

By the Author of THINKING BLACK

NOT LAWFUL TO UTTER

AND OTHER BIBLE READINGS

BY

DAN CRAWFORD, F.R.G.S.

¶ The result of twenty-three years of thought and loneliness in the long grass of Central Africa, by a man whose college was his Bible and his sole authority, God.

¶ His religious impulses are as original and direct as those of John the Baptist. He went into the wilderness to discover truth and found it.

¶ The prophetic gift of manly speaking, of interpreting God's angle of vision to the world, survives in such a man as Dan Crawford. This book is the proof.

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NOT LAWFUL TO UTTER

BOOK I
APOSTOLIC CHRISTIANITY
I
“NOT LAWFUL TO UTTER”

“What was Paul’s secret? Why is it they have been saying ‘Paul! Paul!’ all down the centuries? Why, indeed, if not that the Apostle of the Gentiles was a happy little man who always had a better time with God than he ever had with man.”

I

“NOT LAWFUL TO UTTER”

2 Cor. xiii. 4

NOTE well the modest manner of the phrase. Paul had apostleship, had unction, and had utterance. Nay, more; by night and by day, and sometimes all night and all day, he was God's pioneer witness on virgin soil. Indeed, the whole vision of Paul's life—right on to the premature old age, when he waves back to the East his last adieux from Rome—is that of sheer irrepressibility and spiritual freshness. This, we say, is the man whom God claims as His witness, the man who had that old snatch of desert song humming in his soul—

“*Spring up, O well!*”

That the well did spring up, and that too unto the everlasting life of many, is indeed a first-century certainty. There is no dryness here, though all around is arid desert. For God's river was

full, and of that fulness did he, Paul, receive; yea, inflowing grace for outflowing grace.

We say this man is a joy unto the household of God, because of his sheer irrepressibility and evergreenness. He has always a word of comfort and cheer, uttered often out of his deep infirmities and sore straits.

I

What, then, we would hasten to enquire, is the avowed source of all this spiritual outflow and Divine unction in every burning word of Paul's? Why, of course, the specific source of his power lies in the above word, which declares that the man has a secret. Paul can preach for hours and at all hours; can preach a Eutychus asleep, as he had preached a hundred such men awake for evermore. He has much to say, but also—note the word—much more that he cannot say.

His life's secret was in the "unspeakable words" that fed with endless supply all his other streaming messages. There were words "not lawful to utter," and yet how endless was the utterance they led to! Note it then, God's preacher, whose it is to be watered ere thou waterest others.

Called to publicity, to be a byword, to preach

in season and out of season, Paul hath yet his sacred retreat in life, where, in the covert of God’s pavilion, he doth hide himself. God hath had heavenly transaction with the man, hath whispered those “unspeakable words” into his ears, and for ever sealed His servant’s lips. Loud and long will that poor voice of his (“speech contemptible!”) be raised for God with the throat dry, yet the soul never. Nay, never dry is the preacher’s soul who has such secret “unspeakable words” to royally retire back upon.

Having fed others, here is ever ready for him the timely table of God’s good things, spread by God’s own hands. Why is it “not lawful” for others to feast hereat, ah, why indeed? Christ’s own answer is ready to hand. There is an old tryst, an old promise, in the words: “I will sup with him and he with Me!” We do not get “our message,” but we “sup” and get that which may never be uttered to soul of man. How often the divine Host is grieved to see us secreting for others at His banquet what He would we secreted in ourselves!

II

Here, then, in these sequestered back-paths of the soul, the costliest treasure of God’s preacher

is acquired. We mean that old mystery-word—unction. It is not utterance, nor fluency, nor eloquence; but the unutterable thing of the Christian life, when speech as a method of communication is dethroned and cast in the dust, albeit Christ shows His smiling face and “our hearts burn within us” by the way. God would thus reveal to us how inexorably He claims in our lives just such holy garden-land as He found in Paul’s; in which the Lord God would walk in the cool of the day, communing with us. Here, far from the ken of brother-saint or brother-man, He may behold something man’s eye never saw—“the Father, which seeth in secret.”

Oh, blasting publicity! Oh, soul-withering cleverness! Oh, itching ears of man! Ye are the Church’s Amalekites, her thorns in the side.

Thus, then, we learn a somewhat startling fact in Paul’s life. Glorious apostle though he was, *they never got his best, nor yet saw him at his best.* Paul kept the best for God, even as God had kept His best for Paul! Living by grace and preaching that grace he lived by, yet was he under law in one matter: “It is not lawful to utter” the secret of my God!

Now surely just here, amid deep mystery, there

are worlds of simplicity. Surely there are many so-called words that are really deeds. And even as a strong, far-reaching deed mounts up to the ears of God with a clear, ringing trumpet-voice, so in Paul's life those “unutterable words” were daily coming out in iron deeds—“not lawful to utter,” yet fanning the flame of life, and energising him to living action.

III

Then, beloved, if perchance some such “words” are ours, let us breathe them not to mortal man. Keep them as life's capital, life's foundation—treasure in the earthen vessel. Paul will not glory in Paul the preacher, nor yet in Paul the martyr, even; but ah, “of such a one will I glory,” saith he. Even of Paul the man with a secret, the nameless “man in Christ” of “fourteen years ago,” who heard “unutterable words.” Of such a one would he glory, of Paul the exalted chief of sinners; Paul the cleansed leper, who was charged, like the other leper of Galilee: “*See thou say nothing to any man.*”

Beholding the glory of God, not as in a glass, but in heaven's third heaven, Paul was changed: See then, Paul, that you say nothing of this to

any man, but go down life's way and divinely, diffidently *show thyself*.

So unlawful was it before all high heaven to speak of this secret transaction, that the human participant in it is in Paul's mouth, a third person, a vague old friend of fourteen years ago!

Note, we say, this quaint manner of his, in shutting up all possible bypaths that might lead to his keep, his fastness, the Lord's garden-land in his life. Herein, then, behold Paul the puzzle and Paul the power. He *was* better than all his preaching; for he had a better time with God than he ever had with man. He was a true star in God's firmament in the sanely scriptural sense. *Stars do not speak; they shine*; and yet, forsooth, what saith the Scripture? "There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard; their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."

Eloquence, indeed! What so eloquent as such silence—shining silence. "See thou say nothing to any man, but go thy way and show thyself." Offer the "living sacrifice" (Rom. xii. 1). "Of such a one will I glory."

II

“A HUNDREDFOLD . . . WITH PERSECUTIONS”

The First Century Saints used to gloriously greet each other: Cheer up, brother, the worst has yet to come!

* * *

“The more they afflicted them, the more they grew.”

* * *

“As the sufferings abound, so the consolations.”

II

“A HUNDREDFOLD . . . WITH PERSECUTIONS”

Mark x. 30

A FEEBLE age is the mother of feeble conceptions of truth. The royal words of the first century found in Gospel and Epistle, need a royal age to interpret them. Truly this record cometh down to us wearing a thorny crown! It is royalty in exile; kinghood in Adullam. And we, indeed, who have neither thorns, nor exile, nor Adullam, instead of frankly averring that we are too straitened to receive a Kingly One, we, forsooth, take Him into our mouths, but have no place for Him in our hearts.

Because “persecution” was in my Bible portion this morning, was it therefore in any hole or corner of my life? It was a hard, rugged path of olden time along which saints fled from city to city: am I in such a path? Ah, beloved, that very first century so much befondled by us—how may it not rise up in judgment against us? We borrow glowing imagery from it, but do *we* glow?

I

Let us now note well the immediate root of this wonderful promise as to receiving “a hundredfold . . . *with persecutions.*” For faith will have no emphasis other than on the seemingly incongruous word in the sentence. Now note this. *Riches* is the keynote of Christ’s theme and promise. The context of this text is that the rich young man had just gone away sorrowing, *for he had great possessions.* And now Peter’s breast swells with a holy pride—for he too was (O! yes) was rich. Fisherfolks, indeed, were his northern kinsmen; but what, after all, are the true riches of life, if not the old cottage and the dear, if humble, fireside, with those who gather there? “Lo, we have left ALL!” cries Peter—a contrast indeed to the rich young man’s all, whose riches were mere things, not beings. And Christ, who knew what heartburnings and wrenchings were included in Peter’s actual “all,” chideth him not on the poor old fishing-smack, or poor old anything else, but gladly gathers up every human diamond known to man the man, and not man the miser.

And these He sets in His own circlet of gold, a crown above all the crowns of earth. Diamonds,

indeed! Yes, saith the Lord, I know what even *true* earthly riches are. What so precious as a mother, Peter? A wife, sister, or brother, Peter? Yes, you (not that other one!) were “the rich young man,” Peter, and I, yes, I know all about it. It was for “*My* sake and the Gospel’s” you left all. Then, Peter, your debtor am I, saith Christ; and forthwith came the wondrous promise of “a hundredfold . . . *with persecutions.*”

II

Now let us see why this saving clause as to “persecutions” is wholly necessary to the very existence of the things promised. Note then—and here is the whole pivotal point—that this old Bible word “persecute,” whether in Old or New Testament, can best be Englished by the word “pursue.” And, truth to tell, words then had more intimate connection with deeds than now. For “pursue” surely is the word that best tells of those early days when cities were left under cover of night, and entered as often under cover of disguise. When the bishop rolled not under the city arches in a chariot, but was perforce to go over the wall in a basket! When, if through the gateway he must leave the town, it is to be

stoned through it, aye, and left for dead outside! Ah, beloved, we who tremble to spiritualise an Old Testament prophecy, behold how we spiritualise the Book of Acts! "*Words regarding DEEDS,*" is the heading we give this Book in Central Africa; suggestive, indeed, to us who abound in windy words.

Persecuted in one city, they fled to another; yes, fled for His sake and the Gospel's. And in each city that old promise gets fresher and fairer. Who is this sixteenth-of-Romans beaming matron greeting the weary one? Whose those sixteenth-of-Romans children who clamber to the knee? Who, indeed, if not those of the "*hundredfold with persecutions*"?

At this rate the promise has no existence but in the persecutions or pursuings. Satan stones them out, hoots them on, only to further God's work in the making good of that grand round number, "a hundredfold." The "brothers" and the "sisters" are all there, weary one, lining your path of pursuit, ahead. Yes, further yet, for the better "mothers" and the better "fields"—they are all there to succour you! "He shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children,

and lands, *with persecutions*, and in the world to come eternal life.” Ah, here Peter and his brethren get what the so-called rich young man lost! They get the “great possessions” *plus* the eternal life. God never was in any Peter’s debt yet. But His loyal loving law is: Move on! And if we will not move on, He in love must shove us on. It was only when the fixed-in-one-spot saints at Jerusalem proposed to dispense the Gospel elixir from headquarters only that God permitted the rod of persecution to scatter them. Then, we read (blessed *then!*), the disciples went everywhere preaching the Word.

Yes, and things got better in the precise proportion that things got worse. Even when they had chased Paul into prison, it was only that God went one better. Things get deeper and deeper, sweeter and sweeter. For they are not mere plebeian friends this time: “They of Cæsar’s household!” Yes, the man on the chain got *entrée* into “all the palace.” “I would ye should understand,” quoth Paul, “that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel.”

III

“He shall receive now in this time . . . and *in the world to come.*” This mention of the “world to come” shows that the enemy’s chase continues right on to the frontier! All along the line of the pursuit, devils’ hue-and-cry notwithstanding, the saint has been the gainer, here finding a fresh mother, and there a whole Bethany of sisters and brothers. Rufus may have a mother, yes, but Paul says she is “his mother and mine.” One of Paul’s twenty thousand mothers! Is not this indeed the whole purport of Rom. xvi., yea, this the precise divine reason for *the long list of friends recorded there?* And this, to show how wisely and how well Christ has KEPT that old “hundredfold” promise to His own.

And now, “in this time” is about to end, and with it the pursuit of the saint. The frontier, glad frontier, is reached, and all beyond that is Christ’s jurisdiction. He tells of “them that kill the body, and after that have *no more that they can do.*” How definite the boundary line. How useless their menace.

Now, even the word “hundredfold” pales; and as the soul leaps forth over the border-line, how many fathers and brothers, mothers and sisters, to

give a welcome! Ah, and THE Father and THE Brother too—how sure their welcome! Now, the note is not one of leaving all, but of finding all for His sake and His Gospel’s.

O Peter, what wealth so precious as a poor man’s! What money so dear as the last two mites! The Lord knew what a wrench it had been to leave all. He knew that, daily in the old lake-side home, the hope was growing that Peter would be back again. So He goes over the “all.” The “house” left is the old home, and against that our Lord now puts the “many mansions.” The brethren, sister, father, mother, and children—all these He includes in that hundredfold. How well did Christ understand the poor man’s cause! *To Christ, heaven’s wealth was the Father, not the glories of eternity.* And so, instead of despising the ties and longings of “in this time,” He makes earth border on heaven, granting both earthly friends and fields, and an eternity with Himself!

Ay, but whose is it all, O self-satisfied Saints? “There is no man that hath left . . . for My sake and the Gospel’s, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time . . .” Shall we not seek such enrichment from our Lord?

III

THE PARABLE OF THE STORM

*It is not the water outside the ship that sinks it.
It is the water inside.*

SECKER.

* * *

And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the winds should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree . . . till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

JOHN.

* * *

*Christ said, "Let us go to the other side"—
Not to the middle of the lake to be drowned!*

III

THE PARABLE OF THE STORM

Mark iv. 35-41

It had been to the Lord a long day of parables by the lake-side. Like all His days amongst men this one was a long-drawn-out parable of love to the end, and the nearer the close of the day the deeper the mystery.

Our Lord's parables were ever twofold—parables of *word* and parables of *deed*. And His parables of word were ever backed by His lovely parables of deed—the miracles of the Gospels.

If there is "a great multitude" it is a deed-parable that has drawn them together. "Hearing" they did hear, but did not understand the word-parable; yet was Christ thronged because of His royal deeds.

Meanwhile, and in sharp contrast, behold a little inner circle of disciples. Of God, Christ is made unto them wisdom, and they claim life's best claim—to be "alone" with Him. Their privilege is

that Christ the Preacher will be made unto them Christ the Interpreter. And He, O! He loves them for it; loves them because they have found their need of Him, which is indeed the whole purport of His parables. "Without a parable spake He not unto them"—the multitude—and why? The same verse gives the answer—"When they were alone He expounded all things to His disciples." Let us ponder this deed-parable.

FIRST REFLECTION. And the same day—a day of word-parables—"when the even was come," the Lord must crown the word with the deed. The scholars have had a long day of theory, and now for practice. The Lord is going to test how much they have learned. And His test, like all His tests, is near to hand. For, lo! here is "THE ship" as it has lain the whole day. From that little ship the "doctrine" of Christ has streamed forth on the multitude the long, happy day, and now at even the Lord invites His disciples into the ship, and they are going to voyage under His captaincy across to the other side.

(Ah, how typical it all is—this voyaging vessel, with the Lord aboard, going over to the despised swine-herding Gardarenes. "Let us go"—Me and you together—"over to the other side.")

How this seems to be echoed by "Go ye . . . and lo! I am with you.")

And their Lord, who is ever girded for service, even at the midnight hour, needs no preliminary delays, nor can he brook them. "They took Him *even as He was* in the ship," we read, which surely seems to prove that He had not left it the long day. Such indeed is the eternal basis of all fellowship with Him. He had taken *them* as they were, and "they took *Him*, even as He was." How auspicious a start on the overseas voyage, and how goodly the crew indeed.

SECOND REFLECTION. Ah, but heard ye not that there is sorrow on the sea; that it cannot be quiet? God's "way is in the sea" and His "path in the great waters." For if man goes down to the sea in ships, and does business in the great waters, so does God too. And God's business has to do with man's. His business down there is as Promise-Maker to be Promise-Keeper and when they pass through the waters He will be with them.

And now the storm is brewing, and while yet it breaks not, let us with pathos survey the scene.

There is THE ship chartered and piloted by Omnipotence, and bound for the desired haven.

There are "the other little ships" not bidden to go, and therefore not bound to arrive at "the other side." Ah, hapless little ships with no Christ aboard. And, of course, their pilots are not sleeping—oh, no. Watch it out.

And now the storm breaks—God's stormy wind fulfilling His word, and happy alone is he who is out doing God's business in the great waters. *For God's storm can only help God's business.* Yea, is not this very shriek of wind and roar of wave claimed by Psalm xxix. as Jehovah's own voice? 'Tis the voice of Jehovah that is upon the waters; yea, the God of glory thundereth. He hath called Faith forth on this voyage, in order that Faith may learn that He still speaks in the throat of the whirlwind. To those "in the other little ships"—the onlookers of life—it is as of old, only God thundering. To the son in the secret of the Father comes the voice, and that of cheer.

THIRD REFLECTION. Yet look, for angels are weeping. What angels? What, indeed, if not the four angels standing on the four corners of the earth holding the four winds of the earth? Oh, yes, the wintry winds may blow but only after the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads. Talk about Marine Insurance? Was there ever

such a bound-to-arrive crew as this voyaging band who have been sealed with "the seal of the living God?" Did not the Christ say to them, "Let us go to the other side"—*not to the middle of the lake to be drowned!* And is not the pledged promise of Christ both seal enough and surety enough? "In for a penny, in for a pound," and Christ's fate is their fate. His assured arrival is theirs. Therefore, I repeat it, angels are weeping at this hubbub among the Apostles. They who seemed "all of one"—He their Lord and they His disciples—how far apart they have drifted. They have fallen from grace. And yet Grace is at their side. A near Christ and a far-off Christian—what sorrow like that sorrow. But Christ's best teaching is in His best doing; and Faith's doing consists in its *not* doing. For lo, He sleepeth. Ah, the wonder of it—sleeping pillowed sleep. And if Christ's dear Cross is the Christian's, then, too, should His soft pillow be theirs. Else there is mutiny on God's high seas. It is enough for the crew that they be as the Captain; and He had no pillow that they had not. "Let us go to the other side"—this was pillow indeed for each and all. For to Faith this trumpeting of the hurricane is God's glori-

ous orchestra. Therein He doth set to music the words of the prosaic lake-side proposal, "Let us go to the other side."

Yes, this is Faith's portion—to seize upon the music of the whirlwind, in a sinking, water-logged boat, with a sleeping Christ; and to hear the one voice of certitude as to safety! Faith has to learn the logic of the Holy Ghost, which says "He sleeps," *therefore all is well*. To sum it all up; this is the lesson they have been set to learn—All ill is well; all bad is good; and the very worst is the very best!

This is God's ideal of faith at its best. The actual state of things of course was, as we know, unbelief at its worst. Yes, they *awoke Him*;—awoke Him from sleep, sleep (can you dare the thought?) which they too might have been enjoying. What unbelief thinks, even that it says; and this is why what is really dishonest doubt passes nowadays as "honest doubt."

Yes, "He is *a bad Captain*"; that, and not less than that, has been lurking in their hearts. The lake storm is the lesser, and the black storm in their hearts is the greater. A little more, as in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and they who mutiny against the Captain will crucify Him "afresh";

which means that they did it before. And this mutiny-murder of theirs was far keener to God's heart than that former one. *Then* it was the out-cast Man, with visage marred with sorrows, whom they crucified. *Now*, in Hebrews, He is the glorified Christ seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high, and whom God did glorify they do crucify. God is ever the scourger of every son whom He receiveth, and they, the scourged ones, *strike back at Him.*

But Mark iv. is not Hebrews vi., thank God. For we *can* say of our brethren of Mark iv. (that is of the twelve, except one) that we are persuaded better things of them. Of the sleeping Christ too, we are doubly persuaded that He will not try them above that which they are able.

FINAL REFLECTION. At last they call Him who had been longing for their call. Earlier call would have seen earlier calm. Yet call early, or call late, "He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still."

Yea, and what a call! A challenge, not a request; a protest, not a prayer; a thorough contradiction, in fact, with its "Master!" and its "Carest Thou not?" Yet they call; call upon Him in their day of trouble, and He, O! He an-

swers with God-like alacrity, and that abundantly. For they are His, and He is Himself. And their prayer is not mere words, oh, no!

Prayer is *calling*—"deep calling unto deep." Prayer tells of need, that is to say; and the measure of the prompting need determines the measure of the answer.

Therefore cometh the great calm, for their's had been the great storm. But it is HIMSELF that engrosses them now—"What manner of Man is this?" Not, "What manner of men are we?"

Not a word now even as to what manner of storm it had been. Great storm and great calm are lost in the great Lord of both. Truly the Lord indeed had been sitting over this "*flood*" (P. xxix.).

The lake is calm, but not their hearts! "They feared exceedingly." "Great," in fact, is the adjective qualifying the whole voyage, for great is the Lord with whom they have to do. The storm that estranged them—see now how it brings them nearer! He sees their "little faith," and strengthens it; and they learn more what manner of Lord He is, and adore Him.

Blest storm! Blest voyage! May such a benediction of peace rest upon all God's lonely ones

THE PARABLE OF THE STORM 29

far out on the high seas, battling “ ’gainst storm
and wind and tide.”

*“Star of Peace! when winds are mocking
All his toils, he flies to Thee:
Save him, on the billows rocking,
Far, far at sea!”*

IV

“THINK IT NOT STRANGE”

“There is no high hill but beside some deep valley.

* * *

There is no birth without a pang.

* * *

“ The Evening and the morning were the first day” and only in such solemn sequence can you have even one divine day. The Devil’s programme is to open his day with a morning and end it with an Evening—yes, an evening that never sees a sunrise.’

IV

“THINK IT NOT STRANGE”

I Pet. iv. 12

THE persistent news of fever-deaths in Africa and the noble martyrdoms in China are surely loud calls to the whole Church to arise and carry Christ's cross. To all who wonder desolately why the missionary ranks are so broken, the unerring answer of love is found in the reproofing words, “Think it not strange.” True, it is only human to groan in dejection; but God has ever an inspiring side to a depressing reality. The earthly moan, “Why this waste?” is countered by God's own reproof, “Think it not strange.”

I

And note, please, firstly, how the whole pungency of this reproof lies in the blessed fact that it is Peter who is the writer. He preaches what he is going to practise. For this Peter it is who is doomed to die. All his life this dear man carries the cross, and finally on a cross must he yield up

his life to God as an offering of a sweet smell. Yet is there no resenting of death with asperity on his part. On the glorious contrary, he alone it is—this doomed-to-die Peter—who writes of ours being “a living hope” or *hope of life*. In these throbbing words we see not merely life but life more abundant. Thus it is he invites us, as it were, into his most sacred confidence in the solemn concern of his own approaching decease. He urges that his cross is really a crown. He says, We are begotten unto a hope of life, and I, Peter, hereby certify that it is not death to die. Jesus Christ hath abolished death for Peter, and much more than that, He hath brought life and immortality to light, therefore ours can only be a living hope. No wonder Peter disowns the very word “death.” The outsiders, of course, assert that Peter died. Peter himself, while yet in the body, says, “I must put off this my tabernacle.”

And so, too, with these reprovings words: “Think it not strange.” Here, again, as in the phrase, a living hope, a personal incident in Peter’s history is wholly elucidatory of his point. For the same Peter who once committed that fatal folly with the sword now calls upon them, not to *arm* with a sword but with a *mind*. Do not *arm*

yourselves, as I, Peter, once did, with a sword, but arm yourselves with Christ's mind to suffer. Surely, the point is that suffering is such an admittedly repellent thought to the natural mind, that only the armour of a spiritual mind on the subject of suffering can combat it. Besides, the flesh wars against the Spirit, hence Peter's shrill battle-call—ARM! And now a very natural thing happens. Having so armed his readers with this *mind-armour*, Peter at once calls upon them to use it. “*Think it not strange,*” says he, “concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.” What is the use of *mind-armour* if we *think* suffering strange? The very same thing this (and by the same Peter) as when he warns Christian women to be so adorned in mind that, as a consequence, they may not be “afraid with any amazement.” The point, then, is clear. All this being forewarned of coming fiery trial is merely that, literally, we might be forearmed.

II

But harder things are on the tip of Peter's pen, for the Apostle may surely preach what he is going to practise. These hard things are such a

blow to the flesh that only this protective mind-armour keeps us from reeling under it. God is still the God of mercy who "remembers that we are dust." Hence, knowing as He does how staggering is the solemn word He is about to utter, God in very mercy calls upon us to arm before He delivers the blow. That piercing thrust from the "Sword of the Lord" is the momentous declaration that the very "righteous shall scarcely be saved"! Yes, the righteous, green trees though they be. And if God so deal with His own green trees, what of the dry? (Luke xxiii. 31). It is a fiery trial, and only *the green trees will get through it*.

Here, then, we see God weaving our "web of time" with mercy and with judgment. The mercy is seen in God's own concession that to our frail and human thought it is nothing less than startling to be told that judgment must begin at the house of God! A tender and Divine concession to the solemn fact that we are dust. A holy admission on God's part, let us call it, that if He did not first *arm* us, He would *harm* us. But we have been forewarned and, therefore, forearmed. The armour is the "mind of Christ," and therefore it is positive as well as negative. Not merely do we

not think it strange, but we positively (do we!) “glory in tribulation.” There is the rub.

This inner glimpse, then, into the deep recesses of Peter’s heart is worth more than gold to us. We see the power of Christ’s resurrection energising his soul with the joy of the life eternal. His words are not the sad, gloomy forebodings of a hopeless soul. He strikes the same note as “beloved brother Paul” in his last farewell to the Church of God. Paul, too, declares that the hour of his departure is at hand. It is Paul in the chain who shouts that “our Saviour Jesus Christ hath abolished death!” These words would thrill us at any point of Paul’s noble life; how much more thrilling are they *on the eve of his execution!* “I am now ready to be offered,” but, death of ignominy notwithstanding, it is not death to die.

III

The mighty martyrs of our God knew Christ’s cross too well to think their carrying of the cross to be strange. *The* “strange act” of God was when He rose up in wrath against “His own Son” for our redemption. And with the dying Peter and the dying Paul the vision of love at the Cross hushed every human murmur. The strange thing

was that the Son of God so suffered. And now all that remains for us is to be partakers of His sufferings. Not merely to “think it not strange concerning the fiery trial,” but to positively rejoice inasmuch as we are partakers of it.

“Think it not strange”—for the servant is certainly not above his Lord. “Think it not strange”—for the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. All the records of first-century Christianity have reached us soaked in blood and tears. Down the corridors of time come wafted the Roman shrieks, “The Christians to the lions!” If we think it strange, then admittedly we have forgotten to arm. Peter could say all this, for he was going to die upon this very truth. But he also claims for his readers a full cup to drink. In chapter v. 10 they are declared to be “in Christ.” Now, one great point of our being members of the Body of Christ is declared to be that if one member suffer all the members suffer with it. Hence the Divine order is:

- (1) Partakers of Christ (Heb. iii. 14);
- (2) Partakers of Christ’s sufferings (1 Pet. iv. 13);
- (3) Partakers of the Glory (1 Pet. v. 1).

Thus, we are seen to be “in Christ,” God’s

green tree, both for fruit and fire, and if God so deal with the green tree, what of the dry?

Here, then, sounds the old call to close up the broken mission ranks of heathendom. Soul after soul in Central Africa has witnessed in conversion that the very thought of the loved missionaries dying for their race and land has melted them to repentance.

V

“REMEMBER . . . THOU ART FALLEN”

Christ sometimes used the faithful formula: "Verily, I say unto you." Sometimes He doubled the definiteness by saying, "Verily, VERILY, I say unto you." Even so He sent only one Epistle to the Romans but two Epistles (two "Verilys!") went to the Ephesians.

* * *

We speak about the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians and the First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians. But how little we hear of the First and Second Epistles to THE EPHESIANS?

* * *

The first Epistle to the Ephesians says they were seated in the heavenlies. The second Epistle to the Ephesians says they are fallen from those heights.

V

“REMEMBER . . . THOU ART FALLEN”

Rev. ii. 5

It is a church that is addressed, note well. Not “ye” the church, but “thou.” For there is no unity like church unity, and no fall like a church fall. And what a fall for Ephesus!

I

More than twenty years previously Paul’s letter to them had come to their doors; and four years before that the elders of Ephesus had all wept him off at Miletum, falling on his neck and ardently kissing him. And well indeed they might weep, for this was the man who had given his days and nights and his tears to Ephesus. “I ceased not by the space of three years to warn everyone night and day with tears.”

In that Roman emporium of Asia, with its theatre and temple, pro-consul and town-clerk, Paul had cast the Lord’s net and drawn “of every

kind," doubtless from both temple and theatre. For three glad years had this gone on, the burning message flowing from him and the tears streaming down. He kept no tears for his own misfortunes, for he had no ills in life. His tears were for their woes. And tears begat tears, for lo! they weep as they see him off, adding kiss to kiss.

Yet here was no merely soft-hearted preacher leaving them. Paul's eye was a falcon, jealous eye for their souls' needs. There is no pastor like an evangelist, and no teacher like him who is both. And here Paul, like his Lord, realises how solemn a thing a "good-bye" can be. Not the mere receding of bodies, one from the other, in the increasing haze. But the solemnity is in the farewell words—the good-bye gift of the treasure of our God in hallowed, tender farewell. The next time these are all going to meet—oh, how solemn the thought for all!—is at the judgment-seat of Christ. Therefore came the word, so needed then, and still more needed now, "Take heed to yourselves."

Paul joyed that they, as "light in the Lord," would be for God by night and day when he was far away. But just here Paul the evangelist is

lost in Paul the pastor. Nay, not of the needs of Ephesus is he thinking now, but of *theirs*. These ex-votaries of Diana, will their zeal outstrip their love? Good preachers, will they be good lovers? Time will reveal this; but at least they hang on his words, and particularly on these concerning the advent of apostatisers. Let them come, said they of Ephesus; they will find us clinging to the truth of God. Indeed, who so leal as they, when others were drifting away? And now tragedy!

The first of the seven Epistles, in Rev. ii., shows them to us nearly thirty years after, with a solemn look of stern zeal on their faces. They who had borne and laboured so patiently for Christ's sake, they could not bear them that were evil. Forewarned by Paul, they are forearmed, and Paul, who had left his mark in every Ephesian home (“from house to house”) could not be supplanted.

But God will have the best; and Love enthroned in the glory must beget love, or it will have loved in vain. Alas! the burden and heat of the day has dried the fountain of their tears; they are like “a bottle in the smoke”: no tears in them now, though the smoke brings tears to the Lord's eyes as He beholds them dry and sere.

II

They are “fallen” in Love’s eyes; yes, they, the orthodox, who held fast the form of sound words, and sent back a counterblast to every blast from the Temple of Diana and the theatre—they are fallen from the heights of Love! Love is jealous, and sorrows that they know not her power in the highest. Love looks on it all with a sad heart—all their clear-cut routine and visions of statistics!

Zeal’s eyes kindle as she counts her heads and looks up expectantly for Love’s “Well done!” But nay: Love has only the old-time answer for Zeal. “Even the devils,” said Zeal once exultingly, “are subject to us.” “Nay,” said Love, “therein rejoice not, but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven.”

“And now, brethren,” said Paul, “I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, that is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified.” Thus was the apostle’s good-bye then, and thus also the teaching of his Epistle four years after. If they fall, what a fall, for in that Epistle are “heights” indeed! They are “in Christ”—and where is He?

“Far above all heavens!” said Paul in his good-bye. The word of God “is able . . . to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified.” Here we behold them as those who are raised with Christ in the heavenlies, in whom they have obtained an inheritance. Here too they are sanctified. Here there is not a maybe about being “built up,” for they “are built upon the Foundation.”

Ah! Love is writing all this about the heights of their calling, for Love trembles at the possible depths of their fall. Love writes: “Remember . . . that . . . ye were without Christ . . . but now are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” It is the sad-eyed Love that pens the words, “Remember . . . thou art fallen!”

Yes, Love points out the weak spot, the vulnerable entrance for the enemy. This above all things exercised Paul on their behalf. It brought him literally to his knees: and he who had four years ago on the sea-shore “kneeled down” and prayed with them, is still in his Epistle, not once, but often kneeling for them. “For this cause I bow my knees . . . that ye may . . . know the love of Christ.” Having revealed to them how

high God had placed them, Paul prays that He may keep them nigh and high; and he sees in Love the only power to do this.

Love had raised them, and only their realisation of what Love had done would make them in their lives "raised" men and women. "Good works" must not be first, but the burning fire of faith that God—before the world began—had resolved that they should be His workmanship, even His (emphatic pronoun). And in true sequence the "workmanship" of Love produced "the works" of love. They were to be rooted in Love, for they were "trees of the Lord's planting." They must be grounded in it, for other foundation can no man lay. They were to know its height, to which they were raised, by remembering the depth from which Love had brought them up in the time past of their life. Love's breadth, too, they were to know, by the wide-open, encircling arms; and its length in seeking them when "afar off," stranger and aliens. Yes, that they might know all this—such was Paul's prayer.

III

And now more than twenty years have come and gone, and we reach, not the 1st Epistle of

Height, but the 2nd Epistle of Depth. Paul says they are risen; John says they are fallen.

Alas, and they think far otherwise. To fall and not to know it—what falling like that. To labour and yet after long years to do nothing, really nothing in Love’s eyes—what slavery like that! And who so lovingly records a cup of cold water as Love? Yes, this splendidly orthodox church has every chance in Love’s hand, but Love knows her not.

Oh, yes, it might be said, there is love in Ephesus, and probably plenty of it, too. But it is love in word, and not in deed. It is that which says, “We work, therefore we love; we speak with angel’s tongues, therefore we have love.”

“Now,” saith the Lord of love, with the jealous eyes like a flame of fire, “I have one long debit against you that consumes all your credit.”

Poor insolvent Ephesus! All the coin of her spiritual commerce is revealed to be spurious. It never saw the mint of Love: Love sees not its own image thereon.

The Lord perforce recalls them to the first love, that would produce the first works. The Love that raised them to the heights, is following them to the depths. They are fallen, but Love will raise

them. But twenty long years of labour must go overboard. The test of breaking with the past will be in saying, not, "Reward me for those twenty years," but, "Lord, I thank Thee Thou hast forgotten them!"

It is not "Thou art fallen," but "Remember from whence thou art fallen." What a difference this makes! Ephesus is not asked to look down, for she is down. "Remember from whence," is the Lord's word for "Look up!" And no wonder, for they are going UP, oh, so soon!

VI

PAUL NOT ASHAMED—AND WHY

God has millions of worlds that rush to do His bidding but only now and then can He find a man He can trust.

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After the battle of Marengo Napoleon struck a medal for his soldiers. On one side he put the name of the battle; on the other he inscribed the three proud words: I WAS THERE.

VI

PAUL NOT ASHAMED—AND WHY

Rom. i. 16

THE fact of Paul twice declaring that he is not ashamed of his message, at once reminds us that he is writing to the capital of the whole world. But provincial Paul is a citizen of heaven, and hence all his shame has been rolled away at the cross. A citizen of glory, this Paul can literally look down upon the metropolis of the Cæsars. Right well he knew that those Romans of the capital thought themselves the cream of earth's sons. Hence, doubtless, that black yet faithful third chapter of Romans. With what withering plainness does Paul expose all their boasted precedence in that famous photograph of the common corrupting fall!

I

But again. Paul is not ashamed of his Gospel, because looking down upon it all is God's "blessed and only Potentate," into whose kingdom he has been translated. And all this in the dialect of

Holy Scripture means that, of course, Paul is above it all too! So dear, indeed, was this truth to Paul's heart, and so vital to his joy, that he was forced even to remind his beloved brethren at Jerusalem of it, in almost blunt terms. There, in the "City of the Great King," his dear kinsmen in God were deeply entrenched behind the dignity of a solemn antiquity. Hence, doubtless, Paul's disclaimer in Galatians. With a godly concern for his heavenly citizenship, he declares that "he *went not up* to Jerusalem to those that were apostles before him." Nor have we long to wait for his inner reason for this seemingly austere action. Further on we read: "I *went not up* to Jerusalem," because "the Jerusalem which is ABOVE is the mother of us ALL." The higher we ascend, the broader our outlook, and Paul had a missionary gospel for ALL, because he went high enough. His headquarters were Heaven, not Jerusalem. To Paul, Foreign Missions are a mere matter of altitude. If we live little parish-pump lives then our skyline is contracted. But if on the contrary we are seated with Christ in the Heavens then looking down from His viewpoint *the whole earth* as a lost unit is in full and fair view.

Thus it is we need, in reading Romans, to keep ever before us the "envelope address": "To the *Romans*." For, strange as it may seem, we have only to appeal to the ordinary schoolboy for the dark, latent meaning lying behind Paul's boast: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God *unto salvation*." This mention of the "power of God" is surely in contrast with the brutal Roman power. As an echo from the schoolroom, do we not recall the bloody fact that of all the names in the *Commentaries of Cæsar* not three of them died in their beds! Power, yes, your Roman had plenty of it: but it was unto destruction, not unto salvation. Hence this sanguine Paul, advancing as he is upon Rome, the world's vast charnel-house, he, O! he is not ashamed of the power *unto salvation*. A recent independent witness more than endorses all this. Summing up in three lines the record of these Cæsars, he says: "The bloody catalogue is so complete, so nearly comprises all whose names are mentioned (in the *Commentaries*), that it strikes the reader with almost comic horror!" And thus it is, surely, that we find Paul telling the Romans that "the wages of sin is *death*." In that one unerring line, behold, the Divine reason

of their blood-red history! But the very blackness of the metropolitan background only added to the Pauline incentive (how like God!) to paint the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God in fresh, unfading colours. "I, oh, I am not *ashamed* of the power unto salvation." Surely the Divine innuendo here is that these Romans might well enough be *ashamed* of their charnel-house power that made a desert and called it peace.

II

Our immediate concern, however, is with Paul's declaration that he is not ashamed of the Gospel of God even in the roaring capital of the Cæsars. Leading up to this declaration of his, we pass phrase after phrase all embodying the apostolic longing to reach Rome, the real centre of the world. For every road led to Rome. It was the strategic point to reach all comers. You will notice, too, one phrase in particular that reveals the utter abandonment of the man to this deep desire: Now, he says, **IF BY ANY MEANS** I may come to you. Note, we repeat, the utter and holy audacity of the man: It is not to Rome, the great London of the Empire, he wants to go. It is not provincial Paul wanting to see the sights of that

Babylon; oh, no. But it is, indeed, a man enamoured of Christ's last command: "uttermost parts of the earth"; a true missionary who sees that by reaching the world's centre he is therefore in true equidistance to the whole circumference. Paul was only following God's lead. That Gospel entrusted to the apostle in stewardship revealed a God equally enamoured of all the lost sons of men. Nay, the more remote the lost soul the more desirable to Love. Only "everlasting Love" could declare that the last shall be first. And thus we see here in Paul's longing Romewards—Rome the centre of the world's circumference!—a pictorial representation of the Love that so loved the world! A Roman Cæsar alone it was who could command that *the whole world* should be enrolled. Hence Paul's resolve to reach the metropolis.

Watch the holy abandonment of the phrase, "*If by any means.*" Paul signing a blank cheque! Paul offering to go to Rome either as steerage passenger or cabin. Paul with no personal "axe to grind," but content to endure all things for "the elect's sake."

Did he mean it, this Paul, and this "by any means"? Yes, he meant it so deeply that God

took him at his word. God sent him steerage passenger in a chain! No! God did not take advantage of Paul's warm-heartedness so manifest in the very openness of his offer. But God saw that the Cross would best be illustrated by a chain. A test this for the Paul who said, "I am not ashamed." Will the chain cause a blush? will the chain shut his mouth? Far otherwise. "The offence of the Cross" was Paul's glory; "boast" is the word he uses again and again to show that the chain of iron is a chain of gold.

III

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel." How often the sentence is torn from its context; how often people miss the point that the apostle only reaches it in Rom. i. after elaborately explaining that he longs to have a prosperous journey *to come unto them*. Precisely as our Lord Jesus Christ has written unto us a whole New Testament pending His coming again, so, too, Paul could say, as the Christ in essence says concerning the whole New Testament: "These things I write unto you, hoping to come quickly."

In Africa, the land of the bondslave, what is the

simple and luminous meaning of the word "slave"? Why, obviously, "a person who has no power over his own body." And surely this is Paul's point in leading off with his first, "Paul, a bond-slave of Jesus Christ." Paul, the man who has no power over his own body. And is not this Paul's point when he further on urges other people concerning their bodies? "I, Paul, a man who has no power over his own body—Paul, bond-servant of Christ—I beseech you present your bodies a living sacrifice." Let us never forget it, then, when we quote the phrase so glibly. Paul's proof that he was not ashamed of the Gospel was ever at hand in his readiness ("I am ready") to go to the earth's ends with God's Gospel.

How often do we hear nowadays of men who shout Paul! Paul! yet do not the things that Paul did. The writer has just glanced anxiously at the indexes of eight annual volumes of a paper wholly given up to the study of Paul's Gospel. Like a slap in the face came the discovery that *not once* in all these volumes have you a clear shout for the Gospel to be preached to the uttermost parts of the earth. Yet Paul's "mystery" is nothing if it is not to "let all men know" it. Paul's Gospel

was by “the commandment of the everlasting God made known *to all nations*”! By all means let us say Paul! Paul! but let us be followers of him, even as also he was of Christ.

VII

A ROYALLY REVISED VERSE

“There are two ways of looking at the coming of the Lord. If I be in the constant spirit of worship within the veil, according to Hebrews, I shall see the future as does Christ. Over 1800 years ago He said, ‘I come quickly.’ And whereas, in point of desire, I put nothing whatever between that object and my soul, because Christ puts nothing; yet, on the other hand, if you ask whether the fervency of my love to the Lord and the brightness of that hope are diminished, because I see that He must take time to make that coming worthy of Himself, I say, No: He waits patiently, and so do I.”

R. C. CHAPMAN.

VII

A ROYALLY REVISED VERSE

“The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ.”—2 Thess. iii. 5 (R.V.)

REMEMBERING as we do how life's joy and incentive is pivoted on the love of God, it can conceivably be never amiss to send out the old call, “Behold, what manner of love!” But herein is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us with a love that would not let us go. His love to us, not our love to Him is the theme.

Therefore the immediate concern of these lines is to claim (and reclaim!) for the love of God a long-lost proof-text. Where the R. V. has revised let us revise too. For God's love in the immutable fact of life: not our love to God, but His passion for us. And to turn our backs upon the objective Ocean of Love to be engrossed with the subjective drop in our cold hearts, is surely to jeopardise joy.

Yet even thus has Paul's charge to the Thesalonians been distorted. We believe memory is

not a fault in suggesting that following the erroneous A. V. this Pauline phrase has been persistently pressed as urging a deeper subjective realisation of the love of God, and charging them to be more warm of heart and more aflame with love. That such a meaning is quite foreign to the context can be proudly proved for the loyal love of these Thessalonians is not at all in question. Not their love to God is the theme, but God's love to them: "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God." For the entering of their hearts into God's love is not at all the same sweet thing as the love of God entering into their hearts. His objective love is an ocean, and our subjective capacity is a drop: And Paul's call, we shall see, is to look off to the boundless and soundless ocean. Not to look in at the dreary drop!

I

This is how we prove the point.

That the context reveals hearts of love at Thessalonica is easily evident, for they were commended for their "labour of love." Had not Timothy been a witness of it all? Finding Paul in Athens, had he not delivered to the Apostle the "glad tidings" of their love? Why then

suggest carnal coldness of heart? Surely Paul's call is both old and bold, I mean, the Matthew xxviii. missionary call to look off to God's love in its ocean aspect. Quoth happy little Paul, "God so loved *the world*, and not Thessalonica only!" The Lord direct your parochial hearts into that ocean of His where "me" is merged in "all." To say "God loves me," is to testify that you are a trophy of grace; but the saint never lived who did not reach this ME through the gateway of God's *whosoever*. And what a graceless love that forgets the door by which it entered the house.

Now just here, probably, we strike the whole tender point in Paul's desire for these *loving* but too localised Thessalonians. Their very love to Christ and longing desire for His return had the momentary effect of causing them to forget the vast salvation-for-all scope of God's love. In their longing love they wanted Him, oh, so quickly to come. Theirs had been sorrow upon sorrow and who could wipe away tears like Himself? Hence in their very love to Him they had momentarily forgotten the *world-wide* extent of the hole of that pit from whence they had been dug. Therefore it is Paul—Paul the itinerant mission-

ary—sends in on them this rousing reminding call. He, Paul, is out in the dark night of Asia Minor, and *they* (watch this!) are residents of *a well evangelised town*. This we see from 2 Thess. iii. 1: “Brethren pray for us that the word of the Lord may have free course, with me” (out here in the darkness!) “EVEN AS IT IS WITH YOU.” The Lord direct your hungry-for-His-return hearts into the vast love of God, for God so loved the world and not paltry Thessalonica only. Just think a moment, says Paul: and think, oh! yes, think tremendously the human heart *will* in this holy particular. Think it out, heart of mine, silently and soberly to the one inexorable conclusion. If these *loving* saints of the first century had had their wish, then truly the church, which is Christ’s body, would have been a small enough thing! The vast fields of Gentiledom were as yet all unsown with gospel seed, let alone unreaped. Where was Europe then? And there stood the men of Thessalonica gazing up into heaven, forgetful for the moment of the departing Christ’s command: “Ye shall be witnesses unto Me. . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth!” The Lord direct your loving hearts *into* the love of God, who so loved the wide, weary World as a lost

unit. Every hour the craving cry rang up to High Heaven from trusting-but-trying Thessalonica, “*Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!*” And as an eager echo down came the challenging command of Christ: “*Go, my church, go ye into all the world!*” Yes, *He* will come after the Church goes.

Watch well that word “into.” The idea surely seems to be the scope and breadth of God’s love. For this is the preposition used in Acts to picture the ship’s gig being let down *into* the sea. This, too, the word that shows us the wheat thrown *into* the stormy wave. And so, too, with their loving hearts. The Lord direct your hearts *into* the ocean of love, for ye are not straitened in God but in yourselves. Surely there is a very grave yet gracious hint in all this. They wanted to be with Him where He was in the glory, forgetful of the fact that Christ had pledged His presence *with them* even unto the end of the age. How then could they be with Christ in Heaven *before* the end of the age if Christ had surely said He would be with them even unto *the end* of the age!

Or put it this way. Did not our living loving Lord anticipate this tedious tendency of the human

heart in his last great prayer? For almost in the same breath when he said, *Father, I will that they also . . . be with Me where I am*” did He not wisely say, “*I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world.*”

II

The best test of the truth of this exegesis, however, will be found in remembering that Paul’s is really a twin-charge to the Thessalonians. “The Lord direct your hearts (1) *into the love of God and (2) into the patience of Christ.* Here again where the R. V. has revised let us revise too! And, surely, the whole truth is out at last, for this is *not* our “patient waiting for Christ,” just as the former was *not* more of our love *to* God. I repeat, precisely as at first the Apostle threw them back on the love of God to them, and not theirs to Him; even so, finer far than any paltry, patient waiting of ours for Christ, is *His patient waiting for us.* Yes, us, all of us; not “us” of tedious Thessalonica only! Depend upon it: Christ’s patience, at any rate, is going to do its perfect work, in order that we, the body of Christ as a truly terrestrial unit, may be *perfect and entire, wanting nothing.* Not a hoof will be left

behind! We, the mere sowers, may be impatient. And to curtly command us to be patient certainly does not mend matters. Hence Paul's upward point yonder to the patient Christ at God's right hand, "from henceforth expecting." He, the true Husbandman, has long patience. Surely, then the *sowers* impatient of the heat of the day can find calm and strength in that long loyal patience. For note this keenly: "The field is *the world*." Long patience for a large field. Ah! what an enormous disparity we find between the loving Christ's long patience and our perverse petulance. He has long patience "for the precious *fruit* of the earth"; not merely patience unto precious sowing, but patience unto precious reaping. If the love of God did the splendid sowing, then the long patience of God will royally reap the fruit. "Be patient, *therefore*, (what a logical conjunction!) brethren, unto the coming of the Lord: behold the *husbandman* (i. e., HE WHO IS MOST INTERESTED IN IT ALL!) wait for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience. Be *ye* (note the dig!) also patient." "Precious fruit," yes, because of "precious blood." The patience of Christ will have a perfect work, and the body of Christ as to absolutely

all its members will be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. Himself it was who went forth weeping bearing *precious* seed. Now He waiteth for *precious* fruit. “Precious seed,”—“tasted death for every man.” “Precious fruit—“Preach in *all* the world to *every* creature.” Hear, then, the sum of the whole matter. Will the God of love do less in Grace than He does in Law? Surely this is a pardonable query just here where the Apostle challenges their hearts as to being in the love of God. The God who *visits* iniquity “unto the third and fourth generation,” will He not also *visit* even a third and fourth generation in grace? The husbandman hath long loyal patience. Has He not visited Christendom unto even a thirtieth and fortieth generation in grace?

Thus it is the clamant calls come in on us from the earth’s four corners. Pray for us in the dark corners of the earth, brethren, that the Word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, *even as it is with you* in beloved gospel lands. “Free course” means that it might reach the uttermost man in the uttermost parts of the earth.

VIII

“THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES”

*When the saintly Payson was dying he said,
“I long to hand a full cup of happiness to every
human being!”*

* * *

*“Until the TIMES of the Gentiles be fulfilled.
LUKE.*

* * *

*“I would not, brethren, that ye should be
ignorant of . . . the FULLNESS of the Gentiles.
PAUL.*

* * *

*“The riches of the world . . . the riches of
the GENTILES.*

PAUL.

VIII

“THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES”

Luke xxi. 24

MIGHT we not say of this expression, used by the Holy Ghost, that it bears on the face of it God's controversy with us? For note well, it is THE Gentiles; not merely some select specimens of Gentiledom. Love's arms encircle the globe, and Love's thoughts are “to all generations” (Ps. xxxiii. 11). The scope of God's thoughts and purposes are as the scope of His eye—“He beholdeth all the sons of men.” And the scope of God's eye is to be the scope of our energy. “He fashioneth their hearts alike!” cries the Psalmist. And God's evangelist replies, “For like doom, comes like gospel!”

I

And now let us ask a very pertinent question. Why, oh why, this plural—“Times,” governing this other plural “Gentiles”? Doth not the Holy Ghost still say, “Now is the accepted time”?

To a sinner God guarantées not “times” but only His holy time—“Now.”

Ah! here, indeed, behold the long-suffering of God. He in sovereignty can ever forestall man in responsibility. Does man in lethargy fail to pass God’s “Now” around the globe? Love will not be content with merely a sample of Gentiledom. If Western languages have hymned Love’s praises, Love will have a song from the remotest and most impoverished dialects of farthest lands. Yes, the “last *shall* be first” to Love; and out of the mouths of the babes and sucklings who use earth’s poorest tongues, God will “perfect praise.” Thus, then, will God overcome the apathy that mocks His purposes”; “*The Gentiles*” shall all have their “times”; and, however varied the Gentiles, so varied shall be their times.

On that old, happy day of our lives—the “now” day, when we passed from death unto life—how open-armed God’s “All” and God’s “Whosoever” were to our souls. And now God chargeth us by that primal day of our joy to gladden other lands and people with the All that gladdened us as the guests of God.

We may here recall the phrase in Acts as to

“THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES” 75

God's *visiting* “the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name.” This visit of the Lord our God will be co-terminous with the glorious “times of the Gentiles.” Little does man seem to realise how well the God of Nature will fulfil His visit of Grace. He who in Nature riseth up early to flood with light the far unknown waters of some hidden inland sea, will He not visit every rood of this lost earth with His gospel? “Are not My ways equal?” saith the God of Nature and of Grace. And David, speaking of the earth as a far-rolling unity of hill and dale, island and continent, saith, “Thou *visitest* the earth. . . . Thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water. . . . Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness.” And will God do less in Grace than He does in Nature? Will He not crown “the acceptable year of the Lord” with goodness too? Nay, He will crown it with Grace; even as He crowns every three hundred and sixty-five days of time with Goodness.

On that day when the last stone from the world's last and remotest corner is brought into the building, then shall He crown the acceptable year with His grace. For thus saith the Lord to His quarrymen, who realise indeed what “a

great mountain” this belting the globe with His gospel is—“O great mountain! . . . thou shalt become a plain: and He shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it!”

To Zerubbabel, God’s temple-builder, lo! here was indeed very much of mountain and very little of temple. Faith only could in vision see the rugged mountain-heap quarried into a plain. “The Temple has swallowed the mountain,” says Faith; and the final headstone will mean the outburst of God’s Hallelujah chorus, “Grace! Grace! unto it!” Yet, not by might nor by power shall it all be accomplished—and who dare despise the day of small things?

II

In the great majority of the uses of the word “visit” in the Old Testament it means stern, implacable judgment, the sword of the Lord striking home unerringly and surely. Yea, unto the third and fourth generation doth He visit the iniquity of the fathers. Yet this same word tells us that open-armed love will as surely and individually “visit” every nook and corner of a world of heathendom as it visited inexorably in retribu-

tion for every broken law. The argument from Nature leads up to the revelation of Grace. Hence, too, Christ’s lovely name of “The Dayspring from on high.” For as the eastern skies in all lands herald light for all and light in abundance, so too the Dayspring from on high doth visit and redeem a world lost in night.

Ah, when the Psalmist, a thousand years before the Cross, cried, “Have respect unto the Covenant, FOR the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty”—how well did he understand the purposes of Grace! Paul had certainly read this, and God bade him write something very like it in Romans—“Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound!” David’s “FOR” tells all. “Have respect unto the Covenant,” Lord, which promises to bless “all families of the earth,” for all families are under the curse. “The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty,” therefore “have respect to the Covenant!” That God did respect the Covenant, our tongues can tell. And David’s call comes back on us, the faithless ones. Not “have respect to the Covenant” is the call; but “have respect to the command!” David’s “FOR” of thousands of years ago is still living

and cogent. And where there is sin abounding there must we preach grace abounding.

They tell us of—and we have seen them—poor, dwarfed, downtrodden tribes with only glimmerings of an innate notion of their own manhood. Very, very low in the so-called scale are they, and have as many bestial traits of character as human. “Child-nations” is a matter-of-fact exclamation of the anthropologist, who has merely to glance at the conical occiput and receding chin. But Christ, who comes to seek and save the lost, says in open-armed love to all such “child-nations”—“Suffer the little children to come!” Out of the mouths of such babes and sucklings God will perfect His praise. “The last shall be first!”

BOOK II
LORD'S SUPPER REVERIES
I
THIRSTING AFTER GOD

*“Long the blessed Guide has led me
By the desert road;
Now I see the golden towers
City of my God.
There amidst the love and glory
He is waiting yet;
On His Hands a name is graven
He can ne'er forget.*

I

THIRSTING AFTER GOD

Psalm xliii

*“As the hart panteth after the water-brooks,
So panteth my soul after Thee, O God.
My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.”*

IN this hart or gazelle of the desert, panting after the water-brooks, we have surely the crown of all language as an image of sincerity in the soul's thirst after God. What more sincere in all the earth than the lustrous-eyed gazelle, panting after the water-brooks? There is perfect desert instinct here; perfect innocent need, going out to perfect supply, and expressed so perfectly too in that pant succeeding pant.

Note the first phase. This, then, is the old obvious story. David has lost his God, albeit God, his God, knoweth the desert, thirsty way that he takes.

And this God (*who Himself hath commanded for all time, “If thine enemy thirst, give him*

drink'') this God will indeed be the health of David's countenance, and that right early.

God, then, has driven David into the desert to learn what a God is his God. To learn that for every pant of David's soul after God, the living God, there is a deeper, dearer pant in God's heart after His child. For this, surely seems the meaning of verse 7: "Deep is calling unto deep"—the deep of David's longing calling out to the deep of God's longing; the deep of David's emptiness calling out to the deep of Divine plenitude.

And thus it must ever be, whether with the soul about to be saved or the soul saved in the long ago. Yes, thus indeed, to the intent that by the arid desert and its parched thirst, we may be led on and up to Him.

* * * * *

Watch the second phase. Thirst, then, is the Psalmist's great theme, and thirst's eternal antithesis—God, the Quencher thereof. David is indeed marching through night to daydawn. He shall yet praise Him.

This thirst has given to David what it gives to the gazelle—a clear-eyed earnestness that asks for the *one* thing, and for all things in the one—"My soul thirsteth after God." Oh, for more of this

clear-eyed transparency, and its language of *pant*. The paradox of this panting seems to be that in its wealth of expression there is no language. Parched throat and tongue refuse to articulate the soul's secret. And God is thereby spared a reminder of Babel, with mere vain verbiage, and He hears, moreover, the language He loves so wisely and so well—the soul's pant. Garrick said he would give a hundred guineas if he could say "Oh!" as Whitfield did it when he held 30,000 spellbound.

We have said that with this holy thirst going out for God there is a deeper thirst in God's heart going out for His thirsty child. This heart-pant we probably hear in that arrestive "Ho!" in Isaiah, when God calls to the thirsty. As a good Philologist has said, "The interjection, instead of being a part of speech, is indeed a *whole speech*." What this writer probably means, when his definition is applied to this "Ho!" leaving the very lips of God, is this, supremely this. There is a time when the heart is too full for words; when out of sheer loving, yearning, commiseration on His part, comes forth that "Ho!" from the lips of God, springing out to the soul's succour.

Now watch phase three. David had lost his

God; but how did he lose Him? Ah! this, too, is an old story. He had gone with the multitude; he went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with the multitude that kept holy day. This, we say, is the old obvious story, and how easy it is to be carried on with the "Convention" crowd. So easy, having caught the infection, to praise God in a crowd. Oh, the blessedness of it, and the fragrant memories thereof!

But all that is past now for David. A receding memory leaves it almost below the verge.

God hath called him out to the thirsty desert; and though it might seem far otherwise, David is on the right path now. For listen to his words—"My soul thirsteth for God!" Not for the multitude keeping holy day; but for God, my God.

All this recalls the seventh chapter of John's Gospel. The people have been trooping up to their feast—a multitude going up to the house of God—"a multitude that kept holy day." But the Lord says, "I go not up yet," albeit when His time was come He went up, and found them "murmuring" concerning Him. And finally, "in the last day, that great day of the feast," a great

vision of the sadness of the unsatisfied multitude flooded His loving soul with pity. All down the centuries He saw them keeping their feasts, and getting leaner and leaner; becoming annually drier and drier, like their arid patches of Syrian desert. Then, on that great last day of the feast, Jesus stood and CRIED to the multitude (Isaiah's "Ho!" in another form)—"If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." In other words, "You have had *your* feast, and what has it done for you? Nothing: but *I* am the true Feast; let him who thirsts come unto Me"—not to *it*, the feast; *it*, the creed; or aught else. He came to bring us to God, "my God"—the soul's exceeding joy.

Over against the great vacuum of human thirst God in His day of grace doth put *Himself* as the Ocean, and as we drink with the pant of sincerity we shall become like Him.

* * * * *

Now for the final phase. How very vital all this must be, and hence, doubtless, the fact that this is the Lord's last word to us in Rev. xxii. First, in verse 1, is the river's source, far up on the highest height of the everlasting hills—the throne of God and of the Lamb. Down it

flows from the high throne of God, that blessed river of God, full of water. And it strikes at last the dry and thirsty land where no water is; so whether from the Spirit and the Bride, or from him that heareth, "Come!" is the glad call, and drink of "the water of life freely."

Then, the weary, desert pilgrim, having struck at last the river of God flowing across life's waste, resolves never to leave it. He spends his days of sojourning ascending its hallowed banks. In his glad experience, as with Ezekiel's wonderful river, "everything doth live whither the river cometh." And finally, having drunk of it and bathed in it, all the way along, at last he reaches the city, out from which it flows. It is the city of our God. Here doth He dwell. God is known in her palaces for a refuge. Here, too, is the river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God; "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved."

II

THE PSALM OF PSALMS

*None of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed
Or how dark was the night
That the Lord passed through.
E'er He found the sheep that was lost*

II

THE PSALM OF PSALMS

A Lord's Supper Meditation

Psalm xxiii

THE sequence of thought, linking even separate Psalms, is often their true divine key. Take, for instance, David's bold "My" in Psalm xxiii. How simple it is to see unerring explanation of all this certainty of soul in David, in that preceding vision of love in Psalm xxii.! The roots of Psalm xxiii., revealing Jehovah as Shepherd, strike back deep into the sterile rocky soil of Psalm xxii. The sheep can only reach the green pastures of Psalm xxiii., because the Shepherd of Psalm xxii. held on His way among the thorns of 'the waste.

This is ever the divine law of cross-and-crown sequence. The sheep by the still waters of the Lord's Supper look across the gulf to the Psalm where Jehovah is a Shepherd unto blood. The thorns are over there and the green pastures are

just here, and "My" is the adoring result of it all. Surely in such loving sequence do we find an adequate reason why the ineffable name of Jehovah can be linked with the name of a lost sheep of humanity, lost David, or lost anybody. Jehovah is MY Shepherd.

Thus we learn that, Psalm of sorrow though it be, the grace of God is so exceeding abundant at the Cross, that we find a pledge of the very peace of the sinner in the woes of the Saviour.

I

Watch the contrast of it all. Like David, the Christ, too, opens his Psalm of Calvary with a "My." Twice does the forsaken cry ring out to the skies. How different David's "My" from that of the lonely Christ. A heaven and a hell of difference, surely! The deep of Christ's forsakenness calleth across to the deep of David's calm and joy. And this surely is the divine intention concerning these Psalms—a sequence so certain that the sufferings of Christ shall not have long to wait for the glory that should follow.

Else how shall we explain that praise-shout: "The meek shall eat and be satisfied"? Who are

the meek of Psalm xxii., if not the green-pastured sheep of Psalm xxiii.? Was it not, indeed, just such an adjacent prophecy as this that hastened David to glorify the Christ, by singing of pastures where the meek and lowly sheep find rest to their souls?

But watch this divine sequence a little longer. David's "I shall not want" finds its reason in the fact that Jehovah is with him. And so, too, in the opposite experience of Christ's loneliness do we see the utter poverty of the Cross. Without God was the sinner, and without God was the Saviour. "I, the Shepherd, am poured out like water," is the source of all that satiety in the sheep.

The Second MAN, the Lord from heaven, was His divine title; yet He it is, who, in dying pang, says: "I am a worm, and no man." Watch, too, those still waters of tranquillity, and listen in contrast to the words of Christ's roaring. All God's waves and billows are rolling over Him there, in the strong crying and tears of the Son of God.

This contrast is seen further down under another figure. Both David and David's Lord have a cup, and both the cups are seen running over—

the red wine of wrath and the red wine of joy. No wonder that old English word blood comes from the same root as bloom and blossom. Without the shedding of blood there is no—truly there is *no anything* without the shedding of blood! Far away even in the marshes of Africa, the tribesmen say: “No blood, no blossom!”

Contrast, yet further, David's head anointed with oil and the head of the Christ of God wounded with thorns. That soft oil and those sharp thorns are so widely removed from each other that they spell salvation to the sheep.

There is one phrase, indeed, in this Psalm (almost Pauline) which reveals how fully the writer has seized upon the fact that Christ is his Saviour-Substitute. When David says: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,” surely here we have a most naïve hint that if the Substitute-Christ has so utterly died for the sheep, then in some glorious sense the sheep will not die at all. “Shall not see death” is the note of joy for the sheep. But for that wounded Shepherd of the Psalm of sorrow there was no qualification. The inexorable “Must be” of the Cross was ever before him. If the worst came to the worst, David could say: “I will not

fear.” For the lonely Christ, the worst must climax in the worst.

II

So, too, further on. A divinely intended contrast we see in the two groups of enemies surrounding David and David’s greater Son. There, in the presence of his enemies, God doth load his table with good things. God Himself prepares that table, prepares both the time and place for it, to wit, when the enemies are in full view. But look at the contrasted Christ, hungry both in body and soul! His is the bread of affliction; His the abjects’ death.

And if David’s joy was the confounding of his enemies, how deep the woe of Christ in being taunted by His foes! There they are, shooting out the lip and shaking the head in derision. David gets the banquet, and David’s Lord gets the penury of Calvary. Surely the lesson for us is writ large in all this intended contrast. Do I, or do you, ever and always take our brimming cup to the Calvary cup and, before drinking even one drop of joy, bless the cup of woe that the Shepherd drank all alone for us? These are days, indeed, when whole books of “Bible Contrasts” are greedily perused. How much harder

it is for the child of God to bring his life in its faithlessness into sharp contrast with the loving ways of our steadfast God. As man is, after all, a comparative race, how well, indeed, if he learns life's best lesson of contrasting God with the creature.

David's last contrast is with the Man of Sorrows, an outcast from the Father's house—and he, David, boasting of that house as his dwelling for evermore. The homeless Christ, out in the cold, knocking at the Father's door! “My God, my God! Why—?” Surely here, in the Christ's own “Why?” we seem to see why so many theories of the Atonement are in currency. A dozen and more “working” theories of Christ's Atonement! Does not their very number show that they have tried and failed to fathom Christ's own perplexed “Why”? Oh, let this be our Atonement-watchword for Time—this, too, for Eternity—“Why? Why?” When you think you fathom it, and when you reduce it all to a cold syllogism, then indeed are God's mighty fallen. Christ's own perplexed “Why?” declares it all to be a mystery; and the creed was never yet written that did not shut out great deeps of atoning love.

*“For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man’s mind,
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.”*

III

One word more in conclusion. It will be seen that there is close affinity between the assurance of David’s “My” and the certainty contained in his “shall”—“*I shall* not want.” This is the jubilant dogma of faith. But whence all the certainty, if not in the wondrous blank-cheque Name, “Jehovah”? God, who in grace revealed His own unutterableness, could only perforce reveal Himself by a Name which ever confounds the grammarians of this world to translate. It was the Jew himself who best caught the divine intention, when, as a nation, he resolved not even to pronounce the Name Jehovah at all. If the ineffable Name is *untranslatable*, said he, then let it be *unpronounceable*! Hence it is, the best translation in any language of that glorious Name will only be the best because it is the most unpretentious. So full of meaning, indeed, is the name Jehovah, that human speech can only call a halt, and translate it, blank-cheque fashion: “I

AM, etc., etc.” Thus praise is sacredly silent in Zion before Zion's King.

And David's whole point in his “shall” lies just here. If, says David, my Shepherd has such a blank-cheque Name—“I AM, etc., etc.”—then, indeed, *I, too, can issue a blank cheque* on the unknown future of life. How often we forget that “I shall not want—” is as much a blank-cheque as Jehovah's own Name I AM—! If God's name is “I AM, etc., etc.,” then Faith's echo-shout can obviously only be: “I shall not want, etc., etc.”

Thus the deep of supply calleth out to the deep of need. If God does so challenge Faith as to His very name, “I AM, etc., etc.” then Faith gladdens God's heart by sending back the sister-challenge: “*I shall not want, etc., etc.!*” For when God declared His unutterable Name to be I AM THAT I AM, what is this but just the modernised I AM, etc., etc.!

The whole eternity of God lies a great deep in that ineffable Name, and the responsive “shall” is faith striking its roots deep into the eternity of God. Everlasting is His name, so “shall” adorns the mouth of all God's children. We are

the lords of the future, and another king can never arise who knows not Joseph.

And this, finally, is the real root of David's phrase, "*For His Name's sake.*" His Name, the blank-cheque Name, explains it all. True, the language of modern banking was not known a thousand years before the Cross. David's equivalent for a cheque-book was, in those stormy days, "a Strong Tower." And the blank element is well enough seen in both. Does not David, later on, sing of the Name "Jehovah" as a something we can "run into and be safe"? Precisely as in the stress of commerce a merchant runs into his blank cheques to meet all demands against him, even so David claims that Faith can "run into" the Jehovah-name as into a strong tower. Surely it must be blank enough if you and your needs can run into it. Thither let us flee!

III

A RESURRECTION REVERIE

What the Parable of the Sower is to our Lord's Parables so, supremely so, is The Resurrection to our Lord's Miracles. Leading the long line of His Parables is that first and finest Parable of the Sower, for did He not give it princely priority when He asked, "Know ye not this Parable? And how shall ye know all the Parables?"

And so, too, with that "corn of wheat" Miracle of The Resurrection. Leading the long line of Christ's Miracles is this keystone certitude, and if we know not this Miracle how shall we know all the Miracles?

III

A RESURRECTION REVERIE

John xx. 1-19

It is "*the first day of the week,*" note well; and the Soul finds in this word FIRST something that it desires with great desire. Weeks and days of the week it knoweth not; yet doth it seize upon this word "first" as containing worlds of import. For this first has no last, and this beginning no end. Here is a dawn that will never see a sunset; and God's first day of John xx. is precisely as His first day of Genesis i. One day, one function, was His law of Creation. "Let there be LIGHT" was the lone command of Earth's first day. "And there was LIGHT" is the long, lone blessedness of Resurrection's Eternal day.

"Cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark." She was early, yes, but God was earlier. To the Soul's early there is ever God's earlier. In the days of His flesh He was ever rising early and protesting, saying, "Obey My voice"; and now He who had risen early to

preach, riseth early to save. Note, that this "when it was yet dark" is the Morning-Star hour. *When* He rose so shall we—"while it is yet dark." No forty days will elapse between our rising and our ascending. To rise will be to ascend.

"And seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre." In the might of Imperial Rome the world as a unit, and the power of that world, was headed up in Cæsar. There was no King but Cæsar, and no power like Cæsar's power. When, therefore, Rome struck Christ's death-blow, all the world's strength backed that blow. And as the death, so, too, Christ's burial. As surely as the Empire had killed Him, so surely did it mean to patrol the tomb. King Cæsar would await King Corruption and then each would go his respective way. This stone, then, "great stone" though it was, was not merely a woman's difficulty. It was an Imperial fact. *"Who shall roll it away?"* said they. Yet the real difficulty was not a mere stone, however large, but Death's real gates of brass and bars of iron. **THEY** locked Christ in, and not mere stone. Rome's iron nails and soldier's spear had bolted the gates of brass; be there big stone at the door, or no stone at all.

And so this while-it-was-yet-dark vision of the stone rolled away tells its own tale and another tale also. The lesser is contained in the greater. "The Breaker" is Micah's name for Him, and here the Lord earns it all. He hath broken the gates of brass in Resurrection and cut the bars of iron in sunder!

"*Then she runneth . . . So they* (Peter and John) *ran together.*" How suggestive an inauguration of the Resurrection! The Saints have incentive; they run. God has outrun them; yet would they run. And even so it ever was with the Church. The memory of the empty tomb ever vivifies His own. This made Gospelling so gladly easy in the years 33-66 A. D. This constituted the "Offence of the Cross"; for there the world's power spent itself; and the Gospel of the opened Tomb heaped humiliation on that vaunted power. Where God struck the world its death-blow, so even there the Church ever does so. Ah, empty tomb, may we run because of thee!

"*She runneth to Simon Peter and the other disciple, and they ran together.*" Yes, running indeed, but not to outsiders. *That* will be, and soon enough. The Resurrection, first of all, causes Christ's own to "run together"; to run

to each other's hearts for communion and help. See that lovely miniature of what all this being "together" may involve. "As they ran together the other disciple did *outrun* Peter." How simply put and yet how unerringly. But not he who *is* first exercises his rights as such. The first at the tomb is the second to enter it. He who is forward in running is backward in entering. And *he* is that disciple whom Jesus fondly loved; he, who would rather be second in some things and first in one thing. This one thing all the Church owns to be his fond loving. He who fondly loved was fondly loved. He loved Him because He first loved us. Peter *dared* and John *loved*; yet do we read that "they went away to their own home," dear brethren both of a dear Lord.

In the running of fellowship there will always be outstripping. But the kindly dignity of outrunning consists in its resolve not to be first in everything. It leaves something for somebody else—"that all might have a little."

"*Simon Peter . . . went in; then went in also that other disciple; and he saw and believed.*" It was what they did not see that agreed so divinely with what they saw. This constitutes

believing. "We see not yet . . . but we see;" even thus doth God make Faith. "We see Him not," said Peter; yet do we see His stately goings, and seeing we believe. The believing, it must be most carefully noted, is all put down to John's credit. They entered, "but he believed." Peter's thoughts are read for us by Luke when he says that having beheld the linen clothes, Peter departed, "wondering in himself at that which was come to pass." Ah, how solemn! We can have been first in and last to believe. "The first shall be last." Love's eye alone can keenly detect. Love is not blind, though a proverb says it. Love only can see rightly. The Gospel, in fact, hurries on to tell us that this believing was not the belief of faith—faith in God's word. Saith the record: "He saw and believed, for as yet they knew not the Scripture." This is the belief of love, not the belief of faith. God's hints lead up to God's words. He who refuses the hint will get the word; but blessed is he who taketh God's hints. Love ever does.

"But Mary stood without weeping." Ah, now we climb the heights! Not he who runneth, and not he who entereth, but she who weepeth is crowned. They are not going to get her reward;

no man may take her crown! She gets *Himself*—she who had been out betimes seeking Him while it was yet dark. True, she never dreamed of this, nor would we. We wonder why they did not remember what He had told them. Ah, that shows up not their unbelief but our own! They, even now, are under the black cloud of Calvary; their souls are shrouded in the horror of great darkness. No empty tomb for them will mean the long aching days of sorrow dragging out ahead; the night getting bleaker and darker. And so our wondering at all this only shows how little a Calvary ours has been—how little a loss *we realise* theirs had been. Looking across a glorious Resurrection vista of nearly two thousand years—in which Christ has been Head over all things to the Church—how easy to criticise the orphans who had neither Christ nor Paraclete! Mary, then, was first, and first she shall be, said her risen Lord. She who had experienced His saving grace is honoured by first welcoming Him back again. All has been tangled, and her only relief is that of weeping. She, like the other woman, would have wet His feet with those same tears; but now there are no feet to weep over, and she weeps the tears of despair. And the tears

blind—blind so really that when He speaks to her she knows Him not. Supposes Him to be the gardener, forsooth—oh, blinding tears! For there are tears that blind metaphorically, even as there are tears that clear the soul's vision. She, too, had stooped in to see what the others saw; but her tears hindered her seeing what John saw. God, then, must do His first godlike act in Resurrection; do what He ever does to His weeping Marys. He wipes away all their tears; and that, too, with the old magic word of a human name; her name—"Mary!" And she—oh, in a flash all is explained; and to show how well she has learned her lesson she utters the lone word "Rabboni!" that is to say (if an interjection has any value at all), "Oh, what a Teacher!" For the path has been winding and the discipline severe, but all has been climaxed, even as *our* lesson will be, with that one ascriptive word, "Rabboni!" "Who teacheth like Thee!"

"Then the same day at evening, when the doors were shut . . . came Jesus and stood in the midst." The wonderful morning leads on to a wonderful evening. They have shut out the Jews, not the Lord. He who could not be shut in by the Romans cannot be shut out by His own.

Nay, but His own promise do they claim—"Where two or three are gathered together." Look, too, how they have left Him His rightful place "in the midst"; and look, too, how He claims it! "Jesus stood in the midst." The promise made is the promise kept.

IV

“BE STILL AND KNOW”

*The Lord separates the sin that He hates from
the soul that He loves.*

*

*

*

*We live by dying to ourselves. We die by
living to ourselves.*

IV

“BE STILL AND KNOW”

A Meditation on Psalm xlvii

JEHOVAH is indeed our God, our Refuge and our Strength. Often, too, have we known Him as a very present Help. Yet how far, far oftener it has to candidly come to this: “Be still, and know that *I am God!*” His attributes are soundless and boundless, but back, ever back must we come to Himself. This is life eternal, this the Alpha and Omega in one—to know God. Whether it be the witness of such an one as Paul the aged, or Augustine, or Richard Baxter, the word is ever the same—God, God, GOD, and that I might know Him! But watch withal one tremendous thing. The atmosphere of such a knowledge is that war ever and inexorably precedes peace. “Come, behold the works of Jehovah, what *desolations* He hath made”—*in making peace!* There is no birth without a pang. There is no high hill but beside a deep valley.

I, a little bob-about of humanity, must be still to know Him. Therefore He must make me still with a solemn stillness. He wars with me for my peace. "From whence come wars," asks the Apostle, "if not from this old, old war—the soul VERSUS God? Come therefore, behold the desolations He hath made! Behold the trusty treasures of His deep designs and see how in loyal love God roareth as a lion in the path of His rebel child." He had only this one way with THE SON when He undertook our case; and He hath no other way with *the sons*. God must desolate me for my peace. He must cross His church before He can crown it. Come, then, behold not only life's desolations, but also life's consolations. After the desolation comes the consolation. Look, too, at the specific details in our Psalm of this peace-after-war postulate and how it eventuates.

Firstly, He, the Holy Warrior God, breaketh my rebel bow. Yes, the old bow that had hurled many a dart at Him, our God. Now all is far otherwise. His arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies. To emancipate, He must needs subjugate.

Secondly, in bringing about the rebel soul's

peace He cutteth the spear in sunder. Yes, my old spear wherewith I pierced His wounded side, cruel spear that wounded Him—but unto my healing! Best stroke of my God that snappeth it in twain. Now it will pierce no longer. That spear, though, is not wholly abandoned; it is now beaten into a *pruning hook*. He only *breaks* the spear to make it a pruning hook—emblem of peace, yea, peace through direst, reddest war. The old spear wherewith I stabbed my God I now use to prune myself. Anon, too, it will prune others, for what He tells me in darkness, that must I speak in the light.

Thus, by the inexorable law of Cross-and-Crown sequence we emerge upon these sweetest of words, “BE STILL.” I would not be still, so He had to make me still. Come, behold the desolations He hath made, all to this intent. Here, a sick bed, there a hidden heart trial; and everywhere, a cross for all who will ever wear a crown.

“The *evening* and morning were the first day.” And we will never, never have a divine day unless it be after the primal pattern of God’s first model one. The Devil’s day is the opposite of God’s. The Satanic formula runs, “the morning

and the evening make the diabolic day." Yes, first the morning then the evening that never sees a sunrise. With God our God *the evening* and morning make a divine day!

"AND KNOW." Ah! they know best who have battled with God and been defeated. "I *will* be exalted" is God's cry. So must man be laid low; but not so low as ever the Son of Man lay. And He who went lowest must be Highest. "I will be exalted." So, too, shall we find like exaltation in like humiliation. The same word is used for being "lifted up" on a cross and on a throne and the same glorious Lord was lifted up on both.

Thus we work out at the xlvii Psalm's lovely end, which is really its beginning too. There is a secret key and that key lies in *the mention of Jacob's name*. For every mention of the phrase "God of Jacob" really means "God of (EVEN!) Jacob! Yes, the God of even such a wriggling cheat as he: "The God of all Grace" and therefore "the God of (even) Jacob."

"The Lord of Hosts is with us, THE GOD OF JACOB is our refuge," our "high tower." *There is exaltation for Jacob and all his ilk!*

The Lord of hosts is with us now, as surely as He was against us with all His hosts to break and subjugate us for our peace. Hence this abrupt juxtaposition of “Lord of hosts” and “God of Jacob.”

Yes, Jacob’s name is the determining factor here in the exegesis of this bitter-sweet Psalm. For watch. Storm and calm, war and peace, is Jacob’s soul’s history, as well as a world’s. A soul is a world, and as is the world, so is the soul, to wit, Jacob’s. As many as the sons of Adam, so many the Jacobs. Watch this out with Jacob’s name and history as a key.

Ah! God had indeed to desolate this Jacob ere he could console him. Come, behold the works of the Lord in this Jacob. Come, behold him broken, indeed, at last by life’s Jabbok; lamed for life, but, oh, so peaceful now! Broken at last the old cunning Jacob bow, cut asunder the unerring spear of his youth! And as by that brook Jabbok he battled along, God did say to him in love as a nurse to a weary child, “*Be still and know that I am God.*”

Now it is all over, and after blackest night breaketh morning clear and fair at last. A holy

war, indeed, that would thus subjugate our rebel soul unto Thee, our God!

“Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Most Mighty, and in Thy majesty ride prosperously!”

V

“PRIVATELY”

In a mountain the law was propounded to Moses; in a mountain the law was expounded by Jesus.

* * *

The former to a man of God, the latter by the Son of God. The one to a Prophet of the Lord, the other by the Lord of the Prophets.

V

“PRIVATELY”: A ONE WORD BIBLE STUDY

Mark vi. 32; Matt. xxiv. 3

GLANCING at the New Testament we see this adverb in close and almost sole association with two significant nouns—“mountain” and “desert.” There, on “the high mountain apart,” or in “the desert place,” He appoints the trysting-place with the saints. Surely here is a holy hint that God embraces the extremes of life. This double trysting-place of mountain and desert is His own royal rebuke to the old lie, that “The Lord is God of the hills but He is not God of the valleys.”

I

Watch Mark’s first use of the word. The sentences have come back to the Sender. Where the words of the King had gone there had been power, and they who had seen much of man must now see much of the Master. So to the desert they must go—to Christ’s retreat from the strife of tongues. That place of His Temptation is to be

the place of their rest; where the Christ was with the wild beasts, even there He gathers the lambs of His flock for rest (Heb. iv. 9).

*“God hath His deserts broad and brown—
A solitude—a sea of sand
Where He doth let heaven’s curtain down,
Unknit by His Almighty hand.”*

To the desert, then, by ship they go; but as though to mock the idea of hermitic solitude, the crowd take the short cut by land, and lo, the desert is no longer desert!

What then? What, indeed, if not a feast, a table in the wilderness? He who was forty days and nights in the wilderness without bread, will not let them go hungry an hour. For this invitation to come apart shows that Christ had resolved to feast them bountifully in the desert. They, who had no “leisure so much as to eat,” must come apart to rest, and the resting consists in the feasting and the giving others to feast. Here, then, the Master teaches them the double lesson, that while to be apart privately is the soul’s deepest need, it is no easy thing in this desert of life to get apart with Him.

Moral: How many a short cut the world knows, by which to invade our calm of soul!

II

But the Teacher must finish the lesson. He is the perfect Teacher, because He perfectly lives His own homily. Not even the apostles may break into His privacy. Disbanding the ranks of hundreds and ranks of fifties, He sends them away back again to the bustle of their towns, and even His own He constrains to depart in the ship to the other side. For He who so suffered this interruption of the desert-rest must needs show them how much to be prized above all life's prizes is aloneness with God. There, jutting up into the blue sky is God's mountain, and what the desert denied Him of solitude the mountain afforded "He went up into a mountain privately to pray." Here, then, He teaches where this word "privately" first leads us. Not to the united prayer of saints, but to life's holiest of all-lone prayer on the lone mountain.

*“God hath His mountains bleak and bare,
Where He doth bid us rest awhile;
Craggs where we breathe a purer air,
Lone peaks that catch the day's first smile.”*

Moral: By every legitimate human contrivance we have to "set bounds about" this holy mount of ours, that the people draw not nigh.

III

The next "privately" is still the mountain; yea, a high mountain, and Christ on it with only three, and not twelve, of His own. He does not go where they may not come, and He would thus lead them into His own way of living life. They must know Him on the mountain as they could never know Him in the desert. "He bringeth them up into a high mountain" privately, and was transfigured before, alas, not them all, only three, and so suggestively three too! Here is divine irony indeed. For in all ages, not even in the ratio of three in twelve, has Christ been a transfigured Christ to His own.

Moral: How few Robert McCheyne and George Müllers there are!

IV

Pursuing the track of this adverb, we see unity of design, and find ourselves among the same apostles who come "privately" to their Lord with the powerless query: "Why could we not cast him out?" "We" is emphatic, for who are these, if not those who come back rejoicing that even the devils were subject to them? "We, oh, we! Where is our old-time power?" What a

private affair this is! How often we publicly lament our impotence when the remedy is all in our private life. The question they ask in secret is, however, answered by Christ on the rooftops for the Church in all ages to hear: “Because of your unbelief.” Ah, no wonder the power is lost! Power means publicity as to its exercise, and as night wars with day, so publicity wars with privacy.

Moral: How common the swing of the pendulum from power to poverty!

v

And, granted the power bestowed, what so necessary as the last use of our adverb? They are about to be left on this earth the chosen custodians of Christ’s truth. From their lips and pens will come anon the divine “form of sound words,” and they, in turn, will transmit the same as a divine unit to faithful men who will be able also to teach others. How necessary then for them, as for all of us, to spurn human creeds, and approach Christ privately on the matter of His own teaching. “The disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us when these things shall be.” Not to particularise prophecy

(though well we might), how little, indeed, is Christ permitted to preach His own truth privately to His own! Nay, He is not spicy enough for itching ears, and the public ministry of the Word often supersedes such private divine tuition as He loves to give. Yet as now, so in all ages, the greatest need is to be in private audience of our God, that the good Word of promise may be fulfilled in us: "They shall be taught of God."

It was only Paul for the desert and the desert for Paul that saved the faith from black havoc while yet in its infancy. There in the desert, far from the madding crowd, not only of sinners but of saints, God needs Paul as Paul needs God. Yes, and the saints of the madding crowd need Paul too. Even in this holy matter of getting alone with God, he must supply their lack of service. Paul was allured into Arabia with the promise: "They shall be all taught of God." Did he regret going? See him emerging from it all with a shining face, and listen to his shout: "Who teacheth like Thee!"

Moral: It is written: "They shall be all taught of God."

VI
CERTITUDE

*“ Some men believe their doubts and doubt
their beliefs.”*

** * **

Said Christ to Thomas: Ye know.

Said Thomas to Christ: We know not.

VI

CERTITUDE

John xiv. 4

“WHITHER I go *ye know*, and the way ye know.”
Listen to the certainty of it all from Him who knows the human heart better than it knows itself.

But the word of Faith rings back as usual only the hollow, sepulchral note of Unbelief. And God would thus unmask unbelief before our eyes. So in sharp sorry juxtaposition He puts the word of Faith over against the word of Unbelief—

“Whither I go
ye know.”

“*We know not*
whither.”

Again—

“The way *ye*
know.”

“*How can* we know
the way?”

Ah! Christ knows them better than they know themselves. Thomas really knows a thing that Thomas thinks he does not know. For Thomas has a “My Lord” and a “My God” who knows Thomas better than Thomas knows himself.

I

Note the real root-reason of it all. Their "whither" was as usual only an *it*. *It*, that is, heaven—a locality; and *it*—the hard, theoretical way thither. And, of course, sought by the search of sense, neither *it*, the Goal, nor *it*, the Way thereto, was found. He is found of them that seek Him not; and the remedy, which is an old one, was immediately applied.

The Father is the blessed "Whither" of our soul's pilgrimage, and the "Way" is Christ the Son—a new and living Way. Yes, "I am the Way," not to heaven, the locality, but to the Person, the Father. For what saith St. John?

Right down the long fourteenth chapter of John, and on and on through the wondrous fifteenth, the longer sixteenth and hallowed seventeenth chapters, it is not Heaven this or Heaven that but the *Son* going to the *Father*. Yes, and the Son leading many sons.

But the purpose of this, which we may call the Thomas interlude of the chapter, we shall altogether misunderstand if we proceed forthwith to "Poor Thomas!" him without seeing all that is involved as to the latent unbelief of the heart.

Here, then, is a man—a typical and true man,

frankly standing forth as the spokesman of our fallen race. He has denied the Way, and bound up with that denial is this other—that of the Truth.

Look at the blunt “We know not” frowning over against the gracious “Ye know.” Thomas has believed his doubts and as a result has doubted his beliefs. Christ is positive; so Thomas is not. Aye, and Thomas, plus a million of his ilk, can be positive when Christ is not. The Gospel is a revelation “from faith to faith,” *i.e.* of heights and heights of faith. Yes, and one has truly said it is a revelation of “depths and depths of unbelief.”

Yet the Christ, who cannot lie, says, “I have told you, Thomas—I, whose yea has been ever yea, and whose nay, ever nay—that I am the Way and the Truth. Moreover, Thomas, I have been speaking of leaving you—of going to the Father, and that to you in plain Galilean speech is, *I am going to die*. And having died, yea, though I shall rise again, thou, Thomas (*I see it coming!*) thou wilt not believe it. Yet, Thomas, I am ‘the Way’; I am ‘the Truth’; yea, verily, I am ‘the Life’ and death cannot hold its prey!”

This Thomas interlude, though broken into by Philip’s query, is merely adjourned for a few

days. Wondrous days indeed, for therein God has "brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep."

And now forth He stands who was dead and is alive again—living after the power of an endless life. And in chapter xx. Thomas is commanded to make an end of the matter, *yes, that old matter begun by himself in this fourteenth chapter*. Best doubter, he is now best believer; and "My Lord and my God!" ends the solemn matter. To him, the Way, and the Truth, and the Life, are a peerless Person, whom to believe is bliss.

II

And now for our side of this subject. Away, He has gone into the glory—gone to the Father—the Way indeed, and the Life indeed.

And cheering the pilgrim's path as he travels through the night is the central fact—He is the Truth. This is the reason why the names Way and Life flank the very vital name of Truth. Centuries are going to pass, and still He is going to sit, "from henceforth expecting," upon the Throne.

And still the night will grow blacker as souls journey on to Him, "Whom having not seen they

loyally love. The very blackness of the night seems to feed the flame of sedition and many a time we out-Thomas Thomas with our "We know not." But God knows His timid Thomases better than they know themselves. With royal reiteration and through life's gathering gloom He, our Lord, sends back on us His eager and earnest "*Ye know*" right in the teeth of our blundering-in-the-dark "*We know not.*" And, surely, Thomas would be well and wisely advised to believe in a cock-sure Lord rather than in a cock-sure Thomas.

Jeremiah was a "heart" man hence his tears, yet he it was who said, "the heart . . . *who* can know it?" Then it was a jealous God answered this "who can know it" challenge of His profoundly puzzled Jeremiah. "I the Lord search the heart." "The Lord knoweth the heart." And the God who knows me better than I, John Smith, know myself, this God it is who sweetly tells me that I really know the very thing that I timidly and Thomas-like think I do *not* know.

III

And this God is our God for ever and ever, He will be our Guide even "over" (see Hebrew) death. For note this. He loves us for the good

that is in us—and *because He put it there*. “That good thing committed unto thee keep . . . !” It is not merely that we believe in Christ but that He believes in us. And He never believes in us better than when we least believe in ourselves. It is not merely that we hope in Christ but that Christ is in us the Hope of Glory hoping His own Hope and believing His own Belief. We do not hold *it*, the truth—a dogma. But He, The Truth, a Person, holds us. And just as mere dogma is not good enough for us so is it not good enough for Him. He must have more than talk. If we talk the talk we must live the life.

Let me conclude thus.

Paul once nearly blundered into this thing but he did not. The God who keepeth the feet of His Saints also keeps the pen of His Apostle when writing to the Galatians. I repeat he almost blundered but he decidedly did not. Writing them an Epistle he said, “After that ye knew God—” and then Paul pulled up sharp. “If this is not modified,” mused the Apostle, “then the right point of view will be missed.” So the Pauline pen runs royally on and without deleting a word he redeems and regulates the phrase. “After that ye knew God **OR RATHER** (I’ll put it the

proper way!) *were known of God.*” “I do not,” says Paul, “take it back, but I almost want to. It is not your knowing God but it is God’s knowing you.

BOOK III
MISSION STUDIES

I

“SO THEY TOOK THE MONEY”

When the widow gave her last two mites, this is what she thought. Said she, "Whatsoever I receive is a token of God's love to me. Therefore I part with it contentedly as a token of my love to Him!"

I

“SO THEY TOOK THE MONEY”

Matt. xxviii. 15

NAY, they did more. “They took the money and *did as they were taught.*” Now there is point in these words undoubtedly; but there is far more point in their context. For here, at the end of Matthew, the gospel record is closing and the gospel preaching is beginning. Now the above words occur, not merely in Matthew’s last chapter, but also *hard before* Christ’s last command. There is a transition here far too abrupt not to be intentional. Here is Satan propagating the *lie*, and here, too, is the Christ propagating the *Truth*. Here are Satan’s great money methods of propaganda unveiled before us; here, too, the Christ’s.

Satan seems sure of one thing, that money will do what he wants. Had he not specifically hired Apostle No. 12 for a stated sum? And why not a batch of Cæsar’s men?

I

Let us now contrast these two commissions, for curiously where the Church has only seen one commission, there are in reality two. A glance shows us the deep subtlety of it all. Here in sharp juxtaposition we see the lie and also the truth.

Watch, I say, these rival Missions with their rival methods.

The Christ ordains that they must do all things whatsoever He has commanded them.

The Liar claims a like obedience for they "did as they were taught."

The Christ proclaims the promise that He will personally back all his servants, saying, "Lo I (*even I, emphatic*) am with you always."

The Liar likewise saith to his devotees: Do the deed: sow the sinful seed and if this come to the Governor's ears lo! we will stand by you always.

The Christ by way of a salary giveth them not mere money (no mention of it even!) but He gives them Himself. "I'm your Salary!"

The Liar lures them on with large money for it is a large lie. Large? Yes! but Christ went farther and gave not mere money but Himself.

II

Look closely now at this resurrection-lie, and see if it is not the head and front of all Satan's offending. For the Resurrection is Heaven's ALL, even as it is the Church's breath of life. Look, too, at this salaried lie, as to its actual words. Saith Satan in effect: “Say ye, His disciples stole Him away; . . . and, if this come to the governor's ears, I will stand by you, I will not desert you!” “So they took the money and did as they were taught.”

Is there nothing suggestive, I ask, in the fact that Christ commissions His church to go thousands of miles and yet never hints about the needed money *en route*? Passage money for thousands of saints going thousands of miles is easily involved in this commission: Go *ye* into *all* the world. I repeat this “ye” means many, many men; this “all” means many, many miles. Yes, and this “ye” *plus* this “all” means money, many millions of money! Yet He never even mentions mere money in the concise context where Satan in his lie-commission makes money! money! loom so large. O! give me The Christ for divine methods in His divine service.

Then does He ignore the whole question of

money? Nay! there is no question at all about it for the less is included in the greater. "Go ye," saith this living loving Lord, "and lo! I am with you to *run the whole concern and pay all the bills.*"

Of course, the salary was a large one. "They gave *large* money unto the soldiers." The Resurrection was Satan's extremity; hence this large money for a large work. True, there are hundreds the broad world over who do a large enough work for Satan without receiving a large wage. Man's extremity is the hour of Satan's parsimony. Satan's bounty ever tells of his own extremity.

Take, for example, the daring attack upon our Lord in the wilderness. There Satan reckoned upon the Son of Man's extremity; yes, reckoned that mere creature hunger would eventuate in capitulation. But God knoweth no extremity, nor God's Man either. Yet note the fact and tremble. Satan tempted *even the Son of God with a crust of bread!*

The large money was for a large work, and see how well they worked. Alas, how well men labour for him who labours not for them. Saith Matthew, "They did as they were taught, and

this saying is commonly reported . . . *to this day.*” Here then we behold Zeal on a salary—prepaid, too, according to the words of the Lord Jesus, “They HAVE their reward.”

III

Look now in conclusion at this resurrection-lie and see how unerringly Christ combats same.

Saith the Liar: Say, they stole Him away.

Saith the Truth: Lo! I (*even* I, emphatic) am with you to give this lie its death-blow.

Saith the Liar: Say, they stole Him away.

Saith the Truth: This will shame even the Devil: Me? they could not steal Me away, for lo! I am *with you* in person to nail down the resurrection-lie with the resurrection-truth of my Real Presence with you.

Ah! heart of mine, how often thou forgettest that the resurrection is not a mere event in history, but a person. Not a creed about Christ it is The Christ. Nay, not mere windy word-wrangling can settle this subject. He can only treat this lie the way many a good man has to meet a dark, dirty lie against his own private honour. He must (not talk it down!), he must *live* it down. And as Christ's so The Christ. He is with us in peerless,

powerful person to LIVE DOWN the Jewish lie about His resurrection.

Shall we venture now to deny that here, in such abrupt contrast, there is no significance in Christ's absolutely ignoring the word MONEY in His last command? In Satan's propaganda it is the word that ever bulks so largely. But for that there would have been no need for Matthew's pathetic phrase, "Then the *eleven* disciples"—the unity of the twelve broken by the god Mammon! Moreover, the mournful declension of this Judas—seceding, too, on such a poor wage as from £3 to £4—surely indicates what a poor earthly store was theirs who had treasure in Heaven. "Silver and gold have I none," said Peter, "but such as I have, give I thee."

"*But such as I have?*" Yes, Peter thou hast the living, loyal Lord who not only pays your way but *presences* the way. And His pay *is* His presence!

"And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them."

II

“THE LAW OF FAITH”

If faith in God gives us our Eternal life why should not faith in Him give us our morning meal?

* * *

*We boast of being so practical a people that we want to have a surer thing than faith. But did not Paul say that the promise was by **FAITH** that it might be **SURE**?*

II

“THE LAW OF FAITH”

Rom. iii. 27

WRITING, as Paul does in his Epistle to the Romans, to a great legal nation, how appropriate is his frequent mention of Law. Among those Romans Law was held in such high honour that the echo of the Roman Code can be heard even in a British Court of Justice to-day. How appropriate, then, we repeat, that Paul's language should be framed in such precise diction as would be understood by a Roman lawyer. Surely the sublime and logical sequence of Paul's every “therefore” and “wherefore” is a true echo of their own later language of the Forum. Thus we learn that the Paul of Mars Hill in Greece can prove himself to be a Roman to the Romans, even as he was then on that Athens Hill a Greek to the Greeks. As surely as the home of stern law was away there in the heart of Rome—law that grasped and unified the Empire with an iron hand—even so in all the great Epistle to the Ro-

mans, the word *law* is found dominating and dwarfing all other issues. The more than sixty references in Romans, for instance, to the law of Sinai are so obvious that we need not now consider them in detail. Such mentions of Sinai law, vital though they be, and forming as they do Paul's basis of God's gospel, we do not dwell upon. It is with another and almost curious mention of law that we are now concerned. In this, it will be seen that Roman Paul is still clinging to the imagery of law, the very use of the word in its newness and power adding illumination to the subject, while at the same time conciliating Roman ears. One such powerful phrase is: "The Law of Faith."

I

Note, then, the blessed fact, that Paul is such a Roman to the Romans that he preaches faith as a law. Faith, so definitely in contrast with law all through Paul's Epistles, is yet declared to be a law. "By what Law?" asks the Apostle, and we can almost see the genial smile of his answer, "By the Law of Faith." To Paul, what a wealth of authority lies behind his proclamation, as the Christ's ambassador, of the law of faith. Many

a pro-consul and procurator had he seen flourish an imperial edict in the teeth of a lawless mob, and to Paul, in this solemn concern of the LAW of faith, was not God commanding all men everywhere to repent? If Paul's theme was “the Kingdom of God” (Acts xxviii. 31), then, surely this was a royal edict. Reaching the metropolis as he ultimately did, the last glimpse we have of him in Acts is as “preaching the kingdom of God, no man forbidding him.” And the kingdom of God, to Paul, meant the sphere in which God's Law of Faith was regnant. Through him God was commanding all men everywhere to repent from their law-breaking, much more insistently than any Roman official could claim obedience for his Emperor.

Faith, as a law, however, had a fuller import than its commandment aspect. To the Apostle this law necessarily excluded much, while it included much. As an edict, the same Law of Faith that embraced all men everywhere, just as sweepingly rejected all man's vain boasting. Boasting is excluded, not by whim, but by law—“the Law of Faith.” For the Law of Faith is the law of brokenness of spirit, of emptiness, of humility. And where is boasting here, if not ex-

cluded? The inflexible demand of the law of emptiness is that it excludes fulness, even as brokenness and humility are eternally at war with pride. So inexorable are these laws, that they operated before time was, and drove Satan out of heaven. Boasting, *alias* Satan, was excluded.

Faith is a rock, is certitude, is supremely the sure thing in life. Faith is law, not mist, not mere talk, not dream. It is the only sure thing in the world. This is God's guarantee, as it were, why the Bristol Orphan Homes continue. This, too, is the reason why all who truly tread the path of faith are sure of unerring supply. God is under law to support them, and the watchwords of such a law are "shall" and "must." The only link that binds us to the eternity of God and His steadfast throne is this Law of Faith. Every "shall" and "must" in the treasure house of God is the portion of Faith. There is nothing uncertain in the Law of Faith. The future is merely uncertain in our ignorance of it. With our God the future *is*, and thus faith is under glorious law, and never can "draw a blank." Faith is the evidence of things not seen.

*“His methods are sublime,
His ways supremely kind;
God never is before His time,
And never is behind.”*

II

So definite a thing is this Law of Faith that the Apostle John boldly shows it to be universal even among shrewd men of the world. He declares that, even in the low plane of human affairs, faith as between man and man is utterly indispensable to a day's life in the world. It is the native atmosphere of the human family right across the globe. It is the cement that binds the social fabric in unity. So sure is the Apostle John of this that he boldly argues from this very law of mutual human faith to the higher Divine faith. “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.” Nor does John end here. Such definite leverage does the Apostle see here for the Gospel plea, that he returns to it again under another form: “He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” Thus it is that God turns the world's anti-faith laugh against itself, reminding shrewd men and women that the poorest invest-

ment is the one that ignores God and His Law of Faith. For they who have not faith, yet show the work of that Law of Faith written in their hearts in the very fact that human mutual faith is the fundamental law of even such a vital theme as commerce.

Boasting is excluded by the Law of Faith, says Paul, and so too is bankruptcy. God only excludes in order that He may abound in including. He excludes the sight of human eyeballs, only to give the soul the piercing falcon gaze of faith. The arm of flesh is disowned only to make bare "the Arm of the Lord." Truly he need be no weakling of a missionary who is fully subject to this law. Funds will flow in according to Divine law. "Lacked ye anything?" once asked the God of this law. "Nothing!" was the answer of His own—the answer of the ages.

I like to think of a hidden subtle suggestion there seems to be in this phrase, "Law of Faith," that, after all, *law is law, whether for my eternal life or my daily meal.* The same Law of Faith governs both; even such a stately law as that of Divine supply. David surely felt the wide grasp of this law when in one breath he praised God for binding up the wounds of the broken in heart and

telling the number of the stars! (Ps. cxlvii. 3, 4). A word of cheer, this, surely, to all who are trimming the little lamps of testimony in dark heathen corners of the earth. The God who lights a myriad of burning worlds will keep the little mission lamp alight unto His praise. So exact and sure are God's ways with us that the final sum of them all is “the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.”

III

Finally, what shall we say of such an unwavering Law of Faith, if not that here, indeed, we touch the bed-rock of Christianity. The cringing flesh sees only irritating indefiniteness in Faith as a business basis in life's varied and puzzling affairs. God's most splendid certainty that subdued kingdoms and stopped the mouths of lions is to the flesh no law at all! But the saved soul knows far otherwise. Finding Faith a glorious law operating unto its own life everlasting, surely such a soul sees, in a flash, the Divine law of heaven's lesser being contained in heaven's greater, and as a result will step out with alacrity on the bare promise of God for all.

Surely, just here, we find Paul's reason why his

only reference to Faith as a Law is when he declares that it excludes all human boasting. Man's spasmodic and halting actions are here confronted by the serene certainties of faith. Faith ever pursues its own calm and supreme function in the universe of God, spurning all man's clever little plans and by-laws as its handmaids. There is not a child of God but sees that it is only the naked soul stripped of pretence that claims faith's blessing. And so, too, in all the operations of that law, whether for bread of soul or bread of body. As we received Christ Jesus the Lord, even so must we walk in Him. He is Lord of soul and body, and filleth all things. Beginning in the Spirit, how impoverished must be the faith that seeks to perfect any part of God's work in the flesh. Thus it is that Paul has no other argument of rebuke to those Galatians than the simple yet solid query as to how they received their eternal life. And if by faith, your eternal life, saith Paul, then, O Galatians, why not live your earthly life thereby? The eternal life came to their souls by faith, and the earthly life of testimony must be lived by the same faith. Otherwise it is foolishness: "Are ye so foolish?" Precisely the commiserating word many a worldly

relative throws after a departing kinsman who plunges into heathenism trusting God only for supplies. And this, too, is Paul’s precise retort to all who swerve from the path of Faith: “Are ye so foolish?”

A goodly band in London many years ago was being farewelled to other lands. Text after text was given to us with the godly desire to make them our soul’s portion. Finally rose the beloved M’Vicker with Bible open at the first chapter of Genesis: “God made two great lights. . . . He made the stars also!”

And thus were we sped on our way to distant lands with the glad belief that “He who spared not His own son . . . how shall He not with Him also, freely give us all things?” “Lacked ye anything?” And they said “Nothing!” Surely nothing less than a serene, unwavering Law of Faith operating by night and day could guarantee such a sure supply.

III

“THE CERTAINTIES OF FAITH”

*“You know the hopelessness of such a task
(as African Missions) till you find a St. Paul or
a St. John. Their representatives nowadays
want so much per year and a contract.”*

General Gordon to Sir Richard Burton.

III

“THE CERTAINTIES OF FAITH”

Rom. iv. 16

A MISSIONARY friend not long ago expostulated with me, as a married man, for not having a salary. Something SURE was his idea. On that occasion God spoke from His Word to both of us on the salary subject. What settled the matter as to Faith being the only definite thing Godward was the following word,—“The promise was by Faith that it might be SURE.” There we have the whole subject. The only sure thing is Faith. The thing in my purse or in my hand is not sure. An old platitude, no doubt, is this creature-humbling, Christ-exalting Gospel, but it is well to sound out the call, “Wake brethren, wake.”

We are thus led on in what is positively sure as against what is not sure. The only sure thing is that purposed thing God has stored up in His own heart for me. My bank is God’s heart. My pillow is His bosom.

We certainly travesty this gracious word of

God, "purpose," when we use it concerning high-sounding phrases as to everlasting heaven and happiness, and disown it as to the plenishing of the homely cupboard. Tremblingly we can write the phrase—the eternal purpose of God concerning to-day's meal! For God's purpose to usward is exactly like the third chapter of Colossians. It begins in heaven, as Mr. Spurgeon said, and ends in the kitchen. It speaks of the heavenlies and descends to the earthlies. "It is of Faith that it might be sure."

This brings us to another consideration regarding the path of Faith. It was remarked by my missionary friend to one of our number, that we on the field should be relieved of the burden of the money question, and left free for service. This is so common and specious a mode of referring to the glorious life of Faith, that we should nail it down as we meet it. No; none can have Faith for me. Before high heaven I must myself have faith for myself. It is the only thing another cannot do for me. Bread of my soul, or bread of my body—I must trust Him for both. (Of course they who trust not at all, often get plenty of bread; but so do the ravens and young lions.) If another can trust for me for my daily

bread, then he can trust for me for my soul's salvation. No committee can bear this burden for me. Every man must bear his own burden, in this matter, and that is where the Lord comes in. “Cast thy burden upon the Lord” was written for just such a one.

A close exegesis of the sixth chapter of Galatians, so full of a true balance and combination of qualities, would doubtless show that the precise man to whom the words “Every man shall bear his own burden” refer, is a teacher, looking only to the Lord for temporalities. This we shall see anon. The Lord wants me to cast my burden upon Him, not on a committee. Every man shall bear his own burden up to the Lord, upon whom he rolls it. In the sixth chapter of Galatians the whole subject is revealed. Matters being there put in their true sequence, and every man being burdened with his own responsibility, God's rule of practical, fraternal stewardship flashes into full view. It can only now come into view. He fixes me with my burden, and then, lo, in full view, stand the brethren bearing one another's burdens. There stands the brother who could not go to a foreign land, so you fulfilled his lack of service. And he met your lack as you had met his. He

bears you up in prayer, too—no light burden that—and you seek to serve on God’s upbearing grace.

In Gal. vi. 6, insert Paul’s omitted “but,” and how luminous the link becomes. “Each man shall bear his own burden, *BUT* let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.”

Do we not see here the holy fellowship of stewardship in that linking *BUT*? Souls are linked to souls in a deeper sense than words link words. Every man must look off to God for all; yes, *BUT* every man is to look on the things of others. There is no haphazard exegesis here, we submit. The man who “teacheth” is the central figure. That man must bear his own burden; no committee can do it for him. Yet, hastens the Holy Ghost to add, each man must bear his own burden, *but* let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Widow’s mite, spices of Joseph, and Gaius’ hospitality all echo thereto.

They went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles; therefore let him that is “taught in the Word” succour. Paul speaks of the Gentiles as those who have not the law. From them who know not the Word, nothing is received; *but* let him that is

taught communicate. The servant has often, manwardly, been left to bear his own burden by those who forget to bear one another's burdens. There was no link, no connecting stewardship.

Paul's rallying call in this holy particular is indeed inspiring, and often misunderstood. “Be not deceived” by parsimoniousness, shouts the Apostle. “God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” God's best Sower went forth weeping, bearing precious seed. And as He sowed so shall He also reap.

It behoves us, having thus struck such a high apostolic note, to be found of our God truly out in the sunlight of this path of Faith. Nothing shady; nothing halting in our gait. How often the very phrase, “living by Faith,” is in itself a thing of calculation and counterfeit. How often it stands, not for guileless following of the Homeless Stranger, but for fleshly shifts and contrivances. Sincerity is the cement that binds the Christian testimony together. Surely it is the mother of all hypocrisy to claim to have taken a plunge into the ocean of the Lord when, as a matter of fact, we are really swimming with one foot aground on the shore margin.

This metaphor is literally used concerning

Abraham, God's friend—the father of all who believe. God covenanted with His friend to give him the land by the word of His mouth. Yet of the tangible land itself we thrillingly read that He gave him “no, not so much as to set his foot on.” So, too, with the children of God's friend. We must go forth like our father, not knowing whither we are going. To be literal, we must, humanly speaking, let ourselves drown, reserving, no, not so much as a place to put our foot on. A prearranged contract of salary might be too large, or too small. To have even a semblance of a contract makes it all the more false if we walk in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham. Not even so much as to set your foot on. Not even a little bit of a Society about you. Is all this too sweeping? Has Faith then no footing at all? Yes, and it is located in that very same Scripture. Here it is: “He gave him . . . not so much as to set his foot on; yet He PROMISED.” And the promise is Faith's footing. “It is of Faith that it might be sure.”

In conclusion, it would be well to answer the question as to what particular Scripture stands definitely against a legal contract of salary in the Lord's work. We have only to refer to the other

half of that very same word in Rom. iv. 14. There the Apostle is careful to discriminate, and to him law and flesh are convertible terms. For, saith the Apostle, if the Promise be of law, then Faith is made void, and the Promise is of none effect. Yes, even a very little bit of law, a very small contract, a verbal understanding even—if your money comes through such channels—then Faith is made void, and the promise of none effect. Law, in this connection, is a contract in which A undertakes to do so and so, and B reciprocates with so and so. Along such lines, whether for one’s soul or one’s salary, Faith is made void. The fullest thing in all the economy of grace (the fullest because the emptiest) is made void, and God’s promise returns to His own heart unused.

The sum, then, of the whole matter is that he alone is the really practical Christian who so acts. The Faith that opens everlasting doors can best prove its reality by being now, in time, a cupboard Faith. Christ filleth all things, and therefore the barrel and cruse are of His filling too.

IV

ALL AT IT!

Why be surprised at Islam sweeping one-eighth of the earth's surface? They have no priestly cult; they are all at it!

* * *

“All Christians are altogether priests and let it be anathema to assert there is any other priest than he who is Christian for it will be asserted without the Word of God, on no authority but the sayings of men, or the antiquity of custom, or the multitude of those that think so.”

LUTHER.

* * *

“For ye all can prophesy one by one that all may learn, and all may be comforted.

PAUL.

IV

ALL AT IT!

John iv. 14; 1 Cor. xiv. 31

ONE of the strongest proofs that Christ meant His Church to be a pilgrim band is the fact that He stripped it of all ordinances, save the two *travelling* institutions of Baptism and The Lord's Supper. Wherever man is, there, even there, is water. Wherever the pilgrim rests, there, even there, is some sort of humble table in the wilderness. A sharp intended contrast all this, surely, to the heavy cumbersome Tabernacle furniture of a past dispensation of works. How different the pilgrim Church of the upper room, stripped and lithe for service! There is no ecclesiastical furniture for the only outfit they have is God's INFIT. That is to say, the minimum of machinery and the maximum of power.

I

In this connection, I am indebted to a quaint unlettered African for quite a new proof-text

in favour of the "all-at-it" ministry so distinctive a feature of 1 Cor. xiv. That animated photograph of open ministry in Corinth was linked by the African with the wonderful fourth chapter of John. On the one hand he showed how the same Bantu word bound these two seemingly very different chapters together. Lost in Aryan speech, the link is still strong in Semitic; and the "bubbling up" of a living water-spring is the same word as that "bubbling over" of gift in Corinth. The Assembly is there seen as composed of a congregation of so many living, bubbling water-springs. "He that believeth" is the man of whom it is declared that in him the up-bubbling spring would assert itself. Thus, the animated photograph of Corinth given by Paul is, therefore, only a natural sequence of "all that believe being together." The God who created so many living inlets, does of sheer divine necessity sanction as many outlets. Hence the blessed word of authority: "for ye all can prophesy (or "bubble up") one by one." There is no ecclesiastical outfit in Corinth. It is all infit. And the ordinance of God is, that what He puts *in* must come *out*. "We cannot but speak!" The thing will out.

Nor is that old unlettered African's link exhausted yet awhile. Beyond the link of identical language, you have the stronger link of identical context. Surely the fourth of John is deeply concerned with the very theme of 1 Cor. xiv.? For were not the very words regarding the bubbling-up spring of living water uttered in the specific connection of Christ's words as to "worship in Spirit and in Truth"? And what, indeed, is 1 Cor. xiv. if not the divine snapshot photograph of true and spiritual worship in the Assembly? "All of you have a hymn, etc." What is that if not each individual well of living water bubbling over? Living water only means moving water. God put it *in* and God demands that it come *out*. The water must spring up to the level of its source, hence "the Father seeketh such to worship Him." "Ye can all prophesy one by one." "It shall be in him (in the Assembly) a well of water springing up." How then can mere man shut it down? "The Father seeketh such." Let us all thank God, and that old African, for linking John iv. with 1 Cor. xiv.; a double link of identical language and identical context. He was right. Worship in Spirit and in Truth is the

double theme of these double chapters. The well of water must bubble up if it is living water.

II

Now, all this can stand the sternest of scrutiny. Let us bring to bear upon this humble vision of bubbling springs in the Corinth Assembly the severest test of all known ecclesiastical nomenclature. Take the most complicated of any form of earthly worship. The most intricate of all puzzling forms of human ritual shoots down its roots into the solitary word, *priesthood*. Rome, just here, remember, is the soul of frankness, and heartily claims in priesthood the efficient cause of all her elaborate ritual. Thus, the test becomes unerringly simple, because pivoted on the lone word, *priesthood*. Well, then, literally accepting Rome's own dictum, and speaking in the terms of ecclesiastical systems (for God *had* one such holy institution!), what, I ask, is 1 Cor. xiv. if not a vision of all the worshippers performing priestly service? There they are, a family of priests, with priestly status and office. "Ye can all prophesy one by one," is divine authority conceded to all those spiritual priests. The High Priest has gone in, and they are left behind in

wilderness testimony, priests unto their God. "All of you have a hymn"—surely that is a sacrifice of praise? Now, only a priest, remember, can offer a sacrifice!

To object, as some rightly do, that Paul here regulates the said priestly sacrifices of praise is merely to emphasise this very Levitical analogy. For when, by the commandment of the Lord, Paul said that they *all* could so offer the sacrifice of praise, the priesthood of *all* believers was thereby acknowledged. To regulate the godly exercise of such ministry as he proceeds forthwith to do, is merely to accentuate that very priestly aspect of the Corinth Assembly. For the Levites were not a mob, but served in orderly courses. Hence Paul, by the commandment of the Lord, *founds* on their very spiritual priesthood to declare that all things must be done "decently and in order." The very Levitical phrase this, used in 1 Chron. vi. 32 to remind us that, priests though they all were, yet did they "wait on their office according to their order." "Ye can all prophesy one by one." That is their Levite birthright. "Let the prophets speak two or three." That is the Levites in their courses. "Ye can all prophesy

one by one” does not stupidly mean, “all in one day”!

III

There is no cheap *ad captandum* analogy here. The mere edge, this, of that rich vein of Levitical analogy so beautifully elaborated by Miss Habershon.¹ Quite one hundred and forty sober points of analogy she adduces between the priesthood of Israel and the Church of God! The interpenetration, too, of this analogy absolutely perfect. In fact, after reading *The Priests and Levites*, one sees at a glance that on this subject he alone is divinely theological who is analogical.

The Pope and a quorum of Cardinals would have hard work to try and explain away Miss Habershon’s solid one hundred and forty instances of common analogical birthright between the select Levites of old and *all* Christ’s Church. Luther it was, in the old fierce battle-days, who seized upon this very 1 Cor. xiv. weapon to break Popery therewith. Alas, that he should ever have allowed himself to drift beyond such an anchorage! Nevertheless, Martin Luther’s great letter to the Moravian Brethren will ever stand

¹ *The Priests and Levites, a type of the Church.* By Ada R. Habershon. Alfred Holness.

stubbornly on record, eloquent of the fact that, when the tempest raged its worst, 1 Cor. xiv. was the silencing weapon he wielded against Rome to demonstrate the priesthood of *all* believers. "All Christians," said Luther, "are altogether priests and let it be anathema to assert there is any other priest than he who is Christian for it will be asserted without the Word of God and on no authority but the sayings of men or the antiquity of custom or the multitude of those that think so." "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away."

Why is it that so many exegetes under a specious plea of rightly dividing the "Word" warn us off "Hebrews" as being a Jewish Epistle? Is it because God has declared that the *whole* Church of Christ is a priesthood, and proved it to the hilt in one hundred and forty stubborn links of analogy? And if all the Church be a heavenly priesthood where is the *laity*? And where the status of "clericy"? Truly a straw indicates the current, and we are less Protestant than we think.

The godly Pastor (and we must have *him!*) is the man who realises that he only officially exists to foster this "all-at-it" functioning of the mem-

bers of the body. God's big-hearted Moses could confound many a weakling jealous of his peurile priestly prerogative. Listen to the royal record: "And there ran a young man and told Moses . . . Eldad and Medad do prophesy in camp. And Joshua said, 'My lord Moses, forbid them.' And Moses said, 'Art thou jealous for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!'" "

Big-hearted Moses agrees admirably with brave-hearted Paul who said "Ye may all prophesy one by one."

To sum up. To regulate all this bubbling up gift is one thing. To suppress it is quite amazingly another. Why bring civil war into God's contest? In the very breath where He says "God is not a God of confusion but of peace," the word proceeds "Ye all can prophesy one by one." How then can this connote confusion?

But the clinching and convincing proof is found in the very (yes! very) verse that is used to kill out this same "all-at-it" ministry. What, I ask, is so seemingly contradictory of this "all-at-it" proposition as the well-worn line, "Let all things be done decently and in order"? Yet this very

line occurs in *the same convincing context* as “ye can all prophesy one by one”! How, then, can we even faintly conceive that “decency and order” are at war with its own context of “all-at-it” ministry?

On the convincing contrary, what can divine decency and order mean if not this very open ministry *which is its consistent context*? By what manner of exegetical propriety can you enter 1 Cor. xiv. by the back door of “Let all things be done decently and in order,” and then calmly ignore the preceding precept that “ye can all prophesy one by one”? Here surely you have the old story of David cutting off the head of Goliath with the giant’s own sword. And the very verse assumed to be against is actually the proof-text for this “all-at-it” method.

This and this alone will evangelise the world—*all at it!* Too long a mere nickname has done duty for an argument. And to call this “Plymouthism” or any other “ism” is merely to be the victim of an exasperated expedient. It is the old obvious artifice of making a nickname do duty for an argument. It takes all sorts of people to make a world and all sorts of members to make a ministering body. That there *is* a certain kind

of powerful, pungent illiteracy can be proved from the inspired Word of God where not a few portions are written in "bad Greek." The pedantic essayist may appeal to the select few, but God's millions are multiform and the majority do not care to catch up a royal rousing man on a mere verbal technicality. The soft eye cannot say to the hard, horny hand, "I have no need of thee." Nay, much more, the very members which seem to be more feeble are necessary. For the body is not one member but many.

The case of Islam is a clear convincing proof of a non-clerical caste sweeping one-eighth of the world's population with an "all-at-it" propaganda. From Morocco to Zanzibar, from Sierra Leone to Siberia and China, from Bosnia to New Guinea has witnessed the success of "all-at-itism."

THE END

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