

an oral narrative. My own inclination is towards either the first or the third of these alternatives. His fundamental account in vv.^{19, 20} we take to be simply an account of the Church Rite, as it was known to him. We never escape from the overmastering influence of this Rite: it affects every writer in one way or another.

Luke's second account is evidently the one which he regarded as fundamental. The other account was intended as subsidiary, and was mutilated to avoid repeating anything that was given in the fundamental account; and yet it was authoritative to Luke in the highest degree.

We have seen why it was so authoritative to him that he could not pass it by; but there rises another question. If it was so authoritative, why did he make it subsidiary, and mutilate it? and if it was subsidiary, why did he place the subsidiary and incomplete account first, and the fundamental account second? To do that was to obscure the

sequence and to invite misapprehension. Such was the result that followed. Luke's narrative has been misunderstood, tampered with, and mutilated repeatedly in subsequent times, because his method was misunderstood. When we place ourselves at the proper point of view, everything becomes quite simple; and we see that the subsidiary account had to come first, because its opening words are introductory to the incident as a whole; they could not possibly be placed after vv.^{19, 20}. Mark and Matthew require an introductory phrase to place their narrative of the ceremony in the context, 'And as they were eating, he took bread.' Luke, in his fundamental account, simply says, 'And he took bread,' because the preceding words stated the situation sufficiently. After the ceremony proper Matthew and Mark add a verse, which Luke keeps in the subsidiary account, because it was closely parallel to a sentence in it, which had not been taken into the Church order of the ceremony.

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF REVELATION.

THE HEAVENLY CITY.

ITS OUTCASTS AND ITS INHABITANTS.

REVELATION XXI. 27.

'And there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie: but only they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.'—R.V.

THE ideal city which St. John depicts is not heaven, except in so far as heaven is already latent in the earth and shall finally be realized in it. The indications of the path of interpretation are clear. The ideal city is the Holy Jerusalem, and stands in contrast to the great city Babylon. Whether we take them separately, or oppose them to one another, their meaning is obvious. It is certainly not heaven and hell that they represent, but rather the forces and dominions upon earth of good and evil. Jerusalem represents here, as it does in ancient prophecy—upon which the pictures of this book are almost entirely based—the people of God upon earth, in their holy character and their organized force. If there were any doubt of

this, the added picture of 'the Bride, the Lamb's wife,' would remove all uncertainty. For, whether we turn to the Old Testament or the New, the metaphor is consistently applied to the covenant people of God. The ideal city, therefore, represents the Church of Christ in its ideal meaning and its ideal attainment. It is not a 'jeweller's shop,' as some have called it in supercilious and ignorant scorn. It is a symbolic picture of the spiritual power and grandeur which God has destined for the earth.¹

It is the glorified Church that is here spoken of, and hence the text may be said to refer to heaven, for at the present moment the nucleus of the glorified Church is in heaven, and from heaven every defiled thing must be shut out. Hence, too, it may refer to the kingdom of the millennial age, when the saints will reign with Christ upon the earth for a thousand years, when even upon this battlefield our conquering Leader shall be crowned with victory, and where His blood was shed His throne shall be set up, for among the sons of men shall He triumph, even among those that spat in His face. The text may also be read as including the eternal world of future bliss, for of that glorious, endless, undefiled inheritance the

¹ J. Thomas, *The Ideal City*, 4.

Church glorified will be the possessor, but out of her shall long before have been gathered all things that offend, and them that do iniquity.¹

I.

ITS OUTCASTS.

I. The citizens of the ideal city are defined by moral and spiritual characteristics: 'There shall not enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.' There is nothing but moral disability that excludes from the citizenship of this city; there is nothing but moral power that can entitle to its privileges. It is not the wise and the prudent, the opulent and the mighty, that have a right to the seats of the blessed in the city of Life. The gates are open only to those that have become again as little children, that have opened their hearts without reserve to the glory of the Father, and have been cleansed from all the impurity of the old life.

I. *Anything unclean.* The reference is to the blemish that detracts from perfect soundness, to the defiling characteristics that distinguish the unclean from the clean, the common from the holy. This moral unsoundness is the elementary fact in the history and progress of sin, and a universal fact in human experience. Whatever controversies may be raised concerning total and partial depravity in the beginning of human life, the universal sweep of moral unsoundness in our race is patent enough to every unprejudiced observer. 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity' may be boldly taken as a generalization, and applied to every member of the human family. The fountain of our mother-humanity from which we all spring is tainted with impurity, and no perfection can issue from it. We are all unclean. The defilement of moral unsoundness is born with us.

In the margin the translation given is—'anything that is common.' A still more accurate, though startling, translation would have been—'anything that is *vulgar*.' But our translators may well have shrunk from using this word, because it would convey to many people a wholly wrong impression. What would have been the conception of heaven in some minds if it had been represented on scriptural authority as a place from which all that is vulgar is shut out: what a society-heaven to those who identify vulgarity with

hard hands and workman's clothes! Nevertheless, there stands the word *κοινὸν*, 'vulgar': and so perplexing did it seem to some of the later transcribers of the Greek Testament MSS, that they altered it into *κοινοῦν*, 'everything that defileth,' and in this form it appears in our Authorized Version; and we have to ask, What did St. John mean when in his vision of the heavenly city he said that everything *vulgar* should be shut out?

In the vision of St. John the vulgar that is shut out from the city of heaven is not a nation, nor a class, nor a set; it is a character. It is the egotistic element. The vulgar person in any rank, from the nobleman to the labourer, is one whose whole interests centre on himself, who is unconscious of the feelings of others, lacking all the delicate sympathies and sensibilities of the gentler nature. One who pushes and tramples, and not only that, but one who is simply obtuse and callous, has in him the root of vulgarity. And this dulness of perception is met with equally in all ranks. Now this egotism, which we recognize as the root of vulgarity, is precisely what we must lay aside on entering God's presence. He giveth grace to the humble; to follow Christ it is needful to deny or suppress oneself; it is the meek and the modest that alone can realize God's presence. All purse-proud, or intellect-proud, or success-proud characters—in fact, all egotisms are alike condemned by our instinct as vulgar, and by our conscience as incapable of entering into the kingdom of God.²

The essence of all vulgarity lies in want of sensation. Simple and innocent vulgarity is merely an untrained and undeveloped bluntness of mind; but in true inbred vulgarity there is a dreadful callousness, which in extremity becomes capable of every sort of bestial habit and crime, without fear, without pleasure, without horror, and without pity. It is in the blunt hand and the dead heart, in the diseased habit, in the hardened conscience, that men become vulgar; they are for ever vulgar precisely in proportion as they are incapable of sympathy,—of quick understanding,—of all that, in deep insistence on the common but most accurate term, may be called the 'tact' or 'touch-faculty' of body and soul: the tact which the Mimosa has in trees, which the pure woman has above all creatures: fineness and fulness of sensation—beyond reason; the guide and sanctifier of reason itself. Reason can but determine what is true; it is the God-given passion of humanity which alone can recognize what God has made good.

This is the chief vulgarity, that of character, the dull unconscious egotism; but there is also a vulgarity of intellect.

² J. M. Wilson, *Sermons Preached in Clifton College Chapel*, 2nd ser., 28.

¹ C. H. Spurgeon, *The Everlasting Gospel*, 390.

There are minds which are so absorbed in personalities and trifles as never to rise to human interests in literature or politics, or the life of the home circle; and that without possessing the unlettered and often courteous dignity of the peasant. Ignorance is not vulgarity; the vulgarity lies in a prostitution of education to trivialities, or worse, which pastures on the criminal, or sporting, or society, or other gossip of the day. We feel the incompatibility of such a mind with all the higher life. This sort of vulgarity also excludes itself from the heavenly city. It is 'whatsoever things are true . . . honourable, just, pure, lovely, and of good report'; it is these, and thoughts of these, that fit our minds for the city of the heavens.

And the vulgarity of character and of intellect lead on by a dreadful law to the worst of all its manifestations, which is spoken of as uncleanness. The utter egotism, the want of respect and sympathy for others, the absorption in self-gratification, kept in check by no thought of what is pure and lovely and divine in others or ourselves, finds here its crowning manifestation, and assuredly this blots out, like some dense fumes, the light of the presence of God, and debases the whole nature.¹

2. *He that maketh an abomination.* The next stage in the development of evil is that of moral offensiveness. Moral 'uncleanness' rapidly becomes moral 'abomination.' In spite of the sinfulness of human nature, sin at a certain stage becomes offensive to the moral sense of the bulk of the people. There is an early point in the career of sin where the personal consciousness of moral obliquity far outweighs its moral offensiveness to others. The external relations of sin have not developed to the point of its becoming an abomination to men, though it is already an abomination to the all-holy God. But the road from 'uncleanness' to 'abomination' is an open way. The sphere is one, and the path is continuous.²

You will observe, the seer is not speaking of persons, but of things. One might wonder at first sight why he does not from the outset use the masculine form. Why does he not say, 'There shall in no wise enter into it any man that worketh abomination'? In the case of the second clause, the Revised Version has inserted the personal element, 'he that worketh a lie.' Yet I have no hesitation in saying that in so doing it has weakened, and not strengthened, the original sense. The writer is speaking primarily and mainly, not of actors, but of the influence of their acts. Indeed, it is a great blessing for the human race that it should be so. Personal salvation would be impossible except on the supposition that a man shall be enrolled in the membership of the kingdom while yet he is in a state of uncleanness. This has always been regarded as the pith and marrow of the evangelical doctrine. It is as philosophical as it is orthodox,

¹ J. Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies*, § 28.

² J. Thomas, *The Ideal City*, 209.

and it is as comforting as it is philosophical. The man who would enter the kingdom of Christ must, according to St. Paul, enter by faith alone. He must not wait until he is pure. He must be content to come with the *intention* of purity, with the desire to be what he is not. He must be allowed to put his foot on the sacred threshold 'just as he is, without one plea.' He must be accepted for an aspiration. If he would have his name written in the book of life, it must be written there in *advance* of his life. He must be justified before he is sanctified—pronounced fit for the kingdom in the light of days to come. The only hope for him is his permission to survive, his permission to enter within the gates of gold, while yet his own life has not transcended the brass.³

3. *He that maketh a lie.* The final stage of evil is the complete perversion of the moral judgment. 'Maketh, or worketh, a lie.' In the twenty-second chapter we find the fuller phrase, 'Loveth and maketh a lie.' Sin, having grown into an abomination, acts upon the inner life of the sinner no less powerfully than it does on the moral sense of the beholders. Its external offensiveness goes hand in hand with internal destructiveness, until the life becomes perverted into fossilized evil, and its every activity becomes a living lie. At last evil is loved as good, and good as evil.⁴

Why does he not say 'telleth a lie'? Why does he keep the impersonal form, as if he were speaking of the working of a machine? It is because he is not thinking of a *spoken* lie. He is thinking of what we call the principle of make-believe. He is contemplating the efforts of men to make the appearance pass for the reality, to give a gloss to circumstances, to cause things to seem what they are not, and not to seem what they are. And he declares that the result of these attempts is ever the same—evanescence. He maintains that nothing which is unreal can be permanent, that no sham can live, that everything false is, by its very nature, doomed to perish.⁵

In Plato's ideal state, while lying on part of the private citizens is condemned, it is allowed to magistrates. As Rendel Harris says, it is a reserved art, practised by the guardians of the community upon the rank and file, presumably for their good. The rulers have reserved rights in untruthfulness. 'The lying,' he continues, 'which Plato inculcated was not of the pitiful degraded kind which Liguori patronizes and which Cardinal Newman was so hard put to it to defend. But whatever was covered by the Platonic doctrine, the Christian Church generally repudiated

³ G. Matheson, *Sidelights from Patmos*, 327.

⁴ J. Thomas, *The Ideal City*, 210.

⁵ G. Matheson, *Ibid.* 331.

it, and it is expressly repudiated in the Apocalyptic sketch of the New City.¹

A gentleman passing through the railroad train spoke to a lady and her little son.

'How old are you, my little man?' asked the gentleman.

'Ma,' asked the little boy, 'is he a conductor?'

'No,' said the mother.

'Then I am eight,' answered the boy.²

II. Why are the unclean, the abominable, and the untruthful outcasts from the city of God? There are three good reasons:

1. It is the decree of God. Shall the serpent leave his horrid trail upon the heavenly Eden, twice made of the Lord? God forbid! The purity of a world twice made, the perfection of the Church of the regenerate, the majesty of the presence of God, all demand that every sinful thing should be excluded. All heaven and heavenly things cry, 'Write the decree and make it sure, there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth.' Grave it as in eternal brass, and let omnipotence go with the decree to execute it with the utmost rigour, for it would be horrible indeed if a second time evil should destroy the work of God. Into the Church of the firstborn above the breath of iniquity must not enter. It cannot be that the work which cost the Redeemer's blood should yet be defiled. The eternal purpose of the Father, and the love of the Spirit, forbid that the Lord's own perfected Church should be invaded by any unholy thing.³

2. It is due to the nature of the inhabitants of the city. What is their nature?

1. They are in union with God. When Paul speaks of the Church as the Bride of the Lord Jesus Christ, he emphasizes the mystery of the unity by which the Church becomes, as it were, the other self of the Lord, so that it dwells in the full glow of His love, and receives the gracious fulness of His life. He becomes the head of the Church, and the living fount of all its grace and power. So that the figure of the 'Bride' as conceived in the New Testament is one of loving dependence and living unity. She finds her joy, her fulness, her splendour, her very life, in Him for whom she is adorned. She is a very part of His life, and finds her true glory in losing herself in Him.

¹ J. Rendel Harris, *Sidelights on New Testament Research*, 231.

² W. Armstrong, *Five-Minute Sermons to Children*, 99.

³ C. H. Spurgeon, *The Everlasting Gospel*, 393.

2. They live in accordance with the Divine motives and ideals. God's great task is to make the city the Bride of the Lamb, and to adorn her with the graces of her Lord. Imagine for a moment that the decree of our text were reversed or suspended, and that it were allowed that a few unregenerate men and women should enter into the glorified Church of God. Suppose, in addition, that those few should be of the gentler sort of sinners, not those who would profanely blaspheme the name of God, nor openly break the Sabbath, but a few who are indifferent to God's glory, and cold and formal in His praise. How could heaven bear with these? Those who are neither cold nor hot are sickening both to Christ and to His people, and must they endure the nausea of their society?

3. Their life is a mirror of the life of God. How high the destiny, how marvellous the ideal, to fill out the rounded wonder of the life of God, to make music for the heart and love of the Eternal! True, there is a sense in which God is absolute, and requires and can have no complement. But there is another sense in which He completes Himself in His creatures. Why else was the eternal solitude ever broken, and the myriad beauties of the universe poured forth from the infinite life? It must have been because God realized Himself in His creation, and found there complete satisfaction for His love. But it is in the kingdom of love among men that He realizes Himself in the grandest proportions of love. There, among all the wonders of the world, the glory of the Infinite is most perfectly mirrored. Such must the ideal city be.

3. It is due to the nature of the persons excluded. The reason why wicked men cannot be happy is not alone because God will not let rebellion and peace dwell together, but because they will not let themselves be happy. The sea cannot rest because it is the sea, and the sinner cannot be quiet because he is a sinner. If they were admitted into the place called heaven, they would not be partakers of the state of heaven, and it is the state of mind and character which is, after all, the essence of the joy. To be in a heavenly place and not in a heavenly condition would be worse than hell, if worse can be. What are songs to a sad heart? Such would heaven be to an unrenewed mind. The element of glory would destroy rather than bless an unrenewed mind.

It was about thirty years ago, or more, when stage-coaches still ran, that an excellent old clergyman, who had a keen observation of the world, was travelling on the top of the coach from Norwich to London. It was a cold winter night, and the coachman, as he drove his horses over Newmarket Heath, poured forth such a volley of oaths and foul language as to shock all the passengers. The old clergyman, who was sitting close to him, said nothing, but fixed his piercing blue eyes upon him with a look of extreme wonder and astonishment. At last the coachman became uneasy, and turning round to him said, 'What makes you look at me, sir, in that way?' The clergyman said, still with his eye fixed on him, 'I cannot imagine what you will do in heaven? There are no horses or coaches, or saddles or bridles, or public-houses in heaven. There will be no one to swear at or to whom you can use bad language. I cannot think what you will do when you get to heaven.'¹

A little girl, who knew a great many bad and wicked children, asked, 'Mother, do all children go to heaven when they die?' 'Yes, my daughter,' was the answer. A look of perplexed inquiry came into her eyes as she repeated, 'All of them?' When her mother again answered, 'Yes,' she drew a deep sigh, and sympathetically whispered, 'Poor Dad!'²

II.

ITS INHABITANTS.

I. Their names are written in a book. To live in a book is one of the deepest desires of men. There are few who have not wished to have an influence on earth extending beyond the range of their earthly life. To have something that will survive me, something that will speak of me when I have gone, something that will make me a power in the world after I have passed away, is an ambition which, in some form or other, has been felt by all. Various have been the forms it has taken. Some have sought it by winning love, some by leaving a mass of money, some by rearing a monument of art, some by bequeathing the creations of music. But even those who would live by art, by sculpture, by music, expect to have their name preserved through the medium of a *book*. It is in no case by our own book that we mainly hope to live. Our ambition is to have our names written in some *other* book, to be quoted as an authority, to be referred to as an illustration. Even to write one's name in a visitors' book has a kind of symbolic pleasure; it suggests the transmission of fame. Even to appear in the fleeting columns of the newspaper gives a glow of satisfaction; it conveys the impression of publicity.

¹ Dean Stanley in *Good Words*, 1861.

² W. Armstrong, *Five-Minute Sermons to Children*, 99.

But to have the name written in a real book, a living book, a book that *will* live, to appear in pages that are destined to last for centuries, to obtain honourable mention in a record that will endure as long as the language of your country—this is a goal of aspiration which any man might be proud to win.³

2. It is the book of life. The 'book of life' is that great volume in which the eternal and inexorable conditions of life are written. It is not, as some have supposed, an arbitrary catalogue of names, selected without a moral basis from the multitudes of men, to which eternal life is attached by an omnipotent *fiat*. Its fundamental character is not more elective than it is moral and spiritual. It is the awful and eternal focus of power out of which the currents of life perennially flow. It is the great God's charter of life based upon God's own nature, upon eternal truth and righteousness. The 'book of life' is the record and forecast of victorious moral grandeur, of the vast achievement of God-given power in the hearts of men. It is the roll of heroes, the volume of the mighty, the record of the pure, the list of the strong sons of God.⁴

Six hundred and thirty years before the probable date of the writing of this 'Book of the Revelation,' Daniel spoke of a book kept by God, and of persons whose names are written therein—'At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, *every one that shall be found written in the book* (Dn 12¹). Writing to the Philippians, St. Paul speaks of this book: 'I entreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow-labourers, *whose names are in the book of life*' (Phil 4³). And in He 12²³ he mentions 'the general assembly and church of the firstborn, *which are written* (margin *enrolled*) *in heaven*.' Three times in the Revelation of St. John we read of this book—in Rev 13⁸ 20¹², and the present passage.⁵

3. It is the Lamb's Book of Life. The phrase further teaches that the focus of life for fallen humanity is the Lamb. There is only one book of life for men, and that is the 'Lamb's book.' Men, having lost the central fount of power through the fall, must rediscover it in the sacrificial Lamb of the Cross. In the Lamb is now stored all God's power for the salvation of men.

³ G. Matheson, *Sidelights from Patmos*, 319.

⁴ J. Thomas, *The Ideal City*, 212.

⁵ A. C. Price, *Fifty Sermons*, xi. 161.

Strange that men are so slow to believe and accept this momentous truth. To-day, as in the days of His flesh, the Son of Man must often say, 'Ye will not come unto Me, that ye may have life.'

It is the Leper Asylum at Bankura—where the stage between the painful pilgrimage and the painless City is passed . . . In the little church a pathetic sight is seen—squatting on the cool concrete floor, groups of men on one side, and women on the other side, are ranged. In front of the entrance the untainted children of the lepers from the Children's House are seated. The dread disease may at any time appear . . . A hymn is given out. How they sang! A strange weird tune, sweet music to the angels bending down to hear the lepers' song of praise. Some lips were swollen and features disfigured. Others hid, under the one white garment, hands and feet from which fingers and toes were rapidly disappearing, or had already vanished. After the hymn every head was bent in prayer, an address was delivered, and then, after another hymn, came the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The missionary took the bread from one to another and slowly and with difficulty in many cases it was eaten, until he came to one bright-faced woman whose hands were mere shapeless pads; she tried to raise the bread but dropped it, and after a fruitless effort to recover it held out the end of her sari and lifted that to her lips. The cup was of course impossible. The minister with a spoon poured the wine into each upturned mouth; then all joined in repeating the beautiful words of the service.

'They which are written in the Lamb's book of life' enter in, leaving the uncleanness this side of that beautiful painless City.¹

4. Is my name written there? We have just two things to take into account in coming to a conclusion—our past sin and our present holiness.

1. *Our past sin.* There are many who are even now within the Church of God above, and we will ask concerning them, 'Who are these arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?' We receive the reply, 'These are they that have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' 'In the blood of the Lamb!' I feel as if I could sing those words. What joy that there should be anything that can take all my stains away,—all without exception, and make me whiter than snow. If Christ be God, if it be true that He did within that Infant's body contain the fulness of the Deity, and if, being thus God and man, He did take away my sin, and in His own body on the tree did bear it, and suffer its punishment for me, then I can understand how my transgression is forgiven and my sin is covered.²

¹ *The Foreign Field*, April 1908, 'The Lepers' Evening.'³

² C. H. Spurgeon, *The Everlasting Gospel*, 398.

2. *Our present holiness.* There is still no entrance into the holy city so long as there are any evil tendencies within us. This is the work, this is the difficulty, and since these are to be overcome, how is the work to be done? Simple believing upon Christ brings you justification, but you want more than that; you need sanctification, the purgation of your nature, for have we not seen that until our nature itself is purged the enjoyment of heaven must be impossible? There can be no knowledge of God, no communion with God, no delight in God hereafter, unless all sin is put away and our fallen nature is entirely changed. Can this be done? It can. Faith in Christ tells us of something else beside the blood. There is a Divine Person,—let us bow our heads and worship Him,—the Holy Ghost who proceedeth from the Father, and He it is who renews us in the spirit of our minds. When we believe in Jesus, the Spirit enters into the heart, creating within us a new life; that life struggles and contends against the old life, or rather the old death, and as it struggles it gathers strength and grows; it masters the evil, and puts its foot upon the neck of the tendency to sin.

I read in one of the daily papers the other day of a thrilling incident which took place amid the scene of horror and consternation which followed the collision of the *St. Paul* and the *Gladiator* in the Solent. When the huge American liner crashed into the British warship, two or three seamen on the latter scrambled up the bows of the former into safety. No sooner had one of them done so, however, than he seemed to recollect himself, and called out, 'My God, what have I done? What will my captain say?' and immediately jumped back into the sinking ship.³

Some years ago, two soldiers, who were passing through London on their way home, thought that they would like to see Westminster Abbey. But they arrived just as the doors were closing for the night; and were turning disappointedly away, when a kind voice invited them in. It was Dean Stanley, though they did not know him, and he took them all through the glorious building, pointing out its wonders, until at length he stopped before a monument erected in memory of one of England's most famous soldiers. 'Look at that monument,' he said; and, as the men gazed in wonder, he added, 'Now you may never obtain the honour in this world which that general received, and no such monument as his may ever record your heroic deeds, but, friends, if your names are written in the *Lamb's Book of Life*, that will be your best memorial.'⁴

³ R. J. Campbell, *Thursday Mornings at the City Temple*, 295.

⁴ G. Milligan, *Lamps and Pitchers*, 188.