

Now, if one turns to the Pastorals one finds many such lists of qualities and characteristics. The subject lends itself to them. There also many of the words are rare, and found only once in the New Testament, or found only in one Epistle, or confined to that stage of Paul's life when he was writing the Pastorals. It was a Pauline characteristic to be an innovator and experimenter in a certain class of philosophic moral terms. This philosophy he was expounding to the world in terms that would be generally intelligible. The fact that the author of the Pastorals is an innovator and experimenter in language is no proof that he was not Paul, but rather affords psychologically a presumption that he was Paul, because he shares with Paul a certain deep-seated character.

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PERSONALITY AND GRACE.

V. A GRACIOUS RELATIONSHIP.

GRACE, as we have interpreted it, is not a name for direct forces acting upon us impersonally and in no way requiring our personal consent any more than it requires our personal co-operation. It is on the contrary the personal relation of life to us whereby we can have a right personal relation to it, and of which the possibility of maintaining this right personal relation is the supreme evidence.

Direct forces may pass through the personality as through all created things. Yet, in so far as they are merely direct forces, they are not personal but only the material for personality. Therefore, in the strict sense, they are neither moral nor religious, but only experiences to which we ought to have a religious and moral relation. They are simply talents given to us, not really different from natural endow-

ments at the beginning of life because they are mystical endowments in the middle.

Conversion may be sudden and transforming and yet be exclusively moral and religious. Man's development is so irregular and incalculable because insight may bring him face to face with transforming realities which illumine for him his whole nature, and because there are many evils in it which can live only in the dark. The Divine righteousness and love are mighty in themselves and what seems to be weakness of moral fibre and slavery to habit may often be simply a refusal to suffer them to speak. We may not, therefore, limit either the extent or the suddenness of the change due to the hearing ear and the understanding heart, nor should we ascribe what is due to living in a new world to an unknown mystical change of nature.

But in so far as the change is purely mystical, it is not in itself either moral or religious. It is a new gift of disposition for morality and religion to use. No gift, however given, may be overlooked, and least of all those rapid regenerative experiences by which some lives are transformed. By looking at them more closely, we may find them rather the destruction of barriers which sin has placed round the true character, than any new creation. We may compare them with those cases of double consciousness in which psychology is interested, and which are doubtless explained by the one true consciousness ridding itself, as it were, of its mask. We may also find that the work of destruction, though sudden in its final effect, was the accumulated result of much moral struggle and spiritual aspiration. Yet the fact that it is an overpowering, transforming experience, not our work, but breaking in upon it, would not be altered. And it is difficult to believe that no more is involved. The miraculous seems to operate in the soul as nowhere else, and there are persons in whom a

mystical, overpowering, impersonal influence seems to be as much a new beginning as if they had been born with a different disposition.

The personality, like all created things, must work simply with what is given. The material of it must be forces independent of us and, so far as we are concerned, impersonal. Whether they operate only at the beginning, or are also active through life, does not alter the moral or religious meaning of these gifts.

The moral aspect is plainest. Such gifts form disposition, whereas only the use of them forms character. Wherefore, not with the gifts but with the disposing of them moral questions arise. If the disposition is largely and happily endowed, so that its possessor is naturally disposed to good, that is simply a large responsibility. No more than for a natural endowment of bodily strength, should there be moral approval for a purely mystical endowment of spiritual strength. As an object for moral complacency, it is merely a temptation, being just a talent which may be lodged with us useless or even for moral disaster. Until by personal use of it, it is built into character, it does not become part of our moral selves, and perhaps there is no clearer reminder that the moral self is a moral attainment and not merely a creation of power.

Morality is the pilot, not the stream, however favourable. Only a blind morality would deny that the moral life can be carried forward on such a stream, but only a rudderless morality would abandon itself to the most favourable current.

Religion, even more willingly than morals, admits the existence of direct, creative, and so far as we are concerned, purely mystical and impersonal forces. Like morality, it may also wish to find in them some relation to our past experience, for, while God is able of the stones to raise up

children to Abraham, what He does is to yearn after Abraham's actual seed. Yet religion cannot doubt that, in the last issue, our whole life, physical, mental, spiritual, rests on direct gifts of God. Gladly the religious soul ascribes all it is to God, and says with the Psalmist, "He has made us, and we are His."

Nevertheless, such gifts are not in themselves any more religious than they are moral. They only become religious as they help to make a spiritual relation to God possible. But a spiritual relation is to a Father, not a force. Only as we receive a gracious influence as part of a gracious relationship are we forwarded towards that end. As something which we trust to in itself, it might even be irreligious. To make the abundance of the grace given us the basis of our trust is no more good religion than to make it the basis of our character is good morals.

Wherefore, the theologian, no more than the moralist, should concern himself with the mysterious sources of life which he may not know, but should realise that his task is with the life itself as it is given. His business is not with the influx of grace—ecstatic, sacramental or evangelical, but with the Spirit of God's Son in the heart crying, Abba Father, and with the service of sons which makes that a reality.

Religion has not to do with a relation of grace at all, but with a gracious relationship. Its concern is not the unknown, impersonal basis of the spiritual personality, but the relation of that personality with all its possessions to God, the only perfect personality, their object as well as their source.

It will, then, appear that the question is not between a greater or less measure of grace, or between different kinds of grace, as if any of it were wholly common or any were wholly efficacious, but between a right and a wrong relation

to God. In the right relationship nothing is common, everything is efficacious, because, by consent of the heart, everything has become effective for our spiritual good ; and in the wrong relation everything is common, nothing is effective for good, even the most overwhelming mystical experience being capable of turning into spiritual pride and uncharitableness.

In that case the idea of assigning so much to man and so much to God cannot arise. It is manifestly all of God and none of it of man, but it is all the more of God that it is through ourselves. Every religious soul rejoices to know that all his succour is of God not man, of grace not works. But every religious soul also rejoices to know that God succours us by a personal relation, the essence of which is that it works by love not force, in which case its supreme benefit is the succour of the beloved. From lack of a better word, we may speak of gratitude to God as the fitting response, but it is only as a son is grateful to a father whose perfect parental relation to him has turned dependence on him from being an encroachment upon his own self-reliance and self-respect into the source of all his independence and mastery.

While, therefore, the theological doctrine of election expresses the supreme religious truth that all our confidence must be in God and none of it in ourselves, we can see that it fails to express the true religious faith, because it places our dependence upon God on the wrong issue. It does not concern itself with a gracious relation of God to us, but only with a relation of grace as a gift merely given. The grace it works with is irresistible precisely because it is impersonal. The God which is behind it is abstract omnipotence. But the essence of a gracious relation is that it is personal, which may in the end be equally irresistible, but only by first winning our response.

Grace as an irresistible gift of God is a straight line passing direct through the personality, whereas grace as a relationship is a curve which encircles and embraces it. That is only a figure, but it derives meaning from every personal relationship in which no gift which does not take the trouble to be first a human relationship is accounted a benefit. It must not only bestow its gift. It must also take the trouble to pass the gift through a personal relationship.

Like every curve, it has a concave and a convex side, seemingly contradictory, really complementary. It takes possession of us, yet sets us free; makes us absolutely dependent, yet gives us independence of all things; enables us to lose ourselves, yet truly and for the first time to find ourselves. In all its action it is a thing of seeming opposites. What the philosophers call an antinomy is at the heart of all its ways. And that is so of necessity, precisely because it must enable us to find ourselves in the real world by delivering us from ourselves in our own unreal world.

Nowhere does this more clearly appear than in the first response it asks from us. Though grace is just another name for the dealings of God's love, it does not begin by asking from us love but faith. That we may call its first antinomy. A doctrine of grace, indeed, should not operate directly with love at all.

To understand that method is to set out on the right road; to misunderstand it is to set out on the wrong. To begin with love is to expect that grace will be an impersonal influx, not a gracious personal relationship. With Augustine we are made to regard love as a mysterious, almost a mechanical transformation of our hearts, what he calls a change in the substance of the soul, a simple influx of God into it. Religion ceases forthwith to be a sense of personal victory and becomes a trust in mysterious alien forces from which a new life may spring, but in a manner completely

detached from our present life, and with no moral relation to it.

Religion at once becomes a perilous mixture of an impersonal mysticism and a morality of law and merit. In practice that generally means a combination of a material sacramentarianism and a material asceticism. The reason is not difficult to find. Everything that works on us we must realise through some medium, if it is to take any place in our conscious life. If a mysterious mutation of our nature is our religious trust, then by some means we must consciously realise the fact. Grace, so conceived, having no necessary moral relationship to us, cannot be manifested simply in increased liberty and moral victory in our present lives. Being a direct, impersonal force, only a material medium can quite satisfy the mind, that being the natural channel of all direct forces. Hence the satisfying nature of a material sacramentarianism. But then some test of grace must be sought, some proof that it has really entered by this channel. That requires the idea of merit, which, to be of value as a test must be legally estimated, and, if possible, through visible acts of discipline and self-denial, displayed.

The end is a hesitating, but not humble, trust in our own goodness, a trust in the merit of our love to God which is not less harassing because we must wait till God chooses to implant it, of which fact we can never in the last issue be quite sure. The nightmare of legal merit rides the spirit still, which could not be if our trust were in the graciousness of God's love to us and not in the security of our love to God. The result is a wrong combination of religion and morality which is neither religious nor moral.

Know thyself might be good advice, if one could ever know his own spiritual state by self-contemplation. But of all the impossible things for us to know by introspection,

our love to God is the most elusive. For that there are two reasons. First, the thing we are looking for could not be love for the simple and sublime reason that love is precisely the thing which does not regard itself. Second, to begin by thinking of our gracious relation to life is to obscure from us life's gracious relation to us. To be sure that we are transformed into love would only make us more resentful of life's rude attack upon us who have already a right relation to it. What we need for our deliverance is the assurance that, in spite of our very ungracious relation to life, it has, underneath the frowning face it often wears, a gracious relation to us. Once we are persuaded of that, our own gracious relation to it ought to follow, whereas, without that, the emotion we call love, but which is not a response to anything we know, whether we regard it as our own work or God's, will only be a sentiment, which, when the rude assaults of life come upon it, will be no kind of succour, but, by turning our mind to our own perfect relation to life, make us even more troubled at life's imperfect relation to us.

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