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A SCHOLAR'S
TESTAMENT

ADOLF VON HARNACK



IVOR NICHOLSON & WATSON

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14198

f. 276



A SCHOLAR'S TESTAMENT

A SCHOLAR'S TESTAMENT

MEDITATIONS

BY

ADOLF VON HARNACK

Translated by
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IVOR NICHOLSON & WATSON LTD
44 ESSEX STREET, LONDON, W.C.2

1933



PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
THE DEVONSHIRE PRESS, TORQUAY.



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PREFACE

The meditations contained in this book originally formed part of a correspondence which brought me consolation and strength during a time of sorrow and pain.

Now that I have decided that I ought to share this treasure with others—including those of a neighbouring country, which is yet closely related to my own—I feel I should explain that before he left us Harnack gave his consent to the publication of these papers. I now offer them to a wider public in the hope that the loving solicitude for another's soul which inspired the writer will reach other hearts, and fill them with that joyful courage in facing life which was so characteristic of the writer himself.

As a scholar Adolf von Harnack was well known throughout the world. Few, however, knew that his main concern was with the life of the soul in God, in the spirit of Jesus Christ. On one occasion he wrote in a private letter: "To be strong in the inward man means everything!"

MÄRIT ULLRICH-HELLQUIST.

Bad Reichenhall,
October 1932.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

THE present translation is an unabridged version of the book published by Eugen Salzer of Heilbronn in 1931, under the title : *Vom Inwendigem Leben*. Several verse quotations which appear in the German edition have been omitted. The fragment at the close of the book (xxxvii) does not appear in the German original ; it is published here for the first time at the special request of the author's family.

OLIVE WYON.

London.

October 1932.

“ There are three things which are unfathomable—life,
the soul, God—yet they are the very essence of reality.”

ADOLF VON HARNACK.

I.

September 1916.

“ The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened.”—Matthew *xiii.* 33. R.V.

ON the lips of Jesus the phrase, the “ Kingdom of Heaven,” or the “ Kingdom of God ” means the sum total of all those great and holy influences which, feeding and nourishing the life of the soul, will gradually take shape and form within humanity, so that finally the whole human race shall be welded into a brotherhood, as inclusive as the whole of human life, and as profound as human need. A high ideal indeed—and to-day it seems more remote than ever—and yet it is the only aim for which it seems worth while to live and work here on earth.

Now what does Jesus say about the way in which this great and holy energy will work in the world ? He does not say that it will act as a veneer, beneath which the original wood remains unchanged while the outside is simply a hollow pretence. Nor does He say that it will act as a kind of supplement, giving life a twofold character : on the one hand the ordinary

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life with its own ideals, and on the other this extra way of life with its higher ideals. Again, He does not say that it will work like a corrosive acid, eating away the substance of the ordinary everyday life of humanity, and finally destroying it altogether. No, what He does say is that it will work like leaven : that is, that it will permeate the whole substance of life, transforming without destroying. The process is slow, but it is very sure !

This is a high ideal ; it is, however, both illuminating and alluring ! Nothing will be abolished yet everything will be changed ! The " three measures of meal " mentioned in the parable means the natural life of humanity as a whole ; but each individual may and should apply this parable also to his own life. All the great and elevating influences which affect our lives should act neither as a veneer, nor a supplement, nor like a corrosive acid, but like leaven. On one occasion Paul gave this inspiring thought to his followers : " We are God's fellow-workers." (1 Cor. iii. 9, R.V.) If we do what this parable tells us we shall indeed become " God's fellow-workers," both in our own lives, and in the world outside.

II.

10 *November* 1916.

“I pray not that Thou shouldest take them from the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil one.”—John xvii. 15.

FOR many years this verse has seemed to me one of the simplest and most profound, as well as one of the most impressive sayings in the whole Bible. In the midst of bewilderment and perplexity I have repeated these words to myself, over and over again, and each time they have brought me light and strength. In one brief and pregnant sentence it tells us that God has placed us in the midst of the life of this world, but that His protecting care is over and around us all the time. Could one find, within these limits, anything more satisfying or more sane?

1. He leaves us within the world : then this verse tells us that we are not to turn our backs on the world—we are not to run away from life in any morbid way, whether from disgust, or remorse, or despair, or from that kind of pride which feels itself too superior to do the tasks which life sets. “You are to remain within the world”—this means “You must remain in your

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calling ; you must be faithful to the duty appointed you by God ; you must adjust yourself to the circumstances in which you have been placed, for they form your world. You must not allow any sorrow or any depression to drive you away from this, your own ' world. ' ” “ I pray not that Thou shouldest take them from the world. ” But, you say, the world is often evil and full of sorrow ? It is not so evil and so sorrowful as we sometimes think ; nor is it so stupid as we sometimes think. It is of this very “ world ” that it has been said : “ God so loved the world. ” He loves it, in spite of the fact that it is what it is. He loves it, because only thus can it become better ; for love alone possesses the power of renewal. So it is your duty to remain within the world, and, indeed, you are to love it, and to be gay and joyful, for without joy there is no love. You must remain within the world ; that is, within *your* world ; for, so far as you are concerned, there is no other ; and you must embrace it with love : the sun as it rises upon your life every day, the affairs which are entrusted to you, the people who form the circle in which you live, whether they seem a poor lot to you

or not. All these things together make up your world. "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them from the world." Instead of regarding the world from a distance, with misgiving and repulsion, you are to open your heart to it, freely and fully, for what is the use of remaining within the world if you do so merely grudgingly and of necessity?

2. He protects us from the evil one (or from evil). Jesus has only one petition to offer for His disciples who are to remain within the world: "Keep them from the evil one." (Luther translates simply: "Evil," but this is not quite accurate.) How strange this seems: He sends them out into the world; difficult tasks, grave dangers, trials of all kinds await them. We might have thought that He would have sent them out into life with all kinds of good advice coupled with fervent intercessions for them. But He offers one prayer, and one only: "Keep them from the evil one." Evidently He believes that if this prayer is answered they will be able to bear everything else, and the final result will be good. Obviously He is confident that in every other respect they will be able to find the right way in life,

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as, indeed, is suggested by another verse :
“ Who is there who can harm you if ye be followers of that which is good ? ”

What a simple conviction this is, and yet how great ; it is evident that it is based upon deep experience. It is profoundly serious, and yet it is liberating. Profoundly serious—for it says plainly : You have only one enemy, but he is real and terrible : the spirit of Evil, and against this enemy you must protect your soul at all costs. But this conviction is also liberating—you have nothing to fear in the whole wide world, no disaster, no misfortune, nothing whatsoever, save this one enemy alone !

What, then, is this spirit of Evil ? There are many answers to this question, and men have often been very ingenious in their endeavours to answer it, but for all their pains they have never really reached any satisfactory conclusion. Here is my own reply : “ Evil ” means the habit of regarding oneself and other people simply as part of nature, or of the material world which will pass away and perish, and the habit of arranging one's life in accordance with these ideas. “ Good,” on the other hand, means regarding

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oneself and other people as the children of God, and living our lives in accordance with this belief.

Those who follow after evil use everything—even people, both those whom they love most and those for whom they have a passing attraction, only as a means to increase their earthly pleasure : exactly in the same way as all other forms of life. All that is good and pure and holy is valued, not for its intrinsic worth but only as a means of avoiding conventional irregularities. To such people these values mean nothing whatsoever. The followers of the good, on the other hand, transmute all their experiences of life into spiritual nourishment : that is, in whatever circumstances they may be placed by the providence of God, they try to make themselves at home in them, knowing that these also are “ the Father’s House.” “ Blessed are the homesick, for they shall come home at last.” This “ home ” is not above us in the “ bright blue sky,” although sometimes we speak of it thus in the language of symbol, but it is within us ; for we are not merely part of nature, part of this world of ours, to which we also really belong, but we are the children of God.

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A child of God, or a part of the process of Nature?—those who do not feel the pain of this contrast, and feel it constantly, can never be set free from it. But once we have felt this in the depths of our soul, it is impossible to take either a superficial or a despairing view of life again—to feel ourselves simply part of that which is doomed to perish—no, we now possess a stimulus which spurs us on, driving us ever forward and upward.

And this stimulus, at first painful in its effect, leads finally to this result : the soul becomes stronger, the conscience more tender, the mind purer, the whole person happier. Finally—and this is the most beautiful thing of all—gradually a kind of reconciliation is effected between the soul and Nature, and the very soul which has thus been strengthened can rejoice like a child—and indeed like a child of God—in Nature—both in the beauty of all created things and in the use of his own natural faculties—because now he knows how to control them aright and because he knows he is stronger than they are. We might almost describe this joy as heroism, for it possesses the noblest kind of inward peace, is not controlled by external laws—

(what, after all, is the use to us of external commands?)—but by the new impulse of a pure and noble freedom. You die, and perish, precisely to the extent in which you follow after evil, and you live and grow precisely to the extent in which you live in God's world : first of all, in that spirit of love which seeks the soul, both in itself and in others, that it may then take from the visible world all that can be appropriated harmoniously without injuring the soul.

“ I pray not that Thou shouldest take them from the world ” ; even though that corner of the world in which we live may have become evil—“ but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil ”—that our souls may not be stifled, but that they may learn to spread their wings and rise into the heights.

III.

16 November 1916.

Jesus said to His disciples : " The harvest is plenteous, but the labourers are few : pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He send forth labourers into His harvest."

Luke x. 2. R.V.

" THE harvest is plenteous " : this is a word of confidence and love. As Jesus let His eyes wander lovingly over the crowds which surrounded Him, His gaze pierced through the outer shell to the souls of men, and He beheld a great host of receptive souls, people like those of whom He spoke in the parable of the Labourers in the Marketplace, who said reproachfully to the householder : " We would have come before this, but ' no man hath hired us ! ' " How harshly and arrogantly, however, do *we* judge people : we tire of them so easily, we are tempted to wash our hands of them, or we give them up altogether : indeed, far too frequently it is people who make a great profession of Christianity who behave like this ! and they do it unblushingly, claiming, quite wrongly, that in so doing they are " making a stand for Christian principle ! " How different is the attitude of Jesus, shown in deeds as well as in words ! He

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invited the "publicans and sinners" to "come unto Him"; in them He saw His "harvest," and He exclaims with joy: "The harvest is great!" To-day, as ever, it is exactly the same: the number of people who desire to be freed from their inward slavery is much larger than the stupid self-righteousness of the self-satisfied imagines, indeed, these "outsiders" are ready to make difficult sacrifices; but, first of all they must be called.

But there is a lack of heralds of the Kingdom, and to the joyful proclamation: "the harvest is great!" comes back the moving reply: "but the labourers are few." Who are these labourers? What kind of labourers does Jesus mean? Obviously He means fellow-workers with Himself, fellow-labourers with God.

This is a great saying: "Fellow-workers with God"; it is a glorious, ennobling thought. The Apostle Paul also used it: "We are God's fellow-workers." (1 Cor. iii. 9.) Yes, even you, frail and human as you are, knowing your own weakness, conscious of hesitations, knowing how easily you are swayed by every wind that blows—you are to become a fellow-worker with God!

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But how can I do this? Well, in the very way which is suggested by the words of our text—you are to call other men, you are to help to gather the sheaves into God's barn. But if I cannot manage myself how can I call others?

It is just because you cannot manage yourself that you are to call others; for the only way to win one's own freedom and to become better and freer inwardly is to call others.

But how can I give to others what I do not possess myself? A very justifiable question, and yet it contains a wrong idea. In material things it is true that we can only give what we ourselves possess, but in the spiritual and moral sphere another law obtains. However weak the hand I extend to help my needy brother it becomes stronger when he grasps it. However meagre the love and concern which I bring to his need, when he receives it from me, a warning ray of light is reflected upon myself. However uncertain my trust in God and in things eternal, however imperfect my inward self-discipline, however burdened I may be in thought and feeling, as I try to help others all will be purified, and my own

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faith in God will grow. We cannot wait until we ourselves are strong and established in the faith in order to be God's fellow-workers ; we must begin at once, however inwardly weak and unprepared and burdened we may feel, even if we have only a very slight conception of what the power of a man of God may be.

God's fellow-workers :—but where are the people whom I can help ? You do not need to search for them, and you should not do so. Only open your eyes : look at your daily round of duties towards the people among whom you live and work. You do not need to create a circle ; someone else sees to that for you. And it will grow larger and wider without your doing anything about it at all. And even if at first it should consist only of the one, two or three people who are nearest to you ; even to these in all humility you may be a fellow-worker with God. “ Pray ye therefore the Lord of the Harvest that He will send forth labourers into His harvest ” : this means : pray that each one of us may be sent forth by God Himself in order that our inward man may be set free, and may grow and prosper.

IV.

29 *November* 1916.

“ Behold, it was for my peace that I had great bitterness : but Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption.”—Isaiah xxxviii. 17. R.V.

(The literal translation of the German version reads thus : “ Behold, I was greatly needing comfort ; but Thou hast taken heartfelt pity upon my soul, that it should not perish.”—Translator.)

THOSE who need comfort most not only doubt whether they can ever be comforted, but the very idea of “ comfort ” conveys nothing to them ; the very word sounds merely like empty talk, or like a clanging cymbal. This mood—the mood in which one despairs of ever finding consolation, and indeed cannot believe in the possibility of ever feeling different—is one of the worst which can afflict a soul—to whatever cause it may be due : whether to profound sorrow, or to failure, or to ill-treatment. The effect of this mood may vary : in one it may lead to a kind of dumb apathy ; in another to a restless self-tormenting instability ; or, in another, to the desire to drown all these feelings in some stupefying form of activity, or by oscillating miserably between these varying moods.

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This is the condition of thousands of people who go about the world apparently quite calm, but inwardly despairing, whose only hold on life comes from their fear of death and their passing moments of enjoyment ; they are slaves of life, and slaves of death—"martyrs"—in the wrong sense of the word ; they do not suffer hopefully and joyfully for a high ideal, but they suffer for death, for the continuation of a death-in-life ! The prophet is right when he says of such people : " My soul was nigh unto destruction."

" But Thou hast taken heartfelt pity upon my soul," or, as the Prophet puts it in another passage : " Comfort ye, comfort ye, My people ; speak to the heart of Jerusalem ; and cry unto her that her warfare (her despairing struggle) is accomplished ! " Or, as Jesus puts it : " Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted," or note how Paul speaks of the " God of all comfort." This message of comfort goes right through the whole Bible, which abounds in testimonies of those who have found that there is such a thing as real comfort, and that God is our God, because He comforts us.

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But how does God comfort? And how does He "take pity on our souls?" Could anyone ever give a comprehensive answer which would cover all possible cases? The paths of life and the leadings of God's Providence are so wonderful and so varied that it would seem impossible to give any satisfactory answer to this question. And yet—varied as they are—the power which alone can create comfort is the same, and this power must therefore lie behind every experience. And this power is known as *kindness*, a kindness felt and tasted by the soul. For the only source whence comfort and help can flow into a parched and despairing soul is the experience of kindness. But this kindness does not merely touch the surface of the soul; it has to be something so deep and so full that it will be richer than all the consciousness of emptiness, stronger than the feeling of death, and mightier than the consciousness of guilt. And it must be a kindness which makes us eager to live and act, a kindness which will restore joy in life, and give a happy sense of the value of human activity, and the power to play our part in life with zest, for we are only really alive when we are joyful and active,

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whether our sphere of action be large or small.

But how does this kindness enter our hearts? Here each of us can speak only from our own experience; for the ways in which this happens are countless—"In His Hand lies all the power of consolation and His Wisdom never fails to find a way to enter in." So I will content myself with merely giving a few examples: Here is someone whose heart is so bowed down with sorrow, caused by the death of her nearest and dearest, that life has become utterly empty and meaningless, and all the tasks which remain to be done seem futile and vain. To her the bereavement which she has suffered seems the worst evil which could possibly happen to anyone. And then—whether through her own personal experience, or through that of her children, or through some severe temptation which is finally vanquished—she learns that there are things which are worse than death. She cannot ascribe to her own strength the fact that the temptation has been overcome; so, ashamed and thankful, she acknowledges the kindness and protection which have carried her through this experience. When

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it is over, however, she looks at her bereavement in a different light: no longer does she regard the great loss which she has sustained as the worst thing which could possibly have happened, but out of her deliverance from something worse than death she learns to face life itself with a new, and a more joyful and courageous spirit. This lesson may also be learned far more gently and easily: perhaps even through the gleam in the eyes of a child, light and hope will again spring up within a desolate soul, and the barren garden of daily duty will become a sunlit place: best of all, the change is permanent, and joy in work and in life puts forth fresh shoots and her life enters upon a period of steady growth. And as she gives and labours her own heart becomes glad once more; for if you want to get anything out of life you must give; this is the fundamental law of all deep and high experience.

Here is another instance, of a man who, through ill-treatment or through his own fault, feels himself well-nigh lost; he has forfeited all inward sense of self-respect; everything has become monotonous; he feels as though he were drifting about,

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hither and thither, like a dry leaf which flutters about in all directions till it is completely withered and dead. A state of mind like his, so menacing to the life of the soul—which of us does not know it? And if it is not checked the final result will be spiritual death. On the other hand, however, how many souls, from the Prodigal Son onwards, can also tell how they were delivered from this state simply because they were treated with kindness.

And how did this deliverance come to them? To one through the merciful word of forgiveness; to another through the warm radiance of a love which treats the past as though it had never been; to a third through contact with a great and pure personality, whose power and goodness suddenly broke in upon the soul with all the force of a revelation, invigorating because it warms.

“Thou hast taken heartfelt pity on my soul”—how beautifully and aptly does this express the fact that there is no comfort which does not come from the heart and go to the heart. Merely “dealing with” a person’s need only helps for the moment; material help does not really help us at all, because it does not

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touch the organ which controls the whole personality, namely, the heart. Finally, this verse reminds us that it is *God* who takes pity on us when love takes pity on us ; for kindness, mercy and love, wherever, and in whatever form they may appear, are no natural product ; they are the revelation of a new and higher world : a revelation of God. So we too, in hours of dreariness and darkness, in hours when we are weary, or full of self-reproach, will hold fast our confidence in this Love which never leaves us, confident that in ever-renewed ways, and in ever fresh experiences we shall prove its power and its kindness, and all this will happen without any anxious effort on our part, and for no goodness or merit of our own, but simply and solely from pure love alone.

V.

3 December 1916.

“The Spirit also helpeth our infirmity : for we know not how to pray as we ought : but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings* which cannot be uttered.”—Romans viii. 26. R.V.

WE know that Paul, like Luther, was a great man of prayer, to whom it was an absolute necessity of the soul to gather up his spiritual desires and experiences and present them vocally to God. But even he has to confess : “Often I do not know what to pray for as I ought.” He feels himself both weak in prayer and uncertain about what he should ask. Why is this ? Because even he sometimes experienced a sense of spiritual lassitude, because even he sometimes fell into a condition in which spiritual things seemed confused and obscure, a state in which he felt arid and oppressed in spirit, unable to see clearly what he needed, and quite unable to pull himself together, and get out of this state. If, then, this kind of thing happens to the greatest souls, we need not be depressed and disheartened if it also happens to us !

*German version—Lit.—“unspeakable sighings.”
(Translator).

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Now, how does the Apostle get out of this state? What method does he use? Through frantic efforts to force himself to pray? No, for he knows that in such a condition efforts of this kind are useless, they only weary and exhaust the soul. He ceases to pray, for he says to himself: It is impossible, and to torment myself does no good. Then what does he do? He turns his gaze away from his present spiritual state to something greater and more universal, to an experience of faith which abides even when he can feel nothing of it; the fact upon which he rests is this: "God does not leave thee; He is greater than thy heart, and His Spirit abides within thee, even when thou canst feel nothing of His Presence." Then he gives a deep sigh of relief, and goes back to his daily work in the sure confidence that God does not at that moment expect any formal prayers from him, nothing save that sigh of relief which is also a sigh of release, and which means simply this: "I accept all, as Thou givest it to me"—this is enough for him. This is what Paul means when he says that the "Spirit maketh intercession for us." When we are in this condition the

deep, submissive sigh is worth far more than a prayer which is wrung out of a distracted soul.

But supposing we have not had the interior experience which has just been described, or supposing we have only just begun to find it out, very imperfectly, what are we to do? We ought to think of those who *have* made this experience their own; we should think of their faith and confidence—above all of Jesus Himself, of Paul, and Luther, and of those whom we have known personally in our own lives. We may enter this experience through their faith and this also is the “intercession of the Spirit,” for we are all members one of another, and one soul may and should mediate Christ and the Spirit to another.

But how do we learn to pass beyond this experience and really learn to pray? Most people do not know this, and yet it is an open secret—only through thanksgiving to God. We can only pray truly in sorrow and in distress if we have learned to pray with thanksgiving in the time of our wealth. Those who have not learned this way of praying are only made stupid and dull and hollow by the experience of

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sorrow or distress. Learn to pray thankfully in time of joy—both in times of great joy, and also in every tiny happiness—then in the time of need prayer will come naturally from the heart—whether the distress be inward or outward—and you will then slowly but surely learn what you should pray for : for a steadfast heart, for noble thoughts, and for the power to overcome the trials and difficulties of each day. Thankfulness in time of joy—this is the secret of power to pray.

VI.

7 December 1916.

“Now when Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of Man is? And they said, Some say, John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven.”—Matthew xvi. 13-17. R.V.

I. ON the southern slopes of Lebanon, in a little country town, stood a religious teacher, with a few friends and followers. To the great world of that day he was entirely unknown and at that time even among his own people his standing was in no way remarkable; turning to those who had hitherto called him “Master,” or “Teacher,” he put this question: “Who then am I?”—“What do the people say about me?” and “who do *you* think I am?” And to-day, after more than eighteen hundred years, this question is still being asked; more than this, for thousands of human souls this question is still a vital question; indeed they regard it as one of the most vital questions of their own personal lives. It is, of course,

true that millions ignore it entirely, just as the great mass of the people in Palestine at that time was scarcely touched by it at all ; but those who have been affected by this question for these eighteen hundred years and more are certainly not among the worst of mankind ; in fact, no serious reader of the Gospels can possibly escape this question, whatever his attitude or point of view may be ; for it is both a religious and an historical problem, raising questions so fundamental for human life that no thoughtful person can evade it.

2. So far as the Jewish people paid attention to Jesus at all, and did not simply reject Him outright, like the priests and the scribes, their verdict was unanimous : " Jesus is no ordinary Teacher ! " It was quite clear to them that here was an extraordinary man, remarkable both in speech and action. This is very significant ; it means that this was the irresistible impression Jesus made upon the more receptive section of the Jewish people. Who is He then, if He is no ordinary teacher ? Opinions varied a good deal : some thought : " John the Baptist is risen from the dead and has appeared once

more among us ; ” it is evident that John’s preaching had made a very deep impression upon these people, and they could not imagine anyone greater or nobler than this preacher of repentance ; they were unable to discern the difference between the message of the Baptist and the message of blessedness and love proclaimed by Jesus. Others thought He might be Jeremiah, or one of the other Old Testament prophets—it is remarkable that both groups seemed quite unable to see that here they were looking at a new messenger from God, and, moreover, one who was quite unique. To these simple folk, however, it was obviously quite easy to believe in the reappearance or resurrection of one of the ancient men of God. Their tacit assumption was this : the present time is too poor for it to produce anything truly great or good which is really new. Over and over again in the course of history such periods have been known : periods when no one expects that anything new will ever happen again, least of all in the present time.

3. Peter’s experience of his master had been quite different from that of “ the people.” It had gradually dawned upon

him that all that he had hitherto learned from the sacred scriptures, all that the men of God and all the prophets of his nation had brought him, could not compare with the inward experience which he knew he had received from this teacher who was his friend as well. His soul had become strong, joyful and full of confidence, and Peter knew for a certainty that this was due to Him and to Him alone. But this was not all : he had seen also the effect of Jesus upon many other souls, and now, when the pointed question was put to him, all these impressions welled up within his soul, and he broke out : perhaps even surprising himself—" You are no ordinary teacher ! No prophet like the prophets of old, not even like John ! Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God ! "

4. What does this confession of Peter's mean ? Here we must free our minds from all later false interpretations, above all we must leave ecclesiastical explanations alone, and think of nothing " metaphysical " or " Trinitarian." Rather, we may paraphrase Peter's confession like this : " You are the Promised One, promised to our forefathers, and the One for whom they waited, the One who will

usher in the era of the holy rule of God over us ; One who knows that God is his Father, and who possesses the power of implanting this knowledge as a vital energy within the hearts of men—not only in my heart, but in the heart of mankind as a whole.” This was the experience of Peter, and out of this supernatural experience issued the confession : “ Thou art the Messiah.” (For Christ means Messiah.)

5. Jesus answers this confession with an equally great saying. He says to Peter : “ Flesh and blood did not reveal this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” By this He means, that an experience like that which Peter had discovered through contact with Himself is always a divine gift and not a natural product, indeed, that it is not merely *a* divine gift but *the* divine gift ; for God can give us nothing else, or at least nothing higher than this : that in Jesus we lay hold of the living God and His action on our souls.

6. But what has this whole story to do with *us* ? People say : “ Jesus is no longer among us, and therefore, we can never have Peter's experience ! ” “ How can the past become the present to us ? ”

Two things may be said in reply to this : Firstly : Paul has said, and rightly—for history confirms his statement—that Jesus is the Firstborn among many brethren ; that is, the flame He kindled has had the power of continually re-kindling fresh flames of the same kind in the hearts of men of countless types—from the great and powerful to the lowly and obscure ; “ one loving spirit sets another on fire,” one brother or sister may be, as Luther says, a “ Christ ” to another. From century to century there is now an unbroken chain of men of God : joyful, self-controlled and full of love. This does not mean that it is necessary for each one to come into direct touch with Jesus : Jesus works on through His brethren and His children, right down to the present day. Secondly, however, it is not true that the past can never be present. This statement applies far more to things than to people. It is quite different for human beings : as the seeker experiences what he seeks, so the man who is moral, thoughtful, and awakened, feels when he comes into contact with the great and good spirits of the past. He does not merely gain something from them, but he receives

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the flame of their inspiration directly into his own soul, and the sense of separation due to time and space vanishes into thin air ; for barriers of time and space do not exist where the spirit, soul and heart, are concerned. It is thus that the Person of Christ works, radiating from the Gospels, illuminating the heart of individuals ; indeed, to many souls this contact with Him is a living experience ; He seems to stand before them as once He stood before Peter, commanding reverence and awakening trust ; they feel as though they are looking right into His face as Peter did, and with Peter they confess : “ Thou art the very revelation of God Himself to my soul.” Those who have not entered into this experience should not strive after it, as though it could be won by arduous labour and strenuous acts of will. Such people should be thankfully content with the flame of inspiration which has come to them through others—if it is a real inspiration it must have some connexion with the Father of Jesus Christ—and let them try, earnestly and reverently and trustfully, to follow those good spirits who have revealed this light to them.

VII.

17 *December* 1916.

“ And Mary said, my soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.”

COMMENTING on these verses Luther says, and the whole passage is worth studying : “ This saying proceedeth from a spirit full of fervour and overflowing with joy ; she exulteth inwardly with her whole being. Hence she doth not say : ‘ I magnify the Lord . . . ’ but : ‘ My soul doth magnify the Lord . . . ’ As though she would say : ‘ My life and all my powers are exalting the love of God, absorbed in praise and holy joy, so that I do not aspire after God, for I have already been carried up into His Presence.’ Thus all those who are filled to overflowing with the divine sweetness and the divine Spirit ever feel more than they can express. For to praise God with joy is no human work. Rather is it something which God worketh in us : we have to accept it with joy ; it is solely a Divine work, which cannot be taught by words, but only by experience. . . . Verily, she doth begin in the right manner, by speaking of God first as her Lord, and then as

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her Saviour, as she recounteth His wondrous works. . . . We also should thus love and praise God, seeking Him alone, and nothing for ourselves. But he only doth praise God aright who praiseth Him solely because He is good. . . . A bird can sing and is happy in doing what he can, and he doth not murmur because he cannot speak. A dog leaps gaily in his play, and he is content, although he hath not the gift of reason . . . but the evil, self-interested spirit of man is insatiable !”

This is very characteristic of Luther, the genial and child-like Luther, who always hits the nail on the head ; for his interpretation of this passage cannot be surpassed as a description of this particular mood of the soul. All true joy is breathed into the soul, and all praise and thanksgiving is artificial and valueless unless it wells up out of a soul which at that moment is full to overflowing, lacking nothing, lost to all thoughts of self, speaking simply, as she is impelled, by the joy which has been quickened within her soul.

But when we read a passage like this, and many a similar one in the Psalms, and are told that it is God who thus fills the

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soul with joy, and when we also find that the Psalmists, when they feel remote from God, exclaim : “ Like as the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God ! ” and contrast these words with the poverty of our own experience, we sometimes feel as though the utmost we can attain is to admit, with admiration, that an exalted condition of this kind is something great and rich ! And we ask ourselves : Is it really any good reading passages like these which are far beyond our ordinary experience, and to which we can never attain ?

Now, first of all, we must remember that it is good to keep before our eyes the highest and richest and the most desirable experiences which we know ; for the very fact that we see that others have attained these heights tends to exalt our own soul. In reality we are all much more closely knit together than appears on the surface, or than we in our individualistic independence care to admit. We are children of the same father and the same mother, and if one or several of the family go further than the rest ; if they breathe a purer air and enter into a higher joy, they bring some of this back

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to us ; all we need to do is to open our hearts thankfully that we too may receive a ray of light from the glow of their experience.

Further, however : in these verses there are two important words : *Lord* and *Saviour*. It is not the rigid and so often lifeless conception of " God " which we meet in this passage, but two living words, pulsing with warmth and vigour :

Lord—that is, the Mighty One, the Protector.

Saviour—that is, the One who loves and helps and redeems.

Thus, whenever, in things great or small, our faith is strengthened, and we realise more fully and clearly that our whole life is under the protection and guidance of a watchful Providence, when we perceive that its general tendency is upwards, when we gain the inward conviction that behind the veil of the apparently accidental and casual happenings of life there is something pre-determined and full of blessing, that behind the temporal there lies the eternal, then we may and ought to exclaim : " It is the Lord." Indeed, out of such experiences this exclamation bursts from

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our lips spontaneously ; for we are then both humble and happy, and this is the beginning of "praising God" : "My soul doth magnify the Lord !"

And whenever we gain an added confidence in the faith that God is greater than our heart, when we find that inward burdens are lifted and the sense of guilt is dispelled, when we find that our conscience becomes both more tender and more peaceful, then we may and should exclaim : "It is my Saviour !"

In the fact of Jesus Christ we catch the radiant beams of both aspects of God : Lord and Saviour. He, however—and this is our Christian belief—is a mirror of the fatherly heart of God. This is the Christmas message. How then can we give way to despondency or to despair ? "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."

VIII.

24 *December* 1916.

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.”—John, i. 14.

THIS passage shall be our Christmas Gospel to-day ; it leads us away behind the child-like and beautiful Christmas stories to the heart of the fact, which we celebrate to-day with the whole of Christendom, a day on which this year so few festival lights are burning. Let us hope that all the more hearts may be set alight, rising above the distress and anguish of these days to find comfort in the love of God. Let us help to make this possible as far as ever we can.

“The Word became flesh”—a mysterious and strange expression when it is regarded from the outside ; but a clear and plain saying when it is apprehended in the depth of its meaning. Does a word ever penetrate right into our mind and heart unless it “becomes flesh,” that is, if we do not feel that in the fact of its expression it has gained form and life and even personality ? Only a word which really touches the personal life is vigorous

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enough to be creative and to enkindle spiritual life in others ; all other words fade away within our minds, even if, at their best, they may have interested or entertained us. Only the word in which we feel the utterance of a whole personality means anything to us ; and as we grasp it in reverence and love we feel that it lifts us out of ourselves on to a higher plane. Of every word of this kind we can say with truth : " We beheld His glory." For truly such a " word-made-flesh " is glorious ! " Glorious " (*herrlich*) is the right expression. " Glorious," if rightly used, means the joy of having discovered something greater, more sublime and more decisive than life usually offers. This, however, is only offered by a word which has been made flesh and thus become part of the vital stuff and substance of human experience. Nothing can be a substitute for this. A glorious word of this kind makes us also able to glory : able to rise above ourselves and our fate ; for it breaks the fetters of slavery in which we have entangled ourselves as well as the chains which circumstances have sought to lay upon us.

If, then, this is a normal human

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experience, we can also understand the setting in which the Evangelist places this word of his, or rather the presupposition which lies behind this passage concerning Jesus Christ. Here he intends to say that not only has a good and great word become incarnate in a person, but that here *the* Word, the Word which all men need, is manifested in a Person. What kind of a word then is this? It is the word which can be most briefly summed up in the message: "You are not slaves of the world and of death, but you are the children of God." This is the Word; for shortly before this verse John says: "as many as received Him to them gave He power to become children of God." And in another passage we read: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath towards us that we should be called the children of God."

The "eternal Light" which came into the world with Jesus, the Light which has illuminated this life of ours with a new radiance, is the declaration that we are the children of God. This is that Light, which, even after a long night, if it finds in our heart only a faintly smouldering spark can kindle it into a bright flame, a

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flame so steady that no more can any night alarm us, or darkness overwhelm us. "Children of God"—can we think of any greater message than this? Whenever we really open our hearts to receive this message we are immediately flooded with pure joy and confidence and hope—suddenly we see ourselves freed from all the ugly imperfections which we know to be part of ourselves; we see ourselves without spot or stain; for we know that we are the children of God; no lesser dignity is ours. In the light of this fact, that we are the children of God, the sense of sin and guilt is dispelled, and with deep emotion we aspire to the eternal.

This is the true Christmas Gospel, and all the other elements which surround it are only like the rays which surround the sun.

And now we know what the Evangelist means when he says: "We saw His glory, a glory as of the only-begotten Son of the Father." For if the word proclaims that we are all the children of God, it is not difficult to understand that in Him in whom this truth was first fully incarnated we are to love and reverence the only-begotten Son of God. For the

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moment we will put aside all the simple child-like stories as well as all profound speculations ; for it is a matter of absolute indifference what our attitude is towards them. The one thing that matters is this : Jesus has revealed to us what it means, in its essence, to be a child of God ; He has shown it to us by His life on earth, making it visible in love, service, patience, confidence and trust, as well as in anguish and in death ; we can see this quite clearly. Thus He is the "first-born among many brethren," and as the "first-born" He is the only-begotten, unique Son of God.

His glory still shines in the Gospels, as though He were still standing amongst us and His glory may and ought to become ours also—"full of grace and truth." Grace and truth : how profound is that saying ; for we feel and know that the fact that we are the children of God is nothing of our own doing at all ; it is a pure gift, pure love and mercy, and we shall learn increasingly, as life goes on, that it alone is truly real, and therefore the truth.

For is all that we see around us genuine and true ? Are the objects we handle with our senses true ? Are the things we

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enjoy with the senses real and permanent? Are not all these things passing shadows of a reality which has to be sought elsewhere? That alone is real which is freed from the accidental and from death, and only that is true which takes from us the charming and sorrowful illusion that every pleasure is also real life.

“Pleasure has its sinister side, and all leads to death”—this is the desolate and bleak aspect of reality. “Let me remain ever Thine, Thou faithful God and Lord”—this is the comforting reality, the reality which springs out of the fact that we are the children of God, the reality which springs out of the Christmas Gospel. So we celebrate the “First-born among many brethren” and sisters as our Lord and Leader, and ask God that as we pass through life and grow in grace we may experience His glory.

IX.

New Year 1917.

“ For God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness ; but of power and love and discipline.”—2 Timothy i. 7. R.V.

FOR the third time the New Year finds us in the midst of war. But it finds us unsubdued, strong and courageous. In spite of all the tears which have flowed, in spite of the overwhelming losses which we have sustained, in spite of the anguish, the wounds, the maiming and the disablement of thousands, our people have still maintained their sanity, energy and a bold courage. It is, of course, true that we all desire peace, and all our New Year wishes are summed up in the desire for peace during this coming year ; but this desire is not the cry of a wounded wild beast which is nearing death ; rather, it is like the will of a conqueror who desires to see peace at last. It is an amazing thing that after two and a half years of war we can enter on the New Year in this temper. “ Hitherto hath the Lord helped us ”—this therefore must be the underlying feeling in all our hearts as we turn to greet this New Year. “ God gave us

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not the spirit of fearfulness ” ; we have been allowed to feel this for ourselves, and we still feel it, and with the Apostle we may go on to say : “ but of power and love and discipline.” What is the spirit which has helped us through, and kept us sane and courageous, both at home and on the battlefield ? Is it not precisely this spirit which the Apostle describes : a resolute and iron energy of will, a fraternal and protective love, and a spirit of discipline which has controlled the bad elements in our national life and thrust them out of sight ? Can anything better or greater be said of a people than that it is controlled by such forces ? And so we can express our New Year wishes for the German people in no better words than these : may God preserve in our nation the spirit of power and love and discipline. Power without love becomes self-centred and brutal ; love without discipline becomes soft and tends to dissolve ; but power, love and discipline together form a glorious trinity, and one can wish nothing better for any nation. These energies can meet any foe, whether inward or outward ; they can rebuild any ruins and lift the nation above all loss and harm.

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Therefore let us place these words over the portal of the New Year for our German people : Power, love and discipline.

But the message of the Gospel and of the Epistles of the New Testament is not intended primarily for nations, nor concerned with their well-being and position in the world ; it is directed to individuals, and to the Christian community. So this is a message for the individual—and on this New Year's Day we think of each of our dear ones as individuals—and to each one of them we wish the spirit of power, love and discipline ; to each one as much as he needs.

Power : this means : courage ! The Gospel speaks not only of humility (*Demut*) but, if we read it aright it speaks quite as often of courage (*Mut*) Jesus Christ was a Hero, and His disciples should be heroes too. His whole career was a heroic fight against the evil, ignorance, stupidity and hostility which surrounded Him. But He became neither weary nor dull nor impatient ; on the contrary, to the very end He preserved a spirit of power and endurance. But power also means joy, and all sense of power, whether of body or mind, is also a feeling of joy.

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Why should a Christian be afraid? Why should he despair? "Christians," says Luther, "are a happy people; they can rejoice in their hearts, and exult, dance and sing!" God gives us the spirit of power, that is, of courage and joyfulness, and as we think of all those who are dear to us who have not yet received this spirit we wish that they would appropriate it: this spirit is here and it can also come upon them. This spirit breathes in the air and broods over them, if only they will throw open the ears of their hearts and listen. This Spirit rules and carried on His work in the midst of rebellious and despairing humanity; in the midst of all the sorrow which oppresses us. And to all those who stand in the market-place disheartened and burdened in spirit, whose dumb complaint is this: "No man hath hired us," we would wish that in the coming year they may hear the voice which proclaims: "Follow Me, and you will become a courageous and joyful person!"

And then, after the spirit of power, the *spirit of love*. Ah! this is the worst of it, and it is a vicious circle: Joyless people cannot love, or at least they lose love day by day, and loveless people can only enjoy

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illusory and stupefying pleasures, and all the time they are driving the vessel of their life on to the rocks. There is only one way of escape from this vicious circle : we must surround them, just as they are, with the spirit of love, and warm them with its glow. The words in the New Testament : " We love Him, for He first loved us," can also bear this construction : " Bring love, and do not wait for it to come to you." Love is the faculty of complete identification with someone else, and then of freeing that other from himself, and of leading him upwards. This is how God loves, indeed this is God's nature, and whoever imitates Him in this way is His representative and His living word. And God has given us a deep heartfelt desire and tendency which means that we can do this. He does not demand from us something external, which does not correspond with our own nature, but body, soul, and spirit are inwoven with strong and tender chords of love, which only wait for the Spirit to move them ; when His hand touches the strings they will vibrate with melody like aeolian harps, and give forth the right sound. May the spirit of love be with

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us in the New Year, that far better than before we may learn to help everyone in our own circle in the spirit of love.

And, finally, the *spirit of discipline*. There is a slavish kind of discipline which goes with fear and despondency and self-deception. May God preserve us from this kind! How many people seek to cover their moral emptiness with an external kind of discipline, which looks very moral, but which disguises the fact that their spirit is in bonds—thus they try to hide the reality both from themselves and from others. But there is also a discipline of willed freedom: we know that we can only be strong if we can achieve self-conquest, that we can only be vigorous if our conscience is both tender and enlightened. May this spirit of discipline sustain us during the New Year, together with the spirit of love and of power, taking from us all faintheartedness and lack of enterprise, and delivering us wholly from fear.

To realise and experience all these desires for the New Year looks both easy and difficult! It seems difficult when the path of our life lies through the lowlands, and how many hours and days

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pass like this ! But it seems easy, and it really is so, when we feel we are being lifted up above ourselves ! Night and day succeed each other and the nights often seem so much longer than the days ! But the experience of one bright day can dispel the darkness of many nights, and the certainty that we belong to God, and not to the world which is passing away, can be maintained in the depths of our hearts, even in hours when our courage runs low.

X.

7 January 1917.

“ Let a man so account of us, as of ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Here, moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”

1 Corinthians iv. 1-2.

THIS simple passage contains three leading ideas : the mysteries of God—stewardship—fidelity.

Mysteries of God : In this phrase the Apostle summarizes, for himself and for us all, the duties of life, and in this light they are immediately transfigured. All the circumstances of life in which we are placed, the whole of our calling, with all its duties, great or small, and all our relationships with other people, are God's mysteries, and this is how we ought to regard them, whether they be joyful or grievous, difficult or easy. To what extent are they mysteries of God ? Well, we did not create them ourselves ; we do not know exactly why these circumstances should have been appointed to us, and we do not know when and how they will end. Wherever we may be, and in whatever circumstances, we are treading a path and fulfilling a duty which has been appointed

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for us, but which we cannot trace to its end. All we can see is a little way behind us and a little way in front. Everywhere we are confronted by mysteries ; but now we are to know that these are God's mysteries ; therefore we may face them with confidence. Mysteries of God, however, partake of His nature and of His method of working ; therefore these mysteries are decrees of His love. We may believe this. This love stands at the beginning and the end of every mystery. So we ought to regard our duties with reverence, even though at times they may seem dark and burdensome.

Stewardship : A steward differs from a slave or a servant in this : he is not expected to serve his master blindly ; he bears responsibility with his master, as a friend, but the final responsibility is not his ; it rests with his master alone. In our relation to Christ Himself we are His servants, because we are bound to do His will ; but so far as our duties, our business, and our contact with other people are concerned we are not servants but stewards. Nothing in life has any right to exercise dominion over us ; but, also,

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nothing in life is so much our own that we have any right to act in a self-sufficient, opinionated, self-willed and obstinate manner : this applies to our physical powers, our health, our talents and faculties, as well as to our possessions and our fortune. All the differences between men : between the dull and the clever, the fortunate and the unfortunate, the poor and the rich, are, ultimately, only tolerable, if the privileged do not lord it over the unprivileged, but realise that they are simply stewards, possessing nothing of their own wherein they may glory. The same principle should govern our relations with other people—both those with whom we are in close touch and those who are on the fringe of our circle of acquaintances—here too, we are stewards of that spiritual capital of appreciation, fellowship, trust and love which we all possess. We should not squander it, nor throw it away, nor regard it as our own private fortune ; we ought rather to regard it as a capital sum which has only been lent to us ; it is our duty to administer it wisely and see that it accumulates interest. We are stewards, too, in relation to our children. Just as we are slaves to no man, so also

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we are not masters, but fraternal stewards. And, further, we are *God's* stewards—for, as in the inanimate world everything is summed up under the one concept of "nature," so in the world of man everyone belongs to the "household of God."

Fidelity—what is fidelity? It means treating every duty and every relationship with true tenderness, respecting and cultivating its peculiar nature, maintaining it in its integrity, and protecting it from all harm. As we say of an artist that he has truly grasped some aspect of beauty, or of a soldier that he has been loyal to the flag, so fidelity always has a dual aspect: it means both to grasp something from the right angle, and also to maintain its existence and preciousness unimpaired. Both these aspects are required of us, neither more nor less. The Apostle emphasizes only the "no more" and that rightly; for what a great comfort lies in the fact that all that is expected of us is fidelity! You are faced by heavy tasks, which make you feel acutely your inadequacy and your weakness—be of good courage; all that is required of you is your fidelity. Or you are faced by small duties and burdensome tasks—things

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tedious and tiresome—again, only take courage ; here also you may gain inner satisfaction simply by being faithful ! Or perhaps your ships have been burned, those beautiful vessels which set out on the voyage of life with all flags flying, on which you embarked with such confidence, and now all that is left to you is one small boat !—again, have courage, if you navigate this boat with fidelity it also will carry you over the waves. Remain true to yourself, to your duties, to the people who form your circle, that is, be faithful, and out of your fidelity all goodness and love will grow and bring forth fruit.

So, then, may everyone be able to regard us as faithful stewards of the mysteries of God—this motto shall accompany us into the New Year and place all our work in the light of the Eternal, and thus glorify it. Then by the help of God, we shall succeed in being true stewards, and people will come to value us for the quality of our ideals ; for the real inward aims and purposes which form the mainspring of our life, will react inevitably upon our outward behaviour, betraying the existence of our secret ideal.

“ All have sinned.”—Romans iii. 23.

“ Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight.”—Psalm li. 6.

THE words “ sinful,” “ sin,” and “ sinners ” seem to have faded out of the remembrance of the present generation altogether, or, if this is not the case, the present generation turns on the idea represented by these words with a kind of fury of ill-will, just as we sometimes try to get rid of the memory of some unhappy incident in the past which haunts our minds like a spectre. In the spiritual sphere, however, something which has been lost or disused cannot be restored without further ado—nor can an idea which has died out be instantly resuscitated—simply because we may wish to do so. Is there not, however, some way along which we can re-discover the serious meaning attached to the word “ sin ” by men of old time, and re-capture its reality for our own lives ? Even from the point of view of the history of thought is it not our duty to try to gain a sympathetic understanding of a subject which was once

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a central problem of religious thought and conduct ?

Here, again, the primary and greatest enemy of understanding is unimaginative ignorance ; in religious matters, indeed, such ignorance is more prevalent to-day than ever before. If the subject of sin ever happens to be mentioned this is the kind of talk one hears : “ Enough harm has been done already—and is still being done—in the Catholic Church, by all this fuss about sin : sins of the flesh and sins of the spirit—mortal sins and venial sins. It only entangles the wretched creatures in a bewildering net of guilt and penance, anxiety, terror, and distress of mind ! People who take the whole thing seriously suffer endless mental torments ! Within Protestantism, however, the position is—if anything—worse ! For there we are told that humanity as a whole and each individual within it are ‘ miserable sinners,’ deserving damnation, with no power of delivering themselves at all ! This is altogether intolerable, and absolutely contrary to modern psychology, indeed, it is a monstrous way of talking ! The best thing we can do is to get rid of the word ‘ sin ’ altogether, since it leads either to

despair or to frivolous and careless ways of living ! ”

Protestantism, however—contrary to this widespread popular notion—can rather point to the fact that in this realm it has made one of the greatest advances in religious progress, for, what does it really teach on this question ? Now, this is the real state of affairs : whereas the Catholic demands set God's unchangeable law in the forefront, urging the individual to test his life by this law every moment and showing him that his life is a perpetual chain of transgressions, small or great, against this law of holiness and love (although it might have been supposed to be possible to avoid all these sins by the use of prayer and the sacraments), the Protestant view is quite different. (I mean, of course, the Protestantism of the Reformation : orthodox Protestantism ; but our orthodox Protestants of the present day no longer know the fundamental doctrines of the Reformation.) Protestantism has laid down as a leading principle a new explanation of the word “ sin ” ; here are the actual words, from the Augsburg Confession :

“ Negatively, sin is the absence of the

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fear of God, and lack of trust in Him ; positively, it is selfish desire."

This is the standard by which Protestantism judges mankind, and not by a law containing endless rules and regulations, and there it proclaims with Paul : "All men have sinned." Thus this verdict is not based upon the hair-splitting reflections, anxious introspection, and detailed self-examination of the individual, but it goes to the root of the matter by treating the problem as a whole. And its statement is simply and absolutely true : for what is sin but the state of "being without God" and being "left to ourselves?" All "sins" proceed from this source. Whether the "sins" are great or small does not come into consideration at all ; the essence of "sin" is alienation from God, and self-interest. How this works out in the individual depends upon his circumstances and his environment. Obviously "society" cannot afford to make no distinction between open and gross sin and the hidden sins of the mind and heart ; it must demand a certain standard of external righteousness, and moral obedience to law, but, so far as the inward life of the individual is concerned

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this distinction does not exist. The older Protestantism, therefore, did not hesitate to say in its vigorous way : “ then all men are under condemnation,” or, “ we are all damned ! ” By this it means that a person is only “ saved ” when he is in living touch with God, finding in Him his Centre and his Strength, set free at the same time from himself and his own will, and from the torment of attempting to satisfy the impossible demands of the law.

Once, however, that we have really grasped this truth, and made it our own—a truth which is both searching and liberating : searching—because it probes the depths of personality, and liberating because it releases us completely from the hundred and one scruples raised by the legalistic point of view—then we perceive quite clearly the truth of both the texts which form the motto of this meditation. “ All men have sinned ” ; that is, we are “ sinners ” when we live without God, or think of ourselves apart from Him. “ Goodness ” does not consist of a cluster of isolated good deeds, gathered like a bunch of flowers from a garden overrun with weeds—indeed, where are the flowers to come from, and how long would they

retain their freshness? No, "goodness" depends on the root, on the tree itself, as Jesus puts it so simply and yet so strikingly in His parable: "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit."* But if we live without God, that is, with no fear of God in our hearts and no trust in Him, then we make ourselves the centre of life. For each one of us there are only two possibilities: either I circle exclusively round myself, using everything and everyone simply as a means to serve my self-interest—or, my centre is in God, whom I serve in holy fear, trust and love, and all my interests are absorbed in His, and in every manifestation of His purpose and will. Self, or God: sin or goodness.

"Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight"—in the light of these truths the inner meaning of this text becomes clear. You have not offended against an external "law," you have not broken specific "commandments," or committed small or big sins, but—you have lived without God. This is *the* sin, and therefore the Psalmist says: "Against Thee, Thee

*Matthew vii. 17.

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only have I sinned.' Ultimately the authority to judge your soul lies only in the hands of God : God and the soul ; the soul and her God. But because God is love, this word " God " contains everything you can possibly desire : the satisfaction of all your longings for love and service and self-giving.

It may seem paradoxical, but we might express the same idea in another way ; and instead of saying : " Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned," we might say : " Against myself only have I sinned ! " To what extent is this true ? Well, it is true because the moment you claim the right to dispose of your own life as you will, and to serve your own ends, the very centre of your personality—your soul—becomes disintegrated, and to some extent destroyed, for the principle of cohesion has gone. God " made you for Himself," and if you do not live in communion with Him you cannot remain true to yourself. You do not stand before any human tribunal, nor do you stand before a God who judges you from the outside—your soul is too precious and your destiny too noble for that—but you stand in the presence of a God who judges you within

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your own soul, One who has set you no other task than that of being true to yourself, of fulfilling the purpose for which you were created. "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned," and, "against myself have I sinned": both statements are true. Therefore the only duty God lays upon you is that of preserving your true self, and of moulding it according to His will, by living as His child, as a fellow-worker with Him.

"But," you may object, "if we lay all the emphasis on this idea: 'Against *Thee*, *Thee* only have I sinned,' and if no stress at all is laid upon actual definite commandments, will not this lead to laxity and carelessness?" This fear has often been expressed in these terms; but the fear is groundless. No respect for legal commandments has ever made a man better, and all the preaching in the world about the duty of self-renunciation has never made anyone's conscience more tender.

Indeed, sensitiveness in the ethical sphere, and purity and holiness, can never be gained directly, and the struggle against the encroachment of the sense-world can never be fought successfully on this plane. Only if we love something else still more

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dearly, only when we feel that we have won something still more precious than the mere satisfaction offered by the gratification of the senses can the conscience become more tender, and the whole being purer. Moral tenderness and purity are blossoms and fruits, but they are not roots. The root is the tendency of the heart, and the life out of which it issues. But the tendency of the heart is determined by that which it loves. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." What do you love? What is the most precious thing in life to you? That is the decisive factor. "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned; but in communion with Thee I am Thy child, and so I shall become better and purer."

Harnack added this note later :

" . . . Sin—this word has been taken from the experience of deep and noble souls, and thrown among the ignorant, whereas even on the more average plane of moral experience its real meaning is not understood. Indeed, this is one of the many reasons why our religious instruction of youth is so ineffective : we try to

stuff dwarfs into clothes made for giants, and we force these garments on little, undeveloped souls, telling them fiercely that there are no other clothes for them ! Of course, as soon as they are free to do so, they throw off these strange and awkward garments, and are absolutely convinced that henceforth they have every right to run about naked ! The objection you raise: that we cannot call people ' sinners ' because the knowledge of God is a gift, would be justified if we were to connect the idea of ' sinfulness ' directly with the idea of responsibility. If, however, instead of calling someone a ' sinner ' we use the expression : ' a soul without God ' the description is primarily objective ; it does not suggest a degree of responsibility which implies guilt. To my mind, as to Augustine's, the idea of ' sin ' is negative, but (and here I part company with Augustine) I am also convinced that a very large number of people are not responsible for their sins ; I regard their sin either as part of the whole mass of corporate guilt into which these people were born, and in the midst of which they have grown up, or, I consider the question of ' guilt ' does not come into the reckoning at all. On

the other hand, when we pronounce the verdict : ' All men have sinned,' we must leave the question of degrees of responsibility entirely open ; indeed, it is not our business to settle the question at all. All we can say is that the knowledge of God has its preparatory stages, and that responsibility begins even in these early phases. Even a person who denies God, both in theory and in practice, because he has never felt the touch of the Living God, has, as a rule, been sufficiently influenced by the Spirit of God to feel that he ought to obey his conscience. If he refuses to listen to the voice of conscience and deliberately disobeys it, he too becomes a ' sinner,' and one who is responsible for his sin. But, as we have seen, ' sin ' is a matter of disposition, and not a matter of education ; as an idea it can be termed ' educational ' only with reference to people who have some experience of God, or who believe in the spiritual experiences of others as though they were their own ; for there does exist a certain mysterious process of vicarious substitution by which the strong can support the weak : this constitutes a most forcible argument in favour of the contention that personality

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draws the line of demarcation between one person and another at quite different points in the physical and spiritual spheres.

This is a very difficult, but also great and beautiful section of the higher life of mankind ; we can only stammer indistinctly about this mysterious 'awareness,' conscious that 'at present we only see the baffling reflections in a mirror,' but we know that they hint at a reality so sublime that it is *real* beyond all our imaginings. . . ."

XII.

21 *January* 1917.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”
Psalm iii., 10.

SCIENCE is not a subject for everyone ; but wisdom we all need, and without it we are continually getting into trouble in the business of life. But what is wisdom ? All explanations fail save one : Wisdom is the power to discern reality, and the ordering and valuation of life on the basis of reality. Reality ? But does not everyone know what that is ? So it would seem, and yet that legend of the old pagan warrior who set out to search for the Mightiest, in order that he might serve him, and who sought long until he found the object of his search, is a story which enshrines a profound truth. Wherever he went, whenever he looked into things more closely he found only the semblance of power : for that which at first sight appeared to be strong and mighty turned out to be small and weak. But an evanescent, weak authority cannot be final reality. We also, when we enter into life begin the search for reality, indeed, we

might describe the whole of life as a search, or a struggle to attain the vision of reality. Now, what do men tell us they have found reality to be? Some tell us that reality must be identified with nature, glorious but non-moral, nature, with its outward and inward power over us; all else is deceptive illusion; hence the one thing we have to do is simply to bow to nature and to serve her; even though finally we wither away like a leaf, still we shall have lived and loved, and this is wisdom and the ultimate wisdom. Others, however, say: reality is pain and death; for, they say, these forces are always stronger than life; even though nature as a whole always remains alive, what does that mean to us? Each individual life is still dedicated to death, which throws its shadow ahead of us in pain and sorrow from birth onwards; to admit this is wisdom and the final wisdom; hence even though one may bury oneself in a convent, or try to delay the inexorable march of destiny in pain or death, whether for oneself or for others—still it all comes to the same thing in the end: all that lives is born only to die, and since the whole only lives in its parts, the whole itself is

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simply a miserable spectre of death, which brings forth sinister ghosts in its train.

This is what some men have discovered to be the actual reality—Nature or Death—and this is what they proclaim : Reality is either Nature with its brilliant sense-life, or the inevitable sadness of a continual process of pain and death. And those to whom one or the other point of view seems the ultimate reality, cannot be influenced by the weak attempts of those who point to civilization, as though in it one could find the ultimate reality, or to the glorious progress in technical matters and in applied science, or to the greater refinement, comfort and fulness of life. “As if,” they say scornfully, “this civilization can offer any resistance to the power of suffering and sorrow, or as though it could ever offer more than Nature offers in passing to her children !”

Yet behold ! In individual souls there dawns a sense of something different, and individual souls when they seek for reality find something more. Even while they are trying to defy Nature or Death, even while they are proclaiming defiantly : “This cannot be the final answer !” there arises within them, out of the depths

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of their being, a strange confession, which seems to mock at reason : " It is my own fault that Nature and death prevail ! " How strange this sounds ! How unreasonable ! Yet there it is ! The spirit of man is incomprehensible in its self-consciousness, and unfathomable in its sense of guilt. Humanity, which is the offspring of Nature and is condemned to die, yet holds his head proudly aloft like a Titan ! Yet at the same time he bows in deep reverence and acknowledges himself to be guilty. This, however, is the moment when he hears a voice from above which says : " I am that I am ; I am the Real, thy Lord and thy Redeemer ; thou belongest to Me ! I live and thou shalt live also ; for both are Mine, Nature and Death."

The fruit of this experience is " the fear of the Lord " ; henceforth his soul dreads nothing so much as the loss of this fear, because he knows that apart from it his soul will be tossed back once more into the savage whirlpool of the life of Nature, and into the horror of death. This fear of the Lord, therefore, is the beginning of wisdom ; for it leads us to the discovery of truth and reality and then to the right

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attitude towards life and death : “ Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and what is there upon earth that I desire beside Thee ? ” and—“ I will remain Thy child for ever, come what may,” and—“ Make me what Thou art, sincere and pure, strong and steadfast,”—and “ With Thee heaven and earth are mine, and I will rejoice in them and give thanks unto Thee ; for with Thee I see both Nature and Death in an entirely different light ! ” This is the great miracle of human life ; for this end we were created ; for this our natures are adapted, and with this discovery we are lifted high above all the mere processes of Nature. That we have seen this, that we can experience this, and that this experience can be repeated times without number, we owe to Him who is the mirror of the fatherly heart of God, to Jesus Christ. For we would have remained plunged in weakness and darkness, unconscious like a sick butterfly in the chrysalis, if He had not shown us the power and the love of the Father, and if He had not Himself broken through from death unto life.

“ On the very same day Jesus saw a man working on the Sabbath, and He said unto him : Man, if you know what you are doing, happy are you : but if you do not know, you are under the curse and you are a transgressor of the Law.”—Connected with Luke vi. 5.

THIS remarkable and profound saying—containing within itself a whole era of the history of religion and of religious training—is not recorded, unfortunately, in the German Bible, because even in the Greek Bible it is rare ; it has been handed down in one Greek Codex only, but this manuscript is extremely ancient and very reliable (moreover this verse is placed immediately after the kindred story in Luke vi. 1-5). Its genuineness can scarcely be doubted, for both content and style are favourable. It is, however, impossible to discover why it has been neglected by tradition. We can only guess that perhaps it seemed too difficult, and possibly it seemed rather suspicious. But we are glad that the saying, and the little incident to which it belongs, have both been preserved, for it fills a gap in the teaching of Jesus which, without this

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saying, would have still left us in some uncertainty, or at least would have made us feel that we could not argue on these lines with any hope that our argument would be accepted as "authentic."

From other sayings of Jesus we know, on the one hand, that He ordered His life in accordance with the Mosaic Law which was observed at that time ; on the other hand, we know also that on certain occasions Jesus did not scruple to break through the Law of Moses. In particular we know that He did this in connexion with the prohibition of work on the Sabbath Day. The stories in Luke vi. 1-5 and 6-10 show us, moreover, two motives which, in the view of Jesus, justified the abrogation of the Old Testament Law of Sabbath observance : (i) in case of necessity, and (ii) in the case of an urgent work of mercy. Thus He ranges both the claim of necessity and the duty of rendering a loving service above the legal religious commandment, which He yet held to be the command of God. Even in this there lies a glorious liberation from the yoke of an external religious system of ethics. Jesus says to us : the order of creation, by virtue of which we

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have to care for our physical sustenance and safety, and the order of love, according to which we are bound to help our neighbour both in body and in soul, stands above that of historical statutory religio-ecclesiastical ordinances. The latter, however, we are to regard as temporal, but the former are eternal ; therefore in all cases of doubt they must come first. What a liberating message this was for the Judaism of that day, which groaned under the burden of all the various ordinances connected with purification, with the Temple, and with the conduct of life, which also entrenched itself in a self-righteous manner behind these ordinances against the demands of nature and the claims of loving service ! But what a liberation also for us. For although, so far as we are concerned, the Mosaic Law seems very remote, there are still many ecclesiastical and statutory ethical ordinances in existence to which we are supposed to pay homage. We do not need to cross the English Channel and see the English Sunday and the legalism connected with it ; among us, also, ordinances are burdens which we may not shake off, laid on the soul in the name of God,

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and among us, too, hard-heartedness, self-righteousness and spiritual pride are entrenched behind ordinances of this kind, while the greater things are ignored, namely, the simple and natural necessities of life and love, and the service of our neighbour. Some folk indeed go so far in their loveless attitude towards their neighbour who has erred from the straight and narrow way that they even justify their attitude, on the ground that they have no right to be lenient, since it is their duty to represent the righteousness of God, and His laws !

This story, however, which we are considering, adds to the two motives which Jesus brings forward as a justification for the breaking of the law of the Sabbath, a third motive, and this third one is as important as both the others, and still more liberating.

To the man whom Jesus sees working on the Sabbath—obviously the reason was neither a case of necessity nor still less a work of mercy—He puts a serious question, without waiting for the answer ; that is, He makes the question pierce into his conscience, and immediately adds : that the verdict will depend on his reply,

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and that in each case it will be entirely different.

And what is the question? Well, it is as brief and clear in its aim as Jesus' questions always are: "Do you know what you are doing?" What does He mean by that? Obviously this: If you work on the Sabbath and thus defy the prevailing social order ordained by God, without, however, having thought about God or Divine things, and without any deeper relationship with God, but merely because it suits your convenience—then you are guilty and you are a transgressor; for, on the level on which you are now living that Sabbath ordinance is absolutely binding. But if you are working on the Sabbath Day because through your inward communion with God you have learned and experienced that God wishes nothing better from you than trust in Him, love to the brethren, and a pure and child-like spirit; if, therefore, you are working on the Sabbath Day because henceforth for you it would be a burden, indeed, hypocrisy and a lie, to approach the God of Mercy and Love otherwise than with the inner worship of the heart—then you are not only doing right, but you

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are blessed in so doing ; for this your deeper experience and higher knowledge of God, with its care-free spirit of confidence in God, is not only 'correct' ; in comparison with the command to observe the Sabbath it is something blessed and happy."

How serious and how glorious this is ! Serious, because in this saying Jesus says to us—and Paul, following in His steps has said the same thing : external, moralizing and statutory ordinances are not to be despised, far rather they are indispensable for those who have nothing else. Thus Jesus supports quite plainly the claims of the whole mass of social and ecclesiastical ethical ordinances for all those whose experience of life is superficial, and, for such a time, and for such people, He regards them as Divine ordinances. He confirms them, because apart from them there would be social and moral chaos in which all that is pure and good would be swallowed up ; at the same time, however, Jesus is far from regarding these ordinances as absolute and divine in the ultimate meaning of the words. In every nation and in every kind of history they vary greatly. Rather,

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Jesus knows a better way—a higher point of view, for which these commandments simply do not exist, a view of life which makes people not merely free but happy. Those who see life from this point of view do not think about commandments at all ; all they see is the brooding love of God above them, which transcends reason and law, and at their side brothers and sisters waiting to be led into a higher way of life, and within their own hearts a rich experience of the fulness of God and the joy of liberty, felt and tasted in confident and proud humility.

“ Man, if you know what you are doing, happy art thou ! ”

“ But is there not a danger,” you may say, “ that a man who believes that he is entirely free from all the bonds of an external law will become careless, and a ‘ superman ’ in the bad sense of the word ? With absolute confidence we may say: No ! For the very essence of the real and permanent content of the laws and commandments is completely fulfilled when we live in this spirit : I am resolved to be the child of God, and His fellow-worker.”

For that very reason a man of God who is truly free, in love to his less advanced

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brethren, and in his care for the whole, will make no use of his freedom which might give offence, cause others to stumble or endanger the welfare of the whole. I could well imagine that under some circumstances Jesus might add words like these to a man who (because he was spiritually mature) was working on the Sabbath Day : " Dear friend, you certainly have freedom to work on the Sabbath ; but don't do it ! For see ! your brethren are thereby caused to stumble and are bewildered by it ! " He did not say this, probably because in this particular situation it was unnecessary, but the Apostle Paul often added : " Do not offend your weak brother "—and " Rather than cause my brother to stumble I will give up eating meat ! " To estimate, however, where the free man may use his freedom and where not, is itself a matter of free choice, and for that very reason, even if heavy renunciations are therein involved, there is ultimately nothing burdensome in this self-denial ; rather it is uplifting. For whenever, freely and deliberately, I make a sacrifice, even if it be a heavy one, the sense of joy in the seriously willed act will finally outweigh the pain of the renuncia-

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tion. In the self-imposed law of freedom we experience the highest form of joy, and true likeness to God, which we seek in an illusory manner when we try to express ourselves in our own way, and through the satisfaction of the senses. "Man, if you know what you are doing, happy are you!" But a man who does not obey a self-imposed law must obey a law of some other kind.

XIV.

4 *February* 1917.

“ Jesus said : It is not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it to the dogs. But she said : Yea, Lord ; for even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table. And Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith ; be it unto thee even as thou wilt.”—Matthew xv. 26–28.

THIS is the only incident in the Gospel story in which we read that Jesus was worsted in conversation, and allowed Himself to be corrected. This is why the story is so remarkable, and it is a sign of the simplicity and fidelity of the writer, and of the Evangelists, that this story finds a place in the written record. Moreover, it is a woman, and a pagan woman at that, who corrects the Lord ; for nominally this woman was a pagan, although she obviously knew the Jewish religion—she lived among Jews—and she had evidently been deeply impressed by the preaching of Jesus. It is untrue to say, as some do, that Jesus was only wishing to “ test ” this woman ; no—the principle He enunciated He meant quite seriously, and until that moment He had acted on it : “ I was not sent but unto

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the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Before this incident took place He had not conceived a different or a larger mission as His own duty, and of His own choice He did not wish to go beyond these limits. Hence He hesitated to help this woman. And He clothed His refusal in a hard saying, although it was not a harsher expression than the Jewish religion permitted. The remark is harsh, however, because the simile of "the children and the dogs" is not only a simile; for even to-day in the East believers are called "dogs" by the adherents of the prevailing cult in order to show that they are "unclean," and therefore that no "believer" may hold intercourse with them. Thus, in relation to this pagan woman Jesus felt like a strict Jew, a representative of the religion of his forefathers; for He felt it a duty to respect this religion; and He only allowed Himself to break through its barriers, when, out of the depths of His communion with God, and on the occasion of some particular stimulus, He felt that the principles of this religion had become intolerable. On this occasion it was the voice of a pagan woman which provided such an

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opportunity, and through her He heard the voice of His Father in Heaven.

The words of this woman are both a strong expression of trustful confidence, and a vigorous and quick repartee. She accepts the simile Jesus uses, but she turns it and twists it till the refusal becomes a permission ! She points to the inescapable fact that even when a master and his children are at table the dogs do eat of the bits which fall on the ground. Already many such "scraps" from the Psalms and the Prophets will have penetrated into the heart of this "pagan woman" through her intercourse with the Jews around her, before she saw Jesus and felt the power of His message. Now she applies this experience to her own case : "Act as you will" (she seems to say to Jesus) "you cannot and shall not hinder me also from receiving my portion, and I do not ask for more than the 'crumbs !'" The confidence which breathes through these words is irresistible ; for while she asks, she points at the same time to the impossibility of her request being refused : "The crumbs do fall from the table ! Whether you wish it or not !" Has ever a woman spoken with more conquering

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assurance to any Saviour? But never also has the word of a woman had a greater effect: it taught the Holy One of God; it widened His horizon; it broadened the scope of His own work, and led Him out into the sphere of universal humanity. To Jesus the voice of this pagan woman became the voice of His Father! While He praises her and acknowledges her faith He knows He must help her—"Be it done unto thee even as thou wilt"—and henceforward He knows that there are "other sheep which are not of this fold; them also must I bring," and His gaze goes beyond the borders of Israel, far out into the wide world, until it reaches us to-day.

In this wonderful story there is much food for thought. I will merely indicate the most important points.

First of all there is the woman herself: we learn from her that we ought not to let the bad or the unclean experiences which lie behind us hinder us from laying hold of the pure and the holy when it confronts our soul. What a mass of impurity and superstition must have lain behind this woman as a follower of the abominable Canaanitish religion; this is

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why she does not dispute her right to be reckoned among the dogs ; she really does not care about this now ; for she desires nothing so much as to be helped, and she is determined to eat the spiritual food which she has seen and felt in the message of Jesus for her, even though it be only a few " crumbs," and she has absolute confidence that the Holy One and the Good cannot refuse her ! " Go thou and do likewise ! " or rather : Let your confidence in God as your Father never fail you, even when He may seem to reject your requests.

Then there is Jesus—if *even He* was not " ready-made " in His experience, that is, if even He did not see His whole duty spread out before Him like a map—but grew gradually into the knowledge of the Father's Will, and if, further, it was outward circumstances which afforded Him inward stimulus, and constituted the occasions of His growth, and if in them He heard the voice of God, and discerned the way which He had to tread : how much more shall we watch carefully the small and large experiences of our own lives, discern in them the actual Providence of God at work, and allow them to become

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to us occasions of inner growth and expansion. And if, finally, a poor heathen woman, who did not herself know what she was bringing to Him—meant so much to Him, how reverently should we listen to the little ones and the lowly, since in them too God may be actually speaking to us !

And thirdly, there is the word : “ Be it unto thee even as thou wilt ! ” Does it always happen unto us as we will ? It does not look like it, and yet I dare to say boldly : If our ultimate aim is the right and the good, and we want to reach God, then these words are addressed to us with absolute power : “ Be it done unto thee even as thou wilt ! ” Let me use a parable : When the War broke out there were many Germans in foreign countries, who wanted to return to the fatherland in order to fight for it, and if need be to die for it. But it was no easy matter to return ; for everywhere the enemy blocked their path, watching and waiting to catch them and take them prisoners. But they were so happy and eager in their desire to return to the Fatherland that they were willing to endure all kinds of danger to attain it. So they started out ;

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there were plenty of dangers to encounter, sometimes they were captured and imprisoned, sometimes they had to do very heavy work, as stokers on board ship, or as dock-labourers ; they had to endure hunger and thirst, and even blows and profound humiliation ; but in spite of all this, and in the midst of all these experiences, they not only did not lose their cheerfulness—for this we know from their own testimonies—but they even said : “ We consented to endure all those things, for we knew that things of that kind would surely happen to us, so we prepared ourselves for them, sometimes indeed we even drew these difficulties upon ourselves of our own free-will because we knew that only so could we attain our end.” “ It happened unto us even as we willed, and so we reached our homes, and even in suffering were joyful ; for that was the way to our goal.” Do we need many words to apply these experiences to ourselves ? No ! Then as a Christian who aspires towards God, in relation to thy whole future be certain of this : “ It will happen unto thee even as thou wilt.”

XV.

25 February 1917.

ON PANTHEISM, DEISM AND
THEISM

“ In Him we live and move and have our being.”
Acts xvii. 28.

“ For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things.”
Romans xi. 36.

THREE cold foreign words constitute the answer to the most vital question in the world, a question which is itself full of warmth and glow ! But the development of our language, shaped by the history of our culture, has given us these words, and it is part of higher education to have a clear understanding of their meaning.

(i)

By Pantheism we mean the religious and philosophical way of thinking in which “ God ” and “ Nature ” coincide ; or, to put it in another way, according to this theory the meaning of the conception : “ God ” is no wider than, and does not differ from the conception : “ Nature ” or “ the World.”

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There are, however, different kinds of Pantheism : which depend upon their view of " Nature " (or " the World.")

(a) If by " Nature " or the " World " we mean simply the physical forces which combine to form the fabric of nature, because we are convinced that the forces of the mind and soul also are simply expressions of physical life (that is, if we think in a materialistic way), even in this sphere the word " God " can be introduced, and a system of Pantheism can be taught. We gaze in amazement at the sublimity of the forces of nature ; and to this unity and sublimity of the whole, contrasted with the divisive and petty and often repellent impressions of the part, we give the name : " God." Pantheistic materialists of this kind do exist, like Haeckel, for instance, but when we examine this theory more closely we see that it is really quite wrong to speak of " God " and " Pantheism " in this connection ; for we cannot help seeing that to regard the whole as other than the sum of all the parts is a purely subjective affair. What really happens is this : people of this kind, for want of a better object, transfer to physical nature, regarded as a

unity, a feeling which they are aware of deep down in their hearts, and for which they can find no other value. Further, they maintain that this was the form taken by the Pantheism of Goethe ; this statement is, however, quite erroneous.

(*b*) A quite different Pantheism (which differs entirely from this materialistic pseudo-Pantheism) arises when one has gained the conviction that the physical forces within Nature are not the only nor the final forces, that behind, or rather within them, are non-material spiritual forces. According to this conception this point of view prevails : Everything in Nature, from the greatest to the smallest, possesses form, life, and spirit, and has within itself, and in relation to other things, unity, harmony and beauty ; further, the individual passes away—but—in the inanimate world through motion, and in the animate world through procreation and death—everything is in a process of evolution ; the individual dies in order that the species which brings it forth may be perfected, that it may correspond more and more to a type for which it really is fitted—to put it briefly : all is a creation of the Spirit, which is

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worked out in the physical sphere (that is, in the realm which we can perceive with our senses). It is only through the avenue of the senses that anything seems to be "physical"; in reality everything is spiritual, and it is only our senses which differentiate into countless particulars, seeming to us to be material, that spiritual reality which is both an individual unity and ceaseless motion. For the whole in its fulness and unity—so say the adherents of this school of thought—our poor senses have no organs of perception; we must, therefore, dimly become aware of it, feel it, and by reflection upon it set it before our minds. And the whole in its fulness and its unity is the Deity. It is pure spirit and nothing else, and it works in a mysterious way in Nature—mysteriously: for its action seems to us to be partly conscious and partly unconscious. In this, however, we are mistaken; for we are far too feebly endowed to be able to gain any idea of what its action really is. It is certainly "supra-conscious," that is, it works in a way which we cannot understand. This is genuine Pantheism, of which there are many varieties among religious philosophers; but I must not stay to describe

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this in detail. Thus its chief characteristic is this : that God and Nature still coincide, that is, that Nature does not exist apart from God, nor God apart from Nature. Here, too, God is Nature itself, but the whole conception is strictly spiritual. Of course, from this point of view man too is a natural creature, even though he may be the highest form of nature ; like the worm, as an individual creature, he is only a perishable element in the imperishable fabric of creation ; but there are Pantheists who set humanity on a higher level by saying that only in man does Deity come to full consciousness, and that thus the unconscious spirit which animates the world becomes conscious in humanity. Further, certain Pantheists ascribe Reason and Consciousness to the Deity, as essential to it, and then maintain that within humanity there resides a small part of this conscious spirit which aspires back towards the great Light, in order to be absorbed in it, whereas in the rest of Nature there is only a reflection of the Divine Spirit.

Certainly, this kind of Pantheism contains much that is beautiful and satisfying, and corresponds to deep and high moods .

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of the soul. But even in its highest form it is neutral to the idea of the Good, indifferent towards the idea of responsibility, and unconcerned about the idea that the Spirit is the Lord of Nature. Again and again, it is true, Pantheists have sought to give these ideas their rightful place in their system of thought (though other Pantheists regard these ideas as naïve and belonging to a lower stage of existence); but this cannot be done apart from illusions and sophistries; to sum up in one sentence: Every kind of Pantheism is indifferent to the demands of morality; hence it tries to re-interpret it, regarding it either as the final flowering of the process of Nature, or else it ignores it altogether, as a merely human theory.

(ii)

By Deism we mean the religious and philosophical way of thinking in which "God" and "Nature" (World) are entirely separate. The idea here is this: the conscience desires the existence of a holy and just Ruler of the world. God is Creator and Judge: in this theory this is the decisive element. He has created

the world according to His will and now it exists outside of, and alongside of, Himself. In the world He has created reasonable beings : mankind. They also stand outside of, and alongside of, God ; for all that has been created possesses its own energy of existence, and lives and moves in accordance with it. Thus man, like the whole of Nature, is "*emancipatus a Deo*"—that is, he stands absolutely upon his own feet, since he issued from the creative hands of God. In contradistinction to all the rest of creation, however, God has given to man reason, freedom and an immortal soul, He has also given him a task : Man ought to do good, that is, the spirit should rule over the flesh, with his soul he ought to aspire to God, work with other people in selflessness, love and peace, and transform the earth into the Garden of the Lord. If he does this, after death he will be able to stand without fear before God the Judge ; for at the close of life God will again appear to each individual, and to the world—as Judge—punishing the wicked with eternal death, or annihilation, and rewarding the good with a happy immortality.

Within this system of Deism there are

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also many different varieties ; the best and profoundest Deists admit that God is not only Creator and Judge, but that in the interim-period He also approaches individual souls, reveals Himself historically in various ways, and that through prayer we can approach Him, and thus that during our lifetime we may receive from Him comfort and strength, as well as assistance of various kinds.

We must admit that this kind of Deism, especially in its highest stages, does possess a moral faith in God, and a sense of moral responsibility ; it is, in fact, a serious view of life. But it suffers from two fundamental errors : firstly, it is somewhat mythological in character—it assumes the existence of a Being who lives and acts entirely outside the world, though sometimes He comes into contact with the world from outside, and finally judges it ! This theory always provokes the question : “ Can it be a fact that such a Being exists outside the world ? ” Secondly, however, this Deism has never really perceived the true nature of the good : the Good is life in love and reverence, it springs out of a profound sense of being apprehended by something living and sublime—it is

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the feeling of being lifted above this fleeting world of time and sense, and yet, at the same time, the longing to give out in love to the smallest of God's creatures : it is, finally, the sense of eternal security and repose, as the gift of this Redeeming Love. This feeling alone, which affects both the disposition and the will, is the Good, and a man is only so far "good" as he has something of this spirit in his heart. Virtue, however, which consists in fulfilling some law of righteousness or another, or even all laws that exist (if there ever were such a virtue) has nothing whatever to do with the truly good, but is a poor human, worked-up affair, or at its very best, it is only a kind of "substitute" for real goodness.

(iii)

Thus neither Pantheism nor Deism can satisfy a soul which has deep inward aspirations. But this satisfaction can be found in Theism, that is, in the Christian conception of God. Whereas Pantheism starts from Nature (the world) and Deism from the conscience, the Christian conception of God (Theism) begins at this

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point : that in the midst of the world (which seems sometimes beautiful and sublime, sometimes stupid and merciless, at one time vitally alive and at another dead and lifeless) there is within man a holy longing which corresponds precisely to that which has just been described as the Good. To this we must add a second starting-point—that of history, or, to put it more exactly, the religious history of mankind. The ideas of God which have emerged one after another in the course of this history, or rather, the conception of God which is presented by a steadfast and logical process of development in history, both along the Hebrew line of the Prophets and Psalmists, as well as along the Socratic-Platonic line, moves towards the conception of God as Almighty, Holy Love, who sustains all, and in Whom all things cohere. This idea, however, is the Christian conception of God, and it alone—and no other before it—corresponds to that holy longing which draws us upwards into a realm above that of Nature. Thus we define the idea of God in harmony with our deepest aspirations and with history, and not in harmony with “Nature.”

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We ought not to think, however, that we can now define the conception of God in a way which will satisfy our reason and give us a unified conception which cannot be gainsaid. "No one has seen God at any time," His thoughts are higher than our thoughts, and His Being is indeed higher than our being! If we were able to "conceive" God He would be on the same level as ourselves, indeed He would be less than we are; for he who conceives is higher than that which is conceived. Both Pantheism and Deism are, in a certain sense of the word, "reasonable" and logical; but for this very reason they prove that they cannot be satisfying answers to the deepest questions of humanity.

What then can we say about God? How is the Theistic, that is, the Christian, conception of God formed? It is composed of sure and certain principles based upon inner and historical experience, which do not produce a philosophical unity, but which can exist alongside of one another in the heart, and in the reason, and appear to be logically connected with each other.

(a) *Principle*: All is in God, does not

merely repose in Him, but is the outflow of His life : “ In Him we live and move and have our being ”—this is the truth contained in Pantheism. The more vitally religious our outlook is the more surely do we perceive that the whole of the visible world, from the movements of the constellations on high to those of the plants and of creeping things on the earth below, is instinct with one life, and one alone, which, however, expresses itself in innumerable ways : “ Thine is the power and the beauty and the glory, Thine is life and death unto all eternity.”

(*b*) *Principle* : But heaven and earth cannot contain Thee. Thou art not only in them but also above them, and for this “ above ” we have no other conception than this : they are from God ; they have been created. This is the truth contained in Deism. What “ to create ” means, we do not know. But all we want to say is this : God is above the world, and all things come from Him. “ The heaven is Thy throne and the earth is Thy footstool.” That is a child-like image ; but it comes nearer to the truth than the philosophical conception that God and the world are identical.

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(c) *Principle:* God is Spirit and indeed, Almighty Spirit, determining the end of all things : all things are for Him ; just as they have proceeded from Him and are through Him and in Him, so they flow, according to His Will and Plan, deliberately towards an End which He alone knows, and which can only be Himself ; for that which proceeds in an orderly manner upwards cannot be without an aim, and if all that is proceeds in this manner then it can only be towards the highest End of all : final repose in God.

(d) *Principle:* In the midst of this living world, full of conscious spirit, we men stand with our conscious spirit and this spirit feels and knows that it belongs to Nature, and yet is also above Nature. It seeks, therefore, in the midst of the temporal for the eternal, in the midst of relative values for an eternal value, in the midst of its strong attachment to this world for a liberating energy in order that it may become that which it feels it can be. And man feels this liberating energy in the declaration of the Living God, who is Almighty Love. We feel that the Love which delivers us from ourselves, in order to make us for the first time really inde-

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pendent of Nature, is the strongest energy in the world, and it has absolute power to carry us triumphantly through everything we have to meet, even through death, and the sense of our nothingness and guilt. That Almighty Holy Love which loves us, which we trust, and which fills us with Himself, is the Good and the sole Good ; thus we are inwardly forced forwards, and we venture to postulate that the greatest thing which we have experienced, the love which dominates our hearts and minds, is the God from Whom and in Whom and unto Whom are all things. This is an act of faith ; Theism is not an intellectual position, which we can reach once for all ; it is a position which must be re-captured, day by day ; it is a vital daily act, born of experience of God, of His grace, accepted by our own will. As we think of this we say : " Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief ! "

EASTER

“ But Mary was standing without at the tomb weeping : so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb . . . and she saith . . . ‘ They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.’ When she had thus said, she turned herself back, and beholdeth Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, ‘ Woman, why weepest thou ? Whom seekest thou ? ’ She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him, ‘ Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.’ Jesus saith unto her, ‘ Mary.’ She turneth herself, and saith unto Him in Hebrew, ‘ Rabboni ’: which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her ‘ . . . Go unto My brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.’ Mary Magdalene cometh and telleth the disciples, I have seen the Lord ; and how that He had said these things unto her.”—John xx. 11-18.

JOHN’S method of telling the Gospel story differs from that of the three other Evangelists, who simply try to give an exact account of things as they happened. John, however, selects his material with care, and then tries to convey, through the various stories, a twofold meaning : a literal meaning, and a universal and a deeper meaning ; he expects us to discover this wider meaning for ourselves. I will try to bring out the second meaning in this incident.

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(i) Mary Magdalene weeps because she has lost her Lord and Master—and yet all the time He was standing close by her side! But she did not recognise Him! What does this scene say to us? We too are often sad and despondent, we feel desolate or empty in our inner life, and yet it is simply and purely due to ourselves that we go on feeling like this. Comfort and strength are standing close by us; but we do not see them, because we see nothing but ourselves, or the burden which oppresses us.

We humans are queer creatures! When we look back on our past experience of life, almost automatically the unpleasant and difficult things fade out of our memories, and we dwell with pleasure on the pleasant and happy times we have had. But in our actual experience of life at the present moment this process is usually reversed! We tend to dwell on the painful elements in our present experience, while we ignore the power which could release us from our burden. How can we change this habit of mind? I would dare to say boldly that it can be done. How? By calling to mind and deliberately fixing our gaze upon all those elements in our

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experience which we can never lose. This is the best, indeed, the only way to overcome the tyranny of our acute sensibility to the actual experience of the moment ; only thus do we regain vigour of mind and real self-control. If Mary had recalled all the imperishable blessings she had received from the Lord, then, in the midst of her sorrow and loss, she would have recognized Him, and would not have committed the mistake of " supposing Him to be the gardener ! " How often we do the same : we give way to the painful or depressing feelings of the present moment, instead of calling to our remembrance all the uplifting and liberating experiences of the power of God which are already ours, and we look blindly at the source of our deepest comfort and strength and see nothing but emptiness and futility ! If only we would look back on the " mercies of the way " our hearts would revive, and the power that helped us once and again would spring up anew like a living fountain within our souls !

(ii) Mary, absorbed by the painful impressions of her sorrow, does not recognize the Lord until He calls her by her name. In Isaiah there is a verse which

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says : " Fear thou not, I have redeemed thee ; I have called thee by thy name ; thou art mine." To call a person " by name " means coming as near to this person with help and strength as he needs : allowing him to feel our personal affection for him ; this is what it means. God permits us to feel His personal love in a twofold manner : firstly, by sending us persons who really love us, that is, people who love our souls. Every love which is truly a love of the soul is the love of God ; for whenever we identify ourselves as far as possible with another soul, treating his personality with love and respect, we are doing a Divine work, of which nature knows nothing, because the natural life is concerned simply with the senses. Two souls which are thus bound together are united in God. But God also permits us to feel His love in special personal experiences, if we will only be attentive and listen for His voice with which He calls us by name. Whenever our conscience is stirred, whether to warn us against a course of action, or to summon us to do something in particular, we ought to say to ourselves : " Now God is calling me by my name, so I must recognize Him

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and follow His voice resolutely and with confidence." Whenever, too, we experience a deep and heartfelt joy we ought to say to ourselves : " Now God is calling me by my name ; so I must take my joy as something great, lay it carefully in the shrine of my soul, and thus free my soul through this joy from everything which would weigh me down."

(iii) Jesus said very little to Mary : only one short sentence, which she was to take as a message to His disciples, and to us all ; but in reality this sentence contains everything we need. With this brief sentence, however, we must also couple these words : " Go unto my brethren and sisters and say unto them : I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your God." Whenever I read these words in the right spirit an indescribable joy and confidence floods my soul : " My brethren "—that He who knows us human beings through and through, with all our passions and faults, in our rebellions and in our despondency, in all our uncertainties and fluctuations of feeling and mood, and in all our immaturity of character, should yet call us His " brothers " and His " sisters ! " And

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then He says of the Being who rules both in heaven and earth, who is life itself and the final Source of all things : " He is your Father, just as He is My Father." Could there be anything more glorious ?— " My Father, thy Father "—and this He abides, however poor and unworthy we may feel, and however frail and mortal ; and He is still our Father even when we stray away from Him. This is the true Easter message ! We are inseparably united with the ultimate Source of all life through love, whatever may happen to us, and in spite of guilt, death and the devil. " Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God." So let us make this relationship more and more the very heart of our life and of our faith ; If we do this how different everything will look ! Our own life, the world, all that is terrible in the world, and even death itself, all will wear a different aspect ! Thus, and only thus, does our life become significant ; thus, and only thus, do we enter into real gladness.



“ He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth.”—Matthew xii. 30.

THE first half of this verse, which sounds rather severe, is defined more clearly by its second half. That the first half is not meant to be taken without any qualification is shown by the fact that we have another word of Jesus which says : “ He who is not against Me is on My side.” Thus both sayings are not to be understood in the absolute sense—otherwise they would not exist side by side—but both have a definite sphere of reference. Jesus liked to say things which made people think. He did not use commonplaces.

“ He that gathereth not with Me scattereth.” Thus Jesus divides people into two groups : those who gather and those who scatter ; or as we might put it : those who are positive, and those who are negative. Thus He calls to us to think carefully about this business of “ scattering ” and “ gathering.” Does He really

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mean that these two things are so important? And what did He mean by this?

Actually—we can sum up all the activity of mankind under these two headings of “gathering” or “scattering.” The good business man “gathers”; but the bad man of business “scatters.” The good teacher “gathers,” but the bad teacher “scatters.” The statesman, the father of a family, the mother—if they do not gather they scatter. But also in every relationship of life, between one human being and another, between one friend and another: either we draw people together, uniting and strengthening, or we separate, divide and destroy. From this we can deduce a short but pregnant rule of life: “Be one who gathers;” see to it that everywhere you are a preserving, uniting and strengthening influence, and that you do not separate and divide. Whether in your home, or in your friendships, or even in the more fleeting contacts between one person and another, whether in the sphere of your daily work or in the opinions you express: “Be a person who gathers.” If you are not one who “gathers” you will inevit-

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ably be one who separates and divides ; for nothing passes without leaving some effect behind it. But if you "scatter" you are a negative person, that is, you are a person who harms the process of life, a destroyer of all kinds of life ; for all life is based upon energy, and energy is based upon unity and cohesion.

But although it is certain that all "scattering" is evil, it is also certain that not every kind of "gathering" is good in itself. Jesus does not say simply : "Gather," but He says, "Gather with Me !—He who gathereth not *with Me*, scattereth." Evidently He knows that there is a kind of "gathering" which leads to nothing good, and will finally lead to "scattering." Only those who gather with Him do not scatter. What does He mean by this ?

Jesus also warned us against a false kind of "gathering" : "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth" ; indeed, He has said that this false kind of "gathering" is the worst of all. He calls such folk "slaves of Mammon" and "idolaters." Thus it is true that He said : "Gather up the crumbs that nothing be lost," but equally true that He regarded

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the selfish heaping up of treasures on earth as the very essence of evil. Whenever we gather simply to serve ourselves, there we alienate other people, harm them and scatter them. What does this mean? How did *He* gather? We have a saying of His addressed to the city of Jerusalem: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." He gathers individually, personally, with mind and heart, in order to protect and to guard, that living souls may grow and flourish; for this is what He means by this glorious and deeply moving picture of the hen and her chickens. We too are to gather as He has gathered—with all our feeling and all our heart and with all our powers, and with that all that is living around us which is worthy of life that it may grow and flourish. For this reason you are set in this world, that by your "gathering" you may help God in His work of creation and preservation. And as you gather you must do so from the highest point of view, and in view of the ultimate end—so far as your fellow-creatures are concerned, therefore, you must act in the way that will most help to

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develop the inmost centre of their personality : it is your task to guard it, to protect it, and to help them to get nearer to the true meaning of life and to become joyful human beings. This is what it means to "gather" ; if you do not do this you will only help to "scatter" and ruin their lives.

But there is still a profound mystery in this short saying : "He who does not gather with Me, scattereth." If you want to "gather" others you must continually "gather" (or collect) yourself and guard yourself from dissipation and destruction. Collect ("gather") yourself, that is the first word of command, in order that you may not be gradually weakened and destroyed by your own instincts and passions and weaknesses, and finally lose yourself in "distractions" (or scatterings)—But how does one "gather" oneself?—Not by reflection, and thinking about oneself, nor by direct inward struggle (which usually ends in defeat), but by recollecting yourself in God, and by trying to serve your neighbour. Leave all the rest to God, in the joyful confidence that His power has fullest sway within you, not when you are

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tormenting yourself with painful introspection, but when you are trustfully trying to please Him, and to serve your neighbour in the ordinary life of every day.

XVIII.

20 *May* 1917.

FOR THE SUNDAY BEFORE
WHITSUNTIDE

“ And the scribe said unto Him, Of a truth, Master, thou hast well said that He is One ; and there is none other but He : and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, He said unto him, Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God.”—Mark xii. 32-34.

IN this conversation we note two important points : Firstly : Jesus does not only discern whether a person belongs to the Kingdom of God or not, but He also perceives whether he is near to, or far away from it. We ought to pay great heed to these words and allow them to be said to us, both when we judge ourselves, and still more when we pass a verdict upon other people. We are very much inclined to be absolute in our judgments—to sum people up, far too quickly, as black or white. Religious people of a narrow type are particularly tempted to judge their neighbours in this way. These words are still more applicable to our-

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selves when we take ourselves very seriously and are tempted to be despondent, and to say to ourselves: "My weaknesses and unruly passions are too much for me! I shall never reach the heights where the Kingdom of God is supreme! I shall always be an outsider! The utmost I can expect will be a distant glimpse of the Kingdom now and then when the clouds happen to lift for a moment!" But the view of Jesus is quite different, and He expresses it quite plainly. He discerns far more than the severe "Either—Or" of the moralist; He knows that most people are growing in one direction or another, either up or down, and He can distinguish the different phases through which we pass; thus He speaks of one person as "being near" and another "far off" from the Kingdom; to those who are in this process of growth He says in his encouraging, bracing way: "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God." Yes, that is a comforting saying; it is as comforting as though someone were to say to you when with sore feet you were making your way through bushes and thorns, or along a hot and sandy path, "See! the goal is near, and

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very soon you will be there." And this is what He really does say to us, that is, if we are on the right road, on the way to our home ; yes, even if we often have to sit down and rest, and if the thought may often cross our minds that " we shall never get there," and " it would have been better for us if we had stayed among the flesh-pots of Egypt and had never undertaken this difficult journey ! " " As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort thee." Even a mother cannot remove the difficulty, and the toil, and the self-reproach, but she can ease things, set you on your feet, and inspire you with fresh courage : " Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God."

The second point, however, is this :— Why is it that Jesus says only in this instance : " Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God ? " The scribe had indeed confessed the highest that he knew, namely, that which Jesus Himself regarded and set up as the sum of all that is holy and good : the love of God, and the love of our neighbour ! I believe that in these words of the scribe Jesus had detected a false undertone, namely, from these words, " is more than all burnt-

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offerings and sacrifices." But it is not only "more," it is *all*, and whoever fails to accept the love of God and of our neighbour as "all" is not yet fully instructed in the things of God. What then have we to give, and what can we take to others, other than that which really satisfies the soul, that pure, heartfelt love which sets us free from ourselves, and from all the futility of bondage to the service of this vain and fleeting world? In everything else we are poor, we possess nothing, and can give no joy to anyone, and even we ourselves can never come to an anchorage; in love alone are we rich, and can make ourselves and others rich. Precisely because love "seeketh not her own," she finds herself, no longer as an isolated self, however, but in union with that eternal love which fills the universe, and with every soul which truly loves. We can of course bring enlightenment, intellectual light, and valuable external assistance to our neighbour, but unless there is in it all the real spirit of love all our efforts will fail to satisfy his heart.

The Apostle Paul says that all prayer is contained in the petition: "Lord,

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increase our faith"—but this faith itself is nothing other than the heartfelt confidence that God is Love, and we taste love when we love our neighbour whom we have seen.

XIX.

3 June 1917.

FOR TRINITY SUNDAY

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.”—2 Corinthians xiii. 14.

THE doctrine of the Trinity—moulded into its present shape long ago, after three hundred years of protracted effort—does not form part of the creed of the rank and file in the Christian Church. It consists of two parts : one religious, the other philosophical. But doctrines which do not arise wholly out of the experience of faith are not obligatory on the ordinary church member : for you or for me. It is the province of theology to examine such dogmas with a view to discovering to what extent they can still be of use at the present time. This particular theological doctrine, however, contains the Christian Faith, and that not in part, but in its fulness. And the foregoing phrase of the Apostle Paul tells us how and why the Christian Faith proclaims the doctrine of the Trinity.

Paul does not begin with God, but with Christ, nor does he begin with love but

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with grace. Why this order, which, at first sight, looks rather strange? Because the Apostle is not expounding a theory, but is speaking from experience, and further, not merely from his own experience, but also from the experience of the whole Christian community.

What was it which had transformed the lives of these Jews and pagans who had forsaken their old religion for this new faith? What was it that had changed them so utterly that they felt they were "a new creation?" Christ had been proclaimed to them! But how had He been proclaimed? Paul tells us in another place: "Christ Jesus has been placarded before your eyes!" It was no vague, universal message of the love of God—nothing "in the air"—which had drawn these Jews and pagans and finally won their hearts; no, it was "Jesus Christ and Him crucified," Jesus Christ in all His words and deeds. As they listened to the story of His life and of His death there took shape in their minds—through the avenues of Eye-Gate and Ear-Gate—a picture so vital, so appealing, so searching, that it pierced them to the heart. When the Face of Christ shines

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into that mysterious region of the unconscious, where latent ideas are secretly transformed into opinions and judgments, while as yet consciously there is none of them, because the conscious self does not wish these to emerge—in that depth of the soul, in which our real self lies hidden, like a creature which longs to be born, such is its power—then it effects a new birth. This new birth is painful in the self-condemnation which it brings with it, but it also liberates the soul from the chains of evil, and that which now comes to the light, and emerges into consciousness is a higher life, produced and supported by the grace of Christ; for what does the often misused term “grace” mean but this? that apart from all merit of our own something glorious, permanent and liberating has been given to us?

This particular experience, however, also leads to this further step: that we now see that what we have received can be extended to the whole world, so that we look at the world with new eyes, and behind the mere appearance we see into the meaning of things, and all at once we feel as though scales had fallen from our

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eyes, and we see that an Almighty Love rules the world, or rather : in spite of all the evil which exists and all that is harmful this Love is still the strongest force in the whole world, with which if we will only co-operate we can triumph over everything. And so we add to " the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ " in our confession of faith the " Love of God ; " that grace has become to us a mirror and pledge of the Almighty Love. We possess a Father ! and the world is not an impenetrable structure of accidental occurrences nor is it a machine impelled by wild and savage forces. Grace and love, fatherly love—if only we could find the right words to proclaim this aloud to the whole world, to all seeking, struggling, erring souls, to all who are bowed down with self-condemnation. Just because it is grace and fatherly love which surrounds us, we do not need to wait, to hesitate or to doubt, till we become better by our own efforts, but directly, we may joyfully and courageously and gratefully exclaim : God will accept me just as I am ; just as I am He wishes to take hold of me, with all my faults and passions and daily weaknesses, great and small. He will manage

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everything if I will entrust it to Him. So I will not torment myself, and I don't need to ; for it is not I who can create myself anew ! But I will arise and go to my Father, and I will say unto Him : " Dear Father—I love Thy House, and I would be ever with Thee : but behold, I cannot do what I would in my own strength ; but if Thou wilt make Thy House and Thy Presence ever dearer and dearer to me, then I will not heed the fact that my feet are still in the mire, and I will believe that Thou art strong enough to draw them out of the mire and to draw me unto Thyself ! My heart is Thine already, for Thou hast drawn it to Thyself ; now wilt Thou see to it that my whole being is set free ! "

This is what it means to have experienced grace and love and to trust in it. But what helps us most to do this ? Here is the answer : " The communion of the Holy Spirit be with you." How do we experience this communion of the Holy Spirit ? In many ways ; for this is God's glorious way of working : " The Spirit bloweth where it listeth." Who can tell the methods and the ways which He uses to approach us, sometimes suddenly,

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sometimes quite gradually? Sometimes He uses the experiences of life through which the individual passes, and often convinces him in the depths of his soul while his reason is still unsubdued! Usually, however, He works as the Spirit of fellowship, that is, He leads us into fellowship with someone else, and through him He takes possession of us. Inward piety and personal religion are essentially individual: "God and the soul, the soul and her God"—and yet, as a rule, this quite individual relationship comes into existence through contact with a creative experience of fellowship with someone else, in whom this spirit of faith is already alight. Just as one prophet anoints another, so one friend of God awakens another, and through cordial love and trust in his friend, the individual grows into the love of God, and finally becomes spiritually independent. This is a remarkable process, this in which the higher life is brought forth, and yet it is true that first of all we say "Thy God is my God," and then "My God is thy God." This is the fellowship of the Spirit, of the Holy Spirit, which can be, and is, alongside of and above the spirit of the world and is

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with us, and which always produces both a cordial love to all the creatures of God, and the impulse to forget oneself in loving and serving other people.

But does this mean that these are three "persons," the Father, and Christ, and the Spirit, and is Christ a "God"? What futile and misleading questions! There is only one God, and Christ was a man like ourselves, if we look at His humanity, and He was tempted just as we are. We experience the power of God in a threefold way: (a) historically, actually, and through the centuries in His word, which goes on working in Jesus Christ; as the Firstborn among many brethren He laid the foundation of that which each one of us in our own small circle ought to be and do for others; (b) in the Fatherly Love of God, which we may feel increasingly in our whole life and in the world, and whose fellow-workers we are to be; (c) in the communion of the Spirit, which still passes from one soul to another, enkindling, strengthening, and creating as our most precious possession an invisible fellowship of faith and love.

Thus we believe in the Son, the Father, and the Holy Spirit.

XX.

22 June 1917.

“The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream ; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully.”—Jeremiah xxiii. 28.

THE first clause of this sentence reveals a magnificent breadth of mind towards error, and the second clause manifests a rigid conscientiousness towards the truth.

When a nation is passing through a serious domestic crisis, when the atmosphere is heavy with anxiety and distress, and the future looks dark and threatening, then prophets arise. What are prophets ? Not “foretellers,” but men who can interpret the signs of the times : they feel themselves impelled by an inward impulse to interpret the signs of the times, and to tell the nation what is going to happen and therefore how they ought to behave. But the genuine prophet does not merely possess a keen eye for the events of the day ; he also possesses a deep inward sense, and indeed more than that, a breath of the Divine Spirit—that genius which issues from a life hidden in God. But the others also are prophets ; for they

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explain the signs of the times. But instead of the Divine Spirit weird spectres rush through their souls ; they also feel some unusual power within themselves, and feel they must express it, and get rid of it ; but that which they declare is error.

“ The prophet that hath a dream let him tell a dream ” ; do not forbid him. Let him preach as much as he wishes ! In difficult periods of world history, when everything is in flux, and a new destiny is dawning on the nations, everything must be brought to the light of day. At the same time the mountains open and out of them break forth the spectres of the night and the whole host of evil demons. As they look forward into the future and try to read the “ signs of the times ” souls fall a prey to anxiety ; but all this must come out, and either it will endure through the storm which sweeps through the land or it will perish in the midst of it. If a prophet hath a dream, let him tell it ! Certainly— he will lead the people astray, but in times like these the error will not be of long duration, for the time of reckoning is at hand : those who are led astray will fall into despair and perish.

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Things must happen thus, for this is the Day of Judgment.

“ And he that hath my word let him speak my word faithfully ” : the true prophet needs no new revelations, no dreams, and no ecstasies, for the Spirit takes hold of him through the Word of God, which has been there for a very long time, and only waits to become alive in the hearts of men. What kind of “ Word of God ” is this ? The prophet Micah sums it up very well :

“ He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good ; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ? ”*

To hold the Word of God—this means here and everywhere : simply to cleave to God, to have a God, and to know Him, and to know how He feels towards you.

Thus to preach God's Word aright means simply to preach this message : “ Cleave firmly to God, practise love, and be humble towards God.” And the only prophet who preaches rightly is one who preaches this message, both to individuals and to nations. This alone is the wisdom which can guarantee strength and health to you and me, and also to the nations !

*Micah vi. 8.

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Therefore—beware of being a false prophet, either for yourself or for others ! Leave your dreams alone, however fascinating or terrifying they may be ! do not allow yourself to get entangled in your own thoughts and feelings, but hold firmly to that which is as steadfast as the eternal heavens, to objective truth above your present life : God's Word, His Will, and His Strength. The mountains and hills to which we looked for our help may be removed and cast into the depths of the sea ; they may pass away and be no more seen ; but as for you : Believe in and follow the true prophet who says unto you that you yourself will not fall, and that the Lord God leads His children, even through catastrophes and disasters, to His final goal. But beware lest thou preach God's Word falsely. For it is false preaching which takes away from the soul both its sense of the grave issues of life, and its consolation ; for both belong together, and neither is complete without the other.

XXI.

24 June 1917.

“ His delight is in the law of the Lord.”—Psalm i. 2.

IN a recent letter which I received from a friend these words—or something like them—occur: (words which reveal a very clear self-knowledge and a transparent honesty of soul) :

“ It seems to me very difficult to understand why it is that so often one does right without any joyfulness of spirit, that, indeed, we may do right in bitterness of soul, finding it impossible to rise above the sense of having made a severe renunciation.”

This is a painful experience ; but is there any earnest soul who does not have it at some time or another ? How are we to explain this ? And above all—how can we get over it ? Does it not seem a tormenting contradiction that doing right, that is, doing good (which should be nothing less than a fountain of strength and joy) should become a heavy burden, which we carry with trouble and distress

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of mind? Is it then after all really the right and the good?

In order to get to the bottom of this question we must first of all make one point quite clear: in what we usually call "doing right" two entirely different currents mingle. Quite deliberately a false kind of education, and the so-called moral world (that is: "society") see to it that they are not separated. The one current is that of the truly good, of the higher life, of inward self-expression and of joyful love to God and one's neighbour. The other stream is that of the moral code and rules of that part of society to which we belong, which must be observed in order that we may be decent, useful and active members of society. "Society," however, cares very little about that first current; so far as it takes any notice of it at all, it regards it as belonging simply and inevitably to the second current; "doing right" is conceived by it in one sense only.

But in reality these two currents are absolutely distinct, and every free and noble soul feels the difference between them every day. Since, however, a soul of this kind knows that he can only act

by being subordinated to society, and since, as a rule, a high sense of self-respect forbids him to act dishonourably within society, he sees himself forced to do what society calls "the right thing." But should the fruit of this action be joy? Can we expect that? No; on the contrary: it is inevitable that at this point many kinds of bitterness, difficult renunciations, and painful expiations should arise. The smaller difficulties may be borne with good humour, it is true; but they are not the only ones; there are those which are very, very difficult to bear; there are wounds which cannot be staunched and sacrifices which must be offered, day and night—offered to that very "society" which, up to a certain point, is completely lax, but from that point onwards is relentlessly merciless, and in that higher sense is not ethical at all. And yet, and yet—these sacrifices must be offered, for even this imperfect society with its imperfect rules of "doing right" is, on the other hand, the one and only defence against the inrush of brutality, of passion, of savage selfishness, etc., which would mean the wholesale destruction of humanity if that "fortress"

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were not there. Hence the deep and noble and free man must submit to this "protective" and "educational institution" which he himself does not need, with all the sacrifices and renunciations which this entails, and he must obey rules which he himself does not need, and, indeed, which really hinder him a good deal. This obligation has only one limit : the individual must not allow his soul to be injured, that is, if he sees that he himself is deteriorating through obedience to this code of "doing right," or if his conscience revolts inwardly against it, or if a higher obligation between one person and another commands it, then he must refuse obedience, and do that which society calls "non-moral" and "wrong." But such cases will always be rare ; hence the question remains : How can we triumph over the bitterness and vexation and trouble which are so often the results of, or the accompaniment of, this way of "doing right" ? Well, probably we shall never get over them entirely ; but here also it is true that there are two forces which, together, are almost almighty : knowledge and love. There is nothing else to be done : imperfect as

it is we must love this "society" to which we belong ; we must clearly recognise the exact truth of its position, and still we must love it. We must say to ourselves : you certainly belong to a higher sphere than that of "society," but you also belong to it, and—it is, all the same, composed of human beings with souls, and they are to be helped forward and not left to perish. Only love can offer sacrifices, only love can overcome bitterness. Thus save yourself from the trouble which this "society"—with its demands on you and its ideas of "doing right"—requires, by loving it. In the law of "society" itself you cannot find joy, but probably you will find it if this law gradually becomes better. Therefore you must help to bring this about. This shall be both your revenge and your consolation.

The phrase : "His delight is in the law of the Lord," has nothing in common with these laws of society, and with its idea of "doing right." Zest and joy cannot arise there, or at least not unless the moral rules of society progress ; for only in this lies the law of God. But this also can you say to yourself : I will offer sacrifices freely, in order that society

—and this means others—may be preserved, and that it shall not slip further downhill; for that which I could do without harm because my liberty and my conscience allow it, and I know where to draw the line, others cannot permit themselves to do without degeneration. Therefore you will act in a vicarious manner, like those excellent people who only renounce alcohol as a beverage because they want to help those who drink too much to overcome the bad habit. This simply means: “Bear ye one another’s burdens.”

Secondly, is it true that the doing of that which is really good is often accompanied with bitterness and painful renunciation instead of with joy? And if this is so, how does this come to pass? and ought it to be so?

The Apostle Paul gives an answer to this question. Certainly, in reference to the above passage from Psalm i. he admits (Romans vii. 22): “I delight in the law of God. . . .” Thus it has become a joy to him, and his soul lives in the law of God with gladness and zest. Naturally he does not mean the law of Moses, or the Ten Commandments as

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commandments, but to him the "Law" of God is that law, according to which the soul grows and comes to freedom through love to God and his neighbour. And who would not experience such joy if he felt himself laid hold of by this law! You and I have experienced it. Then we feel strong and yet childlike—beneath us the earth and the dust, above and around us heaven! Eternity experienced in the midst of time! All that is merely earthly and tangible, self-centred and petty, has lost point and attraction, or rather: they have been unceasingly swallowed up and glorified in a deep inward confidence and joy and peace. This is what it means to "delight in the law of the Lord."

But the Apostle adds: "after the inward man," and he continues: "But I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" Great and deep souls feel everything, good and bad, joy and pain, with double force. Hence also in Paul, in Augustine, in

Luther, every impression and every sense of tension and every bit of inner disharmony breaks forth with double energy and effectiveness. And so Paul here declares, quite frankly and with devastating honesty: "It is not all that lives within me, it is not my whole ego which shares in this joy in the law of the Lord. There is something else which does not come under its control, or, at least, too often alongside of the glow of joy in the inward man there arises within me another sentiment, which takes my mind captive and casts a deep shadow over that joy." He calls this: "The law in my members," or simply: "sin." What does he mean by this? Many commentators think that here is only thinking of attacks of sexuality, but they are wrong. Of course they are included in the forces which keep the soul down, but he is in no way thinking simply of them. By the "law in my members," or "sin," he means rather everything which binds us to seeking our own interest, and to our own perishable ego, and to our bodily existence, to such an extent that it becomes the central point in our life, and we are ready to throw over all care for God and our

neighbour and for the rest of the world. The Apostle admits that although the law of God will lead and is leading us so far towards another form of existence, so long as we tarry in this "tabernacle" that is, in the body, struggle, renunciation and defeat will be our portion, and the conflict will never cease. Paul, therefore, looks forward to the time when he will be released from the body, and which of us is not sometimes seized with the same feeling and the same passionate longing for the life immortal: Goethe's poem: "So lasst mich scheinen" . . . reflects this mood. In this respect, however, Luther knew more than the Apostle Paul; for he does not point forward to the deliverance from the body, but he says to us: "Certainly it is so: perfect joy in the good and in the divine is not possible upon earth and therefore you will not only taste bitterness, but often enough you will fall and suffer defeat, and have to endure the pain of self-reproach; but if your "inward man" "delights in the law of the Lord" and if your soul wishes to live above and not below, then let nothing disturb you, neither your painful losses, nor your lack of development, nor your

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guilt, however often they may happen—
God holds you in His Hand ; believe
that with firm confidence, and over and
over again He will make everything bitter
easier to you and every renunciation more
tolerable, and He will never leave you,
in spite of your lack of development and
your frequent falls. In the midst of your
enemies He rules over all, and you will
not die but live in the joy of His love.
Amen.”

“ They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. Though he goeth on his way weeping, bearing forth the seed ; he shall come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him.”

Psalm cxxvi. 5-6. R.V.

THESE words form the close of the Psalm which begins thus : “ When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like unto them that dream ”—a Psalm which was written and sung during the sorrowful Exile of the Hebrew people in Babylon, and is yet full of the sure and certain hope of redemption ; indeed, in one verse, the author speaks as though redemption were already here, so firm is his confidence : (“ The Lord hath done great things for us whereof we are glad ! ”) The formula which has been so often repeated in every century by preachers and poets : “ Seed sown in tears, and the harvest of joy,” is taken from this passage, and the beatitude of Jesus : “ Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted,” is closely connected with this verse. Deliverance from the Babylonian Exile became the symbol of inward redemption.

But in this meditation I do not intend

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to dwell first of all in detail upon this idea of "sowing in tears and reaping in joy"; therefore I will not stop to enquire what kind of tears are these which will bear such a sure harvest of joy—for how many tears do not bear any harvest of joy at all!—but let us turn our attention to something else, which is implied in this verse; then, at the close, that other thought will also receive its due meed of attention.

"Bearing precious seed": can we say anything more beautiful and hopeful about any one than this: that he "beareth precious seed?" In saying this we do not mean simply that he has a rich and good nature; there is much more in it than this; this "precious seed" is full of vitality: these grains will develop. And they are not merely good, and full of potential life—they are also precious.* What does "precious" or "noble" mean here? Possibly this is the most dignified adjective which our language possesses: a noble man is a man who stands out by reason of his inward dignity above the whole sphere of ordinary life, and in so doing he gains the esteem and

*(The German version translates the word as "Noble.")

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attachment of others by means of a kind of sympathetic attraction ; for it is of the essence of nobility that it does not repel, but attracts. A noble person needs no other virtues ; for all are contained in this one word.

But in this verse we are not thinking of noble people but of those who bear "noble" or "precious" seed. And this makes a great difference ! Will this "noble" seed grow and develop ? Inward and outward conditions will affect it, and how often the right ones are lacking. Outward conditions—think of the boys and girls we know ; in how many of them there was noble seed, but life, as they experienced it, allowed this seed to wither, and nothing, or very little, became of them. One missed his vocation ; another made an unhappy marriage ; one was so oppressed by economic worries and cares that he stifled the "noble" seed, and others were drawn into a whirlpool of activity, in which they never once came within sight of their true nature or calling ; one was disposed towards love and warmth and withered away because these were not granted, and another died just as he had begun to stretch his wings.

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Inner conditions : then we remember the parable of the Sower, with its seed which fell on four different kinds of soil : on the hard rock, with its thin covering of earth, and on the good ground, which is also good for thorns and thistles and weeds of all kinds, which stifle the good seed. Callousness and hard selfishness on the one hand, passions and lusts on the other : and the noble seed withers away. " All is seed and all is fruit " is a profound saying ; but in the higher realms of life not all good seed brings forth fruit. It is not only that sometimes the seed dies fruitless, but something else, which is tragic, can happen : " Withering away ! " The noble seed remains, but nothing happens ; with toil and trouble, and with heroic and touching care the seed is kept alive, but the whole trend of the personality will not allow the seed to grow : and there are people who, either through their experience of life, or through inner sterile struggles, likewise become petrified. Only in some hidden spot is there still a dimly burning wick, or there beats a heart, which though weak and exhausted still beats feebly and uncertainly.

" Coming with rejoicing, bringing his

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sheaves with him." Who are these who come with joy and bring their sheaves? "The redeemed," for our verse begins thus: "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion." Redeemed persons are people whom God has led out of the house of bondage of this fleeting world and to whom He has given the confidence that they belong to Him, and He to them. He has led them forth—they do not know how—out of the distress of sin and the law, and He has taken their hearts into His Hands: "Fear not; I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine." And of them the Psalmist sings exultantly, because they do not merely bring in one kind of fruit, but sheaves. They bring their sheaves—they themselves do not notice the sheaves, save that a glowing sense of joy flows through them, but God and other people see the sheaves which they bring. They themselves flourish, grow, ripen, and yet they only feel like happy children, who are just beginning to live; but others reap a harvest from their lives. "Sowing in tears"—"Reaping in joy": without the pain of inner distress there is no joy in the higher life, and no

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one has yet attained this life simply through the quiet cultivation of his own soul. At every turning-point in life a sacrifice must always be offered, until the very last stage of the journey has been reached, but this pain has nothing to do with the torments of self-inflicted penance; for it does not precede the experience of knowing that "I belong to God, and God belongs to me"—as though we could achieve it ourselves by our own anxious effort and toil—but it arises out of the experience, and becomes a firm and joyful act of the will. Joyful, in spite of all the inevitable pain. For those who do not know from experience that there is something strong, joyful, and happy which persists through all, although it is accompanied by pain, are still at the preparatory school; for them and for all, the real experience of life is still in the future.

XXIII.

5 August 1917.

“ For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear ; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”—Romans viii. 15. R.V.

PROPERLY speaking, there is only one cause of unhappiness and misery, and this is : fear ; for, if we look into it closely, we see that it is fear which lurks behind all sorrow and all pain. And although fear may be, and indeed is, of many kinds : fear of loss, fear of evil consequences, fear of solitude and loneliness, fear of death, etc.—it is at bottom one and the same fear, namely, fear of the destruction of life both outward and inward. Therefore it is quite true to say : the real evil of life is fear ; if we feared nothing—absolutely nothing—from that very moment we would be happy people, for the sense of the certainty of life would triumph, without let or hindrance, over all obstacles and difficulties.

In all human experience degrees of happiness are measured solely by the presence or absence of fear. Hence also : the amount of inspiration, joy and comfort

which a person can bring to other people depends solely upon the extent to which he himself is free from fear. Courageous and trustful souls are the only ones who can help and comfort others.

This is the point of view of the Gospel. "Fear not"—this is almost always and everywhere the first message of the Gospel messengers, whether they be apostles, or angels, or the Lord Jesus Himself. They assume, and in so doing they are right, that every individual naturally lives a life of fear, or that at any moment may slip into this kind of life. The Apostle Paul, however, and after him Augustine and Luther, saw particularly clearly that this state is practically universal, and that this means that all men suffer from a heavy yoke of slavery. Yes, "*slavery*" is the right word; for can there be anything worse than this: to be afraid at every moment that we may lose our happiness or our life, and thus to be always in a state of fear and trembling? It is like the state of a prisoner in the condemned cell, daily trembling as he wonders when the dreaded moment will arrive; in reality he is no longer alive at all; for what kind of a life is this in which

the shadow of annihilation broods over it all the time ?

Here, however, the Gospel says to us through the Apostle Paul : " Ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear." In saying this he reminds us of something which we, as Christians, know already, but which we forget so easily, or do not let it become truth to us. How does it come about that we forget this so easily ? Can a slave ever forget the word of his master ? the word which has set him free ? He cannot ; but we can and we do forget ! How does this happen ? Because we look far too much at the visible rather than at the invisible, at nature and at time, instead of at eternity ; at our own feelings, instead of the one feeling which is both divine and human and which never fails—love.

" But ye received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." You have already received Him ; He is with you ; therefore make use of Him, and place your life in the warmth of His sunshine. You do not need to receive Him again : He is here ; He is here, too, when you are despairing and heavy-hearted ; He does not leave you, and if

you will only keep your hearts open towards Him, you will become aware of this Father-Spirit of Love which uplifts and bears all ; for He is powerful to penetrate through all pain, sin, distress, loss, and death. The spirit answers to something within you of the Spirit of God, for He created you for Himself.

Another Apostle says very clearly that this Father-Spirit of Love overcomes and drives out all fear : " For there is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear." Here we may say with confidence : " Thus it is written ; " and we may count on it as valid ; for behind this word lies real experience. Confidence that God as Father does really sit on the Throne of the Majesty on High, and that He also gives us His love, so that we are called the children of God—this confidence really does drive all fear away. What, when, can happen to us if we are under God's protection ? And what evil can time bring to us, if, through our covenant with God, eternity belongs to us—to us, and to our loved ones ?

Certainly—two things must be remembered : firstly, the natural sorrow we feel when those we love are taken away from

our sight, for those dear ones are part of our very life itself. This natural sorrow is not wrong—did not Jesus weep at the grave of Lazarus?—but it is possible to feel sorrow of this kind and yet to be free from all bitterness through the certainty of the fatherly loving-kindness of the living God. And secondly : the anxiety will remain, indeed, even the fear, that we ourselves might destroy our higher life through our own sin and guilt : “ Fear not them who kill the body ” says Jesus, suggesting, at the same time, the fear of the death of the soul. But even this fear ought not to be a “ fear that hath torment ” ; for above it are written the words : “ I believe in the forgiveness of sins, ” and these words also : “ God is greater than our hearts. ” So we are to be fearless and faithful : that is our calling. As fearless as children holding their mother’s hand, and faithful to God, whom we, through Jesus Christ, call “ Our Father. ”

“ But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel : Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee : when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.”

Isaiah xliii. 1-3.

THESE words sound like a direct message from heaven, addressed by God Himself straight to our inmost soul, and yet they were actually uttered by a human being. This human being, however, was not only a man who lived in communion with God, but his whole soul was full of the certainty that he must speak thus in the Name of God—that, indeed, he could do no other. So when people ask us : “ After all, does God really exist ? ”—and even people with a steadfast faith have their hours of doubt—it is useless to try to answer them in the terms of academic theory ; nor is it any good trying to force a reply from the natural order ; we ought to point to words like these, and to the prophetic souls who have declared such things to mankind. Surely anyone who has even a

spark of spiritual vitality must feel that a message of this kind is no magical incantation, no superstitious formula, nor is it some strange illusion, for the man who spoke these words was no crazy enthusiast, nor was he some cunning priest, seeking to throw dust in people's eyes with his imaginary pictures of a visionary future, or trying to make "good business" out of his "revelations"—no ; these words spring out of a deep inward experience, and their force is due to this fact ; this is why they possess a mysterious liberating power. Hence behind these words there must be a reality which is not of this world, and yet which does belong to it ; for, otherwise, how would such an idea have entered into any human heart ? And how could this reality reveal itself otherwise save through the spirit and the word of a human being ? It is plain it could not be revealed in any other way, just because it does not form part of this world.

This is the first point, then, that we note in this glorious saying : it speaks straight to our hearts just as it is and assures us of the reality of God.

But what kind of God is this, whose reality has been experienced by a prophet,

whose voice pierces our hearts over the intervening space of two thousand five hundred years? It is God, "thy Redeemer"! This is the second point in our text. In human speech there is nothing more tender and more uplifting than this message: "Fear not; I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine." All the evil which can touch a human being reaches him in the shape of fear or of anxiety; but the anxiety itself is simply a kind of fear. If, then, the God who rules in heaven and earth gives to His prophet this message: *Fear not*, and allows this message to be proclaimed to all and sundry, then actually all sorrow, and pain, and anxiety should be for ever banished from amongst us on earth. "Fear not! —neither thy destiny, nor other people, nor thyself!" These are the three great causes of fear! Who amongst us can say that they have never assaulted him at any time, and who can say that he will never be attacked by them again? All three can weigh like a ton, and can even crush those who cherish such thoughts. The fear of destiny, when we have received a crushing blow of fate, can be

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terrible ; but it is not the worst fear of all. Far worse is that fear of other human beings which is caused by terrible experiences of disillusionment. What is a loss by death compared with the desolation caused by disillusion, or by wickedness ? How much harder is it to heal such wounds ! How much emptier and more futile does life seem to one who has suffered this kind of loss than to one who has been bereaved by death ! How willingly the former would exchange places with the latter. But even this is not the worst fear of all ; the worst fear of all is the fear of losing oneself, of losing inner self-respect, of losing dignity as a human being, and the sense of stability which this brings, and of sinking into one of the many abysses which lie around us, all of which together only form one abyss—that sorrowful place where the withered and dead and useless leaves are swept on to one common rubbish heap. And in every human being brilliant yet destructive forces are at work, passions and sinister voices—taking varying forms in different people—which can lure the soul to destruction by a process of gradual decay : the soul which has thus been led

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astray only finds it out when it is too late, when all power of resistance has gone.

“Fear not”—so we are told here—
“I have redeemed thee ; I have called thee by thy name.” The “name,” according to the usual Hebraistic view, and in the language of the Bible, means that which expresses and contains the essence of personality. So when we read: “I have called thee by thy name,” this does not mean simply : “I am near to every individual soul, because I know him and call him by name as a mother knows her child,” but it also means : “I know you in your inmost soul—your inner tendencies, and also what you might become, and even so I love you and you are precious in my sight !” So this text is a real birthday text, for it takes each one of us apart among the millions of mankind and says to him : “I know you, for I created you and made you ; I will lead you to that which you ought to be ; thou art mine.”

And then, as though this were not sufficiently comforting and joyful, this individual message assures us further, and each individual among us, that God will work miracles for us ; for that is the

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meaning of the words : " When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee," and " when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned."

Notice that the message does not say : " I will restrain the waters and the fire that they shall not touch thee," but it says : " I will protect and preserve you in the midst of fire and flood." So we ought not to ask God to defend us from all inward and outward danger and temptation—for we are living souls in the midst of a world of death, and we are both children of God and children of Nature ; but we may have the sure confidence that His Hand which holds us is stronger than all temptations and dangers which can possibly beset us. This is the significance of the phrase : " I am the Lord thy God, thy Saviour, the Holy One of Israel." The " Holy One " and " thy Saviour," both at once : this shows us how He will help us, and the way in which He will redeem us—by making Himself and all that is good and holy more precious and dear to us than all the good things of this world put together. Can anyone really

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experience this ? I do not know whether any human being has ever experienced it in such a way that his whole being and his whole life has been completely and entirely and unceasingly controlled by this experience ; but I do know this : that a human being can experience this so deeply that he can never lose it, and that now, in spite of many falls by the way, his life has a fixed aim, towards which his soul aspires, and which he can never lose. This, too, is redemption ; for here also the word is true : “ Lord, I believe ; help Thou mine unbelief,” though we might express it thus : “ Lord, I will, help Thou my unwillingness ! ” To such an attitude of soul comes the response : “ Fear not, I have redeemed thee ; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine.” So, confiding in this promise the soul will daily celebrate the birthday of her new life. She will not look at herself at all ; neither at her progress, nor at her backsliding : but at God, Who is her Redeemer and her Father.

“ The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field ; which a man found and hid ; and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

“ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls : and having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.”—Matthew xiii. 44-46.

THESE two parables are closely related to each other, and if we wish to understand them aright we must guard against the error of seeking to make too detailed an interpretation ; for if we do this we shall miss the point for which Jesus told these stories. We ought not to ask : What does the “ field ” represent ? What does the “ merchant ” signify ? Still less should we ask : Ought the finder of the treasure to have kept quiet about his find ? was he not dishonest ? and other questions of that kind. Such points were simply not in the mind of Jesus at all while he was telling these stories. There were only two thoughts which he wished to impress deeply on the souls of his hearers through both these parables, and they are these : (i) A treasure does exist which is of infinite value, and it is for all men. (ii)

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This treasure can only be possessed if we give up everything for it. Although both parables are told with this purpose there is one feature which makes a very significant distinction between them : The first parable says that the treasure may be discovered by a man when he is not seeking for it, and does not expect to find it, and the second says that it can be found if it is sought.

(i)

A treasure does exist, which is of infinite value for man—is this true? There is much within us which seems to contradict this idea. Does not life tend in different directions for all of us? Do we not consist of soul and body, feeling and will? Does not this nature of ours hunger and thirst for satisfaction? Can satisfaction in one direction act as a substitute for satisfaction in another sphere? May it not be that there is a supreme good at the end of each line? Can someone who ardently pursues knowledge and truth, and finds them not, be satisfied if he is offered something totally different? Can a man who is disappointed in life and in

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humanity, because he desires love supremely, and finds them not, be satisfied with the enjoyment of art? Perhaps he will be content for a moment, or for a short time, but will it last? How then can there be something which is of infinite value for all men? Something like the treasure hid in a field, or the pearl of great price? And yet Jesus believes that this is so, and He goes further, and names this treasure, and He calls it the "kingdom of heaven."

This, however, only seems to raise another problem. But for those who understand the language of Jesus it is no difficulty at all. "The kingdom of heaven": in the language of Jesus this means the sovereignty of the living God, as our Father, felt so profoundly that we know that we belong to Him, and He to us, and that we may look to Him in firm confidence, and see in Him energy of a most personal kind, which enters our hearts, and will not let us go. In a wealth of parables and pregnant sayings Jesus has said to us: "Trust in God, the Father, and you can then say joyfully: 'Thy Will be done.'" And He Himself proved that this treasure is stronger than

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death and the devil, that it makes the heart not merely submissive but joyful, as He says here in the parable : " in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath." And He proved further that this treasure can take the place of other good things which we must renounce or do without, and will prove an excellent substitute for them. He had nowhere to lay His head ; He was persecuted and despised, and yet he remained joyful. And we see the same experience repeated in Paul, in Luther, and, on a smaller scale, in many people who live as God's children.

(ii)

" He sold all that he had "—that is a hard condition ! But is it really so hard ? It would be intolerably hard if it meant that a law had to be obeyed, or if all that were gained in the exchange were simply a moral law which had to be obeyed. But, thank God, this is not the meaning here. We are only willing to sell all, to renounce, to bring sacrifices, for some higher good—to assert the contrary is simply to make a false statement. The man went forth with joy because he knew that he would gain something good, and

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so long as we cannot renounce and sell all, nothing has any value for us, for we have not yet "found." It is no use working ourselves up into a state of fever over this ; far better to leave it alone and wait. Not until you can sell all, "with joy"—that is the meaning of Jesus, is the treasure yours. What, then, is it that has to be sold ? Well—really everything—there must be no hesitation or calculation at all—that is, nothing must be dearer to you than your covenant with the strong and merciful God, and you must give up everything for Him. Literal fulfilment is not always demanded from us ; but in our own minds we should regard nothing as our own property ; we must cling to nothing in our hearts so that we would become sad and distressed if we were asked to give it up. "*Must* I give up this or that ?"—Thank God ! there is no *must* about it ! The "treasure" itself helps you to surrender all, and to sell all. It grows in your soul, and in its power and goodness it is itself the driving force which makes renunciation possible. And finally—we must not think of all this so crudely that we imagine there is no growth, no development, but that all

is done in the twinkling of an eye. This would be to misunderstand the parable ; for other parables of Jesus teach us that He does expect a process of growth, a beginning, a middle, an end. In both these parables however, He simply wanted to place before the souls of men these two thoughts : The highest good—full surrender.

Further, another very valuable feature in both parables is the fact that Jesus says : “ This glorious treasure is found by one man quite unexpectedly and surprisingly, and by another through seeking and finding.” For nearly two thousand years this has been taking place. Some, when they look back over God’s leading of their lives, confess : “ I was not seeking, or at any rate I was scarcely aware that I was seeking, and lo, God met me, and brought me to Himself.” And others say : “ I have sought, long and earnestly, and I have struggled, and I have found ; but the fact that I have found, in spite of the length and earnestness of my search, is not due to any merit of my own ; for I did not create the precious pearl, nor is it due to the merit of my discernment that I have found it.”

XXVI.

25 *November* 1917.

“ And another of the disciples said unto Him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus saith unto him, Follow me ; and leave the dead to bury their own dead.”—Matthew viii. 21-22. R.V.

THIS Sunday of the Dead should be a Day of Remembrance of our beloved dead, and also a day of consolation. But do we need to be reminded of our loss, and what comfort can a special day bring to us when the one we love is absent ? Indeed, these words seem anything but consoling ; on the contrary, they sound repellent and severe, and it would seem as though they would rather hurt a wounded and sorrowful heart than heal and console. Does not this verse seem to say bluntly and decidedly : “ Leave your dead—you have something different and something better to do.” But since this saying forms part of the Gospel, that is, of the “ Good News,” we know its intention must be good. We know too that Jesus knew the natural feeling of sorrow, and that He wept at the grave of His friend, Lazarus. So we must examine the meaning of this saying more closely, and not allow our-

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selves to be repelled at the outset by its apparent harshness. Indeed, we all know from bitter experience that in really serious trouble, and in the most painful experience of loss, there is no such thing as comfort in the usual sense of the word ; for our heart and our lips fail us, and any consoling words we might have desired to utter sound so empty that we cannot bring ourselves to pronounce them aloud at all, and so we come to this conclusion : that perhaps we can only begin to find comfort at the point where we hear these hard words : " In vain you seek comfort, your sorrow remains sorrow ; your pain remains pain ; that is where you must begin, by seeking no consolation at all."

For in reality this is what our text says to us, in severe, unvarnished language. The disciple in question is already a member of the wider circle of Jesus' disciples ; then he hears that his father has died ; the news comes to him at the very moment when Jesus is trying to draw him into the closer circle of His disciples. Full of sorrow, and full of the urgent desire to fulfil the immediate duties of filial reverence and love, this disciple wants to leave Jesus, and go home ;

then, as he says, he will come back. Could there be anything more natural or more justifiable? And yet Jesus cuts him off sharply in the midst of his speech, and forbids him to carry out his desire, with the severe command: "Follow Me! leave the dead to bury their own dead." Undoubtedly Jesus saw that for this disciple this "following," and "following" at once, was far more important, and far more salutary, than anything else at this juncture, even than the duties of filial piety. "Leave the dead to bury their own dead"—"the dead, so far as you are concerned, you are not to regard as alive any longer, for if you do, you sin against the sovereign rights of the Lord of Heaven and Earth; so far as they are still alive they belong henceforth to God; you must adjust yourself to this; in time and space they are dead to you, and if you treat them as if they were still living, and if you try to keep back a part of your own life for yourself in an artificial way, then know that in such a state of mind you yourself are menaced with death; for you are clinging to the temporal existence of your dead, which has for ever passed away. There you can find no comfort,

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but if you persist in this action you will be entangled in the net of the same power of death!" This is what the saying means: "Leave the dead to bury their own dead," and this is what Jesus says very clearly, and with merciless logic, to His disciples and to us.

But first of all He says: "Follow Me." Here He is the representative of God Himself, and to Him it is that He appeals. What do these two small words mean? Well, first of all they say this: You, yourself, in spite of all your loss, and pain, are still a living person; you must realise this and you are not to consider yourself consecrated to death; but you are to accept the will of God, who still requires from you your life, your will and your power of action. No death which another dies, even though it be that of the one dearest to you—ought or should take away from you your own life. Only through your own death do you cease to be amongst the living. How deeply Goethe felt this warning, who, after the death of his dearest friends, cried: "Forward, even over the graves of those we love." He, who felt the need of love and friendship so ardently, revealed in this

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expression of feeling his kinship with this word of Jesus : " Leave the dead to bury their own dead," and after that he scarcely ever spoke of those dear ones who had died—to him they were happy spirits who had passed on, but he simply worked and did what he had to do without further question or repining.

Secondly, however, these words, " Follow Me," tell us also that for us there is a task which is the supreme one in all life, namely this, " Strengthen thy relation with God, and include all that thou doest within this relationship." What does this mean ? How can we follow God and strengthen our relationship with Him ? Only by trusting gladly in His providential ordering of our lives—" The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the Name of the Lord !"—placing ourselves and all our tasks, both great and small, in the presence of the seriousness and power of the eternal.

Confidence and joyful seriousness ! The following of God and of Jesus is included in both these requirements, and in nothing else, and we can be sure (as Luther always testified and preached), out of such confidence in God love to all

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living beings will issue like a strong current of living water and make thee thyself ever more joyful. This is the "great reward" of which the verse speaks in which it says : "Cast not away therefore your confidence which hath great recompense of reward."

And now for the third point : In God and through God, in the eternal and through the eternal, your beloved dead are still yours. Apart from Him you have lost them ; they are dead. With Him you have them still, for He is not the God of the dead but the God of the living, and He is life itself, and all live a spaceless and timeless life in Him. And so, even now your trustful soul lives in Him, and becomes ever more aware that here below all is limited—cribbed, cabined and confined—separated and divided, which, in God, is eternally united, and in the highest points of our experience we can taste this indivisible unity.

May the living God grant to us more frequently such high moments of vision and may they become more and more our permanent state of mind. This means victory over pain, and even over death itself.

XXVII.

6 *January* 1918.

“I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.”
Genesis xlix. 18.

IN several passages in the Bible a distinction is drawn between those who are strong and those who are weak in faith ; sometimes the difference is expressed as between those who are mature (or adult) and those who are still children, so far as spiritual maturity and knowledge are concerned. And both the Lord Himself, and the Apostle Paul, regarded it as a matter of urgent importance that the weak should be protected, that they should not be caused to stumble, and that they should receive the spiritual nourishment suitable for their condition : they are to be fed on milk and not on “strong meat” ; we ought not to expect too much from them, indeed, we ought to limit our own freedom, lest they should stumble or be led astray. It is touching to see how solicitous Jesus is over the “little ones,” and how the Apostle Paul also is careful that the weak should be supported by the strong. Both know that even in the spiritual and moral

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life the fact that the seed and the soil are good is not enough, but that a peaceful and secure period of growth is necessary if the seed is not to die. "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of God"—that is the heartfelt and earnest wish of the Apostle ; for to stand still is to go back : the inward man must become richer if he is not to grow poorer ; stronger, if he is not to suffer defeat in yet harder temptations ; stricter towards himself, if he is not to lose his soul to the world, and fall a prey to his passions ; finally, also, with more insight in his faith, in order that he may be able to meet doubts about God and divine things. The strong and the weak : a saying of Jesus which is not found in the Gospels says : "The weak shall be saved by the strong"—this expresses the brotherly solidarity of Christianity ! What a glorious task this entrusts to the "strong" ! While to the "weak" it gives the right to turn to the strong, and to find in them support, guidance and help ; for the strong owe this to them.

But alongside of this distinction between the strong and the weak there runs secretly through the Scriptures a second

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distinction : the difference between those who possess and those who wait. What does this mean ? Here we must go back a little. The simple, downright distinction between "believers" and "unbelievers," as if that were the final word, quite rightly, not only repels unbelievers, but it wounds every sensitive soul among believers. The difference of which we have already spoken between the "strong" and the "weak" protests indeed against this sweeping and unjust differentiation, which is colour-blind, sees everything as either black or white, and admits no variety or gradation in spiritual experience at all. Among these grades, however, one of the most important is that between those who "possess" and those who "wait." Let me briefly describe it. By those who "possess" I mean here not those who are satisfied or self-complacent, but those advanced Christians whose faith has become a firm possession which they cannot lose, a possession which is bound up so closely with their whole personality and character that it seems entirely merged in it. Even though in secret they may still have to fight against many an assault of the power of darkness, to struggle with

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their own weaknesses—still, as soon as they have decided to act they are so mature and so firm, that they choose the right and do it. They have experienced and felt God's power and His salvation in themselves, and this they can never forget. It is their pillar of cloud by day and their pillar of fire by night ; hence there issues from them a stream of love, kindness and help ; for all inward experience of God reveals itself outwardly as a fountain of sincere love towards our neighbours. Then there also emanates from them a spirit of freshness, courage and joy, for every experience of God makes a man courageous and joyful, indeed a radiant person.

But who are those who wait ? They are those who have indeed perceived and known the power and the beauty and the justice of God, and of His salvation, and who, therefore, also know the weakness and the ugliness and the wrongness of every other faith, and every other view of life ; but all this has not yet penetrated into their inmost soul, and has not taken possession of their whole personality. They know it all, and they even feel it all, but they do not possess it, hence their

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action is still wavering and uncertain. Some conclusive experience is still lacking, or perhaps a chain of such experiences, in order that the truth which they know externally to be necessary and salutary, may be wrought wholly into their inner life. They are like the labourers in the vineyard, in the parable, who, when they are asked why they stand idle, reply : "No man hath hired us." They stand there, ready to work in the vineyard ; but they have not yet heard the final decisive call : "Go, work in my vineyard!"

These are those who wait. What, then, are we to say to them ? Shall we say to them : "Wait no longer ! Come forward and make the centre of your inner life that which you have long prized as the highest good in life" ? But such an appeal would not help them much ; for that is exactly what they cannot do. Or shall we scold them ? But a scolding would help them still less ! Should we scold a lame man because he cannot walk ? Then what ought we to do, and, above all, what should and can they themselves do ? Now this is what our text tells us : "Consciously, and with a holy earnestness, they are to be what they are : those who

wait." "Lord, I wait for Thy salvation." —that is to be their language, and that is to be the settled state of their mind. For in these divine things it is true : " A man can receive nothing, except it have been given him from heaven," and " The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou . . . canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth."

Here you and I can do nothing ; for it is the sovereign right of God and of His Spirit to create holy experiences, and to draw men unto Himself. There is only one thing you can do, and it is this : to be one who waits, truly and really, saying always in your soul : " Lord, I wait for Thy salvation ! " This is the spirit which lies behind those words : " Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief ! "

To be a truly waiting soul—like those virgins in the parable with their little lamps and their meagre light ; that light was certainly not the brightness of the day of festival ; but all that mattered was that they should not let this light go out ! They waited, and they did not fall asleep ; everything depended upon their keeping awake. The bridegroom did not ask more from them than that. " Lord, I

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wait for Thy salvation !” when the soul stands still and waits in this spirit, regarding this state of waiting as the central sanctuary of her soul, which gives order and value to the rest of her life, then she is exercising that strong and pure patience to which God will not fail to give His power, even if to the end of her days she may never fully and clearly feel it. For her this ability to wait is the actual experience of the very power of God, and one day she will hear Christ say unto her : “ Well done ! thou good and faithful servant : thou hast been faithful over a few things ; I will set thee over many things ; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

This has been written by one who belongs to the company of those who wait.

XXVIII.

5 May 1918.

“ I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the truth . . . He shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you.”

John xvi. 12, 14. R.V.

WE have no evidence that this saying was actually spoken by Jesus ; for it occurs in the four chapters of the farewell discourses in the Gospel according to St. John (Chapters 14-17), and it is practically certain that these words were not spoken by Jesus, but that they are due to John, who steeped himself so fully in the feelings and the mind of Jesus, that he was then able to give his teaching as though it were the very words of Jesus Himself. Similar literary devices are often found in ancient writers.

But does this render the value of these “farewell discourses” null and void, and hence our text also ? Certainly not, indeed, we might even go so far as to say the very opposite, namely, that owing to the way in which they have arisen they have a twofold value ; for, firstly, they issue from the mind of Jesus, in whose

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mind and by whose power the Fourth Evangelist lived wholly and entirely, and in this sense they are genuine, for spiritual inspiration which we have enkindled in others is also our own spiritual property.

Secondly, however, they show us how a personality which has been apprehended by the Spirit of Jesus has, through this very Spirit, gained so much inward liberty that it has become mature and can face new circumstances in an independent and confident way. For—what is the presupposition of this text? It is the experience that all that Jesus said to His disciples during His life on earth was not sufficient to give an answer to every question, and to remove every difficulty which met them later on. Rather, they find themselves faced by new problems, both of thought and action, which cannot be solved by the simple application of any particular word of Jesus, which He had already uttered. Now if Jesus had made slaves of them, in a spiritual sense, they would have been in despair; for where they were faced by new conditions they would have been utterly overwhelmed and bewildered. But John is anything but despairing; rather, he says to himself: "When Jesus was

still with us we were not mature enough to understand what the future would bring ; therefore Jesus kept back a good deal, because we were unable to bear it, but He has given us something better and greater than a wealth of anticipatory detailed knowledge and instruction. He has left behind the Spirit of truth who leads into all the truth." Evidently John knows that he has already received this Spirit ; he only uses the future tense because he places this his present knowledge in the mouth of Jesus as a promise.

Thus John knows that the treasure which he possesses is something far more precious than a mass, even were it very large, of sayings, explanations and commands of the Lord—he possesses the Spirit of Truth as the legacy of Jesus, as a mighty, living and inexhaustible source of energy and power, from which he can draw all he needs to meet his difficulties and necessities, in thought and in life. It is not through words and commands that he feels himself united with Christ and with God, but through a living bond, namely, through the Spirit, which raises him up, and carries him through, for this Spirit, as he says expressly, is the Spirit

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of Christ : " He will take of mine and declare it unto you." So he feels himself more closely united with Jesus than ever before, although he sees Jesus no longer with his bodily eyes, and although in many of his problems he cannot get a direct answer from Jesus Himself. Is it necessary to apply to ourselves this text from John which we have tried to understand in the sense in which John meant us to understand it? I will try to do this as briefly as possible.

Firstly: Perhaps you wonder sometimes why the Bible and the sayings of Jesus are so often silent on so many questions which perplex you? Why is it, you wonder, that so many things which you would have liked to see stated in black and white are simply not mentioned at all? Perhaps you discover that for the special doubt of your own soul there is no direct word and you can find no completely satisfying answer to the special needs of your life. But would it have been possible to have given detailed and minute instructions and advice so far ahead that it would have covered all the variety of individual need, and all stages of human development? And even if this had been possible, would

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it have been salutary? Would it have been good for us to live by a huge book of spiritual recipes, or by a great code of ethics, which would supply chapter and verse for every case and for every emergency? How many of us could stand that, and where would be our spiritual freedom?

Secondly : Think of what you possess as a child of God ; think of what you see in your hours of vision, even if you cannot always express it articulately, think of that which gives you shelter in the assaults and storms of life, and light in the doubts of your soul ! It is not this or that particular word or saying, it is not any special command, but it is the deliberate turning of your spirit towards God : the sense of truth, the spirit of reverence for all that is holy, and an ever-renewed aspiration—even though it may often be hindered—of desire after a life whose power is not of this world. This is the Spirit of God, which you have received, and it will lead you far more clearly into the truth, that is, into the reality of a higher life, than a single word or command could ever do, because as the brook issues from the mountain spring,

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so the Spirit issues from God. From this Spirit, in increasing measure, you yourself will be able to decide what is true for you and what you ought to do in your necessities and difficulties and doubts. And it is precisely this feeling of freedom which will give you strength.

Thirdly : take home to your own heart the words : " I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." For it is also true of the life in and with the Spirit of truth that it has many stages, that we make gradual progress in it, and that at first there is still much which remains obscure and immature. But do not on that account become despairing or faint-hearted. On the other hand, do not force the pace, or attempt to go faster than the Spirit wills, for this would be contrary to the Spirit of truth ; do not be too " resigned " either, but be earnest and active in self-discipline, and allow yourself to be guided into all truth by the Spirit of the Holy One into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

XXIX.

26 *May* 1918.

“ For ye are bought with a price ; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”

1 Corinthians vi. 20.

“ Ye are bought with a price : be not ye the servants of men.”—1 Corinthians vii. 23.

IN this letter to the Corinthians Paul reminds them, twice over, of this fact : “ Ye are bought with a price.” And each time he applies the meaning of this fact in a different way. Thus it is evident that Paul regarded the idea that a Christian resembles a man who has been redeemed out of slavery (for that is what this phrase means) as one of fundamental significance. What, then, does Paul really mean by this phrase : “ Ye are bought with a price ? ” During the eighteen months he spent in Corinth he had ample opportunity to observe the much vaunted “ freedom ” of the Greeks. The conclusion he arrived at was this : it was slavery, slavery pure and simple. What kind of slavery ? Well, he found that these “ free ” people, who apparently only did what they wanted, who led a life free from all restraint, and boasted of the fact, were

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really bound with chains which they riveted ever more closely round them, fetters formed by their passions, their natural instincts, and their fear of men. "But," we may reply, "this is the point of view of a fanatical and kill-joy moralist, whose interest in human life is nil!" But Paul was no moralist! and any tendency he may have had of that kind was rooted out of him by the hardest struggle of his life, and the most glorious experience which succeeded it, which he expressed in a cry of jubilation: "The law is for ever done away!" Hence it was not as a moralist that he judged Greek freedom to be the worst kind of slavery, but because he knew that he had experienced true freedom, and the power of an endless life, and that he was then and there actually living in the power of it. From this standpoint he saw that this unbridled self-expression, and this apparently unbroken harmony with nature, and with other people, was actually the most oppressive kind of slavery; for these "freemen" had gradually sacrificed their inner life, partly to nature, and partly to their surroundings, so that in the end they became like empty bits of flotsam and

jetsam floating aimlessly down the stream of time. And Paul believed that if this slavery were not checked, it would result inevitably in death; thus, when, in another passage in one of his letters, he says: "Ye were dead in trespasses and sins," he meant it in this sense. When Paul speaks of sins in this connexion, he never thinks of sins as breaking down the fence of the Law in individual instances, but always of this condition in which the soul is given up to the passing whims and fancies of the moment, the state of mind in which one is at the mercy of one's surroundings and passions.

Was he right? We may each of us ask ourselves this question. No one can answer the question for another, but at least we can each remind ourselves of this obvious fact—that a completely uncontrolled life, which means in reality a life which is absolutely bound and tied to the instincts of the natural man, means the hardest kind of slavery, that at bottom it means a life which is always lived at the cost of other people, and that ultimately it is a life which even the "world" despises.

Although it may be possible to arrest

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this downward process, before one is finally engulfed in the depths, those who are going down this slippery incline should remember that if they are checked before it is too late they rarely owe this to themselves but to their surroundings, which, in fact, do possess various outward supports which prevent a man from slipping down the whole way to the bottom of the abyss.

It seems clear that the Apostle is right : " He that sinneth is the slave of sin " ; nothing can alter this fact, and whether the consequences are fulfilled to the last degree or not is simply a matter of luck or fate ! The only safety lies in being delivered from this condition altogether.

But the way of deliverance sounds most paradoxical in the Apostle's words : " Ye are bought with a price ! " Is not that an obscure mystical way of talking which takes us nowhere ? The Apostle explains his meaning in more detail thus : " Jesus Christ has bought you out of slavery at a costly price." What does this historical fact mean ? What can the deed of one individual do for us ? How can I have been redeemed from slavery more than nineteen hundred years ago ? How can

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an external historical event in the past have a vital and liberating effect on my spiritual life to-day? Thousands of people—if they think at all, that is—ask questions of this sort, and yet the Apostle is only saying what we would all say if we were to think more deeply about this matter. All we have to do is to add an appendix to these words of Paul, an appendix which he could not possibly have written, because his experience of Christ was so early, whereas we have centuries of Christian experience behind us.

This is what I mean: If there were among us to-day only one truly free individual, a person who is "interior" in the midst of his "exterior" life, or if, as, thank God, is the case, there are many free people among us—they owe their freedom simply and solely to their contact with other people, to the inspiration and liberation which have come to them through their life and character as individuals; this is the power which has laid hold of them and led them out of slavery. This process has never taken place in any other way, and it will never happen in any other way. But these happenings are so

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many links in a chain, and at the end of the chain stands Jesus Christ—"out of Whose fulness have all we received, and grace upon grace"—the "Author and Finisher of our faith."

And they have all bought us dearly ; for they all ploughed their furrow in the midst of a hostile world, and their life was full of toil and sacrifice. We do not need to dwell on the fact of Jesus Christ, and the price He paid through His life and His death ; but all the others also—is there one who undertook to try to overcome the enmity of the obstinate world without sacrifice, is there even one who has not practised renunciation, who has not "become poor" in order that the world that came after him might be better and richer ? People talk about Goethe—but those who know his inward life, and the confessions he made himself know that he was unceasing in his fight for self-control and self-conquest, and that his life was far from easy and pleasant. He fought and struggled, renounced and sacrificed, in order that he might do his work in this world, and be of some use to others. But all these heroic souls did accomplish something : for to them all

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we owe the enrichment of our interior life, all our growth in the inner man, all purity of soul, and finally the glorious freedom of the children of God.

Hence no reminder is more timely and no word of warning more profound or strong than that contained in this phrase : "Ye are bought with a price." To take it to heart, to respond to it, means coming out of darkness into light, out of slavery into freedom, it means making an act of thanksgiving to these who have "bought" us. With undying gratitude, therefore, we ought to place this motto over all our daily life : in thought and word and work.

We cannot go into the detailed application of this truth, the Apostle singles out two for special mention :

I. Glorify God in your body. (The words which follow do not occur in the best and most ancient MSS. and are probably a later addition.)

II. Be not ye the servants of men.

To be "in the body"* is the beginning, and perhaps the end, of the ways of God, that is, the Greek philosophical dualistic

*Lit. Corporeality (*Leiblichkeit*) (Translator).

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separation between body and spirit is contrary to the meaning of the Divine Creation, and the ascetic demand which was added later was a mistaken attempt to correct it. But for that very reason we may say : If the spirit is of God then the body also is from God ; the Creator ought to be glorified in it. Then, however, it is evident that the body must obey conscience and the Spirit ; it does not owe obedience to any outward law, but to something far more holy : it is bound to be inwardly united with the Holy Spirit, the spirit of freedom. Here is the centre of control : whatever furthers this unity must be done, and whatever hinders it must be left undone.

The fact that when we live in this way necessary renunciation soon ceases to be felt as renunciation, but is regarded as deliberate, willed restriction of freedom, proves that this way of living is good and right.

“ Be not ye the servants of men ” : words are not needed to prove that every advance in inner freedom means growth in freedom from slavery to the fear of man. I have never yet met a really free person who was not also able to hold his head

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erect and move like a prince among men, however unassuming he may have been outwardly. Further, however, we can only truly love people towards whom we feel free. There is a profound affinity and inward connexion between freedom and love.

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9 June 1918.

“ Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me. But He answered and said : It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to the dogs.

“ And she said : Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

“ Then Jesus answered and said unto her : O woman, great is thy faith : be it unto thee even as thou wilt.”

Matthew xv. 25-28.

SHE was a heathen woman, living among idolaters, and unclean, to the Jews an object of contempt both in customs and in general decency ; indeed, even to look at such a woman sent a shudder through a Jew ; such people were called “ dogs,” as indeed in the East those who do not follow the prevailing form of religion are still called. And yet, since the Gospel was first preached, no woman save Mary in the early tradition has gained such renown as this heathen woman, and it is certain that her story has instructed and inspired more people than all the other stories of religious women in the whole Bible put together. For she had the courage to correct the Holy One of Israel, and He permitted her to correct Him.

Some people say that Jesus only wanted

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to test her by speaking to her in a way which seemed to repulse her ; but we may well doubt whether this explanation is really the right one ; for the fundamental feeling underlying His mission and His calling was the consciousness : " I am not sent, save unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel," and He was faithful to His mission. Therefore He needed a quite special kind of experience to enable Him to step beyond these limits, because He was convinced that the call to those who should come into the House of God from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, would be proclaimed by God at a later stage. This is why He refused the request of the woman, and rejected her cry for help, and the fact that He did this with severity was only because He was acting in harmony with the Law. No Jew saw any insult in the words He used—or rather, a Jew would consider that in a case of this kind, the " insult " was fully justified.

But the woman would not accept this refusal, for her need was too great. She stayed, and she replied.

Let us pause here for a moment : it costs a good deal to accept a contemptuous

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word in silence. It costs still more to reply to such a word without being offended oneself. But it means a great deal if we answer in such a way that the other person is honoured, and yet shown to be in the wrong. This is what this heathen woman succeeded in doing : she gave an answer which could not have been excelled by the wisest person in the world ; indeed, a person of that kind could not have given it at all ; for this woman's wisdom issued from the depths of her own distress and from her unshakable confidence in this Helper ; that is to say, it issued from a heart which was both sorrowful and trustful, and for the moment this made her wiser than the wisest of men.

She accepts the word of Jesus—and in so doing she disarms Him ; she gives in ; the separating barrier exists, and therefore in the eyes of Jesus of course she can be nothing else than “unclean,” than a “little dog.” Of course, she does not belong to the company at table, and she has no desire to force herself upon the other guests at the table ! but under the table there falls a great deal which belongs to the table—and have not the dogs a

right to this? What could one reply to such an explanation, which begins with "Yea Lord," and conquers Jesus with His own words, recognizes Him as Lord and Helper, and desires nothing save that He will still be Lord and Helper because that is His very nature! A sudden light flashes into the mind of Jesus, the bolt of the rigid Mosaic Law is broken, and immediately there breaks forth in a torrent the living waters which slumbered in the hidden depths of His soul. The river of grace flows forth, submerging all ideas of "Law" and "holiness" and "barriers" in its resistless current: "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." The Father has sent this woman to Him, in order that she may make Him greater and freer in the exercise of His vocation. He, the Helper, was helped by this woman, and now He helps her, just as He was in the habit of helping the children of His own people!

This interpretation, which is the only one really based upon the text which frees Jesus from the reproach that against His better nature He had subjected this woman to a severe test and thus put her to a kind of mental torture, will

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cause offence to those who regard Jesus as complete from the first moment of His appearance in public, knowing all things, the Son of God to whom all things are possible, and whose power knows no barriers. This conception, however, is false. If He had been complete from the very beginning, just as clear about Himself as He was about His vocation, He would not have been a real human being. "He learned obedience," says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that is, He learned to look for the leadings of His Father, to follow them, and thus to discern the work He was meant to do, and to discharge it in accord with these providential leadings. Thus His knowledge was not ready-made from the very beginning, nor did He gain it only from the Law and the Prophets, but He gained it—just as we do—through the leadings and experiences of His life. In this instance the meeting with this woman was the vital experience which taught Him to rise above the distinction between the Jew and the non-Jew, and to help all men, regardless of nationality or religion.

Now let us look once more at the woman herself. Outwardly she remained

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what she was before this incident, an "unclean" Canaanitish woman ; but in the centre of her life she had found strength and help in her confident faith ; she had been recognised and accepted by Him who spoke in the name of God. Is not this a comforting example ? God does not look at this or that, nor at all the things which might be and should be so different, but He looks at the heart ; only that which it contains is of value in His sight ; nor does He regard the vigour of our good will—for with Him is forgiveness—but He looks at the tendency of our will : where thy treasure is, there, in His sight, is your heart ; there you are, and that is what you are.

And thence comes the last and the crowning point in the story : " Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." It is a fundamental law of life that we always attain that which we have really resolved to attain, whether it be bad or good. But that this divine law applies not only to the bad in us but to the good, is a glorious certainty, and a glorious comfort. It is " done unto us " not according to our " views " or our " opinions," nor according to the " goodness " of our " works "—

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(for if so which of us could pass the test?)
—but “according to our faith,” that is, according to the direction of our hearts towards God, to our tendency towards Him, and our confidence in Him. And then what happens to us? We are “helped,” that is, we become steadfast and joyful, whatever may come upon us, and such a faith issues in “works”: in a new way of acting and living, which we ourselves only know through the peace it brings with it, known only to God in its reality.

“ And they went and entered into a village of the Samaritans to make ready for Him. And they did not receive Him, because His face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them even as Elias did? But He turned and rebuked them, and said: Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.—Luke ix. 52-56. A.V.

IF we examine this incident closely we can distinguish within it three different conceptions of religion, and when we think this over more carefully we realize that these three conceptions represent the three great kinds or degrees of religion which exist in the world to-day: here they are represented by (i) the Samaritans, (ii) by Elijah and two disciples of Jesus (James and John) and (iii) by Jesus Himself.

(i) The Samaritans refuse to receive Jesus and His disciples for the night simply because they have found out that they are on their way to Jerusalem. In the eyes of the Samaritans, however, anyone who goes up to Jerusalem, and worships in the Temple, is simply a bad

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man ; hence there was no moral obligation at all to receive a person of that kind ; on the contrary, it was a grave sin to have any dealings with such a person. So they refused Jesus hospitality, that is, they would not admit that obligation which in the East one is supposed to give even to a criminal. And they do this "for religious reasons." From this point of view you do not ask whether a person is good or bad, or even whether he is in misery, and in need of help ; rather the right behaviour has already been decided beforehand, and it is this : "Away with him !" If these Samaritans had been asked why it was wrong to journey to Jerusalem and worship there, the answer would have been simply this : "Our religion tells us so, and we must obey our religion." Only when we realize this do we understand the meaning of those words which Jesus uttered on another occasion : "The hour cometh, and now is, when neither in Jerusalem nor in this mountain (Gerizim) shall men worship, but the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." But the kind of religion represented by the Samaritans in this incident has not yet by any means died

out. It is that kind of religion which, in the bad sense, ignores the distinctions between good and evil, between reason and unreason. Its rules have existed since time immemorial, and no one knows how they arose, its creeds require merely a nominal adherence, and the barriers which it has set up have been erected in a quite arbitrary manner. Comfortable traditions are entrenched behind these barriers; fanaticism is kindled by the sight of them, and even narrow-mindedness is here satisfied—for one still has “religion”—while this type of magical religion also takes away the fear of those dark and sinister forces which seem to menace human life at every turn. But all the time, the followers of this religion do not see that they have rejected the Holy One and the holy thing, just as in this incident the Samaritans drove Jesus out of their village.

(ii) Elijah and the disciples of Jesus knew what was good and bad, holy and unholy; they knew also that the bad must be judged because it is worthy of destruction. In God they saw righteousness incarnate, and because they felt themselves—and rightly—to be fellow-workers

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with God, they wanted to exercise their rights and express the righteousness of God by bringing the wrath of God down upon the evildoers. What is there to blame in this? Did not Elijah also act thus to the prophets of Baal? and was he not highly praised? Would not this prove that they are the children of God and of His Spirit? But Jesus thinks differently, and He tells the two disciples, quite plainly, that they have not yet understood His Gospel. He tells them that their impetuous question, and their desire to destroy the Samaritans in that village, show that they are not yet the children of His Spirit. What is the spirit which still controls them? The spirit which believes that the fulness of the life, the spirit, and the work of God can be fully comprehended by the formulæ of morality and righteousness. The desire and request of the disciples both originate in the "moral religion of legalism," that form of religion which only comes into real contact with the Divine at one point, but is blind to His overwhelming glory, deaf to the sound of His Voice in its varied cadences, and insensible towards His merciful Love. At one time this

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kind of religion formed a great advance in the progress of the human race, and compared with a religion of things and ceremonies it is a spiritual faith, but it is not spiritual in the sense in which Jesus conceives the "spirit," and it does not represent the spirit which Jesus proclaims and in which He desires to give us a share.

(iii) "The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." This is the third form of religion, and, as the words themselves tell us—all is here subordinate to one thought: saving, liberation, redemption, life. "I live, and you shall live also." Life in the one sense in which it is not a temporary form of the universal changing existence—life which cannot be destroyed. How does the Son of Man save the souls of men? Only in one way: by allowing them to share in His own life, that is, in the life of God with which He is filled. This life can stream out of Him to us through faith and love which are still closely related to each other, which arise at one and the same time, and grow in harmony—the faith that is sure that the rule "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" is no longer valid, and that it has been replaced by the

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rule : " We are the children of God," and the love that feels : " I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee."

" I am not come to destroy men's lives but to save them." But in spite of this great saying does not fire descend from heaven continually, and destroy human beings, cities and countries ? Has it not been falling down upon us for four years past, in such an awful manner that the horrors which are prophesied in the Revelation according to Saint John have been achieved ? How does this harmonize with the Word of Jesus and with the Spirit of God ?

Who would be bold enough to try to answer these questions in a satisfying way without resorting to wretched sophistries ? But there are two things which we can say, or rather, there are two points to which we can hold : Firstly : These judgments must be necessary for the saving and advancement of the souls of men or they would not have been allowed to come upon us. Secondly : in spite of all the pain, anguish, and sorrow of the present distress the certainty remains untouched in our hearts that we are His,

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and that nothing can separate us from Him. Because you are a child of God, and will remain such, you are also His fellow-worker—in your own heart and among others—in this difficult time. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus”—pure, courageous, humble and full of love.



XXXII.

14 *December* 1919.

“The voice of one saying, Cry. And one said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain; O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold, your God!”—Isaiah xl. 6-9.

WHAT shall I preach, what shall I preach to-day? What shall I preach in this Advent season? All the good things which we formerly possessed, law and order, customs and culture, fidelity and faith have vanished. It seems as though the earth had suddenly opened a yawning gulf between us and them, with no bridge over the vast abyss! And with those good things the Christian elements with which they were connected seem also to have disappeared. For some time past we have felt a painful sense of distance between us and them, caused by a long period of change and transition: it was often quite difficult to feel the vital pulse beating in them which we longed to feel; but we still felt it possible to lay hold on them from time to time. But now they

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too seem to have been sucked under in the great flood which has swept everything else away. Where is our order? Where are our morals? Where is our culture? Where is our God? If He is strength, where is the strength? If the Kingdom is His, where is His Kingdom? If the glory is His, where, in the midst of all this misery and distress, is His glory? If He is the Living One, where is life in the midst of all this death of the body and of the soul?

What shall I preach? What shall I cry? Thus said the prophet, in tones of despair, in a similar situation more than two thousand five hundred years ago, and to-day we say it with him. But to us, as to him, comes the exhortation from God: Preach! God does not permit us to be silent in the midst of this overwhelming distress; but He also answers us when we ask: What shall I preach? The first thing He tells us to say is both surprising and painful: It is simply this: That we are to proclaim to ourselves and to our fellow-men that this experience of ours, this terrible defeat, this decay of all that is worthy and beautiful, in a word, all this experience of death, is the will and

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act of God. "All flesh is grass and all its goodness is like a flower of the field ; the grass withereth ; the flower fadeth ; because the breath of the Lord bloweth upon it." God is not only within all that is good and right, but He is also present in this destruction which has fallen upon our world—all the circumstances which made up our "world"—whose disappearance we mourn to-day. Why does He destroy it? Because it lived without Him ; but without Him it was not worthy to live ; this is what he wants to show us through its destruction, for otherwise we would not have believed it. Apart from Him all flesh is grass, and all its goodness like the flower of the field. He wishes to free us from a very serious error and illusion : namely, that anything on earth has any real existence apart from God, however brilliant and beautiful it may be, and also from the error which imagines that there can be any dignity, any value, any eternity, apart from God. And then His breath blows upon it, and everything falls to pieces, and withers away, and we are forced to see that all the things we used to regard as imperishable, all the culture, and dignity and beauty of our

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generation, is vanity, and less than vanity ; it is pure negation.

This is a severe message. We are quite ready to believe, I suppose, that evil forces have, from time to time, destroyed our most valued possessions ; but here God is saying something quite different ; He says that He Himself has destroyed these possessions, because we regarded them as the highest values, and trusted in them apart from God as our permanent possessions. Indeed, He permits His messenger to say still harder things : "The people is grass." Not merely their supposed goods, but they themselves, are doomed to perish for, as they are, He cannot allow them to have any permanence, and so it is His sword, and His sickness, and His hunger which destroys them. His Spirit bloweth upon them, and His Hand lies heavy upon the nations, and they die. What can we say to such a message as this ? and, indeed, how can we bear it ?

We could not endure it if this were the final word of God ; stupefaction or despair would be our lot, and the misery of mankind would overwhelm us. But it is really only the introduction to the

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sermon which the Prophet is to preach, and this has a double message : " The Word of our God abideth for ever," and, " Behold your God." These messages are to be proclaimed aloud to the whole world : " Zion, go into thy high mountain ; Jerusalem ! lift up thy voice with strength ; lift it up and be not afraid ! " " The Word of our God abideth for ever." What kind of Word is this ? It is the Word of His promise. And what is His Promise ? This is the Promise which is summed up in the verse : " Fear thou not ; I have redeemed thee ; I have called thee by thy name ; thou art Mine ! " Hence no break-down of civilization can engulf a soul which He has redeemed, and no sorrow can be so deep that it will drown a soul which He has called unto Himself. To the redeemed soul He gives a sense of life, and a vital energy which overcomes even death itself, and He creates within her a confidence against which all waves of misery and death will beat in vain ; for He says : " For thou art Mine, and I am thine ; and where I am there shalt thou be also ; death cannot part us." And thus He says to us in this Advent season : " Leave behind you all

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that torments you, all that grieves you, all that you lack ; I will restore all to you again ! ”

“ Behold! Your God!” This message is not only for the individual soul, for the soul which longs for Him—God and the soul, the soul and her God—but for the whole world : God stands in the midst of history, in the midst of the world of nations, even in our own nation, as He was amongst the children of Israel in their wanderings in the desert, in the midst of the barbarian invasions, and in the midst of the horrors of the ‘Thirty Years’ War. At such times there were always souls which felt His Presence, and eyes which perceived Him. The same powerful energy of the sun which causes the grass to dry up and the flowers to wither, also ripens the fruit. It uses decline and death for its own ends ; for it creates new life out of death ; it must destroy, in order to preserve and to increase ; all that has had its use, and all that is bad has to die out, in order that something higher and better may appear. At bottom this power destroys nothing ; for what our God has created that also will He preserve.

Behold your God ! Accustom yourself

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to lift your eyes so high above the earth and above human history that you can see Him ! Be so courageous and so pure that you are able to breathe in His air ; then, in spite of the suffering which surrounds you, you will not despair, and you will look around you without fear ; for His is the Kingdom and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever, and this is true to-day. Amen.

XXXIII.

28 *November* 1920.

ADVENT MEDITATION

“ Seeing it is God that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

1 Corinthians iv. 6.

WHEN Paul wrote these words, and his little congregation in Corinth read them, nearly five hundred years had passed since a man had lived and worked near Corinth — in Athens — who had effected an immense upheaval in the thought of the peoples of Europe. This man was Socrates.

Until the time of Socrates, Greek thinkers had tried to understand the world from the external point of view—the physical processes of nature, on the one hand, and the State, on the other, were the starting-points and objects of their reflection. Socrates, however, perceived that the inner life and its values ought to be the primary and real object of thought, and that it is only from the point of view of the inner life of man that we can hope to gain a true and satisfying view of reality.

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With Socrates there began a glorious movement in Greek thought and feeling. His greatest pupil, Plato, developed first of all, from the hints of his master, a view of the world regarded from the standpoint of the interior life, in which the ideas "God," "the soul," "the good," "the passionate urge towards truth and higher life" (Eros), "the contrast between the instinctive life and freedom" were evolved.

During the very same period (beginning somewhat earlier) the Jewish prophets and Psalmists (starting from quite different pre-suppositions, and transforming them), had proclaimed a similar message. They widened the narrow and petty Jewish conception of God into that of the Lord of heaven and earth, and proclaimed Him as the energy and central point of the soul. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and what is there upon earth that I desire beside Thee?" . . . "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" They were not philosophers like the Platonists and the Stoics, but their view also gave a reliable

orientation of the world ; it was a practical " philosophy " which they offered to their contemporaries, and they knew this, for they said : " The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

In spite of this upward tendency among the Greeks and Jews, however, there was not sufficient dynamic energy to generate a mighty movement, strong enough to overcome the rank and poisonous growth of heathenism, and to lift Judaism out of its narrowness, and its legalistic pedantry. Further—with a few exceptions, full confidence in high ideas and energies did not develop ; even among the best, lack of courage, scepticism and uncertainty were not overcome. Why was this ? Because no one person had ever lived who incorporated and lived out before the eyes of men that which formed the highest content of life. This life-content needs to be lived out publicly if it is to become a soul-inspiring force.

But those who first experienced Jesus Christ, found their lives not only enriched with new " ideas," but found that they had received a new life, which was breathed into them, and this new life was so vigorous within them that, through witnessing to

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this Jesus, they were able also to pass it on to others. This is the strongest proof that this experience was no illusion, no mere flash in the pan !

A new life : this never means anything less than a new love, which leads to a new system of values. The new love was love to the holy and merciful God who had first loved them ; this they felt through the fact that He had allowed them to experience Christ. They now embraced God with that power of love which hitherto they had spent on themselves, and on the earthly life ; for He had set Himself in the centre of their lives ; He lived in them.

But the energy of love which now arose was far higher and stronger than the former energy. It gave them the certainty that they were in an impregnable position, and for that very reason they knew that they themselves could not be overcome by anything in heaven or earth : " Who shall separate us from the love of God ? " Henceforth they valued no love as true love which was not touched with the sense of the enduring and the eternal ; but they also felt that their brethren too could enter into this eternal kingdom of

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their God. They might lose everything else ; they knew they could bear the pain of these losses ; this was what their system of values meant to them.

So mightily was the Apostle Paul affected by this experience of the new love and the new values that he felt he could only compare it in its greatness with the creation of light : " It is God who said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who has also shined into our hearts." So he writes to the Corinthians, and in so doing he paints before their eyes a word-picture of the nature of the experience. To him it is like a radiant light, very clear and bright, in the midst of the darkness which otherwise surrounds us. This radiance lights up the nature of God, and also their own nature, for they now felt that they belonged to Him utterly, for ever and ever. In the light of this revelation Paul sees God's marvellous "glory." Obviously, to him the face of Jesus Christ is a mirror of the fatherly heart of God.

Around us and amongst us there has been much sorrow and loss ; unrighteousness is gaining the upper hand ; the love of many is growing cold, and is increasingly confined within narrower

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limits. Then natural feelings tend to gain the upper hand, and they menace us with yet further impoverishment. Therefore let this Advent text remind us of the eternal light, of the glory of God our Father in the face of Jesus Christ. And do not let us be content to regard it as a luminous mist, but let it be to us like the sun when it breaks through mists and clouds, scattering them, and the sky is clear and bright.

XXXIV.

11 February 1917.

THOUGHTS ON A SAYING OF
GOETHE

“The Christian religion has nothing to do with philosophy.* It is a mighty substance in itself, to which again and again fallen and suffering humanity has worked its way up; and when we admit that it has had this effect, we also admit that it is raised far above all philosophy and needs no support from it.”

Goethe. *Gespräche mit Eckermann*, Part II., p. 39.

IF we did not know who had uttered these words we would infer that they had been pronounced by someone who looks at the Christian religion from the outside, or, at least, by someone who does not wish to give himself away to us by betraying whether he himself has any relation to this religion or not. We would also conclude that the writer was one who had dealt much and often with the problem of “Religion and Philosophy,” for this opinion is a considered opinion, such as no one would pronounce, or be able to give, save after long intellectual work and

*By “philosophy” Goethe meant the knowledge of God in nature.

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experience of life. So Goethe himself as an author meets us very clearly in these weighty words ; for he always retained his personal freedom over against Christianity, however near he may have come to it ; but—with the exception of one period in his life—he was always profoundly concerned with this religion. Here, therefore, we have before us one of the final, ultimate judgments of Goethe, the “Christian pagan”, on the Christian religion. I call him a “Christian pagan” in the good sense of the word, but I must call him so because his reverence for Nature did not fit in with any form of Christianity known until his time. Let us hope that some day things will alter in this respect !

If, however, we examine these words more closely we see that they have been born out of a conflict, and that behind them there lies another point of view which has now been overcome. This other point of view was that previously held by the writer ; for he calls the right view an “admission.” So we gather that the writer has gained this view after a period of struggle ; it was not always his own view.

The view which had been overcome and left behind was this : " The Christian religion—and religion in general—when we examine it closely, has no valid existence at all ; it is, rather, an entity valid only for a certain lower standpoint, and the worth it possesses is merely that of a preparatory stage ; for it is the preparatory stage for the real and pure knowledge of God in Nature. When this real knowledge has been attained, therefore, religion becomes unnecessary, but the higher knowledge does not discard Christianity or religion altogether when it proves its value as a preparatory and a temporary stage."

From this point of view, therefore, religion is measured simply by knowledge. In other passages in his writings Goethe measured it by art, and here also he only granted it the value of a preparatory stage. Hence his statement : The man who possesses art and science also possesses religion ; but he who has them not may have religion if he will ! This statement, however, is not his final word ; on the contrary, in this conversation with Eckermann we meet a quite different conception :

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1. The Christian religion has nothing to do with philosophy. . .
2. The Christian religion is high above all philosophy and needs no support from it. . .
3. The Christian religion is a mighty power in itself.

This is a great trinity of ideas ! What does it express ?

First of all, that we ought not to measure the Christian religion by knowledge at all, but that we ought to regard it as an energy, and secondly, that—just because it is an independent entity—it possesses an independent energy of its own.

It is indeed very significant that one who all his life long lived by the knowledge of God through Nature and Art should confess at the end of his life : There is a third thing, something mighty and independent in itself, the Christian religion ! As an energy he rates it above philosophy, but precisely as an energy ; he would still refuse to place philosophy in another connexion below religion ; for—and this is to him a matter of course : the knowledge of God in Nature is also “ a mighty substance in itself.”

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As an energy philosophy cannot compare with the Christian religion, says Goethe in his old age, that is, in its influence on character and will. Character and will, however, determine life, for they are the fundamental forms of life. Here he fully recognizes the sovereignty of religion, and, indeed, of the Christian religion; he is not speaking of other religions, nor of religion in the abstract. This is very characteristic of his vital realism; he deals only with realities with which he has to do personally.

From Goethe's point of view, how, and wherein, does the peculiar energy of the Christian religion reveal itself? He replies: "Because through its aid, times without number, fallen and suffering humanity has been raised to a higher level."

Thus the tendency of the Christian religion to appeal mainly to the weary and the heavy-laden, the sorrowful and the mourners, the publicans and sinners, is fully recognized by Goethe. Did he allow this to appeal to himself as well? I do not venture to deny this, with any kind of certainty; on the other hand, I have still less right to affirm it with any

certainty. We must note that Goethe does not say "man" but "humanity"; but I am grateful to him that he has spoken like this; for here again we see absolute honesty: he will not say more than he sees and knows, and sure as he is of the truth of this view for humanity in general, he is equally sure that he has no right to say: "This is true for every single human being."

We can be quite sure, however, that in his own soul at least one chord responded when he heard of actual human experiences, for nothing human was alien to him, and a man who could write the song: *Der du von dem Himmel bist*, and the closing part of *Faust*, must himself have experienced something of that of which he speaks so profoundly in this conversation as the power of the Christian religion: the elevation of humanity through inner renewal.

The nature and the power of the Christian religion is not fully defined when it is thus described as the support of those who need to be lifted and set on their feet; for it is far more than a support, even a living and active support, and it is not merely a message for the lost and the

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suffering, for it remains their light and their strength when they have been lifted out of the depths into the high places of faith. It is, however, a true insight that emphasizes the fact that the peculiar power of the Christian religion lies in its ability to meet misery and wretchedness of every kind. Goethe himself is here on the side of Jesus and Paul, even though they would not speak of "raising oneself" but of "being apprehended."

Also, the relation of the Christian religion and philosophy is not entirely determined by proclaiming that they are two separate magnitudes ; in this connexion there are still some very important and difficult problems which have not been settled ; for the Christian religion itself offers a certain knowledge. But, once again, Goethe is right in saying that, first of all, we must conceive both in their complete independence, and that we must place this independence at the basis of all further research.

XXXV.

18 *February* 1917.

THOUGHTS ON SOME SAYINGS OF
ANSELM FEUERBACH

1. The right attitude would surely be to desire from God nothing but Himself.
2. I have a higher opinion of a man who feels his need of religion in the midst of good fortune than of one who simply seeks its consolation in time of trouble.
3. He who lives for high ideals must forget himself.
4. How much evil is needed to ruin a good and healthy man, and how very, very little good sometimes it would take to save him.
5. To be shipwrecked, not in life but in living, is a hard saying.

1. THIS is what the Psalmist thought when he exclaimed : " Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and what is there on earth that I desire beside Thee ? " It is certainly the supreme height of religion ; but which of us can attain it ? There is, however, a second summit to which we may aspire, and it is this : to ask God that He would fill us wholly with love to our brothers and sisters, that we may see them all as His children, and that we may see the whole world, with its beauty, its suffering and its pleasure, as the Father's House, and all this without losing our

longing for our eternal Home. This, too, would be to "desire God."

2. This is certainly true. For those who only allow themselves to be comforted by religion in time of trouble will scarcely possess a settled faith. But those who are made humble and thankful by true happiness, look up to God, and desire Him for Himself, and then, possessing God they will also be able to bear trouble when it comes. Usually trouble is no help to us, but it is a test of our faith ; God calls us to Himself, when He gives us true happiness. This is the most powerful attraction for people who feel truly and sanely.

3. In this phrase I would strike out the "must," for there is no "must" here ; it disappears automatically. "He who lives for high ideals does forget to think about himself." If, then, we really desire to be free from ourselves, from all that is low, and from all that drags us down, we must learn to practise "high thinking." ("Great thoughts and a pure heart, this is what we ought to ask God to give us."—Goethe.) What are the "great thoughts" which are here meant? Are they only possible to the deep thinker? By no

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means ! Everything that lifts us above the instinctive life, and shakes us out of spiritual torpor is a "great thought." Even to do one's daily work cheerfully and conscientiously, as though the welfare of the whole world depends upon it, is a "great thought." Or we are cultivating "high thinking" when we study something thoroughly—in art or science—with absolute devotion to the subject in hand.

4. Because this saying, especially in its second half, is true, we ought not to be slack and lazy, but inventive, finding new ways of meeting everyone with whom we have to do, in as friendly a manner as possible, and, if we can, to say a good word to them. Without our knowing it, this word may find a lodging in the soil of their minds like a grain of wheat, or it may be the means of saving someone from evil, or it may act as a ladder to a higher life. If we are full of a very living and sincere sympathy we need not hesitate to speak very seriously, when we feel the occasion demands it.

5. Every man who only tries to "live out" his life on lines of absolute "self-expression," without any self-control what-

ever, and who desires nothing more than this from life, will inevitably go to pieces. Either he will become a heap of useless dross, or he will fall to pieces before he has even had time to become dross. The tiny blue flames which dance like will-o'-the-wisps before the eyes of the ruined soul, and surround it with ghostly shapes and visions, are the last eerie greeting from life as it disappears from her sight. And yet the urge to "live out" one's life is invincible; for it is life itself. Hence we must see to it that we so "live out" our lives that in the process we do not lose life itself, but rather that we may gain it in ever-increasing fulness. This will only happen if we pass beyond the negative aspects of the question—the extirpation of bondage to the sense-life, and all selfishness—and live a life that is positive through and through, because all our faculties are enlisted in the service of the soul, and have thus become ennobled. Those who live in this spirit can never go to pieces, and they will be armed even against death itself.

XXXVI.

4 *September* 1922.

THE UNCONSCIOUS, THE
INTELLECT, AND THE
CONSCIENCE.*

DR. MÜLLER is quite right: the intellect is not a receptive organ: neither in relation to the world of time and space, and all that it contains, nor to the living, eternal and timeless sphere. The receptive organs are the senses and the unconscious. But just as the senses can deceive us, and hence need the control which can only be brought to them by the intellect, on the basis of whole masses of sense-experience which it co-ordinates and clarifies, so also the unconscious can deceive and lead us astray; thus the unconscious, when it makes itself known in vital feelings and determinations also needs a control; without this man would be always tossed about on an uncontrolled sea of feeling, and the will would be

*These notes were written at Berchtesgaden, after Harnack had received an account of a lecture by Johannes Müller at Elmau, from a pupil.

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irresolute and blinded, not knowing whom or what it should obey.

This control should be twofold : exercised both by the intellect and by the conscience. In its content the conscience is not an original function, but it is an historical attainment ; it is therefore wholly liable to error ; in spite of this, however, it claims to be a subjective and absolute standard (this is the psychological, and therefore original peculiarity of conscience which originally had no real content at all). We cannot ignore this, however, without harm. So we may evolve the following maxim :

“ Never act against your conscience—for to act against your conscience is the worst thing you can do—but, at the same time, never forget that your conscience may make mistakes, and therefore be ever on the look-out to correct and purify it continually.”

In accordance with what I have just said, then, in my opinion it is wrong to say : “ Everything that one does from an inward impulse is right,” and it is just as mistaken to say : “ Every intuitive action is from God, because it issues from the unconscious, which is life itself.” Certainly the unconscious is the organ in which life itself is expressed, but this is

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not only the divine life, but all life (which issues, it is true, from the divine life but is not itself the divine life) ; for all stages of life are active in our unconscious, from the force known as gravitation up to that force which has the power of raising the soul above itself and above the world. Since, then, each one of us is a microcosm (capable of experiencing in his unconscious the whole gamut of life-forces) and since, further, this microcosm tends to give the control, in its sphere of action, to the highest form of life-energy, and since, further, all life impressions—from the inorganic and the animal up to the divine—penetrate into the unconscious, it is no good thinking that we may surrender ourselves to every intuition and to every inner impulse as though it were a divine impulse. Rather we are here directly exposed to the conflict between the higher and lower life-impressions, and these call out the powers of the intellect as well as of the conscience, which are not only useful aids but also organs of the divine—not receptive, but testing and co-ordinating. They are in no wise merely my own subjective capacities ; no, the urge towards truth (intellect) and the urge

towards righteousness (conscience) are really Divine energies instituted in order that we may not be disintegrated by contact with the life of the world, but that we may remain a spiritual unity. At every stage of our development, however undeveloped, the conscience is the organ which gives spiritual and moral stability and cohesion to our personality.

Intellect and conscience alone can do nothing if sense-experience and the experience of the unconscious are absent; apart from the energies of the intellect and the conscience, however, which do proceed from the divine source of life, sole dependence on the impulses proceeding from the sense-life and from the unconscious would leave us in a state of absolute instability and uncertainty. Thus it is not only the unconscious which is the gift of God, but we can say of all our functions: "What do you possess which you have not first received?" and what do you possess which is not divine life—even the intellect and the conscience! Leave each, however, in its place, and permit it to exercise its peculiar function. Do not expect from the intellect or from the conscience a radiant sense of vitality, but

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also do not expect from the unconscious or from the intuitive faculty a repose and life in God which needs no control at all ! The unconscious and the intuitive faculty can, indeed, reduce us to a very low level of life, even to the animal and purely physical level.

In practice, therefore, just as our physical health needs the changes of day and night, so our mental and spiritual health needs the rhythm of continual change : on the one hand, childlike receptivity, and an expectant attitude towards life in all its stages and, on the other, the exercise of a critical intelligence, coupled with attentive obedience to the voice of conscience. In both these responses to life it is God who lives and works within us.

PRAYER.

Great God, I thank Thee for the gift of life ; I thank Thee too that in secret Thou dost speak to my soul. I thank Thee that Thou hast given me the desire for truth and knowledge, and the longing for moral integrity. I thank Thee most of all, for the gift of the Lord Christ, and

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for my neighbour, to whom I may be a Christ too. In all these things I find not merely Thy gifts but Thyself, and where I see my weakness and imperfection I trust in Thy merciful love, which is greater than my heart.

Amen.

XXXVII.

(This "meditation" was written on the occasion of the death of *Amalie Gabriele von Zahn*, who was born on December 25, 1920, and died the same day.)

"Thine eyes did see mine unperfect substance,
And in thy book were all my members written,
Which day by day were fashioned,
When as yet there was none of them."

Psalm cxxxix. 16.

SHE came amongst us, and she departed. She only saw the light of this world for an hour or two ; only for a brief space did she breathe the air of this earth. We welcomed her with love and greeted her with reverent joy, and the next moment, as it were, her father and mother, and all the rest of us, had to taste the bitterness of farewell. Why ? Why ? We strain our eyes into the darkness and see nothing but mystery upon mystery and unfathomable gloom. Dear little daughter, why did you come only to leave us again so soon ? . . .

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“Do not ask me why! Do you yourselves know why your lives began, and how and when and why they will end? And in the sight of eternity is your span of life longer than mine?”

“But you say: ‘We had *work* to do on earth, and thou hast had none!’ But is this true? When you were waiting for me had I not already a task to fulfil? and can I not still fulfil this calling? Can I not make you richer in love, closer to one another, and help you to live increasingly in a spirit of generosity and high aspiration?”

“As you think of me will it not remind you again and again of your true home to which you already belong? I know that it is very difficult to overcome the feelings of natural sorrow and disappointment, but you know in your hearts that they are not the final word: Love trusts where it cannot see, and love never faileth.

“And do not grieve for me: Like you I was created in the Image of God, and I too have my share in His eternal life: He called me into life and then called me back whence I came, and He is a God of the living and not a

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God of the dead. Do not brood sorrowfully and anxiously over my life or over your own : you and I together rest in the peace of His Hands, and His love covers us all."





