

"The Lord's Brother."¹

BY THE BISHOP OF DURHAM.

"I saw James, the Lord's brother."—GAL. i. 19.

WHEN a man is called to minister for once the Word of God in a place illustrious in itself and the centre of an influence indefinitely great, he asks himself with earnest emphasis what shall be his theme. To be at all congruous to the occasion, it should lie close to the living centre of faith. It should belong to the first rank of truths, and be such as to tell, not only on the surface or circumference of duty, but upon its soul.

I have found myself shut up for my theme to-day to our Alpha and Omega, the Lord Jesus Christ. I propose to speak to you upon some aspects of the Apostolic account of Him which have been of help to my own faith and hope, and the thought of which may contribute something to the strengthening of other hearts. The study will be as plain and as practical as possible. But it will cast our attention upon nothing less than the Christ of God, historical and eternal, as we attempt once again to see Him somewhat as an Apostle saw Him, and to ask if the sight does not carry within it an adequate witness to its supreme and saving verity for the soul of man.

"I saw James, the Lord's brother." The words occur, as we are well aware, in a letter which all reasonable criticism places within the first days of the Church. Some students, as Zahn recently, make out Galatians to be the earliest Pauline writing, and place it in 52 or 53, little more than twenty years after the Crucifixion. But Lightfoot's date (57) leaves it still abundantly primeval, so that it comes to us, on any sober estimate, from days when the coevals of the Lord were everywhere, and in the vigour of their lives. His personal presence, His very look and bearing, the accent of His voice, the momentous scenes of the close of His ministry in Palestine, lay

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as vivid, as large, as tangible, to the minds of a host of men than as mature men now feel their most striking and important recollections of the early eighties to be to them. And how much farther back than that the certainties of memory can reach for men still short of old age!

It is nearly four-and-forty years since I, a young school-master, was in company once and again with Tennyson, then a visitor to Marlborough. That reminiscence is as articulate to me to-day, as little clouded or distorted by time, as it was five years after the event. No faintest haze of imaginative colouring, so far as I can see anything of the workings of my mind, has altered within that period my sight of the incidents which certainly needed no imagination to give them interest and significance.

Well, it was at a time about half as distant as that from the memories of Golgotha that St. Paul wrote to the Galatians, and told them, in the course of a careful and practical statement of facts, not by way of a rhapsody, but in an argument bearing upon matters of immediate concern to him and them, that he had once seen James, the Lord's brother. It is a plain elementary item of recollection, in itself altogether prosaic, like a memorandum from a diary. The light falls dry and clear around it—as little a glamour of romance, as little a luminous haze of myth, as if the writer were alluding to an interview with Timothy, or with Sergius Paulus, or with Gallio. Yet think what that datum of memory connoted and involved. This man of the active life and busy pen had once been in personal company with one who was familiarly known to be the brother of the Nazarene. No matter for our purpose what the brotherhood precisely was; it meant this at least—that James had once shared the same home with Jesus, and Jesus with James; that the neighbours knew them as kinsmen, partners alike in the life of hearth, and field, and street, and synagogue, sons of one Galilean home.

I will not linger over the ample answer that lies within this brief phrase to the pretentious theory that to St. Paul the Galilean life of the Lord was unimportant, and very possibly

unknown. It was not so to the man who carried in his soul the converting voice from heaven, “I am Jesus *of Nazareth*, whom thou persecutest.” It was not so to the intimate of St. Luke. Nor was it so to the man who records with such quiet and matter-of-fact precision his fortnight’s visit at Jerusalem to Peter, “pilot of the Galilean Lake,” and his interview with James, the Lord’s brother. Paul was sent indeed to be, not the biographer of Jesus Christ, but the Apostle of the mystery of His cross and resurrection. But full and vivid all the while lay in his soul, behind the message of the Christ in His everlastingness, that life of Jesus which stands with His sacrifice in indissoluble mutual relation.

So to St. Paul the historical Master was as historical as this, that He had been for years the home-mate, in the order of human life, in such a town and at such a time, of a man with whom Paul had himself talked and walked, not many years, perhaps fifteen or sixteen, before he put pen to paper to Galatia. This Jesus the Christ was as little legendary to St. Paul, as little a mythical luminary, or an embodied idea, from the point of view of human life and action, as any brother of a college friend of mine could be about whom I have heard my friend speak often, and with admiration and delight.

We are carried then by this passage, at one step, as by one heave of a strong hand, straight into the very midst of the very first generation of believers. And we find Jesus there, and His Galilean home, in all the certainty of familiar and unanxious allusion. We read a writer who speaks to us from this living page with the immortal presentness of the mind, and who could easily, if he had wished it—and very probably he did—have catechized the brother of the Lord about the face and voice of Jesus, about the normal incidents of the working life at Nazareth, about the whole human exterior of those days of the flesh of the Son of man.

But, then, here is the great paradox, here is the other side: “I saw James, the LORD’s brother.” “The LORD”—what does it mean? He has just named Peter very simply, and now names

James, and will soon name John. Why this reverential designation for the teacher of Peter and the brother of James—"the LORD"? The answer lies in abundance, and close at hand, in this same letter. Look just above upon the page, and read: "It pleased God to reveal in me His SON." Take sentence after sentence, still from these Galatian paragraphs: "Paul, an Apostle, not by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father who raised Him from the dead." "Christ Jesus gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from this present evil world." "Christ liveth in me; I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen."

We need not—we must not now—hear around these utterances the whole weight and splendour of the Pauline Christology. It will be enough to recall, as we pass on, that, to this friend of the mortal brother of the Lord Jesus, He is the supreme and vivifying secret of the salvation of the Universal Church, and equally and at the same time the archetype, the corner-stone, the final cause, as well as the effectual, of the whole world of created being. "All things were created through Him, and"—that last word of mystery and light—"for Him," as their end and goal.

Such was the Brother of James to James's visitor. To Paul this wonderful Being, practically upon the one hand his own contemporary in human life, and the familiar sharer in its domestic relationships, was on the other hand Lord, Redeemer, Giver of grace, Object of saving faith; at once upholder of the universe and inhabitant of the heart. To reveal His glories to the soul, the Eternal Father must intervene. Once known, He proves to be All in all for the personality which has found Him. Into Him a Paul, with all his magnificent wealth of mind and will, rejoices to be, as it were, submerged. "I live, yet not I; Christ liveth in me." He is not, indeed, called GOD in set terms to the Galatians. But either James's Brother is also God

made man, or the language about Him used here is high treason against the Eternal. For it makes out the Brother of James to be man's absolute possessor, man's innermost secret for participation in the heavenly life, his ultimate and adequate object of saving confidence, his all-satisfying joy and glory.

So the historical Jesus, prosaically historical, as He appears before us here, and the eternal and transcendent Christ, turn out to be one. James's Brother is the Lord of glory, the Lord from heaven, the Son of God.

Upon this phenomenon of the Galatian Epistle some reflections arise which have often seemed to me helpful to faith in its struggles and in its work.

In the first place, the convictions denoted respectively by the words "James, the Lord's brother," and by such terms as "the Son of God," are held together in the mind of St. Paul obviously without an effort. From his conversion onwards, whatever his other internal conflicts were—and they were assuredly severe and many—there was none upon this point. Jesus of Nazareth was, by the transfigured Pharisee, from the first to the last, recognized, accepted, adored, served, with a love and reverence which always kindled each other into new ardour, as the eternal Son of the Blessed. No discord, it is evident, suggests itself to him in that amazing juxtaposition of historical and eternal, finite and infinite, human and Divine. To hold this, or rather to be held by it, means for him, not effort, but repose. So far from disturbing either his moral or his mental equilibrium, it is precisely this around which his whole deep and energetic nature moves with all its powers, like a planetary system rolled around its sun. Before and after Damascus St. Paul was the same man, but the same with a vast difference. Before, he was a force intense and burning, but dangerous, because internal harmony was lacking. After, he was more than ever intense and burning, and he put out his great energies in a way which will be felt as long as there is a Christendom on earth. But the force was now pure, salutary, altogether beneficent. The man was as sane as he was inspired.

We find in St. Paul, in fact, the exact antithesis of the religious fanatic. For fanaticism is essentially harsh and narrow. By its nature it abhors equity and tolerance. It sees the part as the whole. It grasps, ordinarily, one great truth, or more likely one fragment of one great truth, and distorts it into an error—perhaps a deadly error—by treating it as all in all. It does not suffer long, nor is it kind, nor does it hope all things, nor endure them. Its tendency is to trample upon rights, and to scout the courtesies which are so genuine a part of human duty. Its tendency in general is to dominate rather than to serve.

The Apostle illustrates all this by the exact opposite in everything. He is large and patient of heart. He can see through the eyes of others. His courage is such that heroism seems a poor word for it, but he is gentle all the while as a nurse with her children; he is anxious to vindicate for those from whom he differs the right to their own opinions; he is a counsellor always working for all possible peace in the Church through the influences of self-forgetting love; he is so studious of human courtesy that he sets us one of its finest standards for all time. Withal he is a wise, practical, public man in the Church, and he is fully alive also to the greatness of civil order and the sacredness of the State. Yet this was the man meantime who had seen—he was sure of it—the vision of the Almighty, and lived no longer to himself, but Christ lived in him.

From this momentous phenomenon of human experience, in which St. Paul is only one example, though the supreme one, of Apostolic (and, indeed, of primeval Christian) character, a further reflection arises. It is this—that this noble sanity of the man, who was sure meanwhile that he was divinely illuminated and inspired, is a moral evidence, as sober as it is profound, to the quality of *fact* inherent in the creed which was his life. I dare to say that, if the belief that James's Brother was the Eternal Being incarnate had not been sacred fact, it would have been a monster of the mind and the tyrant of it, ruinous to reason, to virtue, to justice, to love. Its holders and followers

would have developed, like the Zwickau prophets of Luther's time, into visionaries imbecile or dangerous. They could never possibly have organized the new Christendom on lines of peace, and helpfulness, and virtue; they could not have written the supreme eulogy of self-forgetting love.

The primeval Christian spirit, equally exalted and wise, showed that the believers had seen and touched reality. Nothing but the *fact*, concrete and eternal, of the incarnate Christ of God explains the whole character of an Apostle. That which could produce side by side, in a profound harmony as of musical parts, the absolute assurance of a heavenly vision and the perfection of elevated moral maturity must be nothing less than the central truth of things.

But was it so indeed? Then, past question, the Lord is alive to-day and evermore. That immeasurable wonder—veiled to us in its immensity by its own greatness and by our habituation to the traditional confession of it—INCARNATE GOD sacrificed, risen, and reigning, is immeasurable reality. Behold Him once again as we conclude! He passes by us in His grace and in His glory. He is man, our elder Brother, in all points tempted as we are, able to be touched, yet without sin; so that to His perfect sympathy is for ever joined that omnipotence to help which, without moral perfectness, could not be. And also He is the Lord, King of Glory, everlasting Son, the sinner's pardon, the believer's life, and purity, and power, and final hope.

"We would see Jesus," human and eternal, and we may. We would embrace Him, and we may. In the nearness of His manhood, in the fulness of His Deity, He comes to meet us with open and everlasting arms. Believed, obeyed, He gladdens with a vernal sunshine every region of our being. He cleanses the thoughts of our hearts by His radiant presence in the midst of them. He ennobles every faculty by using it for His will. And at the end, when heart and flesh are failing, He will not let us die. We shall not see death at all, though passing over it, for we shall see HIM as He is.