

those who bear His name. However long a task it may prove, as men count time, the Lord Jesus will yet have His yoke fitted to the world's neck ; and the Father's will shall be done on earth as in heaven. He must reign.

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### *THE ADORATION OF JESUS.*

THE apocalypse of John appears to have been written in the heart of a wild storm which smote upon certain circles of the early Church towards the close of the first century. The book came to some Christians belonging to the diocese or circuit of the prophet John in Asia Minor, who were almost being carried off their feet by an imperial policy of persecution directed against the very centre of their faith, an attempt to substitute Cæsar for God as the supreme object of human worship. The Apocalypse was meant, and has proved of service ever since in the experience of the Church, for the tempted and the wavering. Stripped of accidental details, its message is direct and plain. It is a scripture addressed to all who find inducements in their circumstances to prove disloyal to Jesus or to admit misgivings, uncertainty, and languor into their consciousness of God, especially by failing to realize how completely their relation to Him is bound up with the work of Jesus. To keep such people straight and confident amid the cross-currents of opinion and social usage or the more private vexations of life, this scripture is composed ; it aims at putting an edge upon man's sense of need and at displaying the wealth and wonder of God's provision.

That is one reason why it opens with a vision of Jesus. For what people need above all in so trying a position is to have their hearts and imaginations flooded with a warm sense of God's character and purpose. Faithfulness depends on faith, and faith is rallied by the grasp not of itself but of

its object. The first aids to wounded or fainting faith are found, outside the ground of introspection, in the exulting consciousness that there is a God behind and over all, that this God is our God, and that He is completely and uniquely intelligible in Jesus. Those who require to have their trust kept alive do not want acute analysis of their own fears and hopes. Their experience and ideas promise little or no permanent satisfaction. The way to lift them out of depression into the manliness and confidence of faith is to win them from the absorbing contemplation of themselves to reflect on the greatness of their God; and what more persuasive and ample revelation of God's providence can be found than that offered historically and personally in Jesus, as men realize his spirit and recollect his life? The truth breaks in waves of joy upon the soul, and we can feel the prophet's heart vibrating under its intuition in his opening doxology, one instance of that "*carmen Christo quasi deo dicere*" with which Pliny found the Asiatic Christians sustaining themselves in a tenacious loyalty which seemed to him little better than sheer obstinacy and perversity. The vibration passes into these words:

*To him who loves us and loosed us from our sins by his own blood—yea and he made us kings and priests unto his God and Father—to him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

*To him . . . be the glory!* John knows perfectly well that he can induce his friends to forget their own anxieties and weaknesses only by prompting them to look up with glowing recollection to the character of Jesus; not unless they rank him higher than all else, can they feel the rock under their feet, and live consistent and elate. For undeniably apprehensions, which mean instability, begin to fade as the conscience lays stress on the eternal background of human faith in the person and achievements of Christ, and before the prophet John has anything to say about his friends' trial, he has

much to say about their Lord. He does this in order to break up any possible complacency and make them radically sensible of their true needs. It is a healthy discipline. Dr. Chalmers confesses in his journal that he spent a whole year in youth pondering little except the sublime conception of God's energy and power, which stood out before his mind with such vividness that scarcely an hour passed when he did not breathe "a sort of mental elysium. And the one idea which ministered to my soul all its rapture was the magnificence of the Godhead, and the universal subordination of all things to the one great purpose for which He evolved and was supporting creation." This capacity of taking a wide and religious survey of the world rescues faith from many of the dangers attendant upon local vexations and absorption in the details of ordinary life; and, were it for nothing else, it would be salutary on that account. In some degree the attitude is absolutely essential to a healthy faith. Adoration means inspiration; it rallies and supports the soul. To be rescued from the weakness which attends mistiness and pettiness of outlook, as well as from stolidity, piety must be fed not so much with great thoughts of God as with thoughts of God's greatness, especially of the scope and depth implied in Jesus and his salvation. Sane and spontaneous devotion of this kind has always a value of its own in religion. For as Jesus is the proof and assurance that God is uppermost in the world, and that the last word will be His, obviously the true and wise order of life is to keep him uppermost in our estimates and opinions, since any dulness upon this point reacts disastrously upon the springs of conduct. No surer index of religion is to be discovered than the relative value men assign instinctively to the various objects of their moral confidence. And as the supreme test is not what we admit into the circle of admiration, but what we set up on the throne; not what is thought good but what is thought best—so the moment of moments

in religion is when a man passes from the confession "Jesus is admirable" to the cry "Jesus is indispensable." Amid uneasiness and strain, whatever be the difficulties that claim a man's sympathy or tax his endurance, they are best met and understood as he learns to approach them along this line of a profound conviction of God's providence and presence in Jesus. *To him . . . be the glory!* Such is the standpoint accessible and essential to the Christian soul at any rate; and the least modification or relaxation of the supreme value possessed by Jesus for the drifting soul of man spells moral weakness in the end. No combination of threatening circumstances is really so formidable to faith as the temper which has come to disparage its need of Jesus for the knowledge or service of God. The primary requirement is to know not the number of the Beast but the central place of the Lord.

But men need more than the conviction of an over-arching and eternal providence of God in Jesus to secure them against panic or lethargy of conscience. It is everything to them to feel sure of the real character that lies behind this massive power, and Christianity meets the need by ascribing sovereignty to a God of love. Men are in the hands not merely of One who is more than equal to all visible authorities but of *him who loves us*. The R.V. of this verse rightly changes the A.V. *Who loved us* is true, but it is not all the truth. *Who loves us* is a phrase covering the timeless grace of God in Jesus, which underlies the Christian experience, and is expressed, not exhausted, in Jesus' death. The dominion of Jesus rests upon his power of love. He is Lord of human life simply because—in the deepest sense—he bears an eternal love to it. *He that hath the bride is the bridegroom*. He has won the heart of men, not by overwhelming displays of magnificence and authority, but by a revelation of his own heart in its warmth and purity, showing mankind that in their life with him they

can reckon upon ungrudging patience and succour, perfect understanding of their needs, and eternal pity for their sorrows. However they fare, he associates himself with them and makes their interests his own. The constant sense of this, which grows upon a man with his experience, is the emotion of the religious life. It is also the one safe attitude in view of a situation where persecution is imminent. Repeatedly throughout the Apocalypse of John the movement of thought swings back to this centre of gravity in the Christian faith, the profound and overmastering sense of indebtedness to Jesus for his interpretation and protection of man's life in this confusing world. In Jesus the prophet John finds, and would have others for their health and peace find also, the current of an undeserved love pouring upon man from first to last, counting no sacrifice too costly and deeming no object too mean or poor. This is thrown into the foreground of the book for obvious reasons, which are intensely practical. As the second and third chapters show, the world in the church is more serious to John than even the church in the world. The consciousness of all that is put at man's disposal by that Love, the revelation of the value attached by God to the individual soul and of His incredible care and pains to secure its welfare, these—together with the sense of piercing gratitude—must at all costs be revived, for they are among the strongest forces astir in human experience that make for loyalty and nerve the conscience against compromise and dismay. Where they are keen, the fire of patience and of courage will not easily die down, since the controlling sense of Christ's love to men inevitably nerves them, as any great passion or pure trust must do, to be somewhat worthy of itself. Hence the appositeness of this allusion, almost the only one made by John in this apocalypse, to the love of Jesus as a motive for man's adoration of his person. The practical inference is that disappointing and disappointed

alike can draw immediate comfort to themselves, and with comfort courage, as they turn from their past record or the hostility of their surroundings to the luminous gospel that in Jesus God loves them and loves them of His own accord. The situation, John feels, is far too serious to be met by any commonplace belief or cold acceptance of the truth, or by easy-going good nature on the part of Christian men. Such ways of thought and feeling coast the quicksands dangerously near.

But even love needs to be shown, if it is to be fully trusted and obeyed. It is powerful as it is visible and active ; and the adoration of Jesus which steadies men is born of their personal experience and of sane reflection upon the integral parts of that experience. The content of faithfulness includes thought as well as emotion. Men are kept loyal to Jesus, John explains in this doxology, as they lie under a hearty and intelligent, if simple, sense of what he has done for them and what he makes of them. Both are to be realized.

He has done for them a work of redemption, the supreme evidence of his love being that he has dealt with sin. He *loves us and loosed us from our sins by his own blood*. So John describes the redeeming act, speaking of the share of Jesus in more active terms than usual, yet making no attempt to explain or justify a statement which was a commonplace to most Christians in his day.<sup>1</sup> The object of the passage is purely practical and devotional. Simple and pregnant, it reflects a combination of accuracy and moral impressiveness which has not always marked later and elaborate attempts to philosophize upon the same subject. Men are recalled to their consciousness of freedom and reconciliation with God, in contrast to the fettered

<sup>1</sup> Some frank and reverent reflections on this redeeming effect of Jesus' death are offered by Dr. Paul Rohrbach in his recent volume of travels, *Im Lande Jahvehs und Jesu* (1901); Gulgatha, pp. 418-427.

hampered intercourse which was their all until Jesus became to them God's deep assurance of forgiveness and strength. They are invited to remember the great change, and to remember that they do not owe it to anything less than the sheer grace and goodwill of Jesus. Nothing can well be more explicit or obvious to the conscience. And this emphasis upon the fact, not upon the "why" or the "how" of forgiveness, is primarily meant for all who are prone, while they dwell upon temptation, to undervalue the love of God as something too ethereal to meet and master the coarse, uniform pressure of evil upon the soul. The death of Jesus shows God's love both active and victorious, capable of entering into the worst details of life and triumphing over its supreme enemies. Jesus, in a word, came to be a Saviour and he did his work. For that sympathy and effectiveness men adore him; and adoring him they are delivered from the power of many base dominions. For after that great deliverance and all that it implies upon the part of Christ, who can reasonably doubt his will to claim and succour human life, much less his sincerity and ability? Persuade men to get a sight and sense of Jesus their Redeemer, and you have begun to render them less capable of yielding to any of those temptations which depend for their effectiveness upon their power of getting a secondary place assigned to Jesus in the scale of moral value. The simplicity with which John produces this impression is a proof, if proof be needed still, that the adoration of Christ is quite independent of that "swollen habit" of speech upon the subject which Channing once resented as unintelligent and unmoral. Here ecstasy leads to moral activity, and praise does not slope away into barren verbiage or dithyrambic ornament.

This love of Jesus prompts to further loyalty and gratitude, however, because it evidently makes something of men's character in the present. *To him who loves us and loosed*

us from our sins, and—for still more has to be done—he made us kings and priests unto his God and Father, a Jewish method of picturing the growth and greatness of man towards God. Moral dignity and inner devoutness, royalty and reverence, nobility of bearing and intercourse with God, these are two permanent effects of grace in life, against which the trials of life, as these Asiatic Christians no doubt were finding, are at serious feud. Trouble and hardship are apt to break down the erect and serene spirit of faith, and at the same time to suggest that God is distant and somewhat aloof. Hence the double note struck here. There is a somewhat analogous experience in the 51st Psalm, where the writer first prays for pardon and then asks, in almost the same breath, for an erect undaunted spirit: *Create in me a clean heart, O God—and renew a right (or, steadfast) spirit within me; uphold me with a free (princely) spirit.* To be a king and a priest, in some such sense, is the prophet John's ideal of the Christian career; in the present passage, quoting these Old Testament names, he leaves *βασιλείαν, ἱερεῖς* (see v. 10) as a literal and harsh rendering of the Hebrew phrase, probably to bring out the idea of reigning by itself. Even we, harried and despised and insignificant, in a corner of this huge pagan empire, possess a royal standing of our own. We are not units, but a community with a history and a hope. Our connexion with Jesus opens up a commanding position, and we too have our "Imperial" day.<sup>1</sup> With military instinct, like a general rallying his troops on the eve of an engagement, John strikes this ringing note of authority as an element of

<sup>1</sup> This seems to be the sense in which *the Lord's day* is used in Apoc. i. 10. The first day of each month appears to have been called in Asia Minor the *Imperial day* (Σεβαστή, cf. Deissmann's *Bible Studies*, E. Tr., pp. 218, 219). In a book where Jesus is repeatedly the antithesis to the pagan emperor who attempted to usurp his divine position, there is evident appropriateness in a Christian calling the first day of the week by a title which implicitly suggested the imperial prestige and worship of the Christian Lord.



faith, to remind his readers that their relation to Jesus makes them masters of the world and destines them to be slaves of no passion, policy, or change. Faith, to succeed, must cease to be merely apologetic; it must be felt as a regal experience. To be saved by Jesus evidently is to be regarded as far more than a mere rescue. Is it not initiation into the higher life of a royal community, with privileges and rights to which men must live up? *Noblesse oblige*. Jesus is to be adored because he makes his people free men, gifting them with an independent career of their own for which they must answer to God alone. He puts men in a divine relation to God, which carries with it superiority to all lower standards and influences; and such a firm though modest consciousness of destiny binds a man by a most healthy tie of responsibility to right and conscience. Faith in Jesus, which leads to the faith of Jesus, should render a man bravely independent of all opinions save the highest, and incapable of bowing to any undivine or anti-divine authority. Amid a welter of competing jurisdictions, faith vibrates to the moral authority of Jesus as supreme because it is redemptive in a positive and ennobling sense.

So with the inner side of faith. *And he made us priests to his God and Father*. The right and desire of access is what John means; the sense of forgiveness brings men such a confidence in God's goodness that they turn to Him freely with all other needs, feeling He is no stranger to them. The Apocalypse shows no trace of the querulous study of providence and history which pervades the Jewish writings of the age. Hardship and hostility in the world were more than met, for the Christian temper, by wider access to the Father; and naturally Jesus was a pledge to men that God would never be cold or aloof. Their direct communion with the God and Father of Jesus rendered pessimism unreasonable and quieted excitement, as it destroyed the taste for compromise or surrender. This

right of prayer and intercourse with God is not absolutely confined to those who are conscious of the Christian revelation ; but what John declares is that in their experience of Jesus as a Redeemer men acquire so unwonted and satisfying a conviction of God's openness and welcome that they are thrilled to adoration. We who *through him do believe in God*, as an earlier writer had put it, possess a unique motive to enthusiasm in faith, which is at once the commonplace and the distinctive note of Christianity.

The two thoughts naturally correspond, for men pass unscathed and erect through the passions of existence just as they are in touch with the inner secrets of their God. They are *kings* because they are *priests*, to use John's technical phrase.<sup>1</sup> He is least likely to bend the knee to Rimmon who is inwardly subdued in adoration before the mercy of God to him in Jesus ; and the seductions of the world make most impression upon the conscience which is not allowing itself to be touched and taught by the eternal purpose and utter graciousness of Christ. Complacency, on all grounds, is at once a mark of mental inertness and of moral inefficiency. It is faith withering on its stalk, soon to be rudely cut up and flung out on the ground. Hence the doxology to Jesus at the opening of the Apocalypse is quite in place. Kindling at the thought of God, the writer passes into rapture over the divine value of Jesus to his people ; as the aim of the whole book is to quicken loyalty on all sides and sustain patience among the churches without exciting revolutionary hopes, it is but natural that emphasis should fall primarily upon the character of him who is at once the source and object of these virtues. A passionate enthusiasm for Jesus seemed to John the one antiseptic for that poisoned age. For adoration is meant to be the driving

<sup>1</sup> This seems upon the whole better than (with Weiss) to regard *λεπεῖς* as somehow qualifying the collective *βασιλείαν*: God wishing His people to serve Him, not as mere subjects but as priests.

power of the Christian life in its troubled course. Such thoughts of Jesus as John here exhibits, springing from the rapture and enthusiasm of faith, are set down for a purpose; and that purpose relates to the difficulties of practical religion, which in certain of their acuter forms cannot be overcome apart from a heightened temperature of devotion. As creatures and children of God, men require repeatedly to be made alive to their true position in the world, partly to lower the conceit of false independence, partly to revive constancy by the realization of what infinite resources lie behind them in the love and death of Jesus. Forgetfulness that we are creatures, as Faber shrewdly said, is the ruling spirit of this age; and this accounts for much of the wavering and uncertainty that play havoc with the religious health of those who imagine, or at least act as if they imagined, that they have only themselves to fall back upon in the great struggles of existence. The disease assumes two forms: it is either a smooth complacency or a feverish anxiety. Both are dangerous, and the one remedy is a return to man's proper position as created and redeemed by God through Jesus Christ. *To him*, not to ourselves or anything created, *be the glory*. To be sure of God, as a man may reverently and reasonably be through his faith in Jesus, becomes at once the spring of action and the source of heroism and of sacrifice; for by such a direction of heart one is enabled to see things in their true proportions, with God in Jesus over all. Practical errors are, more often than is suspected, the result of mistaken estimates. Religion, as the apocalypse of John repeatedly suggests, is not admitting Jesus into life; it is putting him over life. It is not serving him so much as serving him first and foremost. It is reserving for him the superlatives of wonder and gratitude. It is to live with a permanent undercurrent of indebtedness to him, breaking out as here into occasional freshets of praise. No man is able to run his course with

much patience or success if he is not *looking to Jesus*, the author and finisher of the faith, although the expression of that trust varies according to the individual temperament. It is the direction and devotion of the heart, above all, that sustains and urges forward life in the open; so much, we may say, is a common element in all varieties of religious experience, and the dialect of dispassionate observation is on all counts unfit for the loyalists of God. Hence before mysterious explanations of the Roman power and its limitations, John sweeps his readers up into a timeless source of moral heroism, thus meeting by anticipation more than one of their current perils. The adoration of Jesus rather than the exploration of history is the means of securing peace and vigour in the Christian life. Up with your heart and mind to Christ, he cries! *To him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever.* The worst danger ahead is not persecution, but the languid unabashed spirit that fails to leap up in a Christian soul at the sight of Jesus and his grace.

It is the old lesson reiterated by Amiel in last century, that nothing resembles pride so much as discouragement. No inconsiderable number of ordinary apprehensions are often due to the collapse of some exaggerated opinion, which a man has been cherishing, of his own merits and abilities. Unconsciously people now and then lay overmuch emphasis upon their personal skill and strength as factors in maintaining the struggle. They secretly resent being deeply obliged to Christ. At any rate, to all intents and purposes, they act as if everything would fail were their hand taken from the task. Or, in the very desperation of conflict, they nervously take their eyes off the eternal Will, of which they form a part, and concentrate their attention too exclusively upon what they consider to be the best methods for keeping up their religious life or maintaining some cause in which they feel personally interested. It is an ill-balanced

attitude. In practice, if not in theory, Jesus becomes secondary and at times irrelevant. And when the inevitable reaction comes with its searching philosophy and disconcerting revelation of inadequacy, the sense of disappointment and despair is correspondingly severe, for any relaxation of man's hold upon the divine necessity of grace really courts embarrassment and allows weakness to creep insensibly into life. Those who overcome owe their success to *the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony*; and the order of ideas is significant. Such is the urgency of the conflict that the only chance for them is Christ and his redeeming sacrifice. That is primary. A decided stand must be taken for truth and conscience; but perseverance and confession are as nothing without the previous fact and act of Christ's redemption appropriated by the soul. The Apocalypse is full of this vital and timely message. It urges that, morally speaking, life is only safe when it has thrown its weight upon Jesus, and that man's efforts after consistency succeed only in the atmosphere of conscious obligation to the death and sacrifice of Jesus. All centres round God *and the Lamb*. This consciousness draws all else along with it, investing a man with confidence and stripping him of paltriness with its attendant slackness of effort. Adoration thus gathers up a man's energies. In dwelling with gladness upon what he owes to the redeeming and renovating love of Jesus, he is insensibly opening the doors to courage and to ardour; for a distinct motive to purity is gained by every one who takes the trouble to realize that he is pardoned and how he has been pardoned.

We feel we are nothing—for all is Thou and in Thee;  
 We feel we are something—*that* also has come from Thee;  
 We know we are nothing—but Thou wilt help us to be.  
 Hallowed be Thy name—Hallelujah!

Such praise implies a disinterested sense of God and un-

common reverence. But it has the further merit of being a tonic; it purges a man from the weaknesses of sanguine over-confidence, faintheartedness, and presumptuous sloth, while it brings home to his mind in a vivid manner the resources at his disposal in God's character and purpose, as well as the obligations of his privilege. He who admits cheerfully this bond of dependence is able to take to himself the comfort of Christ's responsibility for the faithful, and to put aside with increasing decisiveness unnecessary fears. He does not serve Jesus on his own initiative. Loyalty to him is not an adventure or an exploit; it is the response to a mighty grace. Consequently he finds it is one great source of moral strength to realize that the Christian life is ultimately a calling which rests upon an eternal spiritual movement of God Himself in Jesus. *With his own blood he loosed us*, who also says *I am the First and the Last*. These two factors, the infinite sweep of redemption and its personal cost, converge upon the thoughtful conscience with an access of emotion, and the former is not to be obliterated behind the latter. Was it not Coleridge who admitted that one defect in his favourite philosopher Spinoza, was that he began with "it is" instead of with "I am"? Christian endurance demands the latter conviction. It is through Jesus that all this affection and energy of God plays upon his character, bearing it through confusion and lifting it above every chance of moral failure. *To him, therefore, be the glory and the dominion for ever*. In this personal relation to Jesus, or rather in the consciousness of it steadily maintained from day to day, lies all that makes a man Christian and keeps him Christian. *Brethren*, writes an unknown homilist of the second century, *we ought not to think meanly of Him who is our salvation; for when we think meanly of Him, our hopes of Him are also mean*. This is precisely the temper that pervades the Apocalypse with its apotheosis of Jesus, rendering it

strangely profitable despite the uncouth forms of expression that recur throughout its pages, and remind us that primitive Christianity is not equivalent entirely to permanent Christianity. The Apocalypse has a timeless element. It is not an argument that Jesus is morally superior to that arch-agent of Satan, the Roman emperor, nor is it an ingenious attempt to explain how the worship of Jesus is compatible with monotheism. Such dry light and cold blood are ineffective. What the book does is to appeal, in the spirit of Jesus himself, to people who know his unspeakable value to their own lives, and who are sincerely conscious that apart from him they would never have been quite sure of God's mercy or of His redeeming grace.<sup>1</sup> Standing on this common ground, John tells his readers plainly that any descent is perilous; in the service of Jesus "cold hearts are counted castaway," and steady adherence to his faith amid hostility and languor is impossible without a spirit of exulting confidence in His redeeming love. In short, the true temper for any religious struggle is that which passionately magnifies the claim of Jesus to man's reverence and trust. The witness and weight of experience vividly illustrate the thesis that it is but a step from inadequate conceptions of Jesus to conduct which is unworthy of his name, a step too frequently taken in the calms as in the crises of religion. Wisely then the place and the language of this doxology suggest what the whole tenor of the book corroborates, that faith—faith in Jesus—is the ultimate secret of faithfulness, and that to slacken the flow of gratitude and wonder towards Jesus, or to treat God's mercy shown in him as in any sense a commonplace or a right, is to dry up the roots of virtue in the soul. Communion with him spells consistency, and it is

<sup>1</sup> "Jesus himself felt he was a Mediator . . . In him the sense of mediation attained its highest level of stability, inwardness and reality" (Wernle: *Die Anfänge unserer Religion*, p. 25).

from inward trust more than from anything else that a man's life for Christ gains the outward triumph of maintaining itself worn but unstooping to the end.

JAMES MOFFATT.

ON A RECENT EMENDATION IN THE TEXT OF  
ST. PETER.

IN the EXPOSITOR for last year I ventured the suggestion that the obscurity in one of the most perplexing statements in the New Testament, that passage which affirms of Christ a mission (either evangelic or the opposite) to the fallen angels, was due to a very simple cause, viz., the omission of the name of Enoch after a group of similar letters. And it was suggested that the first step towards clearing the Petrine argument was the restoration of the name and the subsequent study of the passage in the light of certain descriptions which are found in the book of Enoch. Since writing the article in question, it has come to my knowledge that I had just anticipated, in the emendation referred to, a much better scholar than myself, and also that both of us had been anticipated, some years since, by a celebrated Dutch theologian. This is in the highest degree interesting. For though, at the first sight, the successful emendation of an obscure passage is like the famous pool of Bethesda, where the first man that troubles the pool monopolizes the virtues, and all who follow him obtain nothing for their patience and their pains, it must be remembered that the medicinal act is not always so clear, in the critical world, as to convince mankind of the miracle. And we must not be surprised if the angel that is set over Conjectural Emendations (to imitate a phrase from Hermas) should find it to his credit to trouble the water two or three times for the same disease.