

main theme is to set forth the fact that the N.T. is written in the language of the common people. It is

'a book from the Ancient East, and lit up by the light of the dawn—a book breathing the fragrance of the Galilean spring, and anon swept by the shipwrecking north-east tempest from the Mediterranean—a book of peasants, fishermen, artisans, travellers by land and sea, fighters and martyrs, a book in cosmopolitan Greek with marks of a Semitic origin—a book of the Imperial age, written at Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, Rome—a book of pictures, miracles, and visions, book of the village and the town, book of the people and the peoples—the N.T., if regard be had to the inward side of things, is the great book, chief and singular of human souls. Because of its psychic depth and breadth this book of the East is a book for both East and West, a book for humanity; a book ancient but eternal. And because of the figure that emerges from the book—the Redeemer, accompanied by the multitude of the redeemed, blessing and consoling, exhorting and renewing, revealing Himself anew to every generation of the weary and heavy-laden and growing from century to century more great—the N.T. is the book of life' (pp. 399-400).

It is almost needful to apologize for quoting so much, but there are reasons why we quote. The enthusiasm of Dr. Deissmann is refreshing, his success in making the N.T. an actual living thing, his power of making us feel the warm, liquid power of primitive Christianity is so great, that we feel little inclination to criticise. Then, too, we have just been reading Drews on the Christ

Myth, and we were almost frozen with it. The best answer to Drews, and the school to which he belongs, is just to follow Deissmann, and steep ourselves in the reality of the N.T. as he discloses it to us. The N.T. has always been a real book to them who have submitted themselves to its guidance, it has become more real, more living than ever, for we see that its sources and springs are from the life of the people.

If in the enthusiasm of the new discovery, if, in the brightness of the light cast on the N.T. by the New Texts, Dr. Deissmann goes a little too far, and forgets that the language of the common people may also be literature, he may well be pardoned. Surely the great eulogy of love in 1 Cor. is literature, and literature of the highest kind. Think also of the rhythmic splendour of Eph 1<sup>3-11</sup>, and the rushing epic grandeur of Mt 7<sup>24-27</sup>. It is well that he should insist on the popular character of the book, but we may not refuse to recognize the grandeur of the N.T. from the point of view of literature. One reflects also on the fact that the N.T. translated into a modern tongue has become the classic of that tongue. Who can measure the influence of Luther's Bible on the German language and literature, and who can say what the Authorized Version has been to English literature? How much would have been lost in our highest poetry if the Authorized Version had not set a standard for pure and undefiled English?

A great deal might be said on the great learning and exact scholarship displayed in this volume. But in the case of Dr. Deissmann that goes without saying. We have aimed, in this brief notice, at the result of sending many to peruse this book. There are treasures without number both for the scholar and for the man in the street.

## The Great Text Commentary.

### THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE PSALMS.

#### PSALM XVI. II.

'Thou wilt shew me the path of life:  
In thy presence is fulness of joy;  
In thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.'

1. The author of the sixteenth Psalm has a direct and personal consciousness of a relation to

God as *his Lord* which forbids him to turn aside after idols, or in any way to conceive to himself a good beyond God, or a dignity beyond consecration to Him. For God is his inheritance—a portion awarded to him by supreme grace, and rich enough to satisfy all his desires. This portion

he finds in ethical fellowship with God, in continually hearing His guiding voice, in setting Him ever before his eyes, in being ever sustained by His unfailing hand. Such a relation to God bears in it all the elements of joy. It raises the singer victorious above all evil, raises him above the pains and sorrows of his physical state into the assurance that his flesh too shall rest secure from the fear of ill.

2. The whole Psalm moves in a serene atmosphere of the fullest assurance. The hope of continued life has no reference whatever to the singer's age or life-work, or anything that is in him. That hope is the direct fruit of God's continued love. It is impossible to suppose the Psalmist tacitly to add that though he hopes for life now, a day must come when life can no longer be an object of desire, when his wearied frame shall gladly sink into the grave. What makes life worth living is, on the view of this Psalm, not any energy that decays in old age, but that communion of love with God which can never fail.

3. But it is to be observed that life and death are here apprehended, not in their physical and empirical manifestation, but in their ideal qualities. The life which the Psalmist knows to be undying is *the continual energy of loving fellowship with God*. The death to which this life can never yield is the silence of the land of forgetfulness, where there is no revelation and no praise of God.

4. That the sixteenth Psalm delineates an ideal which throughout the Old Testament dispensation was never realized fully,—that is, in a whole life,—but which only expressed the highest climax of subjective conviction, was not felt to detract from its religious truth. Nay, in religion the ideal *is* the true. The destiny of him who is admitted into full fellowship with God *is* life, and if that fellowship has never yet been perfectly realized, it must be realized in time to come in the consummation of God's kingdom and righteousness. This, like other glorious promises of God, is deferred because of sin; but, though deferred, it is not cancelled. Thus the Psalm, originally an expression of direct personal persuasion, must necessarily, in its place in the Old Testament liturgy, have acquired a prophetic significance, and so must have been accepted as parallel to such highest anticipations of eschatological prophecy as Is 25<sup>8</sup>, 'He hath swallowed up death for ever.'

5. The Psalm is fulfilled in Christ, because in

Christ the transcendental ideal of fellowship with God which the Psalm sets forth becomes a demonstrated reality. And, becoming true of Christ, the Psalm is also true of all who are His, and in the Psalmist's claim to use it for himself the soundness of his religious insight is vindicated; for Christ faced death not only for Himself, but for us as our Surety and Head. The bond that bound His life to God is also the bond to bind us to God. He identified Himself wholly with us and our sins. Laden with our guilt He descended into the valley of the shadow of death; and if His union with God is stronger than the power of death, it is because His righteousness is stronger than our sins. Thus in Christ the ideal of life eternal in God, of a life superior to all destructive forces, is made a reality.

It does not, indeed, become so under the very form in which our Psalmist conceives of it. We no longer feel entitled to argue from our acceptance with God to victory over physical disease and deliverance from physical death; but that is not because our hope is less high, but because in the light of the New Testament mere physical death is seen as a thing wholly disconnected with the spiritual death of alienation from God, which, under physical form, is the real evil over which the singer of our Psalm feels himself victorious. It is our New Testament hope that death itself does not for a moment interrupt full and joyous life-fellowship with God. For the Christian, Sheol, the place of forgetfulness, exists no more, and the hope of them that live and of them that die alike is that we shall ever be with the Lord.

Thus the Christian doctrine makes clear what the Old Testament saints could only guess at, or now and again, as in our Psalm, insist on by a bold effort of faith. The union of each of us with the Blessed Lord is not a reward laid up for us in the future, it is the supreme reality of the present. The result of it is to endow the present with an eternal significance, and to make our life now all of a piece with the life to come. In the New Testament immortality, resurrection, judgment are brought into close concern with our life in the present, because they are all involved in our life of fellowship with Christ. It is not a question of time, or of the divisions of time. The Christian's life of fellowship with God is one living whole, moving through various changes towards its final perfection.

## I.

## 'Thou wilt shew me the path of life.'

**I. Life.** We must give as large and rich and profound a meaning to the word 'life' here as we can possibly give. For it means life in its truest and divinest sense and in its noblest form. The whole passage shows that the Psalmist is not thinking of a mere continuation of this present life. There is, indeed, an indication that he believes that he shall be saved from the machinations of his enemies at the present time, and that his earthly life shall not be sacrificed to their hatred. But the hope he expresses goes far deeper, and defies even Sheol and the pit itself. It, indeed, goes down into the roots of eternal possession, for the joy of this life is declared to be perfect and everlasting. He thinks of the God within him, and says, 'Thou art life. Art not Thou from everlasting? and art not Thou mine inheritance? Then I shall live in Thy life, and Thy life is eternal.'

It is as when one journeys in an Alpine or Pyrenean valley. Looking up the long gorge, the traveller sees the shadows beginning to gather upon the bases of the hills. But far up the sunlight lingers unfaded upon the snows, so that from them a line of light seems to stretch on, world without end, into the infinite beyond.<sup>1</sup>

(i) It is a life lived in the shelter of God's power (Ps 106<sup>8</sup> 105<sup>37</sup>). The Israelites were in God's keeping, and their enemies were powerless. What a testimony to the heathen nations around them of the might of Jehovah—'there was not one feeble person among their tribes'! They were a nation of giants, a race of strong men, because around them by day and night was the unconquerable power of the Lord; and their history proves that, so long as they took up the position of trusting and obeying, they were both safe and victorious; but when they forsook that position and allied themselves with other nations, defeat met them.

(2) It is a life lived in the line of God's will (2 Co 6<sup>14-18</sup>). The law of cause and effect is just as real and strong in the spiritual as in the material realm; and no sooner does a Christian comply with the Divine conditions than God at once says, 'Now, come hand in hand with Me. I will be your Father, and you will be My son.' Many a Christian is waiting for Christ to pass by and work in a mysterious way some miracle that

<sup>1</sup> W. Alexander, *Witness of the Psalms to Christ and Christianity* (Bampton Lectures), 108.

will open his eyes, set him on his feet, and give him deliverance from his sin. Jesus Christ is continually passing along the highway of life, but no miracle is ever wrought where there is not a distinct, intelligent part played by the Christian. The Lord has to pass by many without curing them, because they will not trust and obey; and many a life is running counter to the will of God because it is unequally yoked, because it is having fellowship with unrighteousness, because it will not come out and be separate.

(3) It is a life lived in the riches of God's supply. 'My God shall fulfil every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus' (Ph 4<sup>19</sup>, R.V.). In Christ—yes, it is all in Him. Everything we can need at any moment of our life is included in the gift of Christ. 'My God!' to be able to say that is better than to say 'My millions,' because we cannot reckon the riches of God by millions. They go beyond human powers of calculation. Do you notice the word 'every'? What is excluded? What exceptions does God make? None.

(4) It is a life lived in the light of God's presence (Jos 5<sup>13-15</sup>). Do not fear the future. Do not let the thought of the possible troubles of the future disturb you. Do not allow the future to bulk more largely than it ought in your mind. Only let God be first, only desire that God shall be supreme in your life and work, and He will take care of you.<sup>2</sup>

**2. The path of life.** The word 'path' emphasizes this view of the term 'life.' Because whenever in the Old Testament the word 'path' is used in this metaphorical way it always refers to the inner character, to the spiritual trend of the life. The 'path' of a man's life signifies those properties of a man's development that have been incorporated into the moral essence of his character. It is that which sums up the activities, the energies, the history, and the progress of the man. Take away his 'path,' and you have taken away the fundamental definition of his life. The 'path' is the man considered intensively, estimating him by the power of the soul within him.

(1) *It begins with life.* In order to move along this path we need, first of all, to be raised from a state of death in trespasses and sins into newness of life. As a matter of fact, a living man, who is

<sup>2</sup> G. P. Watt, *Life and Liberty*, 29.

'without God and without hope in the world,' enjoys at best a very incomplete and partial life. There are certain elements in his nature which ought to be in the enjoyment of full vital power and energy, which lie dormant, as if in a comatose condition; they are paralyzed and rendered incapable of exercising their proper function by a certain terrible form of death. The highest faculty of our nature is that spiritual capacity which enables us to hold communion with God; but as long as we are separated from God by the barrier of sin this capacity is devoid of energy, we live a *merely animal*, and therefore an incomplete, life, and thus our spiritual nature remains in a state of chronic torpor, akin to death; so closely akin indeed that the Apostle calls it death, and speaks of those whose inward nature is in this condition as being 'dead in trespasses and sins.'

In the case of sufferers from paralysis certain elements of the physical organism affected continue their functions, while others may justly be described as dead already; they are cut off from connexion with the vital forces that belong to the body. The blood still circulates in the paralyzed limb, and the organic tissues are still renewed and maintained by vital force, but the nervous system by which the commands of the brain are transmitted through the body and carried into effect is bereft of vital sensibility and energy, nor can it regain it unless by some extraordinary and supernatural intervention of resurrection power. It is cut off by some mysterious disability from its proper connexion with the fount of life, and hence in one respect it is dead, in another, dying.<sup>1</sup>

(2) *It is maintained by life.* Our Lord prayed for His disciples that they might have life, and that they might have it abundantly. He who is Himself the Way (for He says of Himself, 'I am the Way') tells us also that He is 'the Life'; and as, quickened from our own natural condition of death, we set forth on this new journey in that living Way, we are brought, by the very fact that He is the Way, into close contact with the perennial source of life, so that the true life may continually stream into our nature and the supply be kept up, and we live because He lives in us.

(3) *It leads to life.* It leads to that vaster life which lies beyond us, a life whose mighty forces already begin to affect us even now, but the plenitude of whose power and blessedness we shall only know by and by, 'when we have shuffled off this mortal coil,' and appear before God in all the beauty of resurrection perfection. Then all that interferes with the flow of God's life into our

spiritual nature being removed out of the way, we shall be free to revel in that infinite supply for our need, a supply which is a full and boundless ocean containing all we can ever require.

Westwards out of the city of Athens runs a road, once the most famous and even now the most interesting of all the roads in Greece. It is called the Sacred Way. It passes through the ancient cemetery of the city, where the monuments of the dead are standing to this day; it leads by gorge and wood, by shore and bay, through scenes crowded with memories, until it comes to an end at the ruined Temple of Eleusis by the sea. That Sacred Way was a path of death and a path of life. Along it used to pass mourners carrying their dead to burial, with hardly a hope for the future to cheer their grief; along it too travelled the Athenian to worship at the temple of Eleusis, the Temple of the Mysteries, where he would learn all that his religion could teach him about the life beyond the present. We do not know exactly what that teaching was, but we know that it was imparted only to the initiated few. For the mass of men, death appeared to be an inevitable fate; the dead were shadows flitting among shades, their existence a weary echo of this life, relieved perhaps by the pious service of kinsfolk upon earth, but for the most part 'a sorry refuge for the miserable.' If now and again a brighter hope seemed to flicker up, it soon died down, and never took hold of the imagination of the people.<sup>2</sup>

3. *Thou wilt shew me the path of life.* The word here translated 'shew,' though this word is not at all graphic and expressive as a translation, points to the truth that the 'life' here spoken of is not a mere quantity in extension, not to be numbered by so many days, but an inner possession of the soul, a quality which first enters the spirit intensively, and then manifests itself as an extended course of life in its progress and continuance. More full than 'Thou wilt shew me' is the translation: 'Thou wilt *make me to know* the path of life.' To *know* the path of life is to receive it into the soul as a spiritual conception, a spiritual fact, and a spiritual possession. To *know* God is life eternal, because to know God means to receive Him as an incorporated possession into the life itself, to know Him as the content of our spiritual nature. So to '*know the path of life*' is to have this life-way within us, an abiding possession, an inalienable part of ourselves.

Our Lord Jesus is Himself this path of life, for He says, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one cometh unto the Father, but by me' (Jn 14<sup>6</sup>). By His Incarnation, by His life of sinlessness and compassion, by His suffering unto death, by His rising again, and by His unceasing intercession, He is become 'the new and living Way' unto the

<sup>1</sup> W. H. M. H. Aitken, *God's Everlasting Yea*, 225.

<sup>2</sup> G. A. Cooke, *The Progress of Revelation*, 95.

Father. He longs to dwell in our hearts by faith, and to become 'our Life.' He is the one perfect pattern of all human life, and He rejoices to give to the feeblest of us such spiritual strength as shall enable us to 'walk in his steps' here, and become fitted for being always 'with him' where He is.

Now He shows us the path of life when He says, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.'

(1) *Let him deny himself.* Christ appeals to our noblest, most generous feelings. If a person 'lives for himself' he puts aside the truest happiness in life, all that is most worth living for. The besetting sin of our fallen nature is selfishness. To hold 'self' under mastery, whatever be the inward trial that is involved, to abandon self-will and the yielding to one's own inclinations, to rise above all that would check the best attainments of our hearts, and to offer unto God the sacrifice of an undivided will, this is to know the path of life.

(2) *And take up his own cross daily.* The devout thought which is so familiar to us of 'glorying in the cross of Christ' makes us hardly able to realize what must have been the surprising force of these words when they first fell on the disciples' ears, bringing before them a feature of the spiritual life that they had not conceived before. Without doubt there would rise before their minds some of the dreadful scenes that occurred in the conquest of their country by the Romans. Only thirty years before, for instance, as the result of a revolt, no fewer than two thousand Jews had been 'crucified' on the charge of sedition. What a meaning all this gives to His declaration! He speaks out of the consciousness that was never absent from His heart, for He would think of His being soon 'numbered with transgressors' and bearing unknown shame and suffering when nailed to His Cross.

(3) *And follow me.* Christ calls us to follow Him, not in patient endurance only, but also in the activity of a consecrated life. We have many noble examples that stir our hearts and give us courage. Livingstone, Gordon of Khartoum, Patteson of Melanesia, Mackay of Uganda, in recent times are patterns to us of undaunted Christian bravery and of truest self-sacrifice, but they themselves have passed from us. No one would think of their being able to help us over the hard places of our life, or to lift us up when we fall, or to make us strong to cast out the spirit of self and evil from us. But Christ, the one perfect Example of all human life, is also the Living, ever-present, almighty Helper, the all-seeing Guide, knowing the end from the beginning.<sup>1</sup>

## II.

'In thy presence is fulness of joy.'

The path of life is that path in which the Psalmist's eyes are fixed on Jehovah, and his steps are upheld by His guidance. It is in the words of v.<sup>9</sup>; a walk before Jehovah in the land of the living. And so the joys, without which life would not be life (cf. Dt 30<sup>15</sup>), and the satiating fulness of which makes this a perfect life, are those which

can be enjoyed only in access to God, and which radiate on man from His countenance.

'I believe in gittin' as much good outen life as you kin—not that I ever set out to look fer happiness; seems like the folks that does that never finds it. I jes' do the best I kin where the good Lord put me at, an' it looks like I got a happy feelin' in me 'most all the time.'<sup>2</sup>

I. *In thy presence*, is literally 'beside thy countenance.' Here is the thought that rules the whole Psalm. The joys of the righteous are not simply given by God, but consist in the enjoyment of God. They are the pleasures that are constantly and abidingly in His hand. So in Ps 17 the happiness of the Psalmist is to see God's face, to be satiated with His likeness. This is no metaphysical contemplation of God, no abstract intellectual act, but the moral enjoyment of fellowship with Jehovah, of His love and grace, of the smile of the Divine favour, the light of His gracious countenance lifted up on the believer.

'Beside thy countenance,' or 'in the fellowship of thy face.' That is wonderful! Standing in the fellowship of the glory of the face Divine, gazing into it as a man gazes into the face of his friend, and receiving from it the eternal glory,—this, said the Psalmist, is fulness of joy. He could not analyze it or criticise it under such circumstances. He could only feel the incoming of it, the satisfying nature of it, and bathe himself in the glory of it.<sup>3</sup>

2. The joys of God's fellowship are the joys of life. The poet is, indeed, incapable of conceiving any joy otherwise than as a life-joy. To him as to his whole nation, and to every man and every race which looks at these matters with fresh and natural vision, life is the potentiality of joy, and joy the manifestation and energy of life. And, again, he is incapable of associating life and joy with the shadowy existence of the disembodied soul in the land of darkness. We are accustomed to speak of the doctrine of Sheol as a doctrine of the immortality, the deathlessness of the soul. But this is to read Old Testament teaching in the light of Western ideas. To a philosopher like Plato, who views the body only as a prison-house and a restraint, it is natural to speak of the life, the deathlessness, of the soul. But the Old Testament has nothing in common with the estimate of the body and the bodily life on which such language rests. There is no reason to suppose

<sup>2</sup> Alice Caldwell Hegan, *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch*, p. 125.

<sup>3</sup> J. Thomas, *Myrtle Street Pulpit*, iv. 189.

<sup>1</sup> W. M. Macpherson, *The Path of Life*, 210, 214.

that there ever was a time when the Hebrews held the annihilation of the soul in death. But the continued existence of the *Rephaim*—the weak and pithless shades that fill the realms of Sheol—is never thought of as life. Nay, it is the very contrary of life, opposed to it as darkness is to light, as shadow to substance, as weakness to strength, as inanity to joy. Nor does the development of the hope of immortality in the religion of Revelation stand in any other than a negative relation to the doctrine of Sheol—except, of course, in so far as even that doctrine is at least a protest against absolute and crass materialism. The Bible vanquishes the fear of death, not by asserting the immortality of the soul against pure materialism, but by carrying the notion of life in its full and genuine sense beyond death, and so dispelling the dreary hopeless darkness of the land of silence and forgetfulness where Jehovah has set no memorial of Himself, where no voice is raised to praise Him, where love and hatred and envy are perished, where all the eager energies of life are sunk into oblivion and decay.

Neither of the Melvilles died in Scotland. Andrew Melville died at Sedan, James at Berwick. But, as during his troubled life, James Melville had found in the Psalms the expression of his sorrow, his gratitude, or his triumph, so at the moment of death they brought him their message of strength and courage. The pain of his disease was 'wonderfull vehement'; yet he was content, thinking 'of the sight of the face of God in glorie'; rehearsing that verse of the 16th Psalm (v. 12), 'Thow wilt schaw me the pathe of lyffe; in thy sight are fulness of all joyes, at thy right hand is the plentie of pleasures for evir.'<sup>1</sup>

3. In thy presence is fulness of joy. How is it realized?

(1) *In the act of worship.* We may look for the presence of God in the church and congregation, a presence solemnizing all that is done. There are many instances in Scripture of this presence of the Lord in the assemblies of His people. It occurred at the consecration of Solomon's temple (2 Ch 7<sup>1-2</sup>), on which occasion there was a visible appearance in the form of a cloud. It occurred on the day of Pentecost, when 'the sound from heaven filled all the house where they were sitting.' It occurred also in what may be called the second Pentecost, described in Ac 4<sup>31</sup>, where we read that 'the place was shaken where they assembled together.' It is pictured to us in the symbolic picture of the seven golden candlesticks (Rev 1<sup>13</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> R. E. Prothero, *The Psalms in Human Life*, 266.

It is described by the prophet Habakkuk (2<sup>20</sup>), 'The Lord is in his holy temple.' And it is distinctly promised by our Lord Himself when He said, in Mt 18<sup>20</sup>, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I, in the midst of them.'

A friend of mine was interrupted in his study by his little boy coming in. 'What do you want, my son?' said the father somewhat impatiently. 'Nothing, papa; only to be with you.'

(2) *In the secret of the heart.* The Scriptures are full of assurances of our blessed Lord making His abode in the hearts of His people. Look, for example, at such a passage as Jn 14<sup>23</sup>, 'If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.' So 15<sup>4</sup>, 'Abide in me, and I in you.' So in the quotation by St. Paul as found in 2 Co 6<sup>16</sup>, 'I will dwell in them.' And the prayer of St. Paul (Eph 3<sup>17</sup>), 'That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.' All these passages speak most clearly of the personal indwelling of the blessed Saviour in the soul of the individual believer. There is nothing general about them, nor do they allude to what some would call an objective presence, a presence, that is, external to the heart of the individual; but they refer to a presence *in* the heart, so that the heart itself becomes, as it were, the temple or the throne of the Lord.

'Some years ago I remember a noblewoman of your country was studying at our Bible Institute in Chicago, and on the day she left the Institute she told us these two incidents that happened over here in England. She said: 'I had a letter from a dear friend of mine, a lady, and she asked me to come at once to see her. I hurried to her home, and, as I went up the elegant marble stairway, and saw the costly paintings on the walls and the magnificent statues that lined the hall, I said to myself, "I wonder if all this wealth and splendour makes my friend happy?" I did not have to wait long to find out, for presently the lady came hurrying into the room, and, after greeting me, dropped into a seat and burst into tears. All the wealth, honour, and dignity of her position had not given her joy. After this I went to visit a poor blind woman in a humble cottage. It was a dark, rainy day, and the rain was dripping through the badly thatched roof, gathering in a pool before the chair where the woman sat. When I saw the poverty of that blind woman, I was driven to turn to her and say, "Maggie, are you not miserable?" "What, lady?" and she turned her sightless eyes to me in surprise. "What, lady? I miserable; I, the child of a King, and hurrying on to the mansion He has gone to prepare for me? I miserable? No, no, lady; I am happy!" Wealth had not brought joy to the one, but a living faith in Jesus Christ had brought joy to the other in the midst of her poverty and misfortune.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> R. A. Torrey, *Revival Addresses*, p. 167.

## III.

'In thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.'

'In thy right hand,' not, as in the Authorized Version, 'at thy right hand.' God is the possessor of every good thing, and His right hand is the dispenser. From Him 'cometh down every good and perfect gift.'

1. What are the pleasures which are dispensed by the right hand of God?

(1) *Love.* Is not love—to love and at the same time to be loved—the greatest and sweetest pleasure that we can conceive? If, then, our nature thrills with knowing that 'God is Love,' if we feel that we are being loved by Love itself, and that we, in turn, are loving Love itself—and this not as if it were a beautiful idea in our minds, or an impersonal object that we gaze upon, but as being God Himself—God who is all grace and goodness, God who is all-holy, God who is living personal Love—what must this be but the perfection of joy? How marvellous that it is possible for God to love us sinners! How great a gift it is to be endowed by Him with faculties so rich in their nature as to be capable of being redeemed from sin and all its effects, and of being led on to love God in a way that responds to His perfect Fatherly love! This is the life of heaven, the life that is purchased for us by the sacrifice of the Son of God.

(2) *Rest.* 'There remaineth a Sabbath-rest for the people of God' (He 4<sup>9</sup>). 'Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into his glory?' (Lk 24<sup>26</sup>). The highest glory that He now cares for is to be spending His life for us, and to put within us His own saving power, that we may have eternal life. It is still true of Him that His joy is to minister, and not to be ministered unto. This is His Rest, and its nature is indicated in His great words, 'My Father is working even unto this hour, and I am always working' (Jn 5<sup>17</sup>). This is the Life of God, His everlasting Rest. The Rest of the Godhead is one of ceaseless working and activity for others. How marvellous and beneficent is God's working throughout the universe! Heaven shall never be to any one a state of ceaseless repose or inactivity, much less of tameness or monotony; but it shall be nobler and happier than earth, for this reason above all, that there shall not be in it the slightest remnant or trace of sin to check the power and joy of service. 'His servants shall do him service; and they shall see his face; and his

name, his own character, shall be on their foreheads' (Rev 22<sup>4</sup>). It shall be our entering into God's rest—His sinless, unchanging rest, rest in undivided peace of mind, rest from all fear of ever sinning, rest from sorrow and anxiety, rest from the weariness of knowing what we ought to do and not being able to do it, perfect rest in being always engaged in the most joyous, exhilarating work that God can give us.

2. And the pleasures of God are for evermore. Let us think of a pleasure which shall never cloy, a blessedness which can never diminish, a rest which shall never be broken, a happiness which shall never be interfered with. Pleasures for evermore! Oh, grand and glorious word! It responds to the deepest aspirations of our nature. For evermore! At last we shall be satisfied, and none shall ever rob us of our satisfaction. For evermore! We see our future history stretching out through the vast cycles of an unknown eternity, and however far our finite imagination may reach in pursuit of such a miracle of existence, and seek to comprehend that wondrous word 'for evermore,' still it transcends the limit of our furthest thought; and, far as the mind can stretch or the heart conceive, still the boundless sea of joy is rolling on, still the limitless expanse of bliss is spreading, still the rivers of pleasure and the oceans of delight, and that 'for evermore,'—that is '*The Way of Life.*'

How beautiful it is to be alive!  
To wake each morn as if the Maker's grace  
Did us afresh from nothingness derive,  
That we might sing, 'How happy is our case,  
How beautiful it is to be alive!'

To read in God's great book until we feel  
Love for the love that gave it; then to kneel  
Close unto Him whose truth our souls will thrive,  
While every moment's joy doth more reveal  
How beautiful it is to be alive!

Rather to go without what might increase  
Our worldly standing, than our souls deprive  
Of frequent speech with God, or than to cease  
To feel, through having wasted health or peace,  
How beautiful it is to be alive!

Not to forget when pain and grief draw nigh,  
Into the ocean of time past to dive  
For memories of God's mercies, or to try  
To bear all sweetly, hoping still to cry,  
'How beautiful it is to be alive!'

Thus ever towards man's height of nobleness  
Strive still some new progression to contrive,  
Till, just as any other friend's, we press  
Death's hand, and, having died, feel none the less  
How beautiful it is to be alive!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> H. S. Sutton, *Rose's Diary*, xxi.