

# IT IS HARD TO BE A CHRISTIAN

SAMUEL M. ZWEMER, D.D.

---

Dr. Zwemer is widely known as Professor of the History of Religion and Christian Missions, Princeton Theological Seminary ; Editor, *The Moslem World*, and Convention speaker.

These thoughtful, vital chapters deal chiefly with the Christian life of those who have already accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord, but who find difficulties and perils besetting them in the upward road. They consist of Bible studies based on personal experience, that they may lead up into those regions of spiritual conquest and attainment that are still far ahead.

No truer statement was ever made than that of Robert Browning: "It is hard to be a Christian." Hard because of besetting temptations and sins, hard because of our present-day problems and present environment.

The Christian life is hard, most of all, because none of us have yet attained to the high ideals represented by the word we use so glibly—Christian.

## DR. S. M. ZWEMER

### THE ORIGIN OF RELIGION 6/-

This *Magnum opus* contains a wealth of material hitherto available only in many books. A satisfactory study of the very genesis of religion.

### THINKING MISSIONS WITH CHRIST 5/-

Presents the New Testament basis and ideal of the missionary undertaking with knowledge and conviction and with glowing zeal and whole-hearted devotion. Third edition.

### THE LAW OF APOSTASY IN ISLAM 3/6

Answers the question, why there are so few Moslem converts and gives moving examples of their moral courage and martyrdom.

### CALL TO PRAYER 3/6

The present condition of the Moslem world calls for prayer. This book reveals something of the need and of the great resources of God.

### TAKING HOLD OF GOD 3/6

Studies in the nature, need and power of Prayer.

### THE GLORY OF THE CROSS 1/-

Meditations on the Passion of Our Lord and His Death upon the Cross. Deeply spiritual messages. New popular edition.

MARSHALL, MORGAN & SCOTT, LTD.  
London :: Edinburgh

## Outstanding New Books by the Great Bible Teacher

Rev. Dr. G.  
**CAMPBELL  
MORGAN**

## The Great Physician

FIFTY STUDIES OF THE  
METHOD OF JESUS  
WITH INDIVIDUALS 10/6

"Beginning with a study of the Physician Himself, Dr. Morgan proceeds to indicate the Master's Methods with many familiar Bible characters and a large number whose names are not given in the New Test. . . . will make an irresistible appeal."—*Life of Faith*.

"A rich vein of gold."—*British Weekly*.

"Marked by deep spiritual insight."  
—*Joyful News*.

### Great Chapters of the Bible 10/6

### The Gospel According to John 7/6

### Hosea: The Heart and Holiness of God 3/6

### The Answers of Jesus to Job 3/6

### God's Last Word to Man 3/6

### Preaching 2/6

A valuable handbook on expository preaching, full of instructive material.

MARSHALL, MORGAN & SCOTT, LTD.  
London :: Edinburgh

## DR. S. M. ZWEMER

---

### THE ORIGIN OF RELIGION

6/-

This *Magnum opus* contains a wealth of material hitherto available only in many books. A satisfactory study of the very genesis of religion.

### THINKING MISSIONS WITH CHRIST

5/-

Presents The New Testament basis and ideal of the missionary undertaking with knowledge and conviction and with glowing zeal and wholehearted devotion. Third edition.

### THE LAW OF APOSTASY IN ISLAM

3/6

Answers the question, why there are so few Moslem converts and gives moving examples of their moral courage and martyrdom.

### CALL TO PRAYER

3/6

The present condition of the Moslem world calls for prayer. This book reveals something of the need and of the great resources of God.

### TAKING HOLD OF GOD

3/6

Studies in the nature, need and power of Prayer.

### THE GLORY OF THE CROSS

1/-

Meditations on the Passion of Our Lord and His Death upon the Cross. Deeply spiritual messages. New popular edition.

•

MARSHALL, MORGAN & SCOTT, LTD.  
London :: Edinburgh

# IT IS HARD TO BE A CHRISTIAN

*SOME ASPECTS OF THE FIGHT FOR CHARACTER  
IN THE LIFE OF THE PILGRIM*

BY  
SAMUEL MARINUS ZWEMER

MARSHALL, MORGAN & SCOTT, LTD.  
LONDON & EDINBURGH

U.S.A.  
ZONDERVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE  
GRAND RAPIDS

MARSHALL, MORGAN & SCOTT, LTD.,  
1, 2, 11, & 12 PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS,  
LONDON, E.C.4.  
41 SHANDWICK PLACE,  
EDINBURGH.

U.S.A.  
ZONDERVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE,  
815, FRANKLIN STREET,  
GRAND RAPIDS.

CANADA  
EVANGELICAL PUBLISHERS  
366 BAY STREET,  
TORONTO.

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY FURNELL AND SONS, LTD.  
PAULTON (SOMERSET) AND LONDON

IN LOVING MEMORY  
OF  
AMY ELIZABETH WILKES ZWEMER  
(1865—1937)

*“ O blest communion, fellowship divine !  
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine,  
Yet all are one in Thee, for all are Thine,  
Hallelujah ! ”*

“ Then Valiant-for-the-Truth said : I believed and therefore came out, got into the Way, fought all that set themselves against me ; and by believing am come to this place.

*Who would true valour see  
Let him come hither :  
One here will constant be,  
Come wind, come weather ;  
There's no discouragement  
Shall make him once relent  
His first avowed intent  
To be a Pilgrim.*

*Who so beset him round  
With dismal stories,  
Do but themselves confound :  
His strength the more is.  
No lion can him fright ;  
He'll with a giant fight  
But he will have a right  
To be a Pilgrim.*

*Hobgoblin, nor foul fiend,  
Can daunt his spirit ;  
He knows he at the end  
Shall life inherit.  
Then, fancies, fly away ;  
He'll not fear what men say ;  
He'll labour night and day  
To be a Pilgrim.”*

—“ THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS.”

## FOREWORD

SOME of the chapters that follow were given as addresses at Conferences in America and England. Others have not appeared in print. They deal chiefly with the Christian life of those who have already accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord, but who find difficulties and perils besetting them in the upward road. They consist of Bible studies based on personal experience. The hope is that they will lead up into the hinterland of the soul, that is, those regions of spiritual conquest and attainment that are still far ahead. Every sincere believer often echoes the words of the Apostle, "Not as though I had already attained either were already perfect, but I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Some verses of Robert Browning in his great poem on Easter Day, gave us the title for the book and deserve careful meditation in this connection. They are quoted in our first chapter, and no truer statement was ever made than that with which the poem opens: "*It is hard to be a Christian.*" Hard because of besetting temptations and sins, hard because of our present-day problems and present environment, where the atmosphere we breathe is not at all other-worldly.

The Christian life is hard, most of all, because none of us have yet attained to the high ideals represented by the word we use so glibly—Christian. To be a



Christian is to be like Christ, to live in Christ, and for Christ, a living epistle known and read of all men. Now among ancient epistles there are three kinds, uncials, cursives, and palimpsests. The uncials are rare and costly. So there are those whose lives are a beautiful open book, easily read by all, and conveying an unmistakable message, like those beautiful large-lettered manuscripts on vellum. How many are those whose Christian message is written in such a cursive hand and with such lack of care and thought, that, although it is fairly legible, it is not always clear nor beautiful. And then there are those whose lives have lost their first love and first message because they themselves were not wholly yielded to Christ; across the old convictions and affirmations, an alien hand has scrawled the palimpsest of the present world, or the deceitfulness of riches and the cares of this life have made the ancient message illegible.

The Christian life is uphill all the way. It is a fight to the very end. As Christina Rossetti put it in her questioning stanzas :

*“ Does the road wind uphill all the way ?  
Yes, to the very end.  
Will the day's journey take the whole long day ?—  
From morn to night, my friend.*

*But is there for the night a resting place ?  
A roof for when the slow dark hours begin,  
May not the darkness hide it from my face ?—  
You cannot miss that Inn.*

*Shall I meet other wayfarers at night ?  
Those who have gone before,  
Then must I knock, or call when just in sight ?—  
They will not keep you standing at that Door.*

*Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak ?  
Of labour you shall find the sum,  
Will there be beds for me and all who seek ?—  
Yea, beds for all who come."*

But the rest is only at the end of the journey. While the Pilgrim travels he falls asleep in the arbour by the wayside at his own risk. Never is it safe to lay aside the panoply of God. We must fight the good fight until the end, and every day we need the girdle, the breast-plate, the sandals, the shield, the helmet and the sword. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," lest we who preach unto others should ourselves become castaways.

In the study of Old Testament characters I wish to express my indebtedness to Alexander Whyte and George Matheson, while the thoughts expressed regarding wrestling in prayer against our besetting sins owe much to John Bunyan and the daily study of Bishop Andrewes' *Private Devotions*. Others have laboured and we have gleaned from their harvest fields only "handfuls of purpose."

London : August, 1937.

SAMUEL M. ZWEMER.



## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
FOREWORD . . . . .	vii
I. FACTORS IN THE FIGHT FOR CHARACTER	13
II. CONSCIENCE AND CONDUCT . . .	29
III. THE DAWN OF CONSCIENCE . . .	43
IV. THE CROSS THE SEARCHLIGHT OF GOD	53
V. THE TRAGEDY AND THE GLORY OF THE UNCONSCIOUS . . . . .	67
VI. THE SPIRIT OF THE HIRELING . . .	79
VII. THE TWO WHO WALKED WITH GOD .	95
VIII. THE WHEELS OF LIFE . . . . .	107
IX. SONS OF MARTHA . . . . .	121
X. THE SCARS OUR PATTERN . . . . .	135
XI. THE LONELINESS OF JESUS . . . . .	147



CHAPTER I

**FACTORS IN THE FIGHT FOR CHARACTER**

*“ It is not the pleasure of the King that this place should remain so bad : his labourers also have, by the direction of his Majesty’s surveyors, been for above these sixteen hundred years employed about this patch of ground, if perhaps it might have been mended : yea, and to my knowledge, said he, here have been swallowed up at least twenty thousand cart-loads, yea, millions, of wholesome instructions, that have at all seasons been brought from all places of the King’s dominions (and they that can tell say they are the best materials to make good ground of the place), if so be it might have been mended ; but it is the Slough of Despond still, and so will be, when they have done what they can.”*

—“ THE PILGRIM’S PROGRESS.”

## CHAPTER I

### FACTORS IN THE FIGHT FOR CHARACTER

(*John* 1 : 12, 13)

THE fight for character is constant and real in the life of every individual, who is not drifting down stream. In the case of all religions there are those who are waging a spiritual battle, although on a lower plane than in the case of Christianity. In every walk of life there are those who are trying the upward path and are unwilling to take the easy road.

All who are spiritually in earnest realize that they live in the midst of foes. Witness Socrates in Athens ; Gautama Buddha in India ; and the great mystic Al-Ghazali in Persia. Saul of Tarsus, even before he saw the vision on the road to Damascus, was engaged in the fight for character. He tried to live up to the light of his conscience and was zealous in all matters of the law.

Man suffers most of all creatures, because he is torn asunder (not as in the torture of mediæval days by four horses) but by two worlds.

Browning's words apply to each of us :

*" How very hard it is to be  
A Christian ! Hard for you and me  
Not the mere task of making real*



*That duty up to its ideal,  
Effecting, thus complete and whole,  
A purpose of the human soul—*

*For that is always hard to do ;  
But hard, I mean, for me and you  
To realize it, more or less,  
With even the moderate success  
Which commonly repays our strife  
To carry out the aims of life.*

*And the sole thing that I remark  
Upon the difficulty, this :  
We do not see it where it is,  
At the beginning of the race :  
As we proceed it shifts its place ;  
And where we looked for crowns to fall  
We find the tug's to come,—that's all."*

There is a passage of Scripture (John 1 : 13, 14) that raises the question whether character is a new creation or a development ; whether it is due to the process of evolution or to a revolution of the soul, deep as the abyss of our being, and terrific as an earthquake ; whether character is a free gift, or a conquest ; an inheritance or an attainment ? In the fight for character has the soul its allies and its opponents ? Is Christian character natural or supernatural ? Is it a thing that can be taught, like mathematics or theology, or is it caught, as a germ, like measles ? Does it remould our impulses by imitation or by contagion ?

In every life there are at least three forces from the very outset—Personality, Heredity, and Environment. All of these forces are referred to in the striking words that John uses in the introduction to his Gospel.

Some scholars have suggested another reading of the text, making the verb singular: "who was born"—instead of "who were born," so that the whole phrase applies to Christ and not to the believer. Zahn writes :

"According to the usual text of John 1 : 13, this passage treats of the men to whom Jesus has imparted the right and the capacity to become children of God. That applies to all who believe in the name of Jesus (1 : 12). Of these, he says that they are begotten and born, not of double blood, that is by the mixture of the blood of two people, not of the will of the flesh, not of the will of man, but of God.

Even if there did not follow the statement in 1 : 14, that the Logos became flesh, it could not be misunderstood that verse 13 says of the birth of the children of God exactly what is said by Luke and Matthew of the Virgin Birth of Jesus.

The begetting and the birth of the Only Begotten Son of God is directly used as the model for representing the begetting and birth of children of God, who have become so through Him."

Irenaeus and Tertullian both favour the singular pronoun, "who was born." The former quotes the passage thrice in this way. Westcott paraphrases :

"The new birth is not brought about by descent, nor by desire, nor by human power."

Bengel enlarges on this same line :

"Not of blood (ancestors) but of the Heavenly Father of whom the whole family is named";

"Not of the will of the flesh (carnal desire) but of the holy love of the Son of God."

"Not of the will of men, but of the Holy Spirit."

Perhaps this justifies our own modern paraphrase, "not of heredity, nor by eugenics, nor by the power of environment, but by the miracle of regeneration; not by nature nor by nurture but by a new nativity."

Jesus Christ was not the product of His age, nor of His environment, nor the product of His heredity. We find much more in Him than His human personality. He is the Son of God ("begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father"). Yet, in what sense are we also sons of God? Is this high dignity possible of attainment? Does it make the difference, and if it does, are we not compelled to face the startling questions of St. Paul, "Who maketh thee to differ? What hast thou that thou hast not received?"

What makes the difference between a good man and a bad man? Science answers, heredity or environment. And present-day emphasis is on the inevitable power of the former factor.

There are a score of writers who emphasize the influence and power of heredity as the one factor in personality which is persistent and ineradicable. What

these scientists announce as a new discovery the Bible also teaches from Genesis to Revelation. "Adam begat a son in his own likeness and after his own image."

The law of heredity was announced by the Lord of creation, and in this sense we may find Christian evolution on the first page of the Bible: "Everything brings forth fruit after its kind." The genealogies of the kings of Israel are a striking example of the influence of heredity. The second commandment lays down a principle more fundamental than the law of Mendel. Heredity is here affirmed to extend not only to four generations, but to a thousand generations, manifesting at once the mercy and the severity of God.

The question has been raised not only regarding the possibility of the transmission of physical and natural characteristics but of acquired mental and moral traits.

Burbank and others have investigated these laws in the case of plants; Darwin, De Vries and others in the case of animals; Dalton in the case of man; Conklin in the realm of biology.

Let us admit at least that heredity has problems that are difficult to disentangle and hard to differentiate when we study personalities. But is heredity the most important item in one's character? By the laws of nature it takes two people to make one. What is your ancestry? From which ancestor do you get your special character? Let us go back a bit.

We soon find that the number of our ancestors increases in geometrical proportion to an astonishing

degree. In the third generation each one of us, counting backward, has *fourteen* ancestors. In the fifth generation, sixty-two and going back to the tenth generation the total normal number of ancestors would be 2,046! Which particular trait of character could you ascribe as due to the influence of one or all of these two thousand forbears?

It is said that 50 members, in five generations, of the Bach family were notable musicians. Was this because they taught each other music so well? Or because the capacity for being a good musician was inherited in this family strain?

Among the 1,200 known members of the notorious Jukes family there were 310 professional paupers, 440 physical wrecks from debauchery, 55 victims of impurity, 60 habitual thieves, 7 murderers, and 130 other convicted criminals. Here is the tragic story of a corrupt tree bringing forth evil fruit.

Was this because of poverty, lack of education and continuously bad environment, or was there an inherited mental defectiveness, a weakness of will, and a strain of bestiality? The environmentalists accept one answer, the hereditarians the other. And where they disagree, who shall decide?

The whole tendency of modern thought is to over-emphasize the power of heredity, with its inevitable laws, and to allow no loophole for exceptions save as they prove the rule. The result is to land us in a determinism far more fatal than the most fatalistic form of predestination.

Compare, for example, Lothrop Stoddard's book

*The Rising Tide of Colour* or his other book, *The Revolt of Civilization* where he bases his whole argument of inferior races on the false premise that there is no possible escape from the power of heredity; that the underman has no power to become a better man and, therefore, his only hope is in revolt.

We protest against this pessimism. Human history proves that other forces are at work. Benjamin Kidd in *The Science of Power and Social Evolution* teaches precisely the opposite.

Many of us may thank God, as Horatio Bonar did, for a holy ancestry. We can recall, as Timothy could, the faith that dwelt in Lois and Eunice, those who gave us a noble inheritance, because they themselves belonged to God's nobility, and we inherited their lineage.

While the Bible gives many illustrations of the power of the law of heredity for evil, it also shows the power of the same law to work out a divine purpose of salvation, not only for the individual but for the whole race.

"As in Adam so in Christ." "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Was not this the deep significance of the call of Abraham? (Gen. 12: 1—3). "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." "For Salvation is of the Jews."

Japhet and Ham are still seeking a place in the spiritual tents of Shem to escape their own heredity! It is a historic fact that Europe and Africa have found rest for their souls only in the religions of Asia.

We turn, however, to consider also the influence and power of environment. In his most interesting

book *Climate and Civilization*, Professor Huntington of Yale has laid down the great law of the power of environment in the development of the race and of the individual. He answers Paul's question "Who maketh thee to differ?" in one word: It is Climate. Where men live determines what they become in the scale of civilization.

"The heat-belt theory" has been quoted to prove the rise of Islam, the condition of darkest Africa, the character of the Chinese, or the customs of the Malay race.

We may see on every hand illustrations of this law. The sturdy clans of the hills overcome the weaklings on the plain.

The science of education is largely based upon its fundamental concepts. Plants and animals seek to conform to their environment by mimicry and so escape their foes.

The character of the soil is an important factor in the science of agriculture and in the science of Christian education.

*Where* we are often determines *what* we are. An illustration is that of the blind fish in the Mammoth Cave, Kentucky; or the blind heathen who have grown up in the darkness of Central Africa; or the blind and narrow prejudices that prevail in certain communities in Christian lands; their attitude for example toward Jews and negroes.

But man has also the power to change his environment and rise superior to it. Personality, the human will, the power to say I can! I dare! I will! make

one rise above one's mere surroundings. In this sense man is master of his environment.

If environment includes three things, namely, race, culture and art; one's folk, one's work and one's place in society; when, where, and how we live, then we ourselves often make the choice. And although this is true, yet all who depend solely on a new and better environment in the fight for character will surely be defeated.

To cross the Seven Seas will not produce a missionary. The brightest sunlight will not turn a lump of coal into a sparkling diamond. "Going to church," said Billy Sunday, "does not make anybody a Christian, any more than taking a wheelbarrow into a garage will turn it into an automobile."

"The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life" are very strong, and often defeat us, though we may will our very best. All that man can do for man is to make his life a little more easy and to lessen the strain of temptation by improving his environment. After that every man must bear his own burden and fight his own fight.

The whole of the present age, the inheritance of our fathers, our institutions, our country, our civilization, *these* severally and unitedly constitute our environment. How much we owe to all of them, and yet in the last analysis, how impotent they are when a man stands alone and has to make his fight against himself, against his heredity, against environment, to win character, or to hold his own.

St. Anthony did not escape "the world, the flesh,



and the devil" by living in the desert. The "Pillar saints" immortalized in Tennyson's poem did not become holy by lifting themselves above the world in spectacular fashion. A theological seminary is not hermetically sealed.

The best environment does not make us immune to temptations. As Bacon remarks "The desert makes one a wild beast or a god." "Then was Jesus driven by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And He was with the wild beasts, and angels ministered unto Him."

A third factor in the fight for character is Personality. John calls it "the will of man." Many put their hope in their strong personality, that is, their own will power, the strongest attribute of the soul. The power to dare, to endure, to resist, to suffer. What has it not accomplished? It was summed up for us in the oft quoted verses "I am the captain of my soul." Man is the master of his fate, we are told. Man can change himself! But can he? Without compass and rudder—sails ripped and a leaky hulk—in a storm-tossed sea, what can such a captain do?

Personality includes all the powers of the soul, the intellect, the affections, and will. Everything we know, everything we feel, everything we dare and determine. And the strongest power of the soul, the very heart of every man's personality, is his will. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

If only these powers of the soul had remained as they were when God formed man in His image, we might glory in the doxology of the psalmist: "For

Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour, Thou hast put all things under his feet." I can and I will! But, alas, that ideal is no longer a reality. Man has fallen. His intellect is darkened, his affections perverted, his will is paralyzed, or if active, it is warped or weakened or wicked.

So strong a personality as Paul puts it before us in terms that cannot be gainsaid: "The good that I would I do not . . . O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

It is only a page from every man's diary. The double personality of our best and our worst in their struggle for the mastery. Who has not felt it? Nay, it is often true that the greater the personality, the greater the struggle and the tragedy of defeat. Milton's matchless portrayal of Satan in his "Paradise Lost" is a terrific example.

*"Is it true, O Christ in heaven, that the highest suffer most?  
That the strongest wander furthest and most hopelessly are lost?  
That the mark of rank in nature is capacity for pain?  
That the anguish of the singer makes the sweetness of the  
strain?"*

There is a superficial philosophy in our day which attempts to cure the evils of personality by auto-suggestion; but the process is not as easy as they claim.

David, Isaiah, Paul, Thomas à Kempis, Henry Martyn, did not write in their diaries: "I am growing

better and better every day in every way." No, their pages are wet with the agony of tears.

Sin is not to be eradicated by mental suggestion. It required the death of the Son of God to condemn sin in the flesh. Not by denial of the facts nor by easy camouflage but by confession and a living faith in the crucified Redeemer, do men rise above their dead selves as on stepping stones to higher things. Only here do we find hope and deliverance.

Regeneration is the supreme factor, that is our hope, our *only* hope. That is the one supernatural factor, the imponderable factor in the fight for character. Not the figuration of personality but its transfiguration. A new birthright conferred upon outcasts. "The poor out of the dust, the needy from the dung hill . . . to set them with princes." This new birth can obliterate not only all the bad influences of both heredity and environment but can produce a new personality. The lives of King Manasseh and of Saul of Tarsus are two illustrations. What a glorious Gospel Christ has given us. "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me!"

This is the Gospel of hope ; for without regeneration, heredity and environment (even the best possible) do not guarantee character. As Christ said to Nicodemus. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Grace is not an inheritance, but a free gift. Monica's prayer finally changed the character of Augustine : "O Lord give me temperance and chastity, but not now." *Her* prayer prevailed, because it came from a pure heart.

Regeneration removes the guilt of the sin of our past, enables us to have victory in the present, and directs our life in the future. The hand of the Potter can remake the clay. Those that receive Him by faith gain the right to become the sons of God.

The glory of this truth is that it is a Gospel which humbles man and exalts God; and it gives hope to all of us, because it opens heaven to the worst of us by God's grace. It also encourages prayer in all circumstances, for the Great Physician can cure the Incurables!

In this Christianity is distinguished from all other religions, and Christ from all other Saviours.

A new white life can be yours by faith in the Son of God, though the old heredity be as scarlet and the old environment be as crimson. Your personality may be as weak as a bruised reed, it can become a pillar; feeble as a smoking flax-wick, it can become a shining light! To see that, to experience that, is the joy and crown of the Gospel ministry.

With these four factors, however, there is linked personal responsibility. All we have, we have received. Only God makes us to differ. We have, that we may give. We are, that we may become.

Jeremiah and Isaiah in their day went to the potter's house and saw the parable of life as they watched the potter at his wheel.

"Now, O Lord, Thou art our Father, Thou art the Potter and we are the clay." The clay is our heredity; the wheel is our environment; the whirl is our personality. But the hand that can reshape us is God's. Robert Browning interprets it for us:

*"Time's wheel runs back or stops ;  
Potter and clay endure" . . . .*

*"He fixed thee in this dance  
Of plastic circumstance—  
Machinery just meant,  
To give thy soul its bent . . . .*

*"Thoughts hardly to be packed  
Into a narrow act,  
Fancies that broke through language  
and escaped.  
All I could never be,  
All men ignored in me,  
This I was worth to God,  
Whose wheel the pitcher shaped."*

**CHAPTER II**  
**CONSCIENCE AND CONDUCT**

“CHRISTIAN: *That is that which I seek for, even to be rid of this heavy burden; but get it off myself I cannot; nor is there any man in our country that can take it off my shoulders; therefore am I going this way, as I told you that I may be rid of my burden.*

“WORLDLY WISE: *Who bid thee go this way to be rid of thy burden?*

“CHRISTIAN: *A man that appeared to me to be a very great and honourable person; his name as I remember, is Evangelist.*

“WORLDLY WISE: *Beshrew him for his counsel. There is not a more dangerous and troublesome way in the world than is that into which he hath directed thee; and that thou shalt find, if thou wilt be ruled by his counsel. Thou hast met with something, as I perceive, already; for I see the dirt of the Slough of Despond is upon thee; but that Slough is the beginning of the sorrows that do attend those that go on in that way. Hear me, I am older than thou; thou art like to meet with, in the way which thou goest, wearisomeness, painfulness, hunger, perils, nakedness, swords, lions, dragons, darkness, and, in a word, death and what not: these things are certainly true, having been confirmed by many testimonies.”*

—“THE PILGRIM’S PROGRESS.”

## CHAPTER II

### CONSCIENCE AND CONDUCT

A STRANGE discovery made when we search the English concordance of the Bible is that the word conscience does not occur in the Old Testament, and is not found in the four Gospels. Paul uses the word most frequently but the *idea* is present, even where a special word is not used, in the Psalms, the Prophets and in the teaching of our Lord in the Gospels. The fact is that none of the sacred books of the non-Christian religions make much of conscience because most of them do not deal with *sin* as much as with sins. The word for conscience has often to be created in the languages of non-Christian races for the idea itself is often absent.

In the Old Testament, however, we suggest that the Hebrew word translated "reins" in a number of metaphorical passages could better be rendered as conscience. For example: "I was pricked in my reins" (Ps. 73 : 21). "Examine me, O Lord, try my reins and my heart" (Ps. 26 : 2). "Thou hast possessed my reins" (Ps. 139 : 13). "Thou art in their mouth but far from their reins" (Jer. 12 : 2); and in a number of other passages of the Old Testament and one in the New Testament, Rev. 2 : 23.

In general the Bible understands by conscience the



testimony and judgement of the soul which gives approbation or disapprobation to the acts of the will. It speaks of a good conscience (1 Tim. 1 : 5), a conscience void of offence (Acts 24 : 16), a pure conscience (Heb. 9 : 14), a conscience not troubled with a sense of guilt (Heb. 10 : 2), an evil conscience (Heb. 10 : 22), a seared conscience (1 Tim. 4 : 2), and a defiled conscience (Titus 1 : 15). A careful study of these passages shows the close relation between conscience, conduct and character. Man by creation had threefold powers in his soul. The power to know, that is, the intellect; the power to feel, that is, the emotions; and the power to will, that is, activity in the world outside of himself. Conscience is the knowledge we possess of the relation of these three to God. We know that we know Him. We know that we ought to love Him. We know that we ought to do His will. Emmanuel Kant speaks of conscience as "the categorical imperative." Martensen defines it as "the consciousness of eternity." While Shakespeare in Macbeth says :

*" My conscience hath a thousand several tongues  
And every tongue brings in a several tale,  
And every tale condemns me for a villain."*

Or again :

*" O Conscience ! Thou dost make cowards of us all."*

A troubled conscience is the tragedy of all tragedies and our great novelists have probed here for some of the deepest revelations of human life.

In Bunyan's immortal allegory the keynote of the pilgrim's quest is put here. It was a sense of sin and a burden too heavy to be borne that drove him toward the King's highway and the Celestial City. His family and his friends :

"thought that some frenzy distemper had got into his head; therefore, it drawing towards night, and they hoping that sleep might settle his brains, with all haste they got him to bed: but the night was as troublesome to him as the day; wherefore, instead of sleeping, he spent it in sighs and tears. So, when the morning was come, they would know how he did; he told them, Worse and worse."

The same description could be used of some of the characters portrayed by Dostoevsky and Victor Hugo.

Three questions occur when we study this great subject in the light of Scripture: what was conscience intended to be, what did it become by the fall of man, and how is it restored to what it should be in the Christian life? As from the ruins of Pompeii we can reconstruct the old Roman city, as from the fern fossils we learn something of the primeval forest, so conscience even as degraded, defiled, and corrupted gives us evidence of what God intended it to be. In many languages the word for conscience is that of "co-witness." Paul speaks of it as "A good conscience toward God," and George Washington in one of his letters says:

"Endeavour to keep alive within your breast that little spark of celestial fire called Conscience."

Conscience was also an unerring guide. An Indian's definition of conscience, given to a missionary, is not only amusing but very significant :

"It is a little three-cornered thing inside of me. When I do wrong it turns round and hurts me very much. But if I keep on doing wrong it will turn so much that the corners become worn off and it does not hurt me any more."

Conscience also was intended as a bulwark against temptation. It is a barometer of the soul—delicate, perfect, adjusted to environment, suspended in the temple of the heart to indicate the rising storm of self-will or the tornado of temptation. But the warning appears to have been unheeded and with the storm of temptation came man's fall. Conscience still tells each one of us the same story which is put to Adam in the words of God : "Who told thee that thou wast naked ?"

*"I sat alone with my conscience  
In a place where time had ceased  
And we talked of my former living  
In the land where the years increased.  
The ghosts of forgotten actions  
Came floating before my sight,  
And things that I thought were dead things  
Were alive with a terrible might ;  
The vision of all my past life  
Was an awful thing to face,  
Alone with my conscience sitting  
In that silent, solemn place."*

Every one of us is conscious of the fact that an unquiet conscience is an unruly guest of the soul. The delicate instrument intended to be a warning has itself become untrustworthy. The chords of the harp of life are out of tune. The compass of the soul needs readjustment. But there are degrees in the downward path. In the words of the Apostle they are specified as follows : weak, evil, defiled, seared and dead. These terms are used in contrast to what the conscience should be : strong, pure and alive. Paul describes the weak conscience in 1 Corinthians 8 : 10-12. Those who have such a conscience are in danger of calling good evil. Many crimes have been committed in the name of religion. A cantankerous Christian often suffers because of a weak conscience.

“For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol’s temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols ;

“And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died ?

“But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.

“Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth.”

A weak, over-sensitive conscience is not only pitiful, but blameable. A compass with magnetic variation to an excessive degree is not fit to steer by. In the same way the overscrupulous Christian is a bad example

to those who live a life of freedom in the liberty of Christ. The Pharisees were scrupulous, but not conscientious. They would not have the trial and death of Jesus take place on the Sabbath lest they should be defiled, and yet they spat on his face on Friday! We must beware of the leaven of the Pharisees even in our day. The writer to the Hebrews (10: 12) speaks of an evil conscience.

“Let us draw near with a pure heart in full assurance of faith having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”

Then again we have consciences that are false standards. Good is called bad and bad good. Because habit moulds the conscience, we really are what we think and believe. Many a man is an illustration of the story of Gulliver's Lilliputians who tied down the giant. Threads of evil habit or prejudice slowly make us impotent so that our conscience no longer is able to act.

The third downward step is described as a defiled conscience where the indelible spot and stain has besmirched what God intended to be pure. As Paul wrote to Titus :

“Unto the pure all things are pure : but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure ; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.”

“They profess that they know God ; but in

works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient and unto every good work reprobate.”

Most of us recall Alexander Pope’s famous lines :—

*“ Vice is a monster of such frightful mien  
That to be hated, needs but to be seen ;  
But seen too oft, familiar with her face,  
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.”*

This is the awful peril of bad books and pictures. Beware of besmirching your conscience !

The last stage is called a conscience that is cauterised—one that has lost its power of response and become past feeling (1 Tim. 4 : 2). In this case the conscience no longer responds. It is paralyzed, petrified, like a heart of stone. We may thank God that there are few people to whom these words can be applied. Even the professional criminal and the man who has gone far from the Father’s house is often pricked in his conscience at the last and remembers what he has lost : “ I will arise and go to my Father.” This is the miracle of conversion.

It is, therefore, most encouraging to study in the New Testament what conscience should be and what it can become through God’s grace. Paul’s words and life are the answer : “ I therefore exercise myself to have a conscience void of offence.” He had a gymnasium for his soul. He speaks of buffeting his body ; his conscience regenerated and cleansed by the Blood of Christ was now a reliable asset :

"How much more shall the blood of Christ who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God."

"Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience."

"Holding faith and a good conscience which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck."

In opposition to the good conscience which is like the mariner's compass (not yet invented in Paul's day), he speaks here of those who have made shipwreck of their faith. This is the tragedy in some lives. The American poet, Lawrence Dunbar, puts it all in one stanza :

*" ' Good-bye,' I said to my conscience,  
     ' Good-bye, for aye and aye.'  
 And I put her hands off harshly,  
     And turned my face away.  
 And conscience, sorely smitten,  
     Returned not from that day.  
 But there came a time when my spirit  
     Grew weary of its pace ;  
 And I cried, ' Come back, my Conscience,  
     I long to see your face.'  
 But Conscience replied, ' I cannot,  
     Remorse sits in my place.' "*

" Pray for us, for we trust we have a good conscience in all things willing to live honestly " (Heb. 13 : 18).

Again Baptism is a sign of a renewed conscience. "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh but the answer of a good conscience", (1 Peter 3: 21). Because of all this every Christian should daily pray for the renewal of his conscience, and for the gift of God, a conscience void of offence toward God and man. We need again and again to adjust our standards of right and wrong by the only norm of character, Jesus Christ in the Gospels: "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." "From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling."

It is interesting to observe that in these passages conscience is linked with love and faith among the Christian virtues. Without a good conscience faith suffers shipwreck. The thing one never does in a storm is to throw the compass overboard or the ship's barometer. As long as we retain a good conscience the storms of temptation will not overwhelm us, and through the storm and darkness we will by God's grace yet reach home and port, although it may be with rent cordage, shattered deck, but not a wreck.

The thief on the cross is an interesting example. He was saved, as it were, on "a broken piece of the ship." But the first indication of his salvation as he watched the Lonely Saviour on the cross was his conscience accusing him. You remember his words: "We indeed suffer justly, but He has done no wrong." "Lord remember me." "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."



In conclusion it is perfectly clear that an unregenerate conscience is an unsafe guide. To be conscientious is not sufficient. Man can go to perdition conscientiously. Our conscience needs education and this means the struggle of the soul. Paul describes it in the 7th chapter of Romans. Our standards are ever to be raised higher. What we *ought* to be, faces what we *are* in the Christian life like the two lines of a parabolic curve, ever approaching but never meeting. There can be no perfectionism if we study the life of Jesus Christ. The best of us can only follow Him afar off. For those who carry the message of Christ to others, it is well also to remember that to speak with conviction we must aim not at the intellect nor at the emotions, but through conscience; commending ourselves, as Paul says, to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Such was the preaching of Paul before Felix and Agrippa, and of Nathan the prophet in his matchless parable when he faced guilty King David. The gospels record how a greater than Nathan or Paul, even our Lord himself, touched the consciences of men by his penetrating words on two occasions. They are the more remarkable as there is a resemblance and a difference in his attitude toward the sinner from that of Paul and Nathan.

When the woman taken in adultery was dragged into his presence we read that Jesus said: "He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it *being convicted by their own conscience*, went out one by one beginning at the eldest even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone

and the woman standing in the midst." . . . "And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more."

His words to Simon the Pharisee at the feast where the woman that was a sinner brought an alabaster box of ointment and "began to wash his feet with tears and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet," were sharper than a sword to the conscience of his host. After the matchless parable of the two debtors who were forgiven their debt "He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven."

We are reminded of the beautiful collect in the ancient liturgy of the Greek Orthodox Church:

"O God our Saviour, who by thy prophet Nathan didst grant unto repentant David pardon of his transgressions and didst accept Manasses' prayer of penitence; O Shepherd and Lamb, who takest away the sins of the world, who didst remit the loan unto the two debtors, and didst vouchsafe to

the woman who was a sinner the remission of her sins: Show thy mercy now upon thy servants and grant unto them true repentance, forgiveness of sins and deliverance from divisions, pardoning their every transgression, whether voluntary or involuntary. Reconcile and unite them unto thy Holy Church, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

CHAPTER III  
THE DAWN OF CONSCIENCE

*“FAITH: Yes, I met with Shame; but of all the men that I met with on my pilgrimage, he, I think, bears the wrong name. The other would be said Nay after a little argumentation, and somewhat else; but this bold-faced Shame would never have done.*

*“CHRISTIAN: Why, what did he say to you?*

*“FAITH: What? why he objected against religion itself; he said it was a pitiful, low, sneaking business for a man to mind religion: he said that a tender conscience was an unmanly thing; and that for a man to watch over his words and ways, so as to tie up himself from that hectoring liberty that the brave spirits of the times accustom themselves unto, would make him the ridicule of the times. He objected also, that but few of the mighty, rich, or wise, were ever of my opinion; nor any of them neither, before they were persuaded to be fools, and to be of a voluntary fondness to venture the loss of all, for nobody else knows what. He, moreover, objected the base and low estate and condition of those that were chiefly the Pilgrims of the times in which they lived; also their ignorance and want of understanding in all natural science. Yea, he did hold me to it at that rate also about a great many more things than here I relate.”*

*—“THE PILGRIM’S PROGRESS.”*

### CHAPTER III

## THE DAWN OF CONSCIENCE

(*Genesis* 3 : 9)

“AND the Lord God called unto Adam and said unto him : ‘Where art thou?’”

The common name for humanity in Arabic and other Semitic languages is *Bni Adam*, that is sons of Adam. In fact the grave of Eve, a short distance outside of Jeddah near Mecca, is visited by Moslem pilgrims, and so the oldest of names in the Old Testament has been taken up in the tradition of Jew, Moslem, and Christian, and in a sense has become the common name for humanity. When we turn to the New Testament we find that all ancestral trees go back to the same root, for in the third chapter of Luke, the genealogy of our Lord ends with the words “The Son of Adam, The Son of God.” When we read once again the story of Adam’s creation and fall, and expulsion from the Garden of Eden, in spite of all difficulties in interpretation, we recall Paul’s statement in his Epistle to the Corinthians: “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” The headship of the human race is also attributed to Adam in the Epistle to the Romans, in the same real sense as the headship of the new creation is found in Jesus Christ. “When Moses wrote this story, he himself had been banished out of

Canaan for his sin," said Dr. Alexander Whyte, "and therefore he dips his pen in an inkhorn of fears and describes it all with much sympathy."

When the Lord God called to Adam and said unto him, "*Where art thou?*" it is the first question on the pages of the Old Testament, and is in one sense the key to the whole Book. The entire Old Testament is a commentary in answer to that question. The consequence of the fall of Adam overshadows the remainder of Genesis, and continues throughout all the historical and prophetic books. The first question in the New Testament is: "*Where is He?*" and in a sense the whole New Testament is an answer to that question, telling us both who Christ is, and where he is, whence he came, and when he is coming again. In the sin of Adam portrayed for us in this early record, we have the dawn of conscience, but also the dawn of our redemption, and the glory of a new hope.

In the Bible Adam is not considered a myth but a great reality. Paul builds on this one chapter of Genesis his greatest Epistle, and his great chapter on the Resurrection. The science of anthropology also in some sense corroborates the fall. In many parts of the world there are traditions regarding a golden age, and of how man was turned out of a Paradise through some fault of his own, which brought death and disaster into existence. What scientists call heredity is the burden and the blight of all humanity. When theologians call it "original sin," they only follow Milton's magnificent interpretation in his Prologue to "Paradise Lost": "Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit of that

forbidden tree whose mortal taste brought death into the world and all our woe." That sin, as all other sins since Adam's day, has three characteristics and it produces in the sinner a threefold condition : a sense of guilt before God—"hid himself," pollution of conscience and a sense of shame—"they made themselves aprons of fig leaves"; and bondage instead of freedom—Adam lays the blame on Eve. Such a three-fold cord is not easily broken by any man.

We read that God created man in His own image, in knowledge and righteousness, and holiness. When created, Adam apparently had a share of those divine attributes, which the creature could share with the Creator. He was the apex of all the works of God. The fall of Adam was therefore the greatest tragedy of history. Not without reason does Archbishop Whately call the third chapter of Genesis the greatest chapter in the Bible. When we read it carefully, we see that it was God who first uttered the awful word "death." "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." When Adam's hand of disobedience, however, opened the gate and let Death in, God reprieved the sentence and gave him nine hundred and thirty years' respite. Then at last was fulfilled the wages of sin, and dust returned to dust, because "the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." We can only read the story with deep compassion, as we see the first culprit in the hands of his Maker. If Adam had only believed God about sin and death, and not hearkened to the Tempter, nor listened to Eve, if Adam could have seen that other Garden, and the Son of God under the



olive trees, as Alexander Whyte reminds us, how different it would have been. Adam's sin weighed on Paul's conscience or he would never have written: "Wherefore as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners . . . so by the obedience. . . . Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned."

But God's loving heart had compassion on Adam and on all mankind. Adam heard the voice of Jehovah walking in the garden, so the record tells us, and we can still hear His voice walking in our gardens, and speaking in mercy to those who are truly repentant.

*"Remembering man is but dust—*

*Brother to fickle sand, and stubborn clod—*

*The sport of every wind of earthly lust—*

*Be merciful, O God !*

*"Remembering all flesh is grass—*

*Which is, to-day ; to-morrow feeds the flame—*

*And now sees only darkly, through a glass—*

*Dear Lord, be slow to blame !*

*"Remembering as Adam's kin,*

*We share his crime, his punishment, his loss—*

*Consider, Lord, One guiltless of all sin—*

*The crown of thorns . . . the cross !"*

In this very chapter we have Adam's repentance, and the dawn of man's redemption, for Adam did

repent, or he would never have received the promise of the coming Redeemer. In Paul's conception (as a quaint old commentator has it) "Adam and Christ stand out as the two representatives, alone, and unique with all humanity hanging at their girdles." God's question "Adam, where art thou?" was the voice of a broken-hearted father. "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and ran to meet him, and fell on his neck and kissed him."

It is an astonishing fact that the first Evangelist was God himself, and that the Evangel was preached to Adam and Eve in Paradise before they lost it. It was preached by word, and by the symbol of a sacrament world-wide, and age-long. We read: "I will set enmity (not peace or compromise) between thee and the woman. The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," and with the word of promise there was the institution of sacrifice symbolised by the "coats of skin" which God made for Adam and Eve. Delitsch and other commentators find a great doctrine of atonement for sin here in the germ. Here what Melanchthon says:

"In his 'Postilla' for the first Sunday in Advent he reminds us that the first Advent of the Son of God took place in the Garden of Eden. The divine Logos or Son of God Himself addressed Adam in the giving of the promise: 'The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head'; and while these words were proclaimed outwardly, the Logos himself was working also within the hearts of Adam and Eve, and cheering them with His comfort, lest they should fall into everlasting death."

In after ages this Logos was always present in the Church, as Irenaeus truly says, "He spake with the Fathers and was with them in their heaviest conflicts. He was with Noah in the Ark, with Abraham in exile, with Joseph in prison, with Daniel among the lions." "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

How did Adam repent? Al Ghazali's *The Moslem Theologian*, has a great chapter on repentance, in which he says it includes three factors: knowledge of sin, sorrow for sin, and forsaking of sin. Now we find all three in Adam. He went out of Paradise and walked softly all his days; he saw the death of Abel and the doom of Cain. He lived to taste death and the bitter remorse of sin, many, many times before the nine hundred and thirty years of his life ended and he too died.

How did Adam die? And what was his latter end? The Scripture does not tell us who was present at the funeral of the father of our race. Yet we know that he died, and so death passed upon all men. God's sentence was pronounced in Paradise, and not carried out until more than nine hundred years later. For God did not deal with Adam according to his iniquity, but like as a father pitieth his children, so God pitied Adam and Eve. "The mercy of the Lord endureth for ever." Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. And in Him we see the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God in the dawn of conscience. We recall Cardinal Newman's greatest hymn:

*" O loving wisdom of our God !  
When all was sin and shame,  
A second Adam to the fight  
And to the rescue came.*

*O wisest love ! that flesh and blood,  
Which did in Adam fail,  
Should strive afresh against the foe,  
Should strive and should prevail ;  
And that a higher gift than grace  
Should flesh and blood refine,  
God's presence, and His very Self,  
And essence all-Divine.*

*O generous love ! that He, who smote  
In man for man the foe,  
The double agony in Man  
For man should undergo ;  
And in the garden secretly,  
And on the cross on high,  
Should teach His brethren, and inspire  
To suffer and to die."*

O the length and the breadth and the height and the depth of God's love for Adam. One of our American poets, Fay Inchfawn, has caught the inspiration of this tragedy in a very modern but also a deeply significant poem :

*" At Adam's Funeral, his race  
Went softly, with averted face,  
Bearing with awe, because they must,  
The red dust, back to the red dust.*

*Bewildered and sore amazed,  
Legions of angels gazed  
To see the slow procession pass,  
Over the windswept, short-lived grass,  
Rounding the corner.*

*For, close behind His dead,  
With lowly bending head,  
And weary feet that bled,  
Came the Chief Mourner.*

*O, softly, solemnly,  
Slowly and lovingly,  
Following, following,  
Over the sod ;  
Following mournfully,  
Heartsore and drearily,  
Who could it ever be ?—  
Yes, it was God ! ”*

“ For as in Adam all die so in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order. The first Adam became a living soul. The last Adam a life-giving spirit.”

## CHAPTER IV

# THE CROSS, THE SEARCHLIGHT OF GOD

*“Now I saw in my dream, that the highway up which Christian was to go, was fenced on either side with a wall, and that wall was called Salvation. Up this way, therefore, did burdened Christian run, but not without great difficulty, because of the load on his back.*

*“He ran thus till he came at a place somewhat ascending; and upon that place stood a Cross, and a little below, in the bottom, a Sepulchre. So I saw in my dream, that just as Christian came up with the Cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble; and so continued to do, till it came to the mouth of the Sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more.”*

—“THE PILGRIM’S PROGRESS.”

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CROSS, THE SEARCHLIGHT OF GOD

"THOU hast set our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance" (Psalm 90: 8). These words from one of the oldest of the Psalms are familiar to all, a psalm by Moses, the ideal time and place to read which is on a moonlight night under the shadow of the great Pyramids. It is the oldest expression of penitence we have in the Bible. It is a page torn from Moses' own diary, and is wet with his tears. Everybody remembers why Moses did not enter the Land of Canaan; and why on Nebo's lonely mountain he, perhaps, repeated this Psalm in his heart once again. Moses makes his great confession in this Psalm, and here we see Moses' secret sin in the light of God's countenance.

Everybody who has thought over the matter knows from the front page of the newspaper, as well as from the Word of God, that the most dreadful thing in the whole world and universe is sin; and that there is no searchlight that penetrates deeper, reveals more clearly, and convicts of sin more surely than the face of Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary. Paul puts it all into one terrible sentence, which we preachers have perverted into a sort of theological proof text, but which Paul plucked out of his own heart, as the tears fell on the page. "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin."



The negro minstrels in America have many a song containing deep truths of the Gospel in familiar words ; and one of the most beautiful of the songs sung by those negro minstrels begins like this : " Were you there when they crucified my Lord ? " Were you there ? Even Moses himself felt that there was some relation between his sin and the face of Jehovah.

The whole Psalm, of course, is a revelation of God's goodness and absolute omnipotence ; man's frailty and weakness and sinfulness ; and God's judgment on sin. The words " anger " and " wrath " occur five times in this Psalm. One could find a proof-text for every word of the Westminster Catechism definition of God in this one Psalm of Moses. " God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable in His wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. " In this Psalm we find the wrath of God against sin ; and the holiness of God over against man's sinfulness ; and weakness and frailty are placed one against the other from the beginning until the end of the Psalm. And, of course, when we turn to the New Testament we find that on Calvary the three met once and for all, and never to meet again — God's holiness, God's love, and man's sin. Here " mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other. " " Were you there when they crucified my Lord ? " Yes, we were all there. " For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. "

Now there are three questions I would like to ask about this text, which you cannot forget, because the

words are terrible, and they are also wonderfully comforting. "Our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance." 1, What are our secret sins? 2, What is the light that reveals them? 3, What is the effect of that searchlight of God?

1. What are our secret sins? The Hebrew word used here is only used twice in the whole Old Testament. "Hidden things," "concealed things," "things that are forgotten," "things unknown." When you deal with secret sins, you do not mean those things that God is ignorant of. "All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do." And it surely does not refer to those sins that are hidden from men. It must mean those sins that are hidden from ourselves, or that we try to hide. Luther has, I think, a deeper meaning in his translation. He says, "*unerkannte Sünde*" (unrecognised sin). "Thou hast set those sins in the light, in the searchlight, of Thy countenance."

Sin is rebellion against God; it is the transgression of God's law. As an old Puritan put it, "The very first letter of the word, 'S,' has the hiss of the serpent in it." It is "sin," and the Bible is the only Book of the sacred books of any religion that deals fundamentally with the subject of sin. As you read the Bible rapidly, you will discover that every one of its sixty-six books deals with sin—its origin, its consequences, its character, its punishment in this world and hereafter, and its forgiveness, its blotting out for ever. In every book, even in those short Epistles of John, you find sin and sinners. There are twelve different words used for sin

in the Hebrew and Greek of the Bible, and in a Concordance you will find over a thousand references to sin. It is no mistake to say that the Bible is really an encyclopedia on sin. It also deals with salvation ; but, primarily, the Bible deals with sin. " For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

When you ask the theologians they think it is quite simple to define sin. They tell you that " sin is a specific evil ; moral, not natural ; its seat is the soul ; and it consists in transgression of or want of conformity to the law of God." Sin is rebellion against our Creator, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier. When you go to the dictionary, you soon find that even the dictionary makes very important distinctions. Crime relates only to society and legality, and the courts or the front pages of the newspapers. Vice relates to morality, and personality, and the whisper of the gossips. But sin goes much deeper. Sin is not mentioned in *The Times* or *The Tribune*, or the great newspapers. Sin relates to God and His holiness. It is the inner relation between two personalities, my personality and God's. As Moody put it : " Character is what a man is in the dark " ; and sin is what you and I are in the light of His countenance.

If you want to understand this text you have to go back to some of the great literature of the ages which deal with the consequences, the terror, the judgment and the awful remorse that comes from human sin : Dante's *Purgatory*. Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Goethe's

*Faust*. Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. Tolstoy's *The Resurrection*. Dostoevsky's *Two Brothers*.

Now God loves the sinner, but God hates sin. There are many kinds of sin, classifications of sin, and degrees of sin ; but all sin springs from the same root and bears the same fruit. It belongs to the same potential family. You may say that the wages of sin is always death, and the final result of sin is always separation from God. I think I was never more deeply impressed by what that meant than by a phrase in one of Robert Louis Stevenson's novels. He says : " The Bible says that it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God, but I say it is a more terrible thing *to fall out*." Secret sins are the most dangerous of all sins, and the most important, because just as germs die in the sunlight, so the germs of sin breed in the darkness. Jesus called it " leaven," the leaven of the Scribes, which is unbelief, and the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. The bacteria of the soul are the secret sins, to which our text refers.

When Dante describes his entrance into Paradise, he speaks of himself, after he met the guardian angel, as follows :

*" Seven times the letter that denotes the inward stain  
He on my forehead with the truthful point  
Of his drawn sword inscribed,  
And, Look, he cried, when entered,  
That thou wash these scars away."*

They were the scars of the seven deadly sins according to mediæval theology : " Pride, envy, anger, intemperance,

lasciviousness, covetousness, spiritual-sloth : these seven sins were Dante's seven scars on his sanctified forehead." This is an old Biblical classification. The strange thing is that two of these deadly sins of the Middle Ages—intemperance and lasciviousness—belong specifically to the world ; but five cling to the garments of God's people—pride, envy, anger, covetousness, spiritual-sloth. They are the sins of the pulpit, of the pew-holder, of the missionary and of the Christian worker. The sin of Jonah, that self-righteous preacher, without any compassion for the heathen. The sin of Simon the Pharisee, with no love for the lost. Now it is these secret sins that the light of God reveals.

2. What is the light that reveals our secret sins ? That is my second question. "The light of His countenance." Here again we have a different word from the ordinary word for "light." It is a "burning light," the blazing light of His countenance. God the Father has no form or face or body or likeness, yet Moses on the mountain, with Elijah, saw the face of God in Jesus Christ, "whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." "The light of His countenance." Moses was the first man that ever dared to use those words. In the Aaronic benedictine we read : "Lift upon us the light of thy countenance" (Num. 6 : 26). And in the Psalms : "The upright shall behold His face" (Psa. 11 : 7). "I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance" (Psa. 42 : 5). And Paul sums it up by saying : "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4 : 6).

That face of Jesus Christ on the Cross is the whitest and most dazzling light that this world has ever seen. "He became sin for us Who knew no sin." Not the Judgment Day, nor the fires of Hell, not the gaze of the public, nor of all men in the courtroom has such penetrating power as one look of Jesus our Saviour from the Cross. Rebellion in the light of God's justice is black, but in the light of God's love it is devilish; ingratitude and cowardly rebellion. The light that radiates from the face of Jesus on the Cross is the X-ray of God's holiness and love. It penetrates everything. The X-ray of the Cross goes far beyond the whole spectrum of the Old Testament, beyond the red rays of the 51st Psalm, the purple rays of the 90th Psalm and the violet rays of Isaiah 6. When Christ looks at us, then we say, "I am undone." For "the Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword." It pierces through everything.

Think of Mary Magdalene at the feast with Jesus looking at her. Think of Peter in the Judgment Hall, when Jesus turned and looked at him, and he went out and wept bitterly. Think of Paul on the road to Damascus, and the voice of Jesus: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" Think of poor, wretched Simon at his feast, when Jesus said to him: "Simon, I have a word to say unto thee." Their secret sins in the light of His countenance. When Cowper saw Christ looking at him, he wrote: "There is a fountain filled with blood." "The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day; and there may I, though vile as he, wash all my sins away." When Wesley saw Christ gazing

into his heart, his loving heart, his Christian heart, his sanctified heart, he wrote: "Jesus, Lover of my Soul." "Plenteous grace with Thee is found, grace to cover all my sin." When Toplady, a clergyman, a poet, a godly man, met Jesus face to face, he wrote: "Rock of ages, cleft for me." "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy Cross I cling."

It is not strange that the greatest saints have always felt themselves to be the greatest sinners, and the reason is they lived and prayed close to the searchlight—the Cross of Christ. Speaking for myself, in my missionary life, no book of devotions has helped me more, outside the Bible, than *Bishop Andrewes' Private Devotions*, a most wonderful book. Who was Bishop Andrewes? And why has his book such wonderful power? He was one of the translators of the King James' Version of the Bible. He lived in the days of Shakespeare and Bacon. He was tangled up in the Court of James I, with its scandals, because he had not the moral courage to stand out. And then that Bishop, that godly and most learned man, confessed every night to God his sin, and wrote out his confessions, and the manuscripts were afterwards translated into English under the title of *Bishop Andrewes' Private Devotions*.

He belongs to the family of Abraham, Isaiah, and Paul, John Bunyan, Pascal, and Law, and all the Evangelical succession. Abraham said: "I am made of dust and ashes." Isaiah said: "From the head to the foot I am made of putrifying sores." Paul said: "In me there dwelleth no good thing." The author

of *Grace Abounding* living in Bedford, said: "I defy the Devil himself to equal me." Pascal, the French writer and Christian, said: "We are made of falsehood, duplicity, and insincerity, and we cloak up these things in ourselves from ourselves." William Law said: "Man is only a compound of corrupt and disorderly tempers." And as for Bishop Andrewes, he said: "I am made of sin," and with that one awful word he lets us down into the whole bottomless pit of sin and shame and pain and misery that he felt. He stood in the light of God's countenance. "I am a burden to myself," he said, as he continued still on his face before God. "I am ruined, wretched, an excessively sinful creature. Thou Who art the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, be Thou the propitiation for the sins of Lancelot Andrewes."

What do you think of that sort of confession? What sort of superficial life are we living? "You will sometimes see," says Andrewes, "in the wall of a Church, or in the wall of a house, or in the wall of a garden, a stone with the smooth mark of the boring iron still upon it—the boring iron by means of which the blast was let in which shattered the hard rock into a thousand pieces. So sometimes one single sin will still leave its mark on a man long, long after it has been forsaken, repented of, atoned for, and forgiven. One single sin will so explode and shatter his conscience, it will so bruise and break his heart into a thousand pieces, that like one of the children of Israel 'a true penitent will feel the taste of dust of the golden calf in every cup he ever after drinks, in his sweetest as well as in



his bitterest cup.'” But such a man, or woman, to whom much has been forgiven, will love much, and will then have compassion on the ignorant and those who are out of the way. Such a man will have compassion enough on the ignorant, and tenderness enough in his heart to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ truly and fully, because he has felt its power in his own soul.

There was a professor in a seminary who used to test the students as to their inner spiritual life by having them read the third chapter of Genesis, especially those few words where the question occurs: “Where art thou, Adam?” And when the student read those words, he would say, “Get down. God never spoke like a policeman. If you can read that word like a broken-hearted father, then you can preach.” For we have in Genesis 3 and Romans 5 the marvel of that salvation which is our only hope—God’s heart-break over human guilt, and His love that will not let us go!

The effect of that searchlight and the face of Jesus is, first of all, to destroy, always and for ever, the superficial teachings of human perfection. There is no perfect holiness for man in God’s sight until we see His face, until we get to the other side of the River that has no bridge. Paul was not of the perfectionist school. His sense of sin grew with his years. Sin appears exceedingly sinful to him. Romans 7 is not a theological discourse, but a page torn out of Paul’s own experience. “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” “A thorn in the flesh, a minister of Satan to buffet me.” “My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” To some

of us those passages are an exceeding comfort, because we know that, as Paul, so are we in this world.

And this text of Moses humbles us ; it increases our daily penitence and humility. In the words of the hymn, "It pours contempt on all our pride," our racial pride, our spiritual pride, and every other kind of pride. Isaiah puts it even more forcefully. He says that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" in God's sight. It is God's searchlight turned on our own hearts, and it gives us more compassion for those who are ignorant and out of the way. We are touched with the feeling of their infirmities, because we, too, are tempted in all points as they are. We remember that, but for the grace of God, we, too, would have stumbled and fallen.

Jesus Christ turns His light upon us when He says, "Judge not that ye be not judged." The infinite pity of Christ is due to the fact that He (Who was made sin for us, although He knew no sin) saw reflected in His own heart on the tree the sin of the whole race. And in that awful mirror He saw once and for all God's justice, all man's sin, and all God's love. Then burst His mighty heart : "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" And there flowed out blood and water, "Of sin the double cure, cleanse me from its guilt and power." Listen to Jesus Christ. "Simon, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. . . . This woman hath not ceased to kiss My feet. To whom little is forgiven. . . . To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much."

The Indian Christian, Sadhu Sundar Singh, put it all in one great sentence for me. "Those who think

that salvation from sin will come easily have no strength to abandon sin, but those who realize that God became incarnate, and shed His precious Blood to save us from our sin, will not do that which gives suffering to God, or to a brother in Christ." We rightly speak of free salvation and of a simple Gospel; but let us be mindful of those words, lest we use them too glibly and too carelessly.

It is a "simple Gospel" only for those who have never thought deeply. It is a "free salvation" only for those who have never plunged to the depths of the riches of the love of Christ. To Paul it was a great and fathomless Gospel. He said that its length and height and depth could not be measured. "He was made sin for us Who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Thus He to-day and every day, when I kneel in prayer, sets my iniquities which you know not, which the world knows not, and my secret sins, which no one knows, and which I myself am often unconscious of, He sets them in the light of His countenance. "If we say that we have no sin we make Him a liar." "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

CHAPTER V  
THE TRAGEDY AND THE GLORY OF THE  
UNCONSCIOUS

*“The next day they took him and had him into the armoury, where they shewed him all manner of furniture which the Lord had provided for Pilgrims ; as sword, shield, helmet, breast-plate, all-prayer, and shoes that would not wear out : and there was here enough of this to harness out as many men, for the service of their Lord, as there be stars in the heaven for multitude.*

*“They also shewed him some of the engines with which some of his servants had done wonderful things. They shewed him Moses’ rod, the hammer and nail with which Jael slew Sisera, the pitchers, trumpets, and lamps, too, with which Gideon put to flight the armies of Midian. Then they shewed him the ox’s goad wherewith Shamgar slew six hundred men. They shewed him also the jawbone with which Samson did such mighty feats.”*

—“THE PILGRIM’S PROGRESS.”

## CHAPTER V

# THE TRAGEDY AND THE GLORY OF THE UNCONSCIOUS

THERE are two brief passages in the Old Testament that portray the influence of the unconscious or sub-conscious mind on character. In Exodus 34: 29 we read: "Moses knew not that the skin of his face shone by the reason of God speaking with him." And in Judges 16: 20: "And Samson awoke out of his sleep and said I will go out as at other times and shake myself free. But he knew not that the Lord was departed from him."

Here are two portraits of unconscious glory and unconscious weakness in lives that are distinguished for service to the God of Israel. "The things written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through faith and patience might inherit the promises."

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews has seven verses that record Moses' greatness. Samson's name only is mentioned with those of Gideon and Barak, Jephtha and David and Samuel, though his story is perhaps referred to at greater length. Who but Samson "stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness was made strong, waxed mighty in battle, and turned to flight the armies of aliens?"

Milton chose Samson for his greatest tragedy. Michel Angelo chose Moses for his greatest piece of sculpture. Moses and Samson! What a contrast in vocation, talent, character, destiny and influence. Some would say they had nothing in common. One the man of brain, learned in all the wisdom of Egypt. The other, the man of brawn, up to all the tricks and sports of a giant. Moses the man of God. Samson the man of the people. One was an Apollo, the other a Hercules. Moses was legislator, redeemer, and leader of the people. Samson appears as a solitary individual waging his conflict alone, actuated by personal motives and caprice. Moses founded a nation, established a ritual and wrote a code of laws that remained unaltered for twenty centuries. Samson's career ends in a local catastrophe without his having achieved any permanent success. The Nazarite of Dan by his exploits only began to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines. Moses the Levite was the greatest of the Old Testament prophets, for he brought Jehovah to Israel and Israel back to Jehovah. How different these two! Yet *one* thing they had in common. Faith in Jehovah and a sense of vocation to His service. The same faith but not the same faithfulness. "Moses was faithful in all his house as a servant." Samson betrayed his trust and lost his power and influence. We limit our thoughts to one phase only of these two lives, namely the realm of the sub-conscious. "Moses knew not"; "Samson knew not."

Modern psychology emphasizes the supreme importance of the sub-conscious mind in the formation or

in the disintegration of character. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Out of the heart are the issues of life. Our sub-conscious mind is the indelible and infallible record of our actual and deepest desires. The unconscious influence of any man is therefore always greater than his conscious influence, whether for good or for evil. This is the glory and the tragedy of every-day life.

Consider first the beauty of holiness on the face of Moses and of which he was unconscious. The record reads: "Moses knew not that the skin of his face shone," when he had tarried long with God. It all began with Moses' great decision in Egypt. Moses then and there had "chosen rather to be afflicted with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." Then it was that his face began to shine. He caught a vision of God in the commonplace:

*"Earth's crammed with heaven  
And every common bush afire with God."*

Only Moses saw that revelation in the desert of Midian. Ever after he stood bare-foot on holy ground. Afterwards he did not fear the face of Pharaoh because he had met God face to face. Forty days and forty nights on Horeb's height he neither ate bread nor drank water, but his soul was satisfied with marrow and fatness by communion with God. Yet he was unsatisfied. Always his deepest desire and most earnest prayer was:



"Show me Thy glory." Then he stood in the cleft of the rock while the Ineffable Glory passed by and proclaimed: "The Lord merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth; keeping lovingkindness for thousands and forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Then Moses made haste and bowed to the earth and worshipped. Again his face began to shine, and he wist it not. Once more he went up to the holy mount to receive the Tables of the broken Law a second time. And when he came down his face shone with heavenly light.

*" So near is glory to the dust,  
So close is God to man,  
When duty whispers low ' Thou must,'  
The youth replies ' I can.' "*

Do not forget Moses was young. He had still forty years to live, to live with a face that shone.

Paul explains it all to us in his Epistle to the Corinthians. The ministration of the law, he says, came with such glory that the Children of Israel could not look steadfastly upon the face of Moses for the glory of his face. "So," he says under the New Testament, "we all with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed to the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Spirit of God."

No doubt Paul remembered what it was like when he helped to stone Stephen and "all who sat in the

council fastening their eyes on him saw his face as it had been the face of an Angel." Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Stephen and Paul himself—prophets, apostles, martyrs—men and women in the humblest walks of life who lived in close fellowship with God—their faces shone and they wist it not.

The sensitive dark plate of our sub-conscious mind is exposed to the light of God's truth, the Bible, or to the light of His glory in the face of Jesus, and then after a shorter or longer exposure—wonder of wonders—the image of God's Son is printed indelibly on our lives and on our faces. Christ in us the hope of Glory.

"There is one sphere," says George Matheson, "in which Moses stands alone, in which he is the first founder, the primitive inaugurator. It is the discovery that common life may be religious life." In going about his daily duties, Moses' face shone and he knew it not. It was the glory of the commonplace.

"Did you ever happen to pass a looking-glass," says Dr. Alexander Whyte, "as you arose off your knees after an unusually close season with God alone? Then you must have been startled and delighted to see that your plain, dull, haggard face was for the moment positively youthful and beautiful. Well, that was a ray or two of the identical light that shone through Moses' skin of his face."

In Paradise, Dante tells us, the more they love, the more they shine. He recognized the great lovers of God by their exquisite splendour of face. Even their raiment became shining exceeding white as snow.

*“Take time to be holy ;  
 The world rushes on.  
 Spend much time in secret  
 With Jesus alone.  
 By looking to Jesus  
 Like Him thou shalt be.  
 Thy friends in thy conduct  
 His likeness shall see.”*

Now let us turn to the other very dark picture, the tragedy of defeat in Samson, unconscious of his lost power. “He wist not that the Lord was departed from him.”

“There is no picture in the Bible or perhaps in all history,” says Marcus Dods, “more pathetic than that of Samson after his fall. The mighty warrior Samson, the flash of whose eyes had unnerved his enemies, fettered in a Philistine dungeon, deprived of the light of day, set to grind at the millstone like a woman, and dragged out to be the jest and scorn of his insolent conquerors.” From this tragic chapter Milton got the theme for his “Samson Agonistes,” sometimes regarded as a greater work of genius than his “Paradise Lost.”

How did Samson lose his power? Was it not because he first lost his self-control, then betrayed the secret of his Nazarene vow in the lap of Delilah and so lost God’s favour and God’s presence? “He wist not that the Lord was departed from him.”

Samson lived in the infancy of human development. Men appealed to physical strength. They had not learned the beauty of restraint or of holiness. It was

the age of force. So when God wished to convey His revelation, He did it through the medium of brawn. And God made that strength entirely dependent upon the manner in which he obeyed his God and kept his Nazarite vows. Samson's mission to that dark age was to show men that strength, the strength that they needed to fight their battles and overcome their foes, came from God and God alone. His strength proved his undoing. Where we think we stand fast is often the very place of danger for each of us.

Perhaps pride came before his fall. Perhaps he profaned the emblem of his consecration to God by allowing Delilah's unholy hands to touch his long locks, the symbol of his strength. God left him, because he held the honour of God cheaper than his own pleasures. Samson is the type of all such as know God, praise His name, derive strength from Him, do miracles in His name, and then fall away.

"Have we not prophesied in Thy name and worked miracles and cast out demons?"—"And He will say, I never knew you, depart from me."

The rotten tree stands, till the storm strikes it. The corpse seems only asleep, till corruption claims it. "I will shake myself as at other times," he said, "but he wist not that the Lord was departed from him."

The strength of Samson depended not on the length of his locks but on loyalty to his high vocation. The man who shaved his hair in Israel ceased to be a Nazarite. Like Esau, Samson sold his birthright. His courage was broken. His conscience revealed to him that he had sold his secret for wine and love to a woman.

Delilah betrayed Samson as Judas did his Master, with a kiss. The road upward to life and glory and the road downward to shame and contempt rise or fall by gradual stages.

Read the story of Balaam, Solomon, Demas, Peter, Judas Iscariot or the pastor of the Laodicean Church. In each case they seemed unconscious before their fall that God's favour had departed from them. "Whoever has God knows it," says Bengel. "Whomsoever He has left, knows it not." That is the tragedy of the sub-conscious. "Who being past feeling have given themselves over to lasciviousness to work all uncleanness with greediness."

There are men like Samson to-day, who have lost their power because they have first lost their God, lost their faith, lost their first love. They still come to Church. They believe its creeds. They say their prayers. They have the outward appearance of sanctity. But other things have crowded God out and when they stir themselves as in earlier days, they are spiritually impotent.

When a man crucifies his ideals, turns his back on God's appeal, sacrifices Christian principles at the shrine of expediency, compromises truth, dallies with the world, falls in love with money, then his locks are shorn like those of Samson. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved the present world." Which shall it be, in your case? Nay, which is it? Are you being transformed into His image from glory to glory? Are men conscious of heavenly beauties and graces in your character of which you yourself are unconscious?

"Now the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, meekness, self-control." "Every branch in Me," said Jesus, "that bringeth forth fruit the vinedresser trims that it may bring forth more fruit."

Or the terrible alternative—"If a man abide not in me he is cast forth as a branch and is withered, and they gather them and cast them into the fire and they are burned."

Nevertheless Christ, who restored the withered hand, restores withered hopes and withered lives. He restored Samson, because Samson's repentance was real, at the last. His locks began to grow. His faith came back. His power was restored when he learned again how to pray. And his name is not only recorded in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, but in heaven. God's love would not let him go. One lesson of Samson's life is that we have no right to judge each other before the Great Day when all secrets are revealed. No one knows what kind of temptations the other man has to fight against, nor the difficulties through which he has come, and the scars the bitter fight has left in his soul.

*"Judge not : the workings of his brain  
And of his heart, thou canst not see.  
What looks to thy dim eyes a stain  
In God's pure light may only be  
A scar brought from some well-won field  
Where thou wouldst only faint and yield."*



CHAPTER VI  
THE SPIRIT OF THE HIRELING



*“The Shepherds, I say, whose names were Knowledge, Experience, Watchful and Sincere, took them by the hand and had them to their tents and made them partake of what was ready . . . They thought they saw something like the Gate, and also some of the glory of the place. Then they went away, and sang this song :—*

*‘ Thus by the Shepherds secrets are reveal’d,  
Which from all other men are kept conceal’d :  
Come to the Shepherds, then, if you would see  
Things deep, things hid, and that mysterious be.’*

*“When they were about to depart, one of the Shepherds gave them a note of the way. Another of them bid them beware of the Flatterer. The third bid them take heed that they slept not upon the Enchanted Ground ; and the fourth bid them God speed. So I awoke from my dream.”*

*—“THE PILGRIM’S PROGRESS.”*

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SPIRIT OF THE HIRELING

WHAT is the true relation of character and conduct? Is a man a liar because he tells a lie, or does he tell lies because he is a liar? Is a man a thief because he steals, or does he steal because he is a thief? Is a tree an orange tree because it bears oranges, or does it bear oranges because it is an orange tree? Was Judas a traitor because he sold his Master for the thirty pieces of silver, or did he do that because he was already a traitor in his heart?

It is such questions as these—and they are not as simple as they appear at first sight—that Jesus Christ answers for all time and for everybody in a brief parenthesis found in the parable of the Good Shepherd. “*The hireling fleeth because he is an hireling and careth not for the sheep.*”

The word “hireling” has acquired a derived significance in many languages that is sinister and derogatory, although in its origin it simply means one who receives pay for his work. In our English Bible it is found five times in the Old Testament and only twice in the New Testament in this one passage. In nearly every case it has a mercenary emphasis; to collate the passages gives us a picture of the hireling shepherd. Job indicates that the hireling looks at the clock. He is anxious for

sun-down and for the end of his toil. "Are not man's days like the days of an hireling? As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow and as a hireling that looketh for his wages" (Job 7: 2-3). And Isaiah speaks of the brevity of "the years of an hireling." But it is only on the lips of Jesus and in the Epistles of His apostles that the spiritual hireling receives the contempt and condemnation that is his due. He careth not for the sheep but for himself. He does not face those who would destroy the flock as young David did; but seeing the wolf coming, he leaveth the sheep and fleeth. Peter remembers the words of Jesus and exhorts the elders to tend the flock of God not "for filthy lucre" but for love of the sheep, so that when the Chief Shepherd comes they may receive a crown of glory (1 Peter 5: 1-4). Christ's harsh words "All that came before me were thieves and robbers" are more easily understood when we recall what Ezekiel said about the shepherds of Israel, the Pharisees and hirelings of his day.

"Woe unto the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat

to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill; yea my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth and none did search or seek after them."

(Ezekiel 34: 1-6)

It was of such spiritual guides, who had lost their love and zeal and were only greedy of filthy lucre, that Christ spoke when He characterized them as hirelings. How did they become such?

There is no doubt that evil habits end in the deterioration of character. This is the teaching of the Bible; and, as we have seen in our first chapter, it is the unescapable law of conduct. Sow an act and you reap a habit. Sow a habit and you reap a character. When Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom, he made a decision that affected himself and his whole family and descendants. The Prodigal Son made his choice; and having left his father's home, he finally landed as a swineherd. We can see it all around us and often see it best in ourselves, (but for God's grace) how the good shepherd becomes a hireling if he neglects the seven-fold pastoral duties listed in Ezekiel's great chapter. When those who are called to the ministry and boast in the title of pastor fail to feed the flock, to strengthen the feeble, to heal the broken in heart, to bind up the wounded soul, to go after the lost lamb, and to watch over the whole sheep-fold with gentle care, they are already hirelings at heart, for they care not for the sheep.

Men begin with high ideals of their calling or profession and then let them slip for selfish ends or sheer laziness and sloth. Like Bunyan's Pilgrim, they fall asleep in the arbour after they have climbed the hill of difficulty. How skilfully the parable reads :

"He began afresh to take a review of the coat or garment that was given him as he stood by the Cross. Thus pleasing himself a while he at last fell into a slumber and thence into a fast sleep."

The admiration of our ministerial robes may cost us the loss of our Roll !

A greater foe to the ministry than spiritual sloth is the love of money. There are many references in Paul's epistle to this danger, and Demas is not the only one who started digging for silver, when he should have been looking for lost sheep. The love of money is the root of all other evils in the heart of the hireling. John Oxenham portrays what went on in the heart of the Gadarenes when they weighed money against human life nineteen hundred years ago :

*"Rabbi, begone ! Thy powers  
Bring loss to us and ours.  
Our ways are not as Thine,  
Thou lovest men, we—swine.*

*Oh, get Thee hence, Omnipotence !  
And take this fool of Thine !  
His soul ? What care we for his soul ?  
What good to us that Thou hast made him whole,  
Since we have lost our swine ?*

*And Christ went sadly,  
He had wrought for them a sign  
Of love and hope and tenderness divine ;  
They wanted swine.*

*Christ stands without your door and gently knocks,  
But if your gold, or swine, the entrance blocks,  
He forces no man's hold, He will depart  
And leave you to the treasures of your heart."*

We have seen that it is true in a measure that our characters are shaped by environment and habit. But the reverse is more true that our character in all places and circumstances determines our outward conduct. We reveal what we are. This is the significance of the injunction "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." The one is the spring and the other is the stream; and no stream rises higher than its source. The one is the root and the other is the fruit. "By their fruits ye shall know them," but God can see deeper and knows them by their roots. Character lies at the heart of personality and life is its revelation to others.

This is what Christ emphasized in the Sermon on the Mount in sharp contrast to the Law of Sinai. The latter gave the command "Thou shalt not *do*." The former lays stress on what "Thou shalt be." The outward life is an epistle known and read of all men. The inward life is an open book to God alone, from whom no secrets are hid. He alone can cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit. His eyes are like a flame of fire to discern hypocrisy,

but they are tender as those of a mother to a wayward child, when He knows the sincerity of our penitence.

*“ Who made the heart, ’tis He alone  
Decidedly can try us.  
He knows each chord, its various tone,  
Each spring, its various bias ;  
Then at the balance let’s be mute,  
We never can adjust it,  
What’s done we partly may compute,  
But know not what’s resisted.”*

In the history of the Church down the ages it is clear that there were two classes of hirelings to be found when destruction entered the flock of God’s fold. The one class is composed of cowards who are secretly faithless ; the other of bold and open apostates. It is, however, the cowardice of the former that enables the boldness of the latter class to excite consternation in the Church. The wolves only appear bold when the hireling fleeth and fears to face them.

Again and again our Master lays bare the real character of such hirelings in His parables. The story of the keepers of the vineyard, of the builders who rejected the corner-stone, and the entire twenty-third chapter of Matthew are an indictment of hirelings and hypocrites who held office in the sanctuary but betrayed their trust. The Scribes and the Pharisees composed a large part of the Sanhedrin “ who loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” While they were engaged in long and unreal prayer, they or their

agents devoured widows' houses and appropriated the rightful possession of the orphan. It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, Jesus said, than for such lovers-of-money to enter the Kingdom of God.

In John's Gospel we have another statement that throws sharp reflection on the very thoughts of Judas, the traitor. His character is indeed a problem, but here we have at least a hint toward its solution. His conduct revealed his character.

"Judas Iscariot said . . . why was not this ointment sold for 300 pieces of silver and given to the poor? Now this he said not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief and having the bag took away what was put therein!"

His character as thief and covetous man was only revealed by his office . . . only revealed by the betrayal—the poison of treachery was only waiting to strike—like an adder by the wayside. "What thou already doest, do quickly." Finish what your heart has long prompted you to accomplish!

There are good shepherds and there are hirelings in every walk of life. Whether in the home or in the market place, in politics and government, in teaching or healing or preaching. Those who look at the clock and look for wages; those who look at their task as a vocation of God and will lay down their life for the sheep under their care.

Robert Burns in one of his poems spoke out of bitter experience and perhaps a contrite heart:



*"It's no in titles nor in rank,  
 It's no in wealth like London bank,  
 To purchase peace and rest ;  
 It's no in making muckle, mair ;  
 It's no in books, it's no in lear,  
 To make us truly blest.  
 If happiness hae not her seat  
 An' centre in the breast,  
 We may be wise, or rich, or great,  
 But never can be blest !  
 Nae treasures nor pleasures  
 Could make us happy lang ;  
 The heart aye's the part aye  
 That makes us right or wrang."*

Have we the heart of a shepherd or that of an hireling as we face our daily round and common task ?

One of the most interesting and profitable Bible studies is to follow out the idea of God as a shepherd. He shepherds us all, and we shall never find real value or a real place in life, until He puts us to shepherding something or someone. Jacob, himself for many years a hireling in the house of Laban, first used the word shepherd to describe God. It was a bold and prophetic metaphor that he used on his death-bed recalling his own shepherd days :

"Joseph's bow shall abide in strength and the  
 arms of his hands were made strong by the hands  
 of the Mighty One of Jacob, from thence is the  
 Shepherd, the Stone of Israel."

All we know and sing of the Good Shepherd and the Rock of Ages began here. David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Ezekiel, Peter, John and Paul all used the same simple word *shepherd* to teach the same great truth :

“The Lord is my shepherd . . . I am to go out and seek His lost sheep.”

“He laid down His life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”

In Ezekiel's great chapter on the hireling-shepherds of Israel we have the great promise of the coming of the Messiah as the Good Shepherd.

“For thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold I myself, even I, will search for my sheep and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep ; and I will deliver them out of all places whither they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. . . . I will feed them with good pasture, there shall they lie down in a good fold and on fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep. . . . I will feed them in justice.”

(Ezekiel 34 : 11-16)

The Good Shepherd is with each of us to-day. He is our contemporary. All the references to the Lord as our Shepherd in the Old Testament and in our rich hymnology refer to Jesus Christ. There is no other

shepherd to be compared with Him. He has not a single trait of the hireling. "Are there not *twelve* hours in the day?" He said. And then He spent the long night alone in prayer for the sheep. He laid down His life for us and redeemed us not with silver or gold but with His precious blood.

*"But none of the ransomed ever knew  
How deep were the waters crossed  
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed  
through  
Ere he found His sheep that was lost."*

The Good Shepherd leaves the ninety and nine for the sake of one lost lamb. He is the true son of David when He meets the enemy of our souls in the guise of lion or bear (I Sam. 17: 34-36). "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want"—anything, anywhere, from anybody, that He cannot supply. He can even make good shepherds out of hirelings, and has done so again and again by His grace. For He touches the very springs of life and purifies them. He can change character by changing the root of the tree itself. Regeneration is indeed a miracle, but it is a perpetual miracle visible on every hand to those who have eyes to see and a heart to understand.

"Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree;  
and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree;  
and it shall be to Jehovah for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

(Isaiah 55: 13)

Even the branches that were cut off (the hireling-shepherds of Israel) He is able, Paul tells us, to graft in again. He can make us strongest where now we are weakest. Twice-born men include many twice-born shepherds. That is the glorious hope and history of the Christian ministry.

Come now and tell Him what traits of the hireling you detect in your own life. Do you catch yourself looking at the clock, longing for the ease of respite from toil, while the harvest is waiting for reapers? Do you count your wages like a hireling and ask how much *men* will give you for preaching the Gospel? Do you flee from danger and seek the place of safety when wolves are abroad among the flock? How revealing and searching are the words of Mr. Money-Love in Bunyan's allegory:

"To speak to your question, as it concerneth a minister himself: Suppose a minister, a worthy man, possessed but of a very small benefice, and has in his eye a greater, more fat and plump by far; he has also now an opportunity of getting it, yet so as by being more studious, by preaching more frequently and zealously, and, because the temper of the people requires it, by altering of some of his principles. For my part, I see no reason why a man may not do this, provided he has a call, ay, and more a great deal besides, and yet be an honest man. For why?

*First:* His desire of a greater benefice is lawful (this cannot be contradicted), since 'tis set before

him by Providence ; so then he may get it if he can, making no question for conscience' sake. *Second* : Besides, his desire after that benefice makes him more studious, a more zealous preacher, etc. and so makes him a better man ; yea, makes him better improve his parts, which is according to the mind of God. *Third* : Now, as for his complying with the temper of his people, by deserting, to serve them, some of his principles, this argueth, (1) That he is of a self-denying temper ; (2) Of a sweet and winning deportment ; and so (3) More fit for the ministerial function. *Fourth* : I conclude, then, that a minister that changes a *small* for a *great* should not, for so doing, be judged as covetous ; but rather, since he is improved in his parts and industry thereby, be counted as one that pursues his call, and the opportunity put into his hand to do good."

The final test of our love for Christ is to be a good shepherd. He told Peter this three times and unmistakably, after His resurrection. And what is far more significant, He enabled that disciple who denied Him and fled before the wolves to become a true shepherd again.

" Lovest thou me ? . . . Feed my lambs." " Lovest thou me ? . . . Feed my sheep." " Lovest thou me ? . . . Feed my sheep."

And we have for our comfort the great apostolic benediction, which, when the spirit of the hireling enters our hearts, we may make a prayer.

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, *that great shepherd of the sheep*, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen.”



CHAPTER VII  
THE TWO WHO WALKED WITH GOD



*“ Now, as Christian went on his way, he came to a little ascent, which was cast up on purpose that Pilgrims might see before them ; up there, therefore, Christian went ; and looking forward, he saw Faithful before him upon his journey. Then said Christian aloud, Ho, ho ! so, ho ! Stay, and I will be your companion. At that Faithful looked behind him ; to whom Christian cried again, Stay, stay, till I come up to you. But Faithful answered, No ; I am upon my life, and the Avenger of Blood is behind me.*

*“ At this Christian was somewhat moved, and putting to all his strength, he quickly got up with Faithful, and did also overrun him ; so the last was first. Then did Christian vaingloriously smile, because he had gotten the start of his brother : but not taking good heed to his feet, he suddenly stumbled and fell, and could not rise again, until Faithful came up to help him.”*

—“ THE PILGRIM’S PROGRESS.”

## CHAPTER VII

### THE TWO WHO WALKED WITH GOD

THE eleventh chapter of Hebrews has often been called the Westminster Abbey of the Old Testament. Among the many memorials found there to heroic faith and saintly sacrifice two bear nearly the same inscription: "Enoch walked with God, and he was not" (Gen. 5 : 24). "Noah walked with God and he died" (Gen. 6 : 9 ; 9 : 29). These words are used of no other persons in the whole Bible. Abraham received the command "walk before me" and he is repeatedly called the friend of God. Moses was pre-eminently the man of God. Elijah and his great successor were prophets who worked miracles for God, men of fire and whirlwind. Gideon was the warrior of God. Ezekiel bears the same title as Our Lord, the "Son of Man," while Daniel is called "greatly beloved." Only Enoch and Noah have this testimony that they walked with God in an age when everyone else seemed to walk away from Him. Our present age surely demands men of this type who will walk with God, while they preach personal and social righteousness. Prophets of the realities of the world to come in an age of secularism. Men who can stand unmoved in a crisis and whose faith can survive a catastrophe. Such were Enoch and Noah.

Adam and Abraham after all were only patriarchs, but Enoch and Noah were prophets. They were first in the long list of the apostolic succession. Both were pioneer preachers. Both were bold preachers. Both were lonely preachers. In fact their messages were so universal that after thirty centuries the words they spoke are recalled and recorded by Peter and Jude in the New Testament. The heart of their preaching is still an up-to-date message. Our world to-day is turning its back on God and needs men who will make God's presence a reality.

Enoch prophesied, and then men began to call upon the name of the Lord. Christ foretold that the last days would be like the days of Noah, and it does not need special vision to see that present-day Society is facing a catastrophe more terrible than that which overwhelmed the antediluvian world. Many pessimistic seers are telling us that the downfall of Western civilisation is only a matter of time. Bernard Shaw calls us back to Methuselah, and a recent cinema-film entitled "Noah's Ark" drew a comparison between the crisis of the World War and the flood which overwhelmed Noah's generation.

The world needs preachers of righteousness who will call men to repentance, but this is no easy task. It was a great message that fell from the lips of these men ordained to preach before the Flood. But their character was greater than their message, and it is the man behind the message that counts.

Some of the saints mount up with wings as eagles. They are caught up to heaven to see the invisible.

Others run the race and are not weary, like Elijah who kept abreast of Ahab's chariot. But regarding Enoch and Noah this climax is recorded that they walked with God and did not faint.

There are several Hebrew words translated "walk" in the Old Testament. But the word here used is peculiar. It signifies to walk to and fro, to walk habitually, to walk daily and hourly with God. It denotes the most intimate intercourse with Him. A permanent realization of His presence, a dependence on Him, and a following of His guidance. The Psalmist had the same experience when he wrote "I have set the Lord always before me, therefore I shall not be moved."

There are three thoughts that grip our attention as we meditate on these patriarchal preachers of righteousness, these pilgrims to the City of God. In some respects they resemble the two companions in John Bunyan's immortal allegory. Although they lived so long ago, their footprints, like those of antediluvian animals in the rocks, are permanently embedded in the pages of Holy Writ. What did their walk and message have in common? How did these two men differ in their way of walking with God? What did they find at the end of the road? Such are questions that arise as we think of their environment and message.

Enoch and Noah are not myths but historic characters, for both are referred to as such in the New Testament. The name of Noah was often on the lips of Jesus. Both of them were leaders of a new dispensation. Both were preachers of faith and righteousness

in an age of doubt and wickedness. The record is very brief, but the words used are very significant, and however brief the record, we find its interpretation in the New Testament.

On each character as he appears on the stage of history, the curtain rises and falls three times.

We first see Enoch as an ordinary man, engrossed in family cares and secular pursuits: "Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah." Then there comes a great change. The curtain rises and we read: "And Enoch walked with God, after he begot Methuselah, three hundred years and begat sons and daughters." Up till then he had merely lived, now he walks with God. He still has the same old duties, and carries the old responsibilities, but there must have been a new light in his eye and on his pathway. He is conscious of a new vocation and a new companionship. A companion who is far older than Methuselah. "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations, before ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting thou art God." This deathless companion was with Enoch, and so he was not afraid of death. Yet Enoch must have been a lonely man in his generation. Yesterday he walked alone. To-day he walks with God. The curtain falls to rise again.

We stand in a vast cemetery, Adam, Abel, Cain, and his descendants, Seth, Enos, Methuselah, they are all there, but not Enoch. There is no grave for him. Enoch is immortal. The record is that God took him. He was translated, and his translation is the outstanding evidence

to the men of his day that death does not end all. He was a witness of the reality of the world to come.

In the same way there are three great stages in the life of Noah. First he stands a solitary man uttering his protest against the sins of a wicked world. The record is: "All the imaginations of the thoughts of man's heart were only evil every day." Could there be a more powerful description of Noah's daily environment? Who can picture the men of that antediluvian world? The cup of its violence and iniquity was overflowing. The time of judgment had approached. God's mercy was at an end. Then we see Noah building the Ark, and surviving the flood and waters, as well as the waves of terror that flowed over his soul. We must realise that he went through that great experience, a lonely man. Like the last World War, it was a universal over-turning, only far more destructive, and it left still deeper scars. "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts. All Thy waves and Thy billows passed over me." In one sense we may say that Noah was almost translated like Enoch, for he was lifted above the world when it was destroyed, and carried in the Ark to safety.

When the curtain rises the third time on Noah, he stands alone in a new world keeping vigil over the new dispensation. But he does not stand without hope, or without God. We see him under the rainbow of promise and close beside him is a smoking altar for sacrifice. What a pulpit to preach the promise of a better world, and of the mercy of God which endureth forever. Both of these men who walked with God were

preachers of righteousness. Enoch was the seventh from Adam, but the echo of his message is still heard. Jewish tradition and the Epistle of Jude credit him with a special revelation, called the Book of Enoch, in which he prophesied saying: "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His Holy ones to execute judgment upon all and to convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness which they have ungodly wrought and all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Four times that dreadful word ungodly echoes like the trump of doom from the lips of this godly prophet in Jude's Epistle. As regards Noah, Peter tells us that he "was a preacher of righteousness when God brought the flood upon the world of the ungodly." Men were pushing God aside; Noah held Him fast. Men were forgetting God; Noah remembered Him. Men mocked at God; but Noah obeyed Him.

Was he an unsuccessful preacher? And how does God measure success?

The two patriarchs lived about four centuries apart, but both walked in the same narrow path, and both had the same pilgrim's staff, and were looking for the City that hath foundations. By faith they saw the invisible. They saw promises from afar, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims. With faithfulness they proclaimed their message. Uncontaminated, undismayed, they preached righteousness. And they were similar also in their perseverance. Enoch walked with God "three hundred years." They walked and did not faint. Step by step up the steep to the city of

God. The old Puritan Divines taught that the argument from silence is not convincing regarding the belief in immortality in the Old Testament. Abel, they say, confessed another life after his death, for his blood cries out and is heard. Cain acknowledged another life before death, for he was afraid to die, and his soul foreboded that something more awaited him than this world's unhappiness. Enoch confesses another life without death, for out of this world's misery, and without the pain of dying, he goes straight to everlasting life.

Nevertheless the walk of these two men differed, because their lives were different. Noah and Enoch were not spiritual twins. Their lives are a great contrast: Enoch means the devoted one; Noah, the rest giver.

The former lived in a quiet commonplace age. History runs its even course, humanity increases, life expands, civilisation grows more complex, but there is no catastrophe. Only the daily round and common task. The latter appears at a crisis. The cup of human iniquity is full. He lives through the forty days and forty nights of the Divine Judgment.

We need to study the whole record carefully and abide with Noah in the Ark to appreciate what he suffered although he was saved. "No man suffered so much in the flood as Noah," says George Matheson. "He saw the disappearance of an entire world! It drowned all his friends but seven, all his contemporaries. It quenched his fame as a representative man. The flood has infected his memory with the mist of its own antiquity. The more universal we make the deluge,



the more local we make Noah ; the more do we isolate him from the common experience of mankind." To be an only survivor is always a great tragedy.

Noah is a type of many who followed after him. He was saved ; but in the new world and the new life, his old sin found him out. Noah planted a vineyard and became drunk. The flood did not drown the alcohol devil.

For Enoch the pathway was smooth. For Noah it was rough all the way. Enoch walked through the sunshine. Noah through the storm. Enoch walked carefully. Noah stumbled. The pages of Enoch's diary are without incident or tragedy or tears. Noah's life is all drama, all tragedy, all catastrophe. Enoch is only celebrated in the brief record of the Jewish people in three verses. Noah's faith and stature are so colossal that the flood-story is known among all nations from Mexico to China, from Babylonia to the South Sea Islands. This is most remarkable. Noah has a universal reputation.

Most of all do the two life stories differ in their last chapters. The one is an idyll of peace and quiet, the other a family tragedy of unrest and terrible temptations ! Noah was drunk and was naked. " Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be." There the curtain falls. On the right side the altar and the rainbow, on the left side the vineyard and the curse. " And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years ; and he died." Yet all his life, nine hundred and fifty years, he tried to walk with God. Now unto Him that was able to keep Noah from stumbling at the end

and to present him before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy, we leave Noah, because we know that Christ was with him in the Ark and with him at the end, "heir of the righteousness by faith."

But what was the end of the road for these two pilgrims of the night and did they meet at last? Both of them might have used the beautiful words that Bunyan puts in the mouth of Mr. Feeblemind in his immortal allegory. "I am a man of no strength at all of body, nor yet of mind; but would if I could, though I can but crawl, spend my life in the pilgrim's way. I am escaped with my life for which I thank my King. Other brunts I also look for, but this I have resolved on, to wit, to run when I can, to go when I cannot run, and to creep when I cannot go. As to the main, I thank Him that loved me, I am fixed. My way is before me, my mind is beyond the river that has no bridge, though I am as you see, but of a feeble-mind." And so they all passed over; Valiant-for-the-Truth, Christian, and Christiana and her children, and Feeble-mind. Great-heart and Despondency, Enoch and Noah, and all the trumpets sounded for them on the other side. For there is no difference, all have sinned and come short of the glory here. All who believe and walk with God pass into the glory over there. "Enoch walked with God and was not, for God took him." "Noah walked with God and he died." Will it be so for you and me?

"The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose, He will not desert to its foes." "They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy." "For if we believe

that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall first rise, then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air : and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

*" Oh for a closer walk with God, a calm and heavenly frame.  
A light to shine upon the road, that leads me to the Lamb."*

**CHAPTER VIII**  
**THE WHEELS OF LIFE**

*"Now, as they were going along and talking, they espied a boy feeding his father's sheep. The boy was in very mean clothes, but of a fresh and well-favoured countenance, and as he sat by himself he sung. Hark, said Mr. Great-Heart, to what the shepherd's boy saith ! So they barked, and he said :*

*' He that is down needs fear no fall ;  
He that is low, no pride ;  
He that is humble ever shall  
Have God to be his Guide.*

*I am content with what I have,  
Little be it or much ;  
And, Lord, contentment still I crave,  
Because thou savest such.*

*Fulness to such a burden is,  
That go on pilgrimage :  
Here little, and hereafter bliss,  
Is best from age to age.'*

*I will dare to say, this boy lives a merrier life, and wears more of that herb called Heart's ease in his bosom, than he that is clad in silk and velvet."*

—"THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS."

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE WHEELS OF LIFE

“For the spirit of Life was in the wheels.”—

*Ezekiel 1 : 21b.*

THERE is a window in the Cathedral of Chartres, on which are depicted, somewhat grotesquely, the four Evangelists riding pick-a-back upon the shoulders of the Old Testament prophets. St. Matthew sits on Jeremiah, St. Mark on Daniel, St. Luke on Isaiah, and St. John on Ezekiel. The grotesqueness of this idea conceals a great truth. St. John's Gospel of the Eternal Word and his great Apocalypse indeed ride into the New Testament on the back of the magnificent visions and imagination of Ezekiel.

What a prophet of fire and whirlwind was Ezekiel ! Like Elijah in his vision at Horeb, he saw wind, fire, earthquake, and then heard the voice of God !

What diverse minds were attracted to this prophecy and this personality ! We read that William Blake, the mystic poet and painter, was fascinated by Ezekiel even in youth. Herder, the German poet, calls him “the Shakespeare of the Hebrews,” so full is he of expression and so deep in his dramatic style. His prophecy is “an ocean and labyrinth of Divine mysteries,” said Jerome.

“More sublime than Isaiah,” he is according to other

commentators, and yet what a neglected book. How long has it been since you have read it? Hengstenberg calls him "a spiritual Samson, gigantic by nature and standing alone." He inspires the awe of holiness, and the greatest chapter of his prophecy is the first. No Jew, according to Jerome, might read that chapter until he was thirty years old! It was too deep for the immature. Let us, however, be bold and consider first the vision and then its interpretation, conscious that only the Holy Spirit can rightly interpret His own word.

The vision, which is twice recorded in chapters one and ten, and referred to in the fourth chapter of Revelation, is that of the ineffable glory of Jehovah, as ruler of the universe, on a moving throne. We see wheels and living creatures as the moving chariot of God. The symbolism of this is perhaps due to Ezekiel's Babylonian environment.

It was just after the terrible and sudden fall of Nineveh in 593 B.C., and the Egyptian invasion. It was an age of gigantic downfalls: Jerusalem had fallen; Israel was led captive; Egypt was conquered; the glory of Assyria had departed. The doom of Tyre was sealed! Jeremiah and Ezekiel sang the great Recessional of the nations. There was fear and trembling among the nations, dominions disappearing. The world was in deep unrest, even as it is to-day. Chaos and confusion were among the nations. There was fear and trembling in captive Israel. But God was present and manifested His glory by symbols. Ezekiel says: "I saw a vision of God!" Wheels and living creatures. . . . Mechanism and

intelligence. . . . Law and love. . . . The Cosmos and the Creator.

The living creatures? What can they signify here and elsewhere in Scripture save the fourfold aspect of God's glory in Creation and Revelation, and in the Christ of history as portrayed in the fourfold Gospel. This is the oldest and best interpretation. Christ's supremacy as King is symbolized in Matthew by the lion, king of the forests. His service of redemption as Redeemer is symbolized in Mark by the ox. His fellowship with men as Saviour is symbolized in Luke by the face of a man. And the mystery of His deity as Son of God is symbolized in John by the eagle. All this is portrayed in Christian art and architecture.

The four living creatures are types of the one Gospel, the one Spirit of God, and the one Saviour. "One God, one law, one element, and one far off." "The Spirit of the Life was in the wheels." In Him dwelt all fullness of the Godhead bodily. He was a Christ who came from the Father's glory; a Christ who died for man's sin; a Christ who is with God on the throne and manifest in history!

For, as Elvet Lewis says, "The four living creatures were each of them surpassingly human—they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides." It is man that gives creation meaning and purpose. Lordly strength, lordly patience, lordly aspiration—these in the face of the lion, ox and eagle were one with the lordly man." Incarnation, atonement, resurrection, intercession—these were the fourfold work of the Redeemer. These, too, have all the hands of a man



under their four sides. The Son of God is the Son of man.

And in the joining of the wings we again have a symbol of unity in nature and in redemption. Nowhere is there a break. God has left no loose links. Wing joins to wing: type is linked to anti-type. Creation has no ravelled edges. Re-creation is to include all the universe, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess . . . and God be all in all.

And, according to John Calvin, the whirling wheels of fire must signify God's Providence in the course of the ages. "Zekiel saw the wheel of time. Every spoke was human kind. De big wheel run by faith. De little wheel run by de grace of God. Wheel in de middle of a wheel." That is the Negro-spirituel interpretation. They, too, were bound to the wheel of life in the dark days of slavery. They, too, saw God's Providence in the wheels of Ezekiel.

We find a similar idea in the Buddhist Endless Wheel of Life. For every circle, every wheel is a mystery. 3:14159 +. No one has ever solved the squaring of the circle.

The course of nature, says Ecclesiastes, is a wheel. The solar systems are wheels. The climate runs in cycles. The structure of the atom and the stellar universe are both whirling wheels. The cycles of the tides, the cycles of geology—all are wheels, within wheels. Everywhere we see velocity, ubiquity, intelligence—life and not mere mechanism.

And the history of the world is a wheel of human

progress. Evolution in the sense of progress or retrogression is a wheel. Cycles upon cycles seems to be the law of the universe.

Here in Ezekiel's vision we see, not only a revolution, but God on His throne of omnipotence moving forward—gigantic, gyroscopic, apocalyptic, cosmic in origin and scope. Progress without retrogression to the final goal. "They move straight forward." "A wheel within a wheel." Intricate, perplexing as the ages of progress and retrogression in the history of the human race, but ever onward is the purpose of God!

How many lives were broken on the wheel! The Jewish nation itself was broken on the wheel before the fullness of time came. Ezekiel says the wheels were "high and dreadful." "O, the depth of the riches. . . . How unsearchable are His judgments."

"They returned not." Progress has no real backward movement; it is only apparent and relative. "Careless seems the Great Avenger history's pages but record. . . . Truth forever on the scaffold. . . ." And this same vision in chapter one and again in chapter ten and in John's Revelation shows by its repetition its great importance and, as Daniel said, the certainty of accomplishment.

Its interpretation is therefore important. Behold the living God in the whirling wheels of circumstance! God's Providence manifest in the history of redemption; God's Providence in your life and mine! In the Old Testament we see it clearly if only we read between the lines. We see the Providence of God in the history of redemption and the spirit of redemption in the history

of man. Every man's life in the Old Testament is a plan of God.

Joseph was sent into Egypt to preserve Israel, a matchless story of God's Providence. Moses was called out of Egypt as a school of preparation for his great task. David's Psalms were written in the furnace of affliction and temptation, to become the prayer-book of the ages. The Book of Esther is another striking example of God's Spirit behind the scenes. God's name is not mentioned, but His power and grace are evident all through it.

In the New Testament the same Providence of God is manifest in "the fullness of time." When Christ came there was a fullness of preparation, of expectancy, and of despair. The Holy Spirit prepared the time and place for the Incarnation. No one can read the story of the four hundred years of waiting after Malachi's message without exclaiming, as did Pharaoh's soothsayers, "This is the finger of God." The blank page in our Bibles between Malachi and Matthew is full of Divine preparation for the Advent. God was working out His purpose.

That page, as we all know, records four great names : Alexander, Socrates, Julius Cæsar and Judas Maccabæus. Each is of great significance in the life of the Apostolic Church. That page speaks of four great cities : Rome, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. That page tells of the world-wide importance of three great languages : Hebrew, Latin and Greek.

The spirit of redemption was in the wheels of Providence, also in the history of the Church from the

early days of Christianity until now. There is a report in the *New York Times* that libraries today find new demand for Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. But Harnack's *Expansion of Christianity* must be read side by side. Every country shows God's Spirit in the wheels of time and destiny.

This fact is referred to in a recent book, *Some Ancient Safeguards of Civilization*, by R. Travers Hefford. The three safeguards of civilization depicted by the writer are the closing of the Talmud, the consolidation of the Catholic Church, and the codification of the Roman law, all of which took place in the period between the end of the fourth century and the middle of the sixth century. In these three great movements, the author states, "the means were provided by which the treasures of the higher life of humanity were safeguarded, and enabled to survive the great tempest of the Dark Ages. Three great structures of thought had been built up and made strong so that they could, so to speak, ride out the storm and defy the waves which beat against them." The implications for the present period of storm and stress may be surmised. Just as God was working in that olden time, so He is working now to save the world and civilization. Therefore, in our own day, "the newspaper," as Hudson Taylor said, "is the best prayer book for missions."

The work of missions also is a history of progress, the spirit of God in the wheels. The chapters of modern missions and history are strangely interwoven. The Lamb is on the Throne. The Indian Mutiny, 1858, ushered in a new day for India, politically and socially,

and it was the dawn of a missionary epoch. The partition of Africa in the days of old King Leopold and its exploration were pregnant with vast consequences for the Kingdom of God. So were the death of Livingstone and Stanley's letter to the London *Times*. The Armenian massacres (1900-1916) and their aftermath may yet prove the birth of a new nation. The Boxer uprising in China and the subsequent counter-revolution are still bearing fruit. The hands of the clock do not move backward! The Russo-Japanese War and its influence on the Asiatic mind and nationalism; the bombardment of Manila and the entrance of America into the area of the Pacific; the abrogation of the Caliphate and the death of Pan-Islamism have ushered in a new day for missions to Moslems. The Spirit of God is still in the wheels of history.

The Lamb of God is on the Throne. In all this we can even now see one unceasing purpose. "Facts are the fingers of God," as was pointed out by Dr. A. T. Pierson. Although often we see only the tangled skein and the underside of the pattern, the warp and the woof are in the hands of God the Weaver, Who is at the loom, and He knows. His will for the world is good in its origin; acceptable in its cosmic progress; and perfect at the end—when time shall be no more.

In the life of each Christian we also see the Spirit of God in the wheels of Providence. Your belief in special Providence is the gauge of your piety, the measure of the nearness of God's presence to you.

Look which way you will on the wheel of Providence in your own life, and it has a face toward you. "The

wheel is full of eyes." There are no blind forces in Nature. God's face is everywhere and His hand! Daily Providence looks upon you and is ready to speak to you of the love of God, if you are but silent enough to hear its voice. Like a well-drawn picture, Providence has an eye upon all that have an eye upon it. Life is not what Omar Khayyám says, "a checkerboard of fate," but a plan of God, where all things work together for good to those that love God. "If you will observe Providences, you will find Providences to observe."

Have you ever read Browning's description of the potter and the wheel?

*"Fool! All that is, at all,  
Lasts ever, past recall;  
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure;  
What entered into thee,  
That was, is, and shall be:  
Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay  
endure.*

*He fixed thee 'mid this dance  
Of plastic circumstance,  
This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest:  
Machinery just meant  
To give thy soul its bent,  
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed."*

"Thou, O Lord, art the potter, and we are the clay."  
"Have Thine own way, Lord; Have Thine own way;

Thou art the potter, I am the clay." Not only the "steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord," but the stops of a good man. He opens and He shuts the doors. Paul was forbidden to preach the word in Asia, that Europe might have the Gospel. Jesus often says to us as to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." "Our disappointments are His appointments." Here, too, the Spirit of the living creatures is in the wheels. By a "chance" meeting with his Sabbath-school teacher in the street, Jowett was deflected from being a solicitor to being a preacher, and by the "chance" turning of the pages of a missionary magazine Albert Schweitzer began his mighty work in the disease-ridden swamps of equatorial Africa.

"In Him we live and move. . . ." If we are led by the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Live dangerously. Dare and endure, even if you are to be broken on the wheel.

When I was a boy, my father taught me the Heidelberg Catechism. It is hoary with age, but still packed with Divine wisdom. One question I shall never forget: "What dost thou understand by the Providence of God?" And the answer is: "The Almighty and everywhere power of God whereby, as it were by His hand, He still upholds heaven and earth, with all creatures, and so governs them that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, all things come, not by chance, but by His fatherly hand." That is true and practical Calvinism.

In every detail of life, God has a hand. God is not dead. Christ is contemporary. "All things work together for good to those who love God." The daily round, the common task, is part of the wheel of God's Providence . . . until at last "the golden bowl is broken and the wheel is broken at the cistern and man goeth to his long home."

"Every man's life is a plan of God." And there would be no friction, if we followed His will alone, if He were at the centre. Is your life centric or eccentric? Away with self; close to the centre of all is Jesus Christ. Then there will be no friction, no loss of power. There must be rest at the centre, if there is to be power at the circumference: for the Spirit of Life is in the wheels. "This," said Ezekiel, "was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of God, and when I saw it, I fell upon my face."

The wheels of life are very high and very dreadful, as the poet Raymond Kresensky says:

*"Wheels. Wheels move out into space.*

*The earth wheels. Mars wheels around, and all the stars.*

*Moons, moons around the earth; moons around Mars; and  
moons around all the stars, wheeling, wheeling into space.*

*The sun stands still and all the stars wheel around it.*

*The sun and its stars and moons and earths wheel around.*

*There are universes and more universes. Wheels, wheels  
move out into space.*

*Down. Down. Down.*

*Atoms wheels around. Electrons. Wheels. Wheels.*



*Man stands beside the maze of whirling wheels. He reels  
dizzily.*

*Man stands within the maze of whirling wheels. He tangles  
and twists. Spots blur in wheels before his eyes.*

*Outside, the world moves on its wheels.*

*Inside, his heart beats like wheels.*

*His brain moves on wheels.*

*His body pulses to the tune of turning wheels."*

Yet every man's life is a plan of God and He will work it out. For the Spirit is in the wheels and to those who are *in Christ* there is rest at the centre.

CHAPTER IX  
SONS OF MARTHA

*“ I will say again, that when the Saviour was come, women rejoiced in him before either man or angel. I read not, that ever any man did give unto Christ so much as one groat ; but the women followed him, and ministered to him of their substance. ’Twas a woman that washed his feet with tears, and a woman that anointed his body to the burial. They were women that wept when he was going to the cross, and women that followed him from the cross, and that sat by his sepulchre when he was buried ; they were women that were first with him at his resurrection-morn, and women that brought tidings first to his disciples that he was risen from the dead. Women, therefore, are highly favoured, and shew, by these things that they are sharers with us in the grace of life.*

*“ Now the cook sent up to signify that supper was almost ready, and sent one to lay the cloth and the trenchers, and to set the salt and bread in order.”*

—“ THE PILGRIM’S PROGRESS.”

## CHAPTER IX

### SONS OF MARTHA

“Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus” (John 11 : 5).

It is easier to be a son of Mary and sit at the Master's feet, than to be compelled by circumstances to live as a son of Martha, to carry heavy loads and responsibilities and anxieties, with scarcely time for meditation or worship. It is easier to be a Christian at Keswick, than at Tilbury Docks. It is easier to meditate on God in a cathedral than in a coal mine. Easier on Sundays than on week days. Easier, so Kipling tells us, west of Suez than in the Far East. This chapter is a study of Martha and Christ's love for her. For the love of Christ and His power to save does not depend on points of the compass or attendance at Conventions. Christ is the Saviour of all men, especially of those who believe.

The best thing in the world for any one of us, is the assurance we may have of the personal friendship of Jesus. Without Him life would often be blank with uncertainty or black with terror. With Him we may venture out boldly as the mariner across the high seas or the Alpine climber with his guide to the highest peaks. What the children sing is true of each one of us if we belong to Him. “Jesus loves me He will stay, close beside me all the way.”

Although Christ attracted large numbers and preached to them, although He had compassion on the multitude and fed them, yet in the Gospels we must bear in mind that His concern was for the individual. One lost sheep gives joy to the shepherd when it is found ; Jesus never lost sight of the individual in the crowd. When people flocked around Him, He suddenly asked, " Who touched me ? " His friendship is individual. He calls His own sheep by name.

There is a long list of names in the Book of Life, so long that no man can ever number them. But Jesus in the days of His flesh, kept a guest book in His heart, and here is one page from it. " Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." There were diversities of gifts, but the same spirit of loving friendship between each of them, and the Master. He did not love Martha as He loved Mary or Lazarus. The quality and kind of love which we have, is always individual, differing with persons ; and persons are distinguished by their characteristics. Perhaps Jesus loved her most, for she is mentioned first, and that by John who was himself the Apostle of Love, and who leaned on Jesus' bosom at the Supper. The Greek word used of Christ's love for Martha is not the same as that used elsewhere in this chapter, for His love of Lazarus. There may be a real distinction in the use of these terms, but in any case we know that Christ's love for His three friends was evidence of a pure and lofty friendship.

When we ask ourselves who Martha was, we find little detail in the Gospel record, save that she resided at Bethany and that the house in which she lived is

called "her house." She was undoubtedly the older sister, and possibly a widow, some say of Simon the Leper (Matt. 26: 6). She was active, industrious, full of solicitude, practical in temperament, frank in her speech almost to a fault, and anxious to put her best at the Master's disposal.

Her hands doubtless bore marks of service, and her brow wrinkles of care. The contrast of her character to that of Mary, as depicted in Luke's Gospel, has often been an unfair labelling and libelling of Martha's disposition.

It is true that on one occasion she needed the reproof: "Martha, Martha, thou art anxious about many things, only one thing is needful, and Mary has chosen the better part." But Martha's life, although imperfect in this one instance, is recognised by the Evangelists as strong and active and true. Among all those mentioned in the Gospel her Messianic hope was most extraordinary, and stands out in the eleventh chapter of John in a remarkable way. Her statement of faith is so clear and decisive so rock ribbed and strong, that we may well call it masculine. Peter was her spiritual brother, even as John was the spiritual brother of Mary. The Gospels always picture her as busy in service, but she must have had time to think; like famous Brother Lawrence, who; in the kitchen of the monastery practised the presence of God. No faith in Christ's deity and the resurrection power was stronger than hers. At the grave of her dead brother she said: "I know that even now whatever thou wilt ask of God, God will give thee," and then she said: "I know that my brother shall rise

again in the resurrection at the last day." Martha was no agnostic, but she went even further than this in her confession. It reads: "Yea Lord, I believe that Thou art the Christ the Son of God, which should come into the world." We have here the germ of the Apostles' Creed on Martha's lips, and in circumstances of life which shake faith to its foundations. No wonder Jesus loved her.

And we read in Luke's Gospel, that "Martha served." This short sentence portrays her characteristic qualities, and it might serve as her epitaph. Her apostolic successors were: Dorcas and Phoebe; Florence Nightingale, and Elizabeth Fry, and Mary Moffatt, Mary Slessor, Clara Barton, and Frances Willard, and all the rest. Such lives are the leaders of the words of Jesus: "He that would be first among you, let him be the servant of all."

According to an old tradition, Martha went with her brother and other disciples, after the Resurrection of Jesus, to live in Marseilles in France. There she gathered round her a society of devout women, and, true to her character, was a leader in active administration for the poor and outcast. Her tomb is shown to-day in the little neighbouring town of Tarascon, which boasts of possessing her remains and claims her as its patron saint. Later on, an order of sisters was established there, called the Sisters of St. Martha, whose aim is the care of the poor and the instruction of little children. How many mothers and sisters and wives belong to this order in the Protestant as well as in the Roman Catholic world. The sons and daughters of

Martha. She has doubtless had more spiritual descendants than Mary. How many of her sisters to-day have the anxious brow and the troubled heart, which Jesus so loved in Martha, brave, active, restless, care-worn, patient, Martha.

I can imagine her very well, for I remember my own sister Martha, the eldest among eleven brothers and sisters, who after my mother's death was the guide, counsellor, and friend of us all. Although her brow was wrinkled with care, her face was bathed in smiles, and radiant with the hope and joy of Christ's presence. The fact is that every happy home has its Martha.

Sir James Paget wrote from Avignon in 1882, when he visited the so-called tomb of Martha: "At Tarascon we were on the spot where there is at least fair reason to believe that Martha, the sister of Lazarus, is buried. An admirably simple monument has been put up over it with a recumbent figure, and a tablet inscribed 'Sollicita non turbata' (Careful not troubled). As one looked at it, in the dimly lighted crypt, and saw poor women praying and kissing the feet and hands of the statue, one was almost content to be credulous." "Now Jesus loved Martha."

It is not strange that the mediæval mystic, Meister Eckhart, in commenting on the story of Martha and Mary (these two favourite types of activity and contemplation) puts Martha first. "Mary hath chosen the good part; that is, he says, 'she is striving to be as holy as her sister.' Mary is still at school; Martha has learnt her lesson, for it is better to feed the hungry



than to see even such visions as St. Paul saw." Faith without works is dead, and even Paul boasts: "I have laboured more abundantly than they all." And in his farewell address at Ephesus he says: "These hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me." Paul's hands as well as Paul's body bore in them the marks of the Lord Jesus.

In one sense we may believe that Martha was perchance one of the oldest friends of Jesus. She had passed through Paul's three stages of friendship for the Master. She knew Him at Bethany. She saw the power of His resurrection at the grave of her brother Lazarus, and she shared the fellowship of His suffering during the holy week and at the Cross. It was to such as Martha that Jesus, when He had compassion on the multitude, turned and said: "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Not rest for their bodies, but for their souls. His yoke is easy, and His burden is light, but it remains the yoke of service.

Some people must be busy and careful for many things that other people may have comfort and rest and refreshment. We are all debtors to Martha and her sons. Did you ever read Kipling's interpretation in his poem entitled "Sons of Martha:"

*"The Sons of Mary seldom bother,  
For they have inherited that good part,  
But the Sons of Martha favour their mother,  
Of the careful soul and the troubled heart,*

*And because she lost her temper once,  
And because she was rude to the Lord, her guest,  
Her sons must wait upon Mary's sons—  
World without end, reprieve, or rest.*

*It is their care in all the ages,  
To take the buffet and cushion the shock ;  
It is their care that the gear engages,  
It is their care that the switches lock ;  
It is their care that the wheels run truly  
It is their care to embark and entrain,  
Tally, transport and deliver duly  
The Sons of Mary by land and main.*

*They say to the mountains, ' Be ye removed !'  
They say to the lesser floods, ' Run dry !'  
Under their rods the rocks are reproved—  
They are not afraid of that which is high,  
Then do the hilltops shake to the summit,  
Then is the bed of the deep laid bare,  
That the Sons of Mary may overcome it,  
Pleasantly sleeping unaware.*

*To these from birth is belief forbidden  
From these till death is relief afar ;  
They are concerned with matters hidden—  
Under the earth line their altars are.  
The secret fountains to follow up,  
Waters withdrawn to restore to the mouth—  
Yea, and gather the floods as in a cup,  
And pour them again at a city's drouth.*

*They do not preach that their God will rouse them,  
 A little before the nuts work loose ;  
 They do not teach that His pity allows them  
 To leave their work whenever they choose,  
 As in the thronged and the lighted ways,  
 So in the dark and the desert they stand,  
 Wary and watchful all their days,  
 That their brethren's days may be long in the land.*

*Lift ye the stone, or cleave the wood  
 To make a path more fair or flat—  
 Lo ! it is black already with blood  
 Some sons of Martha spilled for that.  
 Not as a ladder from earth to heaven,  
 Not as an altar to any creed,  
 But simple service simply given,  
 To his own kind in their common need :—*

(Then Kipling becomes a bit sarcastic).

*And the Sons of Mary smile and are blessed—  
 They know the angels are on their side.  
 They know in them is the grace confessed,  
 And for them are the mercies multiplied.  
 They sit at the Feet and they hear the Word—  
 They know how truly the promise runs,  
 They have cast their burden upon the Lord,  
 And—the Lord he lays it on Martha's sons."*

If this offends anyone with its sarcasm, we have only to remember that Christ himself was a son of Martha,

as well as a son of Mary. We cannot forget the pathos of the Via Dolorosa, where He fell under the burden of the Cross, and they compelled Simon of Cyrene to carry it for Him.

Indeed we will not be too bold if we state that Christ was spiritually the son of Martha even as He was physically the son of Mary the Virgin. When He became the Son of Man by taking human flesh, He took on Him the form of a servant. In the carpenter's shop at Nazareth He spent many years of toil; although He knew that He must be about His father's business in the Temple, He turned back at the age of twelve, to fashion yokes and repair household furniture for the village crowd. Isaiah calls him: The Servant of Jehovah. He did not sit in contemplation like Buddha but went about doing good. The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give His life a ransom for many. Again and again He rebukes the sin of sloth and idleness. "Why stand ye idle in the market?" The uttermost darkness is reserved for the wicked and slothful servant.

Jesus must have been worn by life's burden and heat and toil. By nights of prayer on the mountain top, so that He had a prematurely aged appearance. "Thou art not yet fifty years old," they said, when He was only thirty-two. Was His hair tinged with grey, and His face furrowed with care? The Gospels picture Him often as weary with the journey, trudging on foot. Only once in His life we read that He rode, and that was toward Calvary. "Foxes have holes, and the birds of air have nests, but the Son of Man hath

no place to lay His head." After spending all day healing the sick, and teaching the ignorant, He would snatch a bit of slumber on a pillow in the fishing smack on Lake Galilee, only to be awakened by His anxious disciples. In the first chapter of Mark's Gospel, if we read it carefully, we have the picture of His strenuous life during one Sabbath day. Sixteen hours of preaching, healing, and praying. "I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day," He said. And again: "How am I pressed till it be accomplished."

The last great scene which John portrays is also typical. "Jesus, knowing whence He came and whither He was going, took the towel and girded Himself." So He took Martha's place at the last, and did for His disciples what Martha had so often done for Him. He even washed the feet of Judas.

No soft and easy life was His. What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A man clad in soft raiment? "The servant is not greater than his Lord," He said. "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" Now we speak of an eight hour working day, and of a week-end of rest for all who toil. Whatever may be true of social and industrial reform, Christians must not forget that Christ set us an example of the strenuous life, and the Apostles have always been those who have endured hardness as good soldiers. "Must we be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease; while others fought to win the prize and sailed through bloody seas." The climax of wickedness, according to Jesus, is laziness (Matt. 25 : 26) spiritual apathy and sloth. Dawdling, when souls are at stake, is an unpardonable sin. If

we hide our talent in a napkin, then after the wasted life we will face an eternity of remorse. Better for us to say with Bonar :

*“ Sin worketh, let me work too—  
Sin undoeth, let me do—  
Busy as sin my work I'll ply—  
Till I rest in the rest of eternity.”*

An easy-going Christian may well go to school with Martha, and take up the yoke of service. “ Now Jesus loved Martha.” He loves those who are fulfilling the drudgery of the commonplace, and with patient zeal complete the daily round. His sympathies are with those who are bearing the crushing weight of family cares, or the burden of the Churches. Blessed be such drudgery if He toils at our side and loves us in it. We must work for the night cometh. To be instant in season, and out of season, because of fleeting opportunities and perishing souls. “ Now Jesus loved Martha.”

*“ Go labour on, spend and be spent,  
Thy joy to do the Father's will—  
It is the way the Master went,  
Should not the servant tread it still ? ”*



CHAPTER X

THE SCARS OUR PATTERN



*“ They therefore brought him out to do with him according to their law ; and first they scourged him ; then they buffeted him, then they lanced his flesh with knives ; after that they stoned him with stones ; then pricked him with their swords ; and, last of all, they burnt him to ashes at the stake. Thus came Faithful to his end.*

*“ Now I saw that there stood behind the multitude a chariot and a couple of horses waiting for Faithful, who, as soon as his adversaries had despatched him, was taken up into it, and straightway was carried up through the clouds, with sound of trumpet, the nearest way to the Celestial Gate.”*

—The Martyrdom of Faithful in “THE PILGRIM’S  
PROGRESS.”

CHAPTER X  
THE SCARS OUR PATTERN

(*John* 20 : 19-29)

THE shadow of the Cross is the longest shadow in the world. That great coming event cast its shadow centuries before, even at the gates of Paradise lost. And when Paradise is regained the shadow falls on the resurrection morning. Jesus Christ never hid His scars to win disciples. He shows them to prove His identity, to proclaim His victory, to manifest His authority and to win disciples to self-sacrificial allegiance. The scars on the hands of Jesus are referred to four times in the Old Testament and five times in the New Testament. (Ps. 22 : 16 ; Isa. 49 : 16 ; Zech. 12 : 10 and 13 : 6 ; *John* 20 : 19-29 ; *Luke* 24 : 40 ; *Gal.* 6 : 17).

“He showed them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you ; as my Father hath sent me even so send I you.”

The Apostle Paul points out in one of his Epistles three stages in the growth of his own friendship with Christ which are typical of us all. First he speaks of knowing Christ as a historical reality ; then he refers to a deeper knowledge of the power of His resurrection, of Christ as alive forever more, as contemporary with us. And lastly, of a still deeper knowledge, namely of

the fellowship of His suffering. Christ as our companion in suffering and we as His. We can understand it better when we study the context and the contrast of those whom Paul calls the Enemies of the Cross of Christ in distinction from those who bear the Cross and wear the scars (Phil. 3 : 10, 17, 18).

Two of the evangelists tell of how our Lord showed His scars in the upper room once and again, and how it resulted in an unshakable faith in His resurrection. It must have made an indelible impression. Whenever I read the record I am reminded of Thorwaldsen's Christ at Copenhagen in the great cathedral church. The figure stands more than life-size in the nave before the altar and the twelve disciples are ranged along the two sides of the building—all in marble. Christ is here not on a cross but ready for the throne and yet scarred in hands and side. A truly "Protestant" Christ. Equally remarkable is Rubens' painting in the Louvre at Paris : "He showed them his hands" as illustrating the gospel story. According to John's account we have a twofold message from His lips : "Peace be unto you." . . . Peace through His blood that was shed and which flowed from his pierced hands. And once again He said : "Peace be unto you. As my Father has sent me, so I send you." That is our only Apostleship, it is following His example, bearing His cross according to His own teaching.

His first word to everyone is : "Come unto me and I will give you rest. I died for you and in me you will have peace." "Peace perfect peace, the blood of Jesus whispers peace within."

His second word is "Go!" That is: Carry my message to others. As my Father sent me to bring salvation, I send you to carry the message of salvation into all the world.

It is remarkable that the only thing Jesus took pains to show after His resurrection was His scars. By His scars they knew Him in the breaking of the bread. The disciples on the way to Emmaus did not recognise His form nor His voice, not even His face or His message. But when His hands protruded from His robe and He broke the bread they knew it was the Lord because of the scars. The same was true of the ten disciples and of Thomas a week later. And so His scars are the seal of our peace and the pattern for our service. The proof of His identity became proof of His Deity to Thomas.

We note first that the scars of Christ are a call to discipleship and apostleship—an irresistible call. The fourfold commission has a fourfold emphasis. Matthew's Gospel tells us that we are to go—all authority belongs to Christ; Mark's Gospel tells us that we are to go to every creature; Luke's Gospel designates the logical order beginning at Jerusalem to the uttermost part of the earth. It is in John's Gospel, however, that we have an indication of the spirit in which we are to be ambassadors. His insight goes deepest of all: "As my Father has sent me, so I send you." As sheep among wolves, the servant not greater than his Lord. We share the same task, the same authority, the same message, but are also called to share His suffering.

It is interesting that the 22nd Psalm, which speaks

of the "pierced hands of the Messiah," ends with a great missionary promise and that Zechariah combines the fact that Israel "shall look on Him whom they pierced" with an outpouring of intercession. The Cross always carries a benediction to others, although it may mean suffering for ourselves. The Cross is the attraction always and everywhere, for nothing wins men to devotion like the Cross. We have only to point to it to win hearts and devotion. This is recognised by all branches of the Church. The history of Missions is the history of martyrdoms, and the history of Christian art by a true instinct always has the Cross as its central symbol. Here is peace for the soul and here is power for service (Rom. 5 : 1). The two are related. Paul's watchword was : "Now I rejoice to make up the penury of the suffering of Christ in my body for the sake of His body the Church." The word is used in only one other place in the New Testament where Luke speaks of the widow who cast in from her penury. We note that to the Jew, Saul, suffering was a problem, even as it was for Job or Jeremiah. But to the Christian Paul, suffering was a privilege : "He filled up that which was wanting in the sufferings of Christ."

The glory of the Resurrection morning is to recognise the scars—to put our hands on the print of the nails and say : "It is enough, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart . . . mine eyes have seen Thy salvation . . ." and to cry out with doubting Thomas : "My Lord and my God. . . ." Who can doubt after seeing the scars ?

This will be the greatest sight in Heaven and the deepest experience of the saints—to kneel and kiss the scars on His hands. Even Mary Magdalene had no scars to kiss, when she anointed Christ at the Feast, yet her tears fell fast because she loved Him so much. The very angels veil their faces at this mystery of love when they see the scars.

*“ Crown Him the Lord of love  
Behold His hands and side :  
Rich wounds, yet visible above  
In beauty glorified.*

*No angel in the sky  
Can fully bear that sight  
But downward bends His burning eye  
At mysteries so bright.”*

We have read that He showed the disciples His hands. The question is has He ever shown them to you? Everyone remembers the story of Francis of Assisi, how he meditated on the scars of our Saviour until his own hands bore the stigmata of the Risen Christ. If one cares to investigate this mediæval story any good book of reference will indicate that St. Francis was not the last to bear the stigmata of Jesus, but that this miracle of devotion has appeared again and again in various individuals.

The physical signs, however, of Christ's suffering need not be our portion. The scars are the token and

test of discipleship in a spiritual sense in every earnest Christian life. Where there is no cross, no crown can be expected. This, of course, is true of all heroic service in every sphere of life, for there can be no true devotion for any cause without suffering for it. But Jesus probes our lives more deeply. He said: "I am the vine." He did not say "I am the olive tree, the palm tree or the oak," for the vine is the only tree in Palestine that is tied to a stake; the only tree that bleeds. The place where the pruning knife does its work, there the ripe clusters are found in autumn.

The Church does not exist for its own sake, but to bring forth fruit unto God. Every branch that beareth not fruit is cut off. Every branch that bears fruit welcomes the pruning knife at any cost. The attentive study of human history shows that earth is the battle ground for eternal conflict between powers of light and darkness: "For when God formed in the hollow of His hand this Ball of Earth among His other balls and set it in His shining firmament, He chose it for the star of suffering." The only question for us is whether we are enemies of the Cross or are we soldiers of the Cross? The contrast is often the condemnation; our listless self-satisfied, easy lives while we sing of the Cross! The test of discipleship is our likeness to Christ; to be conformed to His death is the test of our sincerity. We have never suffered enough as Robert Louis Stevenson points out in his poem "If this were Faith." The poem is said to have been written when he heard of the news of the death of Charles Gordon at Khartoum in 1886:

*" Having felt thy wind in my face  
Spit sorrow and disgrace,  
Having seen thine evil doom  
In Golgotha and Khartoum,  
And the brutes, the work of thine hands,  
Fill with injustice lands  
And stain with blood the sea :  
If still in my veins the glee  
Of the black night and the sun  
And the lost battle, run :  
If, an adept,  
The iniquitous lists I still accept  
With joy, and joy to endure and be withstood,  
And still to battle and perish for a dream of good  
God, if that were enough ?*

*If to feel, in the ink of the slough,  
And the sink of the mire,  
Veins of glory and fire  
Run through and transpierce and transpire,  
And a secret purpose of glory in every part,  
And the answering glory of battle fill my heart ;  
To thrill with the joy of girded men,  
To go on for ever and fail and go on again,  
And be mauled to the earth and arise,  
And contend for the shade of a word and a thing  
not seen with the eyes :  
With the half of a broken hope for a pillow at night  
That somehow the right is the right  
And the smooth shall bloom from the rough :  
Lord, if that were enough ? "*



But it is not enough for any one of us until the world can see the print of the nails in our corporate life as a Church or as a Society, and our friends can see the print of the nails in our personal life. When we remember the poverty of Jesus Christ for thirty years, His homelessness, His hunger and thirst, how rich dare we be in the things of this world? How much can we hoard without losing our souls? In our offerings to the King is there the mark of self-denial? I am told that in one of the large churches in England the silver plate used for offerings has engraved on it the likeness of the hands of Christ bearing the print of the nails. Surely if we could see that on every offering plate, we would be ashamed of giving the Lord that which has cost us nothing. The same thing is true of the Christian prayer life. Christ's prayer expressed His agony for the salvation of others. We read that He spent all night in prayer to God, that he prayed for His disciples by name and that not only in the garden, but all through the days of His flesh. His prayers caused physical and spiritual pain. He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. How listless and formal our prayers seem when we compare them with those of our Lord or with those of some of His followers who were partakers of this grace. When our own plans are torn to pieces, our hopes pierced with thorns or disappointment, our decisions lacerated by the criticism or opposition of others, our pleasures nailed to the cross for His sake—then and then only can we say as Paul did, "Henceforth let no man trouble me, I bear in my body the marks o the Lord Jesus."

The scars are the test. Look at His hands and then look at your own. Alas, so many people have hands that do not even bear the marks of ordinary toil and show only the marks of the manicure! Paul had a different standard. He says: "Always bearing about in my body the dying of the Lord Jesus." When we remember the broken body and the broken heart on Calvary, we realise that Christ calls us to the fellowship of His suffering: "This do in remembrance of me." He follows in Christ's train who best can drink His cup of woe and triumph over pain.

Even Feeble-Mind in *The Pilgrim's Progress* sets a high example of courageous cross bearing. The touching testimony of his simple faith bears in every line the print of sincerity. I remember how the late Bishop McInnes read the words on the Mount of Olives to a group engaged in evening devotion and how deep was the impression made; I therefore repeat them here again from Chapter VII:

"I am a man of no strength at all of body, nor yet of mind; but would if I could, though I can but crawl, spend my life in the Pilgrim's way. When I came at the Gate that is at the head of the Way, the Lord of that place did entertain me freely; neither objected he against my weakly looks, nor against my *feeble mind*, but gave me such things as were necessary for my journey, and bid me hope to the end. . . . Robbed I looked to be, and robbed to be sure I am; but I am, as you see, escaped with life; for the which I thank my King as author, and you

as the means. Other brunts I also look for ; but this I have resolved on, to wit, to *run* when I can, to *go* when I cannot run, and to *creep* when I cannot go. As to the main, I thank him that loves me, I'm fixed ; my way is before me, my mind is beyond the river that has no bridge, though I am, as you see, but of a *feeble mind*."

CHAPTER XI  
THE LONELINESS OF JESUS

*“Now at the end of this Valley was another, called ‘The Valley of the Shadow of Death’; and Christian must needs go through it, because the way to the Celestial City lay through the midst of it. Now this Valley is a very solitary place. The prophet Jeremiah thus describes it: ‘A wilderness, a land of deserts and pits, a land of drought, and of the shadow of death; a land that no man “but a Christian” passeth through, and where no man dwelt.’ The pathway was here also exceeding narrow, and therefore good Christian was the more put to it; for when he sought in the dark to shun the ditch on the one hand, he was ready to tip over into the mire, on the other; also, when he sought to escape the mire, without great carefulness, he would be ready to fall into the ditch. Thus he went on; and I heard him here sigh bitterly; for, besides the danger mentioned above, the pathway was here so dark, that oft-times, when he lifted up his foot to set forward, he knew not where or upon what he should set it next.”*

**“THE PILGRIM’S PROGRESS.”**

## CHAPTER XI

### THE LONELINESS OF JESUS

(*John* 1 : 11 ; *Math.* 8 : 20)

At Advent season there are many aspects of the Incarnation that hold the attention of thoughtful Christians. Some love to meditate on the eternal purpose of God which He purposed in Christ Jesus to redeem mankind and think of His great love for a lost world. Others, whose hearts are like those of little children, fix their gaze on the manger in lowly Bethlehem and consider the manner of this wondrous birth of the Son of Man.

Others look upward and see the angelic host and catch the echo of their song of joy ringing down the ages. Others like the wise men still follow the star and see in Jesus the King of kings and the only hope for a world lost in a night of chaos and confusion. The humble-hearted kneel with the shepherds and find their satisfaction gazing in the face of a little child.

We would consider another aspect of the Advent, not its objective, but its subjective meaning for Jesus Himself, its loneliness for Him, "who took on the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of man."

Jesus came alone. He lived alone. He died alone. He ascended alone. Homeless from the day of His

birth to that day when in the Garden we read, according to one interpretation of the Greek text, that He became "homesick" for God and heaven.

He was the loneliest babe ever born because "trailing clouds of glory did He come" into Bethlehem's dark night. The loneliest boy that ever lived and walked the streets of Nazareth; so pure, so unselfish, so un-earthly, so different from all the other lads that He was alone in the crowd. Alone at play. Alone in prayer.

The legends found in the Apocryphal Gospel of the Infancy illustrate this loneliness and this aloofness. His eyes saw what none else could see; His boyish heart felt, as no other boy ever did, the sorrow of life around Him, its tragedy and the blight of Sin. Nazareth had a bad name. "Can any good come out of Nazareth?"

Here was the loneliest leader that ever tried to stem a tide or secure a following. Twice we read that His eyes wept when other eyes were dry. Lonely in His bitter agony in the Garden and on the Cross. We shall never fathom the mystery and the glory of the Incarnation unless we realise something of Christ's aloofness and loneliness all the days of His flesh.

We read in John's gospel "The word became flesh and dwelt among us." Paul tells us that "He emptied himself." It was the self-limitation of the Eternal. Omnipotence became weakness. Eternity, infancy; Holiness dwelt with Sin. "Light of light, very God of very God, begotten not made" from everlasting in the bosom of the Father, yet He came to earth and was

made man. "God so loved that He gave His Son," and Christ so loved that He came. What did it all mean for Him?

A king is sometimes lonely on his throne, but when he is put *off* his throne and an exile from the palace, his loneliness is like that of David, going with bowed head, away from his Absalom and his Jerusalem across the brook Kedron, an exile cursed and pelted with stones by Shimei, who once served him. And Christ was a King stripped of His glory, born in a stable, a willing exile from the Father's house of many mansions. And they said "Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil." "And they took up stones to stone him."

A missionary is sometimes lonely amid strange surroundings and foreign speech and the deadening blight of a non-Christian atmosphere or fanatic opposition. But neither Alexander Duff in Calcutta, Mary Slessor in Calabar, David Livingstone in Africa, Henry Martyn in Persia nor John Williams in the South Sea Islands, was ever so lonely in heart as Jesus was in Jerusalem. Such a priestly heart among such priests, such a pure heart among Pharisees.

What did Jesus feel when Pilate asked Him "Art Thou a King?"—to be classed with Herod. Again, Christ was lonely, not when very God of God in the bosom of the Father and the eternal fellowship of the Spirit (this is the blessed mystery of the Trinity) but lonely when He took on flesh and tabernacled with men in Nazareth and Capernaum and Jerusalem. This is a hard saying, but one of our own poets has interpreted it thus :



*" In lonely stance against the silvery Syrian sky,  
 He heard the grey wolf's bitter sun-set cry ;  
 He saw the shadows blot the brook Kerith  
 As priest and scribe intoned the sacred shibboleth ;  
 The Hebrew mothers called the children from the  
     street ;  
 To cooling house-top and the peace of sleep ;  
 He heard the music of the far herd's bells  
 Beside the waters of the ancient wells.*

*" The camels crouched along the city's sombre walls ;  
 The oxen lowed within the cattle stalls ;  
 Two lovers strolled the gentle ridge of Olivet—  
 He watched and smiled—His eyes were very wet—  
 Afar sweet Venus dipped into the Western sea  
 And northward, pigeons flew above the Lake of  
     Galilee ;  
 His heart was yearning for the touch of hand and  
     clod  
 It was so lonely in the flesh to be a God."*

All human words fail to describe such loneliness. " He came unto His own and His own received Him not." He emptied Himself and took upon Him the form of a servant. " There was no room for Him at the inn."

Consider also the loneliness of His life and ministry. Like the inaccessible peaks of Mount Everest He rose high above all human greatness, far above all human comprehension and experience. " No mortal can with Him compare among the sons of men." Yet what contradictions of sinners He endured ! What dullness

of the intellect, what crass misunderstanding of His words and His miracles, of His mission, even among His own disciples. So that at one time He turned to them and said : " Will ye also go away ? "

Of the days of His temptation, Mark gives a word-picture in a single sentence that stands out like one of Rembrandt's figures on a dark canvas : " He was in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan ; and He was with the wild beasts " and so lonely that " angels came and ministered unto Him. "

How often in the Gospel story we see Him alone, a great while before daybreak, on the mountain-top, or tarrying there all night in prayer. Again and again we read : " And Jesus was left alone. " Even on the Mount of Transfiguration Elijah and Moses after talking of His exodus at Jerusalem departed and left Him alone. " They saw no man save Jesus only "—His uncomprehending disciples stood close to Him, but Jesus was alone. If any man ever felt loneliness in the midst of a crowd it was Our Lord Jesus ! They pressed upon Him to hear His word, to touch His hand, to feel the hem of His garment, but Jesus was alone !

The shadow of a great loneliness ever loomed ahead on His pathway. " Behold, " said He in the night of His betrayal, " the hour cometh when ye shall be scattered everyone to his own and shall leave me alone—and yet I am not alone because the Father is with me. "

Now we must not forget that Jesus Christ experiences the same to-day in this world of sin. His own receive Him not. Always forgotten, always misunderstood,

always ignored, and left outside and alone in the crowd ! Millions of Christmas greetings and cards with no mention of the name of Jesus. In our great cities overloaded tables for ourselves and the Christ-child on the street, standing hungry in the cold at the window, Jesus walking on the avenues or through the slums or standing in the bread line unrecognized where cross the crowded ways of life.

As He Himself told us : "I was hungry, I was thirsty, I was a stranger . . . inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these My brethren, ye have not done it unto Me."

Have you ever read Benson's great play of "The Piper?" It is the old German tale of the wandering minstrel retold. In this play, after all the children led captive by his music are allowed to return home, the lonely Piper's heart clings to one little crippled lad. "This one I *must* keep," he says, and proceeds on his way until he is suddenly arrested by the sight of a way-side crucifix. Here the struggle begins. "Well," says the Piper, "if You did suffer, what of that? Why should *I* suffer because You did? I love the little boy; he cheers me; no one loves him as I do. I *will* keep him. . . . Why do You hang there so still? You seem to accuse me with your stillness! Oh, I know, Your disciples must take up their cross and follow You, or they cannot be Yours. But leave me this little one, only this little one, this little crippled one!"

"How I love him, and how he will love me. . . . I know his mother weeps, but all of us must weep, and why not she? She is his mother, you say. Well,

and she has had the joy of his birth and she has husband and friends."

"But why should I alone here have no wife, nor family, nor home, nor love? I will not let him go, this little crippled one! He is mine. I won him by my music, this little crippled one. I will not let him go. . . ."

Then he sits still and as the evening draws in he cannot remove his eyes from the crucifix.

Finally, he gets up and stands beneath the wayside Cross. "Don't, don't!" he cries. Then at last it comes, the surrender. He flings his arms out, "Ah," he says, "You, too, were homeless, I know, I know. You, too, gave up all love, and for me! Oh, it is hard, it is hard, but You have won; he shall go back, my little crippled boy. He shall go! O lonely man!"

*"I left, I left it all for Thee—  
What hast thou left for Me?"*

This leads us to consider the loneliness of Christ's leadership and His challenge to the lonely life for His sake.

His demands are always absolute and individual. He calls upon us to follow Him at any cost, and yet He keeps far ahead. When great multitudes followed Him, He turned and said to His disciples: "If any man come unto Me and hateth not his own father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." It reminds us of the Psalmist's words "He scattereth

His ice like morsels, who can stand before His cold ?’

But His apostles did: they took His demands literally. They forsook all and gained all. They went out into a lonely world, and they all died a martyr’s death.—John on lonely Patmos. But all of them had His presence and the warmth of His love. “For He hath filled the hungry with good things, but the rich He hath sent empty away.”

*“Thou didst leave Thy throne and Thy kingly crown  
When Thou camest to earth for me.  
And in Bethlehem’s town there was found no room  
For Thy holy Nativity.  
O come to my heart Lord Jesus come.  
There is room in my heart for Thee.”*

Not only the followers of St. Francis of Assisi, with their vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience, but an exceeding great multitude in all ages and among all nations have taken Christ’s words seriously and followed Him into the wilderness bearing His reproach and become companions of His loneliness.

From John on lonely Patmos to the days of the Armenian martyrs and the recent martyrs in China, the disciples of Jesus have been destitute, afflicted, ill-treated, “of whom the world was not worthy, wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes of the earth.”

“Who follows in His train?” Those who understand the words of Jesus “The foxes have their holes

and the birds of the air their nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." "Follow me."

I remember seeing an inscription on the wall, opposite the staircase, in Bishop Westcott's home, Calcutta, which carries a message to those who have pondered on the subjective significance of the Incarnation :

*"The angels from their thrones on high  
Look down on us with wondering eye,  
That where we are but passing guests,  
We build such strong and solid nests,  
But where we hope to dwell for aye  
We scarce take heed a stone to lay."*

Paul writes to the Corinthian Christians : Remember Jesus "Who though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor that we through His poverty might become rich."

Consider finally the loneliness of His suffering and death. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son to die—and to die alone. The final rejection of the Messiah was not at Bethlehem, but at Calvary. At Gabbatha "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." "Not this man," was their cry, "not this man but Barabbas." Now Barabbas was a robber!

And so the Shepherd was smitten while He laid down His life for the sheep and the sheep were scattered. "They all forsook Him and fled." Alone in the Garden, alone before the High Priest, alone in the Pretorium, alone on the Via Dolorosa, alone on the Cross.

The agony of a great loneliness in Gethsemane, Gabbatha, Golgotha! The Tree on which He hung did not resemble our Christmas trees. Yet it, too, was coloured with crimson and purple—"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities"; it, too, shone with a glory greater than the light of many candles and on it hung one full, perfect, and sufficient gift, the Gift of God's grace and pardon for each and every one of us.

"Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Thy glorious Name, evermore praising Thee and saying: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of the majesty of Thy glory."

"Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." "Behold I declare unto you a mystery!" On this Tree of the Cross there hangs for each one of us all the fruit of the Spirit—His love, His joy, His peace, His long-suffering, His kindness, His goodness, His faithfulness, His meekness, His self-control—a cluster of fruit of Paradise! "And I sat down under His shadow with great delight and His fruit was sweet to my taste."

The loneliness of Jesus makes Him for ever the best friend and the closest companion of all the lonely ones of earth! His homesick cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me," was that we might never be forsaken of God.

Will *you* follow Him?

"I believe," says Robert Keable, speaking of this loneliness on the Cross, "that in a real sense He was voicing the experience of His whole life, an experience

borne hitherto by the Man of Sorrows in the silence of His own heart. No doubt it was intensified on Calvary, but the Lonely Man who is rejected by earth because He is sinless, is rejected by God because He is sin. Oh, unutterable paradox of love ! At that ninth hour Jesus our Lord is unutterably alone in the wide range of all the universe."

In the last stanza of Mrs. Browning's poem on the grave of Cowper, we have the same thought and its interpretation :

*"Yea, once Immanuel's orphan cry His universe bath  
shaken,  
It went up single, echoless, My God I am forsaken.  
It went up, from the holy lips, amid the lost creation,  
That of the lost no son should use those words of desola-  
tion."*