

spiritual freedom. That movement is resistless as the flowing tide, or as the sun rising in his strength and glory. Priestcraft being a determined foe of this intellectual and spiritual freedom, and the Roman form of religion being inseparable from priestcraft—the craft that puts the priest between the soul and the Saviour—it is impossible that the Roman form of religion can be the religion of the future. The religion of the future will be the religion which comes into the closest and most direct contact with the living Christ, which moves and has its being, works and worships, serves mankind and glorifies God, through the might and power of personal communion with Him—not through the mediation of official priests, but by the personal indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

(To be continued.)



A Vision of Service.

BY THE VEN. ARCHDEACON MOULE, B.D.

THE following significant words occur at the close of the Encyclical Letter from the Archbishops and Bishops, issued after the Lambeth Conference, August, 1908: "The brightness of Christ's light is in the scene before us, as we think of the Church thus showing forth in the world, with ever-increasing clearness, the glory and happiness of service. But the vision is not bounded by the horizon of the world; its true meaning is not known until we raise our eyes above the scenes of time."

Further back, in the preamble, the Bishops speak of "The clear shining of this great hope of service," and of the field of service, "wide and various as the world." The preamble then glories in the blessedness and dignity of service in the world; the peroration lifts and stretches our gaze "beyond the horizon of the world and above the scenes of time."

It is of these narrower, and wider, and almost boundless fields of service that I write.

I can imagine an objection *in limine* to the consideration of this subject, to the effect that all we certainly know of God's purposes in redemption, and reconciliation, and restitution is connected with the Incarnation and Atoning Death of the Son of God, taking on Him human, and not superhuman or extra-human, nature; a redemption in its potency and accessibility now, and in its final and eternal effects hereafter, embracing the whole human race. Anything beyond this is, by many serious thinkers and students, brushed aside, as beyond practical Christian politics, and as resting on fancy and imagination alone.

Now, my contention is, that we have in the revelation of the Word of God far more both of hint and direct foretelling on the subject of this wider sphere and vision of service than is often supposed. Living, as I have done, during the greater part of my life in the forefront of the mission-work of the Church below, this subject of the wider service has for some years past arrested my attention. And I make bold to suggest it as a subject for study, and adoring and exulting hope and expectation.

We need no new revelation to make the prospect conceivable, but only more careful notice of what the Bible has taught or adumbrated all along. If I mistake not, we too often forget the constant collocation, and not so much the contrast, of the heavens and the earth in the references of Holy Scripture to God's creative power, and to His kingdom and His salvation. We either interpret the heavens loosely and partially as "heaven," the immediate home of God and His people, or we represent the word as "the expanse" only above, and, too seldom, as an expanse and space *peopled* and connected with the earth. "The heavens are Thine, the earth also is Thine" (Ps. lxxxix. 11); and is there not in these great heavens sentient recognition of their ownership and of God's rule? "Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all

creation : for in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers : all things have been created through Him and under Him : and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist" (Col. i. 15-17). "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained ; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him ? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him ?" (Ps. viii. 3, 4). The Psalmist seems to apply a threefold argument here. First, of the solidarity of creation. The earth, the habitation of man, is part of the heavenly host, and yet, in size and weight minute and insignificant. Secondly, though the earth be insignificant in size, yet it is the cynosure of all creation, for God's special care and love and invitation are bestowed on the earth. And, thirdly, there bursts forth the vision of service, to which my meditations lead. God's care and love, concentrated at first on the little earth, and His dear Son, who made all, living and dying on this minute sphere in creation, will extend that love and care and salvation to all the shaken and disintegrated and trembling depths of His vaster works.

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language"—none audible yet on the lower air—"their voices cannot be heard." But for ever as they shine, by that glory, they praise their Maker ; and then, in the planet train of each of these countless flaming suns, are not their voices heard ? Meanwhile, the heavens, dislocated and disturbed, as it would seem, by the presence of sin, are represented by Jeremiah as "astonied and horribly afraid at Israel's transgression," so intimate is the connection, so fine are the interstellar sensations.

And, turning back to the more ancient Psalms again, we read of the heavens as assessors in a sense at the judgment day : "He shall call to the heavens above, and the heavens shall declare His righteousness" (Ps. l. 4, 6) ; and of God's

mercy which in Christ Jesus rejoices against judgment we are told that "it is great unto the heavens," that "His lovingkindness is *in the heavens*; His faithfulness, His truth reaching to the skies."

The word may sound like mere hyperbole, yet we read (and it suggests the idea of a work and mission of reconciliation to be done there too) that "the heavens are not clean in God's sight" (Job xv. 15). We are arrested also by the often-repeated assertions of God's ownership over the heavens, as over the earth, and of His residence and presence there. "It is He that buildeth His chambers in the heavens, and has founded His vault upon the earth" (Amos ix. 6. See also Neh. ix. 6). "Behold, unto the Lord thy God belongeth the heaven, even the heaven of heavens, the earth, and all that therein is."

Of the earth it is said that "God created it not in vain; He created it to be inhabited." Are not, then, the vast, and to us now silent, heavens instinct with life and sound? Alas! is there not *war* in heaven also, and alas! for the thought of a hostile prince of the power of the air and some mysterious, disturbing, and alienating effect from the advent of moral evil, which requires reconciling! "The heavenly things are cleansed by the better sacrifices" (Heb. ix. 23). Alas! for the principalities, the powers, the world-rulers of this darkness, the spiritual heads of wickedness in the heavenly places!

I quote here two significant paragraphs from Liddon's Bampton Lectures on the Divinity of our Lord, one in the text, one in a footnote, pp. 338 and 241: "In the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians the Church is considered as a vast spiritual society, which, besides embracing as its heritage all races of the world, pierces the veil of the unseen, and includes the families of heaven in its majestic compass" (see Eph. iii. 16); and again (quoting Martensen in his dissertation on the word *κόσμος*): "The cosmical principle having been emancipated by the Fall from its due subjection to the spirit, and invested with a false independence . . . the advance of the kingdom of God is retarded and hindered by the universe of

creation; and the created universe, having in a relative sense 'life in itself,' including, as it does, a system of powers, ideas, and aims, possessing a relative value—this relative independence, which ought to be subservient to the kingdom of God, has become a fallen 'world autonomy.'"

I am not unaware of the measurements and calculations on a nearly measureless scale which seem to forbid the imagination of intercourse between earth and the heavens; and calculations of time and space also which seem to outsoar all bounds and views even of possible service of earth for the heavens. Looking, comparatively speaking, quite near to us, notice how distance in the stretches of space affects apparent difference of size and bulk, and suggests almost impassable gulfs of separation. The full moon, whose face, measured carefully by the sun's full face, is slightly broader to our eye, yet is truly in cubical capacity so much smaller, that 64,000,000 solid moons rolled together will only just suffice to make one sun. Look farther afield through the depth of space. Mark in a clear sky, as Orion rises above the hills and the thicker atmosphere of earth, a small wisp of haze clinging to his sword-belt. That nebula is so vast (both in its contents of stellar and nebular components, each sun also having its planet train) that a million orbs, each one with a circumference equal to the earth's orbit round the sun—each one, *i.e.*, 552,000,000 miles in girth—would scarcely suffice to fill that enormous depth of space. And the heavens contain that nebula as "a very little thing."

The star β Cygni, one of the few stars whose parallax has been approximately measured, and one of the nearer ones to us, is yet shining and revolving at a distance 600,000 times the 92,870,000 miles which separate the earth from the sun.

The star α Centauri is so near, and yet so remote, that, taking the measurement of a year's journey for light at 186,300 miles a second, four years and a third of such journeyings are required before the light can reach us; and the telescopically perceived light, or the yet further radiances revealed by photography, must have taken some hundreds—

some, perhaps, thousands—of years for the journey to this insignificant orb, the earth. Is it, then, imaginable, outside dreamland, that this earth, though changed into one Church, and shining for ever as the brightest jewel in God's universe, can yet touch by sound or subtle influence—by anything which can be called mission influence—the heavens of God?

Now, without attempting reference at all in detail to the general trend of scientific research and revelation, which stills more and more the exclamation of impossibility and inconceivableness in the annihilation or vast reduction of the measurements of distance, and the time required to cover distance; noticing the possibility also of sound, vibrating so slowly now (travelling only one mile in two seconds, and so easily lost to hearing), being quickened some day to the lightning-winged vibrations of light; remembering again that, though the rarity of the earth's atmosphere renders respiration and life impossible for man, as he is now, if he penetrates but five or six miles into the 500 miles of the atmospheric depth and height, yet that this atmosphere and the fathomless expanse of ether beyond, whatever science may surmise as to its nature, are not too rare for angelic life and "passage to and fro" very quickly; not too rare nor too sluggish for our Lord's majestic passage "as He went up," and will not, we may surely believe, be impossible for the glorious life and bodies of the eternal state; and remembering finally that the door, in fact, is opening for free and almost unlimited belief in the possible powers of those who, one in the nature and holiness of God, will have at their hand, if I may say so, the omnipotence and omnipresence of God;—turn, rather, for a moment, and notice that the dream is scarcely a dream; the "vision of service" is "a vision that hasteth toward the end, and shall not lie" (Hab. ii. 3).

The following lines from Mr. Thomas Hardy's recently published dramatic poem, "The Dynasts," describing and narrating with extraordinary but sometimes uneven power the history of England and of Europe during the days of Napoleon, Nelson, and Wellington, seem at first in startling contrast to the

theory I am discussing. The supervision of the world is for the time being imagined as taken from the hands of the One Personal God, and placed in the hands of the spirits of the air, with different characteristics and tendencies. And thus two of them are conversing as they watch the gorgeous and ceremonial rites accompanying Napoleon's coronation as King of Italy in Milan Cathedral. The "Spirit of the Pities" asks first :

"What is the creed which these rich rites disclose?"

The "Spirit of the Years" replies :

"A local thing called Christianity,
Which the wild dramas of this wheeling sphere
Include, with divers other such, in dim,
Pathetical and brief parentheses ;
Beyond whose reach, uninfluenced, unconcerned,
The systems of the suns go sweeping on,
With all their many-mortaled planet train,
In mathematic roll unceasingly."

The "Spirit of the Pities" rejoins :

"I did not recognize it here, forsooth,
Though in its early, loving-kindly days
Of gracious purpose it was much to me."

Now, this "astrology," if I may use the word, may be true indeed about the degenerate Christianity unrecognizable as such amidst its display of gorgeous and superstitious rites and its darker cloud of error in doctrine. But the true Christianity, this "loving-kindly" "thing," with its "gracious purpose," lives on for ever ; and the prophets and St. Paul, and our Lord Himself and His Word, claim for it a better "astrology"—an influence and a gracious purpose touching, moulding, blessing all creation. "All power," He said in the last words audible to His Church on this lower air, "all authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and in earth," and these words of power in heaven as well as in earth are followed by the consequent command to "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature"; and does not the preaching echo on unto the heavens which He controls as well as unto the utmost parts of the earth ?

“ Having, then, a great High Priest who hath passed through the heavens, let us hold fast our profession.” Was that ten days’ mysterious interval between the Ascension and Whit-Sunday occupied by the Lord’s “beginning to proclaim” to the inhabitants of His vast heavens that which it will be His Church’s high duty and glory to complete in the ages to come, and which, perchance, His Church, “which has crossed the flood,” is proclaiming now?

We pass from conjecture and question to the very verge of certainty, and see that the wondrous double light seems destined to shine on all the heavens. For by “the working of the strength of His might which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and made Him to sit at His right hand in the heavenly places; far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and when He put all things in subjection under His feet”—the light downshining and forth-flashing from His ascended and reigning glory, and the light of His redeeming work in the Church shining and flashing from the lower earth—one glory, one testimony, above, below, will illumine the heavens.

And now more clear and certain words follow in the revelation of God: “It was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fulness dwell, and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, having made peace through the blood of His Cross; through Him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens” (Col. i. 19, 20). Then the Cross will for ever and everywhere exercise its immortal power, peace-speaking, reconciling, bringing glory to God, and death and extermination to sin—on *earth*, bending every knee and loosing every tongue in adoration; in the *heavens*, summing up all in Christ the Head of all principality and power. Hear the voice of the Lord once more, a glorious voice: “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be known through the Church the manifold—the much-variegated—wisdom of God.” And this last great promise and prophecy of the Church’s

mission follows immediately on the magnifying of the grace of the ministry which "preaches unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

I add three corollaries to this which I think is a demonstrable, if not a demonstrated, proposition—the Church's high-soaring service from this little earth. First, notice that the truth of the family connection between the far-sundered members of God's great household, His Creation, may account in the thoughts of superstitious and godless philosophers for the principles and teaching of astrology. That false science lives on in almanacs still popular in England; and it is one of the main branches of the teaching of the Taoist religion in China, while the worship of star-gods is mentioned in the Bible. Now, the proposition we are considering supplies the true astrology; teaching not so much that the orbs of heaven influence the earth (though they may sympathize with it, perchance) as that the earth is to influence them. This tiny orb is too insignificant in some men's estimation for God to visit and dwell in, if He ever condescended to visit any special part of the universe, which He is said "to fill." Yet by that very choice, and love, and care, God made the earth the centre of the solar system—that system which we are told by some astronomers to regard as the centre of a cluster of vast systems; and those clusters and galaxies of glory, again, near the heart of the Milky Way, while the centre of gravity of the vast revolving multitude is believed to be in the Pleiades, in bright Alcyone close to that heart, and the Milky Way with its outrider orbs gleams across infinite space, a vision of the Creation of God in the perspective of a band and girdle of glory. Now, from this tiny centre, the earth, all things in the heavens will be brought back reconciled, remade, restored, and for ever in harmony with God.

Secondly, the magnificence of this conception, and the grandeur of this service, in no sense eclipses or minimizes the dignity and honour of the present mission-work of the Church militant here on earth.

Nay, though the work hereafter will be vaster and more

spacious in its extent and energy and unvarying success, nothing in heaven and earth can transcend the glory and blessedness of service now. The very weakness of the workers, our low estate, our bodies of humiliation, are, when yielded to Him for His service and energized by His Spirit, more for His glory than the untiring or mighty energies of the skies. The luxury of self-denial, the privilege of suffering for the Lord's sake, this unique privilege, never to be repeated (for in the world to come work never will bring weariness, and no self need be denied when all is one with His will), this present mission-work of the Church, is, then, of surpassing glory, the noblest, in whatever rank or sphere we work, in this world or the next.

But the quickening of our faithfulness and self-denying energy now may have a double influence, besides the earlier setting up of Christ's kingdom on earth. First, it will hasten the universal reconciling; secondly, it may confer on the faithful workers now special posts of honour and blessing in the service to come. "Thou hast been faithful in a few things, be thou ruler over many things."

The view before us is one of transcending magnificence. There in the new heavens and new earth, "balmier and fresher for their bath of fire," what a blissful occupation for unending years to restore to harmony, without a jar, and to loyal service, never to falter; and then to maintain in that sublime reconciliation, the whole Creation of God, still and for ever by the blood of the Cross, by the Divine attraction and welding power of redemption, and by the Almighty grace of the Eternal Spirit.

Is not this the

"Far-off Divine event
To which the whole Creation moves"?

Is not this "the splendour of that great hope of service beyond the horizon of the world, and beyond the scenes of Time"? "They shall mount up on wings as eagles; they shall run exulting through the long vistas of their eternal home, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint."