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1916.

577TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING,
HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM B, THE CENTRAL HALL,
WESTMINSTER, ON MONDAY, MARCH 6TH, 1916,
AT 4.30 P.M.

THE VERY REV. HENRY WACE, D.D., DEAN OF CANTERBURY,
VICE-PRESIDENT, TOOK THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the preceding Meeting were read and confirmed.

The SECRETARY announced the election of Mr. F. T. Lewis as an Associate of the Institute.

The CHAIRMAN said that the Rev. H. J. R. Marston, to whose thoughtful and eloquent addresses they had had the privilege of listening on previous occasions, needed no introduction to that Meeting. He would therefore, without further preliminary, ask him to give his address on "The Psychology of St. Paul."

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ST. PAUL. By the Rev. H. J. R.
MARSTON, M.A., Rector of Lydford-on-Fosse, Somerset.

I DEFINE psychology to be the science of the soul; or the ordered and ascertained knowledge of the facts of human consciousness. Perception, imagination, memory, appear to be the principal exertions of the faculties which we have within. Of these, imagination alone is not much noticed by St. Paul; indeed, there is perhaps only one passage in his recorded utterances which can be directly referred to this superb faculty.

Christianity is not a school of psychology, yet it cannot fail to give a powerful impulse to that study. I may even hazard the opinion that Christianity created the atmosphere in which psychology breathes its most spontaneous and deepest inspirations. St. Paul was not a psychologist in the technical sense of that term; but his sympathy with the human frame in its mysterious inward working can be proved to have been profound and comprehensive. His handling of the problems of the soul can be proved to have been eminently sane, competent and masterly. To exhibit the method of St. Paul's psychology is the first object of this lecture. To argue from what we shall

discover of his psychological gifts that he is a credible witness to certain wonderful experiences in himself and others, and so to demonstrate the truth of some points of his teaching, is the second object of my lecture.

I cannot carry through this investigation without traversing some of the conclusions of what I may call the "Impressionist Interpreters" of St. Paul. Not without a touch of arrogance, they assert that until the present century St. Paul was not understood. They then proceed to reduce the apostle, who has according to them eluded the grasp of commentators from Jerome to Lightfoot, to the dimensions of a wandering Jew with an epileptic tendency and a mystical piety; a person strangely inadequate to have become the framer of the religious life of fifty generations. It is easy to see why these impressionists strive thus to reduce St. Paul. By that process they are able to reduce the supernatural to very meagre proportions. But by the same process they reduce the apostle to a figure strangely different from the noble personality with whom St. Luke has made us all familiar, and who may easily be discerned behind and within the epistles which he bequeathed to the Church. The materials on which they have to work are small and unsatisfactory, for the details of St. Paul's life are almost wanting until the time of his conversion. After that date he is the author of such fragmentary information as we do possess. I, therefore, prefer to take the apostle at his own valuation. I see him as he was: ecumenical and humane; large hearted, lofty in mind; blending with admirable sanity and poise elements in religion often thought to be incompatible. I discern in him the genuine author of the psalm of love, the man who was all things to all men, strong in weakness, in humility, at once teacher of nations and chief of sinners, the vessel of election and less than the least of all saints. This is the St. Paul of whose psychology I purpose to treat.

The writings of the apostle furnish a fruitful field for this inquiry. In the first epistle to the Thessalonians occurs the famous tripartite description of human nature as spirit, soul and body which attaches the teaching of St. Paul to the modern school of psychologists who insist so strenuously on the physical element in the science. In the seventh chapter of the Romans occurs the passage which, as an analysis of human experiences, stands alone in literature for depth and subtlety. But it is in the second epistle to the Corinthians that the psychological genius of St. Paul reaches the zenith. In this opinion I have the happiness to be supported by the learned Warden of Keble

College. As a human document, this epistle has no rival in St. Paul's writings. As in that to the Romans his mind was fixed on the history of Redemption. As in the first epistle to the Corinthians his mind is fixed on the order and disorder of the Church, so in the second his mind is engrossed by the inner life of souls. By bearing this in mind we are able to allow for the difficulties of interpretation. We can understand the sudden and sometimes violent alternation of feeling; the abrupt transition from topic to topic, from temper to temper. The cause of this lay in the conditions under which the epistle was produced. Circumstances the most trying harassed his body; and influences the most agitating and confused perturbed his spirit. The epistle reflects them all; and the correspondence is at once just, natural and edifying.

“Without were fightings, within were fears”; “I despaired even of life”; “I found no rest in my spirit”; “I wrote amidst many tears”; “who is sufficient for these things.”

In phrases such as these we discern the conditions under which the epistle took its motley but beautiful shaping.

A critic of eminence has pronounced that the language of St. Paul in this epistle is as eloquent as that of Demosthenes, and I agree with him. All the grades and variations of human feeling are clothed with just and affecting diction. It is, indeed, impossible to gather this from the crude and irregular translation of the Authorized Version. But the fact is indisputable. And the fact is important, for it is another proof of the stupidity of the critics, who cannot see how great St. Paul was. They who can resist the evidence of the Greek of this epistle in favour of the grandeur and veracity of the apostle can resist anything and may be guilty of any freak of interpretation. At least forty-seven terms expressing the emotions of the soul or their expression in actions or states can be quoted from this epistle. The list is copious, but I do not claim that it is exhaustive.

I have thrown into a note at the end of the lecture the details. Here it suffices to say that the list covers the whole area of experience. Passions, moods, habits, virtues, vices, emotions and their manifestations, the seats of emotions and the effects of them—all are touched in this wonderful letter with a delicacy, a firmness, a deliberation which declare the master hand. We rise from the perusal of the epistle with a conviction that its author was one who was in deep sympathy with human nature. He knew it well; he shared its feelings;

but he was neither alienated from it by its faults nor soured by its follies. He left it neither in disgust nor in anger, but moved with a divine pity and a divine hopefulness; he was conscious that it was originally good, and that even in its decay and ignominy it was potentially a thing of glory and exquisite efficiency.

It would have been well for the Church if divines and expositors had always caught from St. Paul the infection of so gracious a regard for their fellows. The epistle is a counterpoise to the letter to the Romans, and from a blending of the two we obtain the true theology of St. Paul. I am sure that our belief in the credibility of St. Paul as a witness to the divine elements in his Gospel must be, and rightly be, qualified by our belief in his sanity as a man. I believe that the epistle to the Corinthians which I have just summarised proves that sanity in the most complete and satisfactory manner. But that epistle also contains passages of surpassing interest to the Christian as such, passages which are one thing to us if we believe St. Paul to have been sane and sympathetic, and quite another thing if we believe that he was an epileptic Jew obsessed by the current illusions of the Jews of his day. I have shown cause for rejecting this latter view. Of the great Christian verities which loom large in this epistle, four present commanding claims to our notice. The limits of this lecture preclude me from entering into each of the four; but I may name them as I pass, and then devote what space remains to the examination of two.

These four subjects are: (1) the reality of grace, or the conflict with Naturalism; (2) the reality of reconciliation, or the conflict with Pantheism; (3) the supremacy of spirit, or the conflict with Materialism; (4) the reality of vision and revelation, or the conflict with Rationalism. Each of these four topics comes up in the course of the second epistle to the Corinthians. Each is handled by St. Paul with that masterly skill to which I have devoted the first portion of this lecture. The four together may be said to comprise the fundamental elements of Christianity in all ages, and to be things that matter. If on these points St. Paul can be discredited, Christianity has suffered a blow from which it can hardly recover. If on these points Christians can maintain the credibility and capacity of St. Paul, the Naturalist, the Pantheist, the Materialist, and the Rationalist must quit the arena sadder and, let us hope, wiser men. I select two of these subjects for closer and fuller examination. The first of the two is the reality of the vision of

Jesus which, though not specially mentioned in this epistle, yet plainly underlies it. This point brings me into collision with the Rationalist. The second is the doctrine of reconciliation, which has its *locus classicus* in the close of the fifth chapter of our epistle, and which brings me into collision with the Pantheist.

The seeing of Jesus by Saul of Tarsus at noon on a certain day near the gate of Damascus is a point of capital import. On that account it is three times recorded in the book of the Acts. It was twice narrated by the apostle in the most public and circumstantial manner, once in Jerusalem, once in Cæsarea. It made on his mind, memory, and heart an indelible and profound impression. Its importance is much more than belongs to an incident in his development: it affects vitally the character of the Christian religion as an historic and world-wide scheme. It cannot be shown, in fact, that St. Paul was converted by the seeing of Jesus or by the words that then passed between the chief of sinners and the ascended Lord. But what can be proved is that the kernel of the transaction consists in the words "I am Jesus." These words form the link between the Old Testament and the New. They echo the I AM of the burning bush. They imply identity between the manger of Bethlehem and the invisible throne. They created in St. Paul the conviction that the faith of Jesus was free of all ties in time and place.

Accordingly, then, when St. Paul uses in his epistles the simple name Jesus in speaking of our Lord, we are to think of his first interview with his Master. That use recalls vividly the event that made so awful and blessed a difference to himself and to the whole human family. About twenty times in the epistles as a whole does St. Paul thus write. In the pastoral epistles and in the epistle to the Colossians, and that to Philemon, the use does not appear. But in all the rest it does. It appears in every sort of connection. Jesus was to St. Paul the heart of Christianity: no part of it could be complete without Him. As the object of faith; as the measure of truth; as the object of sight; as the author of life; as the topic of preaching; as the name above every thing; Jesus—the Jesus of the Damascus interview—was all in all.

In our epistle the use is abundant and significant, and may be traced as a golden thread running through the whole texture and tissue of the letter. St. Paul did not always speak of his Lord as Christ or as the Christ, or as the Lord Jesus; or in other terms of greater or less majesty and ambiguity. He let all men

know that He to Whom he owed his all and for Whom he was ready to yield his all, was the Jesus of the human name and the human voice : the very Man of whom Cephas and John bore earthly and personal witness ; and to Whom he, no less than they, would bear his human witness too. Thus by using the name Jesus so perpetually and so confidently, he established the solidarity of apostolic Christianity, and the historical character of Christianity itself.

No rationalising, whether sentimentally pious or clamorously hostile, can get away from these findings ; and Christians are entitled to hold fast to the doctrine of St. Paul as a witness no less than as an apostle.

The Pantheist fares no better than his brother the Rationalist. The language of the apostle presents an insuperable bar to him. Nowhere has the apostle stated more clearly the gulf fixed between man and God by sin than in this epistle. Nowhere has he stated with equal power and tenderness the fulness and pathos of the reconciliation by which God has bridged that gulf. The circumstances under which he was writing made that doctrine very dear to his own soul. He was acutely conscious of the divisions between men, even between good men ; between races and sects ; within the Christian community itself. He was charged by an absurd and fanatical clique with being beside himself ; with being "an irreconcilable." He replied in the finest passage of all his writings by exhibiting the glory of God as the Reconciler. God became a World-reconciler in Christ, not attributing to men their trespasses ; and committing to chosen men the word and function of reconciliation. The reconciliation was effected by an august Person in an august transaction : "He made Him to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

The task of the Pantheist is to convince the human conscience that everything is good : that there is no evil and therefore no sin. That task he has tried to execute without success for many ages. One of the chief obstacles in his way is the language of St. Paul and the experience that lies within that language. I have no doubt that the human conscience is on the whole too sincerely faithful to truth, ever to adopt the vagaries of Pantheism. It will at last come round to the solid and awful realities so faithfully portrayed by the apostle.

The way out of the tangle of sin is by the door of reconciliation with God ; and St. Paul, more than any other man, has

been employed by God to write that truth large on the page of human nature.

NOTE ON THE TERMS AND PHRASES USED BY ST. PAUL IN THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

The collection of terms and phrases in this note is copious, but not exhaustive. It comprises more than fifty expressions. I have distributed them under certain obvious but useful heads. I have translated the original Greek of the expressions into modern equivalents as far as I can. The Greek, however, will repay careful investigation; and, indeed, no translation is really adequate.

1. *Mental processes*.—Thoughts, Reasonings, Volition, Purpose, Deliberation, Attribution.

2. *Natural emotions*.—Eager solicitude, Confidence, Praise, Grief, Fear, Repulsion, Ambition, Jealousy.

3. *Departments of nature*.—Conscience, Spirit, Soul, Body, Flesh. (Soul is used in its plural, but Spirit and Body are not.)

4. *Seats of emotion*.—Heart, Flesh, Vitals. (Heart is used in the plural.)

5. *Outward signs of emotion*.—"Through many tears," "With fear and trembling," "Weakly presence of the body," "Whether in the body or apart from it God knows." Two phrases occur which are like these, namely: "Lest I should become exalted" and "Constraint of heart."

6. *Vices*.—Levity, Nonsense, Chicanery, Trickery, Pollution, Impurity, Wantonness, Harlotry.

7. *Christian graces*.—Faith, Hope, Love, Peace, Joy, Patience, Tolerance, Earnestness, Sincerity, Kindliness, Simplicity, Righteousness, Truth, Obedience, Meekness, Reasonableness, Liberty, Wisdom, Knowledge, Sanctity, Sanctification.

This survey demonstrates the richness of St. Paul's vocabulary, the delicate precision of his use of terms, his alert and vivid interest in the whole structure of man.

Such a writer could not have been the Jewish globe-trotter obsessed with the illusion that the world was about to vanish in a debacle precipitated by the Advent of Jesus. Such a writer was and is worthy of much higher credit than are those critics who interpret him thus.

DISCUSSION.

Dr. A. WITHERS GREEN : A few years ago I heard a celebrated Nonconformist minister in an evening Gospel Service declare that the road of the Damascus journey and interview was not that of a real transaction, but of an imaginary mental one. Now comes in print from an Anglican divine in high status a similar trifling with the wonderful account. To our forefathers the event was very real, for you may see on the pediments over the western entrance of St. Paul's Cathedral the facts depicted in stone in plain detail. To them all was as certain as the cock which crowed thrice, which is also to be found behind St. Peter to the north, and by the side of St. Paul. Those who suggest that Saul of Tarsus was the subject of an epileptic trance display their ignorance. St. Luke doubtless knew that in epilepsy consciousness is lost and that at the end of a seizure, when reason returns, the past fit remains a perfect blank with no memory to record it. So that the *medicus carissimus* and companion of St. Paul and author of the Acts of the Apostles would know how true and substantial was his friend St. Paul's graphic description.

Mr. M. L. ROUSE thought that though it might seem as if Paul was compelled to become a Christian by the blinding heavenly light and the Divine voice and words, they ought not to forget that he afterwards said to Festus and Agrippa, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." So, had he chosen, there was a possibility of his rejecting the mercy and grace which the Lord had offered him. Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was, he thought, defective eyesight, but Sir William Ramsay considered that it was epilepsy.

Mr. JOHN TENNANT wished to correct Mr. Rouse. Prof. Ramsay had suggested that St. Paul was afflicted with malaria, not epilepsy.

Prof. LANGHORNE ORCHARD reminded the Meeting that St. Paul, alluding to his sight of Our Lord on the way to Damascus, associated it with historical facts. He points out that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, that He rose again the third day, and that He was seen by many witnesses on different occasions. Last of all St. Paul records, "He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." He adds this as an historical fact to the four historical facts just mentioned. He was not the man to base a serious faith upon an imaginary foundation. And his great knowledge

and correct use of psychological terms show St. Paul to have been specially qualified to describe a psychological experience.

The Rev. A. GRAHAM BARTON thought of the words of Victor Hugo, "the road to Damascus is one of the highroads of humanity." The Lecturer referred to St. Paul's treatment of man's nature as tripartite, consisting of spirit, soul, and body. Many psychologists did not believe in the tripartite nature of man, but considered that man was dual. Mr. Marston assumed the tripartite division of man's nature, whereas this was in dispute.

Lieut.-Colonel ALVES considered that the character of the Apostle Paul could very well take care of itself, the only difficulty relating to him being the nature of the "thorn in the flesh."

As to the nature of the "soul" in the "spirit and soul and body" of I Thessalonians v, 23, there was much dishonest teaching, notably on the part of the nineteenth-century revisions of the Old Testament, in their following the original translators, who were naturally prejudiced by early Romish training.

In Genesis i and ii, besides the man of ii, 7, being a "living soul," the inferior animate creation is five times called "living soul," in the Hebrew, the Greek Septuagint, and the Latin Vulgate. In Genesis vii, 21-23, man is again linked with that creation as to his "breath of the spirit of lives." Whatever was the result of the God-breathing in man's case, he would seem, as regards the substance of his spirit, as well as of his body, to be the same as the lower animals; albeit, it must be remembered, a distinct creation. Man's likeness to his Maker appears to be mental and bodily, not moral and spiritual, as Genesis iii reveals. This is also taught by both Moses and Paul, who give the male likeness as being nearer the Divine than is the female.

Dead bodies of men are, certainly ten, possibly eleven, times, called "souls" in the Hebrew Old Testament.

Man's nature seems to be revealed as twofold before regeneration, and what may be called threefold after, two spirits acting on the same body, and producing two diverse soul-feelings. The Apostle's remark, in I Thessalonians v, seems to mean that, through orderly and holy walk of life, the spirit overcoming the "flesh," the new "soul" thus generated may overcome the old; and that what was irksome at first may, through conflict, become instinctive.

Like other branches of theology, our psychology has been based

on isolated texts divorced from their context and foundation, passages of Scripture, and some of those texts mistranslations.

Archdeacon POTTER said that it seemed to him that one of the principal causes of the conversion of St. Paul was the fact that he had come into contact with followers of our Lord who showed in their lives the influence of His teaching and life (as, *e.g.*, St. Stephen). Previously to such experience we can imagine him in all seriousness thinking of the early Christians, as Tacitus and Suetonius wrote of them: "a class hated for their abominations," "a most mischievous (*exsecrabilis*) superstition," "hating mankind," "a new and impious superstition" (*nova et malefica*). But that the Apostle's heart was ready for conviction, when evidence appealing to it was forthcoming, we see in his broadhearted and noble speech later at Athens.

The CHAIRMAN thanked Mr. Marston for the new and interesting confirmation which he had placed before them of the fact that St. Paul was sane. St. Paul's sanity could indeed take care of itself as well as his character. It was difficult to read with patience much that was written about St. Paul. The article in the *Quarterly Review* to which Mr. Marston referred was an outrage, not only on St. Paul, but also on all those who had ever written about him. If no one had understood St. Paul until that article was written, then certainly no one at the present day could be said to understand him either. A simple way in which to decide whether St. Paul was sane or no was to read his Epistles. In his (the Chairman's) opinion no controversial literature could be put on a level with the Pauline Epistles, so straight and forcible and with arguments so powerful concentrated into such small space.

There was one other thought which he would wish to lay before them. Christian theology was alleged to be Pauline; it was suggested that Christianity was originated by St. Paul. But this was to forget that St. Paul did not come after the cult of Christianity had been started and divert it into new lines. He was a contemporary of Christ. When he was converted, he was converted into the belief that a contemporary of his own, a Man of his own generation, was God Incarnate. It was not only on the Damascus road that he held interviews with our Lord and received instruction from Him. Witness what he received from our Lord with respect to the Communion. He received instruction and revelation from Him many times. It had been urged that there was a great difference

between the theology of the Epistles and the simple teaching of our Lord Himself as recorded in the Gospels. How could it be otherwise? The Epistles were written after our Lord's Passion, therefore they dealt with deeper truths. As Canon Barnard had pointed out, there was a growth from the Gospels to the last Epistles. The pattern of our Lord must have had an increasing effect. Someone was once asked how to express in a word the effect of Christianity; he replied: "St. Paul," and he could not have expressed it better.

A vote of thanks to the Lecturer was passed unanimously, and the Meeting adjourned at 6.10 p.m.