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with the man's courage that he commanded the firing party to lower their muskets, and spare the prisoner's life. 'But,' said he, 'we shall put a mark upon him.' They made a branding-iron red-hot and placed it on the peasant's hand. When they removed it something was left there. 'What is that?' asked the woodman. 'That,' said the officer, 'is an N. for Napoleon. You belong to him now.' The man turned, placed the branded hand on a solid place, took his axe from his belt, and with one stroke severed the hand from his arm. 'There now!' cried he, 'there is not one bit of me that does not belong to the Czar.' That man was truly loyal. He preferred to lose his hand rather than be branded a traitor to his country. He was willing to give his hand for his king.

How much are we willing to give for our country? And how deep does our loyalty go? We are ready to climb the lamp-post or scale the wall to see the procession, and we shout ourselves hoarser than most, and sing 'God save the King' till we feel thrills like little trickles of cold water running down our back. But that kind of loyalty is only skin-deep. The loyalty that is ready to sacrifice everything if need be is the true loyalty.

4. But the amethyst has one more message for us. It says, *Be loyal to your Heavenly King.* Boys and girls, that kind of loyalty sometimes costs more than loyalty to your earthly king. You will find when you grow up and go out into the world that it will often be very very difficult not to be disloyal. When your companions taunt you about your religion, when they laugh you to scorn and call you coward because you will not join them in some scheme which you know to be wrong, then is the time to set your teeth and say to yourself, 'No matter what happens I will be loyal, I will, I will, I will.' And *you will.* There's no doubt about it.

There is a beautiful fancy which I came across the other day. It tells what becomes of the gold of the corn and the purple of the heather when the summer is over, and the grain is garnered, and the bloom of the heather faded. The gold and the purple are not lost although we see them no more. The angels have taken them to build the golden streets and the amethyst walls of the City of God. And one day, if we are loyal to the King of Heaven, we shall find again in His Heavenly City the gold and the purple which we loved and lost on earth.

Faith and Facts.

BY EDWARD GRUBB, M.A., CROYDON.

IF Faith is correctly described as 'the proving of things not seen'—or the response of our whole inner man to God—what is its relation to belief in the truth of the Gospel story? Can our interpretation of the records of what is alleged to have happened centuries ago affect our lives here and now? Have any facts in history a real significance for Faith? Clearly the Christian religion is vitally related to what are held to be the historical facts of the personality, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This involves it in a special difficulty, which was ably stated many years ago by the late Professor T. H. Green, who had been led, by the New Testament criticism of Strauss and others, to a negative conclusion in regard to some at least of these 'facts.' He wrote:

'The faith which is supposed to be demanded of us as Christians involves two elements which, to say the least, are wholly different: on the one

side, a certain intellectual assent which, if the propositions assented to concerned any other events than those purporting to convey a Divine revelation, we should say could make no difference to the heart or spirit or character—call it what we will—which is alone of absolute value in a man; on the other side, a certain attitude or disposition which belongs distinctively to this "inner man," and gives us our worth as moral or spiritual beings. The deepening of the conception of Faith in the Lutheran theology only brings this discrepancy into clearer relief. The more strongly we insist that Faith is a personal and conscious relation of the man to God, forming the principle of a new life, not perhaps observable by others, but which the man's own conscience recognizes, the more awkward becomes its dependence on events believed to have happened in the past. The evidence for their having happened may be

exceedingly cogent, but at any rate the appreciation of it depends on processes of reasoning which it would be a moral paradox to deny that a man may perform correctly without being the better, or incorrectly without being the worse. . . . It is not on any estimate of evidence, correct or incorrect, that our true holiness can depend. Neither if we believe certain documents to be genuine and authentic can we be the better, nor, if we believe it not, the worse. There is thus an inner contradiction in that conception of Faith which makes it a state of mind involving peace with God and love towards all men, and at the same time makes its object that historical work of Christ, of which our knowledge depends on evidence of uncertain origin and value.¹

There is in these words a very salutary reminder, especially to those of us who are addicted to religious controversy, that we have no right to question the moral integrity of persons who reach a different conclusion from ourselves on matters of history. Moreover, it must be freely admitted that there is a radical difference between the temper of mind which Faith demands and that which is required for the decision of historical questions. The scientific student of history should be cold and critical, examining his authorities carefully, taking nothing for granted that is not proved, determined to go no further than the evidence warrants: *scepticism*, in its true meaning of relentless inquiry, is his true qualification. The religious spirit, on the other hand, is one of whole-hearted and unquestioning *receptiveness*, in which we 'let ourselves go' in the warmth of adoration, and long to believe everything. Which of these mental attitudes should be ours when we face the historical statements in the Gospels; or, if we have to combine them, how can this be done?

A full answer is beyond my powers; but I have found help in distinguishing between historical statements concerning *a bare event* and those that involve the interpretation of a character. When we are confronted with the story of an event alone—let us say, of the Virgin Birth of Jesus—it is right, I believe, to practise the cautious scientific method to the best of our ability; and if, when we have examined the evidence thoroughly, it seems to us inconclusive, to have the courage and humility to suspend our judgment.

¹ Sermon on 'Faith,' in Green's *Works*, vol. iii. pp. 259, 260.

When, however, the event is *one* that involves the interpretation of a character or person, another factor comes into play in influencing our decision, involving what we can only call an 'inward light.' There are events in all our lives in which belief or disbelief may make an enormous difference to us morally. Suppose a 'prodigal son' in disgrace in a far country receives a letter purporting to be from his father, who assures him that if he will come home he will be lovingly received and given a new start. It may make all the difference in the world to him whether he accepts the invitation and acts upon it, or questions whether he is not being hoaxed or played with, and refuses to return. What he decides to do will largely depend on his perception of his father's character: 'Is this the sort of letter he would write, and can I trust him?'

Whenever the appreciation of a person's character is involved, we have to exercise a power of 'intuition' which is quite different from the critical examination of evidence, *and which is equally needed if we are to get at the real facts.* The more abundant our love and devotion, if the character is a worthy one, the deeper and more intimate will be our knowledge of it. It is true that our inward perception is conditioned by evidence: if, for example, we are to appreciate the character of Jesus, we must be convinced that there is some valid evidence on the matter, and this may involve its critical examination. But, when once we are convinced that we are in touch with reality, our insight into the character goes behind the evidence we have to criticize, and becomes indeed a touchstone by which we may be helped in judging it. The sense that the character is too great and noble to have been invented may be an important factor in convincing us that the record is true. Take a simple illustration to show how insight into character may assist us in weighing the worth of evidence: let us suppose we have a dear and honoured friend, and that some one comes along with evidence purporting to show that he has forged a cheque. We may be perfectly right in saying, 'I don't care what evidence you think you have; *I know the man*, and I am perfectly sure he is incapable of such an act.' Here we must admit there is room for the possibility of mistake—our inward light or intuition is not absolutely infallible. But, the more fully our mind has become one with his, the more we have

an inward perception of his character, on which new evidence may throw fresh light, but which it cannot fundamentally alter.

This is true even of characters in history, and above all of that of Jesus. We may gain a knowledge of Him which, though it begins in history and is conditioned by historical evidence, goes behind this into the region of first-hand experience, so that we may truthfully say that we know Him as well as, or better than, our nearest friend. Christian experience has testified to this all down the ages, and we may add our testimony to that of others. 'We must not talk about having faith in facts, but we may have faith in a person: that, indeed, is what Christian faith essentially is—the response of our whole being to the Person whom we recognize as perfectly true and beautiful and good.'¹

This assurance of the perfection of the character of Jesus I believe to be a vital element in Christian faith. We may have to reach it gradually, but it will not be gained by the critical examination of facts alone, though some of us must, in loyalty to truth, give this its due place. We are not to stifle our reasoning powers by a blind assent to the infallibility of a record of past events, or of its traditional interpretation. It is only by the loyal and disciplined use of such powers of reason, by those who have the requisite knowledge and ability, that the reality and true meaning of the facts can be assured *for all*; it is fatal to warn us that they must be accepted as facts but will not bear examination. But intellectual processes alone will not give us the insight we require; our reason needs to be enlightened by something above itself. If our criticism is to sift and weigh the facts rightly, it must be enlightened by some degree of personal religious experience; for a person who has no perception of the spiritual value of events is not in a position to judge truly of their nature. It is by *living with Christ*, and following Him in the path of obedience, that we really learn to know Him.

Many attempts have been made to show that the records as we have them do not support our intuition of the perfect holiness of Jesus. As Dr. Forrest has shown, these attempts 'largely rest on an abstract treatment of certain elements in the case, and a misapprehension of the spiritual

¹ From *The Historic and the Inward Christ* (by the present writer), p. 81.

illumination involved. Any slight difficulty that remains springs from our ignorance, in part, of the precise circumstances which determined Jesus' action. But the real and final answer is that He stood self-vindicated; that the memory of these incidents brought Him no tremor of regret in later hours.

... If He followed unperturbed a course which at all perplexes us, it was because His clearer vision perceived facts which lie behind our range.'²

There is, for instance, a very real difficulty in His stern denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees, especially as related in Mt 23. (Mark gives it in three verses only, Mk 12³⁸⁻⁴⁰.) If any one puts this down to personal resentment because they would not recognize His Messianic claims (a plausible inference, perhaps, from a superficial reading of some passages in the Fourth Gospel), we should, I believe, be quite within our right in replying, 'It was not that, for I know the Man, and I can see that He was too personally humble to resent a mere affront to His dignity.' That would be the report of our 'inward light,' but it is borne out by all the rest of the record. For instance, His sternest rebuke (Mk 3²²⁻³⁰) was administered to those who, when they could not deny His works of healing, deliberately attributed to an evil spirit that which their consciences must have told them was good. What He denounced was not a personal insult, but sinning against the light of God in the soul.

Take, again, the allegation by Mr. Roberts, of Bradford, that 'His teaching on divorce recognizes the husband's right to accuse, condemn, and dismiss the wife, while the wife, having no such rights as against her husband, or even over her own children, is left the helpless victim of the husband's caprice.'³ I should myself be disposed to dismiss this as shallow and misleading exegesis; but, if it were really the meaning of the passage as it stands, we should have to set against it the whole impression made on our minds by Jesus' treatment of women as we have it in the Gospels; and I at least should conclude, in the light of this, that the evangelists had incorrectly understood and reported Him.

These examples may serve to show that we can and must meet special difficulties by bringing to bear upon them our total impression of the

² *The Christ of History and of Experience*, pp. 31, 32.

³ Article 'Jesus or Christ?' in the *Hibbert Journal*, Jan. 1909, p. 363.

character of JESUS; we need the enlightenment of His Spirit to read even the record rightly. But this brings us back to the point at which we started. If we have the enlightenment of the Spirit in our lives—if it brings us into a true religious experience, into a growing apprehension of the character of God and of right principles of life—does the record matter after all? Can we not leave alone as unimportant the question whether certain things ever happened, whether Jesus ever lived the perfect life? Why not walk by faith alone, like T. H. Green? If Christ taught of God, and made us understand that the way to know God and eternal life is to deny ourselves, taking up the cross in obedience and dedication; and if we have proved this in our own lives; is not this eternally true and valid, whether or not He lived it out completely Himself? And, more than that, might not the Spirit of God have taught it to men even if Jesus never lived at all? Would not the great principle of 'dying to live' be just as eternally true if His life and death and resurrection were simply a story, in which those who had learnt this lesson dramatized it in the imaginary career of a fictitious person?

Now, while we must never set limits to what the Spirit of God might and could teach men, apart from any manifestation in an actual human life, this is not the way in which (as a matter of fact) men have learnt the greatest moral lessons. 'First that which is natural, then that which is spiritual.' It seems to have been the Divine method, all through history, to reveal truth to men not in words but in personal lives. It is not ideas, however true, that mainly mould our characters and form our ideals, but personality and personal influence. Unless the ideas of Christianity had first been suggested by an actual life, unless they had first been lived, would they ever have had power to sway the lives of men?

We need something more than ideas and principles—even if it be ideas of the character of God—if we are to be *assured*. There is such a thing as self-suggestion, self-deception. Can the whole burden of our spiritual life, with its warfare against doubt and depression, its unequal struggle against the evil of the world, be carried on the

shoulders of our ideas, which after all may conceivably be the product of our subjective impressions and emotions?

Most of us will answer, No: unless the ideas are embodied in a fact, in a real personality, they are not strong enough to bear the burden. There are rival ethics in the world, of vast influence over multitudes of minds—like Nietzsche's, for whom 'dying to live' is the abominable thing that must be rooted out at all costs. Unless Christianity is something more than a system of ideas, it is doubtful whether it will stand the strain of the conflict that is upon us.

Christian faith is essentially faith in a God who has revealed His character in an *act*: who has entered into this finite phenomenal world of ours in a real human life, lived under our limitations and conditions but conquering and transforming them; who has not simply taught us of Himself in words and ideas, but has manifested His character in a personal sinless life, a life of perfect sonship.

If that Personality is a fact, and if we are able to receive it and appropriate it—intellectually, by finding out who and what Jesus is, and morally, by submitting our will to His—then our faith rests on something *objective*, something real, which is not the creation of our own subjective impressions. His life becomes to us a real revelation, far beyond anything our own powers could have discovered, of the nature of God Himself. His birth into our world is the proof that God has that in Him which is akin to our nature, and which can adequately express itself in a human life; His works of loving service show us that in Jesus it is *God* who is seeking, serving, and saving men; His death on the Cross proves that there are no depths of humiliation to which the Divine love will not stoop to rescue us from sin; His resurrection is the proof of the victory of that love over human sin and evil; His return in the Spirit the assurance that God Himself lives out His own life in the soul of every true follower of Jesus.

Thus our Christian faith stands in an inward apprehension, enlightened by the Spirit, of the historical facts of the Incarnation, Personality, Death, and Resurrection of the man Jesus of Nazareth.