

THE  
GUIDING  
LIGHT

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## THE GUIDING LIGHT

A survey of some of the principles  
that should govern the conduct of  
a true Christian

### 1

#### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PRINCIPLES

IN connection with every subject that enters into human life there are certain guiding principles to light the way. If we can find and in some measure classify these principles, and if we are wise enough to use them, we are never in darkness, however strange to us the details of our path may be.

It is impossible to say how many principles of life there are or what is the order of their importance. Men would never agree in such a discussion. The word "principle" is sufficiently elastic in its meaning to admit of different opinions as to its application. One man would say, "Here is a principle", when another would protest that the truth referred to was not sufficiently important to be so described. It should be called a minor law or an elementary rule.

We need not dispute about words and the exact meanings that should be assigned to them. We use the word "principle" here as meaning a first general truth under which other truths can be classified. There are many fields with principles peculiar to themselves, from the Christian religion down to a game of skill. There are major and minor principles in each field, and often it is possible to use well-established first principles as a platform on which to acquire knowledge of principles still higher. There is one principle, however, which applies to all these fields, that is the rule of being guided by principles. If we are on ground that is strange to us we should

immediately ask, "What are the main principles of this subject?" And we should find the answer as soon as possible. If we are thoroughly (familiar with the details) we must still remember the principles covering those details, or we shall go astray in spite of all our empirical knowledge. Men have observed this rule of being guided by principles most thoroughly in the unimportant fields of life. There is probably not a man on earth who has studied the principles of Christianity with such intensity as Senor Capablanca and Dr. Alekhine have studied the principles of chess.

It has often been remarked that the (apprehension of principles) is the highest effort of the human intellect. A baby cannot have the slightest idea of principles until many months of experience have taught him. The development of the child's mind furnishes the best illustration of successive platforms of thought, each stage very helpful although incomplete.

The absolute raw material of thought is in (sensation). The newborn babe possesses no knowledge; but if properly equipped with (senses) he will soon apply them to gain acquaintance with his little world. When he first sees a chair, he knows nothing of its uses or its qualities. It is simply a sensation of sight, producing in his mind a mental image that can be recognised again. Every time the sensation is (repeated), the impression of this image becomes (deeper) and (easier to be remembered). If one day the chair has been moved and another slightly different one put in its place, the baby will look with surprise at the newcomer. He cannot at this stage make a proper comparison. He cannot say even to himself, "The covering used to be red, but now it is blue". His mind has not yet grasped these concepts of colour. He simply notices a difference in the image and is puzzled. If he presently sees the old chair in a different position in the room, he will look from one to the other with quickened interest. If, finally, one of the human beings whose service he accepts as a matter of course, removes the interloper and restores the old chair to its place, the baby will probably show signs of pleasure that the puzzle has been solved. He has made considerable mental

advance. Here are the beginnings of a recognition of plurality and colour and position and comparison.

(Later), when he attempts to reach the chair and to climb upon it, the brain is developing at such a rate that comparisons are being made and childish judgements formed every minute. A few mishaps in this adventurous undertaking may suffice to bring to light something in the nature of an elementary principle. The child does not need to fall off every article of furniture in the house before discovering that climbs are dangerous and falls painful. We have seen a child, only just able to walk, creeping unattended on some of those terrible stone steps that seem as if designed as death traps for children in some of the tiny houses of our towns. Yet he has been so cautious that he has not come to grief though making many perilous journeys up and down. His obvious recognition of the danger is no proof that he has ever fallen down those particular steps. Still less is it evidence that he has ever heard of the law of gravitation. A few painful experiences and perhaps some partially understood warnings from his elders have made him recognise a general rule or principle which he is capable of applying to the various circumstances that arise. He is not very safe in the application, however. A little unusual excitement may direct his attention powerfully to some interest of the moment, and then all the danger is forgotten, probably with painful results.

Many years later as a man he may repeat the error on another plane. He has built up many platforms of thought since the baby days and has learned of many principles. He knows that climbing is pleasant on the higher plane and he knows that falls are very painful. He thinks that his caution can avoid them. Then something unusual rivets his attention; for the moment he forgets the principles that usually rule his actions, and he falls—just as when a child he went rolling down the steps.

We have known an ordinarily astute man who became surety for another without even knowing the full amount of his liability. The usual results followed, and for a few weeks he was threatened with absolute ruin as the result of his mistaken kindness. One day during the worst period he tried,

as men in trouble often will, to get a little comfort from the Bible. He chanced to open the volume at the book of Proverbs, and he read the words of the wise man regarding this very matter of suretyship. "What a fool I am", he thought. "Here in the house all the while in the book my mother taught me to read is a warning that might have saved me from all this misery." In subsequent days of prosperity he was generous to those who deserved help. He would give or lend as he was able, but he refused to be surety for anyone as a matter of principle never forgotten again. "If you have the money available", he said, "give or lend, and you know what you are doing. If you have not the money, you have no right to put your hand to paper."

We once heard of a commercial traveller who as a matter of principle refused to accept any offer of refreshment from a stranger while he was travelling. For a man who carried large sums of trust money it was an excellent rule. One day on a long journey he was in a compartment containing only one other traveller, a man who with British aloofness did not speak a word. The train stopped at a station, and another man entered who suddenly recognised the aloof one and exchanged cordial greetings with him. Then as the train went on its way the two sustained an animated conversation with reminiscences of interesting experience and plenty of mirth. Finally one, remarking that it was a cold night, opened his case and produced a little spirit stove and water and fresh ground coffee. The other laughed and expressed amazement at his friend's epicurean ingenuity. Presently the pleasant aroma of coffee filled the compartment. The ingenious one produced cups and saucers, remarking that he had expected his wife and daughter to join him but they had cried off at the last moment. Then as they began to take the coffee he suddenly caught the eye of the commercial traveller in the far corner. "Well, really, sir", he remarked; "it's too bad that we should be regaling ourselves like this. Will you join us with a cup?"

The circumstances were so productive of confidence, and the man's manner was so engaging, that for once the commercial traveller forgot his principles. At the London Railway

terminus, the officials succeeded in arousing him from a more comprehensive forgetfulness. Accompanied with much headache, his memory returned, but his money did not.

If men can so readily forget these practical rules of life that touch their temporal interests so closely, what can we expect in connection with the principles of Christianity which often seem out of accord with immediate interests and natural feelings? It has to be admitted that we frequently forget, and need continual reminders of the truths that can save us. Many people remain comfortably and wilfully ignorant of "the first principles of the oracles of God" as the Apostle calls them—"Repentance from dead works, faith, baptism, resurrection", and so forth (Heb. 6 : 1, 2). Many others who have apprehended and obeyed these first principles are continually flouting other and equally important principles that should regulate the life of a Christian. It is to some of these principles regarding conduct that we desire to call attention now. Life involves a constant process of attrition and renovation. We need to renew our spiritual strength or it will all burn away. The foolish virgins in the parable forgot the simple truth that lamps only give light by the burning away of the oil. The lamp must be replenished or the light will fail.

In this world of our mortal experiences there is a strange mixture of good and evil. In many ways it seems a blighted and faulty world; yet as we increase our experience and knowledge, we become conscious of a wonderful, growing persuasion that in one respect the world is a perfect place. This strange extended garden of good and evil, with its devoted lovers and its snakes, its fruits sweet and bitter, its thorns and thistles, and its scorching barrier across the way to that which we desire most, is a perfect training ground for human character. We cannot suggest any alterations that would not in some way spoil it for this purpose.

We find a good deal of joy in this blighted garden, although our experience is so different from that which we think we desire. We become reconciled to the reign of law, and if either in presumption or ignorance we break any of Nature's laws, we realize the folly of complaining when we are punished. Most of us make some little attempt to learn the ruling

principles of subjects in which we are interested, and we do not expect the laws to be changed or the flight of time to be stayed for our benefit if we are neglectful. Why should we expect God to be less logical in the greater world for which life in this blighted field makes selective preparation? Why not recognise that in the spiritual world no less than in the natural, the lamps will go out unless replenished with oil? Why not make an effort to grasp and apply the most important principles of life now, remembering that there will come a time when, in the most literal and awful sense, it will be too late?

## WHEN THE LIGHT IS FEEBLE

THERE may be many people who would express their readiness to apply themselves to the study of Christian principles, if they could feel assured of the truth of Christian claims. They have grave doubts, however, as to whether there is a God who cares for humanity, or whether He has given any commands to men.

We are, of course, writing primarily for readers who have long since satisfied themselves as to these fundamental matters, and we are confident that the way is open for others to find a similar resolution to their discordant doubtings if only they will take the trouble to study along the right lines. Howbeit, in case any who do not recognise the authority of the Bible should chance to read these lines, we would suggest that although they start at the wrong end of the subject, they may be able to find some helpful light by the examination of certain palpable facts and natural laws that may appropriately be examined here.

There are some practices of humanity that are harmful and destructive even to animal health. Is not this suggestive of Divine Law? Man is often disgusted with himself; why should this be if man is himself the author of all his ideals? Are not human needs and cravings all necessarily related to external realities? Could we conceive of any creatures hungering for food and drink if no food or drink suitable for them had ever existed? Or the need for fresh air, if there had never been any air upon earth better than that found in a closed-up railway compartment full of smokers? Or the need for a mate, if no mate had ever been either in objective reality or in the purpose of God? From whence, then, comes this craving of our spiritual faculties—with some people the strongest craving of all? It is useless to ignore it, and equally futile to point out that some men never feel it. In a condition of extreme ill-health men do not desire food. Often it seems that they do not desire

fresh air. Some men have lost all interest in woman. The argument remains untouched that these primitive needs are felt by healthy men, and the needs are clearly related to the external facts.

We can hardly conceive of any thinker challenging this general proposition—that the primitive human needs imply the existence somewhere of that which would satisfy them. At least the proposition would be admitted so long as there was no objectionable conclusion in sight. Even the thorough-going disciple of Haeckel, if any such materialist still survives, would admit the main proposition. He would say, "Of course a man's need for food and drink is related to the existence of food and drink suitable for him, and his need of a woman is related to the existence of woman. (He evolved) in this manner. His parents from the beginning of life were sustained by food and drink and air such as earth provides. It was through the need of companionship and the instincts of sex that he was called into being. They breathed the atmosphere that surrounds the earth and so lungs were developed suitable for such breathing of air. It is perfectly natural and obvious that all our primitive needs should be related to the facts in the embrace of which (we have evolved)."

All of which reasoning only emphasises the significance of the fact that we need God; that we yearn for communion with something higher and nobler than ourselves; that we have ideals that make our attainments seem contemptible and sometimes even disgusting. How strange it would be if creatures that evolved themselves "out of shapeless slime" should, along with a need for the food that had nourished them, develop a spiritual hunger for something that never existed and never could exist. (How strange if they should of their own bestial instincts) evolve ideals that make them miserable because the animal desires (continually prevent attainment!

It is surprising that the human consciousness of sin—one of the greatest facts in all the world—should be (completely ignored) by men who claim to be (logical). It is clear that men who deny the existence of a Creator cannot believe in the existence of sin. If man is only the product of a billion chances, he is clearly at liberty to make his own laws, and no

considerations of conscience need trouble him. He can proudly say, "Who is lord over me? In all the universe I own no superior. That which I do is always right even if it is not always wise." Truly in such a situation "the place of wisdom" would be found. It would be (in the depths).

Perhaps men who have accepted this extreme of materialism have never experienced any craving for communion with God. Perhaps they are also devoid of any consciousness of sin, or they have reasoned themselves out of it. They find no response in their hearts to such words as those found in Psalm 42, and cannot understand why other men are moved by them. Our argument is not affected, however, by the fact that in some human beings all the higher powers are atrophied. We are on the animal plane, and it is possible to live on that plane even when all the distinguishing characteristics of humanity have gone. It is possible to live for a little while even after the animal appetite has gone. The fact remains that some souls do long for communion with God as the hart pants for the springs of water. From whence comes this longing? How has it evolved?

It has been suggested that human consciousness of sin is not entirely without (parallel) in the animal world. Some of the higher mammals, especially dogs, sometimes reveal signs of guilty conscience. There is evidence of uneasiness and something very closely akin to human shame even when there is no reason to fear the pain of actual punishment. We agree that we have seen a dog show signs of shame and contrition in a manner touchingly human. This, however, only confirms our argument. He was not a wild dog. He had not evolved his own doggy ideals to bring him self-reproach through a failure to attain. Anyone who saw him would instantly recognise the human influence. (The dog had been given a law by one whom he recognised as incontestably his superior and his master, and he had broken that law.) Who is the unmistakable Master who has given a law to man?

These thoughts may suggest the desirability of further investigation, even to those who have been most sceptical towards all claims of religion. They may suggest at least that

it is unwise to keep the door of the mind bolted and barred against the idea that God has ever given a message to man. In the absence of such bolts and bars there is always hope of grace.

We may reason a little further on the basis of some of the palpable facts of ordinary life. A truth that shines out very clearly is that mere negatives will lead to nothing of value. The man who shirks all responsibility for constructive work and uses his talents merely to deride and destroy the work of others, is a curse to those among whom he moves. To criticise is so much the easier task that many choose it rather than attempt to render service. We grow impatient with such men at last, and seek the society of those who with less pretence of ability really attempt to accomplish something. In the same way we should soon grow tired of the young man whose sole attitude towards his future work was expressed in doubts and antipathies. It is futile for him to be clear in his mind only as to the careers that he would detest. We would say, "It is time for you to find what you would like to be, not merely what you would dislike. When you have found the most suitable opening, it is futile for you to hesitate merely because you are not sure whether you will like it or prove a success in it. We cannot be absolutely sure of any such matter. We must be directed by reason to the most promising avenue and then get forward with positive and constructive work."

In all the ordinary experiences of humanity this principle will be recognised as wise. (Life itself is an affirmation) and when we can no longer affirm, we are on the way to death. Surely, then, we must not be content with negatives in connection with the most important issue of all. Every negative implies its positive. We are always in a position to affirm just as definitely as we are able to deny, but there is such a difference in the matter of where we put the emphasis. If a man is quite sure that there is no God, then he is equally sure that everything came into existence without a Creator. He must be prepared to affirm that a blind, unconscious, unreasoning force has produced (seeing, conscious, reasoning) beings. Through thus facing the implied positives he may find that while the

difficulties of believing in God are great, the difficulties of unbelief are still greater.

It may be well sometimes to assume that mental attitude described as "sitting on the fence", but with important issues it must not be sustained for long. Life is too short to admit of such delay, and it is rare for the needed illumination to come to us unbidden. The man who sits on the fence, calling out discouraging criticisms to every passer-by, and unwilling to accept information from anyone as to right direction for home, will probably be avoided after a little while. He will remain sitting on the fence until he tumbles off with the passing of life.

☛ We can remember once cycling in a desolate part of the country and being overtaken by nightfall while still many miles from home. We knew that there was a country station not very far away, and there was a train due to leave it in ten minutes time. We were approaching a road at right angles; the station was somewhere the other side of the road, but we did not know whether the lane leading to it was to our right or our left. When we reached the main road there was no finger post and no sign of humanity. There was certainly no time for delay. It was better to take the wrong turning with a chance of quickly finding out our mistake than to wait at the corner with no prospect of any information coming to us and the certainty that in a very few minutes it would be too late. It was clearly a time to act on the basis of such slender evidence as we could see. There was no sign of hope to the left of us, but on the right hand there was a feeble glimmer of light reflected in the sky, and it might possibly be from the station. Without pausing for a moment, we hastened to the right hand, and presently received successive and increasingly powerful confirmations that our choice was justified. The feeble light grew stronger; there was a lane leading directly to it. We caught a glimpse of a red light, and finally there were the clearly-defined lights of the station and the distant sound of the approaching train.

YEAH!

There is a certain allegorical significance in such an experience. The mere negation is immobile and will soon be dead. The affirmation moves and soon may find either evidence

that it is wrong and its movement must be changed, or confirmation that it is right and the pace may be increased.

It is a matter of vital importance for Christians and rejecters alike to find the right course without any avoidable delay. Progress is better than stagnation, even though at first the guiding light seems feeble. There are many who have ten minutes of hard riding before they can reach their goal, and they only have eleven minutes more of life.

### OUR WORK MUST BE CONSTRUCTIVE

We urge this proposition that our work must be constructive, as a first principle of life not only for Christians but for all decent human beings. It is a principle which ought to be accepted without any need for argument, and men who desire to live worthy lives should repeat the thought to themselves continually, using it as a guiding light to test their work.

You have ruthlessly rooted out the weeds; what have you planted in the ground thus cleared? You have destroyed the ugly hovels; what worthy buildings have you erected in their place? You have overthrown false ideas and have killed foolishness with ridicule; where is the true and wise teaching that you have put in their room?

The world has often been cursed by the destructive tyrant who is content merely to destroy. It is fortunate that eventually he destroys himself, which is probably his only useful act. There have been great military leaders who have been of this character. They have wasted lands and have achieved great success in war, but they have constructed nothing; in the result there has been no real stability even in their most complete conquests. There have been others who have united with the military talent a capacity for administration. Their work has been partly constructive, though often faulty and greatly restricted by human greed and frailty. Nevertheless, this feeble effort at constructive work has produced results presenting such a contrast to the work of the mere destroyer, that all readers of history may well learn a lesson.

The principle of constructive work, like other principles, can be applied on many planes, material, mental, moral and spiritual. It seems so obvious that there should be no need to mention it. Yet it is so much neglected that there is hardly any subject in which men need instruction more.



We may often dislike the present position or the prevailing idea. Reflection on that which offends us, especially if our opinions are antagonised, may easily intensify the dislike until it becomes unreasonable and even fanatical. The instinct then is to destroy, without a thought as to what we desire to build. "Anyhow, we can smash the present hateful system", says the social agitator. The appropriate comment on this is that it does not need men to smash things. Some of the brutes can accomplish such work well enough. Moreover, a little reflection will surely lead to the conclusion that the hatefulness of the present social system arises very largely from such senseless destructiveness in the past, while everything useful or desirable in civilised life arises from constructive work. A man who was dissatisfied with the house in which he lived would hardly be so foolish as to pull the building down on top of him without any plans being ready for the new home. Yet in other matters, where the folly is not quite so obvious, that is what men are doing continually. Some who call for reform have no idea in their minds except to pull down. The great revolution comes, and there is simply an orgy of destruction until men weary of their extremes and revolt against the nauseating effects of their own folly. Then, when they begin to build again, it is with broken tools, with inadequate plans, and with weary minds, which tend feebly to repeat the old defects.

History records many instances of such wasted effort, not merely in the development of nations, but with religions, political parties, businesses, and even families. Much of the evil could be avoided if men made an intelligent effort to grasp the Christian principle of constructive work. Christ applied to human life the rule that a tree should be known by its fruits (Matt. 7 : 19, 20). In a practical lesson which has been the subject of some uninformed criticism, he emphasised the lesson that a fruit tree is valueless if it only brings forth leaves. He rebuked his disciples for wanting to destroy those who opposed him, telling them that he had come to save men and not to destroy (Luke 9 : 54). He gave a picture of the judgement seat in which the whole emphasis is put upon the positive side—the righteous accepted for the good that they have done, and the wicked rejected for having failed to do

such work; and no mention is made either of negative virtues or of sins of commission. Indeed, the whole life of Christ emphasises this principle that we must work constructively. It is all in harmony with the words of the Apostle: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good"

The natural tendency with most vigorous and zealous men is in the opposite direction. When their zeal is aroused by the presence of that which they regard as evil, all their energy is directed for combat. They become impatient of anything that would stay their hands. "This is a time of war", they say, "let us first destroy this evil, and then we will talk of plans for the development of good." Such intemperate zeal never prospers. The hated tyranny is overthrown and a worse tyranny put in its place. The faulty building is destroyed and nothing is erected on the ruins until weakened and impoverished men perhaps try to restore the old house as it was before. Such pitiful results are found on all planes—physical, mental, and moral—for on all these planes it is a fact that if men are too ready to fight and destroy they lose both the desire and the capacity for construction.

"Every wise woman buildeth her house, but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands." So wrote the wise man in the book of Proverbs (Prov. 14 : 1). There is, perhaps, a significance in the woman of this proverb, only to be appreciated by those who have a full belief in the inspiration of Scripture and a recognition of the fact that "known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world". Whether we should be justified in this extension of the idea or not, there can be no doubt as to the wide application of this proverbial expression of the great principle we are emphasising that our work must be constructive.

We have seen even a literal pulling down of the house by thriftless, foolish people, loose boards from stairs and shelving being burned to save the trouble of fetching proper fuel. Much of the squalor of the slums is due to this demon of destructiveness and the sad lack of all constructive instincts. On another plane we have seen people who would never be so foolish as to damage the material structure of the house, pulling to pieces the far more important fabric of love, confidence, and good

## THE > AGITATOR

feeling that should hold the family together. There are some unseen girders binding the true home, however small or humble it may be. The wise woman builds, the foolish through selfishness, ill-temper, suspicion, surmising, jealousy, and other fleshly evils, pulls the girders down, and the family falls apart. So throughout every plane of human experience the proverb proves true, right up to the activities of the wise and virtuous woman who is permitted to be a fellow-worker with God in the greatest task of all.

We may well devote a little thought to the bearing of this principle on the work of the agitator. We may all in turn play this part in greater or less degree. Agitation is not always wrong. Sometimes it is good for society to be stirred up by the unpleasant activities of a writer or speaker who refuses to conform to the prevailing ideas of the day. "He who would be a man must be a non-conformist" said Emerson, and we have to agree that the most vigorous of men have usually been of this character. They may be uncomfortable companions, but we may benefit by association with them. But while agitation is not necessarily evil, it is certainly not always good. It depends on the motive and the reasonableness of the relationship between aim and effort. This brings us back to our principle. The real test is whether the work is constructive. Agitation tends to prevent construction, so that in itself it is nearly always evil. It may be a necessary evil, however, preparing the way for work much better than any that it hinders.

If we are inclined to be agitators, then we should ask ourselves the question, "What is our aim?" And if the aim is good, what reasonable prospect is there of achieving it? It is not sufficient to be satisfied that the general purpose is a worthy one. Most agitators would probably feel satisfied that their ultimate aim is excellent. Often, however, there is a deplorable absence of reasonable connection between the aim and the effort. Sometimes there are other motives for the agitation; motives which are not brought to light even in the minds that they dominate. It is this hidden, unadmitted motive that explains the bitterest form of agitation, whether in State or Church, factory or school. The agitation will not help friends,

but it will hurt foes, and this unrecognised root of bitterness is often the real cause of all the trouble.

Then there are some agitators who really seem to regard agitation as an end in itself. They have no particular aim and no special grievance. They are not really bitter, but they are always in revolt. They really seem to think that the leaders in any constructive work ought to be opposed. How much heartache and headache would be spared for those who try to build, if all agitators of this kind could only recognise the principle that all work should be constructive!

There is an impressive record of an agitation and a drastic solution of the difficulty in the book of Numbers. Korah, Dathan and Abiram with some sympathisers, protested that Moses and Aaron "took too much upon themselves", and lifted themselves up above the congregation. Moses fell upon his face when he heard this criticism, for he realized the spirit of it and the probable consequences. Everyone who is at all acquainted with the Bible will remember how this rebellion ended, but probably there are many who have not noticed the interesting and very human fact that the agitators were not by any means united. Korah and his immediate followers were really not so guilty as the others, and that is perhaps why the children of Korah were not involved in his ruin (see Num. 26: 11). Korah really seemed to believe that he was a heaven-born leader and that God would sustain him. He and his immediate supporters were ready to put the presumptuous claim to the test. The egotist was rejected by God, as such proud men must always be, but his children were spared. Dathan and Abiram were of different calibre. When a decisive text was proposed, they were neither prepared to support Korah nor put in a claim for leadership themselves. They changed the ground of complaint. It was no longer that Moses took too much upon himself, but he had not accomplished enough. He had not brought them into the promised land and they were tired of the wilderness. They refused to leave their tents to effect a settlement of the issue. So they agitated and perished where they stood.

We have met the Korah type, and have, perhaps, felt sorry for the ill-balanced little man who wants to lead. Still more

sorry have we been for the wife and children who have adorned him with a home-made halo. We cannot sympathise with the Dathan and Abiram type, also quite common figures in human experience. They agitate for the sake of agitation, refuse to put anything to a reasonable test, and change the ground of complaint with every effort to meet their objections. They are the worst of all negationists.

If we want to be Christians, our work must be constructive on whatever plane we may labour. Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick, strengthen the feeble, encourage the fearful, instruct the ignorant, and help other men and women who are engaged in such work, or at least refrain from hindering them. If we need sometimes to pull down, let us be quite clear as to our plans for building and that the end justifies the means. If we feel called upon to agitate, let us make sure that we have a worthy aim and that every state of the agitation is related to it. Work, moral teaching, discussion and criticism can all be constructive. Here and now, with such material as may be given to us, we can help to build if we will. The earth is ready to swallow up all destroyers and aimless agitators. There is a "book of remembrance" kept for those who fear God and help each other. Every man's work will be tested whether he has built with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay or stubble. Some of the work that is unworthy will be burned, but even then there is a possibility that the man may be saved, if he really tried to build (1 Cor. 3 : 12).

## OBEDIENCE

We should not care to have any dealings with a man who made no profession of being guided by principles of any kind. In point of fact we rarely, if ever, encounter such an individual. On the other hand, we very often find that a man whose conduct is vile, will make the most exalted claims as to the principles by which he is guided. We have heard a drunken man hiccoughing out a recital of his principles for the admiration of his friends. One who is engaged in a fraud will gain the confidence of his victims by similar but more skilful talk. It is not in the profession but in the application of principles that we fail so deplorably. We may understand what is required, but we do not obey.

There are two main causes for this failure: the desires of human flesh, and the weakness of human understanding. Usually both causes are operative in the repudiation of principles, but they apply in varying degree. In the extreme case of a man who only professes principles of righteousness in order to deceive his victims, the first-named cause is all-sufficient. It is useless, even worse than useless, to speak of principles to such a man. Our survey of the guiding lights can only be of service to those who honestly desire to do right, but whose understanding and memory are impaired by fleshly feeling with the result that in greater or less degree they fail in practice.

The need for a survey of both major and minor principles becomes evident when we begin to examine this first principle of obedience to God. Every Christian will recognise the supreme importance of this principle, and there is a sense in which it covers all others. If all realise that they must obey God, and if obedience covers all the virtues, it may be asked where is the need for further preaching to people so fully converted? The answer can be seen in the sin and turmoil,

hatred and strife so evident in Christian communities throughout the world. It is clear that the acknowledgement of a major principle of life does not ensure the recognition of all its implications, far less the application of all its obligations. We may assuredly all benefit by making a thorough survey of the entire field, trying to find the right rules to fit our circumstances and to enable us to render obedience according to our professions.

First it may be possible to suggest some helpful thoughts directly in connection with the master principle of obedience to God. In many parts of Scripture it is stated that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom". The preacher suggested that even the end of wisdom was not far removed. He says, "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."

The accuracy of this ancient saying has been called in question in these modern days. The need for obedience to God has not been disputed. No one would be so foolish as to deny that if God has commanded, He must be obeyed. It is the fear of God that has been condemned and called unnecessary. Perhaps critics who have thus spoken have unwittingly thrown light upon the failure of men to render obedience. We may find that in dealing with this outspoken modern objection to the fear of God, we light the path toward a fuller understanding of how to obey.

The truth is that those who object to the idea of fearing God are taking the word in the wrong sense. There are different kinds of fear, as we recognise even in human relationships. There is a fear which is akin to hatred, and there is a fear which is the direct effect of love. Scripture tells us that "fear hath torment", and that "perfect love casteth out fear". We cannot suppose that perfect love will cast out that which is the beginning of wisdom. If anyone would suggest that the New Testament presents a different idea, and that the objection is to the Old Testament idea of fearing God, we would invite attention to some passages of Old Testament Scriptures which may convince that the understanding of the subject has been inadequate.

In Psalm 130 we find these words: "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who should stand? But there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared". If we were to take the word in this passage in the sense in which it is generally understood the statement would be unintelligible. There would be more reason for fear in this sense if God were relentless and unforgiving. The association of ideas in this Psalm reveals another meaning of the word. It is a sense of reverence and awe in the presence of a great God who is merciful. It arises from the realisation of the wonderful fact that the Almighty mysteriously loves us.

It is interesting to note that more than one word is rendered "fear" in the Old Testament Scriptures. The student who cares to investigate will find that the word used in connection with the fear of God is not the same as the one usually employed to describe the fear of man. It means a reverential fear which impels us to draw nearer instead of a resentful fear which bids us flee away. An examination of original words will thus confirm the impression that we should draw from a careful study of our ordinary English version.

There are two other statements of Scripture to which we should like to draw attention in this connection. For the first of these thoughts we can take either Psalm 81 or Isaiah 48. The same idea is expressed in these two passages. "O that my people had hearkened unto me and Israel had walked in my ways." This clearly indicates a freedom for the human will. Man is free to stand or free to fall, though the fall involves a choice counter to God's desires.

The second passage that we desire to quote presents the same thought in a more startling form and with the addition of a new idea. It is in the sixty-third chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, a rather terrible chapter which is perhaps not much read. After a description of divine judgement when the day of vengeance and the year of the redeemed has come, the prophet represents God as saying, "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them and carried them all the days of old".

We surely cannot deny that this presents a very wonderful thought. It is not out of harmony with the general trend of Old Testament Scripture. Even when the prophets described the most terrible events, they insisted on the truth that God is merciful and compassionate. God is continually represented as a Father to those who revere Him. Everyone remembers that passage in Psalm 103: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pities them that fear him". It is only a step further to be assured that God can be pained by the failures and the afflictions of the men and women He has called into being, and whose characters are being moulded in this world of toil.

We believe that if a thorough test could be made it would disclose a startling fact in connection with this subject. It would be found that without any knowledge of the original words, even children would grasp this idea of the fear of God immediately, if only they had been granted the blessing of a good father. Reverence and love carry with them a certain kind of fear. It is the fear of disappointing or grieving, and it is ten times more potent than the fear of the rod.

All intelligent people will agree that a wilfully disobedient child presents a hateful spectacle. We have often heard that horrible, whining expostulation, "No, I don't want to". We have seen that satanic obstructiveness and the alert watch for signs of parental weakness. We have observed the animal determination which is fostered by its own success, and we need no further lesson to demonstrate the fact that obedience to properly constituted authority is a first principle of wisdom. If, however, we should seek for further evidence, we can find it in pleasanter positive form by observing a well-trained child. Healthy, happy, high-spirited but obedient, it may be often making a virtue of necessity, but none the less engaging on that account. "I would like to take the forbidden course", thinks the well-trained little boy, "but it would pain mother if I did, so I will not think of it." It is no longer the thought, "Father will pain me", although perhaps in the earliest stages he had to learn in this primitive manner. He has reached the higher stage now when he can recognise the legitimate and reasonable claims of proper authority, and can be ruled by love. Such a child will understand the statement that the great Father above

is loving and merciful and forgiving that He also may be feared. It will seem a truism rather than a paradox. The child may understand, more readily than some grown up people, how often a wise parent may find it necessary to deny his children's desires and cause them grief and disappointment without suggesting the slightest cause for believing that love has failed. The child cannot see far beyond the present, but if well trained he is wise enough to recognise that the father's eyes are more penetrating.

Here, then, arising from our consideration of the modern rebellion against the idea of fearing God, we may find a very helpful thought for our continual guidance in the application of this principle of obedience. It shall not be an effort to avoid any cause of divine anger, ruled by the fear of punishment; it shall be a continual effort to be a cause of divine pleasure, ruled by love. We recognise that God has a purpose with mankind; that through no virtue or wisdom of our own we have come within the scope of that purpose; that if we fear God in the true sense of the word He will care for us, and with this thought in mind we will at least try not to grieve Him.

Here as is so often found when we reason in such a manner, a passage from the New Testament flashes into the mind to put the finishing touch to the argument. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4). There is nothing in the least degree fanatical or suggestive of religious mania in this idea of a daily and continual effort to please God. It is essentially the idea of a sober and sound mind. Fanaticism comes when men fancy that God is only to be found in one place or in connection with one subject. When we recognise the simple truth that for the Christian the law of God enters into everything, we recognise that the true son of God is the one who goes blithely all the day, neither terror-stricken nor of doubtful mind, but endeavouring to live in this sin-blighted world as God would have him live. He knows that he has often sinned through the weakness of human flesh, but he also knows that there is forgiveness with God, that He may be feared as the all-wise and loving Father.

There is no possibility of compromise with this principle of reverence and obedience. We must recognise the claim of the Creator to be obeyed, and we must put forth our best efforts to apply the principle or we are no children of His. It is indeed reasonable, and we might venture to say inevitable that continuance of life should be made dependent on obedience to the Life-Giver. This has not been a popular doctrine with men, but it is unquestionably the teaching of the Bible. Sin is the transgression of divine law, and death is the wage of sin. Eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ (Rom. 6 : 23). It would be a tragedy if there could be any immortal rebels against God. We may be thankful that this fundamental law which is conspicuous in every part of Scripture renders such a tragedy impossible. Death has always been the reasonable penalty for disobedience to God. It requires no further effort of divine energy to ensure that men unfit to live shall "sleep a perpetual sleep and not wake" (Jer. 51 : 57). We already have the "sentence of death in ourselves". Rather does it require an application of divine energy to restore from *Sheol* those who from the divine point of view are worth restoring. Even this will present no difficulty to God, and the thought is really no more difficult or mysterious to us than many of the commonplace facts of everyday life. We have become accustomed to the fact of sound being disintegrated, whirled through the ether with the speed of light, and then turned back again into the original sound. Why should it seem incredible that God can take human personalities in the grip of His all-pervading spirit, and passing them through both time and space, restore them as He thinks fit? A man consists of a physical organism, which comes from the dust but was fashioned by the Creator, a will, an intellect, a plane of consciousness and life. Beyond this his individuality is the sum total of his mental impressions. Inasmuch as all that a man does or says or thinks is wrought in this all-pervading spirit of God—that in Him "we live and move and have our being"—where is the difficulty in apprehending the truth that God can restore men who lived even ages ago? This is surely what is meant by the book of remembrance and book of life of which we read in Scripture (Mal. 3 : 16; Dan. 12 : 1; Rev. 20 : 12). A willing obedience is the obvious and reasonable

prerequisite for the life of the age to come. The forgetful disobedience of which we are all guilty, makes us dependent on God's mercy. A purposeful or even a careless disobedience would assuredly make us objects of displeasure and quite unfit for eternal life.

It is probable that many readers will assent so fully to these propositions that they may feel to be in no need of the exhortation. Some may feel that nothing can make them realise the need for obeying God more fully than they apprehend it already. Yet if our statement in the previous paragraph is admitted, surely something is needed to guard against that forgetful disobedience that is so common. We think that there are certain minor principles for the regulation of human conduct that will greatly help toward the desired end.

There are some men, for instance, who would be martyred rather than disobey certain commands of the Christian religion, yet in regard to other equally important precepts they are woefully disobedient. They are unbalanced, or, as the Scriptures put it, "unstable". Perhaps a careful consideration of the principle of balance may be helpful to us all in this greater matter of obedience.

We may observe that other men who are genuinely anxious to obey and who dimly recognise that there is much positive work for them to do, yet somehow never get a start on it. We suggest that a consideration of the limited objective, which is another of our minor principles, will help them to find the first near duty and get to grips with it. Many of the minor principles when they are examined in their turn may throw a light on the path of all who desire light.

For the moment, in dealing with this great principle of obedience to God, we only wish to emphasise this idea of the reverential fear suggested by the Psalmist. Let the obedience be a desire to please ruled by love. The Christian has an advantage in this matter such as was impossible even for the Jews in Old Testament times. He is able to follow the anointed of God, (Emmanuel), the perfect Son, who, in human nature, has revealed the Father to us. The Lord Jesus is the Word of God, not written and engraven on stone, but in a human character. It is easier to grasp the thought we have expressed

if we think of Jesus as our Master. Without much difficulty our imagination can picture him as with us now. We can understand that he might be afflicted in the affliction of his disciples. We can imagine him saying, "I have prayed for thee . . ." as he once said to Simon Peter. We can almost see the expression in his eyes as he turns to look on a disciple who has just denied him. He promised that by the power of the Spirit given to him without measure, he would be present with all who gathered together in his name. If we are really Christians we believe this promise. Surely it can furnish a mental picture that will enable us to develop the right kind of obedience. Let us not grieve Christ.

To conclude this chapter we will quote in full the passage in which the Apostle uses the remarkable words already cited, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God". The context may yield a little more light, and show us both positive and negative sides of the matter.

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

5  
"ABOVE ALL"  
THE SHIELD OF FAITH  
WHEREBY YE MAY  
BE ABLE TO QUENCH ALL  
THE FIERY DARTS OF THE WICKED.  
FAITH

We once heard of a schoolboy who defined faith as "that quality which enables you to believe what you know isn't true". It is probable that the saying was invented by a satirist less innocent than the boy to whom it was attributed, but whatever the intention may have been, the definition only hits off the attitude of people whose understanding of the subject is quite inadequate.

It is a complete mistake to regard faith as something peculiar to religion and divorced from reason. Faith is a great and necessary quality in all the relations of life, and it should always be based on reason. He would be a pitiable man who could not place any confidence in the integrity of his friends. He would be a foolish man who reposed faith in all friendly persons without any reason. He is a more fortunate and a wiser man, who, having seen good reason to believe that his friend is true, places confidence in the friendship and is not disturbed by every temporary appearance suggestive of doubt.

In the business world faith is continually needed, for confidence, which simply means "with faith", is recognised as the basis of all satisfactory trading. It is not true business faith when a man embarks on wild and unreasonable adventures with an airy assumption that somehow his schemes are sure to prosper. That is not faith, it is an inebriated optimism. It is not faith when a man refuses to start any business enterprise until he can be absolutely certain of success. Neither is it good business. It is rather sterility, for it is certain that such a faithless one will never accomplish anything. We once heard a description of such a man: "He will put down a sovereign if he is dead certain to pick up two, but even then he wants to pick the two up before he puts the one down." Such a man will never be a leader in constructive work.

True faith is a reasonable conviction regarding things unseen as yet but which we hope to see eventually. When properly founded and well developed, it is a quality that will enable a man to hold on to his reasonable conviction though temporary appearances may seem against it. It is a splendid test for the making and proving of men even in the ordinary development of human life; much more is the Christian principle of faith a means for making Christian character.

It is because of its power in this direction that we need to give faith a prominent position here. The first step of faith is on the threshold of Christianity. It is mentioned by the Apostle in connection with the first principles of the Oracles of God, which we are supposed to have mastered. Faith is such a big subject, however, that it attends our steps all through life, and perhaps more than anything else will determine the degree of effort we put into the application of other principles.

Sometimes students of the Bible form the opinion that in olden time men were given much better reason for faith than is granted to us now. They were visited by angels, miracles were wrought on their behalf, and they witnessed signs and wonders such as are never seen in these days. It is natural on first thoughts to suppose that faith would be very easy with such helps. Then, when we read of the most complete failure on the part of those so highly privileged, it is equally natural for superficial students to wonder whether men could possibly be so faithless if they had indeed witnessed such signs and wonders as those recorded.

The difficulty arises from a failure to recognise the difference made by environment and training. A man who is nearly blind needs a very distinct object to enable him to see at all. The same rule applies to mental sight, which varies not only as between individuals but also in a comparison of different nations and different ages. If all the facts are taken into consideration, it will be found that the men who witnessed the power of God in Egypt and at Sinai, had no real advantage in the matter of a reasonable basis for faith over those who have seen the extraordinary developments of these latter days. If we can realise their limitations we shall be able to under-

stand their faithlessness even after all those manifestations of divine power.

In our days we have come to recognise that the only possible conception of God is as the Creator with unlimited knowledge and power. No Christian could possibly doubt the power of God to fulfil all His promises. The test for modern faith lies in the question, "Has He really promised?" We might be inclined to doubt the evidence of our eyes and ears if an Angel appeared to us in immortal glory to give us a command from God, but we should never doubt that if our senses told the truth and that such a being had indeed promised, he would also perform. The Israelites who came out of Egypt (had been trained very differently.) It was an age of superstition, with gods many and lords many—gods of the hills and of the valleys, with limited territory and limited power. The children of Israel needed many lessons before they could learn that the God who had spoken to them was supreme. They never doubted that a superhuman being had spoken to them, but when He was silent for a time, they began to doubt His promises. Modern men are fully ready to believe that if the Creator notices them at all His intentions are benevolent. Indeed, they go to an unjustifiable extreme in assuming that they are bound to be objects of His regard. When subject to trial, however, they doubt whether God ever has spoken to man—sometimes doubt even the very existence of a personal Creator. They sometimes incline to make matter the parent of mentality, which assuredly means that the greater is caused by the less. It makes the stream rise higher than its fount. This is a rebellion against the light quite as stiff-necked as that of the rebels who wore out the patience of Moses.

To summarise the difference between ancient and modern doubt, we may suggest that in olden time men saw superhuman beings in every shadow, and so in time of trial they supposed that their God was only one of the many. In modern days men seek a prosaic and ordinary explanation for everything, and so in time of trial (even God is explained away.) This tendency was typified by the materialistic genius who said, "The brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile". Anyone who can regard this as an adequate explanation of human



mentality must have rather bilious thoughts. After such an effort to explain the mind of man, we need not be surprised at men of this type going to any lengths rather than allow a belief in the active presence of a superhuman power in the affairs of men.

If we pursue the comparison between ancient and modern times a little further, we shall find other points of similarity in the trial of faith. Every intelligent reader of Scripture knows that there were times when "the word of God was precious and there was no open vision". When we read a brief biography of a Bible character, it may seem at first sight that he was waited upon by angels at every turn. A more intelligent perusal may reveal that he had to endure many years of trial before the privilege was granted at all. If such a man was not faithful in the days of testing, the more definite revelation was either withheld from him, or else it came as an unwelcome reminder of neglect. Would it be reasonable for a Christian in these days to make peevish complaint that nothing came to strengthen his faith while he remained passive and idle? Does he expect to find without seeking? To see the hand of God without looking for it? To be a personality pleasing to the Creator without any personal effort? Whatever is there in Scripture, reason, or common sense to suggest such thoughts?

As a matter of fact there is nothing extraordinary or contrary to human ideas in the trial of faith. When the exiled prince comes back to his kingdom with supreme power to take the government of the country into his hands, whom will he account fit to be his friends and assistants? Surely those who have believed in him even in the day of weakness and have worked for him in his absence—those who have understood his ideals and his objects, and have tried to keep themselves fully informed as to his intentions. In other words, those who have had faith in him and have been willing to risk some temporal disadvantages in attestation of their faith.

The Apostle Paul lays down a principle in connection with the development of faith. He says, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Many hearers of the Word have found this statement profoundly

true in their own experience. It is a knowledge which cannot be passed on to others except by a very inadequate form of words feebly pointing the way. Perhaps an illustration will assist a little.

Not long ago we read some very interesting confessions of a lady physician regarding her appreciation of music. She evidently possessed a natural capacity for understanding good music, but her ear was quite untrained and her love for the art had not been developed. The truth was that, like the great majority of people—in England at all events—she had never really listened. There came a day when she attended a concert with no expectation of anything more than a very fleeting and superficial enjoyment. For some reason her attention was captured, and for the first time in her life she really listened to a great tone poem. It seemed to her that a magic door had been opened, and she entered a new world of which she had no previous knowledge, the world of tone poetry. Others have had similar experience earlier in life, while yet others will never have it early or late. Some people probably lack the capacity to pass through this doorway, but many more fail to reach it simply because they never try. If any desire to make the attempt, there is a simple rule that might be laid down as a principle, only it seems too obvious. It is merely that if we want to hear we must listen. We must listen not merely with the ears, but with the understanding also. We hear the symphony bar by bar, and then if we have understood it the complete work can be appreciated in the mind. Not merely the momentary effect on the ear, but the whole creation, with its contrasted themes, its development of musical ideas, its counterpoint, its modulation, its changing mode and its expression of feeling. Any real lover of music will appreciate this distinction between the appreciation of a momentary tuneful effect and the apprehension of a complete and well-developed work. He will also realise the significance of the apparent truism that if we want to hear we must listen. The same rule applies to the magic world of Christian faith. Faith comes through hearing the Word of God, and if we want to hear we must listen.

Just as the distant lights may seem very dim at the beginning of the journey, so the first sounds that we hear may fail to

not just the miracles 33

AS BEAUTIFUL MOMENTS BUT THE COMPLETE GLORY OF  
GOD - IN SYMPHONY COMPLETE

impress us. If we continue to listen, however, we gradually become conscious (of the life, power) and profound significance of that which at first seemed meaningless and dead. We come to recognise the (leading themes) through all their transformations; we appreciate their development and their harmonious intertwining. At last it becomes clear to us that the many Prophets and Apostles working over a period of more than a (thousand years) were like the musicians in an orchestra performing a work in which each is intent on his own part, but (conducted by a greater) than they, and (composed by One greater still).

This is the rule of Christian faith. A man's attention may be arrested by an argument, but argument can rarely accomplish more than this. He may be induced to listen and hear the Word of God. Then faith may develop, rule his actions, form his character, stimulate every virtue, and finally by God's grace make him fit for the inheritance of the saints in light.

St. Cyprianus ad Iulianum - De Spectaculis

## \* ROYAL LAW

6

## LOVE

It is recognised by all students of the New Testament that the word rendered "charity" in the Authorised Version would be better translated "love". The English words have both been spoilt by improper use, but love is still able to express the right idea to the minds of most students. This principle of love is continually emphasised in all parts of Scripture. \* The love of God and the love of one's neighbour constituted the foundation of the Mosaic law. Christ said that (all the law) and (the prophets) were founded upon this fundamental (law of love). He emphasised this principle in his teaching regarding God, in his instructions to his disciples as to their conduct towards each other, and in his sacrifice. We need not be surprised, therefore, to find the subject so much to the front in the writings of the Apostles. We can hardly turn to any part of the New Testament without finding some reference to it, and in some passages it is emphasised by the use of language which almost seems extreme. The best known illustration of this is (1 Corinthians 13), where the Apostle says that though a man possesses all other spiritual qualifications— a (faith) to move mountains, a (generosity) that will part with all his goods to feed the poor, and such steadfastness that he will give his body to be burned—he is still of no value to GOD in the (absence of love). Then the Apostle proceeds to give a definition of what he means by the word. Love must be patient, long-suffering, enduring, thinking no evil, never proud, always kind, never rejoicing in the contemplation of evil, always rejoicing in the truth. This is the kind of love that is absolutely necessary if we are to please God.

Earnest people have often experienced difficulty in grasping this principle, and have suffered much mental torment in the effort (to see the path of duty clearly) or if the path seems clear, to find a means of walking along it. How can we love God in

Sin Ber Metcalf

any ordinary sense of the word, or even according to the definition just cited?) How can we love men and women who do not appeal to us, or who seem definitely unlovely? It is easy to love those who are kind to us and treat us fairly, but that is only normal human feeling and counts for little in the matter of Christian merit. We are required to extend our love on the one hand to the Creator who is unseen and so completely superior even to our greatest effort of imagination that He seems far from us, and on the other hand to men and women who are unattractive, ignoble, and possibly even repulsive. How can we force a feeling which does not seem amenable to force along two such different and difficult paths?

We would not suggest that love can be forced; it is, perhaps, unwise even to try. It is so much better to lead it, and for that the way is always open. Even in our ordinary use of the word we recognise that there are differences of quality as well as differences of degree. We experience no sense of incongruity in using the same word to describe various forms of affection, for we realise a certain essential unity in spite of the differences. We may find some difficulty in attempting to explain the basis of love on the different planes. There are some human qualities and experiences that seem perfectly natural and simple until we try to explain them, and then they become suddenly mysterious. If, however, we can in some measure understand the basis of the different kinds of natural love, we may be able to find our way towards the difficult heights of Christian ideals.

Take the love between husband and wife, the love of parents for their children, and the love of children for their parents. Let the love in each case be as perfect as anything human can ever be, and we realise that love is certainly the right word, although on three very different planes. We may suggest that the ideal love between husband and wife is based upon a perfect suitability of companionship, moral, mental and physical. The love of a parent for a child is based upon a tender pity and sympathy coupled with the idea of physical oneness and continuity of stock. The love of a child for the parent is reciprocal. We cannot believe that any child would

develop a very real love for a parent who was entirely cold and indifferent.

This may recall to mind a passage of Scripture to enable us to surmount one of the main difficulties: "We love him because he first loved us". This is the only basis for us to build upon for the first of the two great commands. We cannot love an abstraction. We cannot find any basis for loving God if we are like spoiled children, well fed, but never seeing or hearing or caring anything of the father who provides; or even on the spiritual plane, if our spiritual hunger is that of a babe crying to be fed, but never realising the personality and the objects of the One who answers the inarticulate cry. The moment we realise the fact that God in love for humanity has put wonderful possibilities before us, it becomes possible for us to love God. The farther we advance from the unreasoning infant stage, the better shall we comprehend the greatness of God's mercy, and the more fully shall we be able to reciprocate the love that He reveals to us.

In the same manner the tender sympathy of parental love may be extended beyond the family circle to other children, even though some of them are backward and troublesome. We must not expect anything from them at first, not even gratitude, but it is just possible to love them, even as God loves us.

We must here emphasise a truth which is implied in the Bible, although not definitely stated. It is the strange fact that in the expression of our feelings, cause and effect are not nearly as clearly defined as men have supposed. That which we have regarded as quite definitely an effect may also be a cause. In some matters this truth has been definitely established. A smile is an effect of a feeling of pleasure; a laugh is an effect of a feeling of amusement; but both these effects may act as causes. Men have often forced themselves to smile, although feeling sad and depressed. The effect of the effort has been a feeling of relief and uplifting. If the sadness was the effect of a real and enduring affliction, the depression returns again, but if it was merely physical in its origin or caused by a minor trouble which can be forgotten, the forced smile may effect a permanent cure.

\* RETURN AGAIN - COME BACK TO HIM - LOVE HIM WITH LOVE

It is the same with other feelings. The forced expression of that which has been regarded solely as an effect will stimulate that which has been regarded solely as a cause. It is not merely the wrath of the hearer that is turned away by a soft answer.

The effect is, perhaps, even greater on the wrath of the speaker. Many a man who has accepted Christ and has made a genuine effort to obey, has been suddenly confronted by circumstances arousing all the evil in his nature. The instinct has been to strike—by words if not with physical violence. A sense of duty has enabled him to suppress the natural tendency, and has found for him the gentle answer. The effect has been almost magical in the evaporation of anger, the passing of all desire to retaliate, and the triumph of a feeling at least akin to love even for those who through the pitiful weakness of human nature have been unjust, unkind, or unfair.

A cynical critic might suggest that if love is the supreme virtue by which our Christianity must be tested; if apart from it all other virtues are "like sounding brass and tinkling cymbal"; and if the principle of love properly applied will have the effect here described—then we must conclude that genuine Christians are very rare. This may seem a dreadful idea, and yet we know of no reason for repudiating the suggestion. There is nothing in the New Testament to indicate that the followers of Christ would be numerous. Many passages, such as Matthew 7: 13, 14, clearly teach that there would only be few. It is perfectly natural for men to want to have the most majestic character of all time on their side, even if they are unprepared to make any effort to obey him. Even with those who genuinely strive to be his disciples, there is a natural tendency to mould his teaching to their own minds instead of moulding their minds to his teaching. Men often make similar attempts with the laws of the land in which they live, although rulers and judges and officers are on the spot to rebuke and punish such individuals. With the King and Law-Giver absent, with no danger of immediate punishment, and with many influences tending in a contrary direction, there need be no wonder that the laws of Christ are so often unheeded. Men may find and obey the first principles of Christian faith, and then flout the supreme law of love.

\* Others often develop a "broadminded toleration" as they would call it, which surrenders everything that is distinctly Christian. They love the sinner so much that they join in the sin. In all the errors, self-deception plays a large part. In the strife of tongues men give way to their resentful feelings against those who oppose them; they misrepresent, they "watch for iniquity", they "lay snares", they "make a man an offender for a word" (Isa. 29: 21). They condemn in strong language; and give blow for blow; or even blow in response to the gentle, guiding touch. Yet this is all cloaked by a self-deceptive zeal for truth.

On the other hand, men who are disgusted with such blatant diabolism will often go to the opposite extreme. As religious discussion so often leads to such ugly strife and bitterness, they will have none of it. The result is that some of the most important issues of life are ignored for fear of unpleasant discussion which might arise if any attempt were made to grapple with the facts. The Apostle's definition of love condemns both extremes. (The zealous debaters are not long-suffering and kind, and they are usually ready to rejoice in iniquity if they can find it in those who oppose them. On the other hand, those who shirk the issue certainly do not rejoice in the truth.) They hide truth for the sake of peace. They are not really long-suffering; rather are they skilful in avoiding the need for this virtue; like the father who boasts that he is never impatient with his children, the real reason for his reputed patience being that someone else has to keep them out of his way. In a final analysis, it has to be admitted that the weak, ultra-tolerant attitude is not even kind. It is clearly cruel to "rush at a benighted man and give him two black eyes for being blind", but it may be still worse cruelty to encourage him to walk blindly forward to the pit, even if you utter a final benediction as he tumbles over the edge.

Is it not possible to be firm yet gentle, uncompromising but courteous, strong but kind? Is it not possible to discuss an important subject without heat? To be fair even when we cannot approve, to help even if we are not helped, and to be just although not treated with justice? Is it not possible to love the sinner however hateful his error, and find some pity

in our hearts for the man who blindly opposes God even if he also opposes us?

To all these questions the answer is, "Yes; it is possible, but it is difficult". The difficulty does not arise from any insuperable obstacles in the course we are required to take, and certainly not because obedience in this matter causes us to suffer. An application of the principle of love will save us from more suffering than it will ever bring to us. The main difficulty arises from pride. "Love is not puffed up", and human beings are. If we can banish all forms of pride with all its disguises, we may be able properly to apply this great principle of love apart from which all other virtues are unprofitable.

We can transfer our human ideals on to the spiritual plane. Based on reciprocation we may be able to extend filial affection from the human field to the divine, and with growing knowledge of God's purpose be able to develop a real love for the Father (who has first loved us). Based on tender pity for the weak and helpless we may endeavour to render the deeds of love to men and women who in themselves are unattractive, and then this practical expression of love will encourage the feeling; and as in our work for our children, the more we do for them the better we shall love them.

Finally, we may be so prepared morally and mentally that it will only need the physical change to initiate us into the great Christian "mystery" of immortal love and perfect companionship (based on suitability).

## SERVICE

It may be argued that the Christian principle of service is included in the subject of love; nevertheless there is good reason for treating service as a separate principle. It furnishes the best means for giving love expression, and as suggested in the previous chapter, it may lead the way to an extension of love that has seemed almost impossible.

There is another still stronger reason for giving this subject special attention. Service has been such a favourite word during the last few years, and whenever a word is much used it is liable to be spoilt. When all are called "comrades", those who are comrades in fact would like to find another name. Love, fellowship, charity, and many other words have been spoilt in their turn, and we may well have grave fears for the word "service". High ideals have been put before English-speaking people during the last few years, and among them the ideal of service has been greatly assisted to favour by the discovery that it frequently has a commercial value. Thoughts on such a subject may have a changed accent which makes them fundamentally different. Thus business men in these days may speak of Love, Service and Duty, when they only think of L.S.D.

The wrong accent sometimes begins with the interpretation of Christ's famous words: "If any would be great, let him be the servant of all." This has been taken too much in the sense of a recipe for achieving success. The maxim has its value even here. An enlightened selfishness, as it has been called, is better than mere animal greed, and one who honestly attempts to serve, even though prompted solely by the hope of gain, is better than one who makes no attempt to serve at all. This, however, does not present the full idea or even the greater part of it. There is such a difference between the little man who, with enlightened selfishness, serves because he

wants to become great, and the one who, with enlightened self-sacrifice, served because he was great.

We have seen glaring contrasts even on a lower plane. One with ostentatious service is obviously seeking position and influence. Another with unobtrusive and humble service is only expressing love. That is the greater kind of service, and we would like to preserve from vulgar abuse a word meaning so much.

The idea of service reminds us of the maxim: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." This might almost be given a place to itself as a great principle of Christian conduct. It would transform life if all sought this greater blessedness. It does not merely mean gifts of material value; that is only a very small part of the subject. In service of all kinds—in love, sympathy, encouragement, kindness, patience, the helpful word and deed—it is more blessed to give than to receive. We may add that he who gives in these things will also receive: "Good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over", for in mental, moral and spiritual wealth there need be no waste and no exhaustion.

What a pitiful community it would be if, on the other hand, all concentrated attention on receiving, all thinking of how much they could get out of the community instead of how much they could give! All would be full of complaint for none would be satisfied.

In some ways it is very easy to give. The Lord Jesus said: "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled". We may observe the interesting and significant fact that in a very real sense they give before receiving. When a speaker rises to administer the Word to his brethren and sisters in Christ, their very best gift to him is the attentive sympathy that arises from a hunger and thirst for spiritual food. There is service even in this. If we may be pardoned for such an apparent perversion of the poet's words, we may state with sincerity and feeling that they also serve who only sit and listen, if their listening is intent and evident.

Another important fact to note in connection with service is that, on the principle of the greater serving the less, we should make generous allowance for those we serve, even

though they are unthankful, or stupid, or obstinate. Men who have quite a good opinion of their own abilities often complain that they are not understood, and that proper allowance is not made for their peculiar difficulties. They do not realise that they are putting themselves in a very inferior position by such petulant complaints. We should think the father of a family a pitifully comical little figure if he complained that his children did not understand him and were not fair to him. Why should he expect them to understand him or to treat him fairly? The real question is, Does he treat them fairly and does he understand them? The better intellect should understand the less, and not expect to be understood. The strong should bear the infirmities of the weak, making allowances without expecting any in return. Where no principle is involved the strong should be prepared to give way, for only they can yield without the fear of appearing weak. Incidentally we may remark that this readiness to yield in unimportant matters often helps to secure agreement when a vital issue arises. If a man always wants his own way, he will sooner or later find someone to resist him, and the resistance will probably be as obstinate and unreasoning as that which provokes it. If on the other hand a strong man yields good-humouredly when he can, his rare manifestation of determination will carry weight. It is felt instinctively that his inflexibility is not merely a determination to have his own way, but a stand for that which he confidently judges to be right. His firm decision is respected just because it is rarely given and never weighted by passion, greed, or sheer obstinacy on the lines of "what I have said, I have said".

\* The strong man who grasps this idea of Christian service makes allowance for every kind of weakness in those whom he seeks to help, just as a wise father will make allowances for his children, and still more for the friends of his children— young people who may need his assistance but do not recognise his authority.

There is another phase of this subject, perhaps still more important, for it presents a truth so rarely understood. Just as the merchant may talk of service when his mind is really fixed on profit, so it is possible for one to be equally faulty as

a servant through the love of less tangible rewards than money. The love of power, prominence, and praise, or the mere love of self-expression, may make a tremendous appeal to a man. There are usually plenty of candidates for all positions of prominence, even though hard work may be involved and no tangible rewards. The ideal of service will cast a disguising cloak over all these unworthy ambitions, so that the workers can easily deceive themselves; and the poverty of their foundations is only revealed by the test of time.

Perhaps a reader may protest against these words, and ask, Where is the evil in these ambitions, surely normal in themselves and yielding good service to others? The answer to this is that it depends on the plane of our thoughts as to whether there is harm in such ambitions. On the purely business plane we expect a man to be keen after money, and as long as he tries to give value for money we do not blame him. We expect the politician or journalist to seek fame and influence, and so long as his methods are not too outrageous we tolerate him without complaint. We expect the poet and the musician, if they have real genius, to express themselves without much caring for anyone's opinions. We welcome this self-expression unless it is insufferable. Christian service is on a higher plane, however. It must not only rise superior to the love of money and of the praise of men, it must conquer self as well. This is the truth we desire especially to emphasise here, just because it is so rarely seen. It is good advice to a preacher of the Gospel to say, "Be yourself and do not try to imitate anyone else's style", but it should be understood that self must be given in wholehearted surrender to Christian service.

How often promising young men fail in this! One has good ideas, powerful speech, and readiness to work. He seeks no tangible, temporal rewards, and is, perhaps, as free as mortals can be from the desire for fame and the praise of men. He examines his motives and feels that he is void of offence in all these matters of human infirmity that have spoiled the work of so many preachers. Yet there is a terrible defect in his equipment of which he may become conscious as soon as the thought is mentioned to him. He seeks to express himself, and that, while quite appropriate for the artist, poet, or

musician, is not good enough for the Christian minister. He must not think of that which will best express his own individuality but of that which will most help others. If his personality is weak, an attempt to assert it only leads to failure. If his personality is strong, it will be quite strong enough even when subdued under the influence of a passionate desire to render true service after the example of Christ.

Christ, of whom it was prophesied that "a bruised reed shall he not break, and dimly burning flax shall he not quench"; who came to seek and save that which was lost; who gave his life for men who were unrighteous and unthankful, and who continue to this day, with their vanity and self-expression, breaking the bruised reeds and quenching the smoking flax, often claiming to do such destructive work in his name—Christ came not to do his own will but the will of the One who sent him. In his service to humanity he surrendered himself entirely to God, and the result of this self-effacement was a human personality so strong and distinctive that it shines through history with a lustre that makes the individualism of self-expressing men look dull and dirty.

To the earnest young speaker who desires to serve with his tongue we would say therefore, See to it that you have the right ideal of Christian service. You have perhaps rooted out the love of money and power and of merely human praise; you must cut out the love of self-expression too. Look at the men and women in front of you, all human and weak like yourself and greatly needing help. You may have some striking thoughts and clever phrases in mind that would well express your personality, but will they help those "other sheep", for whom the Saviour prayed? In finding the thoughts and words that will most help them you will have found the true path of Christian service; and Christ will take care of your personality.

## THE GOLDEN RULE

THE command, "Do unto others as ye would that they should do to you"—the Golden Rule, as it has been called—furnishes an excellent illustration of the way in which a minor principle, or rule of life, may assist in the application of one of the first principles of Christian conduct. The Golden Rule is, of course, an adjunct to the principle of love. It is a most practical application of that principle which at once points the way for us if we feel doubtful how we can love our fellow man. It is a much better rule than the negative one attributed to a philosopher of the Far East: "Never treat others as you would not like them to treat you". It puts the emphasis on the positive side and, while it inevitably covers the negative idea, it goes further and with fuller meaning.

The Apostle Paul gives point to the same distinction when he speaks of the comprehensive bearing of the old law: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." He says: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Love, then, must certainly abstain from doing harm; but it will go further than this. It will actively seek to do good.

The word "neighbour" is significant in connection with this law. It indicates that our work is near to us, and this is a more important truth than is generally recognised. It is useless for men to dream of the great service they would render to men who are far removed from them, in circumstances that never arise. Near neighbours need their service, and the circumstances are always favourable. There is hardly a day that passes in the life of an ordinary man when opportunity fails to present itself for dealing with our neighbours as we would like them to deal with us. The Golden Rule is the most practical of all rules, the most helpful of lights in the darkness of this work-a-day world.

A normal man likes others to greet him cheerfully; to treat him fairly; to remember his peculiarities and make allowance for them; to be kind and considerate and polite; and to give him the fair deal, not only in the large issues of life, but even in the smallest of everyday affairs. He hates men to speak evil of him behind his back, or to put evil constructions on his innocent actions. He hates still more the innuendo and the sneer. He is cut and wounded by sarcasm or scornful speech, and he greatly resents that mild kind of misrepresentation which is so rife in all the disputes of this warring and arguing world.

What opportunities are presented here for the man who wants to follow Christ! Reflection on this matter might call to mind the words of Emerson: "Every Stoic was a Stoic, but throughout all Christendom where is your Christian?" We might almost be justified in traversing the ground again, affirming that the average man does all these objectionable things that we have mentioned. It is certain that very few attempt for the sake of others to be cheerful in adverse circumstances. Most people are prone to indulge in uncharitable conversation regarding absent ones. Many are habitually unkind and unjust in the smaller matters of life; while as for misrepresenting an opponent in an argument, there is probably not one man in a million who even attempts to be strictly fair when engaged in debate.

Another lesson comes out in connection with the word "neighbour". The Lord Jesus was often too subtle for the men of his day and sometimes it seems that even modern readers, with all their educational advantages, are unable to understand him. We have heard comments on the parable of the Good Samaritan which have indicated a failure to perceive the subtle rebuke behind the simple story.

It may be well to re-construct the scene by the power of imagination and to listen to the comments of the men who heard the words spoken. A lawyer asked a question with the object of putting the famous teacher to trial. "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" he asked. Perhaps there were some listeners ready to catch at any answer that they could denounce as blasphemous or revolutionary. He had told the disciples



and some of the Jews that they could only have eternal life through him. Would he venture openly to affirm such a doctrine to this lawyer? Jesus answered with greater subtlety on this occasion by putting a return question: "What is written in the law? How readest thou?"

The lawyer knew that Jesus had often pointed to the foundation principles of the law and the prophets. Any answer giving less than this foundation would have called forth other searching questions. The lawyer was wise enough to answer fully at once: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." Jesus replied: "Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live."

Sometimes the emphasis on words, the look of the speaker, and the whole circumstances in which a thought is presented, will make hearers realise a fulness of meaning never previously perceived. It was probably so on this occasion. Men might readily claim to love God, but what of the almost redundant use of words in the law to express fulness and completeness of affection? All the heart, soul, strength, and mind? A man might claim to love his neighbour, but not quite as much as he loved himself. There must indeed be something provocative of very searching thoughts in the mind of any intelligent Jew who can be induced to ponder deeply the significance of his wonderful law. It reveals superhuman wisdom; it offers such possibilities of approach to God and such assurances of divine benevolence; yet it curses all who come under it, for, "Cursed is the man who confirmeth not all the words of this covenant to do them".

Perhaps some who knew the lawyer would smile with cynical enjoyment of the hit his own question had provided. "This do, and thou shalt live", said the teacher, but what a change in the lawyer's character was needed before it could be said that he loved his neighbour as himself. Perhaps the incident suggested a contrast between the work of the carpenter-teacher who ministered to the common people and the attitude of the lawyers who despised them. We are told that the lawyer, "willing to justify himself", asked: "Who is

my neighbour?" Then doubtless the people would come crowding round as Christ began one of his parables. It was the simple parable of the Good Samaritan, now known all over the world. It was based according to the Master's custom on matters of common experience. It was nothing unusual for men who went down toward Jericho to fall among thieves; nothing unusual for professors of religion to pass by on the other side when a destitute and wounded man needed help and sympathy. It was happily not an unheard-of event for a stranger to take compassion on the wounded man and to render assistance both with money and labour. This was the story of the Good Samaritan. Christ asked who was neighbour to the one who fell among thieves? When they answered, "He that showed mercy on him", Jesus answered, "Go thou and do likewise".

Can we not imagine the conversation when Jesus and his disciples had passed on?

"Strange that he didn't really answer the question: Who is my neighbour? He only told us a simple story as an example of mercy and tells us to do likewise. It wasn't as subtle as his parables usually are." "Yes, he did answer the question," another might say: "the one who showed mercy was the real neighbour." "Then are we only to love those who treat us well? That sounds easy. It is not what he has taught at other times." Then one with keener wit breaks in with a snarl of anger: "I'll tell you what he means.. By the time his subtle blow penetrates your thick skulls, he is too far away for you to retaliate. He means that even the Samaritans are our neighbours." Then all turn to gaze after the retreating figure of the Teacher, with mingled feelings of resentment, anger, and admiration.

The Samaritans were neighbours in the most literal sense, but as for loving them, that seemed impossible. Christ loved them, and caused his disciples to marvel at the manner in which he spake to the woman at Jacob's well, and afterwards to others who came out to hear him. The Jews as a whole almost made it a part of their religion to hate the Samaritans; and if they were able to analyse their own feelings they would probably have to admit that the hatred was directly traceable to the

fact of their being such near neighbours. This is a common weakness of poor human nature. Those who are near but not quite with us arouse more bitterness of feeling than complete strangers. Then when such an evil feeling has been once started, the deceitful heart begins to build up fancies to justify the hatred, thus further traducing those who have already been wronged.

It is probable that the Lord would give us another setting for the parable if he were speaking to us personally. A Christian will, of course, never admit that he hates his brother, for he knows that such hatred would drag him down to eternal death. The facts are not altered, however, by re-naming them. There are millions of professing Christians who are bound by those dragging chains, call them by whatever name they may. They do not hate the men of distant lands who never cross their path, even though such men may be guilty of evil deeds. Their hatred is aroused by clashing interests or opinions or personalities with those who are near neighbours, but who do not agree with them. Unless we are much on our guard, there is a tendency to think that the man who is guilty of thwarting us could be guilty of anything. Christ presents a pleasanter picture of such a man performing a noble act, and he bids us contemplate that. Who is our neighbour? Well, let us think of just the man we would prefer to exclude from our thoughts and we shall probably have to admit that he is a neighbour, and according to the law of Christ we must love him.

The attitude of the Lord to the Samaritans furnishes a perfect example of what is required of a Christian. He spoke to the woman of Samaria kindly but faithfully. He told her that her people worshipped they knew not what, and that the time was imminent when the true worship would not be found either in Jerusalem or in Samaria. He told her that salvation was of the Jews. Yet with this plain speaking there was the kindness and gentleness that indicates the true love of humanity.

After all, we need not be surprised at this combination. Roughness and anger are often only the signs of a doubtful mind. If a Christian is "fully persuaded in his own mind",

he has no reason to be angry with the unfortunate people who cannot see the truth so clearly. If we try to apply the Golden Rule our course of duty is clear. We would like our superior in knowledge to treat us as Christ treated his disciples; not forcing lessons which are not essential for the moment and which we are not in a position to "bear" (see John 16:12); giving instruction that is necessary with the kindness of true love, and treating any failure to understand with patience. Let us, then, treat our inferior in knowledge after the same manner, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

There is much that might be written on this subject, but for the moment we must be content with one more point. It will be admitted by all thoughtful people that one of the commonest failings in Christendom has been the love of scandal. This evil is most conspicuous where there are high ideals. This seems incongruous, but it is perfectly natural. If men had no ideals and no standards of honourable conduct, it would be difficult even for the most evil-disposed persons to start a scandal about anyone. Conversely when ideals are high and it is hard for men to maintain in practice the standards that they recognise in theory, the way is open for slander of every kind. In every phase of life the evil is found. Every little community has its whispering gallery. Everyone who is at all prominent lives in a fierce light of inspection, many eyes "watching for iniquity", and many tongues ready to repeat and it maybe somewhat amplify any slanderous story that may be told. The mean and little mind finds much consolation in contemplating the supposed weakness of those who are more prominent in their little world. Often the stories may be true or have a basis of truth in them, for human nature at its best is faulty enough. Frequently, however, the stories are false, and much harm is wrought not only in the giving of pain to those who are slandered, not only in spoiling the effect of good work and sound instruction, but most of all in the effect on the minds of those who utter such slanders or listen to them.

Every Christian knows that this kind of talk is evil and condemned in strong language in the Bible. Many know that the very word rendered "devil" in the New Testament is also translated "slanderer". The Apostle said that the deacons'

wives must not be slanderers (devils) (1 Tim. 3 : 2). History reveals that his rule has often been broken.

All Christians would join in condemning this evil in the abstract, but it is so easy to transgress with complacent self-deception and without perceiving the harm that one does. "Of course, I don't know; I only repeat this exactly as it was told me." In this manner a slander-bearer will try to avoid responsibility while enjoying the work of spreading the spicy news. It is very improbable that the story is repeated exactly. There will be some change of words and change of accent—quite enough to make one step in the giant staircase between the truth and the final story. One step is no worse than another. They all must share the responsibility.

When ill-feeling has been aroused, slander finds a soil of magical fertility. A report that would have been scouted with indignation when the subject of it was a friend, will be accepted readily when he has become estranged. Wrong constructions will be put on his words and actions, and base motives will be attributed to him, when other and better thoughts might so easily come to mind.

Even aside from the effects of ill-feeling, men and women are prone to take pleasure in stories of weakness on the part of those who are eminent. Nothing so booms the sale of a book as a report that it reveals the failings and moral lapses of some eminent people. Even if such a slander has been exposed and exploded a hundred times, there are those who will still cling to it and say: "Depend upon it there was a basis of truth in the report".

It is quite clear all this contravenes the law of love, but it is very difficult to bring the lesson home to the guilty individuals. The Golden Rule will help us if we will allow it. We should not like a man to pass on an unpleasant story about us, even if he did repeat it just as it was told to him. Therefore we should not pass on the story about another. We desire that people should speak fairly and kindly about us, or not mention us at all. We desire that, when more than one construction can be placed on our words and deeds, the best shall be assumed, giving us the benefit of the doubt. We desire that, where there might be more than one motive, and when

perhaps to ourselves the motives are mixed, people should be ready to give us credit for the better thoughts, and not assume that all our efforts are inspired by the worst motive that could possibly apply.

In short, we want people to treat us with kindness and consideration, whether we are present or absent. If we are Christians we must apply the rule, and even so treat other men and women.

## BALANCE

WE now begin the consideration of some of the minor principles which may help us in the proper application of Christian Faith, Obedience and Love. They might also be helpful to men who are not Christians if there is any desire to rise above the animal plane of unenlightened selfishness. There are times when local conditions so obscure the light of the sun that a lamp is needed to show us the right way. So there are times when these minor rules of life may be of very real service to those who will use them. Often they are repudiated by men who need them most, for it seems natural for a man to hate even an abstract principle if his intelligence tells him that it will convey to him a reproof. Again they resemble lamps in this. They are not appreciated by men whose conduct will not bear investigation, and they are useless to us if we throw them away. If, however, we make intelligent use of them, neither minimising their value nor expecting too much, they will serve us well.

First, then, we will take the principle of balance. As with other principles it applies on several planes, and almost anything that can be affirmed regarding it on the lowest plane can be applied to all others. Farmers know the importance of having a well-balanced load when carrying the hay or wheat in time of harvest. An ill-balanced load puts a strain on cart and horse and ropes and on the nerves of all who have to do with it. The lopsidedness becomes accentuated with every shake of the journey, and if the distance is great there is grave danger of disaster. All this may be affirmed of the ill-balanced business or national constitution or human mind. We need not even point the distinction between the load of hay which cannot play any intelligent part to change its condition and the mind of man which is amenable to reason. A large part of the human mind is as incapable of initiating any reform as the dead mass of hay. In either matter it is the will of man

that needs to act, whether to order the hands to re-  
ill-balanced load, or the intellect to reconstruct the m-  
outlook. Sometimes the labourer who has put up a faulty  
load is as obstinate and awkward as the most prejudiced and  
fanatical of religious egotists. He has put the load together  
and what he does is right. He would sooner believe that there  
was something wrong with the law of gravitation than admit  
that he was in any way at fault. Nothing can be effected to  
correct the lack of balance until the will commands that the  
work shall be taken in hand.

The human mind is composite, with intellect, imagination,  
and feelings all subject to the will. The subjection, however,  
is not very complete and there are many rebellions against the  
ruler. In most minds, feeling plays too large a part, and if  
the feeling is of the wrong kind a serious lack of balance is  
the result. Often then the will is perverted and hardened into  
obstinacy, while feeling, growing with the food it continually  
seeks, thrusts out reason, vitiates the imagination, causes the  
whole mind to become increasingly unbalanced, and it maybe  
at last brings it down with a crash. Fortunately, it is frequent  
in human experience that the provocation of feeling changes  
its direction, opposing influences checking each other just as  
the uneven gusts of wind in a gale steady the swaying steeples  
or chimneys so that they do not fall. There comes a time when  
the man corrects his lack of balance, though he may refuse  
to admit his error even to himself. To admit the error would  
be to accept responsibility for so much evil that has already  
been wrought.

We cannot often help others and they cannot help us by a  
severe condemnation of errors and by vehement insistence on  
just the truth which for the moment is most obnoxious. It is  
not only legitimate but it is surely commendable to be tactful  
in pointing out the follies of fellow-sinners. If the farmer  
storms at the faulty labourer and harshly criticises his work,  
there is an end of all goodwill, and probably no correction  
of the error. If he reminds the erring one that there are some  
rough places in the road home and that it is important to  
have a well-balanced load the man will probably agree. He  
will move a few forkfuls of hay and will then strain at the

rope mightily in order to correct his faulty building and make the load safe. Better still, with goodwill secured and no ugly feelings aroused, he will take pains to build more scientifically next time.

If we are to derive benefit from the consideration of this principle of balance, we must approach it in the abstract without any desire to make special applications of it except to ourselves. We admit that lack of balance in the minds of other men has often caused great evil. We may be prepared to admit to ourselves that we have sometimes formed ill-balanced judgements, laying too much stress on one phase of duty to the inevitable neglect of other duties equally important. How can we insure that in the future we shall sustain a better balance, with every phase of Christian faith, obedience, love, and service receiving proper attention?

Well, if we have a desire in this direction it is one step forward. Unfortunately the calm survey of the subject may so easily be disturbed by some provocation of feeling, and then not only balance may go but the desire for it evaporates too. While we have the right desire, however, there is a possible avenue of development to which we can hardly set any limit. There is a truth regarding the mind of man which is of outstanding importance and value to those who are able to receive it. As with many other truths, it has been the subject of unhelpful discussions and fanciful suggestions which have obscured facts, and have perhaps tended to repel some students who in the absence of the doubtful discussion would have been attracted. There can be no doubt as to the main fact, for all intelligent human beings are conscious of it in themselves. Stated in the simplest possible way, it is the fact that a man is, or at least can be, aware of the condition and the changing processes of his own mind. You not only think, but you are aware that you think. You feel, you remember, you are amused, you are angry, you are prejudiced, you are scornful, you feel flattered, you are humiliated, and in all these mental processes your individuality is aware of the feelings and influences that enter the mind. You have to preside over the conflict of many thoughts and feelings, encouraging or inhibiting as you think well. The higher the mentality the

greater is this quality of awareness. In the lowest types of human mind it is very slight. When a man is completely insane it does not exist at all.

It is possible to cultivate this quality of awareness with great advantage in the matter of improved balance. It is not safe, however, to assume that it will come with ordinary education, great as the benefits of such culture may be. It is not safe to assume that it will be developed by intensive study of the Bible, although that is the most helpful influence of all. A highly-cultured man may be deplorably unbalanced, and sadly lacking in capacity to recognise his own mental processes. An ardent student of the Bible may be so lacking in balance that his condition eventually passes into that of religious mania. In neither case is there any reproach to the studies themselves. The failure is in the individuals.

It is possible that to some readers we may render a service in merely pointing out this peculiar capacity of the human mind to recognise its own condition and to be aware of the manner in which it is influenced. Although to all intelligent people the fact is obvious when once it is pointed out, it is quite possible to go through life without ever having thought of it, and therefore without ever having cultivated the capacity.

Suppose, for instance, that this truth is first presented to a man who detests the study of psychology and views every effort to throw light on mental processes with grave suspicion. His first instinct may be to sweep away even this simple truth as quite unworthy of consideration. Suppose, however that we succeed in convincing him that we are not trying to teach psychology or philosophy or any of the things he mistrusts. We are only calling attention to an obvious but marvellous fact in the "fearfully and wonderfully" constructed mind of man. Perhaps then the impatient one will grudgingly admit that we have stated a fact, although he will probably add that it is such a self-evident and simple fact as to be unworthy of mention. It is possible that he may have sufficient intelligence to go further and say to himself: "As illustrating the point, I am aware that I mistrust all attempts to probe into the depths of the mind, and I am aware of the main reason for this mistrust. It was the unmitigated nonsense talked by

So-and-So". Perhaps his thought will advance a stage further, and he will perceive that his resentment against the doubtful speculations of an advanced psychologist had almost led him to repudiate a simple and elementary truth that can be recognised by common-sense. Finally he may admit—to himself at least—that he had never really thought about this power of the mind to which we have drawn attention. He may say to himself: "Yes, I am aware that I have been prejudiced against certain subjects, and I am aware that while there has been cause for this feeling there has been no adequate reason. I must be on my guard and not allow this feeling to bias my judgements." Such a man is then making progress. As a result of attention being drawn to a simple and obvious truth he will make tremendous strides in his mental awareness, with very beneficial results in the matter of improved balance.

As a matter of fact, if we are normally intelligent people we must all be aware at times of putting over-emphasis on a line of thought or feeling that happens to be prominent for the moment. We may say, "No language can be too strong to do justice to this matter", when we really mean that no language can be too strong for the expression of our feelings. In our inmost heart we know that we have overstepped the bounds of justice, and that is a negation of the law of love.

There are some men who under the influence of feeling will fire up, speak or act hastily, and then just as quickly recover their balance. They are aware that they were momentarily unjust, and they try to make amends. This is very much better than a permanent lack of balance and permanent injustice; nevertheless, in that brief period of instability great harm may be wrought. It would be so much better if the mental awareness could be so cultivated as to be conscious of the evil influence of passion when the brain storm first began.

There is a physical sense of balance which preserves men from falling. Some students of humanity have regarded this as a separate sense. It comes into play when there is a deviation from the perpendicular, and tells us how to correct the error. If a man is inebriated it may fail to act and he falls. If he is only partly drugged, he may retain sufficient sense of balance to be aware of any considerable deviation so that he is able

to keep on his feet, although he staggers. A normal man has the sense so well developed that he can walk on the level, or up and down stairs, without any difficulty. An abnormally developed sense of balance may enable a man to walk along a tight rope without fear of falling.

In the same way our mental sense of balance should come into play when mental stability is disturbed. If a man allows himself to be drugged by wrong thought or feeling, he may not be aware of the influence at work, and he may even become so unbalanced that his mind gives way, just as the drunkard falls. Or he may become aware of his lack of balance just in time to avert a fall, so that he staggers, but retains his sanity. It is possible, however, so to cultivate this quality of the mind that we are sensitive even to a slight deviation, and the corrective is applied immediately.

If a man is unconscious of ever having been at all unbalanced, it is almost safe to assume that he has never been anything else. Sometimes, on the other hand, we find that one whose balanced judgements have commanded our admiration, and whose temper has seemed so serene that no provocation of feeling could arise to cause prejudice, has yet made the confession that he has often become conscious of a deplorable lack of balance. His mind has been aware of the provocation and the natural tendency, and this quality of awareness has found the remedy.

The world is full of unbalanced men and women, nearly all engaged in work of destruction, and so little aware of their condition that it may be truthfully affirmed of them that "they know not what they do". We may well try to assist each other to maintain a better balance so that all may be able to render better service. Probably the greatest enemy is pride. We are reminded of one of the evils from which Christian love must be free. If men are "puffed up" they will not be balanced, either in their study of the Bible or in more general education. Neither will they develop the priceless quality of awareness, for they have already admitted the worst enemy of all into the mind, and they are not even aware of that. In such a condition only the rod of the Lord can save them.

If, however, a man is not consumed with one of the many forms of disguised pride, there is hope for him in the quiet contemplation of the interrelationship of principles. Many principles may throw a light on balance, and in turn balance must be applied to all of them. "Be temperate"; "be sober"; and "let your moderation be known to all men".

## THE LIMITED OBJECTIVE

THIS principle, perhaps more than any other, illustrates the need for a man to form the habit of surveying his course in the light of principles, and of finding the right kind of light for the path along which he has to travel.

Stated in its simplest form, the principle of the limited objective might seem too obvious to be worthy of much attention. A certain type of man will treat it scornfully as something so childishly simple as to need no exposition. Behold the same man a few weeks later wildly aiming at a distant goal, turning with wasteful vacillation from one duty to another, and so confused in mind that he hardly knows what to expect as a result of his hesitating efforts. If after much waste of time and energy he at last gets on to a sound line of working, it is almost certain that the reform will have been effected through a tardy application, in some form, of this principle of the limited objective.

He may not recognise it as a principle even then. There are men who are so determined that all their knowledge shall be empirical, that they never lay hold of a principle properly. They are like the child who needs to burn himself at every flame before learning the general rule that where there is combustion there is heat.

The principle of the limited objective is truly a simple one, but it is not often employed except by those who make a practice of being guided by principles. It recognises the truth that no great journey can be accomplished in a single step, and it is well, therefore, to divide it into stages. You have your great ambition in life, perhaps, and you take care that no minor object shall be of a character to interfere with it. That is good, but it is not enough. You should not only exclude the minor objectives that might hinder you, you should also have the minor or limited objectives that positively help you. If

you make large plans, you must make small plans too, or you will not know how to begin the work. If a man intends to carry out a great work if favoured with life and strength for another twenty years, he should decide what is the task for this year, for this month, for this day. We need a clear, limited objective before we can begin any operation effectively. We need a succession of such objectives as we proceed with the work, or we grow weary and unable to sustain the aim at a goal so distant.

A literal journey supplies us with the best illustration of this particular advantage that we may derive from the application of our principle. The most trying journey is the one across a level and featureless plain. If there is nothing to mark off the various stages, no sense of achievement in hills already surmounted, nothing but a flat stretch of desert of unknown length, the spirit is discouraged and the muscles are tired far more than by a succession of hill and dale. When there are definite stages and recognisable difficulties, it becomes so much easier to concentrate upon the immediate duty, and to go forward with a cheering sense of accomplishment in the landmarks that are passed.

There are other advantages, perhaps even more important, to be derived from our principle. One is that it may often help men to keep from destructive work. The most dangerous and harmful agitator is the one who is only conscious of a single, worthy, final aim. Such a man may examine himself and scrutinise his motives with quite unusual severity. All investigation confirms the conviction that his aim is good, that his motives are pure, and that the things he condemns are evil. His zeal may thus be increased, and he continues to work with destructive energy. If only he could lay hold of this principle of the limited objective, he might discover that much of his present effort bears no relation whatever to the final aim. His final ideal may be good, and the present conditions are far removed from it. Possibly there is work for him to do along the lines of his ideal. His present activity, however, cannot take him a single step in the right direction. He has no limited objective, and consequently is practically without an aim of any kind.

Such a man is like an animal in a cage with a strong desire to be free and in his native haunts, but without knowledge of any of the processes that might lead to freedom. He hurls himself from side to side, damaging himself and other prisoners, spoiling food, rendering the hated prison more uncomfortable for everybody, and never advancing a step towards the coveted liberty. Men ought to be more logical, but often they are not. In all countries and in all communities there are men, and sometimes even women, who cause continual turmoil and agitation, rendering everyone uncomfortable; yet they have no object to which these destructive efforts could be related.

A critic might here suggest that we have omitted to mention a most important principle of life that is needed before we can apply the principle of the limited objective. We have not touched upon the subject of analysis. It is perfectly true that analysis is needed for nearly every mental process, and an exposition of it might well have preceded this chapter. It is to be feared, however, that some readers will find the minor principles here enunciated quite sufficient tax for their patience, especially if some of them seem to have an uncomfortable personal bearing. We do not desire, therefore, to extend the subject more than seems necessary. A book might easily be written on the subject of analysis, but it would not bear so directly upon Christian conduct, and there is no need to deal with the matter at any length here. All intelligent people have some capacity for analysis of thought, for intelligent thought is hardly possible without it. It is certain that a genuine effort to find the limited objectives that will by gradual succession lead to any final goal, must inevitably bring into use the principles of analysis, even if a man has made no study of the subject and could not explain the process.

It has been remarked by those who have given most attention to analysis as applied to general subjects, that the essential principle is quite simple. We need to ask intelligent and orderly questions, and then with patience and determination dig out the true answers. Here again is an idea so simple that superficial people treat it with contempt. What a difference there is, however, between the mental processes of the man who has grasped the principle and the man who despises it. One who



has formed the habit of analysing subjects by this method of intelligent questioning, wastes no time in wild and incoherent speculations when he is confronted with a difficult problem. He perhaps takes a sheet of paper in order to clarify his thoughts by the written word. He asks questions and finds the answers. What is the nature of this subject? What is its history? In what way am I interested? Into what main phases can it be divided? And so forth. The questions will naturally vary according to the subject; but if action is needed, if it is a subject that calls forth the energies of the analyst, his questions will inevitably throw light on the steps that have to be mounted. What is my final object? What stages must be passed before that final object can be achieved? And finally, before constructive work can begin, what is the first step for me to take?

Thus the man who analyses a subject well, is led to the principle of the limited objective, while the man who seeks the limited objective must consciously or unconsciously in some measure apply the method of analysis. Both these principles are needed for constructive work; neither are needed for mere destruction.

If the imprisoned animal could reason with human intelligence it might be able to escape from the cage. It cannot get out until the door is opened, the door cannot be opened until the large bolt is withdrawn, the bolt cannot be moved until the head is turned, and the head cannot be turned until a platform has been constructed high enough to bring it within reach. The first step is to make the platform. All the material necessary might be there in the cage, if only the animal had sufficient intelligence to reason the matter out and take the necessary steps in their proper order. It has not the requisite intelligence, however. It only has the final object of being free, and so it beats from side to side in futile, painful, and exhausting effort.

It is, perhaps, fortunate for us that animals are so lacking, but it is distressing to find so many human beings following the animal way of useless and senseless struggle. "Don't talk to me of platforms and bolts", the agitated one says in effect; "I want to be free; that is the only thing that matters. I want to be free." So, whatever his final object may be, he declines

the limited objective and beats his head—and often other people's heads too—against iron bars until exhaustion brings about a period of peace. Then, perhaps, he tries to persuade himself and his friends that his butting of the inflexible iron has so improved the situation that further effort is unnecessary.

One of the grim tragedies of life, staged repeatedly in the drama of human history, can be seen in this futile, animal struggle, with every feature of the warfare hopelessly out of harmony with the final object. A Christian has, perhaps, been full of zeal and has engaged in much labour. Even in youth his final objective was clear and urgent. He wanted to please Christ and to become fit for the Kingdom of God. At the close of his life it perhaps becomes clear that more than half of his labour has been woefully misdirected, and as an old man he is further away from Christ's Kingdom than when he was a boy.

If we were to join the unwise people who ask why does God allow the tragedies of earth, we would not mention famine or flood or even warfare. Sometimes a reason for these evils is partly discernible even to mortal eyes. We should be more disposed to ask the question regarding the misdirected zeal of earnest Christians. Why does God permit so much wrong-headed and destructive work to be wrought by zealous men? Why is it that they are so seldom given a vision that will save them from "kicking against the pricks", and turn the ardent destroyer into the ardent builder? If we urged these questions we might find at last that the answer is a simple one. God is carrying out His own plan and there will be no failure from His point of view. He will lead into His Kingdom all who are wanted there. As we pointed out in a previous chapter, human pride is usually the greatest enemy, and God will never tolerate it. Sometimes the discovery by the zealot that his energies have been wrongly directed will lead to a wonderful humility, as in the character of the apostle Paul. Whether such conversion comes or not, we have to remember that extraordinary ability and superabundant zeal will not commend a man to God in the absence of the essential virtue of humility.

Perhaps some readers will think that in writing of pride and humility we have wandered rather far from the subject of this chapter. What have these qualities to do with the application

of the principle of the limited objective? As a matter of fact the connection is very definite, and we have not wandered from the subject at all. If we can persuade a few more men and women to reflect on the possibility of applying this principle to the ordinary duties of life, and especially to all Christian endeavour, they may learn a new humility all the more valuable because the growth of the virtue is not perceived, and escape from a destructive pride all the more deadly because it is so disguised. It is just when we apply the principle that we discover how small we are, and how little we can accomplish. If any man who wants to be a true Christian will seek out the first step that he needs to take and concentrate attention for the moment on that, there will be no room for human pride. If he remembers the principle at every stage of the journey, and takes care that every step is in the right direction, even with the unmistakable progress that he makes there will be a growth of genuine humility. If the average man could test his whole life by the principle, and ask how many of his past objectives were truly related to the distant goal, it might lead not merely to humility but to bitter humiliation.

We have noticed the impressive fact that a principle so often shoots through from one plane to another, and proves equally true in each. Sometimes we can more readily perceive its value in a field remote from our own experience. We can remember a discussion of this principle of the limited objective which was probably the cause of this chapter being written. We know that a business man listened to the same discussion and then reformed his business on the basis of this principle with the most happy results. Yet the outstanding contribution to that discussion did not impinge directly either on business or Christian morals. It came from a military man who explained how the principle had worked during the first World War.

In the early days, he said, preparations were made for an offensive and then when the word of command was given all pushed forward with the single, fixed object of breaking up the enemy's line and destroying his power. The resistance of the defence was uneven, some sections of the attacking forces pushed far ahead and then, through lack of support, were

unable to hold the ground they had gained. When the counter-attack came, the unevenness was accentuated. There was confusion and lack of co-ordination; and possibly, as the result of all their effort, the situation was rendered worse than before. After many costly experiments, the principle of the limited objective was properly applied. It was recognised that the enemy could not be overwhelmed by a single blow. It was possible, however, to improve the position, and strengthen the line by well co-ordinated efforts concentrating on a single limited objective. With a succession of such minor plans, all definitely related to the desired end, a number of progressively successful moves were made until at last the position of the enemy became untenable and the armistice followed. So the military man explained the matter.

The principle can be applied to almost everything; and on nearly every plane, men who would scorn the idea that we can teach them anything on this subject fall with monotonous regularity into the same old error. With lack of co-ordinated thought they aim wildly at the final goal, and take ill-considered steps which make no advance in the desired direction, but which may lead to confusion and retreat. They have "zeal but not according to knowledge".

The Apostle Peter speaks of the "exceeding great and precious promises" of God, by which we may become partakers of the divine nature. Then he continues: "Beside all this . . . add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity".

We would not suggest that the apostle here enumerates the various stages of Christian development in the order in which these virtues should receive our concentrated attention, but we certainly would suggest that he indicates a vast field for progressive endeavour and for the full application of the principle we have been considering. This brings us to another thought in connection with the subject, perhaps the most important point of all.

After showing that our principle will reprove pride by revealing the narrow margin of our actual work, it may seem

strange to claim that it will also prevent the despairing negation of undue humility. Perhaps it would be a mistake to use this phrase. Humility is probably not the proper word for the difficulty we have in mind. We will try to describe it instead of finding a name for it.

There are many people, especially the young, who feel that they have no call in the direction of religion. They perhaps have quite a good opinion of their mental equipment, and so, in any proper sense of the words, they cannot be described as unduly humble. They are neither vicious nor faithless; they are innocent of hypocrisy, and will make no pretence of a religious impulse that they do not feel. Comparing themselves with the high ideals of the New Testament, or it may be even with the attainments of some of their own acquaintances, they come to the conclusion that others must possess a religious instinct that is lacking in them, and that consequently all attempts to follow such ideals will be futile.

It should be transparently evident when once the fact is mentioned, that all other ambitions might seem equally hopeless if viewed from a similar angle. In temporal matters, however, the ambitious young man is forced to apply the principle of the limited objective, although he may not recognise it as a principle and may even think of its provisions as nuisances. If he wants to be a famous surgeon or an architect or a composer of symphonies and oratorios, he does not merely contemplate the attainments of those who have reached the apex of human knowledge and assume that he must be lacking in the essential qualities for such work because he is so far below such a standard. When he has made his choice of a career he is soon forced by circumstances to find a limited objective, and it is usually quite a small first step. He is sustained through all the hard work of preparation by the limited successes from stage to stage as he passes examinations and completes courses of study. Eventually he may find that the hill top was an illusion, and he must be the striving student to the end of life.

Why not recognise the same truths in the more serious problem of a career beyond the limits of morality? Why should a ruddy, healthy boy or girl expect to have much of a religious

instinct? God does not expect it of them. The Christian religion does not demand that they should stultify their natural instincts. The prophet saw a vision of boys and girls playing in the streets of Jerusalem, when God would be with His people in truth and righteousness. Here is a first objective for boys and girls. Let them speak the truth and be righteous even in their play. The young people need not expect at a bound to reach the highest standard of a Christian, any more than they would expect such rapid advance in the pursuit of a worldly ambition. They need a limited objective, one step at a time.

It may be suggested that the main difficulty lies in the fact that few people feel anything like as much interest in spiritual things as in the material values that seem so near and urgent. This, again, is perfectly natural and supplies additional reason for the application of our principle. If there is a little faith and a little desire to serve, there should be sufficient driving force to take the little steps which successively lead to life. In the writer's experience it is very rare to meet a man who has lost his faith as a result of a thorough examination of Christian foundations. In fact, to speak quite plainly, we do not believe there is or ever has been such a man. Many have thought that their examination was thorough, when they have hardly touched the subject. They have merely compared the opinions of men, with the result that there has been a dislocation of their previous conviction and the temporary establishment of negative conditions in which faith has evaporated. There is far more danger of faith disappearing through inattention than through any of the intellectual shocks that a thoughtful man has to endure, great though some of these shocks will be.

In Christendom, the average young man is quite prepared to recognise the strong probability that there is a God and that in some way God spoke to mankind through Jesus Christ, but the ordinary young man does not want to trouble himself much either with religion or anything else. He has to face the problem of earning his living, however, and when he has made his choice as to the most attractive, or the least repulsive work that he can undertake, he is simply forced to take the necessary steps in the proper order. There is on the other hand no

compulsion in the matter of Christian faith. Yet if we reflect for a little while, it may seem to any thoughtful mind that the reasons for action in religion should appear quite as urgent as any worldly ambition. A century ago there were millions of young men preparing for their respective careers. They did not all find opportunity for work, even after careful preparation. Some of those who started did not work for long, and of those who realised their early ambition, not all found the anticipated satisfaction. One great fact, however, can be affirmed of all of them without any exception. They are all dead.

We may reasonably put this thought before the youth who is preparing for his career. You may or may not have to face the work and responsibilities of mature life, but without any question you must face death. If it is wise to be prepared for the probability of life, so surely is it wise to remember the certainty of death. No human critic would expect you at a single bound to become qualified as doctor, or scientist, or skilled man of affairs; neither does God expect you at a single step to be a mature Christian, able to say, "I have kept the faith, I have finished my course". The question is rather whether you have begun the course, and if so whether you take each step as it presents itself. Is the first step clear? If so, take it without delay, and the next step shall be equally clear; and so on throughout the course until the addition sum of the Apostle is completed, leading to the abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord (2 Pet. 1 : 11).

## THE DUMB-BELLS

We can remember in early days of boyhood watching with wondering admiration the performance of a leading athlete as he gave a public demonstration of what could be done with properly trained muscles. The grand circle on the horizontal bar, the extraordinary flights from one trapeze to another, the winding up of incredibly heavy weights by apparently easy wrist work, and the graceful progress on the hands along the parallel bars. The demonstrator gave a piece of advice that seemed strange to us at the time, although it was based upon a very simple truth. He urged us to use very light dumb-bells for our exercises. It was far better to begin with pound weights than with the heavy loads to which our ambition inclined. To drive home the lesson he gave a demonstration of how a certain pupil who had spurned this advice came along the parallel bars. We laughed, and our interested amusement drove the lesson home to the most permanent shelf of memory.

Many years later we chanced to meet a young fellow who had been trained by a well-known "strong man". Before we knew of this training we were amazed at the development of his muscles. When he explained the kind of exercise he had regularly practised it was easy to recognise another illustration of the principle of the dumb-bells. This young man informed us that we might easily effect a great increase in the strength of our muscles by a proper application of the ordinary duties of life. Walking, carrying a bag, might become almost as good exercise for this purpose as the most ingenious and expensive of developers. The set position must be avoided, the bag must frequently be changed from hand to hand, sometimes the arm should be turned with palm outwards, sometimes the elbow should be bent and the weight raised.

Above all, he urged that the mental attitude must be right with a conscious aim at increase of strength.

We never made a thorough test of these possibilities, not being much interested in the idea of abnormal physical development. We were more interested in the application of the principle on other planes. We believe that all that the young man claimed was true in connection with the growth of muscle. We know that it is true in connection with the growth of mind. On the mental, moral, and spiritual planes, it is certainly a fact that we need exercise to promote growth, and it is equally true that some of the best exercise can be found in connection with the ordinary duties of life. We can, in fact, transfer the young athlete's words to a higher plane, and turn his literal language into a figure of speech. While walking along the busy street carrying our bag, or helping other people to carry theirs, we can find some of the best exercise for the development of moral strength.

This principle of the dumb-bells may be stated in a series of incontrovertible propositions:

1. The law of growth on every plane is through nourishment and use.
2. These two necessities must be properly balanced, with neither stint nor surfeit, without either idling or overstrain.
3. Mental, moral, and spiritual food is plentiful, and much cheaper than food for our physical needs.
4. In human life as at present constituted we can find constant exercise for thought and for moral restraint.

These propositions do not need much elaboration, but they offer ample scope for cogitation. Even the first, although it states such an obvious truth, may easily be provocative of very helpful thoughts, especially if the reader has not hitherto heard the truth expressed in this way. Everyone knows that it would be the height of folly to expect a child to grow strong without proper nourishment. Everyone knows that it is equally futile to expect strength to come as the result of food alone without exercise and the proper use of the growing limbs. Everyone, in fact, is fully aware that a reasonable balance of nourishment and use is necessary for the develop-

ment of physical strength, but everyone has not thought of the simple fact that the same principle applies with mental and moral growth. A different kind of nourishment is needed and a different use is made of it, but the principle remains the same.

The brain, of course, has a physical basis and needs material food, but there is not much in the idea that certain substances are of especial value as brain foods as distinct from the physical needs. If the body is well nourished it will give the brain all it requires as a physical basis. A very different kind of nourishment is needed, however, before any work can be done. The mind must receive impressions through the senses, either by direct observation of nature or through the teaching of other intelligent beings. Then the brain must make use of this mental food, remembering, imagining, thinking and willing; sometimes, it may be, producing ideas which are valuable in themselves, sometimes only having exercise of no more practical value than the dumb-bell drill of the muscles, but in either case making use of the nourishment supplied and so growing in strength.

It has been stated that the majority of people in the civilised world do not develop their minds at all after the age of fifteen or sixteen years, with the result that only a small proportion of their potential mentality is used. We may hope that this statement is somewhat exaggerated, but it is easy to see reasons for it to be true. Boys have to use their brains while they are at school, and when they first learn to perform the work by which they shall earn their daily bread. Many of them, however, perhaps the majority, find work which gives little or no scope for mental exercise. The youth becomes a tiny cog in the great machine of our complex industry, with uninteresting routine work to perform. At the end of the day he is tired with the monotony of his labour and he seeks diversion with the television, cinema or theatre. He glances at the daily paper to find news regarding sport, or, perhaps, to find confirmation of his political opinions. The highest praise that could be given to his amusements or his reading would be to say that they are not definitely harmful.

There is no proper nourishment for the mind in these things, and there is no proper use either. If, therefore, the youth fails to develop a line of interest that will supply the needed mental food, there is danger that the mind will cease to grow. It is a menace to any State if a large proportion of the citizens have the passions of men and the mentality of children, while at the same time they are free, articulate and self-conscious.

If, however, a youth desires to develop his mentality, this is a day of amazing opportunity. The young man who works in a factory, monotonously repeating a simple process in some mass production enterprise, may be worse situated than his forefathers in the matter of the interest attaching to his daily labour, but he is far more favoured in other ways. If he can only appreciate the fact, he is living in an extraordinary interesting age and in many respects a greatly privileged age. He has been taught to read, and there are thousands of good books available. He can hear good music and good lectures, and he can have access to libraries where it is easy to study any subject that may interest him.

Such a youth might ask: "What is the use of such effort?" It is not easy to answer that question. It may be that he himself is of no use. If he chooses to live on the animal plane, working only under compulsion and snatching such crumbs of animal pleasure as he can find, there is no human authority to stop him. All that we desire to emphasise for the moment is that the principle of the dumb-bells applies in the matter of mental and moral development quite as much as in the growth of muscle. The dumb-bell exercises are not profitable in themselves, but there is real value in them if the young man wants to develop strong muscles. In the same way, if he desires to develop his mind there is real value in mental food and mental exercise, even though there seems to be no immediate object beyond. It might transform the life of a youth if at the right moment he could be made to appreciate this simple truth regarding nourishment and use as applied to the mind instead of merely to the body.

Our second proposition is that these two essentials must be properly balanced. There is no need to comment on this fact as applied to physical development. Everyone knows that an

excess of nourishment makes a man fat and flabby. On the other hand, excess of use may lead to collapse. That is what is meant by an athlete being overtrained. He lacks the nervous force to sustain the strain. Rather less exercise and, perhaps, rather more food, would have been better for him. Everyone perceives the need for balance here. Comparatively few people, however, realise that the same truth applies to mental processes. There are men who are gluttons for mental food, and they perhaps choose food of the best kind, the best books, the best music, the best lectures. They suppose that by omnivorous reading they are developing their minds without the need for anything more. In actual experience, such a reader gets mental indigestion, he grows mentally fat and flabby, he is apt to lose the capacity for intelligent thought, and he may become the unstable convert of the last book he reads. Robert Hall made a witty comment on such a reader: "He was no doubt a clever man but he had so many books on his head that his brain could not work".

On the other hand it is quite possible for a man to go to the extreme of excessive use with insufficient nourishment. We may sometimes hear a fluent speaker, or we may read the work of a ready writer, who would be better to remain inactive for a time in order to study and acquire knowledge. In other words, he is not absorbing enough mental food for the amount of mental exercise. A better balance is needed.

Our third proposition as to the plentiful supply and the cheapness of mental, moral and spiritual food, may be resented as seeming to lower the subject. It is, however, a very practical and necessary consideration. A professor at one of our universities might need to spend fifty or a hundred pounds a year on books to keep him abreast of the times. A working man, however studiously inclined, could not be expected to spend more than as many shillings. The professor, however, would be the first to admit that the most expensive and the newest of books are not always the best. In his position he needs to read much that is unprofitable and that he would never recommend to the working man. For the supply of mental, moral and spiritual food, the old books are often the best. The old bindings were certainly better than the modern,

and often the best books have been so little read that they are quite clean when they are second-hand. Any working man who likes can have a good selection.

We have sometimes been surprised at the poverty-stricken libraries in the homes even of men who were supposed to be interested in such matters. A few relics of school days, a few trashy works of fiction, perhaps a really good book with leaves still uncut. On the other hand, we have sometimes been more agreeably surprised to find an excellent selection of books in a very humble home, and we have been told what some of them cost. Some of the best, from the point of view we are considering, have been purchased in excellent condition for a few pence. It is certainly true in these days that mental, moral and spiritual food is much cheaper than the material food for our physical needs. There is no need for anyone to starve on these planes.

Our final proposition is that some of the best exercise can be found in everyday experience as we pursue the ordinary duties of life. Here, we think, the truth is even more obvious in connection with mental and moral development than on the physical plane. If the daily task calls for any thought at all, it offers the dumb-bells to the worker and begs him to use them. If it is such prison-like work that it becomes absolutely mechanical, the worker can carry it forward mechanically while thinking of other things and thus finding still better scope for mental development. In these days, workers have ample opportunity in spare time to lay in a store of mental nourishment for their thoughts to use as opportunity offers.

Unfortunately, many workers have no appetite for spare time studies, and no interest in the possibilities offered by the daily task. We have heard men say: "I am not paid to think", as if that settled the matter, and excused all lack of interest in their work. They might add that they are not paid to keep physically fit, or to keep the various organs of the body in proper working order. A man ought to be interested in attaining to a reasonable degree of self development quite apart from the consideration of the wages he may receive. The stupid refusal to exercise thought in the daily task because the pay is inadequate, may injure the employer a little, but it

injures the petulant worker far more. Interested and intelligent labour with unpaid brain work thrown into service, may or may not lead to promotion and material success, but it certainly leads to mental and moral development. Churlish employers may fail to realise their obligations, but nature will not make any mistake over the principle of the dumb-bells.

Imagine two youths obtaining their first situation as unskilled labourers in a warehouse where the products of many lands are stored. Neither is "paid to think". They are paid to do as they are told, whether in the moving of goods, or sweeping up the warehouse. One works with eye-service merely, with no thought except for the money he will get and the shallow amusements in which he will indulge when work is over. The other takes an intelligent interest in everything he handles, and continues the questioning spirit that develops the mind of the child. What is the use of these articles? Where were they produced? What subtle distinctions of quality can be noted and remembered?

We are not considering the matter from the point of view of material "success" as it is called, so we will not attempt to follow the fortunes of the two youths. The one who secures all the knowledge possible as to the nature and value of the goods he handles is certainly more likely to make progress in the business than the other; but that is not for the moment the point we desire to emphasise. Whether fortune smiles on him or not, he receives full value for his interested service in his own mental development. He is using the dumb-bells of the workaday, and Nature will make no mistake as to the effect.

The simple truth is that nearly every task that men are called upon to perform offers scope for thought. Every part of either town or country through which men have to pass on their way to work, bristles with problems, inviting observation, comparison, judgement, imagination, constructive reasoning, and often calling for action. These dumb-bells of the workaday are perhaps neglected because the stores of mental food in our libraries are so large and so concentrated that these little possibilities for mental exercise seem too trivial to be noticed. Herein is one of the tragedies of civilised life. Men neglect

their powers of observation because they can have access to so many good books, and yet after all they fail to read the books.

We would agree that reading gives us the richest store of mental nourishment, and it must not be neglected. We must not read too much, however, nor too quickly. We must read analytically, getting at the root meaning of each sentence and forming comparisons and judgements of our own. The man who can co-ordinate his reading with his own observations and do some hard thinking on the basis of the things read and observed, is making the proper use of the principle of the dumb-bells in the development of the mind.

Perhaps someone will suggest that in these considerations we have not at present touched much on the subject of moral development. It may be admitted that civilised life offers much scope for mental exercise, but where are the dumb-bells to assist the moral side of our nature? If any reader is disposed to put such a question, we must remind him that we are trying to survey the principles that should guide the life of a Christian. It might be rather difficult to find dumb-bell exercises for a pagan morality in the ordinary experiences of civilised life, but exercises for Christian morality offer themselves every few minutes. Remember the major principles of faith and recognition of God in all things; of obedience to divine law; of love and service to humanity, and the practical bearing of the Golden Rule. In the ordinary experiences of life there are so many ways of being immortal that the contrary possibilities are always with us, and the dumb-bells of little exercises are constantly to hand. The youth in the warehouse could find so many ways of contravening Christian principles that there is no lack of opportunity for dumb-bell practice even there.

One who is honest in matters of money is often flagrantly dishonest in matters of time and service. One who would not on any account take sixpence from his employer's cash box will rob him of six pounds through wasteful and destructive carelessness. There are, indeed, many degrees and different standards in most of the virtues, but it is not difficult to determine which is the standard set by the Christian religion.

We are to "do all things heartily as unto the Lord and not unto man". We are to accept adverse experience patiently, even if it does not seem in any way deserved, and this patient endurance is to be sustained even to the rendering of service to a bad master (1 Pet. 2 : 18, 19). The young Christian who has occasion to follow the Apostle's instruction in this matter, will not complain that the dumb-bells are too light for him!

An ordinary man, whatever his position in life, may find opportunity for moral exercises from the time he rises in the morning until the last thought before relapsing into slumber at night. It may seem absurd to suggest that a little difficulty in dressing—a refractory collar stud for instance—could offer a possibility for exercise in Christian control. It may be that a man would be right in regarding such a matter as too trivial for consideration. If so, it is equally clear that such little trials should equally be too trivial to disturb his tranquillity or to occasion any expression of anger or annoyance. Herein lies the real test. If a man allows such trifling difficulties to arouse his anger and to cause the use of undesirable expressions of annoyance, he must certainly not say that the matter is too small to offer opportunity for dumb-bell practice in Christian virtues. It is obvious that this is just the kind of exercise that he needs.

Often a man will reveal his weakness in a score of different ways before the real work of the day begins. He is unjust and unkind to some of the members of his family because of some little annoyances for which they are, perhaps, not to blame. He is unjustly angry with the omnibus conductor either because the decision as to the limit of overcrowding just excludes him or because it allows too many on behind. Unmindful of the Golden Rule, he puts his feet on the cushions of the railway carriage, although he greatly resents the same practice in other people. He talks about acquaintances as he would not like others to talk of him. All the time it might be truthfully affirmed that "God is absent from all his thoughts".

When we remember that according to the Scriptures it is sin if we "know to do good and do it not", and further that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin", we may be forced to conclude that a man might easily load himself down with



little errors before the serious evils of the day began. In all these matters we have the offer of light and easily-handled dumb-bells. If we despise them because they are so light, we commit a double error, and there will be no failure in the law of cause and effect.

We have several times referred to spiritual development as something beyond the mental and moral. Many readers will agree that there is a distinction, however difficult it may be to define. Perhaps the best description of the word "spirit" is that it is the essence of the whole, and this thought may serve to suggest a definition of the word "spiritual". The Apostle says that "to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace". He further says that "if a man has not the spirit of Christ he is none of his".

The question may be asked: "Can we find spiritual exercises in the experience of ordinary life? Can we, in addition to the mental and moral exercises that are obvious, find something more as suggested by the word 'spiritual'?" We may well hesitate to answer the question either yes or no. It might be more correct to say that we can find spiritual food and exercise in spite of the experiences of everyday life. In another, fuller sense, however, we shall have to agree at last that the mundane experiences are necessary even in this. True spirituality is instructed, and must, therefore, be based on mental and moral training. Spiritual exercises stand in relation to this training as the performance of the symphony is to the practice, and the rehearsals that make such performance possible. During the period of training with constant, unpleasant corrections and reproofs, there is not much scope for tasteful performance. A little of such privilege can be secured, however, even then—enough to suggest the great possibilities when the period of training is over.

Here we touch the essence of all that is involved in the word "spirituality". At its best in mortal experience it only seems to hint at the great possibilities of a higher life. We are only babes not yet come to the birth, and, perhaps, very few of us ready for the terrible yet glorious plunge into dazzling light. Perhaps the first real breath of immortal life will be as painful to all who are permitted to draw it, and the first real

sight of the divine as over-powering, as when the newborn child feels the first rush of vitalising air and sees the bewildering light of day.

We need the full period that God has decreed for us with all the nourishment that we can use effectively. There is a sense in which all our work in service to God is merely analogous to dumb-bell exercise, for God certainly needs no help from us. To Him the value of the work lies not in the service, but in the development of the servants. His people need to be developed in every way for the purpose He has in view—mentally and morally and spiritually. The time for this development is now and the opportunities are presented every day, and almost every moment of the day.

Finally, we have to recognise that on all planes the laws are the same, only the higher the plane the slower we are to perceive them. We could find no opportunity for developing either mind or morals, apart from the instruction that comes either directly or indirectly from God. With that instruction we can find food and opportunity for exercise everywhere. It is the same with spiritual values. Without divine help we should know nothing of the subject, perhaps not even be aware that there was such a subject regarding which anything could be known. Through divine instruction and through the exercise of mental and moral faculties, we learn at last that spirituality is at the heart of every truth. It changes the appearance of material things by changing us. Instead of seeking for spiritual exercises and finding them nowhere, we shall, without effort of seeking, find them everywhere.

An animal probably does not even see the glory of the heavens on a clear night. A materialistic farmer will watch for signs of fair or foul weather, a scientist seeks to weigh and measure the stars and follow their movements, an artist or poet will respond to the beauty and wonder of the display and express his own feelings in his art. The Psalmist perceived all this, and, in addition, he recognised the presence of God. Guided by such teaching we can find the same point of view. Then, spiritual exercises are always within our reach because God in the power of His Spirit "is not far from any one of us".

No change is needed in the constitution of things; the change must be in the human point of view. This is what the Apostle Paul meant when he wrote: "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God".

The little simple exercises of every day experience, which we have here treated under the symbol of the dumb-bells, will inevitably play a large part either in conformation to the perishing world, or in transformation to the perfect will of "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality".

## EXTREMES BEGET EXTREMES

THESE three words express a truth that is written plainly in the pages of human history, yet it is a truth that men are very unwilling to learn. Tyranny and abuse of power with extremes of provocation have been followed by revolution and counter-revolution, the violence of the reaction always being proportionate to the violence of the exciting cause. Opposing parties have hated, feared, and persecuted each other as the fortunes of war have given them power and opportunity. Men have passed from one extreme to another, heaping up against themselves disruptive forces that have overthrown them, so that they have been brought to experience the same kind of misery that they have inflicted on others. When moderation has prevailed, it has often been through sheer exhaustion rather than through wise counsels. When wise men have deliberately chosen the moderate course, they have often been condemned by their friends as weak and yielding. We can look back on history and recognise that such men were strong as well as being wise, and that the extremists were weak as well as foolish, but for every thousand men who can recognise this lesson in the history of the past, there is hardly one who is wise enough to apply it in the experiences of the present.

In large political issues, some of the nations, in measure, have learned the lesson. Extremes always beget extremes, and moderation does not imply weakness. In the very small matters of life, too, wherever there is an attempt at politeness, the lesson has been learned very well. There is, however, still a vast field where the old errors are repeated with pathetic monotony, men working each other up to extremes of feeling and conduct that blast and destroy much of the work that might be perfected with moderation.

Perhaps the little adventures of everyday life may furnish a more helpful lesson than the great events of history. It is

easier to trace cause and effect in the simple experiences of ordinary individuals than in the complex intercourse of multitudes. It may be, too, that an attitude which would seem normal and rational in connection with a great event, is exposed as merely absurd in the world of commonplace trivialities.

If two moderately sensible men, hastening in opposite directions, chance to collide, with the result that one drops his hat in the mud and the other sustains bruises, we do not expect them to magnify their injuries or to blame each other for the mishap. A sensible, fairly educated man will make light of his own trouble and express his regret, without for a moment insisting that the other was to blame, whatever his thoughts may be. It would be so perfectly absurd for two respectable citizens to have a heated argument as to who was to blame, and perhaps come to blows, because they had both been too much in a hurry. If they were guilty of such folly they would both miss their appointments, they would probably both be more damaged by the dispute than by the original mishap, and no possible good would be effected. Worst of all, observers would only laugh at them. Exactly similar foolishness on the part of nations may lead to war with its unrelieved tragedy. Nations cannot be laughed out of going to war. They may be horrified out of it until the memory of the reality becomes dim; then they need another lesson to keep them from such petulant folly.

For the moment, however, we desire to contemplate the many human collisions that are neither great enough to horrify nor small enough to be obviously ridiculous. How often men and women will exaggerate their injuries, throw all the blame on the other party, impute the worst of motives, and become continually more extreme in their cultivated injustice. In the same town, often in the same religious community, sometimes in the same family, there are disputes which grow according to the law of extremes until there is permanent estrangement. Such disputes are too tragic to appear ridiculous, yet in many instances they are quite as foolish as a quarrel between the two hasty men who bump into each other at the awkward corner. So often the original

cause of difference is a little matter compared with the evils which develop in the course of the dispute.

Many years ago it was remarked by the man to whom God gave especial wisdom, that "a soft answer turneth away wrath", and that "yielding pacifieth great offences". All observers of human nature agree that this is true, but most people want someone else to use the soft answer, and they look to the other party in the dispute to do all the yielding.

It seems quite natural for human beings to make exaggerated statements, especially in discussions. Perhaps exaggeration makes for a certain vigour and vitality of expression which arrests attention, and in that manner sometimes serves a useful purpose. It may be effective in swaying the feelings and convictions of foolish and thoughtless people, and so gaining support that would be withheld from a more temperate advocate. For worldly objects, therefore, exaggeration of statement may be effective just as with many other evil things. Christians, however, should shun it. They should be temperate and moderate and sober (Titus 2 : 2). They should let their "yea be yea, and their nay, nay", remembering that whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil. There comes a time when the moderate statement carries far more weight than all the exaggerated protestations of extremists. It may not so much please the partisan who desires to hear a new emphasis of his own convictions, but it is far more effective in presenting truth to worthy minds. If a man is convicted of telling a lie, the truths he has uttered will also be accounted as lies. Exaggeration of statement is only a milder form of lying, and it has a similar effect.

There is another phase of this subject that is, perhaps, more important than any matter of expression can possibly be. Extremes may grow in the mind until they lead to a most serious lack of balance, almost akin to insanity. Although they form a species of mental cancer, they obey the law of growth; that is, they grow by nourishment and use. They can usually obtain a plentiful supply of nourishment from the thoughts of the extremist; they find the most effective use in resisting the opposite extreme.

Sometimes a reasonable and sober man will admit that he has gone to an extreme, but will excuse his conduct on the ground that it was a deliberate attempt to counteract the opposite extreme of other people. We have known a man of usually excellent judgement and balance make this plea. We think that if his action was indeed deliberate, his judgement was for the moment greatly at fault. If he only meant that in reviewing the past he was conscious of his extreme and of the cause of it, we can commend him for being able to recognise his own error, always a difficult task. It is the most natural matter in the world for us to set up a counter-extreme against the outrageous conduct or opinions of our neighbours: it is, however, a great mistake to do this deliberately with the object of reforming them. No Christian desires to crush the personality of those with whom he comes in contact; and short of such crushing effect, all resistance that fails to appeal to reason only gives the wrong thought more exercise, thus making it grow. You might cure a pugnacious boy of fighting by matching him against a super-bully who would cripple him, but you will never cure him by bringing against him a succession of minor bullies against whom he can put up a good fight. The fact that they are obviously bullies seems to excuse his own too ready pugnacity. They are so clearly in the wrong that he does not trouble to ask himself the question whether he is in the right. He has a reassuring sense of acting justly while he finds strengthening exercise for his evil tendency. As we neither want to cripple him nor to increase his pugnacity, the right course, surely, is to find for him a manly but moderate and sober companion who will show him a better way without giving opportunity for the exercise of the tendency that we deplore.

Possibly some readers will complain that this illustration is hardly fair. We agree that like most illustrations it is imperfect, but it conveys a truth calling for serious reflection. The extreme views that we might like to correct in our neighbours may have nothing to do with fighting, but the moment they are antagonised the fighting spirit is aroused, and if that spirit is encouraged it is not only harmful in itself but it will probably take the extreme views with it to still greater extremes. It is often difficult to avoid arousing the merely combative spirit,

however moderately we state our objection to an extreme view. A temperate statement will often appeal to reason, however, and thus show a more excellent way, even although some time may elapse before the way is chosen. If, however, we try to counter the error by an opposite extreme, we are simply diverting attention from the real subject and advertising something which seems to justify the evil that we deplore. At the same time we are arousing the fighting spirit and presenting it with an apparently just cause.

A sweep would be the most ineffective critic to point out that the baker had flour on his coat. We must certainly not go to extremes with the deliberate hope of countering the extremes of others. We should, on the other hand, be constantly on our guard against the natural tendency in this direction. Most men have this tendency strongly developed, although, perhaps, only few have sufficient mental alertness to be fully aware of it. With a little effort men may be able to see it clearly enough in the smaller matters of life; they can test their reactions on this low plane and prove the power of moderation.

To take a very simple illustration. An Englishman and an American each with a well-developed appreciation of his own country, meet and begin to exchange friendly ideas. One makes rather an extreme claim for the merits of his native land. Immediately the other feels a desire to counter it with an opposite extreme. If both are foolish enough to yield to the temptation they may soon quarrel. If they are extremely foolish they may end by coming to blows or parting in a condition of ridiculous anger. A man, however, must have a very poor mental equipment or a very ill-balanced mind if he is prepared to quarrel over such a matter. A sense of humour would save him.

The story has been told of an American tourist who made some extreme statements in a London omnibus. He affirmed that some of the buildings they passed on the route could be erected in America in a few days. Finally when they reached St. Paul's Cathedral and he enquired what building it was, the conductor replied: "I don't know; they hadn't started building it when we passed this morning".

If the tourist possessed a sense of humour he would accept this preposterous statement as an amusing reproof of his own extremes and simply pass it with a laugh. On such a plane the worst of extremes may be thus lightly treated and, perhaps, they do little harm. Unfortunately the same tendency and the same reactions are continually manifest in connection with more important matters. The subject may be too serious to admit of laughter and the disputants may be quite unaware of their own exaggerations. They develop their excesses gradually, as a drunkard goes from stage to stage without being conscious of his increasing folly. The greatest danger is inevitably in connection with the most serious issues of life. The Apostle Paul mentions strife and debate as among the evil things of the flesh, and surely every true Christian can understand the reason for this classification. When men speak to each other and discuss serious subjects as friendly mortals all needing help, they help each other and increase their knowledge. But when the demon of opposition and debate is aroused, there is often a marked deterioration on both sides. Under this influence a man will sometimes make a violent attack on any proposition that comes from a suspected quarter, even though it simply expresses thoughts that he would have warmly approved before the strife began. If he allows the worst form of pride to enter his heart he may easily end by denouncing everyone who dares to differ from him in the slightest degree. If he is too sensible to reach this extreme, the fever works itself out and he climbs back to sanity. He may not be prepared to admit the harm he has wrought even then. There are usually so many other extremists in sight that he can throw the blame on them. It is one of the constantly recurring tragedies of life.

It is a startling and rather disgusting fact that men learn the elementary lessons of life most readily when money is involved. This law of extremes is recognised in the business world, and the natural tendency is suppressed every day at the command of Mammon. A salesman offers an increasingly popular line of goods to a merchant. The merchant sells goods of different and perhaps rather superior quality, and does not desire to encourage the new line. Perhaps rather annoyed at their increasing popularity, the merchant declares

that he would not stock such rubbish. The salesman will inevitably feel an inclination to run to the other extreme and maintain that his goods are of far better quality than the more expensive line favoured by the merchant. If he yields to this temptation, he may be soon ordered out of the place, and there will be no business done. If he is an experienced salesman, he will know how to yield while remaining faithful to his trust, and he will very probably win by yielding. He will admit the high quality of the merchant's goods, but point out that his own are different, that they have their peculiar merit, that they are rather cheaper, and that such a demand is springing up for them that a place might well be found for them without interference with the existing trade.

Times without number such methods of moderation have won in the business world. After all, it is simply a temperate and forceful presentation of truth instead of meeting a half lie with another half lie. Such methods are needed in every phase of life. On the highest plane they are needed most of all. Well might the Apostles tell us to be sober and temperate and to let our moderation be known to all men. If these lessons could be applied in the most important issues of Christian conduct, many tragedies could be averted, and work more faithfully be performed in the ministration of that which is "without money and without price".

### DOCTRINE AND CONDUCT ARE RELATED TO EACH OTHER AS CAUSE AND EFFECT

THIS affirmation may require a little explanation because so many people think of doctrine as belonging solely to ecclesiastical circles, and as being quite unpractical even there. They think of fierce doctrinal disputes that ministered occasion for rancour and bitterness without teaching anything of real value.

The fact is that, through the weakness and yet the pugnacity of human nature, great and important truths are continually obscured by disputes regarding matters of relative insignificance. Great truths are hidden not only by falsehoods but also by little truths, just as a great mountain may be hidden from sight by a too near and intent inspection of a tiny piece of stone.

Doctrine really means teaching. The word can be used in a much wider sense than is generally recognised. The doctrines that a man holds are really the principles that guide his conduct. If his doctrines are well-balanced with a just perception as to which are the most important, his conduct will probably be well balanced too. If he holds some false doctrines, or if his strongest convictions and most persistent thoughts centre round something of little value, the ill effect will be seen in his conduct.

Beliefs may be of all shades of strength, from a slight inclination of opinion to a confidence indistinguishable from absolute certainty. If a Christian has real faith in his religion and if he attaches the proper importance to Christian doctrines, he not only has a strong hope in life but his conduct is guided at every point. As the Apostle expresses it, he "believes with the heart unto righteousness".

Effects do not follow causes at uniform speed. If the foundations of a building are knocked away, the superstructure

will fall in a few seconds. A subterranean tunnel might last for many days or even weeks with inadequate supports. Gradually the pressure from above would force the roof to give way, and eventually the aperture would close completely, but it might take a long time. In the complex human mind, the effects of changed thought may be still slower in manifesting themselves. Habit may persist and the old course of conduct be pursued long after the foundation has been destroyed. Still more time is needed for great changes in human society as a whole. There are so many cross currents and eddies of opinion to retard the general trend and thus still more to delay the final effects.

The question has sometimes been raised as to what the effect would be throughout Christendom if all faith in the Christian foundations were shattered. Some years ago a writer attempted to portray such a condition, and there was much controversy as to the accuracy of the picture presented. As usual, disputants went to extremes. On the one hand it was supposed that the triumph of unbelief would immediately result in a complete repudiation of all moral restraints, while on the other hand some critics argued that human conduct would be unaffected.

The truth, surely, is that very grave effects would follow the death of Christian faith, but they would follow slowly. There is surely no need to argue the matter; we can see the changes that have taken place already and the gradual effect of those changes. We can hardly believe that any competent observer would deny that this is true regarding Britain during the last fifty years. There is less belief now in the foundation of the Christian religion, and there is a corresponding change in moral conduct. There is less regard for duty, a greater demand for pleasure, not such faithful service, a looser conception of the marriage tie, and in many ways less honesty.

In any attempt to trace cause and effect in these matters, it should be remembered that a clear contrast between a nation of Christians and a nation of atheists is impossible, except by an effort of the imagination. The real disciples of Christ have always been in the minority. It should be remembered, too, that all except very earnest Christians are more influenced by

public opinion than by Christian precept. It needs a very brightly burning faith to make the recollection of one of the old commands a more potent influence than the insistent protests of living neighbours.

Another important factor, of which men often lose sight, is that many of Christ's commands are so clearly "good for the life that now is" that society has every reason for emphasising them for its own protection. A nation that cast off all the restraints of moral precept and allowed the worst effects to follow, might soon be compelled in some measure to retrace its steps by the destructive effects of its own excesses. So we can imagine a completely atheistic nation—if one could exist—settling down eventually to a kind of life in which there would be some indirect recognition of God in a selfish respect for the laws of Nature.

Men who depreciate the influence of Christianity would, perhaps, be content with such a condition. If so, it means that their standard is a low one, and that may account for their failure to perceive the full working of this law of cause and effect. It is possible for a great decline in morals to be unperceived if observers are changing their own point of view at the same time.

If we desire to trace cause and effect in connection with the matter of Christian ethics, we need to take note of all the facts just mentioned, and at the same time take care that we do not vitiate our judgement by changing our own standpoint. We have a nation with Christian ideals, Christian hopes, and a Christian code of morals. A few people are fully persuaded as to the foundations of their religion, the conviction being so strong that it is a hearty belief unto righteousness. A few at the opposite extreme have rejected Christianity entirely, and would like to destroy the faith of others. In between the extremes there are men and women of all grades. The man whose faith is not strong enough to keep him from sin, but quite enough to make him miserable with self-reproach. The man who holds to religion with the idea of being on the right side in case there should be anything in it. The man who does not fear God but fears public opinion. The man who is mainly indifferent but who has a measure of fear and a measure of

love for God and for the devil, for the Church and for the World. The man who swings from one extreme to the other, sometimes responding to the call of ideals and sometimes to the call of the flesh. Finally, there is the man who lives on the animal plane and seems unable to escape from it even for a little while.

Suppose that in the course of fifty years a change takes place in the attitude of the leaders of thought. What gradual effects might be expected to follow? We should surely expect a gradual change in public opinion, and therefore a double cause of change in the influences brought to bear upon the majority of the people. When such a change takes the easy line of negation, repudiating the authority of teaching hitherto revered, the rank and file will readily follow the leaders. Under this influence, men who in the old days would have assumed unreasoningly that the old authorities were true, will now with equal lack of reason assume that they are false. Gradually the habits of duty or prohibition which are entirely based upon the old authority will be changed, and even the moral laws which are also emphasised by human necessity will be weakened. This is the kind of change that we can observe in modern English life.

For many years now in England there has been no coercion to make people go to church. The only reasons men have had for attending a place of worship have been a desire to go, or a conviction that it was a duty charged upon them by Christ and his Apostles, or mere obedience to a respectable convention. Of recent years some religious teachers have joined with the avowed enemy in undermining the authority of the Scriptures, with the very natural result that people do not so much as trouble to go to church.

At one time it was quite usual for Christian households in England to have Bible reading and family prayers every evening in their homes. Now it is rare. A perfectly natural result of a change of doctrine, beginning with leaders of thought gradually changing public opinion and then affecting the conduct of the people. If Christians believe that Jesus was the anointed of God, and that he uttered the words regarding worship recorded of him in John 4, they will surely desire to render the worship

required. If, however, they are assured by those who are supposed to know, that the fourth Gospel is neither inspired nor authentic, but the imaginative work of a later writer, it is perfectly natural that they should lose interest in the idea of worship altogether. Who knows whether God requires it? The older members of the family take their rest, and the younger members get on with any wordly amusement that attracts them.

There are probably many modernists who would claim that these changes are of no importance, or perhaps even that they are beneficial. Such men do not recognise the virtue or the good in anything that fails to yield obvious temporal benefit to the human race. The first part of the old law of Love is thus completely ignored. There is no obvious and immediate advantage in loving God and rendering worship to Him. The claims of our neighbours are more insistent, for human life is hardly possible without some effort to recognise human rights and to render social service. Thus an educated and intelligent selfishness demands that some of the teaching of Christ should be respected. Many people seem to be drifting into this position, and there is a tendency to suppose that it is quite satisfactory. It is still described as Christianity.

The relationship between doctrine and conduct is surely very obvious in all this. We should suppose that even the most definite rejecter of the higher claims of Christ would be logical enough to recognise that if those claims prove true after all, the conduct of the men who have repudiated them will not be regarded as satisfactory. When a long absent king returns with overwhelming power to take possession of his country, he will surely choose for his friends and assistants the men who have waited and laboured for him in his absence, not those who have proclaimed that he would never come back and that none of his commands had any authority. The mere fact that they have respected those of his laws that accorded with their own interests will not commend them much.

We can illustrate this law of cause and effect on a lower plane where its operation may be followed more readily. Even when the immediate interests of society demand that respect should be shown to Christian principles there is a tremendous

difference between the effects of a Christian ideal and the mere dictates of human prejudice.

Take two subjects in which the immediate interests of human beings are vitally affected: the sanctity of the marriage tie, and honesty in the ordinary transactions of life. From the Christian point of view these matters are both covered by the two major principles of obedience and love. They are also the subject of many practical exhortations designed to drive home the lessons of the main principles. From the point of view of temporal human interests, both subjects are of such importance that here, if anywhere, we might expect to be able to knock away the foundation of doctrine without any effect on human conduct. If men have good homes they desire to preserve them, even if they might in certain circumstances be willing to wreck the homes of others. Men always hate dishonesty in other men, even if they practice it themselves. Society may, therefore, be expected to set up defences in these matters, and here the influence of Christian teaching might be regarded as negligible.

In point of fact, however, anyone who has had opportunity to make a contrast is conscious that there is a great difference even here. In the matter of marriage, the majority have always fallen so far below the Christian ideal that there never has been any true Christian society with which to make effective comparison. Nevertheless, it is clear that the decline in faith during the last fifty years has already had its effect even in this. The general standard of honesty was always deplorably low judged by Christian ideals, but surely everyone will admit that in this pleasure-loving Christ-rejecting age, it has fallen lower. On every hand we hear the same complaint and, unless we are exceptionally fortunate, we share in the loss and vexation.

If we can make a contrast between the real, wholehearted Christian and the whole-hearted rejecter, the effect of doctrine on conduct is unmistakable. To get light on the Christian point of view regarding these two subjects, read the fifth and sixth chapters of the letter to the Ephesians. If you believe that the writer was an Apostle called by God for special service and that he was commissioned, as he claimed, to enlighten the Gentiles by writing to them "the commandments



of the Lord", take careful note of these chapters and observe how searching and comprehensive they are. If you do not believe in the divine call of the writer, still take note of the words and judge of the influence they should exercise on one who admits their authority.

The principle laid down in chapter five has been little heeded even by believers. Many readers, both men and women, have formed the strange notion that the Apostle puts the woman in a position of subjection and demands much from her, while requiring little from the man. As a matter of plain fact, the command to husbands is far more searching and drastic than the command to wives. The husband is called upon to love his wife "even as Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it". "Even so", says the Apostle, "ought men to love their wives."

Christ gave his life for the Church while it was full of imperfections. He loved the Church so well that he was willing to die in agony for it while it was quite unworthy. If a man makes even an honest endeavour to live up to this ideal, it is very improbable that his wife will be unwilling to fulfil her part of the contract. No rules devised merely by the prudence of man can take the place of this Christian ideal. It is anti-Christian thought that makes unhappy homes, whatever name the faulty ones may bear. Where the Christian rule is remembered and recognised as the law of God, disciples may find their way into a temple of domestic joy, the very existence of which is unknown to others. It is possible even on this blighted earth to experience an Edenic happiness, marred by nothing except the dreadful law of death, and to a Christian even death is not so dreadful as the wreckage of homes so often seen when Christ is rejected.

Perhaps it is still easier to perceive the difference made by Christian doctrine in connection with the other subject we have mentioned—honesty. At first sight some readers might think that here at least we have a principle of right conduct so fundamental that Christian ethics would make very little difference. The interests of society and the philosophical sense of justice would alike seem to insist that this ideal must be maintained even though Christ should be rejected. Study

the teaching of the Apostle Paul and note the specific instructions showing what is involved in the Christian idea of honesty. The disciple of Christ must be honest in the sight of God and man. He must give the just weight and just balance and good service, all rendered as unto the Lord and not unto man. As a servant he must serve well even though his master is unworthy. The Apostle Paul is not alone in this teaching. Christ emphasised the same fundamental principle, and the Apostle Peter also presents the thought in language equally emphatic.

If some should ask, rather bitterly, "What of the masters?" we find that the instruction is equally definite (Eph. 6 : 9). Very severe condemnation is passed on masters who fail to realise their obligations (James 5 : 1-6). The essence of Christian doctrine in this matter is that we must "give, hoping for nothing again", rendering the honest service as unto the Lord and not waiting for the other man first to show himself worthy.

When a man definitely abandons this ideal and repudiates all Christian authority, he will soon have a very different conception of honesty. There are still millions of men and women who would not deliberately steal either money or goods, even if they were sure of escaping detection. They are not honest, however, with their time and their service. They set up their own idea of justice to themselves, and wait for the other party to come into line before being prepared to give of their best. They put the emphasis on receiving instead of on giving, and that is one of the greatest curses of the race.

Many thoughtful men realise that the human race is confronted with terrible dangers. There has been a mighty increase of knowledge, though not perhaps of true education. All classes are articulate and grasping for power, while the world becomes increasingly full of human beings. Unselfish, unstinted and all round service is needed to save the race, but no merely human conception of honest service will move men to lead the way. There is truly a vital difference between the man who renders a merely human conception of "the fair deal" with covetous eyes on his neighbour's goods, and the man who works with singleness of heart on Christian principles,

with good will doing service "as unto the Lord and not unto man".

We have yet to see what results may follow the abandonment of the Christian ideal in a world linked together as now, with such widespread knowledge and such potentialities for good or evil.

Whatever results follow, we may be sure that doctrine and practice will always be related to each other as cause and effect. Sometimes the effects come quickly, sometimes they are long delayed, but they inevitably come at last. The conduct of men may often be inferior to their doctrines, their actions fall below their ideals. We must not ever expect their works to be better than their faith.

### THOUGHT COMES FIRST, AND THOUGHT CAN BE CONTROLLED

HASTY people are sometimes accused of speaking and acting without thinking. The accusation is untrue, or at least it is an exaggeration. Men often speak and act with insufficient thought as, for instance, those who make this exaggerated accusation, but there is always thought of a kind before any speech or deed of a normal human being.

We need not stay to discuss whether the subconscious impulses which in abnormal conditions may produce unreasonable speech or action can be dignified with the name of thought. We will not try to appear learned by plunging into the obscurities of advanced psychology. We will only take note of some simple truths which any normal man may find in himself. We have a profound conviction that the study of psychology is valuable just on this elementary and obvious ground, while most of the ideas thrown up from the advanced field beyond are of doubtful truth and still more doubtful virtue.

It is unfortunate that even the simplest of truths have been clouded in the dust of controversy. There is no subject in which there has been a more complete illustration of the law that extremes beget extremes. There are men who claim that the human will is so potent that it can bend all things to itself, and there are men on the other hand who deny that we have any free will. There are some who have exaggerated the mysteries of the subconscious mind, and there are others who are prepared to deny that there is a subconscious mind at all.

Atheists usually deny the freedom of the human will. It is, doubtless, a logical result of their negative doctrine of materialism. It is peculiarly incongruous that some who have made this denial have, at the same time, described themselves as

free-thinkers. This is all indicative of confused thought which may easily lead to fruitless and destructive strife.

The argument of the strict materialist has been based presumably upon the idea that even mental processes are mechanical. It has been maintained that the action of the will has only been through intensified desire. Even the conflict between inclination and duty has been represented as a mechanical clashing between different desires with the certainty that the strongest would win and result in action.

There may be a sense in which such a conception of the meaning of desire may be true, but the subject has often been presented in a way that is as unreasonable as it is un-Christian. It should be remembered that when a sympathetic observer of human troubles undertakes a "defence of the bottom dog" on these lines, he is setting up an equally good defence of the top dog. If all men are the slaves of chance and circumstance, then it is true that the wastrel cannot help being a wastrel, but neither can the tyrant help being a tyrant. In that case it would be folly to blame either; but then, of course, the one who blames and scolds cannot help himself either! The possibilities of farce are endless with such a conception of the mind.

We can imagine the precocious boy who has read some of this negative teaching, putting up a defence for his breach of decorum. He explains to his guardian that he is the slave of heredity and environment, and that consequently he is not to be blamed for his misdemeanour. And we can imagine the guardian listening gravely and rather grimly to the defence, and then as he reaches for the leather strap explaining that while the argument is perfectly correct and the boy is not in any way to be blamed, he himself is equally helpless and quite unable to resist the temptation to administer the soundest of thrashings.

If I am the slave of conflicting desires and forced with mechanical precision to yield to the strongest of them, who am I to experience these soul conflicts or to have desires running counter to the natural inclinations of the flesh? If the answer is that I am only part of the blind forces that enslave me, or that I am the sum total of all the material clashings, the

subject becomes "confusion worse confounded". We are simply bound to postulate a certain freedom of the will and a reality of human personality, or clear thought becomes impossible. As a wise man remarked many years ago, it is easy for anyone to argue against the freedom of the will, but we all know in ourselves that we possess it.

Much harm has been wrought by extremists in this as in all other subjects. We have actually heard a normally intelligent man, in revolt against the excesses of psychologists, deny the very existence of a subconscious part of the mind. Poor fellow, if all his mental impressions were in his conscious mind at the same moment, of course he would be hopelessly insane. It is certain that he did not really mean what he said. Every intelligent human being who will reflect for a few minutes will agree that the greater part of the mind is beneath the plane of consciousness. The complicated movement of muscles when we walk is sub-conscious. The still more complex movements of lips and tongue in speaking are so distinctly remote from the conscious plane that one who has not studied the subject is totally unable to describe how the commonest of words are pronounced until he experiments and takes careful note of how it is done. If an audience is challenged to describe how a well-known word is pronounced, it is amusing to note the movement of many lips as all who are interested frame the word, and in effect ask their lips and tongue how the sound is framed.

A man may have twelve thousand words or more in his vocabulary, but he may be very thankful that they are not all in his conscious mind at the same moment. If he is a fluent speaker, he can usually bring up each word as he wants it, and in the course of a public address there is a constant stream of words coming up from the subconscious part of the mind and passing back to it again after the thought has been expressed. Sometimes a speaker will temporarily forget the word or the name that he wants. Almost all people are subject to such occasional lapses; some suffer frequently. In such an event we say that we cannot call the thought or word to mind. It is, of course, in the mind all the time; but it is in the subconscious

part, and for some reason we cannot bring it to the plane of consciousness.

It is possible in this connection to experience a very curious sensation. A thought that we had desired to express has slipped from us. We try to remember what it was, but at first without avail. Then suddenly we become conscious that it is coming. We could not explain why we know, for we have not yet laid hold of it, but for some undefinable reason we are certain that the lost thought is returning to the plane of consciousness. In another second we have it, and feel that it was foolish ever to have forgotten.

Hidden away in the subconscious there are many vague feelings and impressions as well as definite memories. Sometimes these feelings may be stirred in a manner that reason fails to analyse. The feelings may even be so complex and unreasonable as to be a serious menace to mental stability. Then it is helpful to know how such subconscious entanglements may arise. When an unreasonable feeling of depression or horror, or anger, or fear, has been traced to its cause, the work of overcoming it becomes much easier. As was pointed out in a previous chapter, the more fully we are aware of our mental condition, the better will be our balance and the more effective our work.

Every man may be conscious of these several parts of his mind. There is the observatory containing the delicate instruments that keep him in touch with the outside world. There is the workroom where the messages recorded are compared and judgements are formed; and there is the great storehouse where impressions and ideas of all kinds and in all stages of development are kept ready for future use. Presiding over all is the "ego" as it has been called, aware of the various influences and in measure aware of the mental processes, able to encourage or to inhibit, able to decide, to will, and to put the muscles in action—able, in fact, to make use of all the lower parts of both mind and body. As the Psalmist expressed it, we are indeed "fearfully and wonderfully made".

An intelligent man is always aware of these elementary truths regarding the mind. Even if he argues against the existence of the will, as men sometimes do in spite of their

intelligence, he is all the while acting counter to his arguments. He really accepts as a fundamental axiom of life the fact that he is a responsible human being, coming in contact with other responsible beings. When a man is not accounted responsible it is because of some defect, or a diseased condition of the mind that makes him abnormal. There is a lack of co-ordination between the various parts that prevents the exercise of judgement and will. Such a man is not responsible; in other words, he is not sane.

As a matter of fact, it is only when we take this view of life that it becomes possible to make an effective defence of the unfortunate. A man who was hungry and whose children were hungry, has stolen bread. Another man who was in no such need has been gambling with trust funds in the hope of making a fortune. Both have breached the law, but the circumstances are very different. The first had the best of excuses; the other had no excuse at all. If, however, we took the materialistic view as it has been advocated by some writers, we should have to excuse them both on the grounds that they are equally the slaves of circumstances, which has determined their action. Let us thrust aside this unreal, speculative argument, and deal with facts as we experience them in ourselves. With a little of such introspection we soon become conscious of a most interesting truth which at once reveals the weakness and the strength of the human will.

We may have an important decision to make, and we are conscious of influences pro and con. We can, if we like, delay the final decision, and during the interval of waiting we can bring under review the various factors that will influence our determination. We are conscious that we can inhibit some thoughts and encourage others. We can, if we will, call up feeling to assist, or it may be, to subvert the reason. Sometimes men try to work up feelings of anger or indignation to assist them in carrying out a part that would not be approved by cold reason. Others have chosen a better part, working up a feeling of courage and enthusiasm to help them in the performance of difficult duties. Thoughts and feelings act and react on each other. It is literally true as stated in the Book of Proverbs: "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he".

There may be times when we are confronted with an issue calling for no skill of judgement but for much force of will. Duty points definitely in a certain direction, but inclination pulls quite as distinctly the other way. We are fully aware that no amount of argument can really affect the matter. If we give way to inclination, we shall realise, perhaps, more distinctly than ever what our duty really was, and we shall be sorry, perhaps even bitterly repentant, for the error into which we have fallen. Yet inclination is so strong that we may be tempted in the moment of weakness to accept the materialistic doctrine of determinism, and put in the feeble plea that we cannot help ourselves. In such a crisis we may make the discovery that while we are not strong enough to overcome by a single effort of the will, we can find a mental process that will give us ample strength for the hour of need. There is an interval between the first contemplation of the problem and the final time for action, just as there was in the experience of the Saviour when the Spirit was given to him "without measure" and he knew exactly what he had to face. "He was driven of the Spirit into the wilderness", and there he faced in the wilderness vision the trials that so soon were to come in daily experience, and he "set his face like a flint" that he should not be ashamed in the work that he had come to perform. So much depends on how we fill up the interval, especially in the matter of what we think.

What thoughts shall we encourage and cultivate? What thoughts shall we check in their inception? These minor points of decision are comparatively easy, but they make all the difference when the time comes for action. They build up reserves of power that seem so natural and inevitable when we use them, that we perhaps fail to realise that they are the product of those sound thoughts that required little effort of will in their simple beginnings.

When nearing the time for momentous action, the worst possible thought is to hover over the forbidden and contemplate the attractions of the thing we desire to avoid. The best kind of thought is positive, constructive, and vital. "Be not overcome of evil", says the Apostle, "but overcome evil with good." Again he says, "Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure,

lovely, and of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4 : 8).

It is as if a man wishes to move a heavy weight, but protests that he is not strong enough. We point out to him that although a direct exercise of his strength may be inadequate, there are means ready to hand that will endow him with the necessary power. There is a block of wood that will serve as a fulcrum, and near by is a bar for a lever. If he is in earnest in his desire to move the weight, he will soon take the necessary steps to apply the aids when they are pointed out to him. Apart from such leverage all the desire in the world would leave him still impotent.

We see illustrations of this principle every day. No reasonable man expects to attain to honourable position in mortal life without going through the necessary process of training. It seems only just that, if his desire for success is so slight that he will not take the little successive steps that lead to the coveted position, he should fail. The same thought was expressed by Christ in connection with the ultimate hopes of man. "Are there few that be saved?" the disciples asked. He answered: "Strive to enter in at the straight gate; for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in and shall not be able." The Greek word here rendered "strive" is the one from which we get the word "agony". The word rendered "seek" is defined by Dr. Young as meaning "to seek, desire, require, question". Many may seek to enter, in the questioning spirit of the half-hearted philosopher, desiring to be on the right side if there should prove to be any stability in Christian hopes. Christ requires his disciples to agonise after the manner of those who competed in the Olympic games, casting off everything that hinders and calling forth all their powers in concentrated effort. Apart from the prize he seeks, the athlete may find that the effort is worth while in the sense of physical fitness and strength. A sense of spiritual conquest and mental stability would be a thousand times more worth while, even apart from the gift of eternal life.

When a man knows of simple means for gaining strength and does not use them, it surely indicates that he does not really desire to be strong. If a man makes no effort to overcome evil

by the exercise of strengthening thought, it indicates that his desire to avoid the evil is not very sincere. We are reminded of an amusing story illustrating this point. The little boy had been forbidden to bathe one fine Sunday. He transgressed, but protested that he really had meant to obey, but when he saw the river it looked so tempting that he could not resist it. "But", said the mother, "if you really meant to obey, why did you take your swimming costume and towel with you when you went out?" "Oh", he stammered, "I took them in case I might be tempted."

The Apostle Paul says: "Put ye on the Lord Jesus, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof". If we make provision, we shall soon find occasion for use. Thought comes first, and as with every kind of growth, the younger it is the easier it is to guide. If we have a genuine desire to live Christian lives, we must begin with Christian thought. Very often in human experience, the toleration, and sometimes even the encouragement of wrong thought has led to such evil feelings and deeds, that in the latter stages the plea of the materialist might be true. The sinner is not responsible for his actions. In other words, he is not quite sane. If he had taken wrong thoughts in hand earlier, he might with some difficulty have stopped the evil growth. If he had dealt with them at the very inception, he might have guided them aright quite easily.

Herein is the best possible benefit of his teaching. Some readers may be wise enough to profit by it early in life. They may, perhaps, see some positive evidence that it has helped them, but they will never know of all the pitfalls from which it has saved them.

The Apostle Peter makes use of a fine phrase, based upon Eastern customs of dress, but still quite intelligible to the men of the West: "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end" (1 Pet. 1 : 13). Dress seems almost part of a human being, and flowing robes add to human dignity. When there is work to be done, however, the robes need to be controlled and kept in place. The modern Christian who would keep ahead of pagan chariots and lead erring souls back to the field where good seed is sown, must gird up the loins of his mind and run as the prophet Elijah ran before the chariot

of Ahab from Mount Carmel to the gates of Jezreel. Undesirable thoughts must be inhibited, idle thoughts dismissed, good thoughts and feelings encouraged and developed. He must make the choice while choice is easy, and use the little thoughts that can be controlled to build up and direct the big thoughts that are so much harder to turn from an established course.

Girding up the loins of the mind implies a gathering together of all parts of the mentality, a concentration of forces, a use of the lower part of the brain to establish the final object of the will. Well-trained habits become most helpful servants; ill-trained habits become tyrant masters. In the most literal sense it is true that as a man thinketh, so shall he be.

We are aware that many thoughts flit into the conscious mind unbidden and perhaps even undesired. They may be presented to us through the senses, or they may be thrown up from the great store of memory. We cannot prevent this fleeting presentation even of evil thoughts, but we are perfectly conscious that we are able to make our selection of which thoughts to encourage and which to reject. We can at any moment call for a halt in the idle stream of consciousness, and fix the spot light of attention upon something that is worthy. We can call forth other thoughts and seek for new knowledge to nourish the chosen idea, thus making it grow, and most effectively crowding out the undesirable.

The tragic truth is that most of us fail to realise properly that thought is real. Yet in one sense it is the only reality. It precedes and causes action, and it remains after the action is over. A man may indulge an evil thought, supposing that it is only a thought and of no importance. It may be only a thought, but in the final issue it is the man himself.

The true Christian realises his responsibility. He knows that he "is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts and enticed", and he would never be so foolish as to reproach the Creator or protest that he cannot help his action. He knows that ample provision is made for him to develop his character, and that the selection of the right daily exercise and the right daily thought is relatively easy. The true Christian must be an optimist, because he is confident that there is a final object in

the existence of humanity. Although all flesh and blood is destined to perish, the thoughts of God are eternal, and God will restore from the human scrap-heap all that is worth restoring,

The true Christian is anxious to find all the daily helps that will bring him into harmony with the divine. He will understand the apostolic exhortation in all its force and beauty, and he will, perhaps, know how to translate the thought into action, and action back again into still deeper thought. "Gird up the loins of your minds; be sober, and hope unto the end." The same ideal is still more definitely expressed by the Apostle Paul, "Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ".

## THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF HUMAN NATURE

THIS is rather a negative phase of our subject, but it is necessary to take note of it, for the true Christian must be on guard continually against the pitfalls that beset his path. We may easily form a wrong impression of human nature through failing to recognise the effects of education and training. It may be accounted very unscientific, but it is a fundamental Christian doctrine that the ancestors of all men now living received some divine instruction. It is easy to see why the laws which are good for human life should have survived better than commands regarding the worship of God. Unless a nation becomes very degraded it will retain some ideal of human conduct, and sometimes doctrine will be translated into practice in a manner that commands our admiration; but it is a mistake to suppose that such deeds are an expression of uneducated human nature. They reveal the influence of training and ideals.

It is possible for a man to manifest tender and attractive traits of character, which are in reality analogous to that which may sometimes be seen in some of the lower animals. Some strange friendships have been observed in the animal world, and human sentiment has sometimes exalted such phenomena in a manner quite out of harmony with the facts. A cat may in exceptional circumstances form a strange friendship with a chicken, and yet remain a very cruel cat.

We may well be glad when a cruel and unscrupulous man reveals some kindly and good-humoured feelings, but we should make a great mistake if we supposed that the momentary benevolence was necessarily the expression of his character.

Without staying to argue the question, however, we may point out that there is no mistaking the Bible estimate of unenlightened human nature. "I know", says the Apostle,

“that in me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing.” “Out of the heart”, said the Lord Jesus, “proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, covetousness, deceit, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. These defile the man.” Again, the Apostle declared that the carnal mind could not be subjected to the law of God, and that to be carnally minded is death.

If we turn to the Old Testament, we find, perhaps, an even more definite statement as to the unlovely character of unregenerate humanity. The Psalmist speaks of children of the wicked going astray, speaking lies in early infancy. The wise man declared that “he who trusts in his own heart is a fool” (Prov. 28 : 26). Finally, we have the prophet Jeremiah saying, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer. 17 : 9).

This is not a pleasant or flattering estimate of the human heart, but surely there are few men of experience who will deny that it is true. It furnishes the chief explanation of the black pages of history. In real life we rarely find hero and villain in clearly marked contrast for all observers to understand. The hero of real life is not wholly admirable, while the villain is not a clearly-labelled ogre, glorying in his villainy. Often it depends on which camp the observer happens to be in as to which is hero and which is villain. Evil is often wrought with such a parade of admirable motive and so much of deceptive pretence, that villainy appears virtuous and cruelty is disguised as kindness. Very often there is a large element of self-deception in the attitude that men assume, and sometimes they deceive themselves completely. We might go so far as to affirm that very rarely indeed can human beings be quite free from the perversions of self-centred judgements and of narrow self-appreciation.

If the sense of awareness of which we wrote in a previous chapter is fairly well developed, a man may sometimes detect himself in the very act of building up pretences from the resources of his deceitful heart. It will probably only be in connection with minor matters that he will penetrate the disguise, at all events until he has made considerable progress in self-knowledge. A young man has particular and personal

reasons for wishing to visit a certain locality. The way half opens for business duties to take him there. Instantly he can think of a score of business arguments to open the way completely and bring about the desired result. He will never once mention the real reason for his insistence, for that is private. He may with considerable skill conceal his anxiety and present his arguments with a subtle disguise of personal indifference and complete devotion to business. There may be an element of self-deception, but in such a matter any normal man will be conscious that he is not quite free from personal bias. If there is nothing at all discreditable in his private schemes, he will smilingly admit to himself that his strongest reason has not been disclosed. If at the same time he is conscientious, he will argue with himself that all the reasons he has urged for the desired move are perfectly sound from the business point of view, and might just as well have been presented if he personally had been indifferent. There will probably be an element of self-deception here, but with an intelligent man it will neither be complete nor dangerous.

There will be a much larger element of self-deception if the private ambition is of a discreditable character that the man does not like to admit even to himself. His mental processes will then be much more subtle, and his arguments more cunning. The man with high principles is not free from this evil. On the contrary, the more anxious he is to aim at an ideal, the more deceitful the heart is apt to be.

If a man has ever detected himself in this effort at self-deception he will probably see the beginning of the same process many times, even after he has made considerable progress in self-control. Circumstances present him with a temptation to deviate from the path of duty, and instantly an excuse or pretext presents itself. Sometimes the collateral thought is thrown up like the subconscious reaction of a nerve. It takes shape almost before there is time to frame the thought that duty calls another way and the alluring path of deviation must be declined.

The deceptive heart is responsible for yet more serious evils than these clever excuses and pretexts which are such a familiar feature of its activity. It is inevitable in human society that



wrong feeling and wrong thought should affect other lives besides that of the individual in whom they originate. "No man liveth unto himself." If a man lived on a desert island without ever coming into contact with other human beings, he might be able to indulge this tendency to deceive himself without injuring others. In ordinary human society, however, those around him have to suffer. He is punished in turn by the reaction and the similar unreasonableness of other men.

How familiar we are with the petty feuds that break out in all grades of society. How often we have heard two totally different versions of the same dispute, each side claiming to be truthful, almost to a fault, and each side deploring the atrocious lies told by the other. A humorous event that used to be popular at sports, might almost have been designed as a pictorial presentation of human perversity. It was a wrestling match or football match between sweeps and bakers. Each appeared at the start well covered with the distinguishing marks of his trade, and when the match was over neither side was improved in appearance by the free interchange of soot and flour. A vociferous protest from each side that the other was wholly responsible for the ugly result, would have completed the picture.

It is clear that if men are not honest with themselves, they will not be honest with other men. The man who persistently finds excuses for himself for evils that occur, will be almost sure to throw the blame on someone else. Sometimes this is done to such a pitiful extent that an impartial observer, with a knowledge of the facts, finds no difficulty in realising the truth of these terrible words regarding the human heart: "Deceitful above all things and desperately wicked".

Sometimes wickedness is not so evident as a foolish self-appreciation, which so easily goes hand-in-hand with self-deception. We have all known the young man who makes the most hopeless failure of his business affairs, sinking all the money that his friends will advance to him, but remaining confident whatever happens that, if only he had been trusted with another hundred pounds, all would have been well. It is the old instinct of self-excuse that inevitably leads to wronging others.

When bitter feelings are aroused, the activities of the deceitful heart are especially sinister. It has long been realised by students of human nature that men often hate those whom they have wronged more than those who have wronged them. King Solomon remarked on this tendency as he did on most human failings: "A lying tongue hateth those who are afflicted by it." It is a horrible evil that has often been rediscovered in later generations. The proverb remains perfectly true to-day, and all who have heard and heeded the ancient words of wisdom are on their guard.

The explanation of this ugly human trait probably lies in the same root cause as the tendency to blame others, of which we have been writing. When a man has treated another harshly either by word or deed, there would be an uncomfortable feeling of self-reproach if it had to be admitted that actual wrong had been done. If, therefore, he is not prepared to make reparation or to express regret, the one who has so acted tries to build up a defence for himself and to find excuses for his severity. He works up a feeling of antagonism in extenuation of the blow he has already struck. To use the Scripture phrase, he "watches for iniquity, and makes a man an offender for a word". That which would have excited no comment in anyone else assumes a most sinister appearance when found in his victim. He puts the worst possible construction on everything that is said or done and "rejoices in the iniquity" he has so diligently sought out. All the while the deceitful heart is feeling: "Here is justification for my attitude."

There is a pleasanter side to this picture, as we tried to show in an earlier chapter. Other factors being equal, we tend to have a kindly feeling for those on whom we have conferred a benefit. The deeds of love show the way to the reality of love. The expression may precede the feeling. A true Christian will be instructed by Scripture in order that he may learn how to choose the good and refuse the evil.

History reveals many instances of men persuading themselves that their most evil and vindictive feelings were only a commendable zeal for the work of God. The words and deeds of malice have been disguised as duty. History also

shows some examples of forbearance and sympathy after the pattern set by Christ. We are able to draw both negative and positive lessons. If anything can make us sufficiently severe with ourselves to be honest and to profit by the lessons of the past, it will be the guiding light of Scriptural principles.

There is another very serious failing that needs to be mentioned in this connection. We refer to pride, one of the deadly sins, one of the abominations denounced in the Proverbs. Nothing lends itself more readily to disguise, and the deceitful heart seems to have excelled itself in devising coverings and new dresses for human pride. We will not discuss whether the word can ever be applied to a quality that is legitimate and desirable. Every intelligent man will at least agree that too often it serves as the proper description of a quality which is utterly evil. It causes wars and violence, it prevents men from taking the course which they know is right, it often leads to great cruelty; and if sometimes it may chance to have an opposite effect, making men accept duties which they would otherwise shirk, the little good it does is a poor set-off against the tale of evil. It is easy to recognise how abhorrent human pride must be in the sight of God. "Who can understand his errors?" Who can strip pride of its deceptive covering? It can be disguised as duty, as piety, as humility, as zeal, or as indifference. It can take the form of overweening confidence in self, of foolish vanity, or of self-righteous complacency. It is found everywhere, and among all classes of people. Even the "inferiority complex", as it is called in these days of psychological smatterings, has its root in pride.

If a Christian feels depressed and melancholy without any solid reasons, he does well to examine himself for the demon of disguised pride. A Christian is permitted to sorrow for the loss of those who are removed by death, but even then he should not "sorrow as those who have no hope", but take comfort from the words of Scripture. We are called upon to weep with those who weep, and to aid by sympathy. In the absence of any such special cause for sorrow, the true Christian should not be depressed or melancholy. It may even be a deadly sin to give way to such feelings, as indeed it was accounted by the early Christians. "Finally", says the Apostle,

in summing up a wonderful exhortation, "rejoice in the Lord, rejoice, and again I say, rejoice." Joy is given as the second of the fruits of the Spirit: "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance".

We are not depressed and made melancholy by sympathy with the suffering that is in the world. Nurses see the most suffering, but they are the most cheerful of souls, although often deeply sympathetic. They are doing all they can to help, and that does not make for depression or melancholy. The feeling of melancholy is not often the result of pain or deprivation. The blind and the lame and the diseased are often wonderfully cheerful, in spite of all their disadvantages. There may, perhaps, be physical causes beyond the reach of mental influences, but such instances are rare. We are persuaded that the greatest causes of melancholy and depression are disappointed ambition and wounded vanity, both having their origin in pride.

What bitterness there is in the smaller house, the lost business, the restricted social ambition! A man protests that it is for the thought of those dependent upon him that he is cut to the quick, and he may be perfectly honest, but if his complex feelings could be analysed it would be found that always the proud flesh feels most pain.

The Christian minister, whether paid or unpaid, is beset by this demon of pride. He may be aware of the danger, and keep it down; he may be saved by a sense of humour, or he may become self-centred and miserable. If a popular preacher is never conscious of the demon of pride trying to enter his mind, it is simply because the demon is safely inside already, and has taken possession of the instruments of introspection. All the evils of depression and melancholy may then follow, especially if the man, apart from this sin of pride, is a genuine Christian, for disappointment is almost inevitable. The real cause of the trouble is a wonderfully disguised pride.

If a preacher of the true Gospel can avoid this enemy and maintain a proper sense of balance, he will not lose heart or fail to find the joy that comes direct from God. He may think that his speaking is superior to that of others, for that is only natural. He, at least, aims at his own ideals, while other

men, perhaps, have widely different standards. It need occasion no surprise, therefore, if he approximates nearer than anyone else to his conception of how the work should be done. Some hearers may perhaps agree with him, others will not. Why either be puffed up by approval or depressed by criticism? If he remembers the Bible estimate of human nature and Bible warnings regarding human weakness, there will be no room for such folly. Whatever powers he possesses were given to him. A microbe might turn him into an imbecile. If he is permitted to develop special powers, he can still give nothing to God except the tribute of obedience and praise. God has no need of his eloquence any more than of the rich man's gold or the widow's mite. If, therefore, he makes great preparation and few come to hear, or if he paints truth in glowing colours and men yawn, he will not be depressed. However far his attainments fall short of his ambitions, he will be happy in the thought that he has done his best, and God requires no more than this.

Pride is mentioned by Christ as one of the evils coming from the heart of man. Of all those evil emanations it is probably the most disguised. It causes quarrels and prevents reconciliation. It is the direct negation of that quality of humility that God requires in all who approach to Him. It causes men to rebel against God, and at the same time makes them miserable. "Pride goeth before a fall", and there is reason to believe that more than any other evil it will be the cause of the worst of all falls, the final and irrevocable repudiation in the day of judgement. "For behold", says the prophet Malachi, "the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch."

## THE FINAL OBJECTIVE

WE cannot lay this subject aside without raising a question which might easily prove provocative of strife and ill-feeling. Men often allow matters in which they disagree to lead them into a practical repudiation of principles that all have accepted in theory. They become so earnest in the discussion of final Christian objects that they flout all the elementary rules of Christian conduct.

In spite of this risk, however, we must raise the question as to what is the final object of Christianity, and we cannot be content to leave it as a question. Some readers will feel satisfied that they found the answer long ago, and only need to be diligent in applying Christian principles that they may live and develop characters in harmony therewith. Others, perhaps, are very doubtful whether the question can be answered at all. They may even feel that it is undesirable to make the attempt. We are living in an age of polite half-tones. There has been such a blending of colours that it is difficult to distinguish friend from foe. Some Christian ministers now use language that would have labelled them as mild and half-hearted infidels a generation ago. On the other hand, men who repudiate the name Christian often admit so much that they do not seem like enemies. The situation is rendered worse by the attitude of some stalwart Christians who seem to think that as virtue often causes offence, there must be virtue in being offensive. Their zeal outweighs both knowledge and courtesy. By their intemperate advocacy they often do harm to the cause they love.

This is not the place to marshal Christian evidence. We have not space to touch the fringe of it. We will, however, suggest a line of thought that may prove salutary to those who have not yet found an answer to the question what is the final

object of the Christian religion, and who may be doubtful even as to the authority of Christ.

We suggest that a desire to avoid unpleasant conflict and humiliating rebuke has often so cramped and curtailed the study of Christian foundations, that men have not even begun to see the naked truth. Finally, the most perverse and irrational of higher critical repudiations has been accepted or at least tolerated, rather than maintain a faith which might lead to terrifying realities.

One might suppose that there was a conspiracy in these days to keep people from knowing of some of the issues. We do not suggest that there is actually a conspiracy. A far more subtle influence has been at work. Men are not anxious to defend the authority of a book if they have already wandered away from its teaching. The people of the village will readily believe that the manorial records are forgeries, if these records discredit the title deeds of their own property. This is not a cynical comment on human dishonesty. It simply states a truth regarding an infirmity of the human intellect to which all men are liable. The danger seems to be exceptionally great when either attempting to face or attempting to evade the problem of religion.

We will try to make the point clearer in connection with the subject immediately before us.

According to the New Testament and the views held for centuries by earnest Christians, the work of Christ was foreshadowed in the Old Testament writings. It is perfectly evident to anyone who will take the trouble to reflect for a minute that this belief must necessarily go hand in hand with a belief in the inspiration of Scripture. The subject admits of no compromise. The Old Testament Scriptures were produced and preserved among the Jews. They claim to have been written by inspiration of God. The expressions, "Thus saith the Lord", "The word of the Lord came to me", and so forth, are used continually. They claimed to declare the end from the beginning, and to reveal God's purpose with the earth and humanity. These writings are extraordinary in their claims and in their character, but there can be no doubt that in so far as they are human, they are essentially Jewish.

The Jews as a whole have rejected Christ, and so we have the unique example of a Saviour and Leader who has been accepted by so many nations, basing his claims upon the sacred writings of a people who reject him. There can be no collusion here, and there can be no compromise. If the work of Jesus was foreshadowed in the Old Testament, as the writers of the New Testament claim, we must recognise the hand of God in the work. If we deny inspiration, then we must deny that there is any reference to Jesus in the Old Testament Scriptures, and all its predictions must be ascribed to merely human ideas expressed from the standpoint of the Jews.

Now there may be many different opinions as to these Messianic prophecies, and an equal variety of thought as to the origin of Christianity. Some rejecters have admitted the main outline of the Gospel records as historical, only rejecting miracle and all application of Old Testament prophecy. The swoon theory was put forward by such critics, apparently without any perception of the manner in which they surrendered their citadel. Others have even ventured to deny the historical reality of Jesus, ascribing his character to a gradual accumulation of legends. Between the two extremes almost every conceivable shade of unbelief may be found. All agree, however, in denying the application of the Messianic prophecies. Rejecters of all degrees are of course logically bound to take this attitude. The moment we admit any of the prophecies to have anything more than a coincidental application to the work of Christ, we recognise the finger of God in the matter, and there is no sense in maintaining any further resistance to the evidence.

It is not reasonable for any man to attempt any coercion of the opinions of others, and no good purpose is served by expressing astonishment either at the other man's credulity or at his obdurate blindness. Experience shows that it is possible for honest and intelligent men to form exactly opposite opinions regarding almost anything. We need not be disturbed, therefore, to find such diverse opinions regarding Christ. We do feel, however, that before being called to follow leaders of thought into the kind of unbelief which in these days is

becoming orthodox, the people ought to be given the opportunity to see facts on the basis of which an opinion should be formed.

In a very real sense the Bible is like a puzzle with many thousands of pieces to be fitted together. The description of the prophet is in harmony with this thought—"Line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little". Those who have been nourished by the "milk of the word", hear and understand. The "scornful men", who will not hear the truth regarding the "rest" and the "refreshing" that God has prepared for His people, "stumble and fall" (see Isa. 28).

We should think men very unreasonable if in dealing with a literal puzzle they threw away all the pieces that they considered ugly, and then complained that the remaining pieces could not be made to fit together. Yet that is exactly what they have done with the Bible. They have attempted to bring the New Testament into harmony with Greek philosophy, and then have gradually rejected the whole of the Scriptures as being out of harmony with the compromise they have effected.

For instance, the prophet Zechariah presents an arresting picture of the ultimate deliverance of the children of Israel from all their enemies, the pouring out of divine grace upon them, and then at the very hour of their greatest triumph, a great lamentation in all the land because they had pierced their Lord. It is described as a mourning as if for an only son, but a mourning in which there is clearly an element of shame, men seeking to weep in seclusion even from their own wives (Zech. 12). This prediction is applied to Christ in the New Testament. Objectors do not attempt to show that the application cannot be sustained from the New Testament point of view. They merely point to the terrible context, and show how completely out of harmony it is with their popular Grecianised idea of Christianity. They ignore the fact that it is completely in harmony with the New Testament conception of Christ's work, which surely ought to be the deciding factor.

Again, in Psalm 110, there is a prediction part of which Christ quoted and applied to himself. It declared that a great one, whom the Psalmist calls "Lord", is to be exalted to the right hand of the LORD, there to wait until his foes are made

his footstool. The rod of his strength is then to proceed out of Zion, and he is to rule in the midst of his enemies. He is to be a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek, and his people are to be "willing in the day of his power".

A student of the Bible knows that we have a little information regarding Melchizedek in the book of Genesis. He was "priest of the most high God"; he was also king of Salem. We do not read of him offering any animal sacrifices as did the priests of the Levitical order, but he "brought forth bread and wine". The Psalmist's Lord, then, was to be a priest-king of this order. He was to sit at the right hand of the LORD until the time for the rod of his strength to proceed from Zion, and then his people were to be willing in the day of his power. Again the answer of the unbeliever is merely to point out features of the context which are out of harmony with modern ideas, but quite in harmony with the New Testament.

It has become the fashion for writers with some pretence of learning to make a sweeping major assumption which may carry humble readers unreasoningly along the path of unbelief. Such writers will state that: "In these days of scientific knowledge it is, of course, impossible to believe that Christ really rose from the dead, or that he will come back to earth as the first Christians expected." They never explain what scientific knowledge it is that renders the old belief impossible; nor do they attempt to show in what manner the hopelessly illogical compromise they make between Christianity and paganism can be reconciled with modern science. We should have supposed that one of the greatest lessons arising out of modern scientific achievement was to be very cautious how we should declare anything to be impossible. Ideas which would have been regarded as absurd only a century ago have become commonplace facts to us. There is now every reason to accept the truth that the ultimate reality is in an invisible, intangible force apart from which the changing world of material things could have no existence. Some of the descriptions scientists have given us of this force remind us of the more poetical words of Scripture regarding the all-pervading Spirit of God (Psalm 139). There are some scientists who are beginning to suspect that the statement of the Apostle may be more literally

true than has usually been supposed: "In Him (God), we live and move, and have our being." Once admit the existence of God and the all-pervading Spirit by which He works, and all things are possible except contradictions. A miracle is simply something beyond human power. The whole fabric of nature is based upon this unseen force, and thus the basis is already present for the performance of anything that the Creator wills. Science cannot tell us what God would will to do, and no real scientist would attempt to press his knowledge into service for a task so completely beyond its scope. He only can observe the facts of Nature and classify and compare them. Students of the Bible might do well to follow the example of the scientist in this. A careful examination, classification and comparison of that which is written in Scripture might put a check on the most illogical of comments.

One who examines the New Testament with a determination to find what it really teaches will soon prove that it is in harmony with the Old Testament basis; Christ is to come to the earth again with power and glory, and this triumphant appearance of Messiah is to be in a time of war (Matt. 24; Luke 21), even in the crisis of Armageddon (Rev. 16: 15-16), and there are to be terrible sights and judgements (2 Thess. 1: 9). The ugly pictures in some of the Messianic prophecies, which have been used to frighten the Christian student away, can all be matched in the New Testament. The real point of the whole argument based upon the Messianic prophecies is persistently missed by the "scornful men" who reject them. There are in the Old Testament Scriptures many prophecies regarding the "Branch of righteousness" who shall grow up in the line of David, God's righteous servant, the one who shall restore Israel, the king who shall reign and prosper, one like the Son of Man, who shall receive power direct from "The Ancient of Days", and who shall completely subdue all nations in the establishment of the universal Kingdom of God. These prophecies are to a point quite intelligible from the Jewish point of view, for they are completely identified with Jewish hopes. Closely connected with these prophecies, however, there are scores of hints, and in many passages something much more definite than a hint, that the coming King

was to be a priest, a sacrifice, and a Saviour. There are indications of a time of weakness in which the people would not be willing, a time of waiting at the right hand of God, a time for the message to be extended to the Gentiles, and finally a time of manifestation in glory, when Gentiles and Jews will alike be confounded, the Gentile kings seeing things of which they had "never been told", and the Jews weeping because they had pierced their Lord. It is no explanation of these prophecies to point out that they are out of harmony with the ideas held by some of the men who have quoted them. Indeed, while trying to avoid the use of any strong language, we must remark that the attempts we have seen to explain away the Messianic prophecies have simply been childish. They have persistently ignored the facts, and have merely played off the prejudices of those who reject Christ's priesthood against the prejudices of those who reject his kingship. It is true that the context of these Old Testament prophecies often presents ideas quite out of harmony with the thoughts current in Christendom, but we need not go to the Old Testament for that. Let the reader compare the following passages in the New Testament Scriptures and judge what we might expect: 2 Thessalonians 1: 8-9; Revelations 1: 7; 2 Timothy 4: 3; 2 Peter 2: 3; Revelations 17: 14. The context of the old prophecies makes them more remarkable when examined in this light.

It is rather difficult to write temperately of the manner in which the prophecy of Daniel has been treated in recent years. There are, of course, special reasons for disliking this prophecy, and it is easy to trace the mental process that has ended in such a travesty as we find, for instance, in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. We can understand the studied refusal even to mention matters which are quite obvious to all students, whether they regard them as terrible evidence of the foreknowledge of the God who rules in the kingdoms of men, or whether they regard them as distressing chance coincidences which are better to be ignored. We do not doubt that the writer of the article on Daniel in the *Encyclopædia* takes the latter view, and his argument is a natural but deplorable result. A similar perverseness and duplicity will be manifested in almost any family circle if there is a determination to avoid

a painful issue which an innocent visitor might be inclined to raise. The banned subject is never mentioned, and in the effort to steer clear of it there is often a tortuous insincerity quite beneath the usual plane of the speakers. We quite agree that the book of Daniel is not all that we should have expected in a divine revelation, but, as we have no capacity whatever for judging as to how God would give instruction to man, it is quite futile to permit any prejudices of this kind to influence us. We quite agree that the simple-minded Christian, who remembers what Christ said regarding the prophet Daniel, studies the book with certain prejudices in favour of the prophet. We are quite certain, however, that one who approaches the book with a determination to ban anything offensive to human dignity, is in the grip of a prejudice a thousand times more dangerous.

The writer in the *Encyclopædia* having assumed that the book of Daniel was a forgery written by a clever but unscrupulous Jew in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, found it logically necessary to reject the prophecy regarding Messiah in chapter 9. We are told that the events mentioned were all in the past when the book was written. We are told that "Messiah the prince", who was to be cut off, was a priest who had recently been slain. With an extraordinary wresting of the words of Scripture, the critic dates the 490 years from the beginning of the captivity, and the fact that they fail to fit this forced application by about sixty years, is attributed to the ignorance of the author.

If the reader should feel able to accept such a modern view of the prophecy of Daniel, we can exercise no force to prevent it, and this is not the time even to argue the matter at any length. We do urge, however, that all readers should take note of the fact that if the main time period mentioned in this chapter is allowed to have the beginning clearly stated in the prophecy itself instead of dating it from the time assumed by the critic, it runs out to the days when Jesus was on the scene. We would also point out that although the Jews of the days of Antiochus so sadly needed help and encouragement, the prophecy goes on to say that after the cutting off of the anointed prince, a people would come to make both city and

sanctuary desolate. And we would ask readers to remember how completely the history of the first century of the Christian era fits in with this prediction.

Those who reject the Messianic prophecies ask us to believe that the "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"—the one who "did no violence" and in whose mouth there was "no guile"—was a personification of the Jewish nation. Or if, in view of the general prophetic description of the "sinful nation laden with iniquity", we find it quite impossible to accept such a monstrosity, then as an alternative it is suggested that we might apply the words to Jeremiah. In fact, it does not much matter how we apply them so long as we resist the New Testament application to Jesus.

Again, men have to be left to decide for themselves. We cannot use force even to make them look at the light. We do urge them, however, that before following the lead of cultured infidelity, every reader should at least form some acquaintance with the facts. Before you decide that the puzzle is a fraud that cannot possibly be fitted together, at least have a look at those pieces that have been discarded.

You will find nothing in these prophecies that fails to fit in with the New Testament picture of Christ, and you will find much that foreshadows those fundamental truths of the Christian religion that were totally unexpected by men, and are rejected by the Jews as a whole even to this day. You will find that the prophets were described as men of sign. You will find that in foretelling the purpose of God the past tense is often used in connection with events long future, as, for instance, when God said to childless Abraham, "I have made thee a father of many nations". You will find that the prophecies are often poetical and dramatic in character; and you will find that the dominant idea in all the most glowing of them is that the Word of God will prevail, that His glory shall fill the earth, that all men at last shall know Him from the least to the greatest, and "all the earth shall see the salvation of our God".

The centre of all these prophecies is a great one who is surely the Messiah, or anointed prince. He is described as the stone cut from the mountain without hands, as the just one

who shall rule over men, as the King who shall reign and prosper and execute judgement and justice in the earth, and who shall be called THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (Jer. 23). He is the sanctified Lord of hosts, who shall "be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel". In a sustained prophecy of Isaiah, beginning with chapter 49, he is described as called from the womb by God, made like a polished shaft, and surnamed Israel, which means "ruler with God". His work was to be to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the nation of Israel, so wonderfully preserved all through the ages for the great purpose of God. Even before the ingathering, he was to be glorious in the eyes of the Lord his God. His work as the deliverer of Israel was to be accounted as of little effort. He was also to be given as a light to the Gentiles, to be the salvation of God to all the earth. He was to come as a servant, to be despised by man and "abhorred by the nation", but to be chosen by the Holy One of Israel.

As God's righteous servant he is to be exalted and very high in the day when God raises Jerusalem from the dust, and transfers the cup of sorrows from her to her enemies. He will startle many nations (see Revised Version, Isa. 52), and the rulers of the nations will be astonished at him, for they will behold wonders of which they have never been told, although all these matters have been reported with glowing reiteration in those writings which are found in every home throughout the land. Then the prophet breaks forth: "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Even the chosen nation would not see in the days when the chosen one of God grew up among them. He was to be perfect, doing no violence, while the people of Israel as straying sheep would turn every one to his own way. The picture presented in this incomparable chapter is in harmony with all the rest. The "sinful nation, laden with iniquity", the people whose very righteousness was compared to filthy rags (Isa. 64), are here described as like sheep all going astray and turning to their own way. God's righteous servant, who was the subject of the previous chapters, is the one who is described as sinless and perfect. On him the iniquity of all was to be laid, his soul

was to be made an offering for sin, he was to die, yet to be chosen by the Holy One of Israel. The pleasure of the Lord is to prosper in his hand; and in that day of divine blessedness, all wrought through him, "he shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied".

We must make our own decision as to the significance of this extended prophecy, but at least let us make it with eyes attentive to all the facts. Do not reject half of the Christian message because it is unpalatable and then throw away the remainder because in its marred form it seems inharmonious. It is pitiable that so many people have rejected Christianity as unworkable without ever having tried it, and have denied its truth without ever having looked at it. The present writer is convinced that almost anyone who will seek out the facts, even in connection with this limited phase of the subject that we have been considering, will come to a point where his scepticism and natural resistance will give way. He will be forced to recognise the truth that the work of Jesus was foreshadowed in the sacred writings of those who reject him. There will be then no longer any logic or reason in the tortuous efforts to explain away the Messianic prophecies. To admit the hand of God at all is to admit everything. The gates will be opened, and the flowing tide of truth will sweep away the refuge of lies and all the cultured perversions of half-hearted infidelity.

If once the mind is thus prepared so that the sight of divine things is possible, the final object of the Christian religion can be seen in all parts of Scripture. It is the complete cutting off of the flesh.

The repudiation of human devices for the covering of physical nakedness, and the provision of skins from animals, foreshadowed the death of a sacrifice and the production of a garment to cover the moral nakedness of mankind. The words uttered to fallen woman taught that her Seed was to be bruised by the power of sin, yet that he would far more effectively bruise the enemy. The rejection of Cain's offering of fruits and the acceptance of the lamb from the flock in symbol introduced the "lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world".



From thence we may go straight forward in the reading of Scripture, finding unobtrusive but unmistakable pointers at every turn. The covenants of promise were inseparably connected with circumcision, the liveliest of all figures of the cutting off of sinful flesh. The promised son of Abraham came, neither through the will of the flesh, nor according to man's expectation. A barren and elderly woman was the mother, and she had to wait for many years before the realization of the promised son. Then when the divinely-ordered child was grown to years of especial favour, the command came to slay him as a burnt offering on the mount that witnessed the sacrifice of the chosen Lamb of God so many years later. The name Abraham gave to this place meant "the Lord will provide", with special reference to the provision of a sacrifice. In all this there was an allegorical foreshadowing of the work of Christ.

The deliverance of Israel from Egypt was through the blood of a slain lamb. Their preservation in the wilderness was through bread from heaven and water of life from the smitten rock. Their altar had to be of unhewn stone on which no tool had set its mark, and without steps, lest the nakedness of man should be found thereon. The great deliverer who is to establish the kingdom of God is symbolised by a stone cut out of the mountain without hands.

All the provisions of Israel's law emphasised the holiness of God and the uncleanness of man. None but the high priest was permitted to enter the Most Holy place of the tabernacle, and he could only enter once in the year, with flesh meticulously washed, with the specially wrought linen garments to cover him, with a perfect sacrifice to offer, and with a cloud of incense to cover the mercy seat. Thus provided, the high priest was required on the day of atonement to enter the Most Holy place to seek grace for the people, just as Jesus has entered into heaven; and the high priest returned with a message of peace to those who waited for him, just as Jesus will shortly return to his waiting disciples.

From all this there emerges a clear principle, fraught with vital significance for the guidance of human conduct. The final object of the Christian religion is expressed in the cruci-

fixion. It is the conquest and the cutting off of human flesh as unfit to stand before God, and in this process of destruction, characters are to be purified, rendering free service to God, and by divine wisdom and mercy at last to be endowed with the power of eternal life.

There have been preachers who, in response to the question of repentant sinners: "What shall we do?", have answered: "Do nothing: Jesus has done it all". That, however, is not the Bible answer. When that question was put to the Apostle Peter, he said: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you for the remission of your sins". Baptism was the divinely appointed means of identification with Christ and his sacrifice (Gal. 3:27-29; Romans 6:3, 4). It is a very easy form of symbolical death and burial, a very slight humiliation and inconvenience compared with the shame and agony of the crucifixion. We have no sympathy with the changes men have made to make it still easier. It was originally, and we think still should be, a complete immersion in water on the part of a willing believer who desires to identify himself with the death of Christ.

Baptism is emphasised in the New Testament as of great importance, but it is only the beginning of the change involved in the word "repentance". Repentance means a change of mind. Regeneration involves a new birth, "a new man", which can be renewed day by day after the image of the Creator. Jesus has opened the way, but we must walk in it. He provides the garments apart from which we could not venture near, but we must wear them worthily, or God will have no pleasure in us.

The Apostle Paul, who has been regarded as the most definite exponent of justification by faith, is also the most emphatic in his teaching that as a man soweth so shall he also reap. "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap everlasting life." It was the Apostle Paul who wrote that we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling. He stated that he kept his body under and brought it into subjection lest, after having preached to others, he himself should be a castaway. He it was who taught that "patient continuance

in well doing" was the essential prelude to the life that God offers. It was the Apostle Paul who found the most seaching and touching of expressions to teach his brethren the vital importance of Christian conduct. "For many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." It was he who enumerated the works of the flesh and the fruit of the spirit in writing to the Galatians, and he added the definite assurance that those who brought forth the work of the flesh should not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Finally we may point out that it was the Apostle Paul who put in the most definite form this fundamental truth expressed by the sacrifice of Christ. He tells us that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God", and that the body of sin shall be destroyed. "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die, but if ye through the spirit kill the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

Thus, repentance involves not only a symbolical burial with Christ, but a real identification with his repudiation of the flesh. This does not mean a narrow asceticism, after the example of men who sometimes think that they can atone for neglect of God's commands by a painful application of rules they have devised for themselves. There is no virtue in suffering pain if the cup of suffering can be avoided without any failure of duty. There is no virtue in going hungry if legitimate food is available. Christ furnished the perfect example of what is required. We feel instinctively, in contemplating him, that the cutting off of the flesh did not touch his character, for he had completely triumphed over the natural man. On the other hand we can hardly resist the conclusion that with some men, the end of the flesh with all its desires will be the end of the entire personality. When the body of sin is destroyed with all its affections and lusts, there will be nothing left.

Here, surely, we have a key to the mystery of life. In this strangely varied existence, with this plastic substance on which human character is written, we are given a great opportunity. Mortal flesh and blood will not last for long. When the time comes for it to be destroyed, what will remain of us written in God's book of remembrance, and what in the Book of Life?

Human beings are invited to partake of the very nature of God. Mortal life is the time of training and of selection. It is the preliminary examination, the eliminating test, the matriculation for the divine university. We are not yet partakers of the divine nature, as the Apostle clearly shows when he brings the idea before us. The divine nature is strong, pure and perfect, while we are weak, impure and faulty. We have not yet escaped from the corruption that is in the world through lust. Lust may still assail us, and corruption still may claim us. The apostle Peter shows us how it is possible for man to partake of the nature of the great God who only hath immortality. It is "through the great and precious promises that He has given to us". Here is the basis of justification through faith, exactly as it is exhibited by the other apostles. Then Peter tells us of that which must be added to faith just as the other apostles insist on the necessity for "works", or patient continuance in well-doing. We must add to our faith "virtue, knowledge, patience, godliness, temperance, brotherly kindness and charity".

It is pitifully futile for men to parade their relative prominence in these virtues, while they remain completely indifferent to the great and precious promises which are the very basis of approach to God. It is equally futile for men to preen themselves on their understanding of divine promises or their mountain-moving faith, if they take no pains to add these essential virtues.

The Apostle shows us a very attractive way of progress, but it is not an easy one. Even virtue, in the ordinary, conventional sense, is not free from difficulty, for we must clearly have the reality and not merely the appearance. The accumulation of knowledge is sure to be hard for most people, for it involves the painful process of thinking. Nearly all men experience difficulty in being patient and temperate. Godliness certainly involves the continual recognition of God in all the affairs of life, as expressed in the Scriptural passage, "In all thy ways acknowledge him". Brotherly kindness assuredly does not merely mean being kind when feelings are amiable and kindness is easy. We must be kind even when feelings have been lacerated and the deceitful heart seeks a pretext for

cruelty. Charity, carrying with it all the force of the Apostle Paul's well-known definition, completes the picture of this gateway to the divine. It is a magnificent gate, attractive in every feature, and yet even those who are drawn to it may fail to pass through. Many lame men sit at the beautiful gate, less anxious to enter the temple than to secure a temporal dole, and there is not always a visible teacher to turn their thoughts to something higher.

Figurative language, however, cannot quite express this truth. The literal truth is that we have a short space of time in which to live, either according to the flesh or according to the Spirit, and then the flesh will perish. So far all thinkers agree. What hope is there beyond? By what shall we be guided and how shall we act now, while we still draw the breath of life? We cannot escape from the responsibility of making this decision even if we so desire. We cannot leave it to the wisdom of spiritual pastors and teachers, for there is division in the churches. We cannot say: "We will let the most capable and highly educated men decide for us", for the most able and the most learned men often differ utterly from each other. It is hopeless to let matters drift, unable to decide what our work should be, for, whether we work or remain idle, time hastens away to bring the day of death.

We must work "while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work". We must decide for ourselves, choose our task and go forward with it, if we are to accomplish anything.

Many people cause unnecessary confusion and difficulty by raising problems on every hand and facing none of them. They will point out that in far distant lands there are people with a civilisation more ancient than that of the West, and with sacred books of their own. What of those writings and those ideals? It is natural for people to attach a sacred import to words of wisdom that have come down to them from the early literature of their nation. Is not this the origin of the idea of sacred writings? Then the canon of Scripture has caused some trouble in the past. How can we be certain that it is reliable, even if we recognise the hand of God in the work at all?

Only an individual answer can be given to such questions; for the present writer, like all other men, must make his own

choice and accept his own responsibility. We would suggest, however, that the multiplication of such questions is singularly unhelpful and unnecessary. If the Chinese and the Hindus, or any other people, have preserved any writings that can properly be considered sacred, then God be praised for His mercies. We feel confident, however, that our ancestors were not so blessed. We do not think that there is anything in early English literature that could possibly be regarded as sacred. The writings which we cherish as the Word of God came from the Jews, a people much hated and abused. Those writings come with such force and authority, and are of such a character, that any man who tries to deal with spiritual things has to make use of them, yet the setting is so unpopular that men will rarely look at it. The writings centre round a wonderful teacher who has been rejected by the great majority of his own people, although their sacred writings point to him in a hundred ways; and their wonderful but terrible law, holding them away from God and condemning them all to death, is an enigma without him.

As for the canon of Scripture, here surely there is evidence for all attentive students that God rules in the kingdoms of men. In the attractive but specious gems of literature that have been rejected, and the terrible indictments that have been preserved, there is surely evidence that the hand of God has been at work. If this truth is to be perceived only after many years of close study, we would suggest that those on the threshold of life need not raise the question. Their primary responsibility is surely with the truths within their reach. They have the gift of mortal life, strength, education, liberty of conscience, and a glorious inheritance of written instruction. Let them at least become adequately acquainted with the teaching that has been preserved from the past before becoming self-assertive. "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good", condemn nothing unheard, and be modest at all times.

To the present writer it seems impossible to doubt the existence of God and of a divine purpose with the earth. If doubt were admitted, it would seem only logical to doubt the evidence of the primary senses, too, and lose all faith in the reality of the objective world. Sight, hearing and touch are only effects on the mind. There is something within us that

responds to the sensation and creates an image which we accept as real. We should believe in sight if we alone could see in a nation of the blind. We should believe in hearing though all around us were deaf. Our hearing the call to righteousness and our apprehension of spiritual values is also an effect on the mind. Our response to it is as real as our appreciation of sight and sound, and we have as much reason for recognising an objective reality to which we stand related.

We are not alone in this experience. Millions share it with us, and many by the use of reason seek for help and guidance as to how they may bring life in the world of physical realities into harmony with the higher call. In these lands men turn with extraordinary unanimity to those writings which came from the Jews. Such a large proportion of all spiritual teaching is directly traceable to these Scriptures as to suggest the probability that even that which seems to have had an independent origin really comes indirectly from the same source—that is, from the God of Israel. Yet although these Jewish writings are appealed to so much, faith in their superhuman origin has waned, and we are sometimes told that it is impossible now to regard them as the Word of God any more than other writings that make no special claims. We ask the reason for this failure of faith, and the answers nearly always assume that everything which has been repudiated or neglected by man should be ignored. The picture has been torn into a thousand pieces and everything accounted ugly has been turned with face to the wall. Men call attention to the exquisite beauty of certain fragments still on view, but deny that they ever can have been parts of a complete picture, the work of one great artist, for clearly they will not fit together. If we try to turn the rejected parts to the light and point out obvious truths as to their unity, we are treated with such scorn that it needs some quietness and confidence of strength to keep us from being overwhelmed. We might be tempted to wonder if a species of insanity had assailed us, to pervert our sense of logic and make us see clear outlines which have no real existence.

We have been provided with an ample basis for confidence, however, in being fully forewarned. Christ told his disciples what manner of men would accept him (Matt. 11 : 25), and

how they would often be treated by those more powerful (John 16 : 2). The Apostles gave warning that there would be a declension from the truth and a failure of faith, especially toward the end of the times of the Gentiles (2 Thess. 2 : 3; 2 Tim. 4 : 3; 2 Pet. 3 : 3, 4). There is another help which will, perhaps, be better understood even than the words of Scripture. There were some giants in the land a few centuries ago, men whose intellect and erudition none will dispute, and they saw clearly enough those outlines of prophecy which are now covered up so carefully. Some of their neglected expositions still endure to show us why they were men of faith as well as of worldly knowledge. No one attempts to show wherein the giants erred. Their names may be honoured for the service rendered in material things. Their work for God is ignored by “the wise and prudent” of these latter days.

We are still Christian. We believe that God has spoken to us through the Jews, and has invited us to partake of His holiness and of His nature. He requires our faith in the promises He has actually made. He requires our obedience to the commands He has actually given. Christ has warned us that the way is narrow, and only few will find it, yet he has stated that his yoke is easy and the burden is light. It is the perversity of man that makes the way difficult, and the restless spirit of man that fails to fit the easy yoke. The Apostles have shown us with patient reiteration that there is one faith, one Lord, one baptism, and one way of life, by bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit. Men stumble at every point. Some refuse the faith, and some, even in the name of Christ, bring forth hatred, misery, strife, impatience, cruelty and intemperate pride, whereas the essential fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance.

While we have life we can encourage ourselves and each other to make one more effort to bring every thought into subjection and so draw near to Christ. We will subdue all fleshly impulses, swallow down our sorrows; and smiling, though it may be through tears, we will endeavour to minister love, joy and peace, while we walk in the way that men find difficult. The guiding light of divine principles will help us.