

# Two Brothers' Notes of Sermons preached by S. A. Tipple.

(Concluded from page 360.)

14th September, 1902. Text: Phil. iii. 12—"But I follow after if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

The verb "apprehend" is generally used as equivalent to "understand," "have knowledge of," or else "to suspect," "forebode." But the fundamental root idea is "to seize," "lay hold of"; and this primary sense is still retained when we use the word to express the arrest of a prisoner. No better word could be selected to express the change wrought in Paul at his conversion. He was laid hold upon, grasped, made a prisoner, by the power of the life and spirit of Christ. From being a rabid persecutor he became an enthusiastic advocate.

But he felt that he was apprehended for some purpose. He was seized in order to his seizure of something. And he made it his business to try to apprehend that for which he was apprehended.

"I press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." His supreme aim was to attain unto Christ.

There are many who in pursuit of certain ends have to stifle a voice calling them to something higher, who will not listen to what they know to be a prompting to a better and more worthy ideal. [They are overborne by] what Wordsworth calls "the weight of chance desires."

Paul was one of those who aim at the highest and whose whole life is taken up in the pursuit—who know not

"the flies of latter spring  
That lay their eggs and sting."  
Tennyson: *In Memoriam* XLIX.

... As Paracelsus, for example, in his supreme effort—

"I go to prove my soul!  
I see my way as birds their trackless way.  
I shall arrive! What time, what circuit first,  
I ask not: but unless God send his hail  
Or blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling snow,  
In some time, his good time, I shall arrive:  
He guides me and the bird. In his good time."

Paul's happy and cheerful nature was due to the fact that

his one supreme end was to attain to the highest he could conceive, and to his consciousness that this aim was the course destined for him—that he was striving for that which he was intended by God to be, that his own endeavour and his Maker's intentions for him were identical.

The highest aims are the most certain to be realised. If we are doubtful whether we shall succeed in our quest, attain to our ideal, let us elevate our goal, refine our ideal, and so we shall make failure impossible. The higher our aim the more surely it is in accord with the Infinite Purpose.

The search for the truest, purest, most exalted, is the only one which we may be confident will be realised. Even although we ourselves may not live to view the consummation, we shall have done our part and helped to make a path for those who come after.

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5th October, 1902. Text : Luke xxiii. 34—" Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

This, the first recorded utterance of Jesus while suspended upon the Cross, is a saying truly characteristic of Him. It was His habit always to find out what extenuating or palliating circumstances there were. He had a sympathetic understanding of the difficulties and hindrances with which we are surrounded, and so was always ready to make allowances.

When a poor woman in blind affection anointed His feet with valuable ointment and His disciples upbraided her for the waste, He turned and rebuked them: " She hath done what she could. Though the devotion might have been shown in finer and rarer ways, yet she in ignorance has done as well as she knows, and I, seeing and understanding, accept and value it accordingly."

When in the garden of Gethsemane He found the three whom He had left to watch, sleeping, though He was at first distressed that at such a time they should seem negligent, yet he immediately added, " the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Sins committed in ignorance or without intention were recognised in the Mosaic order, and for these trespass offerings (as they were called) were offered, distinct from the sin offering. The Hebrew word implies rather an impulsive, unpremeditated act. In the New Testament several distinct words are used to express sin—to overshoot the mark, to miss the mark, neglect a duty, perpetrate a fault, a flaw.

Even when Jesus made His sweeping outburst: " Ye are of your father the devil, and his work ye do," He was recognising with a sigh the hampering effects of heredity. He knew how

the crowd around, turning a deaf ear to the truths He so patiently endeavoured to impart, had been brought up to regard religion as a matter of ceremonial. He knew of the heavy incubus of ancestral inheritance filtering [?] their minds and numbing their faculties.

It is well to remember that we have an undoubted claim on the Divine Sovereign who endowed us with this body of compound and conflicting elements and placed us in this world of turmoil and strife and pain and sorrow. Jesus, doubtless, had some feeling of this when He said: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

We may be sure that the fullest allowance will be made for all the untoward influences and the various encumbrances beyond our control, and I should not wonder if sometimes when we are feeling, perhaps more strongly than usual, our own demerit and gross turpitude, there are those up in the heavens who are wondering that with all our frailty and hindrances we should have fought so long and done so well.

There's a wideness in God's mercy  
Like the wideness of the sea:  
There's a kindness in His justice  
Which is more than liberty.

There is no place where earth's sorrows  
Are more felt than up in heaven;  
There is no place where earth's failings  
Have such kindly judgment given.

For the love of God is broader  
Than the measures of man's mind;  
And the heart of the Eternal  
Is most wonderfully kind.

F. W. Faber.

Robert Louis Stevenson wrote: "One person I have to make good—myself. But my duty to my neighbour is much more nearly expressed by saying that I have to make him happy"—and often this can best be accomplished by being lenient to his faults.

But, applying the words in a wider sense than that in which Christ used them—"they knew not what they did." Had those wicked hands not nailed Him to the Cross the consummation of His life would have been wanting. Where would have been the deep and lasting influence, and above all the great redemptive power of His name? Verily they knew not what they did.

All evil deeds have *some good* effects. All things are overruled for good. God's puppets are we all. In our follies and our vices, as well as in our wise and brave and virtuous deeds,

we are working out our own destinies, working out the Eternal Plan.

It is a universal law that some should suffer in order to the saving of others. Those miserable beings—God pity them!—who go down into the pit, not being permitted to save themselves, yet contribute to the salvation of others. Some serve as a warning beacon, some contribute to the knowledge of life and widen experience. . . .

The strong animal spirits of Robert Burns, which made shipwreck of his life, serve, as someone has said, to make a background. . . .

Yet we must ever strive . . . for none the less wicked were the hands that crucified the Redeemer, though an inscrutable Providence ordained that out of the evil good should come.

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19th October, 1902. Text: Matt. xiii. 43—"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

This passage occurs in one of the recorded parables of Jesus in which He forecasts the history of the seed which He and His disciples would cast forth in the world upon the field of men.

Impression, repression, expression—the order of experience passed through by all mental and moral truths. Before a man can *express* anything of worth he must be *finely impressed*. All truths, aspirations, reforming ideas, have to pass through a time of repressions; and when the difficulties and hindrances have been overcome, then, in the time of expression, comes their full efflorescence.

Self-expression, our *raison d'être*, the object of our existence, what we were born for. In Nature around us self-expression is the aim and achievement of everything that is alive.

Here and there are men who dream dreams. One has a vision of a healthier, stronger, purer life; another sees the folly of some venerated custom; another glimpses a hitherto unobserved truth which promises to revolutionize certain departments of thought; another yearns for a saner, simpler, more natural manner of living. But how many of these fail to fully and truly express themselves! There is so much to deter them; so many and adverse hindering forces. The great trend of popular opinion presses in an opposite direction. They are overwhelmed in the ditch of current convention. They lack the courage to assert their original ideas. Hindrances to self-expression. Some need a change of environment before they can utter their hidden thoughts. Some are prevented from expressing themselves by the character and tone of their associates, some

for lack of a sympathy which would step out and meet them half way. Others need the stimulus of some great crisis or sudden convulsion to call forth the powers within them.

"He that hath a dream," said the Hebrew seer, "let him tell a dream." But there are some who dream dreams and are yet unable to tell them forth, who are impressed and have not the powers requisite for expression. Many men have thoughts, fine, deep, honest thoughts, worthy of expression, but they have not the words in which to express them.

It has been said that whatever is pure and brave and true in a man's nature will sooner or later come to light. Some of our thoughts and ideals seem to evade expression by their very fineness, and our words and deeds seem too coarse to reveal them.

Behind a man's conduct is the something of which his conduct is the expression, and this something—a part of himself—can be only imperfectly expressed and therefore is finer and braver and purer than his best and bravest deeds.

Not on the vulgar mass  
Called "work," must sentence pass,  
Things done, that took the eye and had the price;  
O'er which, from level stand,  
The low world laid its hand,  
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice.

But all, the world's coarse thumb  
And finger failed to plumb,  
So passed in making up the main account;  
All instincts immature,  
All purposes unsure,  
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount.

Thoughts hardly to be packed  
Into a narrow act,  
Fancies that broke through language and escaped;  
All I could never be,  
All, men ignored in me,  
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

Browning: *Rabbi ben Ezra*.

But we are not to express *all* our feelings. We must repress our base passions, our frivolous desires, our passing whims and fancies.

Our nature is like a tangled forest and our self is the hama-dryad, the myth, the nymph that inhabits it.

If it be true in the world of art that the most important principle is to know what to leave out, so in the matter of self-expression is careful selection and due elimination of the utmost importance. We are not to flaunt our animal propensities, the relics of the ape and beast from which we are evolved and whose

lingering remains cling like rotting rags tenaciously to us. We are to select the *man* in us—the individual self.

But when we look closely we find that there *are* no hindrances to self-expression except those which we ourselves originate. No external power or circumstance can have effect without our consent. Most of the fancied antagonistic influences are the offspring of our own habits of thought or action, a habit of indolence, a love of ease and comfort, a shrinking from danger, a standing aloof from conflict, a tendency to look on the worst side of things.

All so-called obstacles are really *aids to expression*. They are *tools*, just as much as brush and palette are the tools by means of which an artist prepares an image of his idea. For it is by standing up to, battling with and overcoming them that expression is most truly effected. In shaping ourselves to meet the difficulties, and in responding to the stimuli that induce to action, we are expressing ourselves in the best and most enduring way.

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9th November, 1902. Text: Acts iv. 12—"Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

Peter, having offended the rulers by restoring to health a paralytic man and by his subsequent address to the people, is brought before the Sanhedrin for examination. He boldly asserts that the miracle was wrought by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom they rejected and crucified, and that by the name of this same Jesus only must they be saved.

He spoke of the *name* after the manner of his time and fellows. In olden times the name of a man, especially of a notable man, was usually a description, representation or image, rather than, as in modern times, a mere title or appellation. The *name* implied the qualities and powers of the person or thing named, and so came to have a certain sacredness and intrinsic value. (Cf. "The name of the God of Jacob defend thee." "Some trust in chariots and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." "The name of the Lord is a strong tower.")

Hence the habit, common to the Jews, of avoiding as far as possible the utterance of the sacred names, and hence a Jew before writing the title of Deity would carefully wipe his pen, and even then would take care to omit some of the letters.

Many things which help to holiness or wholeness. The innocent prattle of a child has often acted in a marvellous manner in clearing the crust of grime from off a mind weary with toil or oppressed with the sense of failure, saving it from disease

or despair. The thrills of emotion when, at times, we come into close touch with Nature. From a French writer: "It was only a drummer-boy beating a tattoo in the street, but the action was so well done, the time so perfectly kept, and the lad's heart was so evidently in his work, that at the sound my spirit revived, and I took comfort at the thought of the ideal being so near that in a humble task like this it can be realized that a mere boy can do his work perfectly."

But these momentary effects—beneficent events and divine benedictions though they be—are but temporary salvations.

When Peter said, "there is no other name under heaven whereby ye must be saved," he spoke from his own experience; but there were a great many things under heaven of which he was ignorant. His sphere of knowledge was limited to the little country of Syria, and he knew little or nothing of the great world outside.

May there not have been here and there, at one time and another, men, inspired of God, of saving power, saviours under the one Lord, to whom men turned, and not in vain, for guidance and comfort and upward leading, in India, say, or in Greece? Yes, there were indeed such. But Peter was not formulating a doctrine or dogma about Christ; he was simply speaking out of his own experience what he himself had found to be true.

Salvation means saving from something that should not be for something that should be.

Some men seem not to be tempted into gross sins; their lives are well-ordered, their passions are neither strong nor unruly; they require rather education and cultivation. An orthodox divine said of Dr. Channing, the American Unitarian, that his life and character were so pure that he was cut off from the highest privilege—that of salvation.

But there is a sense in which it is true that only in the name of Christ can men be saved; for in Him alone do we find . . . and it is only as we learn His secret and live His life that we can obtain full salvation.

Some men will say, "Why do you make so much fuss about men's souls? You forget that you are but a tiny ephemeral speck on a tiny planet, and whether your soul be saved or lost, the universe is neither better nor worse for it." But a man's first business is with himself, whatever his relative importance in the outer cosmos. His own existence is the basic cosmic fact in his consciousness, and in seeking his own salvation he is not only above the charge of egotism, but is, in fact, fulfilling his primary and supreme duty.

The secret of Christ's life and his importance to men lies not in any question as to his rank or station, or in the occurrence

of mysterious dealings by Him with heaven on our behalf, but in His reception and conviction of the threefold conception of Fatherhood, Sonship and Brotherhood. The Fatherhood of God, the all-pervading Unity behind all seeming diversity . . . the Sonship of Man, and his consequent exalted possibilities . . . and, arising from this, the essential Brotherhood of Man. . . . These three relationships He portrayed in the parable of the Prodigal Son—the first in the father, the second in the prodigal, who was yet a son, and on his repentant return was treated as such, and the last in the ugly character of the elder brother, depicted and condemned, thereby implying the real brotherhood.

“Whereby we *must* be saved.”

“I can but trust that good shall fall  
At last—far off—at last, to all.”

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11th January, 1903. Text: Matt. vi. 27—“Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?”

This is the translator's version of what Matthew records as having been uttered by Jesus Christ in the midst of His instructions to His disciples not to be anxious about the things which concerned their bodily life, what they should eat and drink, and what raiment they should wear.

The teaching not to be strictly followed in our own time. It was given in an eastern country long ago and under very special conditions. Swept along in the strong emotions of that eventful time, filled with a sense of the supreme importance of the new religion, and burning with zeal to extend the Kingdom of Heaven, was it strange that He should deem it unnecessary to care for the things of the flesh? that He should trust the Father for whom they were working to supply all their needs, and, secure in that faith, seek to free Himself and His disciples from distracting cares?

Few who have read carefully can have failed to ask what relevancy the question in this form can have to the argument. For who, excepting a child, is anxious to increase his stature, and that by a cubit—something over a foot and a half—which would make a man of average height a giant? If the rest of the sentence be correct, would it not have been less ludicrous and more forcible to have said an inch, or a hairsbreadth? But the translators have erred here. The last word, in the Greek, signifies adulthood, full age, referring to period of growth, term of life, and is used only secondarily to imply measures of length. The expression “cubit of time” sounds strangely to our ears; but the application of measures of length to periods of time was formerly not uncommon, and, indeed, a similar



expression occurs in one of the Greek poets. Even to this day we speak of a *span* of life.

The text should read ". . . can add a day, an hour, to the limit of his existence; can lengthen by a minute, even, the pre-determined period of his sojourn here." Jesus evidently believed our lives to be foreordained by a power which human effort was powerless to affect. So the Greeks with their idea of the Fates spinning the web of a man's life which ceased simultaneously with the breaking of the thread.

The text reminds us of those things in our lives which are in very truth predetermined and irrevocably fixed.

We all have natural tendencies which remain with us to the end for all our care and care. Inherited traits.

In a recent estimate of James Martineau it is said he "came of a fine stock, for in him the blood of the French Huguenot blended with the blood of the English Puritan. He owed to the one his keen and delicate intelligence, the elaborate elegance of his style, and his love of the true as the Beautiful and the Good; and to the other his severe conscientiousness, his ideal of freedom, his ethical passion, his strenuous obedience to the conscience which he held to be the voice of God." (A. M. Fairbairn in *Contemporary Review*.)

What we were in the beginning we are now and ever must be. We may grow older, wiser, better, but essentially we are the same. A man may change his opinions, alter his habit of life, undergo a moral revolution—such as what we call a religious conversion—but it is the same Brown, Jones, Robinson, that we knew before. Individual characteristics remain—an innate vanity, a carping spirit, a natural cocksureness, a shallow mental capacity, prove ineradicable and reveal themselves in this or that speech or manner.

We say we have outgrown superstitions; but a subtle precipitate remains of whatever we at any time received. What we are now we would not be exactly were it not for that experience of long ago, the discarded belief, the superseded faith.

Men differ widely in temperament—the hasty, hot-blooded, impetuous man; the phlegmatic disposition.

The man with a sensuous nature has to fight many temptations which do not trouble his fellows.

The man with a nervous, self-conscious nature is hampered cruelly in the conflict, and in a sudden crisis is liable to fall.

One man cannot be what another is. It is useless for the rough, coarse nature to try to enter into the fine conceptions and visions of the poet's mind.

Vessels of wood, and vessels of silver.

E. J. ROBERTS.