians rejoice in as the Lord's Day - in a way which betrays the high interests of the soul to which the day has been devoted from the beginning by those who best knew God. Be true to the good. Be loyal to those on whom God has set His seal, and count such loyalty an honour higher far than that of any reputation for liberality of mind. Who is so likely to be in the wrong, on a question of this kind, as the man who finds himself in opposition to the saints of all time?

3. Once more, faith in God implies faith in His promises: it implies in the last resort faith in the greatest of His promises, the promise of eternal life. This is directly suggested by the context. True, it was not at first seen by believers in God. The God whom faith apprehends is so great that all that is involved in faith cannot be apprehended in an instant. But it comes into view by degrees.

As the Scottish father whom I quoted at the beginning has said, "Eternity is wrapt up and implied in every truth of religion". A religious life, or a life of faith, means at bottom life in God; and life in God is life over which death has no power. The Psalmist had attained to this truth, and gives expression to it in words of deathless sublimity and beauty. "Nevertheless, I am continually with Thee; Thou hast holden my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. 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." This is the full compass of faith in God - faith with its amplest range of vision, and speaking in its clearest tones. This is what ultimately characterizes the generation of God's children. But how few there are who can naturally speak thus! How difficult it is for us, when we use such words in our praise, to feel that we have any right to them! Our own faith in immortality is often languid, often in abeyance. Sometimes the idea eludes us; sometimes we do not know whether it is a hope or a dread. We are painfully sensible of all the appearances which are against it. We feel our kinship with all the other life in the world, which is not immortal. We feel how hard, nay how impossible it is to draw a line across it at any particular point, and to say that all that is on one side is mortal, while all that is on the other only passes through death to enter into immortality. The statement once made by Lord Lister at the British Association - that anæsthetics suspend the functions of vegetable as well as of animal life - in its simple truth makes the blood run cold. It is all one thing, we seem to feel, in plant, in animal, in man; it springs from one fountain, it runs one course, it comes to one end. No wonder the mediaeval proverb says, "Three physicists, two atheists"; the whole analogy of nature is against immortality. When we think of the immense mass of human intelligence which is now being trained in the sciences that use only physical categories, we can understand the immense pressure under which faith has to assert itself, the hardness of the battle it has to fight. Imagination is chilled and appalled in such an atmosphere, and faith is benumbed where it is not killed outright.

Nevertheless, it is one thing to feel the difficulties which are thus created for faith, and another to succumb to them. There are two ways in which faith when hardly pressed can react against this trying environment. One is to recall the fact, that true as the disconcerting phenomena referred to may be, they are not the whole truth. A man's life is one the functions of which can be suspended by an anæsthetic just like those of a dog or a plant: no one can question that. But a man's life is also one which can raise itself to the immortal faith of this Psalm: "Thou shalt guide me by Thy counsel, and afterward receive me unto glory". This sublime faith in God belongs as much to the realities of human life as the insensibility induced by chloroform. It is not only as true as the other, it is far more true in this sense, that it marks what human nature is when it has really reached its height. This is the self-expression of man when he comes to the full stature of manhood. A man under chloroform is not a man; no one breathes the native air of the soul, no one speaks its native language, no one moves in the liberty for which it was born, till he can make these words his own. It is of those who speak thus and of them only that we can say, "This is the generation of them that seek Thee, the generation of Thy children, O God of Jacob". And the second way to react against sceptical thoughts about immortality is the one which is directly given in the text. When such thoughts press upon us, when the arguments that death ends all seem conclusive and we have nothing to urge against them, when the sense of our mortality is importunate and we do not know how to mitigate or to evade it, let us say to ourselves: If I yield to such impressions, I separate myself from the generation of God's children. In a question of spiritual import I take the opposite

side from all who have been distinguished by spiritual insight and by knowledge of God. I become disloyal to the Psalmist and to all who have made his words their own - disloyal to Jesus, and to the faith in which He lived and died - disloyal to the martyrs - disloyal to all who have fallen asleep in Jesus in the sure and blessed hope of a glorious resurrection. Is it nothing to be on the other side in such circumstances? Is it nothing to be aware that the great spirits of our race are on the side we are abandoning? And for whom? For whom, I say, not for what; for again we must remember that to choose our creed is to choose our company. Can we appeal to names on the other side that command an equal reverence? No one, I fancy, has ever argued more subtly against immortality than Hume: but what has Hume contributed to the spiritual life of the world that he should be counted an authority at all? Who would weigh his negative inferences, whatever the weight of logic behind them, against the insight and conviction of this Psalm, against the assurance of Jesus, against the struggling yet ever triumphant faith of the generation of God's children? None who would be loyal to the best that man has been. None who have generosity enough to comprehend the sudden emotion of this text: "If I spoke thus, behold, I should be a traitor to the generation of Thy children". I will add one word of application to this interpretation of the text: Associate with God's children, and let their convictions inspire yours; frequent the church, and let the immemorial faith of all saints beget itself in you anew. It is one great service of the Church that it perpetuates the tradition of faith - that sublime voices like those of this Psalm are for ever sounding in it, waking echoes and Amens in our hearts - that characters and convictions of the highest type are generated in it, not by logic but by loyalty, not by argument but by sympathy with the good - deep calling unto deep. We need the common faith to sustain our individual faith; we need the consciousness of the children of God in all ages to fortify our wavering belief in His government, His law and His promises. To be at home in the Church is to absorb this strength unconsciously. It is to be delivered from the shallows and miseries of a too narrow experience, and set afloat on the broad stream of Christian conviction which gathers impetus and volume with every generation the saints survive.

05.12. Degrees of Reality in Revelation and Religion

Chapter 12 DEGREES OF REALITY IN REVELATION AND RELIGION

"This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth." - 1Jn 5:6

THERE are three different connexions in which John emphasizes water and blood in a way resembling that which strikes us here. First, there are the two chapters in his Gospel - the third and the sixth - with their reference to the Christian sacraments. "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, ye have not life in yourselves." In the sacraments of Baptism and the Supper, the water and the blood are symbolized, and their virtue is perpetuated for the Church. Then there is the singular passage in which an incident of the Passion is specially emphasized. "One of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and straightway there came out blood and water." That the evangelist attached some strange and extraordinary importance to this is apparent from the solemnity with which he attests it. "And he that hath seen hath borne witness, and his witness is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye also may believe." And finally there is the passage in the epistle which we have taken as a text. The point emphasized in this last passage is that when we think of Jesus Christ the water and the blood are not to be separated: Jesus came, not in one only, but in the other also. The key to this puzzling statement is to be found in chapter four, at the third verse. There we read in our English Bibles, that every spirit which confesseth not Jesus is not of God; but as the margin of the Revised Version tells us, some ancient authorities read, every spirit which annulleth Jesus is not of God. Annulleth is the rendering of the Latin solvit, a word which occurs in all Latin manuscripts but one, and which points quite distinctly to a separation of elements in the being or experience of Jesus analogous to that which is forbidden here. In point of fact we know on other grounds that there were those who made such a separation. Among the contemporaries of John at Ephesus there was a prominent teacher called Cerinthus who taught, to put it so, that Jesus came with the water only. He held that all that was Divine in Jesus descended upon Him when He was baptized, and that all that He did in virtue of the power with which He was then invested was Divine. The new teaching which so impressed men with its authority - the words of eternal life by which the souls of men were quickened toward God - the mighty works which delivered men oppressed and enslaved by the devil: all these were Divine, but these only. Whatever was of God in Jesus, whatever constituted Him the Son of God, withdrew from Him as Calvary came near. The Son of God did not come through blood. The Christ did not really pass through the degrading and squalid tragedy of the Crucifixion. He left the mere man Jesus, or perhaps a mere phantom, to undergo the passion; but all that was Divine was absent then. This is what John so emphatically denies. As against all such separations he protests that the Son of God came by water and by blood. That strange and moving incident at the cross reminds us of it. The sacraments are a perpetual witness to it. Something vital goes out of our religion if it is denied.

Possibly there are some who can hardly take the trouble to understand this: it seems to them so crazy, remote, and unreal that their minds refuse to attend to it. But this is a mistake. It raises an extremely serious question, a question never more keenly discussed than at this hour, though under other forms. It may be put somewhat in this fashion. We who are Christians believe that in Jesus Christ the love of God has been revealed for our salvation, and the question is. What kind or degree of reality belongs to that love? John's answer is emphatic. It is no less real than our own life and death; it is as real as blood. And the immediate inference is that the religion which is our response to this revelation must have a corresponding reality. Hence there are two subjects, or rather two aspects of one subject, suggested by this text; (1) the reality of God's redeeming love, (2) the reality of our response to it.

1. The reality of God's redeeming love. It is easy to puzzle the mind with questions about reality, especially where God is concerned. Every one has heard of the astronomer who swept the heavens with his telescope and found no trace of God. That is not very disconcerting. We do not ascribe to God the same kind of reality as we do to the stars, and are not disappointed if the astronomer does not detect him as he might a hitherto unnoticed planet. M. Renan somewhere speaks of God as "the category of the ideal"; that is, he ascribes to God that kind of reality which belongs to the high thoughts, aspirations, and hopes of the mind. Certainly we should not disparage the ideal or its power, and still less should we speak lightly of those who devote themselves to ideals and cherish faith in them. But to redeem and elevate such creatures as we are, more is needed; and what the Apostle is so emphatic about is that God has come to save us not with the reality of ideals, but with the reality of all that is most real in the life we live on earth, in the battle we fight in the flesh, in the death that we die He has come with the reality of blood. The Christian religion is robbed of what is most vital in it if the historical Christ and the historical passion cease to be the very heart of it.

Sometimes this robbery, by which the faith is ruined, is perpetrated on philosophical principles. The important thing in the Gospel, we are told, is the ethical principle of it - the idea that we must die to live, must sacrifice the lower life for the sake of the higher; grasp this, and everything else becomes indifferent. Jesus may have been the first to grasp it clearly, but it is not dependent on Him; and once we have clearly grasped it, we are not dependent on Him either. On the contrary, it enables us to understand Him, to appreciate what He has done for the common good, to assign Him His due place among the great men who have contributed to the enlightenment and uplifting of our race.

I say again, we have no need to disparage ethical principles and those who strive to regulate their lives by them; but the very meaning of the Gospel is that we have more than ethical principles, however true and lofty, to look to. We have the passion of the Son of God. I had rather preach with a crucifix in my hand and the feeblest power of moral reflection, than have the finest insight into ethical principles and no Son of God who came by blood. It is the pierced side, the thorn-crowned brow, the rent hands and feet, that make us Christians - these, and not our profoundest thoughts about the ethical constitution of the universe. "I write unto you, little children," says the author of this epistle, "because your sins are forgiven you." Where does the forgiveness of sins come from? Is there any ethical principle from which it can be deduced? Are there any fine ideas or combinations of ideas from which we can derive the assurance that there is in God - not in idea but in reality - a love more wonderful and powerful than sin, a love that bears it in all its crushing

weight, and enables us to triumph over it? No, it is no principle or idea which yields an assurance like that. "Your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." It is through the passion of the Son of God, through the death that He died on the cross, and through nothing less awfully real, that such assurance establishes itself in the heart.

Sometimes, again, it is not philosophers but historians who lapse in this unfortunate direction. We are all familiar with what is known as historical criticism, and especially with its application to Scripture. We know that it has affected our estimate of many things, and that it has been attended in the Church with much alarm and apprehensiveness as to its results. There is one way of meeting this situation - one way of attempting to soothe the apprehensions of timid Christians - with which also we are familiar, but which needs to be more seriously thought of in the light of this text. How often we hear it said, "All this nervousness and anxiety about the results of criticism is beside the mark. It is quite true that everything which claims to be historical is subject to criticism, and that any alleged historical fact may prove unable to stand critical tests; but why should anyone be spiritually perturbed for that? It has nothing to do with religion. Facts and faith move on different planes. They never touch. We may come to any conclusion whatever about facts without making the smallest difference to faith. Faith stands on its own basis. It does not depend on facts; it can assert itself in despite of them. It is sheer unbelief which inspires these fears." What are we to say to this line of argument?

If we agree with the Apostle we must say that it is false. The Christian religion, as he at least understood it, was not this pure and sublimated spirituality to which facts are indifferent. Nor is it so to Christians in general. It is saying little to say that the specious consolation just described never consoled anyone who was really alarmed. Indeed to most people it is so far from bringing consolation that they feel it is adding insult to injury. A sound instinct tells them what it means. It means that faith henceforth is to have the reality of ideas - of high and noble convictions or aspirations of our own - but not the reality of blood. And such faith, they know, is not real enough to overcome the world. We do not need to say that it is atheism, but neither is it faith in God through Him. In true Christianity, everything depends on the facts - on Jesus Christ who came by water and blood; not with the water only, but with the water and the blood. Our sound course is, not to say that no matter what comes of the facts the Christian faith is secure, but to point out the entire security of the facts on which that faith reposes. Consider, for example, the evidential value of the sacraments as it is suggested by this very passage. There is nothing in Christianity more primitive than the sacraments. They were celebrated universally in the Church before any part of the New Testament was written, and they still bear unequivocal witness to Him who came in the water and in the blood. Every one of the countless millions who from the day of Pentecost to this day has been baptized in the name of Jesus is a witness to the baptism of Jesus Himself, to His experience at the Jordan and its sequel in His Spirit-filled life. Every one who since the night on which He was betrayed has eaten the bread and drunk of the cup in the Lord's Supper is a witness to the reality of His Passion. These things cannot be shaken, and it is absurd to speak of them as if they could be, and leave our faith secure. Without them it could never have come into being, and would speedily cease to be. Without a historical foundation as real as life and death, preaching is vain and faith is vain: there is not a love of God known to us on which we can lean as Christians have leaned hitherto on the passion of their Lord.

2. Let us turn now to the other aspect of the truth: the reality of our response to God's love as manifested in the life and death of Jesus. Such love claims an answer in kind. There must be an intensity in the religion corresponding to that of the revelation: there must be the reality of blood in both.

Every reader of the Gospel knows that nothing is so abhorrent to Jesus as a Laodicean attitude on the part of disciples. When He was on His way to Jerusalem, Luke tells us, "great multitudes followed Him; and He turned, and said unto them, If any man come to Me, and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple". It was as though it tried His patience beyond endurance to be attended by multitudes who could not find it in their hearts to answer His passion with any corresponding passion of their own. He was going up to Jerusalem to die, and they were going up to gaze, perhaps to admire or to applaud, certainly not to share His cross. It is at the close of this passage that He says to these insipid followers, "Salt is good; but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill: men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." What is salt? What is the saline property in human character which makes it valuable and serviceable to Jesus, and the want of which makes Him pronounce on men the appalling sentence - "good for nothing"? It is the power of self-denial, of doing violence to nature and its impulses, of meeting the passion of Christ with responsive passion, of giving blood for blood. If it is not in men to do this, even in presence of the cross, Christ declares them "not fit for the Kingdom of God".

It follows from this that no deliberate seeking of a sheltered life is truly Christian. The Son of God came in blood. He faced the world as it was, the hour and the power of darkness; He laid down life itself in pursuance of His calling; and there must be something answering to this in a life which is genuinely Christian. Yet we cannot help seeing that in different ways this conclusion is practically evaded. It is evaded by those who aim at cultivating the Christian life solely in coteries, cliques, and conventions of like-minded people; by those whose spiritual concern is all directed inward, and whose ideal is rather the sanctification of the soul than the consecration of life to Christ. There are so few people who make holiness in any sense whatever the chief end of life that one shrinks from saying anything which might reflect on those who do pursue it, even in a mistaken sense; but who has not known promising characters fade away and become characterless, through making this mistake? Who does not know how easy it is to miss the Gospel type, the type of Jesus, and actually to present to the world, as though with his stamp upon it, a character insipid, ineffective, bloodless? Nothing has a right to bear His name that is not proved amid the actualities of life to have a passion in it like His own. But far oftener than by any mistaken idea of sanctification is Christ's claim for reality in religion evaded by mere selfishness. In how many homes is life narrowed to the circle of the domestic affections, and how often precisely such homes are thought of as among the happiest triumphs of the Christian religion! No one need undervalue the domestic affections: they are among the dearest and best gifts of God to man. But if life is shut up within them, as it often is, then no matter how amiable, how refined, how pure, how happy they may be, it is a bloodless life. In many a happy family, which would be amazed to hear itself spoken of as unchristian, the conflicts of the world are ignored. The Lord's battle is going on all around it against pride, sensuality, greed, drunkenness, spurious patriotism; and they are not in it. There is no real response in their lives to that which Jesus was, did, and suffered. But He came by blood; He longs

to see of the travail of His soul; and there is nothing to satisfy soul-travail in the blameless happy life of many so-called Christian homes. Their religion may be real, but it is not real enough for Him; it has no passion in it answering to the Passion of the Son of God who came in blood.

I can understand anyone seeing both aspects of the truth on which we have been dwelling, and the correspondence of the one to the other, and yet feeling unable to realize their connexion in experience. "I can see the passion of Jesus, and I acknowledge that it should evoke a responsive passion in me, but it does not. It is too far away. I apprehend it as a fact, but somehow it does not operate as a motive. Why is this, and what ought I to do?" The answer to such questions, I believe, is suggested by the next words of the Apostle: "It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth". There is a point of mystery in all religion - not the point at which we know nothing, but the point at which we know everything and yet nothing happens - the point at which we are cast absolutely on God. But the mention of the Spirit reminds us that though the Christian experience depends absolutely upon God, it is not for that reason blankly mysterious. The Spirit is a witness; he takes the things of Christ and shows them to us, and under his showing they become present, real, and powerful. This is his work - to make the past present, the historical eternal, the inert vital. When the Spirit comes, Christ is with us in all the reality of His life and Passion, and our hearts answer to His testimony. We read the Gospel, and we do not say, He spoke these words of grace and truth, but He speaks them. We do not say. He received sinners and ate with them; but. He receives sinners and spreads a table for them. We do not say. He prayed for His own; but. He ever liveth to make intercession for us. We do not even say, He came in blood; but. He is here, clothed in His crimson robe, in the power of His Passion, mighty to save. Have we not had this witness of the Spirit on days we can recall? Have we not had it in listening to the word of God this very day? We know what it is to grieve the Spirit; we know also what it is to open our hearts to Him. Let us be ready always to open our hearts to His testimony to the Son of God - to Jesus Christ who came with the water and with the blood; and as the awful reality of the love of God in Christ is sealed upon them, let us make answer to it in a love which has all the reality of our own nature in it.

05.13. The Superlative Way

Chapter 13 THE SUPERLATIVE WAY

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." - 1Co 13:1-3. THE persons to whom these words were addressed were full of what may be called Christian ambitions. They coveted what they reckoned Christian gifts; the Church of Christ was for them a stage on which they aspired to be conspicuous figures. The Apostle has their correction in view when he writes, "Covet earnestly the best gifts, and yet show I unto you a more excellent way". It is literally a way in the superlative degree - via maxime vialis, as Bengel renders it - a way having in perfection all the qualities which ought to characterize a way; a way open to every one, unobstructed, leading straight to the goal of Christian greatness. This is the way of love which he proceeds to celebrate.

It has been finely remarked that the Apostle illustrates in his very first words the lesson he wishes to teach: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not love." An unloving spirit would have said: "Though you speak with the tongues of men and of angels," and made the Corinthians, not himself, represent the bad example. The instinctive courtesy of the Apostle is inspired by love and shows how thoroughly he himself has learned his lesson. The simplest way in which we can enter into his thought is to make clear to ourselves what the gifts are which are sometimes supposed to supersede love, but which really depend upon it for their value in the Church. The gift of tongues was an emotional gift. It was an ecstasy of feeling by which men were carried away, and broke into rapturous inarticulate utterances. The sublime realities of the Christian faith - God, Christ, the forgiveness of sins, the assurance of immortality - as they broke into the common life of man, disturbed its equilibrium profoundly. Nature rocked under the impact of the supernatural as a boat rocks in the water when a heavy weight is suddenly thrown into it. This emotional disturbance, though in some ways incalculable, seems always to have had one character. It was an ecstasy of praise. Those who were carried away by it uttered in this transport of feeling the wonderful works of God. What they expected when the impetus had subsided was an Amen at their giving of thanks. A modern musician has written songs without words: this is a very apt description for the peculiar kind of spiritual emotion called in the New Testament speaking with tongues. Probably the nearest approach to it most Christians make is when they are carried away by the feeling of a revival meeting. Many can still remember the revival of 1874, when Mr. Moody first came to this country. Like most revivals, it lived in an atmosphere of praise: the first edition of Mr. Sankey's "Sacred Songs and Solos" came along with it, and the American organ. Everybody sang these hymns and sang them everywhere. The largest churches and halls were crowded out for months by multitudes surrendering themselves to the emotion. The words and the tunes - perhaps in some cases the tunes even more than the words - sang themselves into people's ears, into their very nerves and brain. They heard the rhythm of them through the beating

of machinery or the noisy traffic of the streets. They heard it as they sat over their Bibles at home. They felt like singing all the time. The church was full of men who floated, so to speak, on this wave of emotion; an unutterable joy in the redeeming love of God seemed to sustain their life; it was full, as they would have said in the early days, of people speaking with tongues. This is an experience which many make light of and even deprecate; they do not speak with tongues, and they do not want to. But this is not how it is regarded by the Apostle. He knew as well as any modern moralist that the promise of the new emotion is not always fulfilled. He knew that the equilibrium of the old nature which had been momentarily disturbed by the sense of Christian realities was too easily restored at the old level, and that men who had spoken with tongues might relapse and become "sensual, not having the spirit". But in itself this emotional susceptibility to spiritual realities is good. "I thank my God," says the Apostle, "that I speak with tongues more than you all"; I am more open than any of you to this access of feeling which rises to unintelligible rapture. No one who has had in a time of revival the experience described above, no one who feels his heart beat quicker and his sympathies kindle as the refrain of a gospel hymn takes possession of his ear and his soul, will disagree with him. But good as this emotional susceptibility is, gift of God as it is, it is not good if it terminates in itself. It is not good if a man boasts of it, and judges on the strength of it those whose experience he does not appreciate and cannot understand. The ecstatic praise which is exhausted in utterance, the feeling which is exhausted in being felt, is in one aspect a kind of self-indulgence. It cannot be the be-all and the end-all of the Gospel. Taken by itself, it is no more than sounding brass or clanging cymbal, those deafening empty noises with which the Corinthians were familiar even in pagan worship. It is not the steam which is blown off with a loud noise, and is visible for a moment in dense white clouds, which drives the engine; it is the steam in the boiler, which is subject to intense pressure, and is neither heard nor seen. Thank God for every Christian emotion, the Apostle says, but ask earnestly, persistently, and devoutly how it is to tell for the common good. "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every one to profit withal," and the question on which everything turns is: What service is being done, by these prized exaltations of mine, to the Church which is the body of Christ? For what ministries of love do they furnish the driving power? From emotional the Apostle advances to intellectual gifts: "though I have prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge". I say advances, intentionally, for this is what he means. The uncontrollable emotion called speaking with tongues is no doubt a spiritual gift, when it is Christian realities which stimulate it, but it is the most elementary of spiritual gifts. It is the new life, indeed, but in a turbid semi-sensuous form, a form which is transcended when the Christian realities not only excite emotion but take possession of intelligence. It is not only inevitable but right that they should do so, and do it with decisive power. The world with Christ and redemption in it - the world in which the Son of God and the forgiveness of sins and eternal glory are real things - is another world. It makes another appeal to the intelligence, excites other reflections, demands other interpretations, reveals other prospects. All former philosophies are cashiered when the realities of the Christian revelation come within the horizon of thought. The intellect which submits to the impact of the Gospel receives a shock as startling and momentous as that which raises the emotions to ecstasy; the mind of man is born again under the supreme revelation of God. It gets an understanding of the world and of all God's ways with it and purposes in it undreamt of before. As St. Paul says here, it gets the gift of prophecy, and all mysteries and all knowledge are thrown open to it.

Probably no one ever had a more vivid experience of this than the writer of this epistle. If any man ever had his mind born again and his world made new in a great experience it was he. The enthusiasm, the intoxication, as it has been called, of the great speculative geniuses like Plato and Spinoza, who have tried to set this unintelligible world in an intelligible light before our eyes, is cold compared to the ardour with which Paul reconstructs his universe with Christ for its Alpha and Omega, its principle and goal. "In Him," he has the exaltation of mind to write, "were all things created, that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him, and He is before all things, and in Him all things are one." The man who was capable of thinking and saying this did not undervalue the intellect and its use in the Christian life. He felt it essential even to his self-respect to have a Christian view of God and the world, a Christian philosophy or theology; he felt the value of being initiated into the ultimate truth, of seeing the world in Divine Christian light - for that is what is meant by having "prophecy, mysteries, and knowledge"; but he felt also that no attainments in this direction touched the centre any more than the emotional excitement of tongues. Without love, to make the intellectual Christian the servant of the ignorant; without love, to keep the intellectual from being wise in his own conceit; without love, to check the intellectual when he is tempted to despise others, to restrain him when he would use his power to intimidate others or to establish a selfish ascendancy over them, knowledge is nothing. All mysteries may be open to a man - he may have the profoundest insight into the manifold wisdom of God - he may see the meaning, the methods, the issues of God's working in the world in a way which makes darkness light and crooked things straight; but without love, it does not count.

Most Christians, probably, at some time or other, have touched experimentally on speaking with tongues, but one cannot be so sure about prophecies and mysteries and knowledge. The daring of New Testament thought in its interpretation of all things in the light of Christ can hardly be said to survive in the Church. A great philosophical theologian, a man who could search with the light of revelation the world known to us as Paul searched and read with the same light the world known to his generation, is one of the crying wants of the time. What we have to lament is not that people overvalue knowledge in comparison with love, or that they set too much store on Christian insight into the meaning and purpose of the world, but that they have no interest at all in the intellectual construction and application of Christianity. Their minds have not been sufficiently stimulated by the Christian revelation to want any new view of the world in the light of it. But extremes meet, and the lesson of the Apostle at this point is curiously applicable to a kind of petrified intellectualism which is to be found in all churches. There are always those to whom Christianity is pre-eminently a kind of knowledge, a system of truth or rather of truths. It means the truth of the Bible, or of the creed, or of some outline of Christian ideas in which they have been brought up. They have a zeal for this, and they are moved by what calls it in question as they are by nothing else. The ideal Christian for them is the defender of the faith, Mr. Valiant for the truth. It does not perhaps occur to them that this is the type of intellectualism which is most likely to be loveless. But much as he admired the character, Bunyan knew its perils when he told how Mr. Valiant for the Truth was assailed by Wildhead, Inconsiderate, and Pragmatical. What a figure these rogues would cut in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians. The curious thing is that the intellectual Christian, or rather the man who champions a truth which is no longer living but only in possession of legal authority, is apt to imagine that they are allies, not enemies, and that he can enlist them all to fight the Lord's battle. They are in reality the vices, and how often the unconsciously cherished vices, of the

degenerate intellectual without love. The Apostle becomes more venturesome and paradoxical as he goes on to ever higher gifts. "Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing." Faith here is not used in the general sense of that trust in Jesus which makes a man a Christian; it is a specific spiritual gift operating not on the emotional nor on the intellectual but on the practical side of human nature. It is the gift which raises Christian efficiency to a high point. The consequences of inefficiency are so miserable and depressing that it is no wonder this gift is highly valued. What is of so much value to the Church as that it should have men in it who in spite of obstacles can do what needs to be done? not men who say what they ought to say, and then nothing happens, but men who positively achieve things, men who overcome the difficulties at which others helplessly gaze. If anyone prized this practical Christian efficiency it was Paul, who was a conspicuous illustration of it himself, and who often sought it in vain in his associates; yet not even this is the vital thing in the Christian Life. We can almost think that as he wrote these words about the power of faith Paul had in his mind not only the saying of Jesus about bidding the mountain remove and be cast into the sea, but the solemn words at the close of the Sermon on the Mount: "Many shall say unto Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name cast out devils, and in Thy name done many mighty works?" It might well seem incomprehensible that spiritual powers should be wielded, and spiritual efficiency in a supreme degree exhibited, by men whom Jesus rejects; but Paul felt the truth these was in it, and so may we. The efficient man may lose himself in his very efficiency; the sense may steal upon his mind that he is the really powerful preacher, that his is the commanding personality to which reluctant circumstances yield, his the practical capacity which gets the belt upon the wheel and transmits force and sees that work is done; and when this happens, all is lost. For Christianity is not in this region of outward efficiency after all; it is in the soul. A man may be a great Christian worker, as we say, and no saint. He may do distinguished service to the Church, and have neither part nor lot in the kingdom of God. He may be one of those who at their departure are celebrated, mourned, and honoured by the Church, but to whom the Lord says, "I never knew you". These are terrible things to say, and to think, but when we are dealing with love, we are always on the verge of terrible things. What can be so terrible as to wound love, and how can love be wounded more terribly than by offering any doings or achievements as a substitute for it?

Emotional gifts, intellectual gifts, practical gifts, all are vain without love. Even the gift which most nearly counterfeits love is vain also. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." These, we might say again, are the very things we can conceive the Apostle doing himself; he was always forward to care for the poor; he died daily at his work. Certainly he did not undervalue the capacity for sacrifice or the practice of it; but he is putting an extreme case, and where sacrifice even the utmost is made (as it may conceivably be made) from ostentation or ambition, it profits nothing. There might even be a rivalry in philanthropy; who could think that the life of Christianity lay there? And so we are driven back by the Apostle to the superlative way - the way which is a way, and along which we can really make Christian progress. Emotion has its value when excited by Christian realities - so has intellect - so has energy - so has sacrifice; but the one thing needful is love. It is only when love rules the use of gifts, and indeed compels us to use them for the common good, that they can properly be called Christian. And what is love? A great theologian has defined it as the identification of ourselves with God's interest in others. God has an interest in others. There is

something in all men which is dear to Him, to which His love is pledged, which it would grieve Him to see injured or frustrated. Do we realize this, and that the question whether we love or not can only be answered in the light of it? Do we realize it in regard to those who are nearest and dearest to us - our brothers and sisters, our sons and daughters? Do we realize it in regard to those who are members of the same congregation with us, or of the same social circle? Is there anything in our life which would not be there but for the sense we have of God's interest in others? Could we point to anyone to whom we have ever shown the kindness of God for Jesus' sake? This is the only thing which is love in the Christian sense of the term. It is by this the Church and the Christian live, and without it they die. To identify ourselves with God's interest in the lives of others, to seek that God's will for them may be fulfilled, that that which is dear to Him in them may be saved, to put what we are and have unselfishly at their service for this end: this is love. Is there any such good thing found in us toward God and those who are dear to Him?

Now what the theologian defined the Apostle describes. He pictures for us in a glow of enthusiasm the modes in which love manifests itself in a world like ours. No doubt when he wrote his description of love he had in his mind those phenomena in the Corinthian Church which made its absence sensible, but the same phenomena are always reappearing, and we find the key to his picture nearer home. "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Is there anything in us, when the contemplation of this picture has made us penitent, which can claim any kinship with it? It is not our likeness, we know that; but is there something in us which draws us inevitably and instinctively towards it, which makes us feel that it should be our likeness, and that it would be, if we yielded to the constraint of the love of God? If there is even this that remains, let us strengthen it and not suffer it to die. The greatest part of our perfection, as Robert Bruce says, is to thirst for perfection - to look on this picture with humble longing hearts till we begin to grow like it. But we ought not to say, to look on this picture. For what the theologian defines and the Apostle depicts is illustrated and embodied in our Lord Himself, and what we have to do is to look at Him. "Herein is love." We do not know what love is till we see it in Jesus, and when we see it there we see Him identifying Himself with God's interest in us. The revelation is not only made before our eyes, it is made with special reference to ourselves. In Christ's presence we are not the spectators of love only, we are its objects. Christ exhibits towards men, He exhibits towards us, that wonderful goodness which Paul describes. When we think what our life has been, and what has been His attitude to us from first to last, do we not say, "Our Lord suffers long, and is kind; He is not easily provoked; He does not impute to us our evil. Where we are concerned, where God's interest in us is concerned. He bears all things, He believes all things. He hopes all things. He endures all things." These are the thoughts, or rather these are the experiences, out of which love is born in our hearts. We love, because He first loved us. All the time it is His love which must inspire ours. "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love."

05.14. The Rich Man's Need of the Poor

Chapter 14 THE RICH MAN'S NEED OF THE POOR

"Now there was a certain rich man, and he was clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day; and a certain beggar named Lazarus was laid at his gate." - Luk 16:19

MANY of the words of Jesus are best understood when least explained. They are true in the immediate impression they make upon the mind of a child, and if we could only become as little children and recover it, this is the only truth they are intended to convey. The story of the rich man and Lazarus - the evangelist does not call it a parable - is a case in point. In the minds of many grown-up readers it raises only irrelevant questions - questions which it does not raise for the simple, and which it is not intended to answer. In what condition does the soul survive this life? Is its condition fixed at or by death? Is there a further probation for those who have failed here, or who have never had a chance? Is the departed soul shut up in itself, in absolute loneliness, or can it communicate with God or with other spirits in that world or in this? I do not say these are not natural questions, but they are not questions with which Jesus is here directly concerned, and to seek answers for them here is precarious. When we survey the Gospel according to Luke as a whole, we see that one of the main interests of the evangelist is in the teaching of Jesus about riches and poverty. This was so characteristic of our Lord and so emphatic that no one telling the story of His Life could possibly miss it, yet Luke has preserved a good deal which the other evangelists have overlooked. It is he alone who tells us that Jesus opened His ministry at Nazareth by applying to Himself the text, "He hath sent Me to preach glad tidings to the poor;" he alone who gives the first beatitude in the simple form, "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God," and who adds as its counterpart, "Woe to you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation"; it is he alone who has the story of the rich man, who said to himself, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry"; and to whom God said, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee". And finally, it is he alone who has the story of the unjust steward who shrewdly used his master's money to buy friends for himself who would give him the shelter of their roofs when he lost his place. The moral of this shady story is daringly put by our Lord Himself: "And I say unto you, make to yourselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness, that when it shall fail they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles". As if He had said, "You are going to lose your place too, like the unjust steward: be as sensible as he was. Spend your vile money in buying friends - you will need them - who can bear witness to you and welcome you as you pass from this world to the other." It is a daring moral, not to be legally interpreted or applied, but with living power in it for those who are willing to take it as it is meant. Of course there will always be those who think they can refute it. "The Pharisees," we read in Luk 16:14, "who were lovers of money, derided him." They scoffed at the idea of a man investing in charity with the dividend in his mind which he would draw in the world to come. It is always easy to misrepresent when you do not want to understand; and the story of the rich man and Lazarus is the answer of Jesus to those who scoffed at the moral He drew from the unjust steward. It is the story of a man who forgot to invest in charity till it was too late. It consists

of a visible scene, a scene behind the veil, and an appendix. It is worth while to look steadily at each, and then to summarize the teaching of the whole.

1. First there is the visible situation in Luk 16:19-21. The rich man's life is pictured before our eyes with all its indulgence and ostentation: he was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. There are lives like this, and people who can afford them. There is nothing they cannot buy - yachts, motor-cars, champagne, pictures, new and old books; no wish need be, and no wish is ungratified. There is no needless exaggeration in the picture, and not a touch of animosity or of class feeling. It is not said that the rich man made his money unjustly, still less that he coined it out of the sweat of Lazarus; his way of living is exhibited - that is all. Then side by side with him we have the picture of Lazarus. It is given more fully, and of course more sympathetically, but quite as impartially. It is a statement of facts and nothing more. Lazarus was a beggar man, whose body was covered with ulcers, and he lay at the rich man's gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from his table. What is meant by the dogs coming and licking his sores is not quite plain. Perhaps the suggestion is that even the offensive animals that roam the streets of eastern towns were kinder to the poor wretch than his fellow men or his rich neighbour; but perhaps it is meant as the last touch of aggravation to his misery: these unclean beasts rasped his sores and he had not the strength to keep them at a distance. How desperately the poor man needed a friend! Yes, but not so desperately as the rich. What an opportunity, Jesus would have us understand, the rich man had to make Lazarus his friend - to buy his friendship with some of his miserable money. How much his friendship would have been worth to him in the future! But no such thing happened. The rich man was there in his purple and fine linen; the beggar was there in his rags and sores; and that is the whole story.

Perhaps under the influence of political economy we pity a little the rich man as well as the poor. Wesley tells us somewhere in his Journal that he met a man who proved to his own satisfaction that every one who could afford it ought to wear purple and fine linen and to fare sumptuously every day; and that by doing so he would do more good to the poor than if he fed the hungry and clothed the naked. Even if we have not an unsolved doubt that there may be something in this, we have a lurking sympathy with the rich man saying to himself, "This is endless. Relieve one and you bring ten. This man is a product of social conditions for which society is responsible, not I; society should put him in a hospital and keep him out of sight; and if the hospital were put on the rates, I should not refuse to contribute my share." But the very point of the story is that Jesus takes no account of possible explanations or excuses. He deals only with facts. There is a poor man, destitute and in misery, at a rich man's gate, and nothing is done. Is that all?

2. No, in Luk 16:22-26 Jesus goes on to unveil the invisible situation. In the world into which Lazarus and the rich man are alike ushered by death, the parts are reversed. It is now Lazarus who feasts. He reclines on Abraham's bosom at the heavenly banquet, as John did on Jesus' breast at the Last Supper. It is the highest conceivable honour and felicity for a Jew. But the rich man is in hell, in an agony of thirst, tormented in flame. And there is something more terrible still. We are not told in the earlier part of the story whether the rich man had seen Lazarus at his door, but he saw him now afar off. He saw him, and would fain have had him as a friend. But it was too late. He had his chance of making Lazarus his friend while he lay at his gate, but he did not take it then, and it would never come back. There is something inexpressibly awful in the words, Son, remember. This lost soul, too, is a son of Abraham: he might have been where Lazarus is; nay, he

ought to have been there. To understand why he is not, it is only necessary to recall the past. It is the very misery of hell to remember the lost opportunities of life, the chances that were given but not taken of winning the heaven for which men are made. Inexpressibly awful, too, is the finality implied in the words: "between us and you there is a great gulf fixed." The scene in the invisible world represents God's judgment on the earlier one, and against that judgment there is no appeal. This is to all eternity God's verdict on such things. The rich man may have thought little or nothing about Lazarus while they were both on earth, or he may have excused himself from doing anything for him by the kind of sophistries with which we have sometimes excused ourselves; but in neglecting to make Lazarus his friend he decided his own destiny for ever.

3. At this point, it is natural to think, the parable might have ended; the lesson which Jesus intended to teach - that we should provide for the future by making friends of those who will welcome us into the world to come - has been powerfully and solemnly taught. The inhuman man is a lost soul: he enters eternity without a friend. But in point of fact the parable does not end here: there is a curious addition (Luk 16:27-31) in which the rich man appeals to Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his five brothers, and Abraham persistently refuses. How is this connected in thought with what precedes? There are those who take it as a symptom of some surviving good in the rich man, an indication that he is not so destitute of humanity after all; there is a root of kindness and sympathy in him to which hopes of his own final restoration may be attached. Others, again, find in the appeal to Abraham only a symptom of latent rebellion; the rich man is virtually charging God with having been unjust to him, and making his restoration, if we may put it so, more impossible than ever. Both of these explanations fail in this respect: they introduce something which is irrelevant to the story as a whole. The idea in the appendix or supplement to the parable, however we define it, must be one which reinforces the main lesson, not one which (as with the interpretations supposed) distracts attention from it. The way in which it is to be woven into one whole with what precedes is, I believe, something like this. "That is final," we can imagine Jesus' hearers saying to themselves when He had finished His unfolding of the invisible situation; "that is final; but is it fair? The rich man did not know about the unseen world. If he had seen hell fire as clearly as he saw the wretchedness of Lazarus or his own sumptuous table, he would have acted differently. He should have been more distinctly warned of the consequences of inhumanity, and so should others be." It is to meet such thoughts as these, which would be sure to occur to others as they occur to us, that the parable is continued beyond Luk 16:26. There is no further interest in the rich man on his own account; he is only used to state the objection which is sure at some time or other to present itself to every one - that the invisible world of which the parable speaks is without evidence. Men do not know about it, and if motives from it are to enter life and influence conduct, they ought to be told about it by a witness they could not doubt. "Let some one go to them from the dead." The great thing to notice is that Jesus treats this objection as mere trifling. "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them . . . if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." What is wanted is that men should be humane; and if the revelation of the character and will of God in Scripture, and the appeal of the beggar at the door, do not make them so, what will? They must become humane from considerations of humanity, or not at all. If they can be inhuman with the Bible in their hands and Lazarus at their gate, no revelation of the splendours of heaven or the anguish of hell will ever make them anything else. So, at least, Jesus teaches, and so God acts. Who will venture to dispute the truth? When we take the parable as a whole, therefore, it is not a lesson on the other

world, but a lesson on humanity. In particular, it is a lesson on the opportunities which the rich have (and need), in presence of the poor, of making friends who can welcome and bear witness to them in the world unseen. I shall conclude with some reflections which it suggests for the mind and conditions of our own time and country. The constitution of society is such among us that it is possible for great numbers of people to live almost without seeing the poor. There is a west end in every large town, and people can live exclusively in their own class. The destitute are not exposed as they are in civilizations of another order. There are poorhouses, infirmaries, asylums; the defective members of society, those who have been defeated in the battle of life, those who are physically and mentally, not to say morally, incapable of taking care of themselves, the poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind, are accumulated there; they do not shock us at our doors. But this is not all gain. What is unseen is too often unthought of, unfelt, not responded to. It does not constitute a motive for, and does not produce, humane and unselfish acts. The actual needs and woes of multitudes are hidden from multitudes of others; and there must be many who (apart from their own families) have never once considerately, spontaneously, unselfishly, and from motives of pure humanity, helped the sick or the poor. This is a loss to the poor, but what the parable invites us to consider is that it is a greater loss to those in whom humanity lies dormant, or is selfishly repressed. It is a loss to society when all help is organized and rendered through institutions, which however humanitarian they may be in their origin, tend constantly to fall short of being humane in their actual working. The personal contact of those who minister to the poor and destitute with those to whom their help is given sweetens the breath of society. Once when he thought himself dying Sir Walter Scott called his children round his bed and said to them: "For myself, my dears, I am unconscious of ever having done any man an injury, or omitted any fair opportunity of doing any man a benefit." What kind of life is it, which in a world crowded with appeals for humanity, never gives a man or a woman the chance of being humane? It is precisely this which is wanted to enrich and render happy lives which are stale with selfishness and satiety. Lazarus needed the rich man, undoubtedly; but do not let us forget that the main lesson of the parable is that the rich man needed Lazarus more still. The difficulty of helping the poor must not be made an excuse for inhumanity. It may be very difficult to do it wisely, and in such a way as not to injure those whom we would fain help. No doubt in a world like ours there are parasites, professional beggars, and sponges of all kinds, who prey upon charity and are ruined by it. Men who are rich and are known to be kind are besieged by petitioners, sometimes no doubt necessitous, but sometimes false, importunate, and shameless. Often they are embarrassed, and sometimes when they find out that they have been defrauded they are tempted to give up interest in their kind, and to lapse into indifference and a stony heart. But anything is better than that. "Blessed," says the Psalmist, "is he that considereth the poor." Probably there are cases in which his consideration will lead to the conclusion that a touch of law is wanted to help with effect, and that the Charity Organization Society, or some institution which can deal with the shifty on the basis of rules, is better adapted than he is individually to do what needs to be done; but on the whole, this is not likely. It is the contact of man with man by which humanity is quickened and enriched on both sides, and when we can exercise it directly, it is twice blessed.

Another reflection germane to this story is that the great impediment to helping others is the love of pleasure. It is the desire, or what is perhaps stronger still, the unconscious tendency, to live as the rich man lived, that defeats the claim of the poor. One of the inevitable results of civilization is the multiplication of artificial necessities, and of those who are eager to meet the demand for them.

We need or think we need a thousand things which we could very well do without, and there are a thousand people importuning us to spend our money upon them - thrusting them into our very hands on the most tempting terms. Plainly there are many people who find the temptation to spend so strong that they simply cannot keep their money in their pockets. It is drawn from them as by an irresistible attraction. They have no bad conscience about it, but they just do not know where it goes. It goes on dress, on travelling, on trinkets, on personal adornments, and indulgence of every kind; and the result is, that when the call of charity comes there is nothing to meet it. All works of love, from Christian missions down, are carried on under the pressure of a perpetual deficit. When people say they have not anything to give for such causes, they are as a rule telling the truth. They have nothing to give because they have already spent everything. But the true moral of this is, that the call for charity is often also a call for self-denial and thrift. No one will ever have anything to give who has not learned to save, and no one learns to save without checking the impulse to spend his money for things which it would no doubt be pleasant enough to have, but which he can quite well do without. The rising generation is credited rightly or wrongly with excessive lack of restraint here. Everything goes. They live up to their means and beyond them, and have nothing to give away. This is not the way to become rich on earth, but what the parable teaches is the more serious lesson that it is not the way to become rich toward God. The man who has spent nothing on charity has no treasure in heaven. He is as poor as Lazarus there. He is on the way to a world in which he will not have a single friend. The main teachings of the parable may be summed up in two further thoughts which it might almost be said to force upon us. The first is, that God appeals to us at our doors, and in ways which it is impossible for us to misunderstand. Many people believe themselves to be interested in religion, in whom nevertheless everything which could truly be called religious life is held in abeyance because of what they consider religious difficulties. They cannot properly be religious - they cannot, so to speak, get their religious life under way - until these difficulties are disposed of. They read this story of the rich man and Lazarus, for example, and their minds immediately go off on the familiar line. Where is Hades? Do all people enter it when they die? Is the state of those who are there affected by the resurrection? What is the authority for us of the words here ascribed to Jesus? Are they literally true, or are they true only in the impression they make on the moral imagination? These, to their minds, are the religious questions raised by this narrative, and religion seems to them to be somehow barred or held in suspense till these questions are answered. I do not say they are never to be asked, or that it is no matter how they are answered. But surely if anything is plain, it is plain that to the mind of Jesus the one important religious question is none of these. It is a far simpler question: What have you done with Lazarus at the door? No one will come from the dead to give you the clear and distinct knowledge of the unseen world which curiosity craves. But no ignorance, suspense, or indecision about these remote questions has any vital relation to religion. It is in the situation which we have to deal with at our doors that all real religious motives are to be found. It is in that situation, and under the influence of the motives which it yields, that we have to make - and do make - to God and man the revelation of what we are. The second thought, and that in which we may say the parable is summarily comprehended, is that men are judged finally by the standard of humanity. The sublime picture of the last judgment in Mat 25:31-46 may be said to be our Lord's own generalization of what is here presented in a particular case. When the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory and all nations are gathered before Him, He judges them by the rule which is here applied to the rich man. If there are those to whom He must say, "I was an hungered, and ye

gave Me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in; naked, and ye clothed Me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited Me not": if there are those to whom He must say this, there is nothing to say in reply. It is a final condemnation. Inhumanity is the damning sin which excludes for ever from the company of the Son of Man those who are guilty of it. The man who needs our help at this moment is trying what we are, and at the Last Judgment will be the decisive witness for or against us. True religion is as simple as this, and it is a fatal blunder when we allow a truth so vital and indisputable to be blurred or shadowed or thrust into the background by those philosophical or theological perplexities which are so commonly spoken of as religious difficulties. It is humanity - I mean humanity in the ethical, not the metaphysical sense; humanity as opposed to insensibility, selfishness, cruelty - which by uniting us to man and to God assures our future. It brings us into a common interest with God and His children. He who feeds the hungry and clothes the naked has treasure in heaven, and the very fact makes heaven real to him as it cannot be to the hard hearted. The invisible world will never be more than a source of unanswerable questions, which will take the delusive form of religious difficulties, to the unfeeling and inhuman; but to those who live in a love and humanity like that of Jesus it will be what it was to Him - another part of the Father's house, and as real as that which we see.

05.15. Immortality

Chapter 15

IMMORTALITY "If a man die, shall he live again?" - Job 14:14.

1. Who has not asked this question, in suspense, in hope, or in fear? We know that we must all die: we know that those who are dearest to us must die: can our eyes penetrate beyond the veil which death lets fall? Is there any answer in the nature or heart of humanity to the question of Job, "If a man die shall he live again?"

If we look at the history of nations and religions, we see that the whole tendency of man has been to answer the question in one way. "Looking at the religion of the lower races as a whole," says Dr. Tylor in his *Primitive Culture*, "we shall at least not be ill advised in taking as one of its general and principal elements the doctrine of the soul's future life." The idea of the extinction or annihilation of man in death is indeed not so much a natural as a philosophic or doctrinaire one; an untaught mind is incapable of it, and it only appears as a fruit of reflection or speculation. The natural inclination of man everywhere is to believe not in his extinction, but in his survival. The ideas attached to the word may be vague, but they are real, and they exercise a real influence upon the life. Their effect is seen, sometimes in the burial customs of savage races - as in the interment of the warrior's weapons, or the artificer's tools, along with him, or more terribly in the slaughter of his wife or his slaves, that he may have all that he needs with him in the spirit land; sometimes in the widely diffused worship of ancestors, which implies not only that the dead are believed to live, but that they have command over powers which may injure or benefit the living.

2. What strikes one most in looking at this widespread, one may truly say this universal, faith in man's survival of death, is its moral neutrality. All men survive, and they survive in practically the same condition, whether they are good or bad. The world into which they pass is conceived as a shadowy unsubstantial place, and the life of those who tenant it corresponds. The ancient Greeks called this place Hades, or the realm of the unseen; the ancient Hebrews called it Sheôl, which probably means the hollow place, the subterranean abode which was entered by the grave. The descriptions which are given of it in the Old Testament are numerous and depressing. Man existed in it, but did not live. He had no communion there either with the living God or with living men. It was a pale transcript of life, but not life in reality. It was a realm of darkness, dust, and endless silence, unbroken by the vision of God, or the voice of praise. The best men shrank from it with horror. The feeling with which they regarded it will be sufficiently illustrated by these lines from the Psalm of Hezekiah: "I said. In the noontide of my days I shall go into the gates of Sheôl. . . . I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world. . . . But Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of nothingness, for Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back, For Sheôl cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth. The living, the living, He shall praise Thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known Thy truth." Many have been astonished and perplexed at finding such utterances in the Bible. They do not

see how to reconcile them with the idea of any revelation made by God to man. But the truth is that such vague beliefs in man's survival, common as they are to the Hebrews and innumerable other races, are not a part of revealed religion at all. The instinctive belief that man survives death is only the point of attachment, so to speak, for a true faith in immortality. It is that in human nature which the spirit of revelation takes hold of, exalts, connects with God, fills with moral and religious contents, and makes effective as the great source of hope, courage, and consolation. The history of revelation, so far as this article is concerned, is the history of a process in which the instinctive belief in man's survival, with all its indifference to moral distinctions, was transformed into the New Testament faith in eternal life for the good, and the eternal loss of the wicked.

3. Of course I do not mean that apart from revelation men never in any degree transcended the vague ideas of the future to which I have referred. In many pagan religions the conception of the future life filled a great space; in some, it even absorbed the attention of the worshippers to the exclusion of everything else. On this ground some have preferred the religion of ancient Egypt, for instance, or the religion of Persia, to the religion of the Old Testament. Certainly the future life bulks far more largely in both than it does in the Old Testament. Every one, to speak only of the former, knows the extraordinary care which the Egyptians bestowed upon their dead. Every one knows about the mummies, in which the body was preserved for thousands of years, that the soul, which could not live without it, might survive too. Everybody has read descriptions, or seen pictures, of the Egyptian tombs, the everlasting houses of the departed, so much more solid and enduring than the abodes of the living. Every one has heard of the Book of the Dead - the most ancient book in the world - and of the judgment of souls in the under world, in which the Egyptians were taught to believe. Are not all these symptoms of a more advanced religion than we find among the Hebrews? I do not think so. It might be enough to reply that the Egyptian religion has died, and that that is God's verdict upon it; whereas the Hebrew religion lived, grew, and lives on to the present day in the fullness of the Christian faith. But it may also be pointed out that the Egyptian faith in the future, whatever its religious impulse may have been at first, became hopelessly demoralized at last. Man's standing in the judgment came to depend, not on his life and character, but on his due observance of a thousand rites or charms which had no moral significance whatever. A religion which at a first glance seems to be of peculiar moral promise is found on closer inspection to be a tangle of superstitious observances in which reason and morality have perished together. A mere preoccupation with the future could not redeem it from its ethical worthlessness; it was dead even while it lived, and now we can only examine it in its remains. Its history has an antiquarian interest; it is not vitally related to the world's hope. It is a striking illustration of God's providential care of Israel, that though Israel lived long in Egypt, and was more or less in contact with Egypt for 1500 years, this dead faith in the life beyond - this non-moral, non-religious interest in what came after death - was never suffered to taint or pervert the simpler ideas of the chosen people. They might have nothing but the instinctive tendency to believe in man's survival, but at least they had it uncorrupted, and in due time God could make it grow to more.

4. But if religion did not of itself develop a true faith in immortality, was there no other power at work in human nature which could do so? We have all heard of arguments for the immortality of the soul: did not they result in anything? The true home of such arguments was Greece, and the great philosophers of that country, particularly Plato, speculated on the nature and the destiny of

man. They felt there was something Divine in human nature, as well as something which seemed to them to be only of the earth. The mortality of the body they could not deny, nor did they wish to do so. They conceived of it not as the necessary expression and organ of the soul, but as a burden, a prison, a tomb; it was their one hope and desire that man's immortal part might one day be delivered from it. The Greek philosophers, too, as well as the great poets, rose above that moral neutrality which I have spoken of as characterizing the instinctive faith in man's survival. They saw rewards and punishments in the once undistinguishing future. Heroic men were admitted to some kind of blessed existence in Elysian fields; while the conspicuously bad, giants, tyrants, lawless profligates, were tormented in some kind of hell. Such ideas, however, were confined to a limited circle; they did not interest themselves in the common people; and however much we may admire the nobleness of the poets and philosophers of Greece, it is not to them, any more than to the priests of Egypt, that the world is indebted for the hope of immortality.

5. Why was it then, we may ask, that both natural religion and speculative philosophy proved ineffective in their treatment of the future, and of man's relation to it? Why do we prize even the Old Testament in which the hope of immortality, to say the least, is so inconspicuous, above other religious authorities in which it figures so much more prominently? The reason is plain. These religions and philosophies failed because they wanted the one thing from which faith in immortality could securely and healthily spring - the one and only ground on which it could arise rich in moral and religious contents, full of consolation, of inspiration, of strength: a true conception of God, and of man and his relation to God. It is quite true to say that Israel had hardly any ideas about the future, and shrank in horror from those it had; but Israel had God, and that was everything. Israel knew that there was One only, the living and true God, from everlasting to everlasting, infinite in goodness and truth; Israel knew that God had made man in His own image, capable of communion with Him, and only blessed in such communion; to Israel, to see good was all one with to see God; with God was the fountain of life, in God's light His people saw light. This faith in God was greater than Israel knew; it could not be explored and exhausted in a day; it had treasures stored up in it that only centuries of experience could disclose, and among them was the hope of immortality. The believing nation of Israel, like Bunyan's pilgrim, unconsciously carried the key of promise in its bosom, even when it was in the dungeon of Giant Despair.

6. The great passages in the Old Testament, in which the hope emerges, come upon us suddenly, as the finding of the key came upon the pilgrim. This passage in Job is one. The tried man is in the very extremity of his distress. He feels - for so he interprets his distress - that God for some reason is angry with him, and that His anger will endure till he dies. His disease is mortal, and will carry him to his grave. But is that all? Job finds his faith in God come to his relief For God is righteous, the vindicator of righteousness, and it is not possible for him to abandon a righteous man as Job would be abandoned, if his death ended all. The idea comes to Job through his faith in God, that Sheôl may not be the final outlook, and he puts it into the pathetic prayer: "O that Thou wouldst hide me in Sheôl, that Thou wouldst keep me secret until Thy wrath be past, that Thou wouldst appoint me a set time and remember me! "How patient such a prospect would make the suffering man. How uncomplainingly he would face the dreary underworld if he knew that it was only a temporary interruption to his communion with God. "All the days of my warfare would I wait till my release should come. Thou shouldest call, and I would answer Thee: Thou wouldst have a desire to the work of Thine hands." This is only the yearning of the soul, its faint anticipation, born of faith,

of what might be; but in a later passage we see it flame up triumphantly, though it is but for a moment. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand up at the last upon the earth, and after my skin hath been thus destroyed, yet from my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold and not another. My reins are consumed within me" - that is, I faint with longing for that great vindication. Both in Egypt and in Greece faith in immortality, such as it was, rested simply on conceptions of man's nature; here, as everywhere in revealed religion, it rests on the character of God. He is the Eternal Righteousness, and His faith is pledged to man whom He calls to live in fellowship with Himself. All things may seem to be against a man; his friends may desert him, circumstances may accuse him; but if he is righteous, God cannot desert him, and if he must die under a cloud, even death will not prevent his vindication. His Redeemer lives, and one day he shall again see God. And to see God is to have life, in the only sense which is adequate to the Bible use of the word.

7. In the Book of Psalms we have the same type of conviction presented from another point of view. The Psalmists write, as a rule, as men in the actual enjoyment of communion with God. Their life is not merely human, it is Divine as well. The fountain of it is with God. God Himself is their refuge and their portion; as one of them says, they have no good beyond Him. In their experience the Divine and the human interpenetrate each other: they see and enjoy God. Perhaps it is one consequence of this intense consciousness of God's presence and grace that they think so little about the future. Having God, they have everything, and no time, past, present, or to come, can make any difference to them. But sometimes they do deliberately face the thought of death, and then we see their faith shine out. What has death to do with such a life as theirs? Is death stronger than God? If He holds us, can it pluck us out of His hand? Never. The Old Testament saints in the sublime hours of their faith had a sublime sense of their eternal security with God. "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me unto glory." "God will redeem my soul from the hand of Sheôl, for He will receive me." "Thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheôl, neither wilt Thou suffer Thy holy one to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life - athwart that pathless gulf; in Thy presence is fullness of joy; in Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Nay we even find words of triumph over the last enemy which the New Testament in its loftiest mood can only borrow: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, where are thy plagues? O grave, where is thy destruction?" The weapons of the King of terrors are struck from his hand, and death is swallowed up for ever. It was along this line of religious experience, inspired by faith in the living, true, holy, and gracious God, that the true hope of immortality entered the world.

8. It would have been natural once to pass from the Old Testament to the New almost without the consciousness of interruption, but this is hardly permissible now. When we consider the two in reference to the subject before us, it is obvious that in the New Testament the faith in immortality has new features. In particular, it has become quite definitely a faith in the Resurrection. The growth of this peculiar form of the belief in immortality has been laboriously investigated, but not with entire success. The sacred books of the Persians, who certainly believed in some kind of resurrection, have been diligently explored, and many who know that the religion of Israel received no impulse from Egyptian ideas of the future suppose that it was strongly influenced by contact with Zoroastrianism. But the real fountain of the hope in immortality has been already indicated, and when we look at the Resurrection as it appears in Zoroastrianism and in Jewish apocalyptic

literature on the one hand, and in the New Testament on the other, it is not more the similarity than the contrast by which we are impressed. In these other books, we are in a world of lawless fantasy, where anything is said of the future because nothing is known; in the New Testament we are on the same ground of historical fact and religious experience which is characteristic of the Old. Consider for a moment how the case stands.

9. Christians believe in their own resurrection to eternal life, because they believe in the Resurrection of Christ. But faith does not depend upon - it does not originate in nor is it maintained by - the Resurrection of Christ, simply as a historical fact. The Resurrection of Jesus is not simply a fact outside of us, guaranteeing in some mysterious way our resurrection in some remote future. It is a present power in the believer. He can say with St. Paul - Christ liveth in me - the risen Christ - the Conqueror of Death - and a part, therefore, is ensured to me in His life and immortality. This is the great idea of the New Testament whenever the future life is in view. It is indeed very variously expressed. Sometimes it is Christ in us, the hope of glory. Sometimes it is specially connected with the possession, or rather the indwelling, of the Holy Spirit. "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwelleth in you." It is easy to see that the religious attitude here is precisely what it was in the Old Testament, though as the revelation is fuller, the faith which apprehends it, and the hope which grows out of it, are richer. Just as union with God guaranteed to the Psalmist a life that would never end, so union with the risen Saviour guaranteed to the Apostles, and guarantees to us, the resurrection triumph over death. Here is a faith in immortality which is moral and spiritual through and through - which rests upon a supreme revelation of what God has done for man - which involves a present life in fellowship with the risen Saviour - which is neither worldly nor other worldly, but eternal - which has propagated itself through all ages and in all nations - which in Jesus Christ invites all men to become sharers in it - which is the present, living, governing faith of believing men and women in proportion as they realize their union with the Saviour: a faith infinite in its power to console and inspire: a faith not always easy to hold, but demanding for its retention that effort and strain in which St. Paul strove to know Him, and the power of His Resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming conformed to His death, if by any means he might attain to the resurrection of the dead. And all this, which fills the epistles of the New Testament goes back to the words of Jesus Himself: "Abide in Me, and I in you"; and, "because I live, ye shall live also".

10. "If a man die," asked Job, "shall he live again?" Let us put it directly, If I die, shall I live again? It is not worth while putting it as a speculative question: the speculators have not been unanimous nor hearty in their answer. Faith in immortality has in point of fact entered the world and affected human life along the line of faith in God and in Jesus Christ His Son. Only one life has ever won the victory over death: only one kind of life ever can win it - that kind which was in Him, which is in Him, which He shares with all whom faith makes one with Him. That is our hope, to be really members of Christ, living with a life which comes from God and has already vanquished death. God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Can death touch that life? Never. The confidence of Christ Himself ought to be ours. If we live by Him we have nothing to fear. "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." "Verily, verily I say unto you, if a man keep My word, he shall never see death." "I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead yet shall he live, and he

that liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die.” Believeest thou this?

05.16. Wrong Roads to the Kingdom

Chapter 16 WRONG ROADS TO THE KINGDOM

“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He afterward hungered. And the tempter came and said unto Him, If Thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread. But He answered and said. It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh Him unto the Holy City, and he set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him, If Thou art the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written. He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee; And in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest haply Thou dash Thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him. Again it is written. Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh Him unto an exceeding high mountain, and showeth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and he said unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him. Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written. Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth Him; and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.”
- Mat 4:1-11

MATTHEW, Mark, and Luke all tell the story of the temptation of Jesus in the same connexion: it followed close upon His baptism. His baptism was for Jesus the occasion of great and uplifting experiences; he saw the heavens open, and the Spirit descending and abiding on Him; He heard the heavenly voice, “Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased”. But this hour of spiritual exaltation was followed by a period of depression and conflict. Was it possible for Jesus to live his life through on the high plane to which it had been raised at His baptism? Could He go back into the common life of man, with all its disquieting possibilities, and in spite of the tempting alternatives which it presented, in spite of the painful pressure which it put upon Him, maintain the consciousness and the character of the Son of God? This was the question which He faced in the wilderness. A mocking writer on the life of Christ says of another situation in it, “One is not the Son of God every day”. What the temptation story shows is the determination of Jesus, asserted from the very beginning, in the face of all compulsions and seductions, to be the Son of God, and nothing but the Son, every day - to be true, in all that the Father gave Him to do, to the heavenly voice and the gift of the Spirit.

We may take it for granted that Jesus did not speak to His disciples of this great crisis in His life merely to get an outlet for the emotion which attended it, or to gratify curiosity on their part about His history. He told them these things because they were important for them. As it has been put, these are not the temptations of Jesus, they are the temptations of the Christ. They are not the temptations of a private person, but of the person whose calling it was to establish the kingdom of God in the world; and they have the interest for all of throwing light on the true nature of that kingdom by exposing alike false though seductive conceptions of it, and false though alluring paths which might be supposed to lead to it. It is a wrong way to put this if we say that the

temptations are not personal, but official; there is no proper sense in which the term official can be connected with Jesus. They are the temptations of the person whose calling it was to bring in the kingdom of God, and they recur to every one who is interested in the same age-long task. They are the temptations of all churches, of all Christian workers, of all who have ideals in their life at all. It is necessary to be on our guard against false ideals, and even more against false methods of pursuing true ones. It is this which gives the story of our Lord's trial and victory perennial interest.

1. The first temptation has indeed a more private aspect: it is connected with the fact that after His long fast Jesus hungered. "If Thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." The Son of God and hungry! the tempter seems to insinuate, is not this a contradiction in terms? You cannot really be the Son of God, if your life is exposed to privations so cruel. There must be some mistake about that heavenly voice: you must have dreamed you heard it. Renounce your faith in a heavenly Father, and in His unfailing love and care, and help yourself in any way you can. To read the temptation thus implies of course that the suggestion to turn the stones to bread is a mocking one: the assumption is that the thing cannot be done. Certainly we cannot do it, and it is because we cannot that this temptation, in this aspect at all events, may come to any child of God. We have heard in the Gospel a voice from heaven, a voice sealed on our hearts by the Spirit, telling us that we are the sons of God: can it be true, we are tempted to ask, when poverty comes to us, or hunger, or pain? Can we hold to the heavenly Father under such pressure, or since He has not given us the power to turn the stones into bread, to annul every physical evil, must we renounce Him, like Job, and die? Must we take our life into our own hands as though God were a word without meaning? Jesus endured this temptation and overcame. Even under the pangs of hunger he held fast not simply His integrity like Job, but His Sonship. His relation to God remained deeper, more vital, more certain than anything that could befall Him; no privation or pain whatsoever would make Him renounce God, or live in any other relation to Him than that of a trustful and obedient child. And is not this power to assert the superior reality of the inward and spiritual against all that is outwardly disconcerting the very pith of true religion? We need not pretend to understand the purpose of all privations, or say that we can justify the ways of God with man to the last detail: but if there is not in man a power to assert his sonship through privations and in spite of them, our Lord has lived in vain. But the main interest of this temptation is wider. As Son of God, and called to establish His Father's kingdom in the world, Jesus was called at the same time to win an ascendancy over men for God. He looked abroad on the world, especially on the world as it was to be seen in Palestine, and He saw various lines along which such ascendancy could be sought and acquired. The very first was the one which assailed Him in this temptation. It would be easy for Him to command ascendancy over multitudes, and to do it without delay, if He made it His business to turn stones into bread. If He made bread the first thing, the foundation of the kingdom - if He adopted the principle that once men's physical necessities were supplied, and hunger, cold, and toil out of the way, the kingdom would come of itself - everything would be plain sailing for Him. This was a real temptation to Jesus just because He knew what hunger was, and because He had infinite sympathy with the poor. He was hungry here in the wilderness, He was weary and hungry as He sat by Jacob's well, He was so hungry in the last week of His life that He would gladly have eaten the berries from a tree by the way side. He lays extraordinary emphasis on the duty of charity; it is the unpardonable sin, which leads to eternal punishment, when He can say to anyone: "I was an hungered and ye gave Me no meat". Once, moved with compassion, He did feed five thousand men in a desert place. But what was the

result? It was that this first temptation recurred: they wanted to take Him by force and make Him their king. This was the kingdom they wanted, a kingdom built on bread. But it was not the kingdom Jesus had come to set up. He withdrew Himself from that multitude, and retired to pray with God alone. He sent out the Twelve to face the rising storm on the lake, and in laborious toil and imminent danger of death forget this spurious hope. And soon after, in the synagogue at Capernaum, He spoke the searching words that drove the bread-seeking disciples from Him and showed the true basis of the kingdom. "Ye seek Me, not because ye saw the signs, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto eternal life." Jesus was the friend of the poor, who went about doing good, but He felt it to be a temptation of the devil to base His kingdom on bread, and to count upon an allegiance evoked by loaves and fishes. This temptation is always with the Church, and it is not the less a temptation that there are many at the present time who turn it into an accusation. The Church, we are constantly being told, does not care for the poor: it is a capitalist institution. People may starve for all it will do to help them. We would believe in it if it made our bread its first care, but if it does not, we will have nothing to do with it. Voices like these are sometimes the modern equivalent of the voice which whispered to Jesus in the wilderness, "Command that these stones be made bread. Go about the country multiplying loaves and fishes all the time." The answer to them is partly to say that they are false; the Church, as every one knows who knows anything about it, does care for the poor. Blot out what Christian people do for the poor in any great city, and how much would remain? But partly also it is to point out that the demand which is here made upon the Church is one to which, if it is to be true to Christ, it cannot accede. It dare not, either for itself or for others, contemplate a kingdom of God founded upon bread. It must have pity for the poor - it must feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, or be lost for ever; but it must have the hardness to say to itself and to all men, even though they are poor, Seek first the kingdom of God; Labour not for the meat which perisheth; Man shall not live by bread alone. There are times when these are very unpopular things to say, and when there is therefore a strong temptation not to say them, but they were all said by Jesus, What comes first is sonship to God, faith in the Father, the love, trust, and obedience of a child; to this, everything else is to be postponed, in the possession of this every trial is to be overcome. The Church dare not enlist under the banner of those who think that a programme of what are called social reforms - the kind of reforms which can be carried in Parliament - will bring in the kingdom of God. It cannot do this any more than Jesus could enlist under the banner of those who would have made Him a king by force. It may quite well be its duty to sympathize with such reforms and to promote them; but it is its specific function to make plain that in the kingdom of God a perpetual primacy belongs to the spiritual, and that it may be the trial of any child of God, in humble faith in the Father, to maintain his sonship through hunger, pain, and death.

2. The second temptation is of quite a different kind. As Jesus looked out upon the society around Him, He saw that one of the simplest ways of winning ascendancy over men was to appeal to their love of the marvellous. If He only dazzled their senses sufficiently they would throng to His feet, and He would be able to do anything with them He pleased. This is what is imaginatively put in the temptation of the pinnacle. The background of the scene (we must suppose) is the courts of the temple, thronged with worshippers; and as Jesus descends through the air from the dizzy height, and alights among them uninjured, they crowd around Him and hail Him enthusiastically as the Messianic King. We know from the New Testament that this was in principle an appeal continually

being made to Jesus. "Jews demand signs," says St. Paul, describing the habitual temper of his countrymen. From beginning to end they demanded them from Jesus. "They came and tempting Him asked Him to show them a sign from heaven." "They mocked Him saying, Let Him now come down from the cross and we will believe Him." The idea is that miraculous works, dazzling, overwhelming, dumb-foundering, are the basis on which the kingdom of God can be built. Overpower the senses of men with wonders, and you will win their souls for God. This was for Jesus radically false, and it contained a temptation which He steadily resisted. He never worked a miracle of ostentation or display: His miracles had all their motive in love, and it was the love in them which bore witness to God. He trusted God, but He did not challenge Him; the works that He did were not venturesome audacities of His own, they were the works that the Father gave Him to do. He never renounced moral sanity, as though something could be done for God beyond its limits which could not be done within them. He trusted God, certainly, but He knew the difference between faith and insane presumption, and He knew that no impression made on the senses, however profound, could establish God's sovereignty in the spirit. This temptation also has its lesson for all who are interested to-day in the coming of God's kingdom. There is always a tendency in the Church to trust to methods which appeal rather to the senses than to the soul, or which are believed to be reaching the soul though they never get past the sense. They may be cruder or more refined, sensational or connected with the symbolic side of worship, but the common character of all is that they fall short of being rational and spiritual. How tempting it is to trust to such impressions, as though the coming of the kingdom were really secured by them - to trust, for example, to the feeling of awe and solemnity which comes upon us as we enter a great cathedral, or to the thrill which passes through us as we listen to the pure, passionless voice of a boy singing, "As pants the hart for water brooks," or to the power of some great preacher's eloquence, or to the inexplicable influence of a sacrament, celebrated with mysterious reverence and splendour. How tempting it is, yet how completely beside the mark! The only Church which claims to perform a miracle as the very centre of its worship falls whenever it makes the claim before this temptation. To turn bread and wine, under the very eyes of men, into the body and blood, soul and divinity of the Son of God, and to do it with mysterious and elaborate ceremonial, would be a miracle as astounding as for Jesus to throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple and to light on earth unharmed - as astounding, and, in the impression it produced, as irrelevant to the work of God. No doubt such things make an impression and have an influence; but they are not the influence and the impression through which that kingdom of God can come for which Jesus lived and died. How little He had of all that churches are tempted to trust in now! How little there is in the Gospels about methods and apparatus! Jesus had no church nor hall; He spoke in the synagogues when He had the opportunity, but as willingly and prevailingly in the fields or by the seashore, in a boat or a private house. He had no choir, no vestments, no sacraments, and we may well believe He would look with more than amazement upon the importance which many of His disciples now attach to such things. "He spake the word unto them," that was all. The trust of the Church in other things is really a distrust of the truth, an unwillingness to believe that its power lies in itself, a desire to have something more irresistible than truth to plead truth's cause; and all these are modes of atheism. Sometimes our yielding to this temptation is shown in the apathy which falls upon us when we cannot have the apparatus we crave, sometimes in the complacency in which we clothe ourselves when we get it and it draws a crowd. This is precisely the kind of crowd which Jesus refused to draw. The kingdom of God is not there,

nor is it to be brought by such appeals. It is not only a mistake, but a sin, to trust to attractions for the ear and the eye, and to draw people to the church by the same methods by which they are drawn to places of entertainment. What the evangelist calls "the word" - the spiritual truth, the message of the Father and of His kingdom - spoken in the spirit and enforced by the spirit, told by faith and heard by faith - is our only real resource, and we must not be ashamed of its simplicity.

3. The last of our Lord's temptations is the one which has been most variously interpreted, which is another way of saying the one which has been least certainly understood. The tempter takes Jesus to a high mountain, shows Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and says, "All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me". It is easy to see the connexion of this temptation with the baptism. The same voice which pronounced Jesus Son had also pronounced Him heir. The same Psalm which says to the Messiah, "Thou art My Son, to-day have I begotten Thee," says also, "Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession". Jesus was born to rule, and He was conscious of it in the very depths of His being. He had a kingly nature, men naturally felt His ascendancy, it was He whose right it was to reign. No one was so capable of using power well. All that He saw was properly His inheritance, and the question before His mind in the wilderness was how He was to obtain effective possession of it. How was He to get a foothold in the world as it was, from which He might advance to its conquest? As such questions stirred in His mind, and He looked out on the world which was to be the scene of His sovereignty, another temptation, another delusive possibility of action, was presented to Him. He saw that there was a great power already established in the earth: was it conceivable that if He recognized that power He might be able to obtain help from it? No doubt it was the power of evil, but one of the terrible things which experience teaches is that evil is a power. It wields vast resources, it can offer immense bribes. In Luke the tempter is represented as saying, "All this has been handed over to me, and to whomsoever I will I give it." This has struck some as transparently false, but if it were transparently false there would be no temptation in it. The possibility of the temptation lies in the two facts that the sovereignty over the world belonged of right to Jesus, as the Son and representative of God, and that an immense and actual power in the world was unmistakably wielded by evil. Could Jesus make any use of that power? Could He, in order to obtain a footing in a world where evil was so strongly entrenched, give any kind of recognition to evil? Could He compromise with it, acknowledging that it had at least a relative or temporary right to exist, and making use of it till He could attain a position in which He would be able to dispense with its aid? This is the real question in the third temptation. It is not that Jesus was tempted to seek a worldly instead of a spiritual kingdom, or a kingdom based on force or fraud instead of love - a kingdom like Rome or Parthia instead of heaven; it is that He is tempted to accept the alliance of evil in establishing His kingdom, to take the help of the devil in the service of God. But to get the Son of God to admit that evil had to be squared somehow, and, that an irreconcilable attitude to it was impracticable, and would prevent the kingdom of God from ever getting under way, would be to defeat His mission altogether. Hence at this point Jesus repels the tempter with passion - Get thee behind Me, Satan - as feeling how powerful was the temptation and how critical. We seem to hear Him saying to Himself as He says afterwards to all His disciples: "All the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them! What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose himself?"

It hardly needs to be said that this temptation also remains with the Church. Evil is still a great power in the world, and as long as it is so the question will continue to arise whether it is not a power of which we can make some use for the kingdom of God. It is all the more sure to arise because evil is strong enough to cause great trouble and suffering to those who refuse to transact with it. Hence people will ask whether there is no way in which we can take the loan of it, so to speak, in God's service - no method by which we can for the moment recognize it, yet avail ourselves of its recognition to secure its defeat - no philosophy or practical skill which will enable us to trade on its capital and to make our own or God's profit. This is the place at which subtlety may deceive us, but simplicity never will. Go to the bottom, as a simple mind instinctively does, and all this philosophizing and negotiating with evil is worshipping the Devil. That is not what it is called, but that is what it is. And it is as vain as it is wicked. No one ever makes anything by it. The Devil is an egoist, and will not do any man a good turn for God's sake. If anyone wishes to work for the kingdom of God, there is only one possible attitude to evil, however plausible and powerful - the attitude of simple outright defiance, which owes allegiance to God alone. This truth has to be applied in various ways, and will hardly be applied without giving offence. There may be a bad man in the Church's environment, who has nevertheless great social influence: is it not fair enough to get his financial or his social support even for the cause which his life discredits? May we not get his patronage for the church fair, and get good of it, even though it is given not without indifference or contempt? The answer of the Gospel is quite unequivocal: to accept such patronage is to fall down and worship the Devil, and that is not the way the kingdom of God comes. Or there may be a bad institution in our environment: the liquor interest, or a corrupt interest in municipal or national politics. Do not alienate so powerful a section of society, we are sure to be told, by declaring the mind of Christ about their trade or their conduct. Recognize their right to exist, and they will recognize yours. You will do more good in the long run by acknowledging facts than by knocking your head against a wall. Certainly there is nothing more to be desired than that facts should be acknowledged; but the final fact which we are here summoned by our Lord to recognize is the fact that with evil He can make no compromise whatever; and as for knocking our heads against walls, how would those who are so quick to use such language describe the way in which He came by His death? Even in things less doubtful we have to take care that we do not ally the Church with what is alien to it, and especially that we do not count on that alliance for its strength. There are plenty of people who avow that they have little faith in Christianity except as it has entered into alliance with the spirit of a nation, and is embodied in a state church; it is its political prestige which gives it its standing ground, and enables it to discharge its function in the national life. This is precisely what the Gospel here condemns. The spirit of a nation, as we are well aware, is capable of pride and selfishness, of violence and inhumanity; and the strength of the spiritual can never be derived from so ambiguous a relation. The Church exists, not to be quickened by the spirit of any nation, however great, but to embody the wider and greater spirit of humanity, nay the very spirit of God. It is always being tempted to seek the alliance and patronage of things lower than itself - of the things that have power in this world: wealth, rank, social distinction, political status. And in all such cases, it is the lower which bribes the higher and takes advantage of it; we fall down and for the vain help He promises worship the Prince of this world, forgetting that He alone can be our help Who claims our undivided allegiance for Himself.

Such were the temptations of the Son of God which He anticipated and vanquished in the opening of His career: such still are the temptations of His Church, and of all who as sons of God are workers together with Him. That is why we think and speak of them still. When they come upon us, let us set the Lord always before us: not despairing of God in trial, nor promising ourselves and others that physical trials will cease; not presuming on God, nor trying by hypnotizing men's senses to win their spirits for Him; not shutting our eyes to the power of evil in the world, but, conscious of the sovereign power of God, bidding it defiance in His name. It is as we follow Jesus thus that we shall become partakers not only in His tribulation and in His patience but also in His kingdom.

05.17. The Leaves of the Sadducees

Chapter 17 THE LEAVEN OF THE SADDUCEES "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees."- Mat 16:6 THE Pharisees and the Sadducees appear at the beginning of this chapter asking Jesus to show them a sign from heaven. Their request is refused. Jesus had wrought wonders among them already which ought to have been more effective than they were. "If the mighty works which were done among you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago." Instead of working more miracles gratuitously, He left them and departed, and we cannot feel too strongly that when He goes away the evidences of Christianity vanish with Him. If He is out of our sight we can have no idea either of what it is or of what it rests upon. In the silence which followed this ungenial encounter, our Lord seems to have brooded over the antipathy of the Pharisees and Sadducees. What was the cause of it? What was it in their spirit and temper that made them so unresponsive, so unsympathetic to Him? Whatever it was, He speaks of it here as a leaven, and warns His disciples against it. Leaven is a figure for something which works secretly and by way of infection. We are familiar with the idea of inoculation as a protective against disease, but there is such a thing also as being rendered proof against health-giving power. The man who is inoculated with the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees - the man who has taken into his spiritual nature the virus of their habits and temper - becomes immune in the presence of Jesus. He is not affected as a human soul ought to be affected. He is not impressed otherwise than as the Pharisees or Sadducees themselves were impressed. He unconsciously and securely defies the influence of Jesus, as one who has been vaccinated, for instance, unconsciously and securely defies the contagion of smallpox. It is the unhappiness of falling into such a condition that we are warned of in the text. When Jesus spoke, the Pharisees were more numerous than the Sadducees and more powerful, and probably the need to beware of them was the greater. In its essence, Pharisaism is virtue which involves the sense of superiority to others, and is therefore destitute of redeeming power. The Pharisee is a person who is complacent about himself, and despises human nature. In the Church, the leaven of the Pharisees is apt to become potent when questions of doctrine and worship take precedence of life. It is the temper which indulges itself in the idea that we are the true people of God; we hold the true Catholic or the true evangelical doctrine; we believe in the incarnation and the atonement, in resurrection and judgment, in the inspiration and the infallibility of Scripture; we believe in the sanctity of the Sabbath and the obligation of worship; we cannot but look down with a pious shudder on all that is sceptical, heretical, unbelieving; we instinctively keep ourselves to ourselves in their presence. It is easy to see that goodness of this type can never help others, and that it is remote from every thing we see in Jesus. It is not too much to say that it is equally hateful to God and man. But it has been exposed so often and so completely that it is discredited as soon as named. The Pharisees are not a proud and popular sect now, by whom we may easily be infected unawares; the real danger lies with the Sadducees, and it is their leaven against which we have to be on our guard. What is it, then, and what are the symptoms of its working? In the time of Jesus, the Sadducees were the priestly aristocracy in Jerusalem. They had the temple and its vast revenues in their hands, and all their worldly interests were bound up with the maintenance of the

existing religious order. They were also charged with the administration of all national affairs, and especially of all arrangements between their own and foreign nations. They professed the true religion, of course; indeed they were its official representatives; but they were in contact with a larger outside life, and they had to maintain a *modus vivendi* with it. In all this there were temptations to which the Sadducees succumbed; and the way in which they explained and justified their transactions and compromises - the Sadducean philosophy, or spirit, or temper - is the contagion we are to avoid. In what way, then, let us ask, did it show its working?

1. In the first place, it showed itself in a tendency to secularize religion; that is, to acknowledge it simply as part of the existing order of society, to give it its place and to keep it in its place. Religion for the Sadducees was an institution, not an inspiration. It was part of an established system of social order with which all their worldly interests were bound up, and their one concern was to maintain the existing equilibrium. Living religion the Sadducees dreaded. A religious movement perturbed them, and they did not know what to make of it. When the Christian religion began to put forth its irrepressible expansive power after the Resurrection, we are told that "they doubted whereunto this would grow". They did not want growing things at all in that sphere. A religion that grew, that operated as a creative or re-creative power, that initiated new movements in the soul or in society - a religion that gave men new and infinite conceptions of duty, making them capable of self-dedication and martyrdom, so that you could never tell what mad disturbing thing they would do or try - a religion that disclosed another world, and made a power so incommensurable with all present interests as immortality a present motive in the lives of common men - such a religion the Sadducees could only regard as the enemy. They did not like it; they had no mind to it and no time for it. Their minds and their energies were absorbed in keeping up the social equilibrium which was so advantageous for them against pressures which they understood - Rome on the one hand, and fanatical nationalism on the other; and the new and incalculable force which they could not help suspecting in Jesus was too much. They were more than willing to give religion the formal acknowledgment which its place in the social order required, but a religion which for anything they could tell might explode the social order was something with which they could hold no terms. This attitude to the Christian faith - this particular working of the Sadducean leaven - is not confined to ancient times. It is the peril, in the first instance, of an established clergy, with vested interests in things as they are. Of course I do not mean by an established clergy the clergy of a state church only; the danger is real wherever the profession of Christianity has settled into the customs of a country, and vested interests of all sorts have become interwoven with it. It is real for all men who have been born and brought up in the Church, and who continue to give the Christian institution that formal recognition which decorum requires, but who find their life apart from this so engrossing, so exacting, and so rewarding, that the institution ceases to be vital, and their religion becomes the only dead and uninteresting thing about them. They may feel like the ancient Sadducees that they have no choice. It takes them all their time to maintain their position. Every atom of their mental and moral capital is invested in their worldly concerns, and they feel as if they could not keep their place if they withdrew the smallest fraction of their interest. But the result is that a man living this life may be startled some day to discover that he has no religion. When he sees the real thing in another soul it frightens him. He hears some one pray, and feels at the same instant how true and vital it is, and how impossible for him. He cannot speak to God any more than he can speak Chinese; the leaven of the Sadducees has stupefied if it has not killed him. Beware of letting any institution, or the observances of any, even what we call sacred, custom take the

place in your life of direct communion with God and Christ.

2. Another way in which the working of the Sadducean leaven is shown is this: it comes out as a tendency to prefer what we call experience to inspiration, the wisdom of life to the authority of the word of God. Experience is a great word, but it makes a great difference where a man makes his experience; whether it is in the world, without God, as St. Paul says of the heathen; or whether it is with God, in the world. If we get our experience in the world, without God, it will certainly betray before long an aversion to the word of God, Far back in the history of Israel, as early almost as 600 B.C, long before the Sadducean name was known, we can see clearly the workings of the Sadducean leaven. Ezekiel heard his fellow countrymen by the banks of the Chebar saying, "We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone" (Eze 20:32). They knew in their hearts that they were not really as the heathen, or they could never so much as have formed this thought. God had revealed Himself to them, and that revelation had fixed for them the high responsibilities which the knowledge of God always brings. For the exiles by the Chebar they were only too high. It is not practicable, they said, to live at the level to which the voice of God through the prophet calls us; in the name of common sense let us say so, and resolve to live at another level; let us be like the heathen, the families of the countries, and serve wood and stone; let us give up the irrational claim to be a people specially taught of God; let us take our chance, and sink or swim with mankind. It is quite easy to put a liberal and philosophical aspect on such thoughts, and to buttress them by appeals to the teaching of comparative religion, and so forth. The Sadducees did it constantly. They were brought into contact with foreign nations, and especially with that gifted nation the Greeks. They saw how wonderfully the Greeks had mastered life, how much they made of it, how brilliantly they reproduced it in their art, how profoundly they criticized it in their poetry and philosophy; and they almost involuntarily fell to asking. Why should we be so conceited as to claim a place apart as a people of God, with a revelation of God not made to others? yes, and to burden ourselves besides with the responsibility of living up to it? Let us lose ourselves in the race, and stand or fall with it. We cannot digest the idea of the supernatural. We can neither think out nor live out the idea that God has given a special revelation, involving special responsibilities, to us.

There is no man living who has not been conscious of this working of the Sadducean leaven in his own veins. In the Church we have all been brought up to believe in revelation and in inspiration. We have been taught to believe that God speaks to us in the Bible, and especially in Christ, as He speaks nowhere else in the world, and that there is an authority here against the truth and supremacy of which there is no appeal. But is this all that is to be said? I venture to put it more strongly. I venture to say, speaking of those who have been brought up in the Church, that we have not only been taught, but have experienced, the inspiration of the Bible, the presence of God in it speaking by His Spirit to our hearts. We can remember the time when our conscience was subdued and quickened by the words which revealed the awful holiness of God. We can remember when the words of Jesus fell on our hearts in the glory of their grace and truth, and we knew that they were words of eternal life. Dare we ever go back upon these experiences? Dare we try to evade the responsibilities they create? It cannot be. No matter how plausible, how large-minded it may seem to say, "We will be like other people, take our chance, sink or swim with our kind"; our responsibility is fixed by these experiences of revelation, and it is a Sadducean leaven which tempts us to evade this truth. No doubt, a man is not a child, and as we know more

we read our Bibles with other eyes; but the child's impression of the word of God and its authority is unchangeably right; and all that deadens our sense of responsibility in relation to it, all that tempts us to plead experience against its practicability, all that would discount its inexorable judgments or qualify its infinite grace, is Sadducean poison. There are many examples to show us to what it leads. The denial of a special presence of God in Scripture ends inevitably in the denial of a special presence of God in Christ. When the Bible is just another book, Christ is just another man. And the spirit which can show Him to His place among the other spiritual luminaries of the world is more than half prepared to ignore Him altogether. It was the Sadducees at the beginning who convinced themselves that there was no room in the same world both for Christ and them, and that is still what the Sadducean temper comes to.

One mode in which this tendency to disparage revelation comes out, even in what ought to be Christian preaching and teaching, is distrust of the great things in the Gospel as mysterious. The avowed aim of many who plead the cause of Christianity is to be bright, practical, rational, attractive; to meet people on their own ground. Under the guidance of such aims the world of New Testament truth too readily contracts; we hear nothing of the atonement, of the new life in Christ, of immortality and eternal judgment. With the narrower conception of the realities with which it has to deal, the Church soon comes to have lower ends and with them lower means; it ceases to have in the full sense of the term a Divine or Christian calling; it lapses into a more refined piece of the world, and sometimes into futile efforts to compete with the world on ground of the world's choosing. I do not say a word against the development of the social, the institutional, or the philanthropic side of Church work; but Christianity lives by the supernatural and eternal, and all that obscures this or thrusts it into the background is the leaven of the Sadducees against which we are here warned.

3. There is one other point to refer to, on which the New Testament lays particular emphasis. The Sadducees are described as people who say that there is no resurrection, and that angel and spirit are words without meaning. They not only denied immortality, they derided it. They invented the story of the woman who had had seven husbands, and asked whose wife she would be in the resurrection. It was invented to leave the laugh on the Sadducean side in their discussions with the Pharisees, but the laugh is not much to have on your side in questions about God and man and human destiny. The Sadducean objections to immortality, as raising absurdly unanswerable questions, no doubt seemed to them, as they still seem to many, truly philosophical - the inevitable refusal by acute and enlightened minds of impossible ideas; but according to Jesus they rested on a two-fold ignorance. "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." The Scriptures mean, of course, the Old Testament Scriptures, and according to Jesus there is a revelation of immortality there. There is a revelation of immortality because there is a revelation of God entering into a relation of friendship with men so intimate that He consents to be called their God. "I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob." Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob may never themselves have understood all that the friendship of God involved: they may never have suspected that life from the dead was in that word. But Jesus understood. He knew that the friendship of God was something which time could not exhaust and against which death was powerless. He lived and died believing in immortality, because in life and in death He knew the Father. The supreme utterances of Scripture - those words in which the human spirit has revealed once for all what it is capable of - illustrate the mind of Jesus here. "Nevertheless, I am continually

with Thee; Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me unto glory." "I am persuaded that neither death nor life shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." "They shall never perish . . . no one is able to pluck out of the Father's hand." Those who know what God is to man, and only they, are in a position to speak about immortality. But no one ever knew this as Jesus; and accordingly, for those who understand it, the word and faith of Jesus, as arguments for immortality, outweigh the scepticism of all lower minds. To be ignorant of God, the God whose relations with men are revealed in Scripture, is to be out of count when immortality is in question. The other kind of ignorance to which scepticism is due is described by Jesus as ignorance of the power of God. The world of nature and of natural relations, in which we live at present, has evidently no room for immortality; and the Sadducees drew the inference that because we cannot be immortal in this world, or in a world which simply reproduces this, therefore we cannot be immortal at all. But this is to make the present world the measure of the power of God, and it is against this that Jesus protests. The truth is that the present world - nature as we call it - is so far from defining God's power that what it suggests to a living mind is rather its unsearchableness and infinity. This is the key to the passage in which St. Paul, in a discussion of the resurrection body, dwells on the boundless variety and wealth of nature; the God who has such resources at His disposal cannot be embarrassed in providing for the immortality of man. It is the key also to one of the most wonderful passages in Job, where, after a sublime contemplation of the greatness of God in nature, he concludes: "Lo, these are but the outskirts of His ways: And how small a whisper do we hear of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand?" God can sustain man's Life in another order or mode of being to which the Sadducean conundrums about the Resurrection do not apply; and it is such an order, not the perpetuation of the present, to which the hope of immortality refers. The question of immortality is in some respects a very simple one. It is the question how much God can or will give to man, and how much man is willing or able to receive from God. No one can answer it decisively but one who has true thoughts both of God and man. This is what makes the answer of Jesus so important. And everything that prompts or fosters unworthy thoughts of either - everything which represents God as powerless or ungenerous, and man as insignificant or contemptible - everything which discredits the idea of union and communion between the human and the Divine - is important too. It is important because it is the leaven of the Sadducees by which our spiritual nature is benumbed and rendered insensible to all that God means toward us in Christ and can do for us through Him. Surely we do not need to be told how many secret allies in our souls conspire with the tendency to believe that death ends all. All our natural indolence, all our reluctance to make spiritual efforts, all our unwillingness to conquer truth and goodness from nature, and to live in God always, are on this side. So is our willingness to reduce the living God to a stream of tendency, and to deny eternal judgment because we do not see how we could execute it justly, or because it is disproportionate to so worthless a being as man. All this is the leaven of the Sadducees, to be purged out by disciples of Christ.

If we ask whether there is not an antidote for it, the answer can only be given in the words of Jesus, Abide in me. Jesus was no Sadducee. He believed in the living God and in a living religion which should make all things new. He believed in revelation: He heard the voice of the living Father in the Scriptures, and so may we if our ears are not dulled with sophistry or secularity or complacency. He believed in immortality. He lived and died believing in it, and He said to His own,

“Because I live ye shall live also”. To keep our hearts against all these debilitating, deleterious, and in the long run fatal tendencies, there is but one thing we can do: abide in Christ, and let His words abide in us.

05.18. Walking in the Light

Chapter 18 WALKING IN THE LIGHT

"If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin."- 1Jn 1:7 THIS is one of the passages in Scripture in which the language is so spiritual, and so remote from that which we use in daily life, that it is apt to leave no impression on our minds. We have no inclination to dispute it, but it does not arrest us. If we do not think of it, it sounds familiar, but it grows strangely unfamiliar if we try to realize what it means. I have heard an eminent scholar express impatience with the first epistle of John as a whole; it seemed to him, he said, the innocent prattle of a good old man, not to be too seriously followed. But a scholar much more eminent - perhaps the most distinguished New Testament scholar of the last generation, Dr. Hort - characterized this same book as the most passionate in the New Testament. It is the book, if our minds were only at home in the region in which it moves, which says the last word about all the great things in the Christian religion; the simplest if you will, and the most free from effort, but also the most profound, the most searching, and the most impassioned of all. This text brings before us two of the great experiences and privileges of Christians, and the condition on which they depend. These experiences are, first, mutual fellowship, and second, continuous sanctification. This interpretation of the Apostle's language has indeed been disputed. The words "We have fellowship one with another" have been supposed to refer not to the fellowship of Christians among themselves, but to the fellowship of Christians with God, the "we" representing under one term God and the writer of this letter and those for whom he speaks; and the words "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin" have been interpreted not of continuous sanctification or progress in holiness, but of the annulling of the responsibility for sin; in theological language, they have been taken to refer to justification, not sanctification. When it comes to experience, the things which are here distinguished are never separated. The mutual fellowship of Christians is a fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, and there is no justification known to Scripture which does not sanctify, nor any sanctification which does not rest on a fundamental annulling of the responsibility for sin. But though this makes the difference of interpretation practically unimportant, I believe the way in which I put it at first is that which truly represents the mind of St. John: the experiences in which it comes out that a certain condition is being fulfilled are the fellowship of Christians with each other and their progressive sanctification. The condition on which these experiences depend is that of walking in the light as God is in the light. Following the order in the text, I shall speak first of what is meant by this condition.

1. If we walk in the light as He is in the light. - Light and darkness are words which the Apostle uses both in the Gospel and the epistle, but which he never explains. Partly they do not need explanation and partly they do not admit of it. We feel the freedom with which they are used when he says in one sentence that God is light, and in the next that God is in the light. We feel that in some aspects light and darkness might be regarded as equivalent to holiness and sin, but the text itself is enough to show that they are not to be simply identified. The Christian conscious of sin is

called by the Apostle to walk in the light as God is in the light in order that the blood of Jesus may cleanse him from all sin. What is suggested by "light" throughout the passage is something absolutely luminous and transparent, in which there is no concealment and no need for any. To say that God is light is to say for one thing that in God there is nothing to hide: if He is dark, it is with excess of bright; it is because He dwells in light that is inaccessible, not because there is anything in Him which of its own nature craves obscurity. This is the line on which our thoughts are led by the following verses, where the opposite of walking in the light is evidently hiding sin, or denying that we have sinned. It is some kind of secrecy - which no doubt has its motive in sin - that is meant by darkness, and this gives us the key to walking in the light. To walk in the light means to live a life in which there is nothing hidden, nothing in which we are insincere with ourselves, nothing in which we seek to impose upon others. We may have, and no doubt we will have, both sin and the sense of sin upon us - "if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" - but we may walk in the light nevertheless, if we deal truly with our sin, and it is only as we do so that we enjoy Christian fellowship and are cleansed by the blood of Jesus. What, then, is specially required of us if we would walk in the light?

It requires in the first place prompt confession of sin. The sin that lies upon the conscience unconfessed darkens the whole moral being. But to confess is not the first impulse when we have sinned. Pride, fear, shame, and other powerful feelings keep us back. Our first impulse is to hide our sin, or rather to ignore it; to try to believe that the best that can now be done is to forget it, and to go on as if it had never been; to brace ourselves up to bear the inevitable consequences as stoically as we can; in any case, to say nothing about it, in the hope that in time it may work itself out, and that God will say nothing about it either. The thirty-second Psalm, which tells the story of a penitent and pardoned sinner, begins it with the words, "When I kept silence". That is the first impulse. But to keep silence is to walk in the dark and to walk alone. The unconfessed sin separates us from God, and from all His redeeming and cleansing power. Of course He knows it, but it is not enough that He should know, it is necessary that we should tell Him. If we are going to walk in the light, there must be no shunning of God's presence, no restraint of prayer, no hiding of anything from Him even for an hour.

Further, to walk in the light means that we confess our sins without reserve. Sometimes we do not really confess when we think we are doing so: we rather admit our sins than confess them, and we seek in all possible ways to explain, to extenuate and to excuse them. We may confess them in words, but in the secret of our hearts we do not take blame; we do not admit full responsibility for them. We think of the evil nature we have inherited, of the bias in our constitution to this or that attractive vice, of the defects of our education, of the violence of temptation, of the compulsion of circumstances; we do not deny what we have done - we cannot - but we mitigate it by every possible plea. This is not walking in the light. In all such self-excusing there is a large element of voluntary self-deception which keeps the life in the dark. To walk in the light requires us to accept our responsibilities without reserve, to own our sin that we may be able to disown it, and not to own it with such qualifications and reserves as amount to saying in the long run, It was indeed I who did it, but after all it is not I who should bear the blame. A man who makes it his business not to confess his sin, but to understand and to explain it, no matter how philosophical he may seem, is walking in darkness, and the truth is not in him. There is nothing in his attitude which gives him the benefit either of fellowship with Christians or of the cleansing blood of Jesus.

Finally, to walk in the light means that when we confess our sins to God we do not keep a secret hold of them in our hearts. Many a man confesses the sin he has done, and knows that he is going to do it again. It is not only in his nature to do it; it is in his inmost desire. He has been found out, exposed, humiliated, punished; yet he is saying to himself, "When shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." It need not be said that there is no hope here: this is the man who is shut up at last in the iron cage of despair. Where there is something hidden in the heart, hidden from God and from man, yet with the last word to say in the life, the darkness is as deep and dreadful as it can be. The desire to keep such a secret hold of sin is itself a sin to be confessed, to be declared in its exceeding sinfulness, to be unreservedly renounced; and it is only when the life is brought into the light by such openness that the Christian experiences of which the Apostle speaks are put within its reach. The man who has a guilty secret in his life is a lonely man. There can be no cordial Christian overflow from his heart to the hearts of others, nor from theirs to his. And he is a man doomed to bear in his loneliness the uneffaced stain of his sin. The cleansing virtue of the atonement cannot reach him where he dwells by himself in the dark. He is cut off from the two great blessings of the Gospel which are conditioned by walking in the light - the fellowship of Christians with one another, and the sanctifying power of the blood of Jesus. Let us briefly consider these.

2. (a) We have fellowship one with another. - The fellowship of Christians with each other has its basis in their common fellowship with the Father and the Son, but it is a separate and priceless good. The joy of the Christian religion is largely bound up with it, and without joy there can be little effectiveness, because little attraction or charm. How good it is, and how strengthening, to feel the heart enlarged by sharing in the Christian experiences which are common to all believers! how happy a state, not to be alone in that which is deepest in our life, but to know that there are those who passionately sympathize with us, who feel with us and with whom we can feel, to the very depths of our spiritual nature! The New Testament epistles are one prolonged illustration of what this fellowship means. It means, to put it briefly, that Christians are people who have in common the interests and experiences which dominate these letters, who are moved and uplifted by them as the Apostles and their correspondents were, who instinctively speak of them as they spoke, and who find in their relation to each other in Christ the most inspiring and joyful element in their life. It is something like this the Apostle means when he says, "We have fellowship one with another". But what of our present experience in this connexion?

It can hardly be doubted that the want of fellowship, in this primary Christian sense, is at this moment one of the greatest wants in the Church's life - the one which is most to be deplored, which more almost than any other makes the Church helpless and exposes it to contempt. Is it not pitiable to see the substitutes that are found for it, and the importance which is assigned to them, only because the real thing is not there? We speak of having "a social meeting" of the Church, as if a meeting could not be social unless its Christian character were disguised or put into the background. We approve of the Literary Society because it keeps young people in contact with the Church, as if this kind of contact had anything to do with the ends for which the Church exists. We congratulate ourselves on the success of a bazaar, because though it did involve an immense amount of labour and of waste, it brought the members of the congregation together, and united them in a common interest over the organ or the renovation of the buildings. We may even find the choir picnic important, and if we open a reading-room where men may play at dominoes we call it

“extending the social side” of the Church’s work. How incongruous and unreal all this would look in the first epistle of John! How small and trivial it does look in face of many other fellowships which absorb men in the world around us! The fellowship of the members of a political club in promoting what they think the good of the nation - the fellowship of scholars in the advancement of science - the fellowship of the members of a Trades Union in promoting the material interests of their class - all these are more powerful, more stimulating, more attractive than the small incidental fellowships which seem to be all that is real in some churches. Why is it that the powerful and fundamental fellowship constituted simply by membership in the Church has fallen into the background? Why do we not feel the power and the charm of a common relation to the Father and to His Son Jesus Christ, of a common participation in that eternal life which was with the Father and has been revealed for us in the Son? Why is not this the centre round which we rally, where we find our greatest joy, where we can be most truly one, and are inspired for the highest ends?

According to the Apostle, it is because we do not walk in the light as God is in the light. We sit here side by side, but how far are we really present to each other? How many of us are there who have things to hide? How many who have done what no one knows, and what they have not told unreservedly even to God? How many are there whose minds are quietly and steadily set on something which they dare not avow, whose future depends on keeping others in the dark, and who do not realize that in the sense of the Apostle the very same act keeps themselves in the dark too? How many are there whose minds have been secretly loosened from what once seemed convictions, who have been intellectually estranged from the Gospel, who would create a sensation if they stood up in the midst of Christian worship and revealed their whole thoughts about God and Christ, about Church and Bible, about prayer and sacraments? These are the things which make fellowship impossible. These are the things which make us dumb, because they silence on our lips the language of the New Testament, the only language which true Christianity can speak. The want of fellowship, if the Apostle is right, constitutes an impeachment of our moral sincerity. If we were walking in the light it would be otherwise. If we always told the truth, if we never made reserves, if we dealt sincerely with God, with one another, and with our own souls, we should have a fellowship with one another such as we have never known; we should speak the language of the Apostles as our mother-tongue, and we should find, not in other associations but in the Church itself, the most satisfying and inspiring society in the world. Walk in the light as God is in the light, and your hearts will open to each other in Him. You will discover on every side unsuspected friends. You will get new inspirations for your Christian life, new impulses and opportunities of sharing in the Christian life of others. The Church will no longer be a weariness to you, a place to which you come with reluctance and which you leave with relief; it will be the home and joy of your heart.

(b) The restoration of Christian fellowship is not the only blessing which comes with walking in the light: there is also continuous and progressive sanctification. The blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin. This is not spoken of simply as God’s will, as that which He intends shall take place; it is spoken of as actually going on. When they walk in the light, the atoning death of Jesus actually exerts its sanctifying power upon Christians; they become continually purer and more pure from all sin.

It cannot be said too strongly that this is God’s interest in the Church. As St. Paul puts it, this is the will of God, even your sanctification. What He is concerned for is that men who have been defiled

and stained by sin, men who have been dyed with it through and through, should be completely purified. It is a tremendous task. Think only of the congregation gathered here, and of what sin means in us if we take it in all its forms and dimensions and powers. Think of the sinful passions which are rooted in our nature - what St. John calls the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life. Think of the habits, some of thought and imagination, some of grosser indulgence, which practice has burnt into the blood. Think of the sins of youth and of age; of the pride and wilfulness and folly; of the discontent and querulousness and rebellion; of the sloth and shiftlessness, of the envy and malice and uncharitableness, of the selfishness and ingratitude, of the disobedience and obstinacy, of the insincerity, falsehood, and treachery, of the love of the world and the forgetfulness of God, which are all represented here. Think of the deep stain these things leave, and then consider that it is the will of God to cleanse us altogether from them, and that He has provided a power which is able to do so. Dreadful as is the power of sin in all its forms and ramifications, there is a power in the world which is still more strong and wonderful - the blood of Christ. The blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. It does not cloak, it cleanses. It purges sin away, and makes the flesh of the leper come again as the flesh of a little child. This is what the Gospel promises, or rather we should say. This is what the Gospel is. It is a stupendous assertion, but the very wonder of it is the evidence of its truth. It is not too good to be true; it is too good and too great not to be true. There are books on the atonement in abundance which, apart from all other arguments, discredit themselves finally by reducing the revelation of God in the Passion of His Son to the poorest moral commonplace. The whole of the New Testament is a protest against this. The atoning death of Jesus is the supreme miracle of grace, and its effects in human nature are no less wonderful than the power by which they are wrought. It cleanses from all sin. It prevails against, overpowers and expels all that has ever degraded and defiled the children of God. Can we set to our seal that this is true? Is sin surely disappearing from our life and nature under the power of the atonement? Are we who are members of the Church learning day by day that the most powerful thing in the world is not the sin we know so well, but the blood of Christ's cross, and that under this Divine and irresistible influence the dark stain of sin is vanishing away? This is the concern which God has in our life. Others may look on us with interest to see what progress we are making in our business, or in our education, or in our social career; but what God looks at is our progress in being purified from sin. For this purpose was the Son of God manifested; for this purpose He bore our sins in His own body to the tree; and to God this purpose cannot but be as dear as the agony and passion of His Son. Is it as dear to us? Is it the one concern of our life, as it is the supreme interest of God in Christ, that we should be cleansed from all sin? If it is, then we must observe the condition under which the sanctifying power of the atonement becomes effective; we must walk in the light, as He is in the light. I have already explained what this involves, but must repeat part of it here in this new connexion. The atonement is ineffective and indeed uninteresting mainly for two reasons, which though they are the opposite of each other lead alike to walking in the dark. It is not interesting if we are not seriously interested in sin. If sin is regarded with comparative indifference - if it is treated as a slight or superficial matter which we can deal with for ourselves - if the responsibility toward God in which it involves us is not realized - if it is explained and explained away till we do not feel very uneasy, not to say very guilty about it - if we have never learned the power of the bad conscience to paralyze the will - then of course the atonement will seem gratuitous to us, and we will not get experience of its cleansing power. And on the other hand, it is not interesting if we are seriously interested in sin. The man who has been

compromised with evil and who for reasons of his own intends to continue so - the man who thinks he cannot afford to break finally with something against which his conscience protests, and is therefore secretly resolved that he will stick to it - this man also can have nothing to do with the atonement. For the atonement means the blood of Christ. It means deliverance by one who died for sin, and whose power is a power enabling us to die to it. It means the inexorable love of God with which evil cannot dwell - a love which must be shut out of his life, though the saving power of God is in it, by every one who, whatever his professions, refuses to treat his sin as what it is to God. This is why the Apostle puts in the forefront of his wonderful declaration of the Gospel the searching condition - if we walk in the light as He is in the light. There is power in the blood of Jesus to cleanse us from all sin, and there is no power to cleanse us anywhere else, but it needs the condition of openness and sincerity. We cannot be cleansed from the sin we do not confess. We cannot be cleansed from the sin we excuse. We cannot be cleansed from the sin to which we are secretly resolved to cling. And if not from these, then not from any. The Gospel is simple and whole; there is no such thing as negotiation, transaction, or compromise possible in the relations of God and man. Everything is absolute. We may take the Gospel or leave it, but we cannot bargain about it. We may be cleansed from all sin, or from none, but not from some on condition of retaining others. Walk in the light, and all this will be self-evident. Renounce with all your heart everything secret and insincere. Let there be nothing hidden in your life, no unavowed ends, no prevarications, no reserves. Simple truth is the one element in which we can be united to each other, and in which the redeeming love of God can work for our sanctification. Insincerity, the dark atmosphere in which so many souls live, is in its turn one of the forms of sin from which the blood of Christ cleanses; and as we confess it, and disown it, and bring it to the cleansing blood, it also loses its power. We can learn even to be sincere under the power of the death of Jesus - to hide nothing from God, to practise no delusions on ourselves, to refrain from imposing on others. This is the way in which all the wealth of the Gospel becomes ours; when we walk in it we realize that the Apostles wrote for us, and that the greatest and most wonderful things they say of Christ and His blood are the simple truth.

05.19. Moral Impossibilities

Chapter 19 MORAL IMPOSSIBILITIES "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils." - 1Co 10:21

WHAT the Apostle means in this saying is evidently that we cannot drink of these two cups simultaneously or consistently, but of course it is in our power to drink of either. There is such a thing in the world as the cup of the Lord, and we can take it in our hands and put it to our lips. To-day many of us have done so. Perhaps it was under a deep sense of what it signified, perhaps with a sort of perplexity in our minds that in a spiritual religion like ours such a place should have been claimed by a material rite. It is certain that many church members have no clear convictions about the sacraments, and are uncomfortable in the celebration of them. They may think in some indistinct fashion that they are symbolical, but they use even the idea of symbol in a wrong way. A symbol in their thoughts is something to be distinguished from reality; just because it is a symbol, it keeps them, one might say, at arm's length from the thing symbolized. But the true use of a symbol is to bring the reality near; it is to give us a grasp of it such as we could not otherwise obtain. A Christian spirit does not play off the reality in the sacrament, and the symbol, against each other; it grasps the reality through the symbol; it does not answer to its experience to say that in the communion it partakes of the symbols of Christ's body and blood; it has Jesus Christ Himself in all the reality of his incarnation and passion as its meat and drink. It is nothing less than the cup of the Lord which we drink, nothing less than the table of the Lord of which we partake. The sacraments, no doubt, may easily become encrusted with superstition. They did so even in the days of the Apostles. The Corinthians to whom Paul writes evidently thought the sacraments had a magical power, and could keep them safe even when they ran into spiritual perils and tempted God. The Apostle had to point them by way of warning to ancient Israel, which had also had its sacraments; they were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; they all had the same spiritual meat, the same spiritual drink; yet they perished in the wilderness. The sacraments are not charms or spells which make any conduct safe. Nevertheless, though superstition may gather round them, they enshrine the ultimate truths of the Christian religion; they safeguard, in a form more impressive and less open to distortion than words, the realities by which faith lives. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion in the blood of Christ? Is it not the cup of the Lord? Is it not He who puts it into our hand? Is not His love in it, the love with which He loved us when He gave His life a ransom, the love which bears sin, and brings regenerating pardon? Is not that love in the cup, here, now, within reach, ours, commended to us by the Lord Himself? If these things are not so, I do not know what the Christian religion means, or how it can subsist; and however men may become bewildered in their minds over the fundamental truths of revelation, Christ has in this ordinance a witness to Himself which finds its way to the heart. For generations Protestants have been accustomed to denounce the mass of the Romish Church as idolatrous, superstitious, materialistic, and I know not what else - and all with perfect truth; yet the mass, as every one knows, is the heart of that Church's strength. Why is that so? It is because underneath all the incrustations of materialism, superstition, and priestly assumption, the ultimate truth of the

Gospel lies hidden - the truth which the cup of the Lord presents to us - that here and now the love which bears and bears away the sin of the world has come to meet us, and graciously offers itself to us. The Gospel, it might be said, is buried in the mass; but when you have done your worst in this way to the Gospel, you have done no more than to bury it alive; you cannot kill it, and through all encumbering grave clothes it will thrill and subdue and hold the hearts of men. There could be no stauncher Protestant than I, but if Protestant Churches disparage the sacraments, and dissipate the Divine realities to which they bear witness, then the Romish Church, in spite of its superstition and its tyranny, will prevail against them, and it will have a divine right to prevail. How many among us there are who have none but negative ideas of the Lord's Supper! If they were asked what they believed about it they could hardly say anything except that they did not believe in a real presence anyhow. And yet the cup which we bless is the cup of the Lord! Dear friends, we do not need to believe in a real presence of the Lord in the material elements; probably we cannot; but if we are Christians at all we must believe in a real presence of the Lord in the celebration of the Supper - a real presence in the sense of the elements and the use to which we put them. We must believe that the table of which we partake is the Lord's table, that the cup which we drink is the Lord's cup. We must believe that the Lord is with us to all the intents and purposes signified by the elements and the actions. He is with us in the virtue of His broken body and His shed blood; He is with us as the Lord who bore our sins in His own body on the tree, and made one sacrifice for them for ever; He is with us that the unsearchable power of His atoning love may enter into us, condemning, subduing, annihilating, regenerating; He is with us to impart Himself to us, to be the meat and drink of our souls. We have a real presence, a presence which the supper enables us to realize in all its wonderful grace. We have this Divine, this truly supernatural thing, at the heart of our Christian life; it does not rest on the wisdom of man, but on the presence and power of a redeeming God. And this is what we stay ourselves upon when we drink the cup of the Lord, and partake of His table. The Apostle takes for granted all that has now been said. He contemplates the Corinthians sitting at the Lord's table, making His redeeming love their own, entering into this wonderful union with Him. It is with this in mind that he says, "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils." What does he mean by such extraordinary language?

He is thinking of the pagan religions from which the Corinthians had been converted, and amid which they lived. It was not only the Church which had its sacraments, paganism had sacraments too. The Apostle could see in his mind's eye a company of worshippers go up to the temple of Aphrodite or Apollo. He could see them sprinkled with lustral water, and standing by in sacred silence while the victim was slain in sacrifice; he could see them join in the songs and dances that filled up the time between the sacrifice itself and the preparation of the sacramental meal, and that reflected the religious mood of the festival, whatever it might be; he could see them at last give themselves up to the joy of the meal which crowned the festal day in honour of the god. We know pretty well what this meal was. Aristotle derives the Greek verb which means "to be drunk" from the words which mean "after the sacrifice"; it was a scene of revelling and excess; Paul calls it "the cup of devils," "the table of devils," and pronounces participation in it inconsistent with participation in the table and the cup of the Lord. "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils." The language seems needlessly harsh to some modern readers. It is not easy for those who study what is called comparative religion to think of the religions of ancient Greece as having nothing in them or behind them but powers opposed to God - to think of heathenism as a whole as sustained

by forces demonic, not Divine. In the main, this is due to the fact that students of comparative religion are not in contact with these ancient worships as they actually functioned in the lives of men, but only with what they judge to have been the ideal impulses in which they originated. The Apostle speaks of heathenism and its sacraments as he knew them in relation to his own work, and if his estimate of them is not that of a modern professor of the science of religion, it is just as the estimate of Hinduism which we get from a missionary in Benares is very different from the philosophical representation of Hinduism we get from a student of its sacred books. The two witnesses or interpreters do not contradict each other; they are really speaking of different things. The Corinthians also thought Paul's language harsh, but for a different reason. It was not unjust to the pagan religion, but to them. They knew quite well what a pagan sacrament was, but they felt themselves proof against it, and able to share in it with their old neighbours without getting any harm. Some thought their own sacraments secured them. Some had learned from Paul himself the lesson that an idol is nothing in the world, and armed in that intellectual conviction, or as they might have said in that Christian principle, they thought they could participate in the pagan worship as grown men might in some children's game, without having either their minds or their characters affected by it. It is this fine abstract idea of the power of a principle to shield the soul from moral peril that Paul is afraid of. He knows the Corinthians better than they know themselves, and he knows that they are daring the impossible. No matter how sure a man's hold may be of the Christian principle that an idol is nothing in the world and therefore can do nothing to harm any enlightened person; if he takes part in such a transaction as I have described, then its atmosphere, its circumstances, its spirit, will prevail against him; he will be brought in spite of himself into the great communion of heathen life again.

Let him say what he will, it is another world than that in which we live at the Lord's table; it is spiritual influence of another quality which tells there upon the soul: and the two are irreconcilable. "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons". Our interest, however, is not in the Corinthians and in the Apostle's right to speak as he did to them; it is in the application of his words to ourselves and to the conditions of our own life. Is it necessary to say to us, "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils"? Are we in any danger of entering into communions which are incompatible with our communion in the blood of Christ?

Surely to ask this question is to answer it. We do not see, indeed, in our streets the temples or the altars of false gods; at least we do not see the names of the false gods written upon them. But that is part of our peril. It is easy enough to say that an idol is nothing in the world - that we do not believe in demons and their influence - but that does not take us very far. It is easy enough, as one of our most brilliant Greek scholars has put it, to say that there are no such persons as Bacchus and Aphrodite; the real question is. Are there no such things? Are there no powers in the world in which we live which are radically and finally hostile to Christ? Is it not as true now as when the New Testament was written that our wrestle is not with flesh and blood - not simply with other human creatures like ourselves, whom we could fight, so to speak, with our hands - but against influences which are far more subtle, pervasive, and powerful than that of another human will - against a poisonous moral atmosphere which chokes the very life of Christ in the soul? Such an atmosphere was created for the Corinthians by the old heathen worship and its associations, for in Corinth as in Canaan they did their abominations unto their gods; for us, it may be created in other ways, yet be none the less fatal to our communion with Christ. Can we specify any of these ways

so as to warn ourselves against them?

Probably the cup of devils is drunk most frequently still under the sign of liberty. Even a Christian man says to himself that everything in human life ought to be of interest to him. It belongs to his intelligence to concern itself with all the experiences of his kind, and the most attractive way to look at these experiences is in literature. This is the mirror in which life is reflected, and it cannot be wrong to gaze into it. It is indeed the mark of a large and liberal intelligence to have the amplest toleration here; to allow the mind to familiarize itself with all that has been said and thought by human beings; to cultivate breadth, appreciation, geniality; to avoid a censorious and puritanic temper. The world that is good enough for God should be good enough for us, and we should not be too good to take it as it is.

It is by pleas like these, or in a mood like this, that men and women who have drunk the cup of the Lord allow themselves to drink the cup of devils. They deliberately breathe a poisoned spiritual air as if it could do them no harm. But it does do harm. I do not believe there is anything in which people are so ready to take liberties which does so much harm. There are bad books in the world, just as there are bad men, and a Christian cannot afford to take either the one or the other into his bosom. There are books, and books of genius too, which should not be read, because they should never have been written. The first imagination and conception of them was sin, and the sin is revived when they are conceived again in the mind even of a Christian reader. It is revived with all the deadly power that belongs to sin. We cannot give our minds over to it with impunity. It confuses, it stains, it debilitates, it kills. It is the cup of devils, and we cannot drink it and drink the cup of the Lord.

There is a strange persistence in the idea that all things are lawful in this region, and that it is in some way a sign of moral weakness to put a limit to one's liberty. And this makes it the more dangerous. Christ, it was said by some one writing on Pascal, has two great enemies, the god Priapus and the god Pan. You can get to the end of it with the first, the author of this observation thought, but never with the second. You can vanquish sensuality in its gross forms, but can never quite get over the idea that the world is one, and that it can do you no harm to regard everything that is in it, especially when it is presented to you in the form of literature, with indulgent toleration. I say again, it is not true. Such indulgent toleration is the cup of devils, and it can never be compatible with the cup of the Lord. The Lord died for the difference between right and wrong, to which this mental temper would render us indifferent; and we drink of His cup that we may be conformed to His death. No charm of art or genius should prevail with us to breathe an air which is fatal to the soul's health; rather must we say of such charms, as the law of God said to Israel of the idols of the Canaanites, "Thou shalt not desire the silver nor the gold that is on them". Nothing has value for a Christian, he can count nothing but loss, if it impairs the reality, the certainty, and the worth of his experiences at the table of the Lord.

I dare say some might be found to argue that the violence of Paul's language here is due to idiosyncrasies of the man, and that we find a more serene and impartial look at life in the words of Jesus. The Lord, it may be said, is more genial, and has a more sympathetic appreciation of life as it is. I can only say that this seems to me the very reverse of the truth. The most severe and inexorable things that are said in the New Testament about the impossibility of combining the life of discipleship with any such indulgent toleration of all that men call natural are the things said by

Jesus. He is the great teacher of separation, of renunciation, of the cross. The one thing which alarms Him, and calls forth from His love the most passionate warnings, is the disposition in men to believe that nature always has its rights and that we can never go far wrong if we simply recognize them. "If thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off and cast them from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire." All things are not lawful for us if we wish to remain in the Lord's company and to share in His life. If a man holds the principle that nature is entitled to assert itself through all the impulses implanted in it, and holds it so absolutely that he will go wherever his feet can carry him - that he will handle whatever his fingers itch to touch - that he will glut his eyes with gazing on whatever they crave to see - the result will not be that that man will have an ampler and a richer character; it will be that he has no character at all. It will not be an abundant entrance into life, it will be the sinking of an exhausted nature into hell. For creatures such as we are, in a world like this, these, according to the teaching of Jesus, are the alternatives; and they are alternatives. This is the philosophy of Puritanism, when all the liberal criticism of it is over: "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; ye cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of devils". And as surely as we would have Christ and the atonement, the judgment and the mercy of God, the Spirit of holiness and the hope of heaven remain real to us, so surely must we renounce the things which cast on all these the shadow of unreality or insignificance, and neutralize in our life their redeeming power. Dear friends, there are such things. We all know them. We have all loved them. We have all feared them. It is our Lord Himself who says to us, "Cut them off, for your life".

We read in Psa 17:1-15 of men whose portion in life is of the world, but it is the happiness of those who drink the cup of the Lord that their portion in life is of God. All that is most real to them and most dear is that which is brought home to their hearts at the Lord's table. They think with awe and with exultation of what God is, and of what He has done for us and is giving to us in His Son. They say to themselves. This is the world, this is the environment of realities, in which I must live and move and have my being now. Other things pass, but this remains. Other things are dubious and baffling, but this is sure and clear. The presence which is ever with us, in the secret of which we have been hidden, under the overshadowing of which we go forth, is the presence of an eternal love which has borne our sins and is calling us to holiness in fellowship with itself. How can we ever forget it? How can it cease to be the motive which inspires and controls all our life? How can we ever be ashamed of it? How can we venture to argue against it, and to excuse ourselves for bringing other things into competition with it? Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Do we think we can face the responsibility of our life if He is not with us? What tempts many to unfaithful accommodation is the dread of standing alone. They do not like to be singular, especially when singularity brings the reproach of being censorious and intolerant, or timid and small minded. But no one is alone who bears any reproach for being true to Christ. It is under these conditions that the Lord comes most near and makes His presence most real to the soul. The jealousy that we might have stirred up against us stirs up itself on our behalf. "I," saith the Lord, "will be a wall of fire round about them." "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye." This is our hope when we take in all seriousness the responsibilities of our calling. When we put aside the tempting cups which on all sides are held out to us, it is not to impoverish our life. It is to say, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and my cup: Thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in

pleasant places, yea I have a goodly heritage. . . . Thou wilt show me the path of life; in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”

05.20. The Deadliness of Slander

Chapter 20 THE DEADLINESS OF SLANDER

"Therefore I say unto you, Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come." - Mat 12:31-32

IN the Gospel narratives at this point we find two comments made upon Jesus which are almost equally startling, and which suggest that ordinary conceptions of our Lord are in some respects far from the truth. The tradition of Christian art has taught us to think of Jesus as living a life of untroubled calm; His countenance in pictures may be pensive or majestic or compassionate, but it is always in repose. Anything strained or overwrought would seem out of place. But here we see that alike upon friends and enemies He made a different impression. He was rapt, as He taught the multitudes, in a lofty excitement. When He encountered those who were regarded as possessed by evil spirits, the Spirit that was in Him reacted with intense vehemence against their delusions and degradation; the Gospels are full of the peremptory and commanding words that He spoke as He set them free. If we think of a scene like the cleansing of the temple, when zeal for His Father's house consumed Him like a flame; or of His baptism, when He saw the heavens open and heard the Father's voice; or of the hour when He turned on Peter with the terrible rebuke, "Get thee behind me, Satan"; we can feel how untrue is that conception of Jesus which represents Him as immovably placid. Perhaps it would be truer to think of Him as habitually rapt, exalted, intense. Certainly this is how we must think of Him on the occasion on which he is presented to us in the text. It was a condition which baffled the bystanders. His friends said, "He is beside himself"; the scribes from Jerusalem said, "He has an unclean spirit". This is how it is put in Mark, but there is a striking difference to be noted between the evangelists. Mark does not say anything about the Son of Man; he contrasts blasphemy against the Holy Spirit with sins and blasphemies in general. Matthew on the other hand contrasts it with speaking against the Son of Man. "Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in that which is to come." There are some difficulties about this version of our Lord's words into which it is not necessary to enter here; but assuming it to be, reliable, we may be disposed to think that though Mark does not present us in set terms with the contrast which we find in Matthew - the contrast between speaking against the Son of Man and speaking against the Spirit - he does present us with the key to it. Two kinds of sin are in view in Matthew, and both are sins of speech; but though he mentions both, Matthew does not illustrate both. If we had to explain from his Gospel alone, first what is meant by speaking a word against the Son of Man, and next what is meant by speaking against the Holy Spirit, we should be much at a loss. But Mark, though he does not present us with this contrast, presents us with illustrations which enable us to understand and apply it. The petulant exclamation of the friends of Jesus, as they see how He is rapt and lost in His work - He is beside Himself- there we have the word spoken against the Son of Man; the malignant utterance of the scribes from Jerusalem, as they

saw Him relieve the possessed - He has Beelzebub, He is in league with the devil - there we have the word spoken against the Holy Spirit.

It is not necessary to dwell long on the first. A life and work like that of Jesus must often have seemed baffling to those who were about Him and who had a natural affection for Him. We can understand how His mother and His brothers had a true though misplaced concern for His welfare. If there were a son or a brother in our house to whom the one thing real was the kingdom of God, who broke every earthly tie to give himself completely to it, who spent whole nights on the hillside in prayer to God over it, who was so absorbed in it that he could not find time for his necessary food and apparently did not care, should we not be tempted to think that he needed looking after? No doubt the friends of Jesus should have known Him better than they did. They ought to have had greater sympathy with Him, greater appreciation for His work. They ought not to have made it possible for Him to say, with the bitter accent of experience, "A man's foes are they of his own household". But though they sinned in these respects, it was not a hopeless or unpardonable sin. Their hearts were not really shut against Jesus; they were not deliberately and malignantly opposed to His work. I do not say this as though the sin of their speech could be explained away. If they were alarmed on Jesus' account, they were irritated and annoyed on their own; they were provoked that One who ought to have been able to take care of Himself should persist in causing needless anxiety; and their petulant exclamation, pardonable though it was, was gravely wrong when we remember who was its object. Nevertheless, it was only petulant, not malignant. It was something they could and would be sorry for afterwards; they would repent and it would be forgiven. Is this speaking against the Son of Man a sin which can be committed now? Sitting in the church, we are perhaps inclined to think that it is not. We cannot stand in the same relation to Jesus as those who were His contemporaries on earth, and it is not possible for us to express impatience or irreverence in the same unthinking way. But it is difficult for anyone who hears or reads much of the unceasing discussion of Jesus which goes on all around us to avoid the impression that speaking against the Son of Man is a common sin. Probably there never was a time when the Gospels were so much read as at present. Jesus is surrounded by multitudes as dense and as deeply interested as ever thronged about Him in Galilee. They look on and listen, and feel free to express their opinions about Him, and often they do it with no sense of what He is and of what they themselves are. They make their comments unembarrassed by reverence. It is not in their minds that Jesus is the Lord, and that in the last resort it is not we who judge Him, but He who judges us. What is called the purely historical study of the Gospels - as if there were any such thing - is apt to betray into this wrong attitude some who should know better, and who really do know better; and then they may be heard to speak of Jesus in a tone which is painful to Christian feeling and injurious to the Lord Himself. You may catch it often in what are ostentatiously non-Christian or non-theological renderings of the Gospel; but you may catch it also in sermons and in students' essays and in common talk. The friends of Jesus who said "He is beside Himself" had lost for the moment or had not yet attained any real sense of what He was; they spoke of Him as if He were just one of themselves, who in an excess of zeal was like to go off His head. Their attitude is reproduced by a great many people who, without thinking what they are doing, really take the measure of Jesus in their own minds, point out His limitations, assign Him His place, show where and how far He paid tribute to His time,- betray, in short, in their whole relation to Him, the twentieth century's sense of its own superiority to the first I am not going to deny that the twentieth century is in many ways superior to the first; nor even that it was part of the

reality of our Lord's manhood that He should be man of the particular age in which He was born, and not of another; but if we cease to feel through all such distinctions that Jesus is the Lord, we shall run great risk of falling into the sin in question. Do not let us consider it a sin of no consequence because it is pardonable. It is pardonable on the same condition as other sins - namely, that it is repented of, confessed, renounced. To cultivate reverence of speech where there is no deeper reverence might be a doubtful gain; we know the kind of insincerity which is generated in this way. Nothing is more unpleasant than the piety which thinks it irreverent to speak of Jesus as the Gospels do - the piety of religious etiquette, for example, which always says "our blessed Lord" as if it were a sin to say "Jesus"; but in spite of the risks in this direction, the risks in the other seem to me at present greater. What we need to cultivate is a reverent sense of the greatness of Jesus; or rather, without any conscious cultivation of it, we need so to look at and listen to Him, so to love, trust, and obey Him, that the sense of what He is will grow upon us, resting continually on our hearts, and restraining us from all that is irreverent in thought or word. But let us turn now to the other sin referred to in the text, that of speaking against or blaspheming the Holy Spirit. As speaking against the Son of Man was illustrated by the impatient outburst, "He is beside Himself"; so blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is illustrated by the fearful words, "He has Beelzebub; he is possessed by the prince of demons". Matthew tells us that at this very time there was brought to Jesus one possessed of a demon, blind and dumb; and that He healed him, so that the blind and dumb both saw and spoke. Jesus Himself was deeply impressed. He was conscious that the power which He exercised in restoring such dreadfully afflicted creatures was power which the Father had given Him. He revered God in it. To Him it was the supreme and decisive proof that God was visiting the world for its salvation. "If I by the finger of God am casting out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you." It does not matter whether a first century form of thought - that of possession by demons; or a twentieth century form of thought, which would speak of some kind of insanity, is used to describe the facts and to present them to the mind; the facts themselves are indubitable. There was a power which wrought through Jesus, bringing health to the disordered mind, composure to the shattered nerves, purity to the hideous imaginings, God and His peace and joy to lost and terror-stricken souls. If we may say so with reverence, the contemplation of its working filled Jesus Himself with devout joy; He saw in it the pledge of the Father's redeeming presence. It filled the multitudes with unimaginable hope: "Can this," they exclaimed, "be the Son of David? Has the great Deliverer appeared at last?" But the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebub. He is in league with the devil. The power He wields is Satanic in its source, and His only aim is to deceive the people." To understand this, we must remember that this was not the first thought of the scribes about Jesus, nor their first word, but their last. They had had their eye upon Him from the beginning, and they did not like Him. They disliked Him more the more they saw of Him. The earlier part of the Gospel according to Mark exhibits a series of occasions on which they had already come into collision with Him. They were perpetually finding fault with Him and His circle, and were ready on their own side, as theologians perhaps are apt to be, with the charge of blasphemy which is here so solemnly retorted. "Why do Thy disciples fast not? Why do they on the Sabbath day that which is not lawful? Why doth this man speak thus? He blasphemeth. Who can forgive sins but God only?" The attitude of Jesus to God and to man threatened everything the scribes counted dear. It threatened their conception of religion, and it threatened their religious reputation. If Jesus was right about these things, they were wrong - wrong to the very foundation. No doubt this was a trying position for them. It is hard

to admit that we are wrong about the things which are most vital, and it is peculiarly hard when those who have this painful admission to make are the professional teachers of religion, and when they have been convinced of their error by one who has had no professional education, and has only been taught of God. But though it is hard to unlearn and to learn better, it ought not to be impossible. There were scribes whom the study of the Old Testament had prepared to appreciate Jesus. There was one who offered to follow Him wherever He went. There was one who answered Him with such spiritual intelligence as commended His admiration and perhaps His hope; "thou art not far," he said, "from the kingdom of God". But with the majority it was not so. Their early aversion to Jesus deepened into antipathy, and their antipathy settled into malignant hatred. There was nothing they would not do in their implacable antagonism. With His wonderful deeds of mercy under their eyes - with a power at work in Him, before their very faces, which its effects proved indisputably to be the gracious and redeeming power of God - they hardened their hearts and said, "Beelzebub". It was not the exclamation of men who were irritated at the moment and forgot themselves, so to speak; that could have been repented of and forgiven; it was the deliberate and settled malice of men who would say anything and do anything rather than yield to the appeal of the good Spirit of God in Jesus. This is the blasphemy against the Spirit, the sin which in its very nature is unpardonable. Jesus calls it eternal sin. It is sin which, look at it as long as you may, is never turned by repentance into anything else; and therefore it has no forgiveness, neither in this world nor in that which is to come. The terrible solemnity of these words has oppressed many hearts. People of sensitive conscience have been tormented with the dread that they had committed the unpardonable sin - that without knowing it, or in some hasty but irretrievable word or act, they had placed themselves for ever beyond the reach of mercy. It would be wrong to say anything which encouraged sinful men to think lightly of their sins, but it is surely clear from what has been said already that this fatal sin cannot be committed inadvertently. It is the last degree of antipathy to Christ to which the soul can advance, the sin of those who will do anything rather than recognize in Him the presence of God.

You may think, perhaps, that in this case it is a sin which has very little interest for us - less even than that of speaking a word against the Son of Man. But consider the sin in its nature, as distinct from the particular form in which it was committed by the scribes. They were confronted by the appeal of God's goodness in Jesus, and rather than yield to it they contrived a hideous explanation of it which should render it impotent both for themselves and others. Is this a sin which is so very uncommon? Or is it not common enough to hear men who are annoyed and reproved by the good deeds of others ascribe these good deeds to base and unworthy motives, so as to relieve the pressure with which they would otherwise bear on their own consciences? This is the essence of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. It is the sin of those who find out bad motives for other people's good actions, so that goodness may be discredited, and its appeal perish, and they themselves and others live on undisturbed by its power. Take one of the most ordinary instances. When a selfish or mean man is confronted by the generosity of another, there is a spontaneous reaction in his moral nature. It is a reaction of admiration. Conscience tells us instinctively that such generosity is good; it is inspired by God; it is worthy of admiration and imitation. But something else in us may speak besides conscience. Perhaps we do not like the man who has done the generous thing; we grudge him the honour and the good will it brings; we would not be sorry to see him discredited a little. Perhaps we are naturally grasping and mean, and our selfish nature resents the reproof of another's generosity. We should be pleased to think he is no better

than he need be. We hint at ostentation and the love of praise; we think of ambition, and of the desire to have a party, which is to be conciliated by such gifts; and the generosity of the man is perverted or ignored. It ceases to be a thing which speaks with power for God to us. This, I repeat, is essentially the sin against the Holy Spirit. It is the sin of finding bad motives for good actions, because the good actions condemn us, and we do not want to yield to their appeal. It is the sin of refusing to acknowledge God when he is manifestly there, and of introducing something Satanic to explain and discredit what has unquestionably God behind it. When this temper is indulged, and has its perfect work, the soul has sunk and hardened into a state in which God appeals to it in vain. The presence of Jesus Himself does not subdue it; it only evokes its virulent, rooted, implacable dislike. This is the sin against the Holy Spirit as it is presented to us in the Gospels.

One of the things which disguises it from us, and sometimes even makes it attractive to youthful minds, is that it often assumes the appearance of cleverness. I have spoken of it as the finding of bad motives for good actions. All human actions, we are accustomed to hear, proceed from mixed motives; and to disentangle these motives, to show how largely and how subtly evil mingles with the good, how far what is superficially noble and disinterested has selfishness in some form behind it, is a great part of what some people call the knowledge of human nature. A famous French moralist printed as the motto of his book the following sentence: Our virtues for the most part are but vices in disguise. A penetrating mind, working with this clue, can easily make a brilliant, fascinating, disquieting exhibition of human nature; but it is dangerous and miserable to go out into the world of real life in any such spirit. Pity of the man who thinks that most of the virtue in the world is vice in disguise, whose cleverness is only to unmask the pretender to goodness, whose boast is that he is never taken in! In the process of canonization there is a figure called the *Advocatus Diabolicus* the devil's counsel, who states the case against the saint on the principle we have been considering. He finds out all the bad motives which may have prompted all the saint's good actions, and urges them against his recognition by the Church. It is a poor occupation, and to exercise it in real life is to be really on the devil's side. Though our Lord says to His disciples, "Beware of men, be ye wise as serpents," He never teaches suspicion. It is a sign of spiritual health when we are quick to recognize and to welcome goodness, and our joy in the appreciation of it is one of the surest indications that we ourselves have a place in God's kingdom.

It is in this region that we must look to make the practical application of the solemn words of Jesus. Perhaps you may think I have brought them down to a level at which their solemnity is lost. But it is not so. As I have already pointed out, the stage at which the scribes now stood was not the first stage of their relations to Jesus. They had reached it by degrees. They did not commit the unpardonable sin in a moment of impatience or inadvertence the first time they met Him; they sank into the commission of it as on one occasion after another they indulged their aversion, resented His influence, counteracted His work, perverted His motives. It is in the same way only that anyone can ever come to blaspheme the Spirit, but the solemn possibility remains that in this way this dreadful guilt may still be incurred. Surely we may say emphatically of this as of all sins: Withstand the beginnings. Do not be suspicious of goodness in others. Do not be slow to believe in it, or ready to put an evil construction upon it. Speak no slander, no, nor listen to it. It is the chief of all our happiness and security in the world that we do not become blind to goodness, that we keep alive to the presence of God wherever that presence is manifested in the life of men, that we open our nature freely and joyfully to the impression of it, that we let ourselves be caught in the stream

and carried on by it in the life which is life indeed. If you have a suspicious temper, fight against it; if you think it clever to detect the reality of selfishness or vice behind the virtues of others, suspect yourself; if you have any joy in the exposure of unworthy motives, be afraid. But above everything, if you wish to be remote from this unpardonable sin, rejoice in the work of Jesus. Acquaint yourself with what is being done in His name, and in His spirit and power - with the casting out of evil spirits, with the preaching of the Gospel to the poor, with the mighty works of love which men and women inspired by Him are doing in all the world; acquaint yourself with these things, rejoice in them, promote them, give thanks to God for them; and the thought of the sin against the Holy Spirit will never make you afraid.

05.21. The One Right Thing to do

Chapter 21 THE ONE RIGHT THING TO DO "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." - Rom 4:3 "He believed in the Lord; and he counted it to Him for righteousness." - Gen 15:6 THE interest of Abraham's life in the Bible begins when God speaks to him, and when Abraham believes what God said. How God spoke to Abraham, or how He speaks to anyone, we may never be able fully to explain; but if there is a God at all, it is not assuming much to assume that He is able to communicate with His creatures, to assure them of His presence, of His interest in them, of His will on their behalf. We know that in point of fact He can do this. He can impress us with such a sense of obligation as can only be understood as the will of God; He can inspire us with such sublime and solemn hopes as can only be understood as promises of God. Now what the text tells us is that when God has done this - when He has spoken and we have heard His word - there is only one right thing for us to do: to believe Him. It is not right to dispute God's command, or to criticize His promise, or to try to enter into any kind of negotiations with Him about either. His word is absolute and unconditional because it is Divine. It is not right to put anything else into the scale against it, as if, perhaps, it might be outweighed. The only right thing to do, the only right attitude for the soul to take, is to recognize that in the word which God has spoken, whatever it may be, we are in contact with the final reality in the universe, and to invest our whole life and being in that. When we do so, God counts it to us for righteousness, and it is righteousness. There is nothing in God's counting artificial or unreal. It may be a righteousness of grace - if the word of God is a word of grace it will be so - but it is real righteousness nevertheless. The man is not only reckoned righteous, he is truly right with God, for whom the word that God has spoken is the last reality in life. The word that God spoke to Abraham was characteristically a word of promise. It is put in various forms at different periods of his life. "I will make of thee a great nation." "Unto thy seed will I give this land." "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars if thou be able to tell them: so shall thy seed be." If we put this in general terms we may say that Abraham had a Divine future held out to him in the word of God. When we are told that he believed God, it means that that Divine future had a reality for him in comparison with which everything else lost both reality and value. He could count all things loss for its sake. He left his country and his kindred for it; he renounced for it the tempting openings which he saw around him, and every future which he might have carved out for himself. We must not forget that the life of Abraham was rich in natural possibilities. He might have had a future in Ur of the Chaldees had he chosen to remain there, and to disbelieve the voice which said, "Get thee out to a land that I will show thee, and I will make of thee a great nation". No doubt a man of his power and enterprise would have had a career if he had chosen to settle in Sodom or in Egypt, and to renounce the visionary prospect of inheriting Canaan. He could have founded a family and even a powerful line of princes, if he had been content with Ishmael, as he was much inclined to be - O that Ishmael might live before thee! - and had given up looking for the child of promise. But if in face of the word of God he had declined upon any of these alternatives, God could not have counted it to him for righteousness. On the contrary, he would have been all wrong with God. The other things, of course, had a reality of their own which he did not dispute. A home in Haran, or in Egypt, or in the

plain of Jordan - a life like that of the Babylonians, or of the Canaanites and Perizzites whom he saw around him in Palestine - military ambitions like those of Chedorlaomer and the allied kings: all these probably meant as much to Abraham as to anyone. But he had had something revealed to him with which in reality and value none of them could compete: the future held out in the promise of God. To believe in this, though it meant to count unreal all that was most real to other men, was the only right thing to do; and as Abraham lived out his long life still believing, still counting God's promise the final reality, it made and kept him right with God. He stood before God justified by his faith, a man with whom God was well pleased, the friend of God.

Every one must have noticed how much there is in the New Testament about Abraham and his faith. The reason is that for those who wrote the New Testament Abraham is the type of true piety. He is the ideal of religion, we might almost say the pattern Christian, and apostolic Christianity finds its own attitude to God anticipated or reflected in him. All the New Testament writers who wish to prove anything about true religion say, "Look at Abraham". Paul does it in this passage, and then again in the epistle to the Galatians. James does it in the well-known discussion of faith and works in which he is often supposed to be controverting Paul. The writer to the Hebrews does it in sublime and memorable words which will recur to every one. The reason of this is that in true religion there is one thing which never changes - the attitude of the soul to God; and that right attitude of the soul to God, on which religion depends for its very existence, is perfectly illustrated in Abraham. God may make Himself known more fully in one generation than in another; His word may be more articulate, more explicit in its command, more spiritual and far-reaching in its promise; but the one thing which it requires under all circumstances is that which it found in Abraham - to be treated as the last and absolute reality in life. So to treat it is to take our place among the children of Abraham; it is to believe God in the sense of this text, the sense which makes and keeps us right with Him. The one condition on which this text has any interest for us is that God should have spoken to us also, and by doing so made an appeal for faith. It is the assumption of true religion in all its stages that He has spoken. In the old Scots Confession of Faith drawn up at the Reformation, one of the most interesting chapters is headed, "Of the revelation of the promise". The original form of the promise, according to the Confession, is preserved in the third chapter of Genesis: the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. It is the primary form of faith to believe that good will eventually triumph over evil, nay that man himself, by the help of God, will destroy the works of the devil. But the promise, the Confession proceeds to tell us, was repeated and made more clear from time to time, till at last it has been made perfectly clear to us in "the joyfull daie of Christ Jesus". This is the point on which our interest has to be concentrated. We may not know how God spoke to Abraham, nor how Abraham was so sure that it was God who spoke, but we know that Christ is God's word to us. What does it mean? What revelation of God comes in it calling for our faith? It means that the last reality in the world, the final truth of God, is redeeming love, a love that bears sin in the agony and passion of the garden and the cross, and holds fast to men through it all. What does it promise? What is the Divine future which is held out to us in it? It promises that we shall be sons of God, transfigured with the holiness and glory of the only-begotten from the Father. The Apostles were not afraid to believe this, or if they were, the gracious revelation triumphed over their fears and enabled them not only to believe it for a moment, but to live by their faith. What stupendous things they say in faith, and with what simplicity! "We shall be like Him," says St. John. "We shall wear the image of the heavenly," says St. Paul. This is the true confession of Christian faith, the height to which the

heart can rise in men who have heard the voice of God in Jesus, and taken in all that it means. And do we not know in our hearts that these are the men who are right with God? If we ask what His word requires, must we not say that it requires to be believed? The one right thing to do in presence of the revelation and appeal of God in Christ is to stake our life upon it for good and all. This was what Abraham did when he believed God, and this is always what faith means in the Bible. Without it, it is impossible to please God; but where He finds it, He asks for nothing more. He counts His faith to the believer for righteousness; and in very truth the man who so believes is right with God. God and that man are pledged to each other without reserve, and if it is a sinful man it is a redeeming God, and the future is sure. "We shall be like Him." But all men, as St. Paul says in a solemn sentence elsewhere, have not faith. They have not all staked their life on the revelation of God in Christ. Redeeming love is not for all the last reality in the universe, for which everything else is counted loss. Many live in worlds of their own which are by comparison unreal. Some are happy, others miserable; but none are right with God.

There are men who live, it may be said, on the level of nature rather than of the Divine revelation, and who are tolerably content with it. God promised a Divine future to Abraham, and many a man in Abraham's place would never have given it a second thought. It was shadowy enough anyhow, and Abraham had already in his possession things which were comparatively valuable and real. He had a fair worldly position, and it was capable of improvement. He was rich in slaves and cattle, in silver and gold. He had the respect of the society amid which he moved, and no doubt knew its worth. Why should he give up all or any of this for the doubtful future offered to him by God? Something like this is in the minds of many people who do not take the Gospel seriously. Their life as it is, without the word and promise of God in Christ, is real enough, and yields considerable satisfaction. Their business is real, and the interest they have in it engages their thoughts sufficiently. Their family life is real, and the affections are their own reward. Their intellectual interests are real; they find a true enlargement and refinement of their natures in literature, science, and art. Even their politics may be real, not to say absorbing. But if it be true that into this world of human life with all its interests and rewards God has come, revealing and promising something which transcends them all, does not that make a difference? If God has really spoken to us in Christ, if He has shown us in Christ what He not only wishes us to be, but what it is in His purpose and power to make us, is it possible for any man, however honourable and satisfying his life may be, to be right with God, and yet not to take His word to us in Christ seriously? Is it possible at the same time to be right with God and to ignore Him? I say it is not possible. God is present, no doubt, in all the world, in that whole order of things in which human life with all its interests goes on. We live and move and have our being in Him; and He is present, so far, in many a life which is unconscious of what it owes Him. But He offers us in Christ far more than this presence of which we may be unconscious; He offers us a redeeming and transfiguring presence to be consciously made ours through faith. He offers to lift our being, in spite of what we have made it, to the plane and power which we have seen in Christ. Can we ever be anything but wrong with God as long as we ignore this, and prefer to the Divine future held out in Christ - a future which abides for ever - the fast vanishing present, however satisfying, for the moment, it may be? Can we ever be anything but wrong with God as long as we ignore the fact that everything else we have is infinitely outweighed in worth by Christ, while Christ is nevertheless regarded by us with indifference? And can life be worth having unless at bottom we are right with God?

Sometimes this life on the level of nature hardens through content into complacency and self-sufficiency, and the revelation of God in Christ is encountered by its worst enemy, the most absolute antagonist of faith, Pharisaism. What Pharisaism means at bottom is that man is independent of God, and can even make God his debtor. The Pharisee comes before God clothed in a righteousness of his own, a character and life for which he is prepared to take the responsibility himself, and virtually challenges God's approbation. But how can a man assume such an attitude to God? If the final revelation of God is made, as the New Testament shows, at the cross of Jesus, is not such an attitude once for all impossible? Can a man stand in the presence of that Passion, can he realize what God's eternal love has done and is doing and will ever do for the redemption of our fallen race, and think himself right with God though he ignores it all and takes the whole responsibility of his life alone? You may think that there is no Pharisaism like this in the world, but do not be too sure. I believe there are many people, even in the Church, to whom the idea of becoming indebted to Christ is profoundly disagreeable; and because it is, they evade the final revelation of God in His crucified and risen Son, and without shaping their thoughts very definitely hold by the Pharisaic conviction that somehow or other they will be able to answer for themselves. They do not take the word of God in Christ seriously. They do not believe it, as Abraham did when God spoke to him. The final reality is not for them what it is for God, and hence they can never be right with Him. When they read their Bibles everything is out of focus, and naturally they cease to read what they cannot understand. But it was a Pharisee of the Pharisees who saw more clearly than any of the Apostles that in faith boasting is excluded; and even the Pharisee will become right with God if he stands by the cross of Jesus till the power of that Divine passion descends into his heart and reveals itself to him as the first and last reality in the world. But there is another world still in which we may live, not despising faith like the Pharisee, nor ignoring it like the unreflecting man who takes life as he finds it, but dismayed by it as too hard, or incredulous of it, as too good. When the meaning of the word of God in Christ begins to break upon our souls, we may well be overwhelmed by its greatness; it holds out a Divine future, no doubt, but who can believe it is a future meant for us? Christ is in the world, the living word and promise of God; and as we look at Him, we hear God's voice assure us that we shall be like Him. This is the Gospel. Only God could inspire a hope so wonderful; but when we think of it, is it not too wonderful? is it not quite incredible? We like Him? We conformed to the image of God's Son? We know in part what we are. We are sorrowfully acquainted with passions that degrade us in our own eyes; our imaginations have been haunted with unholy things; shall we be like Him? We have fits of vicious or sullen temper when we stab with wicked words even those whom we love; is it really meant that these shall cease, and that we shall be clothed in the meekness and gentleness of Jesus? We are selfish, grasping, unwilling to part with money or to take trouble for others; is it really meant that for us it will be more blessed to give than to receive? We are inconstant and half hearted in all our efforts to be good; we run well, perhaps, for a little, but cannot run with patience a long or trying race; is it the very truth of God that this weakness will be overcome, and that we shall endure to the end, and by endurance win our souls? Yes, that is the Divine truth; that is the word and promise of God in Christ, in whom the eternal redeeming love of the Father has been revealed as the ultimate reality in the universe. But how easy it is and how common for apathy and despair to assert themselves against it. Men say to themselves, "It is no use talking: I can never be anything but what I am. God cannot make me pure. He cannot make me free. He cannot make me glad. He cannot put a new song in my mouth. He cannot make the

eighth chapter of Romans the natural expression of my experience. It only needs to be imagined to be pronounced impossible." It is indeed no use talking; but the word of God in Christ, on which everything here turns, is not talking; it is the revelation of the ultimate reality and power in the world. The God who is revealed there is spoken of in this very chapter of Romans as one who calls things that are not as though they were: not meaning that He speaks of them as existing though they do not exist, but that while as yet they have no existence He speaks of them in that creative voice which called the worlds into being and has not lost its power. We do not believe in God at all unless we believe in One whose word can work this wonder; and when we reflect that the redeeming love revealed in Christ has omnipotence at its command, dare we doubt what we are called to do? What do we believe is the final reality? What is going to survive and reign when everything else has passed away? Is it the flesh, the bad conscience, the impotent will, the worm that dies not and the fire that is not quenched? Are we to stake our life on these, or on the redeeming love of God which has come to us in His Son, and on the new creature to be created by it in God's likeness? Do we believe in what we are as the ultimate reality, or is not the eternal love of God which appeals to us in Christ more real, and able to change us into His image? It is only this last belief which does justice to God, and makes us right with Him. It is this only which He can count to us as righteousness. It is this which is the faith by which men are justified and saved. This text is one of many which suggest to us two characteristics of the true religion much insisted on in Scripture - its simplicity, and the absoluteness of its requirement. When God speaks, He demands to be taken at His word; no more than this, but also no less. His word is not proposed as a basis of negotiation or discussion; it can neither be abridged nor supplemented. To apply this to the Christian stage of revelation: redeeming love, displayed in the crucified Christ, is the sum of God's word to the world; and all that that word demands from those who would be right with God is the final and unconditional abandonment of the soul to the redeeming love itself. I do not believe that anyone ever got a real sight of Christ and of God's redeeming love in Him without becoming conscious that there is something in it which with all its graciousness is peremptory and inexorable. There is that in the Gospel with which no one is allowed to argue. All we can do is to believe, in the sense of the text, or to disbelieve; to give it in our life the place of the final reality to which everything else must give way, or to refuse it that place. Many people are not clear about this. They would like to talk the word of God over. It raises in their minds various questions they would willingly discuss. It has aspects of interest and of difficulty which call for consideration: and so on. Perhaps there are some who confusedly shield themselves against the responsibilities of faith and unbelief by such thoughts. All that such thoughts prove, however, is that those who cherish them have never yet realized that what we are dealing with in the Gospel is God. When God speaks in Christ He reveals His gracious will without qualification, and without qualification we have to believe in it, or to refuse our belief, and so to decide once for all the controversy between ourselves and Him. God has not come into the world in Christ - Christ has not hung upon the cross bearing the sin of the world - to be talked about, but to become the supreme reality in the life of men, or to be excluded from that place. To believe is to fall in unconditionally with the purpose of God. It is to fix our eyes on Christ and say, There is the supreme and final reality in the universe for me; there is that which for me is more real than all the world has to offer; yes, more real than the terrible reality of sin which till now has dwarfed and annulled every other reality in my life; there is that to which I must and will and do cling in spite of all appearances, in spite of my unworthiness, in spite of everything in my nature which questions or resents it. This is faith; it is believing God,

and when we so believe Him, He counts it to us for righteousness. He cannot ask from us anything more or less or other than faith. It is the one thing which does justice alike to Him and to us. It is not a part of Christianity, but the whole of it. It has the hope and power of all moral attainment in it, and it only needs to have its perfect work to make God's unspeakable promise good.

05.22. Rival Paths to Perfection

Chapter 22 RIVAL PATHS OF PERFECTION "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh?" - Gal 3:3

WHAT is before the Apostle's mind as he writes these words is the conversion of the Galatians and their religious relapse. Once they had been pagans, worshipping gods that were no gods with a merely ritual service - in bondage to "weak and beggarly elements," which whatever else it means, means enslaved by some sort of religious materialism. Suddenly Paul appeared among them with his Gospel. He held up Christ on His cross: "placarded" Him, as he says in this chapter, before their eyes. He held Him up in the character described in his very first sentence, as one "who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from this present evil world." The sight of Christ crucified arrested them as it has arrested innumerable hearts since. They were fascinated by it; for the time they were spellbound. Christ entered into their souls in the power of His passion; He lived in them, and they died to their old selves and lived in Him. Old things passed away, and all things became new. This is the beginning, and if we only understood, it is also the middle and the end of Christianity. Nothing has any right to a place in it but Christ, the Christ who died for us, and the reactions of the soul under His influence. Christ crucified and the soul's response to Him are the whole of the true Christian religion. This is the experience which is meant in the New Testament by receiving the Spirit. The creeds teach us to believe in the Holy Spirit, but that is an expression foreign to the New Testament; the Spirit was not a belief, but an experience, of the early Christian. It was his first experience. He began in the Spirit. His new life started as an inspiration, an experience of uplifting, liberty, and power. Its predominant manifestations might be emotional, intellectual, or ethical, but its standing mark was originality. Where the Spirit of the Lord was there was liberty. The Spirit was subject to no law but that which was involved in its own nature; there was no motive for that which it dictated but the motives operating through Christ crucified. Everything statutory disappeared from religion. Christ was the end of law to those who came under His power. Religious materialism and religious routine were abolished. But Paul was not the only preacher who appeared in Galatia. He had hardly left the country when others appeared in his track. They had a new "placard" to exhibit, and they were not afraid to raise it side by side with the Apostle's Christ crucified. It was a placard on which were engrossed the countless formal precepts of the Jewish law - its covenant badge of circumcision - its sacred calendar, with its days, and months, and seasons, and years - its distinctions of food into clean and unclean - its whole system of visible, statutory, outwardly imposed ordinances in which the religious life was to be embodied and expressed. Strange as it may seem, passing strange as it certainly seemed to the Apostle, this placard also had its fascination. It exerted a malignant spell over the Galatians which checked if it did not neutralize the beneficent spell of the cross. They actually thought they were making progress, reaching a higher stage of religion, when the gracious power of the cross which had worked their spiritual emancipation ceased to be felt; and when, instead of exulting in the liberty and responsibility which it had brought, they were scrupulous about rites and ceremonies, times and seasons, and in general about laws which were not inspired but imposed.

The Apostle, who was their spiritual father, was alarmed and distressed. He could not understand such an unchristian relapse. This progress! he exclaims; this a step towards perfection! Can folly go so far? Having begun in the Spirit, with a great inward liberation, renewal, and reinforcement of life wrought by God through Christ crucified, can you imagine that you are carrying your Christian life to perfection when you abandon all this, and submit once more to statutory observances that only touch the outer life, or to put it a little scornfully, the flesh? This is the situation which the verse presents to us, and we may generalize it in order to apply it to ourselves. Religion begins in inspiration, that is, in enthusiastic inner freedom begotten by Christ in the soul, and owning an absolute responsibility to Him, and to Him alone; but it is only too apt to belie its origin and its true nature, and instead of cherishing inspiration and liberty as the very breath of its life, to relapse into fixity, ceremonial and routine, and actually to glorify these as the authentic tokens of the Divine. Let us look at some illustrations of this.

1. The most conspicuous, perhaps, is to be found in the sphere of thought. A free-thinker is a name of evil import in the Christian Church, yet when we think of it, no men were ever so free in their thinking as those who wrote the New Testament. Whatever else the New Testament is, it is the most original book in the world. The mind of the Apostles was inconceivably stimulated by the impression made on it by Christ: I cannot think of anything which gives one so vivid a sense of intelligence working at high pressure, and seeing new worlds of truth open before it while it works, as some parts of the epistles. It is no exaggeration to say that Paul and John were the most daring free-thinkers who ever lived. They had no creed or catechism to follow: they do not quote anyone, hardly even Jesus Himself; they were not "sound" in any traditional sense, but original; they were not orthodox, but inspired. They reconstruct the whole world in thought for themselves, with Christ as its Alpha and Omega, its source, its centre, and its goal. Nobody had done this before, and no outward law imposed such thoughts upon them; they were thoughts freely produced from within by men who felt that they were both free and bound to think and speak as they did. This liberty of mind, if we do not like to call it freedom of thought, is not inconsistent with a harmonious witness to Jesus, but it enables the Apostles to combine variety with unity, and to bring out different elements in the unsearchable riches of Christ. The fundamental unity of the apostolic religion is unquestionable: it is one and the same Christ who is Lord and Saviour to all who speak to us in the New Testament. But though Christ is the same in all, yet to Paul He is predominantly the Christ who atones for sin and brings the gift of a Divine righteousness; to John, He is the Son who reveals the Father and communicates eternal life; to James, He is the Lawgiver and the Judge; to Peter, the Author of immortal hope; and in Hebrews, the great High Priest of humanity. These conceptions do not contradict, they supplement each other; but they rose in the minds of the Apostles only as they stood in the presence of Christ crucified, and let His influence tell upon them unchecked and untroubled by any authority from without. The wealth and the liberty go together. And it is the same when we think of the intellectual reconstruction of the world in the epistle to the Colossians. Only a mind which was absolutely free, and which experienced at the same time an irresistible compulsion in the revelation of God in Christ crucified, could have ventured to give a new interpretation of the universe in the light cast by the cross. But though this intellectual freedom, which is illustrated on every page of the New Testament, is the proper attribute of Christian minds - the atmosphere in which they live and move and have their being - how many there are in the Church who seem to be fascinated by the very opposite. What they think indispensable, what they pride themselves upon, is not inspiration, not the stimulation of

intelligence by the crucified Christ, but orthodoxy, soundness, fidelity to a formula in which the truth has once for all been embodied, and which is never to be subject to reflection or revision any more. They chain themselves to some form of sound words, and find in this a guarantee that they are in the ideal Christian position. They accept some creed as a law of faith, a statute imposed upon them by the authority of the Church, and everything turns for them on unwavering fidelity to this. But the Church of any given age is an assembly of fallible men; and no one who knows what it is to "begin in the Spirit" - no one who has experienced that deep-reaching, all-embracing emancipation which comes to the intelligence as to the moral nature when the power of Christ's passion descends into it - can ever identify a law of the Church simpliciter with the truth of God. It does not matter whether it issues from Nicaea or Augsburg, from Trent or Westminster. The mind that has been fascinated by Christ Himself, and that has begun to know what He is by its own experience of what He does, must never barter that original quickening and emancipation, and what it learns by them, for any doctrine defined by man. It is a false progress that is promoted by unbending conformity to creeds and confessions. The only way to become perfect is to cherish the initial liberating impulse, to keep our being open to the whole stimulus of Christ, to grow and still to grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour. There is nothing statutory in the Christian life, and of all the regions of life the intellectual is that in which statute is most signally out of place.

2. Another instance of the working of the same principle is seen in the tendency to stereotype Christian experience, and to demand that in all natures it shall assume precisely the same forms. What is produced in the human soul when Christ crucified is placarded before it? Sometimes there is apparently a prevailing type of experience: in the great revival of the eighteenth century, for example, there was often an overpowering sense of sin, which was suddenly swallowed up in a great joy and peace in believing. Perhaps, indeed, such types are not so prevalent as at the time they seem to be; for during a revival there is a tendency for all who are affected to interpret their experience according to the established formula, and to exhibit it, so to speak, cast in a mould which may in some cases really be incongruous to it. But in any case we know that there are other types. The spell of Christ crucified may exert itself in other ways; it may exhibit its power in a new hungering and thirsting after righteousness, in a longing to see the sovereignty of the Lord realized in human society, in a strange new birth of love in the soul. Such new or divergent experiences are not to be distrusted: the one thing we have to distrust is fixity, the tying down of the cross to one particular mode of exercising its power. Theological books used to have a long section headed *Ordo salutis*, the way of salvation. It discussed in what was supposed to be the normal order such subjects as calling, illumination, conversion, repentance, faith, justification, regeneration, the mystical union, sanctification. It might seem the very region in which every thing was sure to be real, because it rested on experience throughout; but often it was vitiated and made unreal just because it shrank from giving experience its due. Its wish and tendency was to reduce experience to one type: to show that every one who was a real Christian must have had the proper experiences in the only proper order. But the wind bloweth where it listeth, and the freedom of the Spirit is not to be limited by any assumed way of salvation. In grace there is the infinite variety which living nature itself presents; and the way of perfection is not to reduce all genuine Christianity to what we think the true pattern, but to trust and recognize as genuinely Christian all experiences which men owe to Christ. It may easily be the one crucified Lord Who begets in some souls the passion of contrition and the joy of faith, and in others the passion of love for the sinful

and wretched, and joy in working for the kingdom. The only thing to be trusted is experience, and we must take care not to distrust it on the ground that we have the measure of all true Christian experience already in our hands, and can now impose that measure as a law. We cannot. There is no such all-comprehending law known to us, and familiar or unfamiliar we must welcome everything that Christ inspires.

3. The same reflections are suggested, and we must let the same considerations weigh with us, in regard to Christian worship. Worship is a function of the Church, and in its worship, as in its thinking, the Church began "in the Spirit." Everything in its worship was original, and every one might contribute to it as the Spirit impelled him. "When ye come together," Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "each one hath a psalm, hath a teaching, hath a revelation, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation". The Apostle does not blame this nor repress it; he only attempts to regulate it. He lays down the laws, which are themselves suggested by the Spirit, of edification and decorum. Nothing is to have a place in worship that does not build up the Church, or that is in itself unseemly. But short of this, worship is free; and the larger the number who contribute to it and the more original and independent their contributions are, the more perfect is the worship. Paul dreaded the imposition of restrictions. "Quench not the Spirit," he said, with this very danger in view. Do not pour cold water on your fervent brother when he makes his contribution to prayer or exhortation, even though you think the fire of his devotion a little smoky. It will burn itself clear, but it is poor policy to put it out. The quenching of the Spirit in worship, however - the relapse in the Church's collective confession of God and testimony to Him from inspiration to routine - is the most constant feature of its history. It is one long story of what began in the Spirit trying to make itself perfect in the flesh. At a very early period modes of worship became fixed - perhaps, to begin with, modes of the celebration of the sacraments. Eventually, however, laws were made for every part of the Church service. The prayers to be said, the Psalms to be sung, the Scriptures to be read, were all fixed; often it was fixed by custom if not by law, that the preacher should preach from the Scripture that had been read. Nothing was left to inspiration at all. There was no point at which the Spirit could manifest itself even if it would. No one would say that there are no advantages in this. It is an advantage to be protected against arbitrariness and caprice. It is an advantage to have noble forms of worship, even if we have no more, and not to be at the mercy of people who possibly are not always inspired. It is more than an advantage, it is a necessity, to have some element of orderly habit in everything which is to last. But surely we should have said beforehand that no one could think that to be tied to such forms, unable to vary them or to do anything outside of them, was the way to perfection. Yet strange to say this is what many think, and there is nothing that shocks them more - nothing, as they would say, that is more offensive to their conscience as loyal church people - than the idea of modifying the use and wont of worship. How eloquent they can be about its accumulated associations, its sacred memories, its venerable authority. One Church is conscious of this in another, but not so readily in itself. Presbyterians are astounded and amused when they read in the life of a Tractarian bishop of Salisbury that he had such a reverence for the order established in the Church that he would not allow any deviation from it: would not use liberty, even when the law allowed it, as in choosing readings for harvest thanksgiving services, or in omitting the long exhortation in the Prayer Book at early communion; nay, as his biographer Canon Liddon tells us, "he would not allow his chaplains to follow the modern fashion of leaving off bands". But Presbyterians can see these things without looking beyond their own borders. Even those who are not old can remember what strange things have been said and done in the name of

purity of worship, as if purity meant petrification. Men have objected to beginning public worship with prayer instead of with praise. They have objected to the use of hymns in public worship as if it were a sin now to sing a new song to the Lord. Certainly worship ought to be pure, but the only pure worship is worship in Spirit and in truth. The more it is inspired, the more certainly will we have new songs, new prayers, new testimonies, whenever the Church meets; the body of Christ will be built up in its worship by that which every joint supplies.

I do not think it can be questioned that the absence of this freedom in worship - or to use the Apostle's expression, the quenching of the Spirit, and the desire to attain under law and routine the perfection which can only be reached through inspiration - is an evil which is deeply felt and from which the Church is at present suffering severely. Few Church members realize what large numbers of people there are whose hearts have been touched and quickened by Christ crucified - who have responded to the appeal of His love - who have in short "begun in the Spirit" - but who are outside of the fellowship of the Churches because they could not enter without having the Spirit quenched. They associate with each other in meetings of their own, where they can impart to each other some spiritual gift; in the absence of forms they are far more like a New Testament Church than any of the organized denominations; and though they have often the drawbacks of a defective education, they contain a great deal of the most vital and valuable Christianity of the country. The Churches have lost much, which, by abandoning their original freedom, have made it impossible for such Christians to remain within their borders. They ought to make room for them. A meeting in which there is a liberty of prayer and a liberty of prophesying - in which Christian devotion can be expressed, or Christian interests and duties discussed, by every member of the community - in which the free Spirit can have free course through those whom it has quickened to spiritual issues, is indispensable in the Church if it is to fulfil its ideal. It began and is always beginning anew in the Spirit, and it will never be made perfect in the flesh. It began and is always beginning anew in enthusiasm and liberty, and it will never be made perfect by routine.

4. The largest application which could be made of the text would be to Christian conduct in general. The perfect life, in the Christian sense, is that which is at every moment inspired - that in which statute is abolished and conventions have no more power. Nothing could be less like Christian perfection than what has sometimes been specially designated the perfect life, namely, a life controlled at every point by monastic rules. The obedience of the monk, who has given his will away to a system if not to a superior, is not the path to perfection; it is a kind of moral suicide. It has a real analogue outside of monasteries in the timid scrupulosity to which everything new is wrong, and in the stolid conscientiousness which without troubling itself about the opinions or the needs of others restricts itself to the observance of established conventions. We do not need to say or to think that the goodness of such people is of no value or serves no purpose. Perhaps it acts in the moral world as the mass of small investors does in the economic world: it maintains a sort of equilibrium; respectable people are not so easily disturbed and thrown off their balance; it would be too much for them if all the Lord's people were prophets. But whatever their value, no one can pretend that the path to perfection is to be found in stereotyping ways of being good or of doing good. Even one good custom can corrupt the world, and only customs which in the strictest sense can become second nature have a right to last as long as nature itself. The true path to perfection is that of inspiration: it is the path revealed to those who stand in the presence of Christ crucified and to whom everything is legitimate - yes, and obligatory - which finds its motive there.

To refer to only one illustration of this. Every one is aware of the degree of ineffectiveness which at present marks the Church's efforts to do good to the world. An immense amount of effort seems to be put forth with no adequate result. Those who have a real connexion with the Church and who take a real interest in it are few. To a large extent it seems to be beating the air, and even among its sincere members there are many who have little sense that they stand for anything inspired and inspiring. Is not that in great measure because the Church, in a world in which everything is alive and moving, has sunk too much from inspiration to routine? It goes on doing what it once did with effect, but what is effective no longer, because all around it has changed. We want to discover, not a new Gospel, but new ways of reaching man with the Gospel; a new intellectual construction of it which will answer to the ideals of truth and knowledge in the mind of our own time - a new utterance for it in the language of those to whom it is preached - new ways of helping the poor - new ways of exerting an influence on the social life in which we all share - new modes of approaching those who need the Gospel but do not want it; a new gift of inspiration, in short, telling on our life in every direction. This is the way to perfection, and to apply it to our methods of worship and of work is entirely in the line of the Apostle's thought. Perfection does not come by statute. It does not come by adherence to routine. It does not come by reverence for use and wont, however hallowed and venerable. It comes by receiving the Spirit, and the Spirit is received at the cross. It enters into us as we come under the spell of that great love, and as it enters it makes us free. We are born again into newness of life, and it is in that newness perpetually renewed, and not in the oldness of the letter - not in any fidelity to established rules or usages - that we are to serve God. Only as we stand in the presence of Christ crucified, and looking out on the world and its needs feel that we are at once free and bound to serve it in every way which the love kindled in us by the cross inspires, are we in the truly Christian attitude. It is the attitude in which goodness is not imposed, but creative. It is the attitude of the new man for whom all that is old has passed away. The blighting power of routine has passed, and in the new life of the Spirit, with its enthusiasm and liberty, the hope of perfection is opened to us at last.

05.23. A Good Work

Chapter 23 A GOOD WORK

“And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on His head.” - Mark 14:3 THE story of the anointing at Bethany, an incident which deeply moved Jesus and which shines out with a radiance of its own even on the pages of the Gospel, is set by the evangelist in a very sombre frame. In itself the outburst of a great devotion to Jesus, it is preceded by an account of the malignity of His enemies, and followed by that of the treachery of one of His friends. The chief priests and the scribes, we are told at the beginning of the chapter, sought how they might take Him by craft and put Him to death. The one thing which embarrassed them was the presence in Jerusalem of the Galilean admirers of Jesus; if any violence were attempted there might be a popular rising in His favour. From this embarrassment they were delivered by Judas. The assistance of one of the twelve enabled them to act with speed and secrecy; perhaps they thought it would also do something to discredit Jesus with the multitude, when His own followers turned against Him. It is apparent from the fourth Gospel that the promptitude with which Judas acted was not unconnected with the incident at Bethany: Judas was prominent among those who misread the act of Mary, and exposed themselves to the Lord’s rebuke. But I do not propose to discuss either his character in general or his immediate motive in betraying Jesus. I cannot overcome the feeling that there is something morally unwholesome and insincere in all speculative discussions of this sort. They are exercises of moral ingenuity upon a subject which is exhibited in Scripture to excite moral horror. They are attempts to revise a sentence from which there is no appeal: “Good were it for that man if he had never been born”. The interest of the references to Judas here is only that his conduct serves as a foil to that of Mary.

It was in the circumstances just described, while the net of His enemies was swiftly closing in upon Him, that Jesus was entertained at Bethany by a circle of His friends. It is not easy to say how far they appreciated the circumstances, or had any definite idea of what was impending. On the way to Jerusalem He had repeatedly spoken of His death, but if there were those among His disciples who had an uneasy sense of something ominous in the air, there were those also who thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. To all intents and purposes Jesus was alone. He sat among His friends, but His mind was absorbed in thoughts which most of them did not divine. This is one of the trials of life which has in its measure to be borne by all. We have to live, to take our part in bright scenes, to see smiling faces and listen to cheerful voices, while our hearts are sad within us, and death unseen by others is at our door. We may be sure that no shadow was cast on the company by the preoccupation of Jesus with what was about to befall Him; He would bear His own burden and not obtrude His anxiety on others. But there must have been a certain tension of feeling in the company; and its pressure in one heart was relieved by the act described in the text. “There came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on His head.” Anointing is not a Western custom, and the use of such perfumes is rather counted unmanly among us, but in the East it was otherwise. In the

hot and stifling climate it was grateful and refreshing, and to anoint one's guests was an ordinary courtesy the neglect of which was noticed and felt by Jesus. But this was no ordinary anointing. It was distinguished by the costliness of the perfume, and by the lavish generosity with which it was poured out. Not a word was said; the act itself said all that was necessary to those who were worthy to understand it. An ancient Greek poet describes his poems as "having a voice for the intelligent," and this woman's act has the character of a poem. It has "the loveliness of perfect deeds, more strong than all poetic thought". In some way it must have come from a sense of debt to Jesus. Mary owed to the Lord what she could never repay. She had sat at His feet and heard His word. She had received her brother again from the dead; she had herself received the life eternal. She had a finer sense than others that Jesus could not be with them long, and she must do something to give expression to her feelings. The ointment was nothing; she was pouring out her heart at Jesus' feet. The Gospel narratives, in showing how the act of Mary was understood and misunderstood by those who witnessed it, invite us to consider the principles on which actions can be or ought to be judged.

1. The standard which first occurs to every one is that of duty or law. The right action is one that is enjoined upon us by the law, one which an external rule makes obligatory, and which we dare not neglect. It is obvious that this is a standard of which we can here make no use at all. There was no law which required Mary to act as she did, and no one could say that a law had been broken or that duty had been neglected even though the anointing at Bethany had never taken place.

2. But there is another standard by which we may judge of actions - not the standard of duty, but that of utility. We may think not of what it is obligatory upon us to do, but of what it is sensible, reasonable, profitable for us to do. This was the standard which was applied by some of those who were present on the occasion, and particularly by Judas. To them the anointing was waste. It was the more reprehensible because there were so many better things which might have been done at the same cost. "It might have been sold for more than three hundred pence and given to the poor." We all feel that this utilitarian estimate of Mary's action is, to say the least, unsympathetic: it is no use asking what is the good of such and such an action if the actor is quite indifferent about the good of it in your sense of the term. You cannot convict him of any wrong by showing that there is no profit in what he has done, unless he did it for such profit, or unless such profit is the only legitimate end of action. What the disciples did when they exclaimed, why was this waste of the ointment made? was really to interpret through the senses an action which proceeded from the soul, and could only disclose its meaning to the soul. Perhaps they were ashamed the moment the word "waste" had passed their lips, and tried to cover their confusion by the suggestion that it might have been given to the poor: this is no unusual experience. Anyhow we must remember they were poor men, and that to squander in one impulsive instant, for no visible object, a whole year's wages of a working man, might well put them out of their reckoning for the moment. But we must take care also not to share their mistake. To waste, in the proper sense of the term, no one could be more opposed than Jesus. It is He who says, "Gather up the fragments that remain that nothing be lost". But generosity is not waste. The affections need to be nourished, and they are only nourished by the kind of giving which looks for no return. They need to be nourished even in the interest of the poor, and it is no genuine care for the poor which would check their spontaneous, impulsive, even exuberant action. The hope of the poor lies in the kindness and generosity of human hearts, and kindness and generosity are fostered not by considerations of

what is sensible, but by kind and generous deeds. It was Mary who wasted the ointment and Judas who put forward the case of the poor: but who will believe that Judas was a better friend to the poor than Mary? There is, of course, such a thing as senseless extravagance, and even in the generosity of love there may be a trace of vanity - a man may be proud of himself in the gift he bestows on his wife; but the true wealth of the world lies in generous feeling, and there is no wisdom, nor economy, nor care for the poor, in suppressing the instinctive movements of the heart. The soul is not to be judged and snubbed by the senses; it has laws of its own of which the senses know nothing, and they are signally illustrated in this act.

3. This brings us to the third standard by which actions may be interpreted - not duty, or utility, but love. Jesus undertakes the defence of the woman against those who misunderstood or complained of her. "Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work upon Me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but Me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying." If we observe the main points in this defence we shall see the characteristics of the action which so deeply moved Jesus that He conferred on it an immortality of fame. "Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

There are three points in the defence of Mary by Jesus which seem to call for particular attention.

(a) In describing what she has done as "a good work," He judges not by the senses, but by the soul. He does not mean that it was legally binding, or that it was economically sensible, but that it has the charm of moral originality and inspiration on it, like the works of God. The right which is thus inspired is not only right, but lovely, a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. The house was filled with the odour of the ointment, and the fragrance of this surpassingly beautiful deed has never faded from the Church. It was grateful to Christ as the unsought unbidden act of a child's love is dear to the mother - as an unexpected gift of the bridegroom, with no motive but love, is dear to the bride - as everything into which the heart pours its passion is dear to those on whom it is bestowed, in proportion as they are worthy of it. The motive of love, and the originality and spontaneity which accompany this motive, must characterize all actions which win the commendation of Jesus. The right must not have sunk in them into a tradition. It must not have been degraded into the observance of a statute. It must not be confounded with the sensible or the expedient which can be justified on utilitarian grounds. If it is to be recognized by Jesus as Divinely right it must be incalculable, spontaneous, creative in its originality, a new revelation of what the good can be. It is only then that Jesus can say of it emphatically, as He did of Mary's act of devotion, "a good work".

(b) The second important point in the defence of Mary by Jesus is contained in the allusion to His death. "Me ye have not always . . . she is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying." I have said already that we hardly know how far the company present at the Supper had entered into Jesus' anticipations of the end. It is a fair inference from these words that Mary had entered into them more deeply than the others. Even if she had no definite idea of His burial in her mind - and it is unlikely that she had - she may quite well have divined more clearly than others what was absorbing the mind of Jesus; she may have felt, as they did not, that they were not to have Him with them long. It was out of some such sympathy with Jesus, deep and passionate though

obscure, that she acted; and Jesus, we might almost say, only gave it clearness and took it at its real value when He said, "She hath done it for My burial". Now this kind of sympathy, which feels what it cannot see, and which gives a depth and scope to action beyond what the actor himself can grasp at the moment, is also essential to "a good work". Nothing is supremely good that we understand beforehand all round and through and through. There must be something operative in it which goes beyond us; motives of which we cannot give a full and clear account, but which connect us somehow with God. It is insensibility to such larger if less-defined realities which makes conduct small and disappointing, and heaps up legacies of remorse. What a solemn shadow it would cast upon the company at Bethany to realize that with death so close at hand they should grudge love the opportunity of showing itself without counting the cost! Even the miserly soul becomes generous in such a case. The most grasping man does not grudge anything to make his love real and dear to the wife or the child that is slipping from his grasp. He does not know what good it can do, but he must do it. But in all that company at Bethany the one who was in deepest sympathy with the Master was the one whom the rest could not understand: an unhappy memory for them! Let us note it, as a further mark of what is divinely good, that it must be inspired by a sensitive sympathy with Jesus, a sympathy which enables us to divine His mind even when it is not formally expressed.

(c) The third point in the defence is contained in the words, "She hath done what she could". Unfortunately this expression is capable of being misunderstood, and has indeed been widely understood in a sense exactly the opposite of that which it was intended to bear. In our modern idiom, "she hath done what she could" is almost as much apologetic as eulogistic. The undertone is, "It was not much, of course, but what more could one expect? There is no room for reproach or censure." This, I say, is precisely the reverse of what the words mean. The disciples did not reproach the woman for doing so little, but for doing so much; and Jesus justified her, not by reducing her act to smaller proportions, but by revealing it in all its depth and height, and showing that it was greater than she herself knew. The only close analogy to it which I can recall in Scripture is the story told in 2Sa 23:1-39. "And David longed and said, O that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate! And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord. And he said. Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives?" The true sense of the words of Jesus is seen if we apply them to the three mighty men and their heroic achievement. They did what they could. They saw the opportunity for showing their devotion to their king, for doing him the smallest service at the most tremendous hazard; they saw it and seized it. They rose to the occasion, and they rose at the same instant to the height of their valour and their fame. So did Mary of Bethany. She responded to the mood of Jesus with the same instinctive loyalty with which the mighty men responded to the longing of David; she saw what the moment required, and was equal to it; she met a heart over which the shadow of death was darkening with an uncalculating outburst of love which was inexpressibly grateful to Jesus. But while the magnanimous King of Israel dared not accept the gift of his mighty men, and felt that devotion like theirs was too much for any human being, and that he must pour out the water they had brought at the hazard of their lives as an offering to the Lord - a proof that with David and his heroes it was like master like man - Jesus welcomes the devotion of Mary, and rewards it with undying fame. He does not excuse, he

glorifies her when he says, "She has done what she could."

This, then, is another mark of what Jesus means by "a good work": it is a work signalized by generosity, abandonment, uncalculating devotion, and that on an occasion on which others see no call for anything unusual. There is indeed an appeal in the circumstances of the case, but it is too subtle for the unsympathetic to feel it, and too searching for the ungenerous to respond to it. They never become aware of the chances they lose of doing such good works and winning Christ's praise. They are apt to criticize devotion, as the sensible people at Bethany criticized Mary, but such criticism is only a proof that the moral intelligence and the moral nature are alike undeveloped. "Want of tenderness is want of parts."

I shall conclude with two observations on this story, of a more general purport. The first is that the act of Mary illustrates the Gospel. It does so in a way so unmistakable that Jesus Himself secures it its place in the Gospel for ever. It is told for a memorial of Mary, but it is told also to reveal Jesus. It is a characteristic page in His life, exhibiting at once His conception of what is morally lovely, and His power to evoke the reality of it in the souls of others. Here we see the very spirit of Jesus. He is one who gives without calculating. When do we most feel inclined to say, "To what purpose is this waste?" Is it not when we look at His life and death - at the tears He shed over the impenitent, at the patience with which He sought those who refused to be found, at the love He lavished on those who would not love Him in return? Is this sensible? No, but it is Divine. It cannot be justified on prudential or utilitarian grounds, but it does not need to be justified to love. Yet even Christian theologians have argued for a limited atonement on the ground that upon any other theory the love of Christ was "wasted" - thrown away for nothing. As if it were not the very tragedy of being lost that some men can perish in a world in which Christ died for all. The utmost devotion of which human souls are capable is only the reflex of that love with which He gave Himself a ransom for us, and nothing less than the utmost devotion on our part bears any proportion to that which has been demonstrated by Him. The second observation is this: the act of Mary judges those who judge it. It provokes criticism, but the criticism recoils. It is carped at by the selfish, but the selfish are always hypocrites: they always have reasons on their side, and they always have love - which is the supreme moral reason - against them. It is not a bad way to test what we are, to ask whether we have ever done an impulsive, enthusiastic, extravagant thing in love. Have you ever done any such thing for your mother or your wife, for your church or your city, for a stranger or a friend? If so, it is a good omen. But show me the man who has never in a moment of high feeling spent what he could not justify on economical grounds, and I will show you a man not fit for the kingdom of God. "Magnanimity owes prudence no account of its motives." Love is not bound to justify itself to the utilitarian; but the utilitarian will one day have to plead his cause at the bar of love, and will find that he has none. Immortality, according to Scripture, does not belong to the economists and the sensible men, but to the martyrs; not to those whose aim is to save their lives, but to those who are willing to spend and be spent to the utmost for a cause greater than life itself. It is in them that Jesus sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied.

05.24. Propitiation

Chapter 24

PROPITIATION "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." - 1Jn 2:2

WITHIN the last twelve months foreign missions have been more talked about in the Church than at anytime I can remember. The appeals made in connexion with them have been frequent and importunate. The cause has been pleaded with every kind of argument. The actual condition of the non-Christian world has been presented to us with a fullness and distinctness once impossible: we have been shown in all its aspects what the life is which is waiting for the Gospel. In many parts of the globe the critical nature of the situation has been emphasized. Opportunities, we have been told, are passing - will within five years or ten years have passed - never to return. In the Far East, where great nations are awaking and coming to the consciousness of their powers, it is now or never for the Gospel. It is now or never in Africa, where every Moslem is a missionary and where Islam is advancing with giant strides. Missions have had much to do with the new movements in India and China, but what a frightful prospect it would open up if the vast populations of Asia should master the resources of Christian civilization and be left with none but pagan impulses to direct them. The urgency of the need and the vastness of the opportunity have alike been pressed on the Church, and we have not wanted those who in view of both have talked to us of missions as a "business proposition," and have told us how, as men of business, we must address ourselves to the organizing and financing of the business if it is to be made a business success. And what is the result of this unexampled activity in pleading the mission cause? So far as I can see, it is neither here nor there. An immense proportion of the people in our churches care little about the matter. There is no sensible increase either of contributions or of gifted men. There are no signs of expansion, elasticity, or fresh ardour.

Now why should this be? Some appeals, I can hardly doubt, are wrecked on the sober, not to say the sceptical common sense of those who hear them. Many people cannot help distrusting the diagnoses of vast situations like those presented in India and China. They do not believe that anybody can read them with authority, and when they are told of the consequences that will inevitably follow if something is not done within five years or ten years, they are not much impressed. They have a latent consciousness that all human affairs are in the hands of God, and that though He honours us to be His fellow-workers, it is a mistake to suppose that the vast movement depends, in the way implied in such appeals, upon us. Many people also have something in their minds which reacts against the idea that we can plan, organize, and carry out the evangelization of the world. They do not really believe that the thing is to be done that way. They get tired of military metaphors - about sending reinforcements here and occupying strategic points there. They cannot help remembering words of Jesus about the kingdom of God - words in which it is compared to a seed growing secretly, or to leaven hid in three measures of meal till the whole is leavened - and they cannot get over the feeling that these words must apply (in a way

which many appeals overlook) to the coming of the kingdom of God even in India and China. Further, there is a sense of proportion in the human mind which is apt to protest when even a great cause is put out of focus. There are many people in our churches whose minds and hands are pretty full. They are in a situation which taxes all their faculties. Their families, their business, their rents and rates, their duties religious and political to the society in which they live, are real, insistent, and absorbing; and while they would not disclaim responsibility for foreign missions, they are impatient when their other responsibilities seem to be minimized in pleading the mission cause. They can make missions to the heathen a real but not a preponderating care. To ask them to make missions their primary concern seems to them almost as unreal as to ask them to learn Hindustani or Chinese. It is impossible, not because they care nothing for the Chinese or the Hindus, but because the bulk of their intellectual and moral energies is pre-engaged, and pre-engaged in what they consider imperative and entirely right ways.

I have said these things, which to some may appear chilling or out of place, only because I do not wish to be thought oblivious of them. But when all such allowances have been made, there ought to be more missionary interest in our churches than is actually found, and the fault lies in the last resort not in the nature of the appeals which are made for missions, but in the minds to which they are addressed. "Some people," I once heard a distinguished missionary say, "do not believe in missions. They have no right to believe in missions: they do not believe in Christ." This goes to the root of the matter. It is not interest in missions that we want in our churches at this moment, but interest in the Gospel. Apart from a new interest in the Gospel, a revival of evangelical faith in Christ as the Redeemer, I believe we shall look in vain for a response to missionary appeals. But there is something in the Gospel itself, something especially in that presentation of it which we have in the text, which immediately creates missionary interest, because it has no proper correlative but the universe. Again and again we have it echoed in St. John. "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation." "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." It is as though one might conceive Christ in some character or aspect which limited His significance, but once He is seen in the character of a propitiation, as a lamb bearing and bearing away sin, all limitations are removed. The only correlative of such a Christ is the whole world, and nothing gives us such a wonderful impression of what Christ was to His immediate followers as that they actually saw in Him as He died upon the cross a goodness that outweighed not only their sin but all sin, and could say God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. This is the consciousness out of which the missionary impulse springs. This was what made Paul cry, "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and the unwise". If there is little missionary interest in the churches, depend upon it, the reason is that there is little evangelic interest. The wonder of that redeeming revelation that made the first disciples Apostles has faded away, and we must revive it by standing where the Apostles stood, and seeing Christ in the awful and glorious light in which they saw Him, if new life is to enter into missionary work.

We are all familiar with the aversion to the ideas of sin and of propitiation. In a sense, they stand and fall together. If there is no sin, there can be no propitiation. The one is just as real as the other. I am not going to speak to those who question the reality of sin - who explain and extenuate what was once so-called, who resolve it into the inevitable result of heredity and environment, for whom

individual is lost in corporate responsibility, and who have never had the experience of a living soul standing with a bad conscience in the presence of the living God. The whole Gospel is meant for sinners - not for men as such, but for sinful men: an elementary truth too often overlooked. It is meant for people to whom the bad conscience is a responsibility they cannot escape, a chain they cannot break, a doom - and what doom could be heavier - never to be anything else than what they are. It is to men who in one degree or other know what sin is, that the Gospel is addressed. It is to them Christ comes from God, and He comes in the character of a Redeemer. He does not regard sin nor treat it as unreal. On the contrary, it is more real to Him than it is to us. He enters more deeply than we can into all it means both for us and for God - He, Jesus Christ the Righteous. And because He does so, He is the propitiation for our sins. When we think of the forgiveness of sins, there are only three things we can say. One is, that it is impossible. Things are what they are, and the consequences of them will be what they will be: not even God can reverse them. As the late Mr. Rathbone Greg put it, God is the only being who cannot forgive. A man who is more or less indifferent to moral interests may be indulgent to his neighbour who is no better than himself; but how can indulgence be looked for from One who is the inflexible guardian of right? I am not going to argue against this. I believe it contains a recognition of the vital truth that God never condones sin. He never treats it as anything less or anything else than it is. If there should turn out, after all, to be such a thing as a Divine forgiveness of sins, we may be sure it will be such a forgiveness as carries the Divine condemnation and destruction of sin in the heart of it.

Another thing that may be said is, that forgiveness can be taken for granted. Of course God forgives. That is what God is for. His name was proclaimed to Moses, "The Lord, a God merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." We can all presume upon that. I am not going to argue against this either. I believe it is an imperfect and in the last resort an impious way of recognizing the truth that salvation is of the Lord. "'Tis from the mercy of our God that all our hopes begin," and they do begin. The initiative in salvation must lie with God, and He actually takes the initiative. We can and do depend upon that. But we must not presume upon it. Often we are referred to the Old Testament for illustrations of the experience of forgiveness which are not (it is said) conditioned by anything in the nature of propitiation, yet for depth and height and gladness have never been surpassed. It may not be possible for us to tell through what experiences God mediated to psalmists and prophets in ancient times the assurance of His pardoning love to Israel, but one thing is certain: none of them ever took it for granted. To all of them it came as the wonder of wonders, the unsurpassable, all but incredible, revelation of the goodness of God. Listen to Moses: "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin and have made them gods of gold; yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin - and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written." Is that the voice of a man who thinks that of course God must forgive? Or listen to the great prophet of the exile. He has caught the voice of God, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins; return unto Me, for I have redeemed thee"; and how does he respond? "Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel." I ask again, is that the voice of a man who thinks forgiveness may be assumed? Take one example more, from Micah. "Who is a god like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage?" Does he take forgiveness for granted, or does not the amazing revelation and experience of it lift

his God above all gods? No! whatever the way in which their experience of forgiveness came to Old Testament men, it came as a marvel in which God was incomparably revealed, as an inspiration to passionate praise, not as a commonplace which called for no comment.

We might say antecedently to experience either of these things - forgiveness is impossible, or forgiveness may be taken for granted - and we have allowed for the truth and falsehood of both; but what the New Testament says is that God Himself loved us, and sent His Son a propitiation for sins, and that in Him we have our redemption, through His blood, even the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace. There is something in this which we could never have anticipated. Forgiveness is not impossible, nor is it a matter of course; it is a miracle. As the New Testament holds it out to sinful men, it is the supreme achievement of God in Christ; His costliest, His unspeakable gift. To receive it is an experience as wonderful in its kind as to achieve it or to bestow it; there is a passion in being pardoned corresponding to the passion of Jesus when He gave His life a ransom for men. This is what is fundamental in the Christian religion, and it is this we must recover in it if we would revive its original expansive power.

Many people speak of the forgiveness of sins who have no idea of what forgiveness means in the New Testament, and no idea, either, of the ways in which the reality of sin is demonstrated there. The one condition of forgiveness which they understand is repentance on the part of the sinner - as though the reality of sin were exhausted in what it is to him. But its reality is not exhausted so, even if we assume, what is never the case, that the repentance is adequate to the offence. Sin is real in the universe, beyond the sinner's control. It is real to God; and before it can be forgiven by Him - or rather in the very act in which it is forgiven, as part of the very process of forgiving - His sense of its reality must be declared. This is what is done in the propitiation, and it is in proportion as we appreciate this that the Divine forgiveness appears an unspeakable gift. I believe the reason why we sometimes have difficulty with this connexion of ideas is that we are too familiar with forgiving ourselves, and too apt to assume that this is the same as being forgiven. Often in hearing or reading arguments against propitiation - especially those based on human analogies - I have wondered whether those who used them had ever had the experience of being truly forgiven for a real wrong by a fellow creature. Take the case of that relation in which human love is most intense, and at the same time most ethical - most remote from the elemental instinct with which even the dumb creatures cling to their young - the relation of husband and wife. A man may sin in this relation - I do not mean at all in the gross way of violating his marriage vow - but in a way that wounds his wife's love. He may do something by which he falls in her opinion, compels her to be ashamed of him instead of proud of him; he may forfeit the confidence she once had in him, and in proportion to the fineness and nobility of her nature hurt her more than he can comprehend. And what then? Possibly what happens in such a case is that there is no reconciliation, but that after a while the offender begins to forgive himself. He has been mortified, ashamed, and humiliated as well as his wife, and it is mainly of himself that he thinks. He sees no more that is to be made by indulging such feelings longer. He assumes that his wife as a reasonable being will at last let bygones be bygones; and in consideration of the fact that he admits he has behaved badly, he expects her to be willing to begin again, and to go on as if nothing had happened. This is what often takes place in human relations, and unhappily it is often the only analogy which experience supplies for interpreting our relation to God. But sometimes what takes place is quite different, far more wonderful, far more Divine. There is such an experience as a real reconciliation, in which the

offender does not forgive himself but is forgiven. And what is the peculiarity of this experience, by which it is differentiated from the other? It is this: the centre of moral interest is transferred at once from the offender to the offended. The centre of the passion by which sin is overcome is seen to be not in the sinner, however deep and pure his repentance may be, but in the purer and diviner spirit which has borne his sin and is forgiving it. If this is a true analogy, can anyone think forgiveness is easy, a thing that needs no explanation, and to which the idea of propitiation is irrelevant or even abhorrent? I can believe that it is possible for love to forgive anything - for the love of a wife to pardon things in her husband that broke her pride, her hope, and her trust in him; but I can believe also, or rather I cannot but believe, that just in proportion to the purity and divineness of her nature, must that forgiveness come out of an agony in which it would not be amazing if she suddenly fell down dead. There is all this difference between forgiving oneself, which is so easy, so common, and so degrading; and being forgiven by a love which has borne our sins, which is so tragic, so subduing, so regenerating. Real forgiveness, forgiveness by another whom we have wronged, and in whom there is a love, which forgiveness reveals, able at once to bear the wrong and to inspire the penitence through which we can rise above it, is always tragic; and it is tragic on both sides - to him who has borne the sin which he forgives, and to him who stoops with a penitent heart to be forgiven. What the propitiation stands for is the divine side of this tragedy. It is tragic for God to forgive - a solemn and awful experience, if we may put it so, for Him; just as to be forgiven is tragic - a solemn and awful experience for us. This is the truth - and of its truth I have no more doubt than I have of my own existence - which underlies all the New Testament teaching about propitiation. To evade it, or to let it fall into the background, is not to drop a Jewish misconception which the Christian spirit has outgrown. It is to pluck the heart out of the Christian religion. It is to stifle praise in the birth, and cut devotion at the root. The great distinction between the Old Testament and the New, in what they reveal about forgiveness, lies just here: the New Testament has a perception, which was as yet impossible to the Old, of the cost at which forgiveness comes to men. The Old Testament felt that it was wonderful, but the New Testament can say that it is as wonderful as the Passion of Jesus. He died for our sins. In Him we have our redemption through His blood. We are justified freely by God's grace - the Old Testament knew that; but in the New Testament they can add, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation, through faith, in His blood. That is the ultimate difference of the dispensations, the last and highest stage of revelation in the new. But on this ultimate difference others are dependent, and among these the conspicuous difference with which we are concerned to-day, that while the Old Testament religion was that of a nation, the New Testament religion is destined for the human race. Get to the heart of it and its universal scope cannot be missed. The propitiation is so absolute, so divine, that it draws everything within its range. If we feel what it is, we feel that it is not for our sins only, but also for the whole world. The motives to mission work - in other words, to preaching the Gospel - can never be found in a command as such. We read the command of Jesus in the Gospel, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," and we know by experience that for multitudes it does not constitute a motive at all. They are quite well aware of it, but they quite easily ignore it. It only acts as a motive in those who have themselves been won by Christ, who realize what an unspeakable gift God has given us in His Son, and who feel spontaneously the impulse to impart it. There may be degrees in this realization, but it is most keen and vital - it operates most potently as a motive for preaching the Gospel - in those who have apprehended Christ in His character as a propitiation. In comparison

with the Christianity which has this grasp on the heart of the New Testament revelation every other is anæmic; it is the passion of Jesus the Redeemer which alone evokes a responsive passion in sinful hearts. It is this which opens men's mouths in testimony meetings; it is this which raises up evangelists; it is this and nothing else which will send them for the name of Jesus to the uttermost parts of the earth. And if even the command of Jesus, simply as a command, is ineffective, much more so are what may be called the secondary motives to missions. Our science, our civilization, our administration of justice, our industry - all these may be valuable enough, and it might be very advantageous to introduce them into countries we could name; but the Christian Church does not exist to be the agent or the forerunner of external fashions of life which it has seen come into being and which it will probably see pass away. It lives for and by the things which are spiritual and eternal. In Jesus Christ the righteous, the propitiation for sins, it is the possessor of something inexpressibly good - something so good, and for which it feels so deeply indebted and so boundlessly grateful to God - that it cannot keep silence nor withhold it from any man. There are Gospels with which we would not go very far. They are so poor that we should hardly like to expose them to anyone, let alone to all the world. But if Christ the propitiation has been revealed to us as the power of God to save, then we have something in our hearts that lifts us above the need of commands and makes secondary motives unreal. The only motives worth considering in this region are the irresistible motives. We get nothing until we get men who say, "We cannot but speak. Necessity is laid upon us. We are debtors. Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause; for the love of Christ constraineth us. Having therefore obtained help of God I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great." I repeat, what we want is not missionaries, in the narrower sense, but evangelists - not a new interest in the non-Christian world, but a new interest in the Gospel - not men who want to preach to the heathen, but men who cannot but preach where they are. That is the stock from which alone the missionary force can be recruited - the men and women in whom all emotions and motives are swallowed up in the sense of what they owe to the Redeemer. Let us pray and preach for the multiplication of such men, if we would help the mission cause. Redeemed and devoted lives will solve all our problems, and nothing less will touch them. The appeals which have been made so long in vain will not be vain when the old doxology breaks again irresistibly and spontaneously from the Church's lips - Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood, be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. That is the voice of those who know instinctively that Christ is the heir of the world. It is of Him and of His Church that they think when they sing that ancient Psalm of the kingdom and its King. "There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. His name shall endure for ever; His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed." Amen.

05.25. The Voice of Jesus

Chapter 25 THE VOICE OF JESUS

“Come unto Me, 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.” - Mat 11:28-30

THERE is a benediction in the very sound of these words, of which few that have heard them are quite unconscious, and it becomes the more striking when we observe the setting in which they are placed by the evangelist. Up to the preceding chapter, the story of Jesus' Life as a teacher and healer seems to have been one of unbroken success; the multitudes thronged around Him, and the work so grew upon His hands that He was obliged to share it with the Twelve, and to send them out to preach and heal in His name. But with the eleventh chapter a turning point is reached, and now almost every incident in the life of Jesus, over a considerable period, might be headed Offence. In the opening of the chapter His forerunner John is presented to us as in doubt about His Messiahship. “Art thou He that should come, or are we to look for another?” Then we see Jesus comparing His contemporaries - the generation which would not listen either to Himself or His forerunner - to wilful children, who would not play at any kind of game their companions proposed; neither a wedding nor a funeral would please them; they would not be in earnest with God whether He came in the austerity of the Baptist or the geniality of the Son of Man. In what immediately follows we hear Him pronounce woes on the cities which had seen all His mighty works and yet had not repented, and face the disconcerting fact that all the better classes, as we should say now, were against Him. The wise and prudent could see nothing in His message. Yet while thus repelled on every hand Jesus is not shaken inwardly. His trust in the Father and in His guidance remains: “Even so Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight”. His confidence that He is empowered for His work, and can do for men all that they need to have done, remains: “All things have been delivered unto Me by My Father . . . no man knoweth the Father save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him”. And above all, His love remains. It is against this background of offence and disappointment that He stretches out His hands again and cries: “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

1. The people addressed were in the first instance those whose religion had become a burden to them. It is remarkable, indeed, that this is one of the chief connexions in which the terms “burden” and “yoke” are employed in the New Testament. “They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne upon men's shoulders”: so said Jesus of the religious teachers of His day. “Ye are putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear”: so said Peter at a later day to their successors in the Christian Church. Religion had become for multitudes an affair of endless commandments and prohibitions; its statutes - and it was all statutes - were numbered by hundreds; they were to be obeyed because there they were, the traditions of the elders. As Jesus looked round Him, He saw men crushed, bent and tottering under this traditional and statutory religion - weary with their efforts to do justice to it, yet never getting one step nearer

God, nor finding rest and liberty within. It is to such He cries, "Come unto Me. I have the secret of what you are looking for. I can initiate you into the true religion, the obedience which is not imposed but inspired; and there you will find rest for your souls." Are there not still those whose burden is that of a degenerate religion? True religion, the life of God in the soul of man, is not a burden, but the very reverse. It is not something that we carry; it is properly something which sustains us. But how many people there are whose religion is their chief trouble. Carlyle speaks mockingly of governments for which religion only exists in the shape of the religious question or the religious difficulty. But it is not only governments of which we may say this. There are plenty of men and women who get nothing out of their religion; it troubles, perplexes, oppresses them; it is something they do not know what to do with. And the reason of this is always the same. Human traditions have gathered round the religion and become identified with it: it means a great mass of things that we are to believe, because others have believed them, or that we are to continue to do because others have done them. But times change, and minds change, and these traditions become an ever more intolerable burden. We do not know how to adjust the traditional beliefs to other things which we know to be true. We cannot feel that there is anything morally effective in the traditional modes of behaviour - any thing to which conscience consents spontaneously, and which tells upon the world as real goodness would. The whole thing becomes a burden and a perplexity - a mass of questions we do not know how to answer, of conventional ways of being good and of doing good from which we cannot help fearing that the virtue has departed. We are weakened, depressed, overborne by our religion, not uplifted and inspired. What are we to say to souls in such a case? Jesus says, "Come unto me". What you need is not religion - in the shape that time and human traditions have given to it - but Christ. It is not other people's pieties, or creeds, or sacred customs, but Christ. God does not wish us to have the religion of our ancestors, but to have religion of our own, and such religion is kindled in our souls when we drop religion as it is imposed by men, and come to Him. This is no doctrine of mere rebellion or religious anarchy; there is no fear of rebellion or anarchy when we put on the yoke of Jesus. But how do we come to Jesus? There is no general answer to this question; the peculiarity and the beauty of coming to a person is that every one may do it in a way of his own. It is not like learning a catechism, or mastering a science, where there is the same routine for every one; it is like forming a friendship, or falling in love. Every life crosses that of Jesus at its own angle, and in all true religion there is an original experience, something which is our very own. No one can tell how slight it may be to begin with. Even in human relations we may owe all the happiness of which we are capable, or all the misery - all the best we can rise to, or all the worst to which we can sink - to what seem very insignificant things; to a look, an attitude, a gesture, the tone of a voice, a word so trifling that no one was aware of it but ourselves. There is the same incalculable incommensurable element in all real contact of the soul with Jesus. The one certainty in every case is that we come to Jesus in some kind of obedience, in an act rather than a belief, or in a belief which has no adequate expression except in act. Take My yoke upon you. No intellectual difficulties are ever supposed in the Gospel, for there are no intellectual requirements. But there is always something to do, or to bear. What it is, we must find out for ourselves in Jesus' presence; but as we do it, the true religion will rise up within us, assured, emancipating, full of a deep peace and joy. Though the idea of a yoke is irksome, Jesus says, "My yoke is easy". This is not because His standard is lower than that of conventional religion; on the contrary, there is none so high. But in His company it is the heights which attract. "My feet always move quicker of themselves when I catch sight of the hills." As he

breathes His own spirit into us, obedience is not a crushing burden that we bear; it is the uprising in us of gratitude and devotion in which our souls find rest.

2. If a degenerate religion is the burden of some, that of others is that they have no religion at all. Their life is empty and futile; the one word of Scripture they thoroughly understand is "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity". Life is a burden to them because there is nothing in it. It has no chief end, no satisfying result, no fruit that abides. Day by day it goes on, and year by year, always heavier and heavier as its emptiness is realized. How many people there are who are burdened by this vain life which has no inner law, no necessity and no freedom of its own. How many there are who with a sense of slavery do what other people do, and sometimes wish they had never been born. Perhaps they are recruited in part from those who have rebelled against conventional religion, but have not got past the stage of mere rebellion. But more commonly they represent what is another great tradition in human life - the tradition of self-will. Promising as it seems at first, all experience goes to show that there is nothing so fatiguing and oppressive. It never gives rest to the soul.

Me this unchartered freedom tires;

I feel the weight of chance desires: My hopes no more must change their name:

I long for a repose that ever is the same. Or in a wilder strain: - He made a feast, drank fierce and fast, And crowned his hair with flowers; No easier nor no quicker passed The impracticable hours. Has Jesus anything to say to those who are sighing under this burden? Yes, even to those who have lived this empty, disappointing life, and who are crushed beneath its futility, He cries, "Come unto me." Empty and worthless as it is, this life may still be redeemed; nay, it may be filled unto all the fullness of God. "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me". Do one single thing which Jesus commands; do rather one single thing which His example inspires - for the yoke is one which He bears rather than imposes - and you will be let into the secret. Mark Pattison said that one of the things which impressed him in his work as a teacher was the smallness of the seed from which a complete intellectual life might spring. Once get the living mind into contact with living reality, and no matter how insignificant the point of contact might appear, a process was set up which would not cease till the mind had gathered all things into itself. It is the same in the spiritual world. The emptiest life only needs to establish communication with Jesus by putting on His yoke to be launched on a career of boundless satisfaction and peace.

3. There is a burden commoner still than that of a degenerate religion or an empty life - the burden of a bad conscience. There is no weight so crushing as that of the invisible chain which binds a man to his past, and makes it impossible for him to be anything but what he is. Can Jesus do anything for this burden? Can He lift the load of guilt with its crushing and disabling memories, and give relief to the soul?

There is nothing about which we can be more positive than this. The Gospels are full of illustrations of it, and they are confirmed by the whole history of the Church. Think of the woman in Simon's house, who washed His feet with tears and wiped them with the hair of her head, and to whom He said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace". Think of Peter, when the Lord turned and looked upon him, as he denied Him with oaths and curses. Think of the paralytic borne of four, on whom He wrought the comprehensive miracle of redemption: "Courage, child, thy sins are forgiven thee; arise, take up thy bed and walk". In cases like these we see the burden falling, the chain

breaking, peace welling up through the deepest penitence, joy and hope dawning in souls that had been sunk in despair. And it is such souls as much as any that are appealed to in the words of Jesus, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest".

What the man who is burdened with a bad conscience needs is the assurance that there is a love in God deeper and stronger than sin. Not a love which is indifferent to sin or makes light of it. Not a love to which the bad conscience, which is so tragically real to man, and so fatally powerful in his life, is a mere misapprehension to be ignored or brushed aside as insignificant. No, but a love to which sin, and its condemnation in conscience, and its deadly power, are all that they are to man, and more; a love which sees sin, which feels it, which is wounded by it, which condemns and repels it with an annihilating condemnation: yet holds fast to man through it all with Divine power to redeem, and to give final deliverance from it. This is what the man needs who is weighed down and broken and made impotent by a bad conscience, and this is what he finds when he comes to Jesus. The doctrine of the atonement is the doctrine of the cost at which such a wondrous revelation of love is made to sinful men: it is intended to make intelligible the method and the cost of forgiveness. We do not need to be astonished if what are called the intellectual difficulties of the Gospel culminate here, and if there is no doctrine which men are so prompt to criticize and to repudiate. In the nature of the case, if we try to construct a doctrine of forgiveness at all, it must be a difficult doctrine; it has to focus in itself many great and superficially inconsistent ideas. All the attributes of God must be active in it, His inviolable holiness and His infinite love. All the aspects of human nature must have justice done them in it; its deep corruption and its capacity for redemption. Not merely the relation of the sinner to God and to the moral order of the world has to be considered, but the solidarity of the sinner on one side and of Christ on the other with the whole human race. When we try to apprehend all these things at once - and these are by no means all that have to be considered - who will venture to say that He, has done to all the justice to which they are entitled? Who will be astonished if the doctrine of atonement has sometimes been superficially and inadequately handled, if it has been misunderstood and misrepresented, if it has been preached in forms which rather challenged the criticism of the conscience than satisfied its deepest needs? But why trouble about the doctrine? Surely what conscience cries out for is not the explanation of forgiveness, but the experience of it; and for this we must come to Christ. The experience does not rest on the doctrine, but the doctrine on the experience. No doctrine can make us certain in our very souls that there is a love of God against which even our sin is powerless, but it is to give us that very certainty that Jesus cries, "Come unto Me". We cannot get it in the catechism. We cannot get it through any doctrine of the work of Christ. We can only get it in His company, because the thing itself, the love which bears sin and which holds fast to man through it, is manifest in all its power and intensity in Him alone. And if here again we ask how it is that He imparts this certainty to those who come to Him - how He creates in sinful souls the assurance of a pardoning and restoring love in God which gives the victory over sin - we can only say again that the ways are too manifold and too wonderful to trace. Sometimes the assurance is born within us as we hear Him proclaim forgiveness to the paralytic or to that passionate penitent who wet His feet with tears. Sometimes it dawns upon us as we see Him receive sinners and eat with them. Is not that a very sacrament of pardon, that fellowship of the sinless one with the sinful, in which they are made to feel what their sin is, and yet are not driven away, but have access to the Holy One? Is not that, as it were, forgiveness incarnate, a pledge of it that no one can misunderstand? Sometimes again the certainty shines out for us from the gracious parables of

Jesus - from the story of the two debtors who had nothing to pay, but obtained a free discharge; or more movingly from the story of the prodigal son, whose father saw him a long way off, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. We know, as Jesus speaks, who that father is, or rather whom he stands for; the pardoning love which welcomes the penitent prodigal is that of the heavenly Father welcoming His lost children home. And there are still more wonderful things than these in the Gospels which bring the Divine love near to us in Jesus. With what solemn yet reviving power the words sometimes fall upon the heart, "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many!" To give His life a ransom for many: here we have something connected with sin, and not disproportioned to it - something deeper, more wonderful, more powerful than sin - something that when we see in it the key to the whole life of Jesus makes such a pardoning love as our sins require credible, real, present, overpowering. And as we read on in the story everything illumines and confirms it. Who can doubt that there is forgiveness with God when He hears Jesus say at the Supper, "This is My blood of the covenant, shed for many, unto remission of sins"? or when He sees Him, as He passes through the council hall, turn and look upon Peter? or as He listens to His last prayer for others, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"? or to His last promise to the dying thief, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise"? Above all, who can doubt it when He comes back from death, and, standing in the midst of the very men who had all forsaken Him and fled, says, "Peace be unto you"? No one can take in all this and be in doubt as to whether there is forgiveness with God. We know, if we have come to Jesus, that there is forgiveness - not forgiveness lightly won or lightly to be assumed, not forgiveness easily to be understood or explained; but forgiveness with all the reality and passion in it of His life and death, forgiveness as mysterious and profound as all that is most tragic in the experience of Jesus, forgiveness that has plumbed the depths of sin and is able to save to the uttermost. We may never be able to explain it to the full, or to fashion it into a clear and consistent doctrine - indeed we never shall be able; it is beyond all hope of telling wonderful. But we can have the clearest and surest experience of it, nevertheless, and that is better than any doctrine. Bring the burden of your bad conscience to Jesus. Open your heart to Him. Submit to His discipline. Keep in His company, listen to His words, learn what He is, come under the power of His life and death and resurrection, and He will give you that assurance and experience of a Divine forgiveness which will revive and recreate your soul.

4. Finally, the invitation of Jesus is addressed to those whose burden is of a less definite description - the burden of life itself with its apparently inevitable cares. Life is a conflict, and we have no choice but to face it; but how many there are who are wearied in it with responsibilities which are too heavy for them to bear. Men feel this even when they are successful: they are wearied with the greatness of their way. They feel it when they fail, and when greater effort is demanded of them while their strength is becoming less. Yet in both cases alike it may easily be that there is some false conception of life in the mind - some convention assumed to be authoritative - which in the presence of Jesus would lose its power. Many of our burdens are in this way of our own making. We measure life by an unreal standard. The things we are so keen about are not, after all, the things that matter. The victories and defeats that so elate or so depress us, and in any case so absorb and exhaust us, ought not to touch so deeply the spirit of man. Winners or losers in the conflict, we have all alike something to be ashamed of, and it comes home to us as the word of Jesus falls upon our ears, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and I will give you rest". Jesus knows the secret of life and teaches it. He gives rest by showing us what true life is, and

enabling us to enter into it by taking His yoke upon us. It does not consist in the abundance of the things which we possess, though to increase their possessions seems to be the most universal desire of living men. It does not consist in the distinctions we strive for - in the attainment of commercial or social or intellectual or political ambitions. To all these things Jesus was indifferent, yet He had the life which is life indeed. He had it through all the conflicts of earth, and through all its excitements; he had it through temptation, disappointment, suffering, poverty, death itself. That true life consists in the knowledge of God as Father, in the conviction of His fatherly love, in the consciousness that we are called to be His children, in the liberty of obedience to His will. All this Jesus can teach; He can initiate us into it by His word and life and spirit. He Himself is meek and lowly in heart, clean of earth's ambitions and its strifes; and as we enter into His school, putting on His yoke and learning of Him, His own peace comes to us, the peace of God which passes understanding, and keeps our thoughts and hearts in Him.

It is not possible to say on this text what should be said, or even what one would like to say. All our thoughts and words about it are far beneath its unspeakable grace and truth. Let us listen to it again, as from the lips of our Saviour, ere we close. "Come unto Me, 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."

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