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## The Process of Salvation.

IT is a commonplace to say that for a century and more the minds of men have been drawn with increasing attraction to the contemplation of the historic Jesus, and that to-day no figure in history looms more vastly before the world. He is receiving the homage of men not only within the Church but far beyond her borders, and not only in Christian lands but among the heathen. The little books we call the Gospels, which tell His brief story, are rapidly becoming the most priceless literary treasure of all humanity. It is not so commonplace to point out that the Gospels were not the earliest Christian writings, and that they were not the product of mere biographical interest, but of faith and experience. There was a Christian people before there was a Christian document, and years before the oldest of the Gospels was written there were apostolic letters addressed to Jews and Gentiles who were living a new life through the redeeming power of a Jesus who had lived and died and, so they believed, was alive for evermore. We should never have heard of the Jesus of history had it not been for their experience; and the Gospels by their very existence bear witness to a salvation of which He was the efficient cause.

In dealing with the Process of Salvation there is a certain advantage in starting with this fact. For one thing, it makes it clear that in Christianity we have to do with a religion of redemption and not simply with a higher morality. It is inconceivable that after the shattering disillusionment of the crucifixion, and if that had been the end, the followers of Jesus of Nazareth would have rallied again in order to proclaim to the world a few beautiful precepts their ill-fated Master had taught them. The Sermon on the Mount is an essential part, but not the whole, of Christianity; and there would have been no Christianity if it had been. And for another thing, it makes it clear that the vital centre of Christianity is not Jesus, considered simply as an historical figure, but Jesus as Redeemer and Lord. The earliest preaching was of a Jesus who by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God had been crucified by lawless men, but whom God raised up, "and being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear." Pentecost was the sequel to Calvary, and out of Pentecostal experience Church and Gospels have come.

### 1. THE NEW TESTAMENT EXPERIENCE IS THE EXPERIENCE OF THE SPIRIT.

There is much that is of interest in the Pentecostal and similar experiences of the Apostolic Age that is not strictly

relevant to our subject. "Tongues," ecstasies, visions, and the like, are abnormal phenomena which have frequently appeared in religious movements, and have not been confined to the line of revelation. Considered in themselves they are of more importance to the psychologist than to the Christian interpreter. That profound emotion may under some circumstances have psychic effects, and that some persons are peculiarly liable to experiences of this nature, are facts too well known to labour. Prophecy in its earlier stages was closely associated with them, and they reappeared in the early Church. Their supernatural character was never questioned, and it was natural in that age that they should be regarded as signal signs of Divine favour. To acknowledge that primitive conceptions of the Spirit were defective is not to deny that the power which carried men beyond themselves in a rapture that had strange effects was truly the Spirit of God. It is only to distinguish between the essential and the accidental, the permanent reality and the transient form. It is the more necessary to do this in that there is evidence that many were disposed, as some are still, to value these phenomena for their own sake, and that they were occasionally associated with sub- or even anti-Christian features. The controversies outside, for example, found an echo within the Corinthian Church when a believing brother, speaking in ecstasy, cried "Jesus is accursed." It was to a bewildered community which had submitted the incredible fact to him that St. Paul laid down the principle that no one speaking in the Spirit of God could say that. It was plain that not all "supernatural" phenomena were of God. It was probably such experiences as these, as well as his own profound instinct for ethical reality, which led him to discount the value of such abnormal endowments, and to find the true fruits of the Spirit in faith and character. And it is not without significance for the history of religion that in this he was anticipated by the greatest of all the prophets. In dealing with the "false prophets," Jeremiah was confronted with the problem of phenomena universally believed to be the products of the Spirit of God. He no more questioned the reality of their visions than he questioned his own, but his experience compelled him at length to submit all visions to a moral test, and to recognise that it was the substance rather than the form that proved prophecy to be of God. Because of its associations the word "Spirit" is never used by him. In the same way, while we may be sure he was not the only Christian to know where the true values lay, St. Paul—so far as we know—was the first to relegate what were called "spiritual gifts" to their right place among those secondary and transitory things that change and pass.

But these abnormal experiences are of evidential value in so far as they bear witness to the immense enthusiasm that characterised the first believers, and the profound changes the Gospel wrought in them. Discount the phenomena as we may and must, the fact remains that it was an excess of joy that broke the bounds of reason and sometimes of order. The men who spoke in ecstasy and trance were possessed men, but what possessed them was an overflowing consciousness of redemption from bondage into freedom, from bleak disappointment with life into immortal hope. When St. Paul spoke of the Gospel as "the POWER of God unto Salvation" he was using language which most, if not all, of his converts could understand and repeat. It may be doubted whether they could follow him in the subtleties of his dialectic, but there is no doubt that when he wrote to some of his earliest converts "God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying 'Abba Father'" they knew what he meant. We are told that the news that there is but one God and not a million can be a Gospel to a Japanese to-day;<sup>1</sup> and this must have counted for something in the early days.<sup>2</sup> But the dynamic of the Gospel, then as now, was the certainty that the one God had demonstrated His Fatherhood to sinful men by sending His Son Jesus Christ to save the lost. St. Paul "placarded" Christ crucified before the Galatians as the Son of God Who loved them and gave Himself for them; and it was in the amazing love of Christ that they found God, or rather, as the apostle would have said, were found of Him. It was the discovery of a grace in God, of which Jesus Christ was the Embodiment and His Risen Life the security, that was the soul of the joy that broke into inarticulate praise. A redemptive power was in and accompanied the Gospel which reproduced the most gracious incidents of the Gospels. Indeed, St. Luke was speaking the language of soberness and truth when he opened his second book with the words, "The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus BEGAN both to do and to teach"; because the written and unwritten Acts of the Apostles were but continuations of the Gospel story. If, during His earthly life, Jesus brought salvation to publicans and sinners, to harlots and extortioners, St. Paul could, years afterwards, say to the Corinthians, "Such were some of you." If Jesus could tell the parable of the Prodigal Son in defence of His ministry, its beauty has preserved the private letter to Philemon which tells the story of the Prodigal Slave, "no longer a slave, but

<sup>1</sup> Warneck, *Living Forces of the Gospel*, 211.

<sup>2</sup> cf. Tatian, "This ends our slavery in the world and rescues us from rulers manifold and ten thousand tyrants" (quoted by Glover: *Christian Tradition*, 150).

more than a slave, a brother beloved." A power entered the world with Jesus which continued to work moral miracles. Redemption was a reality wherever the gospel came, because there was an energy in it which was not of man but of God. And this power was associated permanently with Jesus Christ. It was the Holy Spirit which He "sent forth," or it was His Spirit, or it was Christ Himself. "The Lord is the Spirit" says St. Paul in a brief and flashing word; and St. John is essentially right when he antedates Pentecost, and represents the disciples as "receiving" the Holy Spirit in the Upper Room with their first Vision of the Risen Lord.

## 2. THE PRIMARY WORK OF THE SPIRIT IS TO REVEAL CHRIST.

The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit lies outside this study, and yet it is necessary to attach a definite meaning to the phrase. Denney, as is well known, practically identified the Spirit with the moral influences of the Gospel, or with faith. If this is unsatisfactory it is because it seems to ignore, if not deny, any personal and immediate relation of God with the soul in conversion. God is more than a moral influence. He is the living God in Whom every soul lives and moves and has its being. We are not only dependent on Him moment by moment of our life; He is within us, nor is it possible to say where the human and the Divine meet and mingle. So wondrously and with such lowliness does He hide Himself behind our consciousness that we are unaware of His presence; and yet He is the Source of whatever goodness we possess, the Secret of the shame we feel when we would fain cover our sins from our own eyes, and it is He who works creatively within us towards unrealised visions of beauty and truth. It is because He, by an unutterable kenosis, and by grace and not necessity, is bound up with us, that He can be afflicted in all our afflictions, and burdened with our sins. On the other hand, and this is the mystery of our life, for man is a greater mystery than God, we are spiritual beings in a universe of spiritual values which we may or may not make our own; each of us, as Tennyson says:

The main miracle that thou art thou,  
With power on thine own act and on the world.

And therefore any revelation made to us must be one that appeals to our mind and moral consciousness. God can only make Himself known to us in rational and ethical ways. There is a mystic element in all true religion, inasmuch as a personal relation always passes speech and the senses; and all mysticism is in the words of the fourth Gospel "A man can receive nothing except it have been given him from above." But, with all its glorious immediacy, mysticism, as such, adds nothing but

irradiation to our knowledge of God. The *material* of mystic vision, where it is not formless, however it may be illumined by the Spirit, is already given in experience. It is the transcendent, not the immanent divine, that is the object of knowledge, but without the immanent the transcendent would speak in vain. It is the Spirit of God within us that bears witness to the God above us, interpreting all objective revelations, whether given in nature or history, in great events or in private life; and as at Pentecost we hear "Every man in our own language, wherein we were born." And supremely the Spirit within bears witness to Jesus Christ when He is presented to us, and in testifying to Him reveals its own nature as the Spirit of holiness and the Spirit of Christ. Deep calls unto deep when Jesus and the soul are face to face; and though, owing to the limitations of language, we use words drawn from spatial and temporal existence, and speak of the "coming," the "descent," or the "baptism" of the Spirit, these but describe the release of power and heightening of personality that attend the opening of the will itself to the witnessing and now invasive Spirit. The divine fact is that the Spirit is present in every man and witnesses to the revelation without; energising within us according to the greatness of the revelation and our response to it. Jesus Christ is not only the greatest, He is the final revelation of God, for there can be nothing deeper in God than the Holy Love manifested in Him. And Jesus Christ, and Him crucified and glorified, is the material of the Spirit where He is made known to men. The work of the Spirit is to glorify Him, to illumine Him in His life and death and eternal significance; and according to our response is the inward power.

All recognition of and response to Jesus Christ is due to the Spirit of God. At its simplest and lowest, if it were not for the Spirit bearing witness to moral worth and beauty, we should see nothing in Jesus that we should desire Him; still less should we know such constraint in Him as to compel us to His feet. The child's response to what it sees in Him is as valid a work of the Spirit of God as is the surrender of the sin-stained soul of an Augustine. The youth and maiden, captured by His radiant courage and dedicating themselves to His service, are yielding to the same Spirit as the saint who knows there are riches in Christ of which as yet they have no suspicion. It is always true that no one can call Jesus "Lord" save in the Holy Spirit. But in all true response to Jesus Christ there is an implicit as well as a conscious faith, and it is the continuous work of the Spirit to unfold the meaning of Christ to the believing soul. The Christian life, in one of its aspects, is the exploration of Christ and the discovery of needs that only He

can meet; and though like the original disciples we may begin with the Master, beloved and admired, like them we must follow on to know our Lord in the whole range of His truth and saving power, and to realise that the religion of Christ is not for good men but for men. "We may begin with the Master," but we may begin anywhere with Him. There is and can be no uniformity of initial experience. Peter, who left his nets at the call of Jesus, did not start from the same point as Matthew the publican, to whom the call itself was a wonder of grace. The young John who flung himself joyously after the Master did not start like the woman who was a sinner and who washed His feet with her tears. Yet the time came when Peter wept bitterly, and he and John and Matthew joined hands in a common confession of failure when their defiant virtues had proved windy boasts. Men may *begin* with the sense of sin and the conscious need of forgiveness, and like Bunyan's Christian, must be eased of a burden before they can go far on the pilgrim path. But there are many who do not and, without violence to their natures and upbringing, cannot begin with this experience. Yet without it the grace and power of Christ cannot be fully known, nor the Father who gave Him, and was in Him, loved as He is to be loved. Sooner or later the Holy Spirit unfolding the things of Christ to the Christian soul reveals Him as the Saviour.

Increasing knowledge of Christ inevitably involves a deepening knowledge of ourselves, and a dissatisfaction with our own achievements which is not assuaged by greater efforts. The goodness we attain by our own striving turns to ashes, and our self-begotten virtues lose their lustre. And even if at the beginning it was the sense of sin that brought us to Him, that sense is transformed into sorrow and cleansing tears when He shows us His hands and side. Christian penitence is the fruit of His love and not of our fears. And the Cross which compels moral sincerity creates the conditions of its own reconciling power, and becomes through the Spirit a subduing and redeeming energy as it lifts the veil from our sinful hearts in the same action as it rends the last veil from the face of the Father. Our sin is revealed and judged by the divine love that suffers and forgives. And in responding to Christ crucified the soul, of necessity, for this is the only response, associates itself with Him in His Passion. As McLeod Campbell puts it in the greatest of all books on the Atonement: "To be washed in the blood of Christ must be to have the moral and spiritual elements of that offering revealed in our spirits, as bringing us into spiritual harmony with them, making us to partake in them."<sup>3</sup> That is, in brief, the forgiven soul makes its own the judgment of Holy Love upon

<sup>3</sup> *Nature of the Atonement*, 251.

its sin, and inwardly disowning its sin, identifies itself with Christ in His obedience to the Father even unto death. Where there is true penitence there is union with Him in all the meanings of the Cross. The Cross, as it is the ultimate manifestation of forgiving and redeeming love, is the absolute assurance of forgiveness; but it does its saving work as it effects this substitution of Christ for self as centre; and we, being liberated from the burden both of sins and virtues which are the products of self, rise with Him into a newness of life which will reach heights of ethical sonship beyond the vision of any striving moralist, and our personal selfhood is consummated in God. The forgiveness of the Cross is not a general amnesty but a constraining power, which, in reconciling us to the Father, fashions us into the likeness of the Son. There is no "mystic Union" with Christ which does not involve this moral union with Him, a union which for us as for the New Testament is symbolised by baptism. It is not suggested that in the experience of any individual, even of an apostle, this identification is complete<sup>4</sup>—our strong temptations and our many falls are proof to the contrary. But it is implicit in all response to the holy and forgiving love of God in Christ crucified, and it is part of the work of the Holy Spirit to bring us, through triumph and failure, joy and suffering, chastening, temptation and victory over temptation, into more perfect union with Christ in the ethical realities of the reconciling Cross.

### 3. THE HOLY SPIRIT AS THE SPIRIT OF SONSHIP.

It was as a Son that Jesus Christ lived and died. And He revealed the Fatherhood in a Sonship which in its every motion reflected its quality and purpose. The word "Father" conveys little, or rather it conveys anything according to our ideas and experience of earthly fatherhood. But the best fatherhood is bettered by the "how much more" of Jesus, and by the life and death which give their value to the words "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Faith in Christ is not a passport into the presence of the Father; it is faith in the Father as the Son has revealed Him. Christ is indispensable to that faith, for it is upon the work of Christ as Redeemer that it rests. Our faith in Christ brings us into conscious relationship with God, and the Spirit within us bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God.

It belongs to our sonship that we should have free access to our Father at all times and in all needs, and when we have no need except to see His face. There are no guarded chambers in the Father's House into which His forgiven children are

<sup>4</sup> cf. Phil. iii. 12.



forbidden to come. There is no throne-room or holy place into which none but dignitaries and priests may enter. The child is free of the home, and the holiest place is where he tells his secrets into the ear of his Father. Prayer is awed and trustful intercourse with God. It is the seal of sonship. Our prayers rise as we rise, and as our knowledge of the Father grows. And the Spirit, ever revealing the things of Christ, leads us into a wider and deeper knowledge of the Father's will for us as Christ is deeper understood. To ask for earthly things is within the rights of children, but to pray for the gifts that are at God's *right* hand and which He desires us to possess is a privilege we come to value more. "For my part," says St. Theresa, "and I have been long at it, I desire no other gift of prayer but that which ends in every day making me a better and better woman." Yet for the highest things, the grace and perfection of sonship, unbroken and blessed fellowship with God, who is Light, and in Whom is no darkness at all, we know not how to pray as we ought, for our aspirations fail on flagging wings and droop to earth; but the Spirit of God, which is the Spirit of Christ within us, never ceases to intercede for us with groanings which cannot be uttered; and deeper than our broken prayers is the sighing of Him who worketh in us both to will and to do the Father's holy will.

In the doing of the Father's will there is no element of legalism. The motive is not fear of punishment or hope of reward; nor can the will of the Father be done in any labour of obedience which is not filial. It is not the quantity and outward perfection of the work done which satisfies Him, but the spirit of sonship expressed in it. The essential weakness of Law, from this standpoint, is not merely that it is mainly negative and that it cannot cover the infinite variety of circumstances and life, but that it tends to concentrate our attention on ourselves and our own achievements; and therefore it creates self-righteousness or pronounces condemnation. As the children of God we are not under law but under grace; none the less under grace that He has revealed His mind in the teaching and obedience of Christ. In the Father's House there are no tables of commandments, but there is the love which is the fulfilling of all noble law. As von Hügel says, "Holiness consists primarily not in the absence of faults, but in the presence of spiritual force, in Love creative, Love triumphant, the soul becoming flame rather than snow, and dwelling upon what to do, give, and be, rather than upon what to shun." It is not by scrupulously observing rules, and keeping precepts and multiplying prohibitions that we demonstrate our sonship. These are the morals of the Pharisee, and the heathen who know not God.

There is more hope for a man who sins greatly than for a man of negative and beggarly virtue. Sonship is shown in the love that prompts thought and action, and in the finer humanity that love creates; and there is no sonship where there is no brotherhood. "He that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" To know ourselves to be the children of God is to recognise all men as His children, and to reverence all. The infinite value of every soul is intrinsic and not dependent on its material or moral standing; and the Father whom we would serve in love can only be served in His children. The filial love of Jesus was manifest in His boundless and heroic love for sinful men, and in nothing was His Sonship more apparent than in the richness and breadth of His humanity. His was an inclusive personality, not in any metaphysical sense, but in its comprehensive understanding and sympathy. In the filial life there is a Shakespearean quality, and indeed in his broad humanity Shakespeare is, so far, more Christian than Dante. The greatest saints are the most human saints. Peter, Francis, and Bunyan who loved "to make friendship with all," are more truly Christian than some whose names are more august. A conception of Christianity which excludes any type of humanity, or that sets any limits to our sympathies, is alien to the mind of Christ. The Gospel brings us out into a large place where a man can breathe, and into kinship with the whole family of God. And in this great humanity there is, for the believing child of God, no other imperative than Christly love, love as Christ has interpreted it in His words and deeds; and being the imperative of love it is limitless in its range. Law is stiff, and moral codes become prisons to the soul. Love in its action is of infinite variety, and is measureless in its sweep and freedom. And, as the children of God in the family of God, it is our motive and sole direction. "All divinity," as John Donne says, "is love or wonder." It is not the imitation of Christ that marks the Christian, for the imitation even of Christ can become an external thing. It is the reproduction of His life in the springs of thought and feeling. And the Spirit of God, which, as St. Peter says, is "given to them that obey," not only reveals Christ to us in a Sonship which grows more luminous, He—in that revealing—transforms us into the same obedient sonship as from glory unto glory.

#### 4. THE SPIRIT OF SONSHIP IS THE SPIRIT OF GRATITUDE AND FAITH.

All that the Father has is ours in Christ, and all His will is accepted as a will of grace. Jesus Christ was a Son in His Father's world, delighting in the beauty of it, and gratefully

accepting the bounty of the table His Father spread. He possessed the world as only one who is its Master and never its slave can do. As He was pure all things were pure to Him. He was no ascetic despising the body, rejecting the life of the senses. He came eating and drinking. The antithesis between matter and spirit was not in His thought. All things were holy to Him—the dawn on the heights and the silver dusk, the trailing vine and the yellow corn, bird-music and the laughter of children. Marriage was a divine mystery; fatherhood a veiled theophany. He made wine a sacrament, and bread a heavenly food. Nothing God had created or ordained was evil or to be refused. Was not earth the footstool of God, and the sky His burnished throne? God, that is, is the underlying Reality of the whole natural order. If Jesus denied Himself any earthly good, it was not as condemning it, but for His work's sake; even as He had power to lay His life down that He might take it again. Possessing the world He could renounce it, for renunciation is impossible where there is no possession; and renouncing it He possessed it more completely. As Traherne says: "Was He not the Son of God; and Heir of the whole world? To this poor, bleeding, naked Man did all the corn and wine, and oil, and gold and silver in the world minister in an invisible manner, even as He was exposed lying and dying upon the Cross" (*Cent.* 60). And into all this wealth of creation and of all the gifts of God the Christian enters as by right of sonship. All things are his for his delight and increase of life; his is also the genius with which God endows the thinker, the artist, and the poet. It is not Christ who has banned culture or the searching mind; or has dashed the cup of natural joys from the lips of men. All human faculties are sacred, and all pure enjoyment is of God. It is indeed better, as He said, to enter life maimed than to be cast out. To gain the world and to lose the soul is, in the end, to lose both soul and the world. But the maimed life is not the ideal life. The ideal life is that in which all the senses and all the powers of man minister to the life of the Spirit which sanctifies them. And where there is realised sonship the world is ours, and all that is in it. It is a true word of Chesterton's Alfred, addressed to the heathen Danes:

Therefore your end is on you,  
 Is on you and your kings;  
 Not for a fire in Ely fen,  
 Not that your gods are nine or ten,  
 But because it is only Christian men  
 Guard even heathen things.

The strong tendency, constantly reappearing in the religious world, to substitute "Touch not, taste not, handle not" for the

righteousness of Christ is a lapse into will-worship and legalism. Except where love is the motive, or fear of personal weakness, or necessary self-discipline, it is definitely unfilial and anti-Christian. The son of God is free in his Father's world. He is the heir of God, joint-heir with Christ; and possessing the world and not being possessed by it he can use it royally; or, if need be, can renounce it freely, reflecting in dim majesty the unutterable Act of Him who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich.

Further, it is a grave error to suppose that it is only through sorrow and pain that the Father touches us to nobler sonship. There is a discipline of joy no less potent to the growing soul. In all the bounty of life, in its light and loveliness, in the good gifts of the body's health, and the mind's energy, and the heart's affection, He deals with us as with children from whom He would withhold no good thing. And it is part of the tragedy of life that so many miss the needful joy through folly and sin, their own or others', and the mis-shapen social order in which they live and which works evil from generation to generation. But to be human is to be woven into the seamless web of life; and in vicarious and in sympathetic suffering the Christian accepts the conditions of his humanity, and his union with God Who bears the whole. In the family of God the strong bear the burdens of the weak, not of compulsion but willingly. And in patience and labour, in wrath and pity, in self-sacrifice and service, the Christian seeks to make available for his brethren the joy of his Father's world, and the grace that is his in Christ; for the redeemed life is a redemptive life, filling up that which is lacking of the sufferings of Christ.

In the same filial spirit as he accepts his own joys and his obligations, he accepts his own sorrows and the afflictions that life holds for him as for all the children of men. There are inevitable pains and disappointments, toils and anxieties, consequences of mistakes and sins which forgiveness does not remove, to make life hard and sometimes bitter to the taste. Life itself is dangerous, and the highest life moves along perilous edges where vigilance and valour alone can preserve it. Temptations change their character but not their intensity or deadliness as we leave the lower levels. But to be reconciled to God is to be reconciled to all His ways, natural and supernatural, and to life as He has ordained it, including the cost of moral growth and fidelity. It is to believe that the same Love which created joy has willed trial, and that both are needful; that Love is the ultimate reality of the universe, and all things work together for good to him that loves God. "Religion," says James of

Harvard, "makes easy and felicitous what in any case is necessary." When God is recognised as Father, and the Spirit of Christ cries "Abba" in our hearts, the whole order of life, in its weal and woe, becomes what God intended it to be, a redeeming order; so great a change does sonship make. Life is not so much the school where we learn lessons as the means the Father uses in moulding souls, in creating spiritual beauty, in making us meet to be partakers of His glory. And in all its height and depth life is accepted by the Christian, not with stoic fortitude, but with faith's surrender to a Wisdom and Love and Redeeming Power that subdues and uses all things to a purpose too great to be immediately understood and too divine to fail.

#### 5. THE SPIRIT OF SONSHIP IS THE SPIRIT OF FELLOWSHIP.

The filial life cannot be a solitary life. It exists and can only be sustained by brotherhood. Christian humility is the recognition of our dependence, not only upon God, but upon our fellow-men. And the Church, which is that part of the family of God which has recognised itself in knowing the Father through Christ, is the sustaining fellowship. It is not a little garden walled around; it is rather land redeemed from a waste which has still to be redeemed. It is the Kingdom of God in so far as that Kingdom has earthly embodiment, and it has no final frontiers short of the ultimate bounds of humanity. It is not confined to any place, or to any age, or to any one ecclesiastical organisation. It is universal, and it reaches back through the centuries to the beginning and forward to the end. It is no merely human society, to be made or unmade by the will of man. It is "The Church of God which He purchased with His own blood." It is the custodian of the Gospel of Christ, the keeper of the keys of the Christian ethic, the "pillar and bulwark of the truth." It is greater than any individual, and its life is an infinitely larger life. It supplements and corrects the individual faith by its wider vision and its ampler experience. It is the sphere of the Spirit, for it is through its continuing and expanding life that the Spirit leads men into the full truth of Christ. Less even than prophecy can the mind of Christ be of any merely private interpretation. Nothing less than the Church can suffice for so great a work, and the Church in its lengthening life. Into the Church the Christian is born of the Spirit of God, and in this great Fellowship is heir to all the riches of Christ in all His saints, for the confirmation and perfecting of his sonship.

In the Church as visible and localised he is to find the inspiration and instruction he needs, but he finds as he brings, and to receive he must give. In the human imperfections of his

brethren there is opportunity of spiritual gain; for in necessary service, in the exercise of patience, in mutual forgiveness, in the love that suffers long and is kind, brotherhood is proved and enriched. If a man sees not his brother in one who has the vision, however dim, of the Father, how can he recognise a brother in one who has not the vision? In the Church first, and if anywhere, must he realise the brotherhood without which his sonship is a vain imagination, and the Fatherhood of God the most pathetic of human illusions. And for him and for all his brethren there are means of grace, the fellowship itself, the preaching of the Word, and the sacraments; remembering always that as Coventry Patmore has said: "To some there is revealed a sacrament greater than that of the Real Presence, a sacrament of the Manifest Presence which is, and is more than, the sum of all the sacraments." By all these does the Spirit operate, not magically but spiritually and morally, keeping Christ before the eyes of His people, and witnessing to His presence in their midst. In the Process of Salvation the Church has its great and necessary place.

The Process of Salvation is the development of sonship in all its implications; that sonship which is the fulfilment of the purpose of God when He laid the foundations of the earth and the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. It was for the bringing of many sons unto Glory that the Author of our salvation was made perfect through suffering. The same perfection is to be ours, and except that He suffered the worst that we might know the best, His way is our way, and His life is the norm of ours. The Process of Salvation may seem full of risk, and its demands upon us too great for our infirmity. Who is sufficient for these things? I thank God, through His Son Jesus Christ, He is sufficient. For in the whole process there is the energising of the Holy Spirit, and in the heart of the Christian there is the assurance, given in the Cross of Christ, that the redeeming love of God, Who worketh all things, will perfect that which concerneth him. God is in earnest about our salvation, and in His will is our peace.

B. G. COLLINS.