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the only completely ethical representation of God's perfection that has ever been given in human speech.

We are coming to believe that virtue is its own reward. We find it not impossible to understand that it would be unworthy of God, and unworthy of man, if righteousness were rewarded with houses and lands and power over the lives of others. And a heaven of sensuous bliss is no payment for a life of well-doing. 'Give me the wages of going on—and not to die.' The more completely ethical our religion becomes, so that the goal of life is to do the will of God, and that will of God is thought of as seeking only that which is moral and reasonable, the more satisfying does it become to say that God rewards the righteous by showing them how much He loves them. But we have yet to arrive at a similar corporate certainty that vice is its own punishment. The desolation that sin is in the heart of the sinner, the desolation that it works in the life of the brotherhood, the separation from God that it expresses and produces, are themselves its punishment. Any other punishment can have no meaning, no bitterness, and produce no significant suffering, except as a symbol of the punishment which is sin itself. The more we understand of the love of God, the more we shall understand of sin. The fire that is never quenched, the worm that does not die, the lake of everlasting torment, are these not, at best, only inadequate symbols of the suffering of one who should realize what his sin meant to the infinite love of a perfectly righteous God? And if the aim of punishment be, not merely to make the sinner smart, or to 'vindicate the moral law' ('a beautiful abstraction beloved of theologians alone'), but to save the sinner, is there any punishment that a perfectly wise God could devise except—to show the sinner how much He loves Him?

We need not be afraid, we poor sinners, that such a punishment will not hurt us, or even those other sinners who deserve to suffer so much more than we do, as much as we or they deserve. When the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and he went out and wept bitterly, was it anger or love that broke his heart? In the *Dream of Gerontius*, Dr. Newman described an angel bearing the departed soul to judgment—'into the veiled presence of our God.' The eager spirit darts from his hold:

> And, with intemperate energy of love,
> Flies to the dear feet of Emmanuel;
> But, ere it reach them, the keen sanctity,
> Which, with its effluence, like a glory, clothes
> And circles round the Crucified, has seized,
> And scorch'd, and shrivell'd it; and now it lies
> Passive and still before the awful Throne.
> O happy, suffering soul! for it is safe,
> Consumed, yet quicken'd, by the glance of God.

The sternness of Jesus Christ, and of God as Jesus reveals Him, is the expression of the infinite demands of love, and of love's terrible optimism. There is nothing weak about love. If a man thinks there is, let him try for a week to trust his life only to love—to make it his only motive, his only weapon, his only method, his only protection. The shuddering awe which man feels in the presence of the Divine belongs of right to Holy Love. Any other divinity is left behind by the moral progress of humanity itself. This alone, at last, can we worship, for this alone is infinitely beyond our grasp—the Love of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

Better than Wireless.[1]

'Thou shalt be visited with earthquake.'—Is 29[6].

It's dreadfully cold getting up in the mornings, isn't it? Once outside it's fine. And the colder the morning the better. In winter that means slides—great long ones half-way down the street until somebody comes and salts them. And spring and autumn often bring fog or mist, and you go off to school through a queer, creepy kind of world, and all the way pretending such big adventures. But it's the getting out of bed that is the business! Over you go at last. Ough! How shivery you are before you get your flannels on! Your teeth are chattering, your feet are lumps of ice, you wish you lived somewhere else,

[1] By the Reverend A. J. Gossip, M.A., Aberdeen.

where it's always warm and sunny and there are no dark, horrid, shivery mornings!

Yet, I don't know. I'd rather have cold than earthquakes any day. It must be wretched to feel the earth go wobbly under you, to see the walls run squint, and then reel back at you, like things in a nightmare, and to waken up screaming. And in really warm places they're apt to have so many earthquakes. The clever folk, you know, have made an instrument that tells whenever one happens, and they come quite often. I don't know how it works. And I feel just as you do at an exam. when the master comes and reads over your shoulder, and you're not sure that you are right, and want to cover it with your hand. There's sure to be some silly person who knows all about that instrument who will read this, and I wish that he would go away. Anyhow this is my answer. I think that when the earth keeps steady the seismograph, that's what they call it (yes, I think that they are rather juggins to give it a name as long as that!)—anyway the seismograph makes a straight line on a roll of paper. But when the earth gets jolted by an earthquake—well, you know what happened in the writing class when some one jogged your arm and the pen went with a splutter and a splash of ink away up to the top of the page; so, here too, the jolts are all marked down like that. Now suppose a man has an instrument like that (what was it called?). He goes to sleep; he gets up by and by and has his breakfast; he sets off to his office; he looks at his seismograph (got it this time), and, 'Hullo,' he says, 'something's been happening somewhere.' Perhaps it was only a wee shuggle, perhaps it was a big shake, it may have been under the sea or somewhere where it didn't matter. But, big or little, there it is marked down.

You've got an instrument like that. Oh no! you say, we haven't even got a wireless yet. I would so love to have one, and all the other fellows are always talking about theirs. But no such luck for me. Well, never mind! The next time they put on side to you, you say, 'That's nothing; we've got an instrument that tells us all the earthquakes.' That'll make them sit up. They've all got one too, of course, but then they won't know. So that'll be all right! But I haven't, you say! Yes, you have. You call it your conscience. And what is that but just a queer thing that marks down all the storms and the tempests and the rows and the earthquakes there are in your day? That time you threw a stone and broke somebody's window, nobody saw, but your conscience went up with a jolt like your pen in the writing class and you were unhappy till you told Dad all about it. That other afternoon when Mother told you to be sure and change when you came in, it was so wet and slushy, and you were hungry, or you had left too little time for lessons. Anyhow you didn't; and when next day you were hot and ill and had to stay in bed you just had to tell her all about it. It's all marked down there every time by your own seismograph.

It seems a pity that the instrument can't tell before the earthquake, doesn't it? It's so little use afterwards! But if it could warn before, it would do quite a lot of good. It's like the bell above some shop doors in quiet streets. The people don't want to stay all day in the shop, and so they fit up a bell, and when you push the door open, then the bell begins to ring, and they know that somebody is coming into the shop. But suppose it only rang when you were going out! Why, a thief might come in and snatch up a heap of things, and they would only know when he was making off, and by the time they ran there he would have got clear away!

Why does the seismograph tell us only after it's all happened? But it doesn't. They have found out, or are just perfecting, a new kind that will give warning long before the earthquake comes. I understand that when it feels a shaking just beginning, it shows, or is to show, a red light. And when the wise men see that light they'll flash a message to the part of the world that is in danger, 'Earthquake coming. Run for it. Keep away from buildings or else they may fall on you!' And so many people may be saved, when this thing really works.

Well, you say, if conscience could do that, then there would be some sense in it, and not just tell us all about it afterwards. But, dearie me, it does. Didn't you know? If you use wireless the wrong way you'll hear nothing, never a sound. And you've been using this the wrong way. That's quite certain. For it always tells when something wrong is coming. 'Don't,' it says. 'Play the game,' it keeps calling. Look, there's the red light showing. There's a temptation coming. Something is going to try to make you cross or selfish or sulky or lazy. If we would only use this wonder-

ful thing we have, we would hear, not somebody talking in Newcastle or London or Cardiff, but God Himself speaking straight to you and me! If we would only watch for the red light, the game wouldn't be spoiled by peevishness or temper, and our day and all that was to be so jolly wouldn't all be shaken into ruins and unhappiness; we would escape the earthquakes every time.

THREE PARABLES.[1]

The Parable of the Thorn.

Thorns are unfulfilled possibilities. As human vices have been defined as inverted virtues, thorns are inverted graces. They are abortive buds or branches, turned to other uses by Nature. In conditions specially unfavourable, a whole plant may thus become abortive, and branch and bud and leaf run to thorns. That is the case with some species of cactus, where the whole plant resembles a military despotism, where all is for defence and nothing for grace. Stunted through lack of nourishment, a flora tends to become spiny. Some deserts are entirely given over to such growths, each plant fiercely protecting its scanty moisture. For none has anything to share. Deserts have few generous moods.

The ultimate and hopeful fact about thorns is that under other conditions they might have been buds, issuing in fruitful branch or beautiful leaf. Under cultivation thorns do disappear. Several fruit trees, for instance, the apple and the pear, are thorny in the wild state. But cultivation has emancipated them from the thorn habit.

Not a few modern plant conversions have their origin in this nature of the thorn. After years of experiment, Luther Burbank has produced a thornless and edible cactus. The species had centuries of evil habits behind it, and to the unseeing eyes might have seemed beyond hope. Burbank saw the possibilities of the thorns. He saw the plant's fine qualities, thriftiness and hardihood, if only the entail of thorny habit could be broken. After one of the most curious romances of plant life, it has been broken and the cactus has been given a future and a hope.

If such things are possible in Nature, who will dare to say what things are impossible to Grace. Evil tendencies may there also be broken and new hope brought to seemingly hopeless lives.

[1] By the Reverend F. C. Hoggarth, Whalley.

The Parable of the Strained Wire.

There is an old legend of a knight who had chosen a solitary fort beside the Rhine for his dwelling. Filled with a curious notion of having music about his lonely home, he hung wires from turret to turret that on this improvised harp the winds might play. But the days brought no music.

One night the sun set threateningly; then a storm broke, of terrific force. The old knight grew strangely restless, and presently he went outside into the storm. He saw the lightning-slashed blackness, and presently he heard, at the heart of the night's wildness, a melody. His wires were playing. There was music from that unexpected quarter. All that they had needed was a storm to rouse their songs. As Dr. Hutton points out, the very word 'strain' has a dual and suggestive meaning. It applies equally to the stretched wire and to the music that sleeps in it. A strain is both tension and song.

Many of the world's noblest songs recall the knight of the Rhine and his storm music. They also are harmonies won from a storm, melodies heard at the heart of wildness. How true that is of many of the greatest Psalms. 'In peace I will both lay me down and sleep, for thou, Lord, alone makest me to dwell in safety' is a storm song. It was beloved of Luther for that reason, for, born in the wild, it speaks most comfortably to those whose lot it is to live in the wild. 'The Lord is my Light and my Salvation, whom shall I fear?' is the tuneful confidence of one whose days were troublous and whose adversaries and foes were round about him in much threatening. So is it with our greatest hymns. Luther's 'Ein Feste Burg,' Cowper's 'God moves in a mysterious way,' Julia Ward Howe's 'Mine eyes have seen the glory,' are all songs born of the storm.

The Parable of the Uphill Road.

In cycling, I have discovered that an uphill gradient is more easily taken by night than by day. I have marvelled at the comparative ease with which in the darkness, I have reached the summit of some rise, that in the light would apparently have demanded much more determined and strenuous going. I have ridden hills at night with no undue strain, at the foot of which I should have dismounted by day.

The kindly night shrouds the road and so helps one's going. All one sees is the bit of lighted road

illumined by the rays of the cycle lamp, and so the gradient is mounted bit by bit. Where I might be certain that I could not climb a hill did I see it in its formidable and challenging completeness, it hardly occurs to me that I cannot pull off the next ten or twenty yards.

Moreover, there is frequently an illusion of levelness or of descent, there in the darkness just beyond the lamplight. There may be no descent at all, and coming to that point the road is found to be still an uphill way, yet the illusion helps.

There is great gain in not being able to see too far ahead. Could we see the distant scene, our going would be greatly embarrassed. There is a whole deep philosophy of life in the phrase, 'One step enough for me.' That indeed is the way to travel. The hill difficulty is never too formidable provided we do not see it whole in the distance.

The Christian Year.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Incomplete Virtue of Resignation.

'Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.'—Mt 6^{10}.

No petition in the Lord's Prayer is so frequently misinterpreted as this. It is generally associated in our minds with something harsh and forbidding, something which throws over our life the shadow of a cross. When we use this prayer, what is the attitude we too often put into it? Is it not merely a kind of pious resignation to a dark fate which we cannot avert?

Now, is this right? Was Christ merely commending here a spirit of resignation? Was He merely commending here a kind of baptized fatalism, a stoical patience with adversity, in the name of the will of God. Is there not something braver in this prayer, something bigger, something we can see and desire and consecrate ourselves to, with all our hearts, when life is sunny as when it is dark?

There are two things which this resignation idea forgets. The first is that God is not the author of many of the things which we are accustomed to call the will of God. Are we going to make God responsible, for instance, for all the sickness and the sorrow that darkens our life and say of it, 'It is the will of God'? Is God the author of our poverty-stricken, drink-polluted slums? Is God responsible for the war through which we have just passed, with all its heart-breaking sorrows and shattered lives? Are we going to say that these things are the will of God? It is these that are the root causes of many of the hard circumstances and conditions in which men live their lives to-day. Can these be the will of God? If this were His will, is this a will we could bow down to without losing our self-respect and the best qualities of our soul?

How are we to regard these things, and what cause are we to assign to them? That is the mystery of mysteries. But no man whose life has been touched by calamity dare make God responsible for it, without landing himself in a hopeless problem, and without doing an injury to his own vision of God. Whatever brought evil into our life, it is not of God's sending; it is not of God's willing; it is rather the breaking of God's plan. Our hard conditions are the best He could do for us in a world such as man has made it. The difficult lot in which men find themselves is the result of His will baffled and spoiled by the conflicting passion and selfishness of men. It is not God's original will—His divine decree.

The second thing this resignation idea forgets is, that the will of God is something we have to do. It is not something which is done in spite of us. God's will is only done as we help Him to do it. God's will is something we must do. It is something in which we have to play our part—a voice we have to hear and obey—a purpose we have to see and carry out—a plan we have to approve and work upon—a line of active love we have to grasp, and link up our lives with. 'God mend all,' said the workman in Carlyle's story, to his master, looking at the ruin of his country. 'Nay, but we must help Him to mend it,' was the answer. That is what Christ means.

Now, what is the will of God? What is the active purpose which lies at the foundation of the world? What is the thing God is seeking in and through our lives, and seeking our help to carry out? There is only one word that can express it—the Word that 'was made flesh, and dwelt among us.' Christ is the light in which the mind and will of God become clear. Whatever our life may be, God's will for us is to make us like Jesus.

And look again, what is the larger purpose for which Christ strove? Was it not the redeeming of the world, of the whole world, to make the lives of men beautiful and strong and true, and bind

them together in love and loyalty till they become a kingdom of God, and the world their Father's house? Watch Him as He goes here and there, healing the sick, driving out devils of lust, speaking a cheering word to some down-hearted soul, taking men and women and remaking them, and breathing into them the breath of love which is the breath of life. That was the will of God taking shape. That was the will of God being done. Can we see this will of God without loving it, without desiring it, without our whole being going out towards it as the real ambition of life? Is there anything greater in life or any greater way of looking at life, than just to realize that we have some part to play in this great purpose, some contribution to make to it?

Now, what is the attitude to life in its various aspects which this seeking of God's will demands?

1. There is the attitude of brave acceptance of life's inevitable hardships and sorrows as the condition in which we have to seek the will of God. Notice what this means. It means something more than resignation to a lot we cannot avoid, though it be hard to bear. Listen to what R. L. Stevenson says about resignation. He is talking about the garden of the soul, and the various plants which are to be cherished there. 'There is a plant called winter-green, or Resignation, otherwise known as the False Gratitude plant. It is a showy plant, but leaves little margin for profit. "John, do you see that bed of Resignation? I will not have it in my garden! It flatters not the eye and comforts not the heart. Root it out—out with it! And in its place put a bush of Flowering Piety, but see it be of the flowering sort."' What is wrong with resignation is, that it does not go far enough. It does not flower, it does not blossom. It is more than resignation that is demanded. It is acceptance of the hard circumstances and the sorrowful way, if these be our portion, as the conditions in which we are to find and to do the will of God. But the conditions themselves are not the full will of God. They are only the terms on which we are to live out the life God would have us live, and play our part in the loving purpose of God, which is salvation for us and for all the world. Not merely to bow our head to the sorrow, but to seek to shape our lives in that sorrow, so that we shall do the will of God and show forth that courage and faith and loving-heartedness which are the nature of Jesus. Not merely to resign ourselves to walk a lonely way or carry a difficult cross, but walking that way and carrying that cross, to find our place in the service of God and fill it to the full—*that* is to do the will of God.

2. Then again, it is a prayer for the discernment of God's will in the perplexing decisions and hard choices of life.

There are many means by which the Spirit guides us in these perplexing ways. There is the guidance of an inward discernment, a fineness and delicacy of perception which some people have above others. Or it may come in what we may call the guidance of circumstances. How often it has happened in a man's life that the great choices were in a way taken out of his hands, and that he was led on from point to point by the directing hand of circumstances! It may be objected that the guidance of circumstance is often misleading. So it is. Circumstances are like everything else in life. They take their colour from our own minds. The great thing is to get into the right attitude of mind, and in that attitude think things out. And the right mind is the mind that seeks only the will of God, the mind that is alert for opportunity, because it is lit with the passion to do the will of God.

3. Further, it means a spirit of battle and service amid the ills of life and the needs of others. Many of the ills of life have no right to bring us resignation. They should bring into our soul the spirit of rebellion. If God permits them at all, it is for this one reaction upon our souls, to rouse us to a crusade which will sweep them right away as having no proper place in God's universe. This is true of many of the ills of our own life. We have no business to endure them. There is a good deal of ill-health, for instance, to which we have no right to resign ourselves. No man has any right to be resigned to ignorance who has time on his hands and books at his elbow. There is an apathy which is the sin of sins, because it foils God's passion of self-giving. Above all, we dare not be resigned to any sin or vicious habit which stains our own life.

Shall crime bring crime for ever—
  Strength aiding still the strong;
Is it Thy will, O Father,
  That man should toil for wrong?
No, say Thy mountains. No! Thy skies.
Man's clouded sun shall brightly rise,
And songs ascend instead of sighs.

That is the note this prayer demands—the note of battle that challenges every wrong, the note of service which seeks every healing and redeeming way. Every scientist who is rooting out disease is doing the will of God. Every man who is seeking to make life sweeter and better is doing the will of God. Every philanthropist who is trying to assuage the tide of human misery, every politician who seeks to bring in better conditions of life for the people, is doing the will of God. This is a fighting prayer. It is a worker's prayer. It is the prayer of the eager heart, longing for a world in which dwelleth righteousness. 'Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.' [1]

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Christ of the Apocalypse.

'What think ye of Christ?'—Mt 22^{42}.

'The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John.'—Rev 1^{1}.

The Book of Revelation stands by itself in the New Testament. It is a very familiar book, and to many it is very attractive, and yet its secret is a very hard one to discover.

It is an apocalypse, a revelation. It purports to contain the words of Jesus Christ through His angel, to His servant, for His Church, and it belongs to a large class of literature. It has close affinities with many similar books, like the Assumption of Moses, the Book of Enoch, and the Book of Esdras, all of them strange and obscure writings, of the meaning of which we still know very little, yet which are closely paralleled by much that we find in this book. And it was a class of literature that sprang out of the circumstances of the day.

What now, we ask, is the delineation of Jesus Christ which we find in such a book as this? It should be noted that the picture of Jesus Christ drawn here is altogether characteristic of the writer. Here we are at a time removed by some decades from the life and teaching of Jesus Christ Himself. We are dealing with people who have known Him and worshipped Him and formed churches in His name for some years past; we are dealing with people who have learned to stand up for Jesus Christ against the power of the persecutor, and learned that it was better to die for Christ than live for the world, the flesh, or the devil. It is natural, therefore, to ask what attitude these people took up to Jesus Christ, and what their teachers told them about Him. It is probably true, as one modern writer says, that this book gives us a better idea than any other part of the New Testament of the way in which Jesus Christ was actually preached to the people of the early Church. He is to them the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End; He is the King of kings, the Lord of lords; He is at the right hand of God; He is the Lamb in the midst of the throne; He is the one Power in heaven and on earth with whom they have most to do; He is God's Vicegerent; He is God's Word; He is God's Messenger, Prophet, and Priest, and He is King and Lord over all. And this is the historic Christ.

If we attempt to analyse the conception of Jesus Christ that is given here, something of the following kind must be said. There is no Christology in the book, or, rather, no definite and organized Christology. There is no attempt on the part of the writer to give systematic shape and form to his conception. It has to be pieced together from many scattered references. It comes in flashes, and it is not in any sense an ordered and recognized doctrine. But on certain points the teaching of the writer is clear.

1. We find that Jesus Christ was to His Church, as He was to Paul, *a continual and abiding presence.* Those early Christians did not believe in a dead Christ. They did not look back wistfully to the grave in the Garden and seek Him there. He was with them, their Friend and Saviour, their continual help, and they saw Him, many of them, descending from heaven in the smoke of their martyr fires; they felt Him present by their racked and tortured frames; He spoke to them healing words, and gave them His strength. To His Church He was the source and ground of salvation and of life.

2. And this Christ was to them also *the Prophet of God.* In Him they found the very Word of God to their souls. The Logos, that great conception of which their minds were so full, was incarnate in Him and became to them God's Word, and they listened to what He had to say as to the very Voice of God. To these Christians Christ was the Word, not in any technical or metaphysical sense, but as imparting to them the truth of God. He was to

[1] J. Reid, *The Victory of God*, 135.

them the Truth as well as the Way, and in His word they found their law of life.

3. And then, again, Jesus was to these men *the great High Priest.* Sometimes they conceived Him as the Victim and the Sacrifice, but always as the great Intercessor, who stands between God and man. He is the Lamb in the midst of the throne, and He receives, forgives, and comforts His people. There is nothing in the whole Bible stronger than the teaching which we find in this book about the intercessory and atoning work of our Lord Jesus Christ. He takes there the great prerogative of God. The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins. The book is penetrated throughout with that idea, and it was one of the ideas that had come home to the heart of the Christian Church concerning Jesus Christ, that in Him alone is forgiveness to be found.

4. And then He is *the King of kings.* The writer displays his powers of imagination most vividly in depicting the great consummation of all things in Jesus Christ, of the City of God sent down from heaven, of the New Jerusalem, when God's rule shall be established in righteousness. This book is the great missionary book in the Bible, though the fact is not always recognized. It looks forward to the time when Christ shall reign everywhere and over every one; to the time when God's Kingdom shall be perfected, when every knee shall bow to Jesus and every tongue shall call Him Lord; and it looks forward to that time not as to some infinitely distant vision, but as a practical reality. In those days Christians generally, like the writer of this book, felt that they had a part in this great business. It would be well if the Christian Church to-day had anything like the missionary vision which these old saints, these persecuted saints, had. It may be questioned sometimes whether Christians now really believe, as the writer of this book most assuredly believed, that Jesus Christ will reign for ever and ever. Do they think it is possible or practicable that the whole world, every nation, tribe, and tongue, shall come under the dominion of Jesus Christ? Until they have attained to this faith they are not likely to possess the power of the men to whom this Apocalypse was first addressed.

5. This book also makes Jesus Christ not only the future King of the universe, but *the guarantee of the everlasting life of the children of men.* We are all familiar with those exquisite words in which the writer speaks of the life beyond the grave—'And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away'—words of comfort and hope that have come home to men and women so often since. We do not need to be reminded that this is all attached to Jesus Christ, to His resurrection, and to the life that He imparts through love and faith in His name.[1]

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Worth of the Individual.

'What mean ye, that ye use this proverb, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.'—Ezk 18^{2-4}.

The prophet Ezekiel lived at a critical period in the history of the Jewish people. The kingdom and dynasty founded by David, after a duration of more than four hundred years, was hastening to its close.

Ezekiel thus lived in an age of transition between the old and the new. He witnessed, and suffered in, the great shock which must always accompany a disruption of ties and associations which have continued undisturbed for centuries. This shock brought with it a change in the manner of looking at moral problems. So long as the Jewish state existed, the principle of solidarity was accepted as a recognized principle of the Divine government of the world. Men suffered for the sins of their ancestors; individuals shared the punishment incurred by the nation as a whole. It was what every one saw taking place about him, and it was accepted as an element of the recognized constitution of things.

But the disastrous years which ended in the fall of Jerusalem, and the unprecedented sufferings attending them, gave rise to questionings on this subject which exercised and perplexed many minds. The reflections thus occasioned found expression in a popular proverb, which must have been often heard at the time, for it is quoted by Jeremiah as well as by Ezekiel: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' The phrase was meant as an arraignment of the

[1] W. B. Selbie, *Aspects of Christ,* 121.

methods of Providence. The doctrine of transmitted guilt was accepted as a fact of experience, but it no longer satisfied men's deeper moral instincts. There was felt to be in it at bottom something incongruous with perfect justice.

The prophet meets the state of the people's mind by two great principles, enunciated in the first and second parts of the chapter respectively. In the first he sets the individual's immediate relation to God against the idea that guilt is transmitted from father to children: 'All souls are mine; the soul that sinneth, it shall die.' In the second he rejects the idea that a man's fate is so determined by his past life as to make a moral change in him impossible: 'I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth: wherefore turn yourselves, and live.'

1. *The individual's relation to God.* 'All souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, *it* shall die.' *Soul* here does not mean the spiritual or immortal part of man; it denotes merely (as often in Old Testament) an individual person; and the passage means that every individual person stands in immediate relation to God, all belonging to Him alike, the son not less than the father, and thus each is treated by Him independently.

The doctrine of this eighteenth chapter is perhaps the most characteristic element of Ezekiel's teaching. It is evident that the prophet anticipates questions which have often come to the front in modern times. Moral aptitudes and deficiencies are transmitted by inheritance: do not children suffer by reason of faults or tendencies for which they are not themselves strictly and fully responsible? We cannot entirely sever ourselves from our surroundings.

It cannot be denied that there are cases in which the proverb is true, in which the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But as against the view which regards the misfortunes of the present as entirely derived from the mistakes of the past, Ezekiel asserts the truth, which we must all feel to be consonant with justice, that, while allowance will be made for untoward antecedents and circumstances, every man will be judged by God according to what he does himself, and the use he makes of the opportunities which he enjoys.

2. *The call to the individual to repent.* 'All souls are mine.' 'I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth: wherefore turn yourselves, and live.' The truth which the prophet thus teaches is the emancipation of the individual, through repentance, from his own past.[1]

The question of questions for any of us is this, What kind of soul are we building? Is our attitude lifeward or deathward? Are we destroying that beautiful thing that God has given into our keeping? Are we marring the divine image within our hearts? Or do we live that life eternal which is life indeed, and which is to know God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent?

How can we do it? How arrive at the perfect relationship between God and the soul? Some souls are God's only, as my horse is mine: a senseless, unreasoning, unconscious condition. Some souls are God's as the slave is his master's, unwillingly, grudgingly, longing to escape; but some souls are God's as the truly married are, wholly each other's. 'My beloved is mine, and I am his'; a mutual possession, a mutual self-surrender, a mutual delight. Mutual! How can this be between the poor little soul of man and the infinity of the eternal God? What can we give for what we receive? What can He desire whose are all things? Remember what has been said already of man's unalterable liberty. God made man, but He made him free. God may crush him, but He cannot compel him. Love cannot be commanded; love cannot live but in freedom. This is our own; this we can give to God; this God desires, asks for: 'Son, give me thy heart.'

We have got beyond Ezekiel now. The prophets spake in time past as the Spirit gave them utterance, but in these days their Lord Himself has come and has spoken plainly, and told us all that man may know this side of the grave. He has told us what God is, and what we must do. Nay, He has shown us God, and He has shown us a perfect Man. We know now that God is love, and that the highest privilege of man is to love God with all his heart and mind and soul and strength. We know now, as man never knew before, what those words mean, 'All souls are mine, saith the Lord God.' We scarcely speak now of God, for He has bidden us call Him 'Father.' We meet His eye as we look upward; we feel His arm round us; we look onward to the day when He will take us home, and we shall know even as we are known.[2]

[1] S. R. Driver, *The Ideals of the Prophets*, 62.

[2] F. C. Woodhouse, *The Life of the Soul in the World*, 6.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Two Sons.

'I go, sir; and went not.'—Mt 21[30].

This parable was spoken in the Temple at Jerusalem on the Tuesday before the Crucifixion. The shadow of death was upon Christ, but there was also a shadow whose gloom was perhaps greater still, that of the sense of failure.

This sense of failure finds a direct expression in two of the five parables which were spoken in the last week—the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen in the Vineyard who murdered all their master's servants and crowned their crimes by the murder of his son, and the parable of the King's Marriage Feast to which no guests came except the tramps—and it colours at least the expression of a third of the five, the parable of the Two Sons; for of these two sons neither really does the Father's will on earth as it is done in heaven, and the best approach to such obedience is made by one who at first sulkily refuses to obey at all.

'A man had two sons.' 'Children' would be a better translation. The word conveys just a little more love than the word for 'sons.' The pains and the yearning love of the birth-pang hang about it still. The word 'bairn' is its precise equivalent. In the parable of the Prodigal Son the boys are called 'sons' throughout, except just at the last when the father wishes to soothe the injured feelings of the elder boy, and to do so he says, not as our version runs, 'Son, thou art ever with me,' but, in far tenderer fashion, 'Child, bairnie, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.'

'A man had two children; and he came to the first, and said, Child.' Every little touch is tender. He came himself. No hired messenger would serve. He came just as God comes Himself to fetch us, with that same tender word 'child,' 'bairnie.'

'Go work to-day in the vineyard. And he answered and said, I will not.' Perhaps 'I won't' conveys the meaning better. It is as abrupt as it can be. There is no such term of respect, 'Sir,' as the second son uses.

'But afterwards he repented himself, and went.' Here the English reader again misses a point of great importance. There are two Greek words in the New Testament translated 'repent.' The first, and the common one, which is used more than fifty times, means nothing more than a 'change of mind.' The second, which is used (in verb and in compounds) only eight times, is the word employed here and in the application of the parable in v.[32]. It is stronger than 'regret,' far stronger than 'repent,' and not much weaker than 'to be filled with remorse.'

'And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir; and went not.' There is a smug self-satisfaction about the second son's answer which no English can quite reproduce. The word 'I' appears in the Greek, and whenever this is the case it is always emphatic. 'Never mind, father, what my brother says. He says, I won't; but you know you can trust me. I will go. You can always trust me.' The same point is brought out further by the fact that the Greek does not contain the word 'go.' The only word expressed is an emphatic 'I.'

1. Let us look first for a while at the son who said 'I won't.' He is a common enough type. It is worthy of note, indeed, that our most important MS. of the Greek Testament puts this son second. If we imagine that the father had really spoken to the other first, and that young 'I won't' standing by had heard and understood the meaninglessness of the profession of the first, and in disgust had resolved to be true to himself and not to profess what he did not intend to perform, we get a very close approximation to a type exceedingly common in the world.

It is a curious fact, but fact it is, that the 'I wont's' of this type are usually proud of themselves. They are Pharisees who often think themselves Sadducees, the sceptics of Christ's day. It has been well said that 'the frank confession that they are not good seems to serve some men as a substitute for goodness.' There is then no special virtue and no strength of mind implied in saying this 'I won't.'

Again, the feeblest failure after effort is worth a thousand times more than 'I won't.' There was never a moral gladiator whom the down-turned thumbs of the amphitheatre condemned to death who was not worth more than they who doomed him and lazily turned to their neighbours to remark how miserably the wretch had fought. 'Miserably'—yes, but he had fought, and Clough's lines remain immortally true:

'Tis better to have fought and lost,
Than never to have fought at all.

2. We turn now to the second child. This child stands as a type of the Pharisees who may not have meant all they said, but did mean some of it, while some of them meant all of it. So we may fairly take this child as a type of those who profess at first to be Christ's, but whose practice falls miserably short of their profession.

There is, first, the class of professors, pure and simple. Mere profession suffices; at all events, they rarely get far beyond such. It is a common enough type. What does it mean, and what is the cure for it? It means that the promise has never really gripped the personality, that emotion has been touched, but not will—and therein lies the danger of appeals from the pulpit to the emotions and the cause of the instability of much revival work. The work has been man's, not God's. They say that once a man converted under the preaching of Mr. John Wesley was soon afterwards found sodden by drink. 'A fine convert of yours, Mr. Wesley,' said one to him. 'You speak true, sir,' said Mr. Wesley, 'that is none of God's making.'

Then, there is the class of those who really start and never reach the vines. The roots of their faith have struck right through the shifting sands of emotion, and obtained some hold on the will beneath, but it is not a deep one. There is Mr. Pliable, who stands the jeers of Mr. Obstinate—and a man who can stand sneers must have something in him—and sets gaily out with Christian towards the Celestial City, dreaming of the glories that await him, and in an altogether heavenly frame of mind until he meets with the Slough of Despond. That is enough for Pliable. 'If we have such ill-speed,' he says, 'at our first setting out, what may we not expect between this and our journey's end? May I get out again with my life, you shall possess the brave country alone for me.'

We can imagine this second son really starting for his work, but as he climbed the precipitous hillside, where the vines were clinging, and as the sun slowly mounted the Eastern sky to his blazing noonday, the resolution gets weaker and weaker until he sits in the shade to rest, and falls asleep. He meant his 'I go, sir,' and he really started; but he 'went not.'

Now make no mistake, it is hard work God calls us to; hard work under hot, unpleasant conditions. He does not say, 'Go talk,' 'Go pray,' 'Go dream.' But we have always this to remember. The Father has called us 'Child,' 'Bairnie,' and the Father has sent us into His own vineyard: 'Child, go work to-day in My vineyard.' The weeds may be there, and the soil may be hard and stony, and the sun may beat pitilessly down upon us, and often it will seem that the more we try the less we accomplish; yet still it is 'My vineyard': 'Child, go work to-day in My vineyard.'[1]

[1] W. P. Workman, *Kingswood Sermons*, 44.

The Israel Stele of Merenptah.

By the Reverend J. W. Jack, M.A., Glenfarg, Perthshire.

This Pharaoh, who began to reign over Egypt about 1225 B.C., not only fought the Libyans and pirates of the coast lands, who tried to establish themselves in the Delta, but seems to have carried out, or at least organized a campaign in Palestine. He refers to his numerous victories in an inscription on the back of a fine large granite stele, over ten feet high, which had originally been set up by Amenhetep III of the previous dynasty to commemorate his buildings. The date of the inscription is not later than the fifth year of Merenptah's reign (*i.e.* about 1220 B.C.). Israel is mentioned in this inscription, though for the first and only time in Egyptian history, so far as existing discoveries have gone. In the latter part of the text, the following sentences occur in the order here given:

> 'Wasted is Tehenu, Kheta is pacified, Pekanan is captured with every evil circumstance, Askalon is carried captive, Gezer is taken, Yenoam is brought to nought, Israel is destroyed, its seed is not, Syria has become as the widows of Egypt, all the lands together are at peace.'