

The Life of Faith.

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The Informing Spirit.

JOHN XVI. 1-15.

WE have seen that the blessedness which Christ holds out to His disciples through union with Him is the blessedness of life; and we have seen that the joy, knowledge, effective power, and readiness for suffering which follow upon our union with Him, are true issues of life. But to us men life implies a spirit within us, a spirit which really makes us capable of these effects, which gives reality to our experience, bestows upon us that balance which is right judgment, that moral sense which enables us to perceive and also stimulates us to do the right, until at last it links us to God in bonds as strong as they are unseen. We shall expect to find, then, in this new life a spirit which will give shape to our moral ideals, and enlighten while it forms,—an informing spirit whose gift shall be the threefold gift of knowledge, power, and character. And this is exactly what Christ promises. At the very centre of the life which we are to live in Him, we may find, He tells us, a Spirit sent by Him to abide, never to leave us, to be in us, to exert His power permanently at the centre of our life.

Christ has first to recall His disciples from the contemplation of their own impending loss to the great gift which should follow upon that 'going' which they deplored, but which they so little understood. He had shielded them hitherto, and the thought that that shelter was to be removed filled their hearts with sorrow. So full were they of their loss that no one asked how this departure affected Him, and thus they were in danger of missing the abiding significance of His departure for themselves. There are three words¹ for 'going away' used over and over again in these chapters,

¹ ἀπέρχομαι, πορεύομαι, and ὑπάγω. So Dr. Abbott, *Johannine Vocabulary*, pp. 142 ff. This may be accepted with some reservation. The 28th verse of this chapter, in which Christ gives up the word ὑπάγω which He had previously used and reverts to the more easily understood πορεύομαι, to the great relief of the disciples (v. 29), is strongly in favour of this interpretation. There are, however, many passages in which the word can mean nothing more than withdrawal. See especially the use of the imperative in such passages as Mt 4¹⁰ 9⁶.

and there is a fruitful study to be found in the changes rung on these 'bells of sweet accord.' Let it suffice to say that departure from the point of view of mere separation passes into the idea of a journey, and thence into that of a goal to be reached, a 'going home.'

Christ had before Him the separation which He, no less than His disciples, would feel; but He knew that He was on His way back to the very centre and fountain of life in the bosom of the Father, and that there would proceed thence that Spirit who would give both meaning and power to life, the new life which they would live in Him. It was expedient for them that He should go away, for He was going home, their home and His, and from that source of life should issue He who would be in them and abide, He whose power we recognize within us to-day in the office and work of the Holy Spirit. What is His work? Our Lord says that it is 'to convict the world'; and so we come to verses peculiarly packed with thought. The word 'to convict'² (R.V.) implies authoritative examination and unquestionable proof. It means 'to bring home to' the world the true issues of the life it may be living, but it goes even further than this, as implying a power of decisive judgment and of power to enforce it when made. The subjects with which the Spirit deals cover the whole of man's spiritual experience. Past, present, and future are all before us in sin, righteousness, and judgment; and the Spirit will convince men of these because they all turn upon man's attitude to Christ, since the work of the Spirit is to take of that which Christ is,³ and to reveal that unto us. The great test of sin

² ἐλέγχειν. 'Places the truth of the case in a clear light before him' (Westcott).

³ ἐκ τοῦ ἐμοῦ λήψεται; cf. Mt 10⁴⁰, where the use of the possessive pronoun rather than the dative of the personal pronoun seems to indicate not, 'I have not the power to give,' but rather 'it does not belong to my nature to give.' If this distinction may be maintained here, this passage will show that the work of the Holy Spirit is to reveal that which Christ is in its unity.

will always be the Person of Christ. He is in Himself the dividing line which separates men. Their sin will be determined by the answer to the question, 'Do they believe upon Him?' It is in such a passage as this that the supreme importance of a true view of faith becomes apparent. Such belief as is indicated here is no mental state of acceptance or conviction; it is not a condition of mind, but an act of will which is before us in this connexion. 'To believe in Christ' is to surrender oneself to Him, and the self-esteem or the selfish obstinacy which makes a man refuse to do that is the assertion of that principle of self-will which is the root of all sin. Want of 'belief' is thus seen to be the secret principle of rebellion against God, of the 'lawlessness' which sin is.¹

In thus bringing home to the moral consciousness of men all that we mean by 'righteousness,' the ascension of our Lord, His return to the Father, comes into view. For that 'return' completed the historical work of Christ, and in that work the kingdom of righteousness was revealed once for all. We had never known the full power of obedience, or the majesty of law, or the reality of a spiritual fellowship with God, apart from the life of Christ. Men had guessed at righteousness, had felt after it; but in the life of Christ, rounded off and completed by the return to the Father, the prototype of the divine righteousness was at last seen. As St. Paul says, it stands revealed in the gospel of Christ.² But this return to the Father is bound up with the sending of the Spirit; therefore He will convince by virtue of that return.

So also with judgment, that final and perfect discrimination, that separation of the tangled and conflicting elements of life, that laying bare of the secret, spiritual factor of life and thought,—the awful judgment of God, is the work of the same Spirit. For in revealing the things of Christ, He reveals that through which the Prince of this world—he in whom the spirit of the world finds its perfect embodiment—is cast out³ and the world is judged. The standard which he had imposed is overthrown; the criterion of conduct is no

longer self-interest. That has been judged.⁴ Christ has in His own life assigned to that its proper place, and in doing so He has made real through the Spirit that final judgment to which we move in certain, inevitable steps. He shall lead you into 'the truth in all its parts.'⁵ So run the remarkable words. They hold out to the disciples of all time that moral certainty, that assurance, that moral judgment which we need in a world of conflicting issues, of violent impulses, and of motives never at one stay. St. John was not the first to give the thought expression in literature. Before he wrote this wonderful Gospel, St. Paul had spoken of the man who should 'judge all things.' He had spoken of him as possessing the mind, the moral reason of Christ, and he had designated the man so described as 'the spiritual man.'⁶ The phrase is remarkable. It does not mean the man whose thoughts turn more easily to the spiritual as distinguished from the material world; nor does it indicate merely the man with a pious turn of mind. It means the man whose spirit is in living contact with the Spirit of God. For it is in the meeting of the human with the Divine Spirit that there is given to us that moral and spiritual perception which bestows upon us the 'right judgment in all things' for which we so often pray. There is no room here for that censorious spirit so ready to proclaim and to condemn the failures of men either in thought or deed. The expression indicates rather that meek and self-distrustful spirit whose power is not of its own, but is the gift of God, and which consists of a readiness to recognize that which is of Christ as it may be made known to us by the Spirit of God. It is He who calls to us from across the gulf that separates life from life: He declares it unto us, declares it so that the message reaches and blesses our ears.⁷ He does this because He is the Spirit of truth, the Spirit who gives expression to truth. And what is that truth? 'He shall take of that which is myself,' says Christ, and 'reveal that unto you.' No one can hope either to fully describe

⁴ κέκριται, perfect, 'stands judged'; cf. *vñν κρίσις ἐστὶ τοῦ κόσμου* (Jn 12³¹).

⁵ *εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν ἀλήθειαν*, 'Into the complete understanding of and sympathy with that absolute Truth which is Christ Himself' (Westcott).

⁶ 1 Co 2¹⁵, *ὁ πνευματικὸς ἀνακρίνει πάντα*. See Edwards *in loco*.

⁷ ἀναγγελεῖ.

¹ 1 Jn 3⁴, *ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία*.

² Ro 1¹⁷, *ἐν αὐτῷ (τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ) ἀποκαλύπτεται δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ*. For *δικαιοσύνη*, see Sanday and Headlam *in loco*. The word 'covers the whole range of right action.' 'To the few it was the highest moral ideal,' etc. etc.

³ Jn 12³¹, *vñν ὁ ἀρχὼν τοῦ κόσμου τούτου ἐκβλήθησεται ἔξω*.

the work of the Spirit of God, or to measure the effect of His work upon the life of man. It was more than the revelation of truth, for it was also, and more particularly, an indwelling within man of One who was God Himself. To man, unsure of purpose, bewildered by facts of life which seem to involve grave moral contradictions, affronted by the frequent and loudly vaunted triumphs of evil, what could have come with greater power—the power which lies in a full assurance of the reality and of the character of sin, righteousness, and judgment,—what could have come with

greater power than the presence at the very centre of life of a Divine Person, earnest and foretaste of a greater possession still,¹ as by His presence within us we know ourselves the heirs of God.

Great is the life which comes to us by reason of that surrender of ourselves to Christ which we call 'faith.' Great are the issues of that life in joy, in knowledge, in prayer; but greatest of all is He who lives within us, life of our life, the informing Spirit, Spirit of all truth.

¹ Eph 1¹⁴, ἀρραβὼν τῆς κληρονομίας ἡμῶν. Cf. Ro 8¹⁷, κληρονόμοι μὲν Θεοῦ συγκαληρονόμοι δὲ Χριστοῦ.

Literature.

THE RELIGION OF THE SIKHS.

It is not for their religion that the Sikhs are best known. They are known all over the world for their prowess in battle and for their loyalty. But the fame which they have acquired, and which is so honourable, rests ultimately upon their religion. We may not need to know what their religion is. We may need only to know that we can still rely upon Sikh fidelity if all the other races of India should prove faithless. But until the Sikhs have embraced Christianity and so are bound to Britain by that strongest and most enduring of all ties, it is right and necessary that we should know that it is their adherence to their present religion that keeps them loyal and makes them brave. It is startling to find Mr. Macauliffe advocating the establishment of the religion of the Sikhs in India by the British Government. His argument, however, is quite intelligible. For he fears that, if left to itself, the religion of the Sikhs may be swallowed up in Hinduism. And though it is improbable that the British Government will ever establish a religion again, yet if establishing a religion is likely to keep it in life, there could be found political arguments for the establishing of this one which would appeal even to a statesman like Lord Morley of Blackburn. 'Truly wonderful,' says Mr. Macauliffe, 'are the strength and vitality of Hinduism. It is like the boa-constrictor of the Indian forests. When a petty enemy appears to worry it, it winds round its opponent, crushes it in its folds, and finally causes it to disappear in

its capacious interior. In this way, many centuries ago, Hinduism on its own ground disposed of Buddhism, which was largely a Hindu reformation; in this way, in a prehistoric period, it absorbed the religion of the Scythian invaders of Northern India; in this way it has converted uneducated Islam in India into a semi-paganism; and in this way it is disposing of the reformed and once hopeful religion of Baba Nanak. Hinduism has embraced Sikhism in its folds; the still comparatively young religion is making a vigorous struggle for life, but its ultimate destruction is, it is apprehended, inevitable without State support.'

But would it not be better to lose the loyalty of the Sikhs than to perpetuate their religion? Mr. Macauliffe does not think so. And accordingly he has given the English reader the first complete and competent account of the Sikh religion.

Until 1893, Mr. Max Arthur Macauliffe was engaged in judicial duties in India. In that year he was requested by certain Sikh societies, which were aware of his appreciation of their literature, to resign his appointment and devote himself to a translation of their sacred books. He did so. In course of time he translated the whole; and, as he translated, he submitted each portion to the criticism of certain learned Sikhs. Thus the work appears as the universally accepted and authorized English translation. And this is well. For there is probably not an Englishman living—even Dr. G. A. Grierson would refuse to be called an exception—capable of criticising it. The work