

of the hope that at some point God will dramatically intervene. Human affairs are so bad that no human agency seems competent to provide a solution. Despair itself gives birth to a wild and perhaps an extravagant hope. Now superficially this general hope of apocalyptic has many resemblances to evangelical hope. There is the same realistic appraisal of the present order. There is the same conviction that a divine irruption is the only hope of redemption. But there are two decisive differences.

The first is that the Christian hope derives from faith. Faith perceives that God has already intervened, that the age of God has come already. The denouement which is its fulfilment is therefore certain. For that reason there is nothing titanic or despairing about Christian hope. It is a quiet expectation that what is now present in faith will one day be fulfilled in sight. And it has its task to move forward to that fulfilment. Second, the intervention of God is not an intervention in the abstract, but the concrete work of redemption which has been done and will be consumed in and by Jesus Christ. The Christian hope is not a snatching at wild general possibilities. It is rooted in the historical work already accomplished by Jesus Christ. It is a concrete and personal hope in Christ Himself.

Surveying the teaching of Calvin, we may be surprised at the richness of a doctrine to which he devoted so little explicit attention. It cannot be pretended, of course, that he worked out all the implications of his statements. Yet he surely went to the heart of the matter when he related hope so plainly to faith and to the eschatological work of God in Jesus Christ. Understood in this way, hope can be safeguarded against both aimless generality and a disruptive apocalypticism. It can assume its true character as the patient but positive and well-grounded expectation which is the gift of the Holy Spirit. It can also exercise its true office in relation to the outlook and aims and the daily life and warfare of the Christian.

Praying in the Spirit

BY THE REV. CANON F. W. DILLISTONE, D.D.

SURELY Romans viii. 14-27 constitutes one of the most remarkable passages in the whole of the New Testament. Within the space of a few verses the Apostle reaches out in imagination to embrace the entire cosmic process and proceeds thereupon to link it to the activity of the Spirit in the life of the Church. There is a connection, he affirms, between the travail of the created order and that of the weakest individual Christian. It is one and the self-same Spirit Who is groaning both in the struggles which belong to the history of the natural order and in those which belong to the history of the human soul. Let us seek to examine the passage in more detail.

I

The framework of these verses is provided by the splendid vision of man, through the operation of the Spirit of Christ, gaining deliverance from every form of bondage to sin and death. The ruling contrast is that between life after the flesh and life after the Spirit. Those who live after the flesh set their minds—that is, their interests, their desires, their affections, their purposes—on purely egoistic and worldly ends : their bodies are in bondage to that mortality which is the fate of all men when separated from God. Man cannot indeed avoid living in the general sphere of the flesh, and because of this he is constantly subject to the downdrag of impulses and interests which are opposed to the Divine will, as well as to the temptations which spring from the weakness of a mortal and corruptible body. The central question is, however : How can he be delivered from his bondage to sin and death into an assurance of God's favour and a conformity to His Will ?

With an unshakable confidence St. Paul answers this question by proclaiming the possibility of life after the Spirit. Those whose interests are centred on the things of the Spirit, whose bodies are animated by the indwelling Spirit, can be assured of a growing mastery over the things of the flesh and of a final deliverance into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. Moreover, this life after the Spirit is far more than a vague and nebulous ideal. It is the life manifested once and for all in the perfect sonship and the victorious resurrection of the Christ. Growth in the Spirit is growth in the sonship revealed in the perfect Son : final deliverance through the Spirit is guaranteed by the act of God Who through His life-giving Spirit raised Jesus from the dead. In other words, life after the Spirit is life in Christ : the end of all the activities of the Spirit is to produce the pattern of sonship revealed in Him Who was the firstborn among many brethren.

II

When all this has been said, however, it is quite clear that St. Paul does not regard the achievement of the life after the Spirit as an immediate or even as a simple process. In the great central section of the chapter there is the full recognition of the inevitability of suffering, of the need for patience, of the waiting in expectancy which characterizes all life, of the groaning and travailing which are present in the created order—all these must precede the final unveiling of the sons of God. Only through a long process of life-through-death, triumph-through-suffering, regeneration-through-travail, will God's final purpose be attained.

It is a striking fact that this section is flanked on either side by a moving reference to the prayer-life of the Christian Church. We approach it, as it were, through the gateway of the prayer of childlike confidence. All who had received the Spirit of sonship gave evidence of their new status by joining in the heart-cry : *Abba, Father*. As is well known, the cry *Abba* is one of the Aramaic expressions commonly used in the primitive Church which passed over into Gentile Christianity. It may already have constituted the opening invocation of an early form of the Lord's Prayer and may well have been one of the first cries uttered by the newly-baptized. Whatever its more formal use

may have been, St. Paul clearly regards it as an outward testimony to an inner working of the Spirit in the heart of the one who utters the cry. When the Spirit bears witness to our spirit that we are indeed the sons of God, then the cry 'Father' must naturally rise to our lips. The status and relationship of the man who has received the Spirit are plain. He is a son of God. He has the right to address God as Father even as the perfect Son of God did in the days of His flesh. He is an heir, a joint-heir with Christ, of the glory that shall be revealed.

Yet the fact that the man who has received the Spirit is already in principle free from the bondage of sin and death, already in principle heir to the full liberty of the sons of God, does not mean that he is exempt from suffering and frustration and earnest longing. Rather it may mean that the yearning and the pain will be actually accentuated. Now through the Spirit he begins to realize how great are the glories of the Kingdom. Now through the same Spirit he begins to long for the full redemption of his body. So he groans within himself, desiring earnestly the consummation of that which at present he enjoys only in part. But such groaning, the Apostle affirms, is no isolated phenomenon. It is to be regarded as part of the universal travail which characterizes the whole of the created order. "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." And this groaning is not simply a dull protest of frustration against the apparent meaninglessness of existence. It is, in fact, the outward evidence of the movement of the Spirit Who is engaged in drawing the whole universe back into its true relationship of freedom within the family of God.

Thus the passage leads out again into prayer. Not now is it the joyful cry of recognition as the one newly born of the Spirit accepts his status as a child of God. Instead it is the travailing cry of the son who longs to enjoy more fully and more unceasingly the relationship into which he has been called. He prays—yet knows not what to pray. He longs earnestly—yet knows not how to express himself in words. He sighs, he groans—and feels how weak and poor and unworthy are his efforts to draw nigh to God. Then comes the great reassurance of the Apostle. Do not despair, he seems to say. Your very longings are the result of the Spirit's activity: your groanings are in reality His groanings: your inarticulateness allows the Spirit to express desires which are in accordance with the will of God: your unuttered prayers give ample evidence that the Spirit is catching you up into His unceasing intercession by which He moves to bring the whole world back to the feet of God!

III

Within the history of the Reformed Churches the two aspects of prayer emphasized in Romans 8 have gained full recognition. In his valuable book, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*, Dr. Geoffrey Nuttall reminds us that one of the greatest re-discoveries of the Reformation was the Fatherhood of God. In the Middle Ages the nature of God had been mainly conceived either in intellectual terms or through judicial and governmental images. But now "one thing was the centre of all the life and all the teaching of the Reformers—that

God was speaking to them as their reconciled Father, and that they were in direct communion with Him". The immediate result was a renaissance of filial prayer. Those who knew God as Father could naturally and eagerly cry Abba : the Spirit was bearing witness with their spirits that they were sons of God.

But not only was it Romans viii. 15-16. which brought a renewal of the life of prayer. The Puritans in particular loved Romans viii. 26 and quoted it constantly in their writings. It was even used by Richard Baxter to support a protest which he was making against the almost fanatical insistence by some of his brethren that all prayer must be extempore. "It is a great error," he writes, "to think that the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit may not be exercised if we use the same words or if they be prescribed. I doubt you lay too much on words. . . . Words must be used and weighed, but the main work is heart work, and God knoweth the meaning of the Spirit when we have but groans which we cannot express and cry but Abba, Father".

Passing on to a later stage of Puritan history, the mid-nineteenth century finds Horace Bushnell exercising a notable ministry in Hartford, Connecticut. Through his preaching, writing and lecturing he brought new influences to bear within the Puritanism of New England, transforming what had tended to harden into a stern orthodoxy into a passionate faith. One of his best known books was entitled *The Vicarious Sacrifice*, and in this book one of the most original chapters is entitled, "The Holy Spirit in Vicarious Sacrifice". He begins by urging that our commonly received impressions of the Holy Spirit leave all too little room for the marks of feeling and character which belong to true personality. The Holy Spirit is not to be regarded simply as gift or influence or power. He works in a ministry of love precisely as Jesus did, "burdened for men, burdened for enemies, heaving in silent agonies of passion to recover and save". The essential sacrifice of Christ did not consist in pains borne in His body. Rather it was the "long weary draft upon His patience, His disgusts and wounded sensibilities" which were borne as a constant burden in His intercessory prayer. The vicarious sacrifice of the Spirit consists in the continuance of this travail of priestly intercession.

It is not surprising that Bushnell finds special support for his teaching in the passage from the Epistle to the Romans to which we have been devoting our attention. He regards 'helpeth' as much too weak a translation of the Greek word *συναντιλαμβάνεται*, a word which, he claims, holds within it a notable strength of vicarious assumption : he lays stress upon the references to priestly intercession in the passage, claiming that the intercession of the Spirit "is the wrestling within of His own divine sympathy and suffering love, to raise them into accord with God's mind and the secret notions of His goodness". But his main object is to show how comparable the vicarious work of the Spirit is to that of Christ. He speaks of the 'groanings unuttered' as 'the silent Gethsemane' of the Spirit's ministry. "One, as truly as the other, and both in exact conformity, fulfil the natural pathology of love and sacrifice ; Christ, when He throws Himself upon the ground, groaning aloud for the mere burden He has upon His feeling, and without any other kind of distress ; and the Spirit, when He

enters into the struggles of our disorder and weakness with so great concern, groaning inaudibly in us and heaving out our soul in sighs and prayers." Thus, he writes, "the Holy Spirit works in the same feeling as Christ did, bears the same burdens on His love, suffers the same wounded sensibility, encounters loss and sacrifice under the same vicarious impulse". And he concludes the section with a sentence which, though somewhat rhetorical to our ears, conveys the depth of his own concern and is probably not an unfair representation of the Apostle's own thought. "This much, however, I will say, that if the sacrifices of the much-enduring, agonizing Spirit were acted before the senses in the manner of the incarnate life of Jesus, He would seem to make the world itself a kind of Calvary from age to age, and would just as impressively sanctify the law by the perennial obedience of His sacrifices, as Christ did by the casual sacrifice of His cross." This 'faithful and strong Spirit', this 'piercing and severe Spirit', this tender and self-sacrificing Spirit is constantly at work in human hearts to beget us in holiness and to bring us to a state of full reconciliation with God.

IV

If the Holy Spirit is a vicarious Spirit : if the Church of Jesus Christ is the community of the Holy Spirit : then it follows that it is the constant purpose of the Spirit to make the Church a truly vicarious Church. All too often the Church seems weak and confused and hesitant. It either says nothing or utters words which seem little more than groans. Yet here stands the great proclamation of St. Paul that the Spirit is bearing the burden and formulating the unuttered cries. If only the Church is willing to accept its vocation as the vicarious Church, the Spirit will sanctify its fumbling deeds and its uncertain words and make them part of the universal travail in which He Himself is engaged.

One of the most impressive addresses given at the Willingen Conference in 1952 was by Reinold von Thadden, the leader of the great Christian lay-movement in Germany. Speaking of the mission of the Church he urged that a Church under the Cross must be a vicarious Church. "The world," he said, "will not bring its needs and perplexities before God. It revolts or despairs; it rages or resigns. We, however, can take its fate upon our shoulders and vicariously bring it before God. What other use should the Church make of its knowledge of the remission of sins? It knows, indeed, better than the world what unforgiven guilt means. It knows better how unforgiven guilt nourishes, for instance, the tensions still existing between employer and employees. It knows better how unforgiven guilt separates the nations and prevents peace. What use does it want to make of the intercession entrusted to it? I believe that every good idea, every good plan devised by the Church for the improvement of the situation of men, has sprung from the rich source of diligent and concrete intercession. Whoever takes time to pray for people who in their blindness tread a destructive way, whoever takes time to bring this waywardness before the ears of God, will know how creative such action can be. The world has preserved a very distinct feeling that

the Church can do some things which the world cannot bring about. The world is waiting for the vicarious service of a Church under the Cross”.

So we return to the wonderful balance of Romans viii. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of sonship : He assures us of our rights and privileges in relation to the Father : He enables us to utter with confidence and hope the sacred words, ‘ Our Father ’. At the same time the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of vicarious sacrifice : He teaches us of our duties and responsibilities in relation to the world : He gathers us up into the travail by which the created order is being redeemed unto the glorious liberty of the children of God : He enables us to intercede—and when words fail He still makes our requests known unto God. Such is the earnest of the Spirit. But “ if the earnest,” cries Irenaeus, “ drawing human nature into itself, already makes it say ‘ Abba, Father ’, what will the whole grace of the Spirit do, which men will then receive from God? It will make us like God, and perfect us according to the Father’s will ; for it will make man after the image and likeness of God ”.

Christian Healing—A Consideration

BY THE REV. DOUGLAS WEBSTER, M.A.

THE title should be noted. There were many possible alternatives but mostly ambiguous ones. There is a general agreement that ‘ Christian ’ is that which derives from Christ and that healing is the process which leads to cure or restoration. Christian healing, then, may be said to be healing which in its source, its means and its end is entirely Christian. Other popular expressions are often used intentionally in this good sense but by no means invariably—hence the confusion. ‘ Faith healing ’ leaves open the question, ‘ Faith in whom? ’ Very often it need suggest little more than confidence in the human ‘ healer ’. ‘ Spiritual healing ’ is better, but the word ‘ spiritual ’ is vague and in the sphere of healing can so easily become an equivalent for ‘ spiritualist ’, for spiritualist circles are responsible for a good deal of healing to-day. Again, it could so easily imply that the healing is confined to the spirit—but Jesus healed bodies and minds as well ; or that the means of healing are purely spiritual—but Jesus used spittle, possibly analysis, and certainly the ritual law. ‘ Divine healing ’ avoids these difficulties but is not very specific. Could not all healing be said to be divine in that its ultimate fount is God, just as all truth is similarly divine? The doctor’s skill, in so far as it is scientific, is from God-given knowledge ; medicine is extracted from the earth God made.

But terminology is not our only difficulty. This subject is a happy