

marvel involved in it—that beings made in God's image, and capable of knowing, loving, and serving Him, should yet repel, shun, dislike, flee from Him; should resent being reminded of Him, should *wish* to be without Him! Surely no one thinking rightly will say that this is even *natural*. There is more than naturalness, or even *unnaturalness* in it—there is *sin*, guilt.

The explanation of such a perverted moral condition it goes far beyond the province of "evolution" to furnish. It points to a world-wide defection traceable back to disobedience in the beginnings of the race.

JAMES ORR.

THE PLACE OF REWARDS IN THE TEACHING OF CHRIST.

II. EXAMINATION OF CHRIST'S TEACHING ON THE SUBJECT IN VIEW OF THE OBJECTIONS URGED AGAINST IT.

THERE is one point in connexion with the rewards which Christ holds forth, which may tend to differentiate them from the vulgar reward referred to above, which becomes a direct bribe to virtue—viz., that they are almost always referred to as rewards laid up for us *in heaven*. It is true that in answer to Peter, who speaks of the great privation he and his fellow-disciples have endured, Christ declares that "there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold *now in this time*, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark x. 29 f.). But it is evident from the terms in which Christ refers to the restitution to be made that it is no material

recompence that He has in view, while that significant addition "with persecutions" to the promise of earthly reward warns us against understanding the promise in any gross sense. As a general rule, however, when Christ refers to the reward which His followers will secure, it is of the next life He is thinking, of the blessedness in store for them in the kingdom of heaven. Now, it may not seem to make much difference, at first, so far as the legitimacy of the introduction of the idea of reward into the sphere of morals is concerned, whether we conceive this reward as to be enjoyed in this life or the next, as an earthly or a heavenly reward. And undoubtedly, from the point of view of a morality which abhors all consideration of self-interest and esteems that conduct alone which flows from a love which is totally regardless of self—from such a point of view, for instance, as Schiller takes up in that quotation we gave from him above—it makes no difference whether the reward looked forward to is to be enjoyed in this life or the next, whether it is in material or spiritual form. But we have seen reason to doubt whether any such theory of morals can maintain itself. It is no defect in Christ's teaching that He has resisted the attractions of any such visionary and impracticable theory of morals. We may disregard the criticism, then, that may be brought from this point of view, that it makes no difference whether the reward be earthly or heavenly, and consider whether any such objection holds from the standpoint of practical morals. But, even from this less exalted standpoint, it may be contended that there is little difference between the moral attitude of the man who looks for his reward immediately and that of the man who is willing to wait for it hereafter. And, without doubt, that criticism is valid against a misconception of what Christ means when He speaks of the heavenly reward, with which we are not

unfamiliar. There are many Christians who have no higher conception of the heavenly treasure than a store of good things, similar in nature to the good things of earth, only that their enjoyment is transferred from earth to heaven. They give up now in the hope that they will obtain hereafter a rich recompence for what they forgo. What the nature of the recompence to be made to them is, they do not attempt, perhaps, clearly to define. But it may, I think, without injustice to them, be alleged that it is very questionable whether they have clearly realized the essential difference between the earthly and the heavenly treasure, whether they have endeavoured to purge their conception of the heavenly recompence of all taint of materialism, whether, above all, they have laid to heart the vital fact that, the heavenly treasure being spiritual in its nature, the all-important matter is the presence on the part of him who is to participate in it of the spiritual capacity to appreciate it. But these are the essential features in the Christian conception of the reward as a heavenly reward in contrast with an earthly; and where they are absent, even though the reward be still described as heavenly, in the imagination of the person who looks forward to it, it has ceased to deserve the title, and is really only a form of earthly enjoyment transferred from earth to heaven.

But are we justified in thus characterizing the reward which Christ holds before His followers? Does the fact that Christ speaks of this reward as in heaven warrant us in stripping it of all material characteristics, and describing it as a state of spiritual bliss? Evidently the view we take of this question will determine largely our position as to the teaching of Christ on this subject of rewards. If the heavenly treasure is something external, a store of good things laid up for us in heaven, to be enjoyed apart from any higher spiritual capacity on the part of

the participant, then the exhortation to the practice of righteousness under the prospect of enjoyment of this reward is simply a piece of bribery. Whereas, on the other hand, if the heavenly recompense consists of that spiritual bliss which we have suggested, bliss to the enjoyment of which the spiritual condition of the participant is matter of supreme importance, then this will go far to meet many of those objections which are urged against the prominence Christ gives to this question of rewards. Now, we must beware of the danger of reading our modern ideas into the sayings of Christ, and of treating all the imagery of His eschatological utterances as mere accommodation to the modes of thought of His hearers. But, if there is danger on this side, there is danger also on the other, and it may be questioned whether the reaction in modern exegesis against the tendency to spiritualize the words of Christ has not gone too far in the way of literal interpretation of statements about the future life, to the prejudice of the spiritual truth underlying them. It has been maintained by Titius that "many sensuous functions, which we exclude from our conception of a heavenly life, were not excluded by Jesus." But, even were we to admit this, we should still contend that it would be to do grave injustice to the spirit of Christ's teaching to fasten upon the sensuous element in the future life and dwell upon it, as if it were matter of prime importance. For instance, take the figure most frequently employed by Christ to express the blessedness of the future life—the figure of a banquet. Is it the case that Christ actually regarded that banquet as a reality? Was He in earnest when He spoke about sitting down to table and drinking wine in the kingdom of heaven? Suppose for the moment that He was, though we do not believe so. Would one be justified in laying any stress upon the sensual pleasures to be enjoyed

at that table? Do they bulk in Christ's mind at all when He presents this picture to His hearers? Or is it not rather the case that the banquet to which He refers, even though He regards it as a reality, is introduced merely to suggest the rich blessedness of the kingdom of God, regarding which the saying of the Apostle surely truly expresses the mind of the Master, that it "is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost"? And the same thing holds in other cases. There may be difference of opinion as to how far Christ actually intended those sensible features, in the pictures He paints of the future, to be taken seriously. But even if He did, we know enough of the general spirit of His doctrine to understand that these sensible features are not dwelt upon for their own sake, as if any enjoyment of sense could be conceived to form an integral part of the blessedness of the kingdom, but are employed merely as aids to the imagination in its contemplation of the bliss of that future life of which, again, it is in the spirit of the Master that the Apostle quotes that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

What, then, do we find when we turn to the various utterances of Christ regarding the rewards in store for the righteous? What is the general tenor of His teaching? Is it such as to justify our criticism of those who think of the heavenly recompence as a store of good things, in nature not essentially different from the good things of this earth, to the enjoyment of which they look forward as compensation for their renunciation of these latter? There are some passages that seem to lend plausibility to that view. Christ speaks about a treasure in heaven, about being rich towards God, about receiving "good

measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over." The rich man is reminded that having received his good things on earth, he cannot expect to enjoy them in the next world. And, again, there are the passages in which Christ speaks of differences of rank and position in the kingdom of heaven, some sitting on thrones and judging the twelve tribes of Israel, some sitting at His right hand and at His left hand in the kingdom, and the passages to which we have referred where the figure of a banquet is employed. In these cases Christ certainly does use language which, if taken literally, would justify those materialistic expectations of future reward to which we take exception. But the general tenor of the rest of His teaching provides us with a standard by which to test any such false conclusions. Generally speaking, it is the kingdom of heaven itself that Christ sets before His followers as the great reward to which they may look forward. It is no Mohammedan paradise which He promises them. Certainly He emphasizes the blessedness of the heavenly life. It is so rich that one may well esteem no present sacrifice too severe in order to secure it, so transcendent that even the most miserable on earth may well be congratulated on their prospect of enjoying it. But it is the blessedness not of supreme delight but of ethical perfection, the blessedness of that life in which the will of God is perfectly done. One would have expected as much from the whole tone of Christ's preaching, and there are several express utterances of His in this direction which leave no doubt upon the point. One favourite way of describing it with Him is to call it "life," or "eternal life." Its blessedness, which on other occasions is suggested by the figure of the Messianic banquet, is represented in more ethical terms when it is said of the pure in heart that they shall see God, or of the peacemakers

that they shall be called the sons of God, or of those that love their enemies that their reward shall be great, for they shall be the sons of the Highest. How much the ethical enters into Christ's conception of the blessedness of the kingdom is shown by the injunction to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, righteousness being here regarded not as an antecedent condition to participation in the blessedness of the kingdom, but as part and parcel of that blessedness. In the same way the promised blessing held forth to them that hunger and thirst after righteousness is that they shall be filled therewith.

These statements may not be very numerous, but there can be no question as to their importance. We feel that we have here the true ring of the gospel of Christ, that where there appears to be any divergence between the tenor of these utterances and that of others which take a less exalted standpoint, there can be no hesitation as to which more faithfully represents the true view of Christ. When we weigh their significance, they suggest conclusions regarding the position which Christ takes up on this question of rewards which go far to meet the objections which have been urged against His doctrine. Let us note some of these conclusions.

First, if the reward is ethical in character, if it consists in the attainment in richer fulness of that moral perfection after which we are striving here, then evidently the objection that may be urged against the introduction of the idea of reward in religion, on the ground of its being an external attraction, falls to the ground. For the rewards of Christ are no such external attractions. They are no things to be bestowed by another in return for a certain performance. To see God, to be called the sons of the Highest, which, we must remember, is no mere empty title,

but suggests actual elevation to this rank and dignity, to be filled with righteousness, to have eternal life—these are no extrinsic attractions under the prospect of which the practice of righteousness loses anything of its purity. The objection to the introduction of the hope of reward into religion that it tends to encourage unworthy motives, and that there is danger of one's doing the right not from love of it but from the hope of reward, evidently fails altogether to find application here. For the rewards Christ promises are not such as appeal to the cupidity of human nature. Before one can be attracted by them, one must already love for its own sake that righteousness, of the fuller attainment of which they give promise. And not only do they fail to make appeal now to those who lack the truly religious spirit, they are of such a nature as to be enjoyed hereafter only by those who have the spiritual capacity to appreciate them. In this connexion the saying of Christ holds good, "Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." The blessedness of the kingdom of heaven is no gift which may be handed to us by God, no store of good things which we may simply receive at His hands. It is a spiritual experience, and for that spiritual experience there is necessary a certain spiritual capacity on our part. So that even if one were to attempt to do the righteousness Christ requires of us from no higher motive than anticipation of the recompence promised, one would learn to one's cost that the effort had been vain, for where the inward love of righteousness is lacking, there the necessary condition for the appreciation of the recompence is lacking also.

We may remark in passing that the moral teaching of Christ with regard to rewards is safeguarded against such

objections as we have been considering on another side, from which we reach conclusions similar to those we have now been dwelling upon. The side to which I refer is the importance assigned to the inward motive, to the righteousness of the heart, in the doctrine of Christ. The rewards Christ holds forth are promised to those who do the works of righteousness. But what are the works of righteousness in Christ's eyes? Never the mere external works apart from the spirit in which they are done. It is the spirit that prompts them that gives them their worth in the sight of God. The two mites of the poor widow are reckoned a richer contribution than the offerings of the wealthy; the sins which one cherishes in one's heart as equally heinous with those of outward conduct. It should hardly be necessary to defend the teaching of one who preached this doctrine from suspicion of admission in any form of a base motive. To those who contend that Christ's doctrine of rewards tends to encourage the practice of righteousness from an unworthy motive, it should be sufficient to reply that the practice of righteousness from an unworthy motive is in Christ's view a contradiction in terms, for it is the motive that gives the act its righteous character, and where the motive is impure the act is unrighteous.

But to return to the conclusions which we would draw from the utterances of Christ regarding the rewards in store for the righteous in which the ethical character of these rewards receives prominence, there is another feature which emerges on a closer examination to which we would direct attention. In many of His sayings about them Christ emphasizes the correspondence between the conduct which secures the reward and the nature of the recompense. The merciful obtain mercy; the forgiving are forgiven; they that confess Christ before men are confessed by Him

before His Father in heaven ; they that humble themselves are exalted ; they that lose their life shall find it. There is more here than the observance of a quantitative equivalence between the service and the reward. Such quantitative equivalence, indeed, does not obtain. Christ expressly points out, on occasion, how far the reward exceeds the service that secures it. He who renounces for the sake of the kingdom of God receives manifold more, according to one Gospel a hundredfold, for his recompence even in this world, and in the next everlasting life. He who is faithful over a few things is made ruler over many things. The fact that the reward is out of all proportion to the service is made the theme of one of the parables, "The Labourers in the Vineyard." The equivalence that prevails between the service and the recompence is, then, not quantitative but qualitative. But the fact that it *is* qualitative, that there is a certain correspondence between the nature of the service and the character of the recompence it secures, suggests some reflections of considerable interest. Evidently the recompence which Christ holds before us is no arbitrary reward which bears no inner relation to the nature of the conduct which secures it. It is rather the development to fuller perfection of that love of righteousness that inspires it, the crowning with success of the effort that finds expression in it. In its most general aspect, as we have seen, the reward may be described as the kingdom of heaven itself. Now, as all the various forms of service which secure the reward are but different modes in which the same effort finds expression, the effort to advance the kingdom of heaven, we reach the conclusion that the general idea underlying all these various promises of recompence in the gospel of Christ is this—that God will not disappoint the earnest efforts of those who strive for the advancement of the kingdom, but that they may

labour on in the assurance that in the end their endeavour will be crowned with success, and they will be permitted to participate in the final realization in heaven of that kingdom in whose interest they have worked on earth. That is the general principle underlying Christ's position on this question of rewards. I do not say that in all the cases in which He places the service and the reward in a relation of equivalence to one another we can trace the action of this principle. Yet there is usually some inner principle of connexion. When we are told that he that humbleth himself shall be exalted, for instance, we feel that there is something more than a merely verbal correspondence between the act and the reward promised to it. Underlying the promise there is the recognition of the truth that the spirit of self-humiliation is that which most truly exalts a man in the sight of God, even as the glory of the Son of Man was revealed in the humility of His service. Or when we are told that he that loseth his life shall find it, we feel that here we have no promise of an arbitrary reward, but that the finding of the life is but the triumphant vindication of the spirit which inspired the self-sacrifice. Or again, when we read that the merciful shall obtain mercy, that the forgiving shall be forgiven, we feel that there is a peculiar fitness in the promise of these blessings in these cases, for mercy and forgiveness are no things we can receive at the hands of God, but spiritual experiences which demand a certain spiritual capacity on the part of those who are to undergo them, and where the spirit of mercy and forgiveness is wanting on the part of man, there can be no true participation in these blessings at the hand of God. So much is it the case that the reward Christ promises is but the fuller realization of the spiritual blessedness which the earnest striving after righteousness brings with it, that it is sometimes

difficult to say whether it is the future or the present life that Christ has in view when He speaks of the recompence which righteousness secures. For instance, are we to think of the exaltation which accrues to him that humbleth himself as reserved altogether for the future life? Is it going too far to fancy that Christ, who felt that He asserted His own dignity by the humility of His service, and taught that that which was exalted among men was abomination in the sight of God, should have meant His disciples to realize that by humbling themselves in the spirit of love they were in the truest sense proving their moral greatness? Again, when we read in Luke the promise to those who love their enemies and lend hoping for nothing, that their reward shall be great, and they shall be the children of the Highest, this seems to point to future recompence and status in the kingdom of heaven; but in Matthew, where we are urged to love our enemies that we may become the children of our Father in heaven, who proves His Fatherhood by the unconditionedness of His love, the end set before us seems to be something within our reach even now. And while we recognize that most of Christ's utterances about eternal life in the Synoptic Gospels have originally an eschatological significance, it may be questioned whether the advance made by the author of the Fourth Gospel in representing this eternal life as something within our reach now is so great as is sometimes represented. Undoubtedly Christ did not think of the blessedness of that heavenly life as beginning only in the hereafter. When we recall, for instance, the terms in which He speaks of those whose names are written in heaven, declaring that even now they received power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, so that nothing should by any means hurt them, we can well believe that though He looked for the full blessedness of

that eternal life in the future, even as He looked forward to the coming of the kingdom in its fulness in the future too, still, as He could declare that already that kingdom was among His hearers, so He must have felt that already, in their performance of the righteousness of the kingdom, His disciples had a foretaste of the blessedness of that eternal life which they were to enjoy in its fulness hereafter.

There is one other point in connexion with Christ's teaching about rewards to which we must advert in order to understand the place they occupy in His doctrine. We have seen that misgiving has been excited in some minds at the prominence given to this subject as unworthy the ethical sublimity of the doctrine of Christ. But there is another ground on which Christ's position on this question may cause hesitation. It seems to conflict with the direct tendency of Christ's own doctrine on a point of the first importance. In holding before His hearers the prospect of recompence, He was appealing to a motive which played a chief part in the religious life of later Judaism. But the whole aim of His teaching was to set aside the conception of the relation between God and man on which the position of later Judaism in this connexion was based. The relation in question was conceived to be a purely legal one. By the strict performance of the law laid upon him, man was entitled to certain blessings at the hand of God. On the other hand, failure to fulfil that law brought certain retribution in its train. "The promised reward and the required performance," says Schürer, "these are the two poles around which everything revolves." God was regarded as the great Judge who would deal with every man according to his works, rewarding or punishing in strict equivalence to the merit or demerit of the individual. But if this is the foundation on which rested this doctrine of recompence,

which Christ received as a legacy from His religious predecessors, what place was there for it, we may ask, in His teaching? Was not the whole tendency of that teaching in the opposite direction? Did He not set in place of the great Judge strict to mark iniquity, giving to every one in exact proportion to his desert, the loving Father, who delights to shower down His blessings upon His children apart altogether from their deserts and gives freely of His good things to the unworthy and the sinful? Is not the idea of merit upon which the Judaistic hope of reward rested utterly abhorrent to the whole spirit of the gospel of Christ. Has He not expressly set it aside in His parable about the servant returning from the field, "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all these things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do"? We do not earn the kingdom of God. *Gratis* we have received. It is the Father's good pleasure to give. We must receive the kingdom as a little child. It will hardly be disputed that in such sayings we have the characteristic tendency of the gospel of Christ. Yet the doctrine they set forth is fundamentally opposed to the whole conception of man's relation to God on which the position of later Judaism on this question of rewards was based. How then, we may ask, can Christ retain the prospect of recompense in His teaching while denying the ground on which that prospect was based?

In answer to that question it must be recognized that the idea of reward in the teaching of Christ has no longer the same place and significance as it had in the teaching of later Judaism. If we have to choose between making some modification, even though it be considerable, in the strictness with which we interpret the figure of a reward when introduced in the teaching of Christ, on the one

hand, and departing even in the slightest degree from our assurance of the Fatherly love of God, which showers down its blessings with a lavishness absolutely unconditioned by the desert of man, on the other, there can be no hesitation as to which alternative we must choose. Whatever happens, nothing must be permitted to obscure the freedom of the divine grace. If there is any incompatibility, then, between the two sides, it is on the question of rewards that the qualification will have to be made. Christ Himself leads the way in respect of breaking away from the strict application of the idea of reward which He introduces. He employs the figure at times where it is inadequate to do justice to the thought He desires to enforce. We have seen one instance of this already in the case of the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard. This parable is specially interesting in the present connexion because it brings into juxtaposition those two elements in the doctrine of Christ respecting whose compatibility we are in doubt, the idea of recompence and the assurance of the divine grace. And not only does it bring them together, it does so in criticism—at least so we may reasonably conjecture—of that legal conception of man's relation to God in which the idea of recompence played such an important part. It cannot be said that their compatibility is demonstrated. While both are to appearance retained, the idea of recompence is virtually set aside, for the payment that is made to the labourers last hired is no longer in the strict sense a recompence for work done, but a present bestowed of the generosity of the master. And what happens in connexion with this parable may be regarded as typical of what takes place throughout the whole teaching of Christ. Whenever the idea of recompence, which Christ uses freely in the course of His preaching, comes into conflict in any way with the freedom of the divine

grace, or threatens to cast any shadow on the spontaneity of the divine love, then it is no longer to be taken in the strictness of the letter, but is to be regarded as one of those forms of speech employed by Christ, which prove inadequate to the thought He sought to convey. Already we can see the tendency to rise above the category of reward in those passages in which Christ emphasizes the transcendence of the recompence over the desert of those who obtain it. And when we come to examine more closely several of Christ's sayings in which He introduces the idea of reward, even when a strict equivalence seems to obtain between the conduct and the reward it secures, it will be found that while, so far as outward form is concerned, He seems to be still at the point of view of His contemporaries with their expectation of a recompence strictly proportionate to the merit, in spirit He is really far apart from them. For instance, when we read among the Beatitudes the promise to the merciful that they shall obtain mercy, we need but to reflect what is the nature of the blessing held forth—mercy for their own transgressions—to realize how far Christ is removed from the point of view of those who felt that they were entitled to claim a reward for their merit at the hand of God. Again, when we hear Christ promising a reward to those who pray, we experience a feeling of disappointment to find Him apparently countenancing any such unspiritual view of prayer, according to which it is regarded as a work of righteousness performed in anticipation of promised recompence. But here again, it would be to do grave injustice to Christ to take His reference to reward in the strictness of the letter. He was using the language of His contemporaries, but He breathed into it the purer spirit of His own doctrine. And while the thought of reward suggested to the Pharisee those unspiritual views of man's relation to God against

which the whole teaching of Christ was a protest, we may well believe that to Christ, with His profound conviction of the Fatherly love of God, the thought had lost all those unworthy associations which attached to it in contemporary usage, and was selected by Him as a suitable figure by which to bring home the assurance to His hearers, that no true effort after righteousness would be suffered by that God to be lost, but that to every faithful servant of the kingdom the blessedness of attainment would be vouchsafed at last. In this sense the assurance that our prayers shall find their reward loses all its offensiveness.

Briefly to sum up. We have noted the prominence which the prospect of reward receives in the teaching of Christ. In spite of certain sayings in which the hope of immediate recompence is set aside, it is undoubtedly the case that Christ laid the fullest emphasis on the prospect of future reward, and freely recognized it as a worthy motive of conduct. From two different sides objection has been taken to Christ's position on this subject. First, it has been urged that this is a base motive to which to appeal, and that the righteousness practised under the influence of it is unworthy the name. And again, it has been contended that this anticipation of recompence is an anomaly in the doctrine of a teacher who opposed so vigorously the legal conception of man's relation to God, and made the Fatherhood of God the central doctrine in His preaching. We have discussed these objections, and while we may admit that they are cogent enough against the idea of a reward in its cruder form, whether as a bribe to the practice of virtue or as the payment to which man is entitled for his service, they did not seem valid against the manner in which the idea of reward was introduced in the teaching of Christ, where the lofty spiritual tone of the rest of the doctrine at once ruled any such sugges-

tions out of court. We have noted what is the general tendency of those passages in which Christ emphasizes the prospect of reward in heaven—to encourage men to the practice of righteousness by the assurance that the God in whose service they are working will not fail to crown their labour at last with success, and that in the blessedness of the kingdom of heaven they will attain the end after which they have been striving on earth. Whether this may be called a reward in the strict sense of the word, may be open to question. We are not concerned to defend Christ's retention of the term; and if the word connotes those unworthy ideas to which we have referred, we will readily admit that strictly speaking there is no place for the idea of reward in Christ's doctrine. What we *are* concerned to defend is not the name but the thing Christ would suggest by the name. That is no excrescence in Christ's doctrine: it is a vital truth of His gospel. It is nothing to be regretfully retained and shamefacedly put away into the background: it is the very pride and boast of the religion of Christ. Take away from Christianity what Christ holds forth to men under this hope of reward, and you rob it of all power of appeal to the heart of men. As Jülicher puts it: "To reject the reward which Jesus has in His mind is virtually to reject the mercy of God, the kingdom of heaven, comfort, God-sonship, or to require that morality shall renounce all connexion with religion. A love without faith and hope—this Jesus never wished, this did He least of all think possible."

G. WAUCHOPE STEWART.