

needs think that it is legitimate to use similar language of our Lord.

In this lies the likeness. But there was also unlikeness—which, just because it is unlikeness, withdraws itself from our powers of observation and description. When St. Paul is speaking of the Divine indwelling in Christ, he says: 'For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily' (Col 2⁹; cf. 1¹⁹). The Apostle would not have written thus of any child of man. We must leave the phrase as it is, and let it stand for something that we are not able to define further.

I have avoided as much as possible the use of metaphor, and especially of local metaphor. I used it freely when I first wrote, partly following in the track of other writers, and partly because I hoped that in this way my meaning would be more readily apprehended. I do not, however, think that the use of such metaphors is really necessary. The main point is that certain phenomena of which we have evidence are conscious, others subconscious, and others again not conscious at all. I have tried, so far as I could, to make these distinctions serve my purpose.

At the same time I must not be supposed to yield in principle to those of my critics who would bar the use, in matters of psychology, of 'spatial and material metaphors' altogether. It seems to me quite impossible to do this. Whatever might be true of another state of being, it seems to me that in the present state of which we have experience, our souls—ourselves, whatever they may be

—are certainly in space. They are bounded by the body, and we carry them about with us in the body wherever we go; they are affected by changes that happen to the body; apart from this embodied state, anything that we may say about them must be highly speculative, and with such speculations we are not at present concerned.

Neither can I conceive that the picturesque language which has got into general use, about 'the subliminal' and the like, is really to be tabooed. People use it, and it conveys a meaning. It has a meaning for the speaker, and it awakes a corresponding meaning in the person addressed. In other words, it rests on both sides upon real experience; and although it does not exactly coincide with that experience, it must have at least a certain relative rightness in regard to it. It holds good as far as it goes; it is knowledge limited and qualified by conditions that are unknown to us.

This is what I have to say in self-defence. The element of 'self' in this defence is very subordinate. It does not matter to the world at large whether I, as an individual, am right or wrong; but it does matter whether the facts to which I have sought to give expression are right or wrong. And that must be my excuse for returning to the subject and stating my case once more. It is probable that this will be my last word, and I shall in any case look on the course of further discussion with equanimity.

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

JOHN III. 8.

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.—R. V.

1. SUCH were the words of Christ to a man who had regarded the doctrine of the new birth of the soul as an apparent impossibility. To Nicodemus the emphatic assertion, 'Ye must be born again,' came with all the novelty of a voice from another world. He could not understand it, and stood in

startled unbelief before its mystery. Christ met at once the objection to its mystery by pointing him to a similar wonder in the world of nature.

Perhaps a gust of night wind swept round the chamber where Nicodemus sat listening to Jesus, and gave occasion for this condensed parable. But there is sufficient occasion for it in the word 'Spirit,' which, both in the language in which our Lord addressed the ruler of the Sanhedrin and in that which John employed in recording the conversation, as in our own English, means both 'spirit' and 'breath.' This double signification of the word gives rise to the analogies in the text, and it also raises the question as to the

precise meaning of the text. There are two alternatives, one adopted by the Authorized and the Revised Versions, and one which is given in the margin of the latter. We may either read 'the wind bloweth' or 'the Spirit breathes.' 'The Spirit breathes' is legitimate, but does not yield quite so good a sense, since the separation between the material emblem and the power which it was used to describe is complete. At the same time, however, the whole of the phraseology is inspired by the higher meaning.

2. There are three things brought into relation with one another in the text: the wind, the Spirit, and those that are 'born of the Spirit.' From these three things two comparisons are drawn. (1) There is a comparison between the 'wind' and the 'Spirit.' The laws of both are practically unknown; both are unseen; the presence of both is revealed in their effects. (2) There is a comparison between the Spirit and the Spirit-born. The characteristics of the Spirit are to reappear in them, for 'that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.' So we have—

I. The Wind and the Spirit.

II. The Spirit and the Spirit-born.

I.

THE WIND AND THE SPIRIT.

1. The symbol is beautifully chosen, for what more powerful figure of speech is there for the purpose than the wind? The mere word comes with wings of mystery. When the cruder kind of rationalism has jauntily denied us the wonder and worship of the world, when philosophers have deluded us with explanations of the inexplicable, the sighing and the sobbing of the wind awaken long buried instincts to the presence of mysteries too deep for speech.

2. Christ wants Nicodemus to see that, as the wind is a reality and a power, though we do not understand it, so the Spirit of God, mystery as He is to us, can yet be a fact and a force. Strange and inexplicable things do exist. The body lives by breath, by the respiration of the air. The air we breathe is moving ever about the world in breezes; we know almost nothing of the method of their movements, but we do not deny there is such a thing as wind, and we do not doubt its power. These breezes—why do they rise and fall; why do they come now from this quarter, then from that; now soft, again strong; one time in gusts and lulls alternating, like the sobs of a child, another time quiet and steady, like the breathing

of a child that has forgotten his sorrows in sleep? Whence they come and whither they go—who can tell? Such is the Spirit of God.

i. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth.'

1. The wind arrests man's attention, as an unseen agent which seems to be moving with entire freedom. It is fettered by none of those conditions which confine the swiftest bodies that traverse the surface of the earth; it sweeps on as if independent of law, rushing hither and thither, as though obeying its own wayward and momentary impulse. Thus it is an apt figure of a self-determining invisible force; and of a force which is at times of over-mastering power. Sometimes, indeed, its breath is so gentle that only a single leaf or blade of grass will at distant intervals seem to give the faintest token of its action; yet, even thus, it 'bloweth where it listeth.' Sometimes it bursts upon the earth with destructive violence; nothing can resist its onslaught. Thus, too, it 'bloweth where it listeth.' Beyond anything else that strikes upon the senses of man, it is suggestive of free supersensuous power; it is an appropriate symbol of an irruption of the Invisible into the world of sense, of the action, so tender or so imperious, of the Divine and Eternal Spirit upon the human soul.

2. Such is the absolute and self-determining sovereignty of the Spirit, who comes to accomplish the miraculous change which had staggered the faith of Nicodemus. To teach this lesson Jesus personified a dumb, insensate force, and described it as choosing its own pathway. He who is Divine enough to create new life in human souls is clothed with matchless majesty; and, whilst obeying no human mandate on the one side, recognizes no impossibility or finite limitation on the other. This power from God, which makes for human regeneration, can overpass mountains and outleap all restraints imposed upon its action by our dim vision and our blundering unbelief. It is free to pass by for the time, if need be, a stereotyped, self-complacent Rabbi like Nicodemus, and bring a flood of spiritual vitality into a callous, covetous publican or an abandoned profligate. It may withdraw itself from the punctilious Jew, and focus its vitalizing forces into the soul of a benighted Gentile.

(1) We cannot choose the methods or prescribe the times of the Spirit. And this is to teach us a

reverent and implicit dependence upon God's holy will. Counsels of reason and impartial love guide the movements of this sovereignty, and it is in no sense arbitrary though unfathomable. The winds are not fickle, although we often think them so. They have their appointed zones, and, within a large cycle of their own, their effects are stable and unailing. Rain-clouds are carried to and fro, the balm of spring is shed through field and forest, and the year crowned with blessing. Even so does God govern the movements of the Spirit.

(2) We cannot command the Spirit; but we, being free agents also, can strive to put ourselves in line with the Spirit's operation. Seamen cannot raise the wind or direct its course, but they can put themselves in the way of the great regular winds. We can do the same: we can slowly, by mechanical helps, creep into the way of the Spirit; we can set our sails, doing all we think likely to catch and utilize His influences—believing always that the Spirit is more desirous than we are to bring us all to good.

It isn't for men to make channels for God's Spirit as they make channels for the watercourses, and say, 'Flow here, but flow not there.'¹

ii. 'Thou hearest the voice thereof.'

i. The wind asserts its presence by an unmistakable sign. 'Thou hearest the voice thereof.' The eye cannot directly trace its path through the air. It has no rigid, predetermined courses, and may blow upon us from north, south, east, or west. Yet it gives a sign as it passes before us. We catch its murmur amongst the trees, and its quiet music surging through the rocking corn-stalks of the harvest field. We hear it moaning through the forest and splitting the straining boughs. We watch its effect far out at sea, as it whitens the wave-crests or sends the ship with swollen sails swishing through the trough of the deep. The subtle force attests its presence by the sign it stamps upon the face of Nature. We hear the voice thereof and know its message.

2. So with the movement of this life-giving Spirit in human souls. We see the tokens of its power, for they come within the range of our direct experience, although its comings and its goings are veiled in impenetrable dimness. A deepening sorrow for sin shows that He is brooding over the deeps of the soul. We see the inclinations dis-

¹ George Eliot.

engaging themselves from earth and turning heavenwards. We hear the confession of sin from lips that have been sealed with pride. We recognize a strange and sudden desire for better things in those who were once of the earth, earthy. We see a mourner comforted. A new power of spiritual discernment arises within those who were frivolous or sodden. We listen to the psalm of praise from forgiven and liberated captives. A home is transformed and softer voices speak within it.

3. The voice of the Spirit is uttered in freedom, in life, and in power. It gives the completest enfranchisement to the divinity of the human spirit. It is not the voice of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, or council, or conclave. It is not the voice of Pope and Patriarch or Archbishop, or of the house of Bishops. It is not the voice of any formally consecrated institution or assembly. It is possible for all these to speak again and again, and yet no tones of the voice of the Spirit be audible to the spiritual ear. The authority of the voice of the Spirit is not with dignitaries as such, but with spiritual men. Again and again in the history of the world, the arrogance of the authoritative institution has been passed by, and upon humble communities of spiritual men and women the Spirit of God has descended, and through their lips men have heard the 'voice of the Spirit.'

iii. 'But knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth.'

i. We are supposed to know far more about the origin and the progress of the winds than men knew when this ruler of the Jews visited Jesus by night. We have our diagrams of cyclones, our theories of trade winds, our newspaper weather-charts, our forecasts. But the laws determining the movements of the atmosphere lend themselves less readily to scientific handling and verification than the laws which have been formulated in other branches of physics. There is here, as elsewhere, a large residuum of unexplained mystery. The Lord's similitude is valid still.

2. The whence and the whither of the Spirit's work amongst men is no less beyond human power to trace. When does the Spirit first begin to work in the heart of a child? Whither is He directing the man who receives His renewing virtues? Towards what activities does He lead forth those who surrender themselves to His sovereign will? For what after-destiny is He making ready those into

whose soul He comes? To answer such questions would be to empty eternity, past and to be, of those unutterable things which God has kept back from us. Mystery invests the methods and the issues of His sacred work.

In speaking of the human body says one: 'Its power to resist the inroads of disease is said to be in proportion to the opsonic quality of the blood, by which the healthy corpuscles are enabled to kill and devour the dreaded and deadly germs that attack the healthiest frame. Experiments have shown that without this quality or substance the healthy cells are powerless against their enemies. These opsonics have a name, but have not yielded themselves to analysis. It is an unseen power whose presence is only known by its action. We are told "no one has seen these opsonics; the microscope does not reveal them. We only know them by their work." The indwelling Spirit, the Healer, is the opsonic of the soul destroying all that is harmful, and bestowing health, purity and power.'¹

II.

THE SPIRIT AND THE SPIRIT-BORN.

When our Lord has thus under the symbol of the wind pointed to the freedom and mysteriousness of the Spirit, He adds, 'So is every one that is born of the Spirit.' It is a familiar idea that the Christian life is to be one of Christ-likeness; but even though the law of the higher order of life which Jesus laid down with such clearness and emphasis expresses the truth, it has not been generally recognized that the spiritual man is to resemble the Spirit. The characteristics of the Spirit reappear in the life of every one that is born of the Spirit. Let us consider some of these characteristics.

I. *Freedom.*—The spiritual man is made free with the freedom of the Spirit of the inviolate God. As the Divine Spirit has freedom in Himself, so has He given to the spiritual man to have freedom in Himself through the Holy Spirit that dwells within him.

(1) This true freedom is achieved by the sacrifice of our own will and the acceptance of God's will. When the soul truly accepts God's will its own will dies, and then it enters into the only freedom of which the human being made in the image of God is capable. It is when we have given ourselves up to the obedience of the Son entirely and utterly that we enter the estate of liberty. In so far as we enter it we are unconscious of any conflict, of any jar. We love the

¹ Nevill Roberts, *Before the Foundations*.

law, we hear no more those discords which are God's trumpets to summon the sleeping or rebellious human will. That will is awake and working harmoniously with the good and acceptable and perfect will.

(2) But in order freely to understand the sweep and the greatness of this perfect law of liberty, we must remember that the new life is implanted in us just in order that we may suppress, and, if need be, cast out and exorcise, that lower 'listing,' which is always ignoble and sometimes animal. For this freedom will bring with it the necessity for continual warfare against all that would limit and restrain it—namely, the passions and desires and inclinations of our baser self. These are, as it were, deposed by the entrance of the new life. But it is a dangerous thing to keep dethroned and discrowned tyrants alive, and the best thing is to behead them, as well as to cast them from their throne. 'If ye, through the Spirit, do put to death the deeds' and inclinations and wills 'of the flesh, ye shall live'; and if you do not, they will live and will kill you. So the freedom of the new life is a militant freedom, and we have to fight to maintain it.

Burke said about the political realm that 'the price of liberty is eternal vigilance.' So we say about the new life of the Christian man—he is free only on condition that he keeps well under hatches the old tyrants, who are ever plotting and struggling to have dominion again.²

2. *Manifestation.*—The spiritual man is endowed with a power of manifestation and of influence. 'A holy life is a voice.' It reveals its presence in the world. Men take knowledge of the Spirit-born. They cannot be hid. They are 'the salt of the earth' and 'the light of the world.' As the flower reveals itself by its fragrance, so the life that is quickened by the Spirit of God reveals itself by its holy influences. It appeals to the lives of others; it 'speaks' to them, awakening such feelings and emotions as are quickened by the Holy Spirit.

(1) The Christian life has in every case an unmistakable quality which is recognizable. It is apparent to all. Let us be sure that there is such a thing, definite and recognizable, as personal Christianity. Let us be sure that the Christian type of character is a type by itself, and that to follow Christ is a life like no other. As society at large becomes more and more Christianized it

² Alexander Maclaren.

may be increasingly difficult to feel this. Nevertheless it is true; and the saintly life when we see it is a proof of it. If we find it a thing hard to realize in our own case, let us remember what is alone the secret of it. It is the Spirit that brings it about; and what cannot His agency effect? He has energies and influences, and modes of sanctifying operation at command that may be trusted to make all things new. He can melt and fuse and refine, and, when He has tried the nature, bring it forth like gold.

(2) Christians should be in the world, as the very breath of life amidst stagnation. When the Christian Church first sprang into being it did come into that corrupt, pestilential marsh of ancient heathenism with healing on its wings, and like fresh air from the pure hills into some fever-stricken district. Wherever there has been a new outburst in the experience of individuals and of churches, of that Divine life, there has come, and the world has felt that there has come, a new force that breathes over the dry bones, and they live.

The Church has sometimes appeared to falter and fail. The city that should be set on a hill, the joy of the whole earth, has been in a low place, in a valley full of ditches, and yet it has sent out streams of regeneration over the waste land, and confounded the unbelievers who imagined that its work was done. An early Christian poet had a vision that all the cities of the earth should offer the Lord, when He comes to judge, the relics of the martyrs who slept in them, and not one city in all the world would fail in the gift.¹

3. *Mysteriousness*.—The new life has a means of manifestation which all Christian people are bound to exemplify. But our Lord draws a broad distinction between that which can be manifested and that which cannot. We can show the leaves and the fruits; the roots are covered.

(1) It cannot be said, with any truth, of ordinary characters, that there is any mystery about them, or that they have an unseen origin; on the contrary, we know everything about them. Take an ordinary man of the world—what he thinks and what he does. His whole standard of duty is taken from the society in which he lives. He does, in the way of duty, what is generally considered proper and becoming among those with whom his lot is thrown. He reflects established opinion on such points. His aims and objects in life, again, are taken from the world around him, and from its dictation. His motives all come from a visible quarter. It

¹ W. Robertson Nicoll, *Sunday Evening*, 245.

would be absurd to say that there is any mystery in such a character as this; it is formed from a known external influence—the influence of social opinion and the voice of the world.

(2) But there is a certain character and disposition of mind of which it is true to say, 'Thou knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth.' The New Testament describes, in various parts, what this spiritual character is, its expressions and manifestations; but there is one gift which sums up all the features of it—the gift of love or charity. Without being able to express accurately all we mean by love, we recognize it when we meet it. There are those who stand out from among the crowd, with an impress upon them which bespeaks a heavenly birth. Their criterion of what is valuable, and to be sought after, is different from that of others. They do not press forward for the prizes of this world; they stand apart from the struggle in which common minds are absorbed. But they do this without spiritual pride, they think little of themselves and much of others, and they have a love of their brethren, and of all whom God has made after his own image. They have these and other great common characteristics, though they have differences of natural disposition; and exhibit the action of Divine grace, each in the form in which his natural character is adapted to show it. When we see one possessed of this spirit we ask ourselves, How has the person become possessed of it?

(3) The origin of this new life is 'hid with Christ in God.' But a man may know that he has been born though he is not able to recall, as no man can recall, the circumstances of his birth. Life is the great evidence of birth, natural or spiritual. We may desire to know the time and place of birth for some other reason, but certainly not for this, to make sure we have been born. Of that there is sufficient evidence in the fact of our being alive. And spiritual life quite as certainly implies spiritual birth. They who manifest this new life have indeed been 'born of the Spirit.'

A labouring man utterly regardless of religion happening to be on a visit to where Evan Roberts was preaching at the time of the Welsh revival, came under his influence, and returned home to a small town in South Wales a changed man. A friend asking what had come over him, he, who had not opened a Bible for years, replied, 'Well, it's like this—'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and

whither it goeth." For I now feel that as I was bound before, I am now free as the wind; you say yourself you perceive good effects of something on me, just as we see the beneficial effects of the wind everywhere; and how it exactly happened, I must confess, I could not explain to you except to say that God did it.'

It is now some years since the above happened, and the man has all along been and is still the same free, good man, and now occupies a worthy and responsible position in the town.¹

¹ Donald M. Henry.

Eberhard Nestle.

By J. RENDEL HARRIS, M.A., LITT.D., LL.D., HON. FELLOW OF CLARE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

THERE is, probably, no one in the great world of German theological scholarship whose removal could have created such a blank in England as has been caused by the recent death of Dr. Nestle, of Maulbronn. To the writer of the present lines, who has been in close and constant correspondence with him for over thirty years, the loss is one that appears irreparable; and there are many others to whom the deprivation will be almost as acute. Frankly, I do not like writing an obituary notice; it would be my own wish to slip away as unobserved as possible, and what one wishes for one's friend, richer in the grace of modesty than oneself, should be something like what one desires for one's self. At the same time I do not feel free to say nothing, because my sense of vacancy is shared by a wide circle of those who prized the man's acquaintance, admired his gifts, recognized the scholarship, linked to Teutonic simplicity and sincerity (which made it as easy for him to disagree with you as it would have been to another man to praise you), and the phenomenal, almost magical accuracy with which he presented the results of his work and exposed the defects of those whom he criticized, so that he might easily and without a rival have been the patron saint of proof-reading and manuscript collation. Add to this that whatever he was and had was at the service of those whom he admitted to the inner circle of his friendship. So I write a few lines in his memory, because I believe I am, in the world of letters, 'the greatest loser of all that ever had a share in his life.' I know there are some who will contest the claim, but my acquaintance goes back to the year 1883, which is long before some well-known scholars in Great Britain had made his acquaintance, and had realized what a choice spirit he was, how valuable was his co-operation, and how sound his judgment. At the date

mentioned he was about thirty-two years of age, and I was a few months his junior: he was the trained and expert scholar, just beginning to make his mark in the critical history of the New Testament, and I was an untrained amateur, who had blundered into fields of investigation for which I had never qualified, and was trying to solve old problems by new methods, as has been the case ever since. What vistas of incompetence he could open up before an unfortunate tyro; and, in doing so, he was as gracious as he was wise.

I believe the first thing that passed from Nestle to myself was a post-card, an inquiry of some sort with regard to work upon which I was engaged. A post-card in correspondence is a mustard-seed with evangelical virility; it soon dilated and expanded and multiplied. I think I have lost that first post-card, though I have still with me many illuminating letters from that period, in which he offered me brotherly help and information, giving freely where I had little, in the shape of accumulated knowledge, to offer in return. And then, just at the last, our intercourse ended with a post-card again; it lies before me; I think I will venture to print it.

The work by which he is best known, and will be long remembered, is his edition of the Greek New Testament, in its first form for the Stuttgart Bible Society, and then, later on, at the suggestion of some leading English scholars, for the British and Foreign Bible Society. Quite recently, as I was driving through a town in the heart of Asia Minor (I think it was the ancient Philomelium, from which the church of the place once sent to Smyrna for details of Polycarp's martyrdom), I passed a colporteur who was engaged in the arduous and often thankless task of the circulation of the Scriptures. I stopped the carriage and bought from him a Romaic Greek Testament and