

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

to be absent in the older Sumerian version now described. The narrative at this point speaks of his prostrating himself (apparently in adoration of, the king of light), and the sacrifices which he proceeded to make. Here an ox and a sheep replace the vegetable offerings of the Flood-hero whom Gilgamesh journeyed so far to see.

There remains only the 6th and last column, as far as it is preserved. A deity apparently urges them (Zi-û-sudu, his wife, and all those who were with him in the 'mighty boat') to conjure the sender of the Flood, Ana-Enlilla, that he should

be well-disposed towards them. This he does, and Zi-û-sudu receives life—eternal life—like that of a god. After this comes a reference to the things which I have rendered 'roots,' growing in the ground. These the patriarch-king seems to have called 'the seed of mankind,' and they were made to live—how is not stated—in another land, apparently the district called Tilmun, on the shores of the Persian Gulf—practically south and south-western Babylonia, with, possibly, the island of Bahrein, if we accept Oppert's identification.

In the Study.

An Induction Sermon.

BY THE REV. A. F. TAYLOR, M.A., ST. CYRUS.

'Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it.'—Is 30^{20, 21}.

WE are met here on an occasion of very special local interest—the induction of a new pastor over his congregation—but there broods upon all our minds to-day the shadow of a great European crisis and a great national anxiety. I have not found it easy to find a text that should be in harmony with both the particular and the general situation. I have finally selected the verse which I have read to you from the thirtieth chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.

The prophet Isaiah was a master of phrases. His style is full of vigorous contrasts—contrasts of sound, contrasts of words, contrasts of thought. Contrasts of sound and contrasts of words can scarcely be reproduced in a translation, but contrasts of thought remain in whatsoever language they are rendered, and we have such a contrast of thoughts in this particular text. 'Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed.' The text sets two things in contrast to one another, and represents the one as in some measure a compensation for the other—and some people may think it a very inadequate compensation. The words have the appearance and promise of comfort, but the comfort is of a somewhat

elusive kind. One can understand the comfort of such words as, I will give you deliverance from your enemies, or relief from your suffering, or rest from your fear; or even of the Apostle Paul's assurance that the afflictions and troubles of this present life will find an adequate compensation in the joy and glory of the life to come. But this surely is strange comfort anyway, 'Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers (or preachers) be removed.'

I would have you note, first, the vigorous nature of the metaphor. *Bread* and *water* are the daily necessities of life. It is almost as if the prophet had said, 'Though adversity and affliction be with you every day of your lives, so that you seem almost to feed on them, yet you need not be discouraged. There is compensation; and the compensation is this, that your teachers, or preachers, will still be with you.' Curiously enough, the prophet Amos uses the same metaphor, and the same contrast of thought, but in a different way—as embodying not a message of comfort, but a message of warning. 'Behold,' he says, 'I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord . . . and they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.' It is just as if he had said, There are worse things that can happen to a people even than the terror of famine, and that is, that they should not be able to hear any word of the Lord for the comfort and strengthening of their souls. So here the prophet says, Even in

the midst of national anxiety, peril, and disaster, no people need despair if there are still among them those who can speak some message of God to their souls. Of course there are some people to whom this word-promise will not appeal. That which the word specifies as one of the good and gracious things which may sustain the national life in the midst of adversity will not appear to them to be any great comfort or any adequate compensation. But just herein lies the freshness and boldness of the metaphor. Who but a man of genius, who but a man who was conscious of the moral momentum and persuasiveness he was able to put into his words, would have dared to offer the people such an apparently illusive comfort as this? 'Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy preachers be removed.' 'Poor comfort!' one may say, 'for who are my preachers? and what help worth speaking of can they give me in the time of trouble? "The heart knoweth its own bitterness; and a stranger intermeddleth not with its joy." I must eat the bread of adversity alone, and I must drink the water of affliction alone. Money may help me if I am poor; a strong arm may help me if I am in peril; a physician may help me in the hour of sickness, but what can the preacher do for me anyway? Will words discharge my debt, or frighten my foe, or heal me of my sickness? How are these two things to come into touch with one another—poverty and peril and sickness, so real and so pungent, and on the other side words—mere words! Miserable comforters are ye all!'

And yet there is a deep, an abiding, and a marvellous truth in this message of the prophet; for, after all, the spiritual compensations of life are the only adequate ones, for through them, however the body may suffer, the soul still triumphs!

Of course the difficulty of realizing the full comfort of this message lies in the fact that the actual or professional teacher, or preacher, falls often so far short of the ideal. After all, there are but few preachers who actually *are* all that the ideal preacher has it in him to be. One or two great lights there are in every generation, whether we call them prophets, philosophers, or poets; some lesser lights that may still be accounted great; lesser still in diminishing degree until we come down to those whose light is so feeble that it is almost a mockery to call them lights, forces, or

powers at all. The greater lights are men whose names will live for ever—Isaiah, Jeremiah, the Apostle Paul, Wycliffe and Luther, Knox and Wesley and Chalmers; the lesser lights are the ephemerally popular preachers, serviceable in their own day and generation, but not remembered beyond it; and so down by degrees we come to those who are still preachers in name, but in whose voices there is no ring of conviction, in whose thoughts there is no light, in whose message there is no power to comfort or inspire. I speak feelingly, as every preacher must who is conscious how far his own actual service falls below the ideal.

'Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed'—a high ideal of the preacher's office lies behind these words, and it is only if we turn our thoughts away from the actual and professional preacher, and fix them on the preacher God-given and God-endowed, that we feel the full truth of them. But what an inestimable boon such a God-given and God-endowed teacher is! How he grips his generation and lifts it out of lethargy and despair! How he arouses men to new efforts, and awakens them to new interests, and imparts fresh zest to their lives! He *is* some compensation to a people in the time of their adversity and affliction, for it is just in such times that he comes to his own, and often enough he transforms a nation's adversity and affliction into glory and honour. It is almost impossible to overstate what one man may be to the generation to whom God has sent him. No greater boon can come to any nation than that there should be ever with them some man of God to strengthen them in adversity or guide their counsels in the time of peace!

Such a man was the prophet Isaiah himself. Those were days of terrible anxiety in Jerusalem when he lived, and had it not been for him they might have been days of terrible disaster also. Had it not been for Isaiah the fate of Jerusalem might have been like that of Samaria, which, crushed by the might of Assyria, never again raised its head. Such men also were Wycliffe and Luther, Knox and Wesley and Chalmers. The ideal preacher is a captain and leader of men, moulder of their thoughts and inspirer of their feelings, from which all their actions spring. He may not immediately and literally be able to deliver a people from their adversity. He cannot blow away an

army like the legendary Elisha ; but he can stand by a people in the midst of their adversity, delivering them from cowardice, inspiring them with courage, confidence, and hope. Adversity and affliction are very sore experiences of life, but, if they should befall us, it is much indeed if we may be strengthened and inspired to bear them manfully and go bravely through with the work of life in spite of them.

There are thousands of young men everywhere crying for some one to teach them, to be the master of their thoughts, and to lead them in the ways of the higher and nobler life. Let but the true God-given and God-endowed preacher appear, and choice souls will gather round him, be they few or many ; and it is a wonderful thing indeed that even those who can lay no claim to exceptional gifts of learning, eloquence, or force are yet permitted to bear their part in this great ministry of comfort and inspiration. If we ministers have felt discouraged sometimes by the thought of how little we seem to be able to help or influence those round about us, have we not also been surprised sometimes to know that some word of ours has indeed brought strength or comfort to a frail or suffering soul ?

Let me close with a word of comfort to my brethren in the ministry. Knowing what I myself have felt, I know what you have felt also. I know that many of you, my brethren, have often felt discouraged and sometimes, perhaps, even depressed. You know, indeed, that you have a message, but often enough utterance seems to be denied you—at least such utterance, powerful and persuasive, as you would wish to achieve. Let me then remind you that things are to be valued according to their nature, not merely according to their magnitude. Whatever raised to its highest power is manifestly able to exert an *enormous* influence, must be able to exercise *some* influence even at its lowest power. The sun illuminates the whole solar system, but that very fact implies that a candle flame may illuminate a room. We must not allow ourselves to think or feel that our ministry or service is of no account because it is not of as great account as we should wish it to be, or as some other man's apparently is.

At the beginning of the complete edition of Wordsworth's poems (at least of my edition) there stands as preface to the whole a Sonnet in which I myself have often found comfort and which,

with the omission of a single word, I hand on to you :

If thou indeed derive thy light from Heaven,
Then, to the measure of that heaven-born light,
Shine—in thy place, and be content :—
The stars pre-eminent in magnitude,
And they that from the zenith dart their beams,
(Visible though they be to half the earth,
Though half a sphere be conscious of their brightness)
Are yet of no diviner origin,
No purer essence, than the one that burns,
Like an untended watchfire, on the ridge
Of some dark mountain ; or than those which seem
Humbly to hang, like twinkling winter lamps,
Among the branches of the leafless trees ;
All are the undying offspring of one Sire :
Then, to the measure of the light vouchsafed,
Shine—in thy place, and be content !

Virginibus Puerisque.

I.

August.

'Behold a basket of summer fruit.'—Am 8^l.

If any of you children chanced to go to Ayrshire in the summer-time, and found yourselves near a place called Alloway, you would meet tourists from all over the world, and see them, not only lingering by the banks of the river Doon, but trying to get a glimpse of a real Scottish ploughman. The explanation of this is, that there was once a ploughman lived in the neighbourhood whose name was Robert Burns. He was a man who had visions. He could not even see a wild daisy growing without dreaming about it, and his mind becoming filled with beautiful thoughts. When he wrote these thoughts down, they seemed just full of music. Ever since his death, people have spoken of Robert Burns as the greatest of Scottish poets. Then France had a wonderful painter called Millet. He also came of humble peasant folk, and his pictures make one feel sure that there must be something pure and lovely about the character of the French peasantry.

Sometimes I think that town children miss a great deal by not coming more into contact with the people who live always in the country and whose men-folk plough the fields and take care of the sheep ; their lives are so full of interest, and they themselves often so good. The Prophet Amos was just a farm labourer. According to his own description he was a herdsman and a

dresser of sycamore trees, which means that he tended the sheep and the goats and took care of the sycamore fruit. In the course of his day's work, he naturally had many opportunities of learning nature's secrets and hearing God speak. One day there came to him the command of the Lord to go and tell the people of Israel about their sins. And Amos went. Think of this plain man of the hills appearing amongst those who thought themselves very great and also very 'grand.' Amos, the herdsman, might seem rugged and uncouth, but you may be sure that his straight simple words arrested the attention of his listeners.

He took pictures from his outdoor life to enforce his arguments. Once a vision came to him: 'A basket of summer fruit.' That sounds nice, doesn't it? I know that the thoughts of you boys and girls turn at once to strawberries, raspberries, and plums that have a beautiful fresh bloom upon them. But to Amos this vision did not speak of the lusciousness of ripe summer fruit, but of its decay. Probably there appeared to him just the common fruit amongst which he worked every day during the whole fruit season—the fig of the sycamore tree. It was one of those fruits that have to be eaten as soon as they are plucked. You know how soon even strawberries and raspberries lose their flavour when off the bushes.

The sycamore fig of Palestine was a most peculiar growth. An interesting writer and preacher tells us that it grew, not from the branches, but from the trunk of the tree, and on short stems. In order to produce this fruit, the part of the tree where it budded required to have a cut or wound made in it. From this wound or opening a bud sprang up, which grew and formed the fruit. Then when the fruit was nearly ripe, it required to be punctured, or to have what is called its 'eye' removed, for the fig was infested with an insect that gave it a bad taste. When the 'eye' or top was cut off, the insect escaped and the fruit then became sweet. Now, boys and girls, try to remember that the sycamore fig originated in a wound, and was made sweet by a wound. It was altogether an unnatural growth.

The vision of the ripe sycamore figs brought to Amos a message of judgment for Israel. It is right that your dream of 'a basket of summer fruit' should bring only thoughts of joy. God meant it to be so. For those of you who cannot have baskets of strawberries or raspberries He

has made a lovely fruit garden. It is out in the country, in the woods, and by the waysides. With some children I have known, summer reached its fullest glory only when there came a day of gathering ripe wild fruit. You love colour, I know. You like the field flowers. But what happiness is to be compared with that of spending a day in the woods, or of wandering for hours amongst hedges, and at night going home with baskets full of Nature's good things? You don't all carry baskets, I know. I have met many a merry party returning from gathering blaeberreries. The shy, happy smile, the little black mouths, and the flagons told me what they had been about.

Last month, walking through a wood, I noticed the blaeberreries ripening, and I could not help thinking of God's goodness. The bushes grew amidst the softest of mossy carpets, and little flowers peeped up here and there, as if laughing to see a grown person trying to find a ripe blaeberry in early July. I was trespassing in the children's garden. Whatever be the sorrows in the world, God does not forget you, my boys and girls. He gives you many things to make you happy, amongst them the 'basket of summer fruit.'

When Amos delivered his terrible message, he was looking back over the story of a nation that had sinned. You are looking forward. Your 'basket of summer fruit'—does it speak to you of anything beyond the mere joy of eating it?

Many years ago, a girl went blaeberrying with her brother. The wood was a long way from where they lived, and a schoolboy companion asked them to go to his home for tea. This boy's father was a crofter. What a quaint old house the girl was taken to. She looked up and saw the rafters in the kitchen. They were quite black. At first, she wondered if she could enjoy her tea. Of course she did, and that very much. Afterwards, quite a number of people came into the kitchen, and seated themselves in a circle. Bibles were handed round, then a psalm was sung to a very old-fashioned tune. After that came a chapter from the Bible—read verse about. Some of the readers read like little children: you know what I mean. Lastly, they all knelt down and an old grandfather prayed.

On the way home, the girl felt that her day at 'the blaeberreries' had somehow not been quite so full of fun as usual. Now, when she is old and has forgotten the sweetness of the wild fruit, she

looks back on that Saturday as one of the happiest in her life. There was sunshine, there were flowers; and her visit to the crofter's cottage made her think of God. The sycamore fruit was an unnatural growth: so too was the wickedness of Israel. They were God's children and had forgotten it; thus their happiness and prosperity could—like the sweetness of the figs—endure only for a moment. Take then your 'basket of summer fruit,' my boys and girls, with God's blessing. Remember you are His children, and that He is caring for you. His goodness 'endureth for ever.'

II.

Like to Like.

'And being let go, they went to their own company.'—Ac 4²³ (A. V.).

Who were the men who 'went to their own company'? They were Peter and John, the disciples of Jesus. Peter, who was accompanied by John, had healed a lame man who lay at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, and the event had caused great excitement among the people. Now you know what happens in our own towns when anything unusual occurs—a big crowd gathers. It was just the same in Jerusalem. The people ran together to see what was the matter, and I wouldn't be a bit surprised to learn that there were a very great number of small boys in that crowd. Peter began to speak to the people about how they had crucified Christ and how He had risen again, and many of them were won over to the side of Jesus. But when the priests heard about it, they were very much alarmed, so they shut up Peter and John in prison for the night. The following morning the rulers and elders and scribes had Peter and John brought into their midst, and they tried to get them to promise not to speak any more to the people. But when the disciples refused to do this, the council, after threatening them, let them go, for they were afraid of the people. And, Peter and John being let go, 'went to their own company.'

Who were the companions to whom Peter and John went? They were also disciples of Jesus, and the next few verses let us see what kind of men they were. They were good men, and they were brave men, praying that they might still have boldness to speak the word in spite of the threats that had been made.

Do you know that if we had learned nothing more about Peter and John than what is told us in our text, and what we read about the company to which they joined themselves, we could still have told what kind of men they were. Now I wonder how that is? Well, it's just like this. Men and women, boys and girls, too, are known by the company they choose, when they are free to choose. If we had been told what kind of company Peter and John had in prison, we wouldn't have known a bit more what kind of men they were themselves. Very likely they had beside them robbers and murderers, but that didn't mean that *they* were robbers and murderers. Their companions were chosen for them. But as soon as they were free they went to the companions they had chosen themselves, and people do not choose companions unless they like them and have something in common with them.

You will find that you are judged by the company you keep, by the friends you choose. Have you ever heard the story of the farmer who had a pet parrot? One day he lost his parrot. Search was made everywhere but Polly could not be found. A few days later the farmer set out to shoot some crows who were damaging his crops. He hid himself behind a hedge and took aim, and then went to see how many crows had been killed. Lying beside the dead crows he found his favourite parrot, one wing broken by the shot. And when he picked it up, what do you think it said? 'Bad company; bad company!'

Yes, it was bad company that had brought Polly to this sad pass; and remember, if you are found amongst the crows, you will be taken for a crow; if you company with bad boys and girls, you will be thought to be one of them.

Now if somebody were to come to me and ask me about one of you, 'What kind of boy is that?' or, 'What do you think of that girl?' I should say to them, 'Will you give me a few days to find out, and then I will tell you?' Of course I should have to put on a sort of invisible cap, because if you knew I were watching you, you would be a different kind of boy or girl—not the real boy or girl. Well, suppose I had on my invisible cap and set out to watch you, where do you think I should go? Perhaps you imagine I should follow you into school and stand behind your form, or sit on your desk to see how you did your lessons. Oh dear no, I shouldn't think of wasting time

over that. I should know that while you are in school you have to keep to certain rules and do certain things—you are just one of a crowd who have to keep these same rules and do these same things. So while you were in school I should take a little nap to prepare me for the hard work I should have later on.

But when school hours were over, when you were 'let go,' I should stand beside the door and watch you coming out; I should follow you to the playground and notice what kind of games you played, and how you played them. I should notice what sort of temper you showed at games, whether you played fair, and whether you gave the other boy credit for playing fair. I should follow you on the way home. I should notice the groups you broke up into—who were your chums. Then when your lessons were learned in the evening and your books put away, I should watch how you employed your spare time.

Here is a boy or girl who makes for a book and sits down to devour it quite oblivious of all that is going on around. It is not difficult to tell what sort of young people they are. Here are others who get out their cricket bat or their tennis racquet—they are fond of games. Here is a boy who gets hold of his tools and starts whittling and hammering at something. He has a taste for engineering. Here is a girl who likes to bake things or sew things. She is going to be a good housewife. Here is another girl who gets out her paint-box and her pencil. She has a love for art. Here is a boy who goes out and hangs about the street idle. He is in danger of getting into serious mischief and making a mess of his life. Here is a girl who is so tired of everything, and thinks there is nothing nice to do. She is laying the foundations of an unhappy nature, and if she doesn't pull herself together, she will turn out a bore to herself and her friends.

Yes, it isn't how we behave when we are being watched and held in that shows what we really are: it is the company we choose when we are free—the company of things and of people: it is the way we act when nobody is watching. Are we just as straight and upright behind our mothers' and fathers' backs as we would be if they were looking on?

There is a story of an American statesman who lost his wife, and on her tombstone he had these words carved: 'Sacred to the memory of Jocelyn,

wife of J. Sterling Morton and mother of Paul, Mark, and Joy Morton.' One day a friend who had seen the tombstone remarked on the strangeness of the inscription, and asked Mr. Morton why he had had the boys' names put there. And what do you think the statesman replied? 'I have taken my boys to see the tombstone, and I have told them that if one of them does anything to dishonour his mother's memory I will have that one's name chiselled off the stone.' I think those boys would be very careful always to be honourable, and clean, and true. I think they would be anxious never to do anything mean or unworthy. And I think it is a splendid rule for all of us, whether they are with us still, or whether they are waiting for us in our Home above—never to do anything, anywhere, of which our mothers would be ashamed.

III.

The Enchantment of Sin.

'Ye will not come to me that ye may have life.'—Jn 5⁴⁰.

In the book called *The Faerie Queene* is told the tale of the quest of Sir Guyon. The story tells that the Faerie Queen had a feast every year for twelve days. All her brave knights were in attendance at the court, and people who had suffered any injury came and begged for help against the wicked fairies or witches, or dragons who had done them harm, and the Faerie Queen sent her knights to redress their wrongs, to slay the dragon, or the magician, or whatever else was needed. At one of these feasts an old palmer appeared. He was dressed in black, and carried a long staff in his hand. He had come to complain of the doings of a wicked witch called Acrasia, who did many evil things in his country. There was at the feast a brave handsome knight, named Guyon, and to him the Queen gave the task of going with the palmer, to save his country from the enchantress. So they set out together, and met with many adventures by the way. They came to a sea which they had to cross, and got a boat and a boatman to take them over. For some days they rowed on past great sea monsters, and enchanted islands, and at last they drew near to the land where Acrasia lived. Then Guyon got his arms ready; and as soon as they touched the shore, he took the palmer with him as his guide, and set out to find the witch. Savage beasts came rushing and roar-

ing at them, but when the palmer waved his staff they slunk away. On they went till they reached a beautiful ivory palace. A young man at the gate offered them wine, but they would not drink it. They went through lovely gardens, gay with flowers, and fountains, and ringing with the song of birds. A beautiful lady wished to persuade them to drink the grape juice which she squeezed into a cup for them, but Guyon dashed the cup to the ground, and pressed on till he found the witch lying on a bed of red roses. Creeping softly up, he flung a net over her, and made her a captive. Then he destroyed her palace that it might entice no one else, and led her away a prisoner to the boat. As they went the savage beasts came rushing at them again, but the palmer touched them with his staff, and lo! they were changed into men. They had all been men once, but had been turned into beasts by the power of the wicked witch. For the wicked witch is just Sin, who makes men like beasts, when they listen to her tempting songs and taste the wine she offers them. Some of the men looked angry when they saw the witch a prisoner, and some were full of shame for their past conduct, but all were glad for being delivered. All, indeed, except one. His name was Grille, and he had been changed into a pig. He had been a pig so long that he had grown used to it, and could not think of anything better. So he only grunted in a discontented way, and said, 'Why did you not leave me alone? I *wish* to be a pig. It is far better to be a pig than a man. There are plenty of roots and acorns here, and nice mud to roll in. What more do I want?' Sir Guyon was very much surprised at his ingratitude and said,

'See the mind of beastly man,
That hath so soone forgot the excellence
Of his creation, when he life began,
That now he chooseth with vile difference
To be a beast, and lacke intelligence.'

Then the palmer said,

'Let Grille be Grille, and have his hoggish
mind:
But let us hence depart, whilst weather serves
and wind.'

So the good old man touched him again, and changed him back. Then the boat sailed away and carried Guyon and the palmer back to the palace of the Faerie Queen, the men who had been

restored went back to their own homes, and Grille was left to root and grub to his heart's content.

Now that was a choice to make! He liked being a pig! You may have heard of some one who was as greedy as a pig, or as lazy, or as dirty, or as obstinate as a pig, but nobody likes being compared to a pig, much less being one. There was a time when Grille did not like it either, when he thought his heart was broken because he knew he had become a pig; but that was so long ago that he had quite forgotten it, and now he would not be anything else though he had the chance.

Of course you don't mean to grow up lazy and greedy and obstinate. Then take care. Now, while you are young, is the time to form your habits. You are shaping your character now, and it will not be easy to change it afterwards. You are growing like your companions, whether you choose good or bad ones. You are filling your minds with pure thoughts from good books, or with bad things from trashy papers. Perhaps you are giving in to what you know is wrong, instead of fighting against it. If it is pleasant you have not courage to refuse it, as Sir Guyon dashed down the enchanted wine that was offered him. All these things are making your future character. You are *changing yourself* into something, and time will show what it will be. So when people point out faults to you, and advise you not to get into bad habits, you should be grateful, and try to put them right. How sad it would be if you made yourself into a growling bear, or a sneaking fox, or a coarse groveling pig. It would take more than the touch of a magician's wand to undo it. Worst of all, there will come a time when you do not wish to change. It is too much trouble. You had rather be a pig!

Missionaries in the poor parts of our cities say that the most hopeful part of their work is among the children, because their character is not yet formed, and they may, when they see what is good, follow it, and grow up good men and women. When people have become accustomed to sinful habits, it is very very difficult to help them. They cannot change themselves, and they have lost the wish to be changed.

There is only One who can change people back from the sad shapes they have made for themselves—the Saviour of the world. Even He cannot do it against their will. He grieved over the city of Jerusalem, and said, 'O Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth

gather her brood under her wings, and ye *would not!*' And again He said to the people of Jerusalem, 'Ye *will not come* unto me, that ye may have life.' He offered them salvation from their sins, and life with Him in heaven for ever. He begged them to take it but they would not have it, and He could not give it to them against their will.

You are made in the image of God, will you not give Him your hearts to keep now, before sin has laid its spell upon them, lest it should change you into its own ugliness, and you should be content, and forget what God meant you to be—His dear children?

IV.

Look Straight Ahead.

The Rev. E. W. Sheppard-Walwyn has published a volume of Talks with Boys and Boy Scouts, under the title of *Look Straight Ahead* (Allenson; 1s. 6d. net). We shall quote the talk that gives the book its title:—

A boy went to learn farming. The first morning he was taken out to see how ploughing was done. He said:

'Any silly can do that. All you've got to do is to hold the handles, and the horse does the work.'

So the farmer let him try. The line went all crooked, and he felt very sheepish.

'What were you looking at when you ploughed?' his master asked him.

'Looking at?—er—I was watching the funny things the plough turned up, beetles and crooked stones,' he said.

'Exactly. Look at something *on ahead*—that tall bit in the hedge, for instance.'

So he tried again.

The second time the line went all over the place.

'There now! I looked at something in front,' said the boy.

'What did you look at?' asked the farmer.

'Well—er—there was a cow fooling about in front of me.'

'And you looked at that? Silly boy. Look at a *stationary object*, something that doesn't move, I told you—that little tree in the hedge.'

So he learnt to plough at last.

You boys have a long line to plough through the world. If you look *near* at hand, I mean, at yourself, you will make a mess of it.

Looking on oneself too highly, *i.e.* being cocksure and conceited; or looking on oneself too lowly, *i.e.* being downhearted—both result in crooked lines.

Looking at the cow is like copying good people. They make mistakes. The cow was first here then there. So 'good' people make mistakes. They do a 'good' thing one day, and something not so good another day.

Some quite kind men and women are making most serious mistakes, for instance, about Sunday, and are letting the boys have their week-day fun on God's day, so that they may not be 'dull.'

So, never say, 'It must be all right to do that, because so-and-so does it, who is *such* a nice person.' Else you will plough your own line all crooked. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews tells about a lot of good men of the Old Testament, Abraham, David, Samuel, etc.

Then chapter 12 begins: '*Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses (i.e. all these 'good people' watching us from the other world), let us run with patience the race (or plough the line) that is set before us, looking unto —.*'

Well, you would think that, having filled a whole chapter with talking about these 'good people' of the Old Testament, it is surely going to say, 'Looking unto *them*,' as examples. But it deliberately leaves the whole lot out, and puts another name—'*Jesus*.'

He is the 'stationary object,' the 'same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' If you put Him up in front of you, you will always plough straight.

If you think how He used to speak to His mother, and the kind of books He was likely to have been fond of reading, then all your own words to your mother will be kind and manly, and you will never read anything you will afterwards struggle in vain to forget.

Some, when they are rude, say, 'Oh, it's only in fun.' They have not looked hard enough at Jesus Christ to *see* what a smudgy thing rudeness is.

Others will tell a lie, and say, 'It's only a green one.' They have not looked hard enough at Jesus to see that all lies are black, none are 'white' or 'green.'

The Lord Jesus first ploughed the line Himself through life without a mistake, and has been standing at the end of it ever since, and is beckoning

you on with His wounded hand to follow in His steps. If you could catch but a glimpse of the love in His eyes as He watches you, it would then be easy to go on trying, and not to be discouraged in the Christian life. For His eyes have the most amazing power in them. They can draw you

through any difficulty, and out of anything bad you ever get into. But you must give proper time, in your prayers, and on Sunday, to get a look right into His eyes. A hurried look is no use, as then your look and His *haven't time to get clinched together.*

The Pioneer of Faith and of Salvation.

A STUDY OF THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF JESUS AS PRESENTED IN
THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

BY THE REV. ALFRED E. GARVIE, D.D., PRINCIPAL OF NEW COLLEGE, LONDON.

I.

1. ONE of the objects of the religious-historical school, which it pursues with great ingenuity and industry, is to *correlate* Christianity with other religions, to minimize its originality and to magnify its borrowings. Much is made of the dependence of the Fourth Gospel on Philo, of Paul on Stoicism or the mystery-cults, of the Epistle to the Hebrews on the Platonic doctrine of ideas, and even of Jesus on Jewish Apocalyptic. It is no interest of Christian theology to deny altogether any of these connexions; but it is its duty to challenge the too exclusive attention given to these relations, and so the disproportionate impression made of their influence. It is in the moral and religious realm that the uniqueness of Christianity lies; and the reality of the personal experiences of believers, dependent on, and reproductive of, the personal experience of Jesus, is the absolutely original contribution of Christianity to the religious and moral life of mankind. This reality transforms, and so invests with fresh meaning and new worth, any elements of religion or morals which, as an organism affected by its environment, the Christian faith may have borrowed; and it is its assimilation of what seem foreign elements that is a proof of its vitality.

2. Applying these general considerations to the Epistle to the Hebrews, we may observe (i.) how the Platonic contrast between reality and appearance, the heavenly substance and the earthly shadow, is resolved into unity in the personal experience of Jesus, and (ii.) how the personal experience of Jesus is the source and the pattern of

the personal experience of believers, so that they too, even as He, have risen above that contrast. He who is the Pioneer of their salvation (2¹⁰) is also the pioneer of their faith (12²); and through faith in Him, who is 'the effulgence of God's glory, and the very impress of his substance' (*ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ, 1⁸*), they possess the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen (*ἐλπίζομένων ὑπόστασις, πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων, 11¹*). The disparagement of the image in comparison with the idea, characteristic of Platonism, the author of Hebrews does pronounce regarding the whole Levitical ritual system; but the salvation and the sacrifice of Christ do not belong to the inferior earthly order, but to the perfect heavenly order; and here man is in contact not with transitory appearance, but with eternal reality. We may apply to his standpoint Rothe's declaration that *the ethical is the ontological*. The author is the master and not the slave of the philosophy he uses for his own purpose.

3. While a false and wrong use was made of the distinction between the religion of Jesus and the Christian religion in order to depreciate the latter in comparison with the former, yet Christian theologians have made a profound mistake who, to assert the claim of the second, have ignored the worth of the first. Christ Jesus is both the object and the subject of faith, and He is the one only because He is the other; in His own sacrifice He realized the salvation which the believer receives from Him. We can escape an intolerable legalism, formalism, and externalism in dealing with this doctrine of the