

proof in Jesus Christ. He who took the throbbing heart, which beats in the first four verses, and laid it on His bosom, saying, "Thou art right, I am the Good Shepherd," so that since He walked on earth the name is no more a mere metaphor of God, but the clearest, strongest reality that has ever visited this world of shadows—He also has been proved by men as the Host and Defender of all who seek His aid from the memory and the pursuit of sin. So He received them in the days of His flesh, as they drifted upon Him across the wilderness of life, pressed by every evil that it is possible for sin to bring upon us. To Him they were all "guests of God," welcomed for His sake, irrespective of what their past might have been. And so, being lifted up, He still draws them to Himself, and still proves Himself able to come between them and their past. Whatever they may flee from He keeps it away, so that, although to the last for penitence they may be reminded of their sins, and their enemies come up again and again to the open door of memory,—in Him they are secure. He is their defence, and their peace is impregnable.

GEORGE ADAM SMITH.

### GOD'S CALL TO SELF-POSSESSION.

NAPOLÉON the Third is said to have shown traces of a peculiar power, which may perhaps be described as the exact converse of that personal magnetism by which some leaders inspire and exalt their allies. His presence seemed to lower for the time being the vitality and intelligence of those who came into contact with him, and so acted as to destroy their self-possession. By some occult spell thrown over them, he could disturb their recollectedness, and so empty them of

their power that it was impossible for them to be at their best in his company. If that strange man had really such a gift, and set himself to exercise it, the motive could only have been selfish, inhuman, flagrantly wicked. Some men, laying no claim to occult endowments of any kind, do nevertheless delight to bear down, overawe, and paralyse all possible rivals, and we apply to them one of the most contemptuous epithets in the language. Animated by envy, the lust of dominion, assertive egotism, they take a sinister pleasure in obtruding their power and parading their superior audacity. There is a despotism of the will and the brain and the tongue just as unholy and ungracious as the despotism of the irresponsible autocrat who tramples upon the bodies and material interests of those subject to his sway.

Such tempers and methods must ever be inconsistent with true virtue and benevolence of character. The man who is great by gift, or office, or opportunity, and at the same time unfeignedly good, will shrink back at the idea of incapacitating by occult terrorism those who come within the field of his influence. He will wish them to employ their powers to the best possible advantage for the common weal, and to this end will seek to put them at their ease, to encourage them to intellectual self-command, to build them up, and not to cast them down.

Such is the character of God. The vision of His presence and power is not meant to permanently depress and overawe and paralyse. His glory is overwhelming, but it is not His will to annihilate reason and all that constitutes personality by the manifestations of His majesty. As in the cases of Job, Ezekiel, and John in Patmos, He calls His servants to dignified self-possession, to collected reasonableness, to quiet, unfluttered thought and deliberation in His presence.

Self-possession is necessary for the highest forms of inter-

course with God, as well as for that service of God amongst men for which such intercourse qualifies. The Divine service is essentially reasonable, establishing its sanctions through an appeal to the reason, and achieving its ends by the instrumentality of the reason.

A man cannot be an intelligent recipient of the Divine Revelation till he has made some little progress in the art of self-possession. Now and again God makes Himself known in vivid and stupendous ways which smite mortals with fear and trembling. For the time being, He strips them of their manliness. As He suddenly discovers Himself to their perceptions they seem to be plunged into an atmosphere in which it is all but impossible to breathe. Some such sensation afflicts them as though they had been placed under the receiver of an air-pump and all that which vitalizes the mental consciousness were being slowly sucked away from them. The characteristic attributes of the personality are numbed, stifled, half destroyed, and the man who is the subject of these manifestations might well think himself in the throes of a process intended to dissolve the elements which make up the unity of his being, and merge him irrecoverably into the terrible Infinite. Now this paralysing sense of the supernatural which seems almost to threaten the obliteration of the individual is only temporary. God does not wish to subtract anything from the personality or to make us less than that which He created us to be. It can be no part of His design to sink us below the stature of our full manhood and to make us grovel in His presence, just as the subjects of some eastern kings upon appearing before the throne are expected to drop, like quadrupeds, upon all fours. This putting forth of His subduing power and splendour both upon contumacious sinners and saints whose obedience is deteriorated by reservations, has its urgent needs-be. It

arrests men in their headstrong sin, it tames the soul to completer harmony with God's nature and demand, it touches sleeping fibres of faith and reverence in their being which have escaped quickening in the superficial processes of bygone years. But after all the only thing God wants to draw out of the personality, is the taint of selfishness, affinity for wrong, soft complaisance towards transgression. Indeed it is the sin latent in us which produces collapse before His presence, and when that is gone serene self-possession is recovered. He does not wish to blight or restrain and reduce a single constituent in the sum total of a man's identity. His first word after laying low the turbulent transgressor or overwhelming with His glory the imperfect and half-hearted servant, is the word that calls us to our feet and bids us be ourselves.

This lack of quiet self-possession is sometimes the reason why stricken, conquered, storm-tossed souls cannot enter into the quiet of saving faith. A temptation to keep back the obedient response to God's solicitation of human confidence may come in two opposite ways. Many a man persuades himself that his heart is not sufficiently stirred to be able to exercise the faith that will save him. He is too cool, too much master of himself, too deliberate and calculating and self-possessed in his moods. The psychological atmosphere, he is tempted to think, is far too commonplace. And, on the other hand, those most profoundly wrought upon, most overpowered by a sense of their guilt and of the Divine holiness, exercised to the point of distraction by some force which has fixed itself within their emotions, find it is very difficult to collect their minds into an intelligent and purposeful effort of faith. Their natures are almost stupefied by the mighty supernatural arrest that has come to them. They feel as most people feel after some sudden and tragic trouble has burst over their heads, as though they were made of stone. The

power of thought and emotion seems to have been frozen up or has almost passed away. They cannot collect themselves for what is demanded at their hands. They are prostrate, inert through the excess of feeling, "all of a heap," as the familiar and homely phrase puts it. Saul, the blinded persecutor, must have been in some such condition as he lay prone at the gate of Damascus, for he could not then and there put forth the faith by which he was healed, built up, sanctified. Time and opportunity must be allowed for the mind to assert itself, a space for rest and mental recuperation, meet occasion for the powers to collect themselves again and to act. God cannot breathe faith into a purely passive soul, or a soul exhausted by the excess of its own emotion. The nature prostrate and helpless through overwhelming conviction must be brought out of its paralysing amazement. Faith is an act which demands collectedness of mind, a rational and reflective attitude, modest self-possession. Overwhelming emotion may sometimes precede and may often follow conversion, but the critical moment of faith is a moment of quiet and intelligent endeavour. True it is that faith is God's gift, but the hand that receives is not the hand which is clutched with terror or folded in sleep, but the hand which is heedfully and unfalteringly held out. God can no more put faith into a nature paralysed by the excess of its own emotion, than He can put faith into a nature dead in trespasses whilst it continues dead. There must be quiet, collected, steady-eyed vigilance.

Whilst reverence in God's presence is a duty from which there can be no release, that sacred emotion of the soul is not intended to dumbfound and transfix us, however mighty the revelations to which it is a tribute. Indeed, the reverence that is allied to helplessness and imperfect perception is manifestly a sentiment of inferior quality. The man brings some kind of reproach upon himself who wishes to

dazzle the supporters he is rallying to his side. He confesses his own meagre endowment in the power to captivate, who seeks to lull his admirers into dreaminess, or fascinate them into stupor and so disarm their judgments. The Commander-in-Chief of an army, who plots to drug the battalions of his opponents, admits thereby the weakness of his own fighting forces. He is not able to measure himself against his adversaries under normal conditions. If, as God comes forth to conquer us, His revelations put the larger part of our mental life to sleep, or obscure a single faculty or perception, that would be practically a confession of weakness. It would imply He has not adequate moral and spiritual reserve force wherewith to subdue our souls into adoration of His attributes and homage to His great behests. The first flash of His presence may affright, stupefy, half blind; but that is because we have been such atheists in the past and have accustomed ourselves to live without the sense of His presence. By-and-by all the powers of the nature will rise up to receive Him in the vast totality of His greatness and splendour. When God sees fit to disclose His majesty and abash our pride, He does not intend to permanently weaken, discourage, paralyse. That would be to surround Himself with worshippers of meaner capacity and servants of inferior fitness for His tasks. He has nothing in common with those barbarian kings, who fancy dwarfs, deaf-mutes and shrivelled monstrosities for their pages, and who make their courts spectacles of deformity and mutilation. Alike for the honour and glory of His own name, the quality of the love which He wishes to attract to His person, and the prosperity of the work to which He designates us, he desires to call forth, train, and perfect the maximum powers that are in us.

The largest and the loftiest service of God is that which is rational in the best sense of the word. Those disclosures of His being, character and operation which God will

make both in this life and in that which is to come, are intended to stimulate and not to depress that group of faculties of which the brain is the symbol. Is it likely that God by His breath would create this subtle mechanism of thought within us for the gross, mercenary ends of our physical life, and then when we pass to the confines of a nobler destiny wreck the mechanism by the impact of His unmeasured revelations, or throw it out of working gear by the fierce untempered pressure of His terrible presence? He has created us all that which we find ourselves, so that we may be better able to comprehend Him than beings less richly endowed, and we cannot think that this special capacity will be overwhelmed and destroyed as soon as the goal comes into view. At the zenith of his development, man can pay his Maker a loftier tribute than bird or beast or flower, and it is incredible that the Maker should wish to take us permanently back a single step towards lower levels of intelligence by suspending the operations of any of our faculties as a sign even of His superior grandeur. Every mental power must be healthy, well mastered, on the alert, so that we lose nothing from His many-sided revelations. God is more honoured by the praise of a wakeful, active-minded congregation, than by the praise of a solitary worshipper or two whilst the rest are asleep. The soul is an assembly of faculties whose operations blend into each other, and God is most worthily extolled and glorified when the congregation of faculties within us is alive, conscious, operative rather than dazed by a mood compounded of wonder and fear in which consciousness is all but lost. We cannot apprehend God and assimilate His truth and life in states of feeling which are partly trance conditions. The highest intercourse with God attainable by a human soul is that in which the soul is perfectly self-possessed and competent to command its own powers and apply its own discernments.

Men may come into mental states in which we describe them as possessed,—possessed either by the Spirit of God for good or by an unclean spirit for evil. But possession represents only a half-way stage towards a final goal of holiness or sin. There is something worse than devil-possession before the wicked man; it is the state in which he has become master of himself for evil, and brings his entire nature into play to promote what is bad without the prompting or instigation of an associated mind. And there is perhaps something higher than being possessed by a Divine afflatus for good; it is the state in which a man has become master over himself for what is noble, and quietly and thoughtfully uses the entire group of his disciplined powers for the apprehension of God and the setting forth of His will to others. Perhaps that may never be reached in this life, or reached only as the consummation of its gracious training. In possession both for evil and for good the personality becomes more or less veiled, overshadowed, suppressed.

The manifestation of majesty that confounds and permanently disables by its intenseness unfits for the truest and most comprehensive communion with God. Vivid theophanies may have overwhelmed for an instant saints of peculiar privilege, and plunged them into self-forgetting transports, but it has been in the Divine order that the highest powers of the mind should come to assert themselves again; and the unutterable and awe-struck experiences of the great Jehovah's presence issued at last in making those who received them more royally masters of themselves, and their own spiritual resources.

In our own, as well as in earlier times, Christianity has fallen under the influence of those Oriental philosophies which assume that the basis of human personality is evil, and its duration fleeting, and that reabsorption into the infinite and universal life is the goal of all aspiration and



progress. Preachers who are more eclectic than profound, sometimes deny a physical resurrection, speak ambiguously about the permanence of the individual consciousness, and half imply that in the end we shall be taken back into the Divine, and be as indistinguishably lost there as we were before our creation. If immortality is affirmed at all, it is affirmed as an attribute of the race rather than of its members, of the power which moulds universal life rather than as the property of those who embody the mystery of life for a season, and then vanish away. Such theories suggest a universe presided over by the spider which sucks the vital juices out of its victims and leaves fragments of legs and glittering wing-cases to decorate its web. The idea seems to be that the infinite cannot tolerate the finite, that it is always thirsting to draw all the properties, and attributes of manhood out of us, and that it will leave at last the mere husk and shell of a forgotten personality behind, to bleach in the wind, or not even that. The infinite is painted as though it were the giant of old, who devoured his own children, a dark bottomless whirlpool of fury, drawing into its vortex all created life. Such a view credits God with predatory instincts rather than pays Him the glory of His own absolute and eternal love. No father wishes to see the personalities of his children effaced, and to find them reach the height of their destiny in an apotheosis of absorption would be a prospect the heart of parental love could not contemplate without dismay. God wishes to take nothing but the folly, defect and evil out of our personalities.

In Christ's high-priestly prayer we find the charter which pledges the permanence of all those elements which constitute personality. His relation to the Father which presupposed the essentials of personality was to be the standard looked to in the perfecting of the disciples. "As Thou Father art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may

be one in Us." Our Lord's union with the Father was not of such a character as to lead Him to think of Himself as the Father rather than the Son. Whatever else was common between the Son and His Father, consciousness was differentiated and personal. Love would have been impossible apart from this bifurcation of consciousness or would have assumed the form of self-love, which after all is the negation of love and mere selfishness of a more or less refined quality. The branch which is grafted into the stock of a tree still produces its own specific flowers in spite of its union with the tree, and produces them more nobly because of the reinforcement of life it receives from the tree. Our Lord's union with His Father, accentuated rather than obscured the properties of His personality. The outburst of glory on the holy mount which dazed the disciples and made them heavy with sleep awoke Christ's faculties into keener consciousness and finer energy. He was in His eternal environment and all the elements of His life were vastly quickened. The Father was ever dwelling in the Son, but the personality of the Father was not lost in the mystery of intercommunion, and the Son was ever dwelling in the Father, but He remained a perfectly conscious and clearly defined Son, and His personality was neither volatilised nor swallowed up by the mystic relation. The union which entirely absorbs makes *communion* a fixed impossibility. And His own age-long fellowship with the Father, Christ presents as the type and consummation of all human excellence and blessedness. We might as well speak of God losing Himself in man as of man losing his personal consciousness in God and never finding it again. Pantheism makes human personality a mere snow crystal which is to be dissolved in the sun, but in Christ's view it is more like the diamond which is brought into the sunbeam. No chemical change is set up which destroys the diamond; on the contrary new proper-

ties are shown in both stone and sun by the juxtaposition of the two, and there is no trace of absorption on either side. The stone does not entomb the sunbeam nor does the sunbeam disintegrate and dissolve the stone.

Ages await us in which the revelations of God will far transcend the grandest disclosures of the past; but even then these revelations will be attempered to our capacity to receive and assimilate. Man's intellectual grasp, far from being overstrained and palsied by the strange secrets of the future, will only be stimulated and enlarged. The manifestations of glory which await us are sometimes so described as though they were designed to smite men into petrifications of awe, to put upon the nature a weight of solemnity that will render it entirely passive, to dispossess the intellect of that which makes it kingly and invests it for royal priesthood, and weaken, if not destroy, all the elements of personal consciousness and self-possession. Now He who spake to Moses face to face, and who assuaged the fears of John when he was smitten by a countenance which eclipsed the sun shining in his strength, and who told the prophet Ezekiel to lift himself up to the full height of his manhood, so that he might learn his supreme lesson and receive his commission direct from the lips of the Most High Himself, will say to us as we lie oppressed by the solemn and weighty revelations which will burst upon us at our emancipation from the senses and sense-elements, "Stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee."

We are not children of the mist, freaks of cloud-scape, broken shadows, iridescent vapours whose destiny it is to confront the sunlight and be irretrievably dissolved. In the maturity of an all-round, unshrinking, indefectible personality, we shall be summoned into the presence of His glory to quietly receive the nobler teaching of the hereafter. He will call us to lift ourselves up to the full measure of the stature of our perfected manhood so that we may be

fit to receive truths which for the present are unutterable. He will need a personality symmetrical, uncrippled, royally upright and complete to address in the new communion of relationship into which He will call us. He will ask us then to be self-possessed, and He is teaching us the alphabet of that duty now.

T. G. SELBY.

PROFESSOR G. A. SMITH'S "HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE HOLY LAND."

IN venturing to write a review of Prof. G. A. Smith's *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, I feel somewhat like "the man in the street" attempting to criticise a work of fine scholarship. But the wish that I should do so has been expressed by those whom I am unwilling to disappoint; and perhaps the impression made by the book on a bystander who is interested in the game of Old Testament study, though not himself able to play, may possess some slight interest, and warrant the following paragraphs in appearing before the public. Besides having myself studied with some minuteness the *Historical Geography* of another part of Western Asia, I have had the advantage of frequently talking about the early history of the Hebrew people with my friend Prof. Robertson Smith, and of reading under his guidance in 1878 everything that he thought most valuable on the criticism and interpretation of the Mosaic books and the historical books of the Old Testament—a long piece of work which afterwards proved a most valuable education for the problems that face the historical investigator in Asia Minor. Naturally, after such a course as was marked out by Robertson Smith, one retains a permanent interest in the subject; and this interest has made me welcome most heartily a book which