

scarcely knew what keeping the commandments meant. Was not the sum of the commandments, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself?" (See the lesson for June 1.) But how could he say that he was loving his neighbour as himself when he rolled in wealth, while all around him were the poor and the needy? Jesus had not tried him yet with the greater table of the law. Alas! he failed utterly when tested by the lesser and easier.

Thus Jesus led him to see that it was *impossible for him* to inherit eternal life by keeping the commandments. He who thinks so, knows not what it means. The selling of his goods was simply the test made use of. If he had done so, still there was the "Come, follow me." Not even by selling all that we have, but by following Jesus,—by the obedience of faith, by trust as of a little child,—that is the way to inherit eternal life.

Exposition of the First Epistle of St. John.

BY PROFESSOR RICHARD ROTHE, D.D.

CHAPTER II. 3-5.

"And hereby know we that we have known Him, if we conscientiously keep His commandments. He that saith, I have known Him, and keepeth not His commandments conscientiously, is a liar, and the truth is not in him: but whoso keepeth His word conscientiously, in him verily hath love to God been perfected. Hereby know we that we are in Him."

Ver. 3. From this point John starts his polemic against the *morally empty* Christianity of that age. The verse we are now considering, which joins on to what precedes in a very loose manner, is connected in thought with the beginning of ver. 1, and all that lies between is only an intervening thought. My object, says John, in writing this is that ye may not sin; for to be a Christian has its truth, and therewith also the infallible sign whereby it may be known, only in our acting in accordance with duty. A piety that is not full of ethical content is no Christian piety. *To have known Him* is a description of the real acceptance of Christ through true faith, and consequently of belonging to Him,—in other words, of true Christianity as a whole. According to Scripture, *knowing* has a pregnant signification, *loving* being distinctly included. That John expresses this by "knowing," is closely connected with the following fact: John has no notion whatever that a man could know Christ, could have a right idea and conception of Him, without believing in Him and loving Him. Whenever he sees want of love or hostility to Him, it is natural for him to take for granted that here a misconception of Christ is also at work. To every genuine Christian also it seems psychologically impossible that one should really know this Christ and yet turn away from Him. Hence the warmest Christian is gentlest in his judgment of that in the world which seems enmity against Christ. More especially he whose knowledge of Christ is very distinctly knowledge of Him in His ethical quality, is convinced that all real knowledge of Christ necessarily has surrender to Him as its consequence. Moreover, the Christian is daily experiencing in regard to himself that he does not yet know the Saviour perfectly, and that His image must con-

tinually be rendered clear to him. Accordingly, it is not difficult for him to believe that one may altogether misjudge Christ.

Ver. 4. What was said in ver. 3 is more emphatically repeated in negative form and applied distinctly to the mere lip-Christians, the reality of their Christianity being thereby expressly denied. It is an impossibility to know and love Christ, and yet at the same time refuse obedience to His commandments. Such behaviour John characterizes as an audacious falsehood. He casts the utmost infamy upon it, and thereby confirms the universal human judgment, that nothing raises such horror as hypocritical Christianity. John looks upon such conduct as a token of the most complete loss of all inner subjective truth in man. Whoever is capable of such a lie must have reasoned himself into it, and must therewith have utterly destroyed the last roots of inner truthfulness. One may still have ever so many false grounds of comfort:—nothing is more dangerous than to make a pillow of the grace of God.

Ver. 5. The thought that has just been expressed in negative form John now, in order to lend it intensity, expresses also positively. At the same time, however, the truth of the thought, that the keeping of the Saviour's commandments is the true token of belonging to Him, is also established. The *keeping* of the word is here a keeping with careful heedfulness and conscientious fidelity. Only in him who conscientiously labours at keeping the word of the Lord faithfully is there present that bent of life with which God can enter into fellowship, communicate Himself to man, and accept man's surrender to Him. Whoever keeps the word of the Saviour conscientiously, in him is love to God actually realized. This love to God,

however (for it was the literal soul of the life of the Redeemer, John xv. 10), is the peculiar token of fellowship with the Redeemer. That love to God (what is meant here is not God's love to men) is described in such a case as a perfect love (love that has been perfected), involves no difficulty, for the simple reason that the proposition is purely hypothetical. We must, of course, also take the "keeping" in all its stringency. John knows right well that the case supposed here never becomes full reality. "*Hereby*," *i.e.* from the actual realization of love to God. "*That we are in Him*" is equivalent to "that we have known Him" (ver. 3); for a real knowledge of Christ brings directly with

it fellowship with Him, and is not even possible without it. Real love to God is the token of real fellowship with the Saviour, because love to God was and is the essential content of the Saviour's whole being and existence. He who loves God is hereby one with the Saviour, whose whole being is a loving of the Father (John xiv. 21, 23, 24, xv. 10, viii. 29). This being in Christ is not, as many expositors think, mere moral oneness with Him, for such a oneness does not even exist; it is at the same time essentially a real unity of the one spirit with the other. Wherever there is an actually sanctified ethical being, there there is of necessity a real fellowship with God.

"J."

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II.

And now let us just consider one or two other assertions with respect to soul and spirit which we shall find in the Bible. We have the expression "living soul," but I do not recollect that we ever have the expression "living spirit." Spirit in relation to life is called, not "living," but "quickening,"—that is, not living, but "live-making." I will refer to one somewhat remarkable passage in the eighth chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, where it is said, "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is"—is what? What is the opposite of "dead"? Surely "living," or "alive." But the word is not "the spirit is *alive*," but "the spirit is *life* because of righteousness." It was an energy underlying, as it were, the manifestations of even life itself. Again, when that in man which is not put an end to by death is spoken of, it is not, I think, called "soul," but "spirit." Stephen said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" and in the Epistle to the Hebrews we have the expression, "Ye are come unto the spirits of just men made perfect," or rather perhaps "of just men finished,"—who had completed their course. It appears then that there are certain indications in Scripture of a sort of energy, if I may so speak, lying deeper down than even the manifestations of life, on which the identity of the man, and his existence, and the continuance of his existence, depend. Now you see that such a supposition as that is free from the two difficulties that I have mentioned with respect to the two first theories that I brought before you: the materialistic theory and what I called the psychic theory. It represents the actions of the living body as the result

of an energy, if I may so speak, an energy which is individualized; and the processes of life, thinking included, as a result of the interaction between this fundamental individualized energy and the organism. It is free also from the difficulties attending what I called the psychic theory, because if thinking is a process of life, and life depends upon the interaction of this individualized energy,—to use a term to express a perhaps somewhat vague idea and an organism,—then we can understand that thinking, in order to be continued in its normal healthy action, requires the interaction of these two things.

Now the supposition that our individual being depends upon something lying even deeper down than thought itself enables us to understand—I was wrong, perhaps, in saying to understand, but at any rate to conceive—how it might be that our individual selves might go on in another stage of existence, notwithstanding that our present bodies were utterly destroyed and went to corruption. We frequently hear of the immortality of the soul as if it were—which I do not think it is—a part of the Christian faith. You must not, when I say this, you must not confound two totally different things—the immortality of the soul and a future life. That there is to be a future life is beyond all question the doctrine of Scripture, but the supposition that the soul is innately immortal is merely a philosophical hypothesis to account, so to speak, for a future life; and that hypothesis may be an incorrect hypothesis, and I am disposed to think that it is incorrect to a very considerable extent. In Scripture the doctrine of a resurrection is most clearly laid down, and it is most clearly