

to the student of the Bible as well as to the geographer and the ethnologist. One is glad to see that all the ethnological materials which he has collected are to be published in a separate volume.

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ETERNAL LIFE AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

THE Collect for Peace which is said daily at Morning Prayer in churches of the Anglican communion begins, "O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord, in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life." The original Latin of the latter clause, in the Gelasian Sacramentary, *quem nosse vivere . . . est*, was expanded by the English translators so as to make unmistakable the reference to the words of our Lord in St. John xvii. 3, "This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God." This text was also made use of by the same divines when they were composing a new collect for St. Philip and St. James's Day, the introductory address of which is, "O Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life." In the prayer originally composed for the use of Trinity College, Dublin, probably by Archbishop Laud, and now found slightly altered in the Church of Ireland Prayer Book, "To be used in Colleges and Schools," addressing our Lord Jesus Christ as "the Eternal Wisdom of the Father," we say, "We beseech thee to assist us with thy heavenly Grace, that we may be blessed in our studies this day, and above all things may attain the knowledge of thee, whom to know is life eternal." For our Lord in the passage from which I have quoted co-ordinates as elements of eternal life two items of personal knowledge: the knowledge of God the Father, and the knowledge of Him whom the Father sent, even Jesus Christ.

I have called attention to the echoes in the Anglican

Prayer Book of the words of our Lord in St. John xvii. 3, because they supply a justification, if such were needed, for an attempt by one who is not a metaphysician to explain the passage for the benefit of those to whom the prayers are familiar, but who may be unskilled in philosophy. This seventeenth chapter of St. John's Gospel has been called the Holy of Holies of Scripture. In it the Evangelist reproduces what it was possible for a merely human mind to record of a prayer of the Divine Man to His heavenly Father. It is then naturally a chapter difficult to understand, but it has been written for our instruction ; it deals with eternal life ; and all that we can learn about eternal life concerns us very nearly. I have said that the chapter has been called a Holy of Holies ; this is not strictly true, for it lies open for us to enter ; but it is a Holy Place into which those who desire to enter to any purpose must first have purified themselves.

“This is life eternal, that they should know thee.” It may help us towards a better understanding of what these words mean if we first make clear what they do not mean. We read in 2 Timothy ii. 18 of “men who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already.” There can be little doubt that the false teaching here alluded to was akin to, if not the same as, that of some in Corinth a few years earlier who said, “There is no resurrection of the dead” (1 Cor. xv. 12). What these persons meant was that the language of Jesus about eternal life and a resurrection received its complete fulfilment in our present conditions of existence in the acquisition of that more elevated knowledge of God and man and morality and spiritual existence generally which Christ and His coming had imparted to mankind. This sublimest knowledge of things divine is, they said, a resurrection, and the only resurrection that men can attain unto.

This is eternal life, and it is the fullest eternal life that can fall to the lot of man.

The false teachers of the apostolic age, like those of many an age since, combined a plausible but false spirituality or sentimentality with an invincible materialism; and they attempted to find support for their materialistic disbelief in the resurrection of the body in a perverse misunderstanding of the Christian language about "newness of life."

We need not have recourse to the Fourth Gospel to prove that the message of Christ and His Apostles to the world was a message of life. In the second recorded speech of St. Peter after the Day of Pentecost, we find this magnificent paradox: "Ye . . . killed the Prince (or Author) of life" (Acts iii. 15); when the angel of the Lord brings the Apostles out of the prison, he charges them, "Go ye, and stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this Life"; and more striking still is the language, constantly found, in which an analogy is drawn between the risen life of Jesus, the heavenly conditions into which His human nature entered on the first Easter Day, and the changed manner of life which ought to characterize those who believe on Him. Thus St. Paul, addressing the Colossians, says, "Having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead" (Col. ii. 12). And again, "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above" (Col. iii. 1).

It is easy to see how metaphorical language such as this could be plausibly wrested from its true significance by persons who combined a patronizing admiration for the ethical teaching of the Gospel with a reluctance, or perhaps an incapacity, to "trust the larger hope" of personal individual immortality, which is what we Christians mean when we speak of eternal life.

There are still in the world, perhaps there always have been, and always will be, representatives of those who said in St. Paul's time, "The resurrection is past already," men who say that eternal life is nothing beyond a present knowledge of God; they "keep the word of promise to our ear and break it to our hope," taking a sad pleasure—for it cannot give them real satisfaction—in encouraging and seeking grounds for their despair of themselves and of mankind.

Now we have to observe in the first place that St. John, writing for Christians who believed in a blessed hereafter for themselves and their fellow-believers, sets forth in its initial and perfect stages the new life in Christ in terms that no Christian can misunderstand. Our new life begins here; St. John, then, records that Jesus said, "He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgement, but hath passed out of death into life" (John v. 24). But our new life does not end here; and so we learn that Jesus said, "He that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John xii. 25), and, "This is the will of my Father, that every one that beholdeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John vi. 40).

Again, the verse itself which is under discussion, when read in the original, suggests quite plainly that the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ which are declared to constitute eternal life is a continually growing knowledge, "always advancing." This is conveyed in the Greek in a way which it is impossible to reproduce in English except by a lengthy paraphrase. "This is life eternal, that they should know thee," etc. Bishop Westcott in his comment on the verse notes: "The *that* (*ὅτι*) expresses an aim, an end, and not only a fact. So too the tense of the verb (*γινώσκωσι*) marks continuance, progress, and not a perfect and past

apprehension gained once for all. . . . Eternal life lies not so much in the possession of a completed knowledge, as in the striving after a growing knowledge." The conclusion, then, seems to be forced on us that if the knowledge of God be a continually developing, advancing apprehension of Him, the eternal life with which it is closely identified must also be a continually developing, advancing existence, not one that is measured by a few revolutions of the earth planet.

And this, I think, will appear still more evident from reflection on the notions about knowledge and life that are entertained by ordinary people. In the passage with which we are dealing the two greatest mysteries with which man can be confronted—eternal life and the knowledge of God—are set before us ; they are brought into connexion with each other ; they are declared to be closely related to each other ; and in some sort one is defined by the other : " eternal life is that they should know thee, the only true God."

We may perhaps find it easier to grasp this definition, or statement, if we begin by reducing the scale of the things spoken of ; and in place of talking of *eternal* life and the knowledge of *God*, ask ourselves, Is there any connexion between knowledge and life ? The question is no doubt a hard one ; but it is not for us, in this case, quite so vague as it might seem to be at first sight. We must note in the first place that we are concerned, not with life in general, nor even only with organic life, but with the life of human personalities, and those too not low down in the scale of existence, the life of the men and women who have been given to Jesus Christ by God the Father. Our Lord had just addressed His Father thus : " Thou gavest him [the Son] authority over all flesh, that whatsoever thou hast given him, to them he should give eternal life." Those who are given by the Father to the Son are they whose eternal life is the knowledge of the true God and of Jesus Christ. The

life, then, of which we are speaking is the life of human beings whom Jesus Christ considered to be the highest of God's creatures—Christian people, in fact. We are therefore relieved from the necessity of grappling with biological problems. Moreover, we are speaking of personal life as it is understood by ordinary people. The gospel has a meaning for those who are not metaphysicians, though we readily grant that it has a deeper and fuller meaning for those who are masters of thought.

I think that the ordinary man might be willing to accept as a definition of life, "the conscious exercise of his vital and mental and moral faculties." We do not regard that man as fully alive who has lost his reason, even though his body continues to discharge in a healthy way all its natural functions. Similarly, if the moral perceptions have become deadened by neglect, we hold that the man has, even apart from what are called religious considerations, missed much of a true life. Our ideal of life is the exercise in the highest degree of all our powers and faculties.

'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,
Oh life, not death, for which we pant;
More life, and fuller, that I want.

However this may differ from the aspirations of the Oriental mind, and however ready the Church ought to be to welcome what India and China and Japan may in the future contribute to Christian theology, we Westerners would commit intellectual and moral suicide if we were to be false to the ideals which have led us hitherto; we are bound to be true to the ideal of personal individual life, the enormous value of each separate soul of man, belief in which, in the providence of God, has placed us in the van of human progress, and which has been enunciated by Jesus Himself: "What doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life?" (St. Mark viii. 36).

It is not necessary, in an argument addressed to Christians, to attempt to prove that our highest powers and faculties are those of our moral nature ; but our moral nature, its life, has to do with the knowledge of persons, knowledge of moral principles as they affect other persons endowed with moral natures like our own ; this is, moreover, a knowledge that grows with growing experience. The highest type of life, then, has an intimate connexion with knowledge ; and if knowledge varies in dignity and value and possibilities of extension with the dignity, worth and range of its object, the mind cannot conceive of any limit to a life the " chief end " of which is, to use the noble words of the Shorter Catechism, " to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever."

Men wander into a maze of error from which there is no escape if they fail to perceive at the outset that knowledge of God is knowledge of a personal Being ; it is not like knowledge of facts, or of natural laws, or of mathematical processes. With all the astonishing means now in the hands of mankind for taking a wide and distant survey of space and ascertaining the nature of other world-systems, personality still baffles chemical analysis ; and the highest personality of all, God, remains as unknowable by human senses as in the days of Job :

Behold, I go forward, but he is not there ;
 And backward, but I cannot perceive him :
 On the left hand, when he doth work, but I cannot behold him :
 He hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him.
 But he knoweth the way that I take.

(Job xxiii. 8-10).

" But he knoweth the way that I take." We know that we are known. All that our unassisted intellects can attain to in their Babel building is to know that God knows us ; and so to say with the Psalmist, " In thy presence is fulness of joy " (Ps. xvi. 11), or else to tremble with guilty Felix

when conscience reasons with us "of righteousness, and temperance, and the judgement to come."

That the knowledge of God is essentially a consciousness of standing in a personal relation to Him was clearly enough perceived by the ancient Hebrews; but although their sacred poetry has been with great truth described as "a poetry of friendship between God and man,"¹ yet the foundation of their practical religion was the fear of God. In their appeal to the average man knowledge of God as a person meant fear of Him; and the practical expression of it was justice and mercy to men as being fellow-subjects of the Great King. Thus when Jeremiah is denouncing the degenerate rulers of Judah, he contrasts them with Josiah: "He judged the cause of the poor and needy. . . . Was not this to know me? saith the Lord" (Jer. xxii. 16).

This was much; it is a good deal even now; but Jesus Christ "shewed a still more excellent way" when He revealed the personal God as a Father; and thenceforth man's knowledge of God is grateful love to a heavenly Father, which finds its practical expression in love to others, our brothers and sisters in the family of God. Hear how St. Paul declares what is the scope of our knowledge: "If any man thinketh that he knoweth anything, he knoweth not yet as he ought to know; but if any man loveth God, the same is known of him" (1 Cor. viii. 2, 3). Similarly, when he reminds the Galatians, "Ye have come to know God," he corrects himself and adds, "or rather to be known of God" (Gal. iv. 9). St. John characteristically gives us the complementary practical expression of this knowledge of God: "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren" (1 John iii. 14).

As Christians, then, we have advanced in knowledge of God from fear of Him to love of Him. This our love to God

¹ Herder, quoted by Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, p. 87.

is knowledge "in part." We are no longer bondservants, but children in our Father's house; yet children still. We shall grow up some day, and "know even as also we have been known" (1 Cor. xiii. 12). Meantime we do well to remind ourselves, and proclaim to the world, that our advance from fear to love is based on a fact of which our intellects can take knowledge; for although the Father, "dwelling in light unapproachable," still eludes the grasp of man's intellect, yet our knowledge that He is our Father rests on an ascertainable fact in the world's history. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

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THE POTTER'S FIELD.

SIR W. RAMSAY, whose studies on the Acts of the Apostles and vindication of the trustworthiness of St. Luke are so admirable, remarks, that St. Luke had means of knowing the later events of his history with an accuracy wanting as regards the earlier, where he was dependent upon others. This is obvious. But if St. Luke has established a right in one part of the Acts to be regarded as trustworthy and painstaking, having a clear grasp of principles, and of the relative value of events, so as to select his materials with judgment, we must give him credit for something of these qualities in the earlier part of his work, and this the more because, as Sir W. Ramsay admits, the entire plan of the narrative, concentrating attention on the successive critical steps, is "thoroughly Lukan." We may, in fact, apply to the early part