

deal more than his predecessors have done. Yet he holds that Paul's view of faith is not that of Jesus. His argument is set forth under the following heads:—(1) The cleft between Paul and Jesus; (2) the agreement between them; (3) the explanation of the agreement and difference; a concluding section sums up the results. Not Paul but Jesus is the Founder of the Church. It is not possible to enter into detail, but it is a book which students will have to reckon with.

Professor Meyer, of Zürich, in his answer to the question who has founded Christianity, Jesus or Paulus, covers a good deal of ground. In his preliminary statement he sets forth Christianity in its great historical forms, Catholic and Protestant. With neither of these does he agree. Then he treats of Paul, first as to the sources of our knowledge of Paul, then of the gospel of Paul, of the theology of Paul in its peculiarity, of Paul's theological system, and finally of its origin. No reader of the Paul of the Acts and of the Epistles would recognize the Paul of these pages. According to Professor Meyer, Paul was a Gnostic, and in his Epistles are the germs of the developed Gnostic system. Take, for example, the relation of God to the world, Professor Meyer affirms that, ac-

ording to Paul, God stands in no immediate relation to the world. Through His Son, God made the world; at a more remote distance between God and the world move the archons, or world-elements, that rule the times and the seasons. There are angels, throne principalities and powers that intervene between man and God, and so on. Forgetful of the statement that we have access directly to the Father, and of many other statements to the effect that of Him, and to Him, and through Him are all things. In truth he does not argue the question. Finally, he has a study of Jesus, and comes to the conclusion that not Paul but Jesus is the founder of Christianity. But it is not the Jesus of the Gospels that was the founder of Christianity, but the Jesus that remains after the critics have removed from Him all that they think is due to the idealizing reflexion of the Church. In these books there is no inquiry into the capacity of the early Church to perform such a colossal task. To the present writer it is easier to believe in the Jesus of the Gospels than to believe in the capacity of the Church, to conceive and to draw a figure so unique, so great, and so transcendent as the Jesus of the Gospels.

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The Life of Faith.

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I.

The Obedience of Faith.

Ro 1¹⁷, 'In the gospel is revealed a righteousness of God, from faith unto faith; as it is written, The righteous shall live from faith.' Mk 3¹⁻⁵, 'He entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had his hand withered . . . and he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he stretched it forth: and his hand was restored.'

In far distant times there came to the great Arab chief, whom we know as Abram, the conviction that he was called to leave that portion of the desert within which he and his fathers before him

had fed their flocks, and to go forth into a land which he knew not (He 11⁸). This was no natural instinct; it was the very contradiction of all that was native to the man. The conviction brought on a great crisis in his life, but he obeyed the impulse which he was convinced was divine. With a perfect abandon he followed the direction which was to him the voice of God, and doing so he has become the 'Father of the faithful,' the very prototype of faith for all time.

Years passed. His children have learned in Babylon the bitterness of exile and captivity (Hab

24). To them there comes a prophet who says, 'Accept this discipline. Yield yourselves up to God in that obedience which shall declare the perfect submission of your spirits to His will; and out of this bitterness of exile, out of the blood and tears of your captivity, shall come the cleansing of your national life, deliverance from the fetters of evil habit, the uplifting, the spiritualizing of all the thought of your people, until your surrender to the will divine shall be that in which you shall find your higher life, and by your faith you shall realize the life of righteousness.'

Again the years have passed. A great Christian philosopher writes down the words which are to stand for all time, shaping to noblest issues of spiritual life the thought of unborn generations. Paul writes of a righteousness of God which is to appear in the life of men. He says that it is possible only to men of faith; that it is only by it that man may hope to live the life of God; that it springs out of faith, and issues in faith. Faith is the microscopic cell buried in the heart of a seed: it is equally the heavy fruited bough, flung out to all the winds of heaven, nourishing out of its very substance the life of men.

In the study of spiritual powers we cannot afford to neglect that which we call 'FAITH.' We are not likely to get very far on in life's journey without being challenged to explain it. We are being challenged to-day. The secular Press discusses the question, and in the many letters which have appeared we have a clear indication of the deep-seated interest which belongs to the subject, and also of the mental confusion which follows upon all careless or inexact thinking upon this subject. There are many who desire to live the life of faith, but they are confused by the reflexion that the very faith which they seek is said to be the condition of attaining to the life of faith. 'How can I use that which I desire to obtain?' So cries the man in his perplexity. 'I see the beauty, the strength, the fruitfulness of the life of faith; I earnestly desire it; but the Church tells me that before I can get it I must use it. If I had it to use, should I desire it? Is this faith the cause or the product of the Christian life? Is it something with which I must start, or something with which I shall end?'

Paul's answer is that it is both. In order that we may the better understand this all-important statement in Christian teaching, we have thrown into

close proximity with this verse an incident taken from the Gospel. Paul gives us the philosophic statement; Mark describes the experience which declares its truth. There stands before the Christ a man with a withered arm. The limb hangs perfectly useless by his side. The nerves have ceased to act in the shrunken limb. Its muscles have atrophied; they no longer obey the command of the will. Movement has long since ceased to be possible. And Christ says, 'Stretch forth thy hand.'

We should find it easy to excuse the man if he had burst into the laugh that declares an embittered spirit. 'Stretch it out? Why, that is the very thing I have wanted to do all these years. If I could do it at all, would I have waited for your instructions? You are making what I need as a gift the condition of your giving. You must give me first some other power, and then there will be some chance of my doing what you say. Don't tell me to do what I want you to give me the power of doing.' Just for one moment the man stands looking into the quiet eyes of Him who knows both the innate powers and the sad paralysis of the human heart. Just for one moment; and then something stirred within the man. *It was the willingness to obey.* Only that: but how much it was! The nerves that had long since been utterly irresponsive, dead fibres of a useless limb, began to tingle, as once again there flowed along them the almost forgotten vibration. The feeble muscles obeyed, grew full and round again, and slowly the long palsied limb was lifted up, and into all its dry and desolate channels there came once more the blessed tide of life. That power to use his arm; was it a product or a cause? Did he not obey the initial impulse? Did he not receive the fuller power? His power sprang from his willingness to obey; it issued in the power to obey more perfectly. It was from faith; it was to faith. The final issue was life.

God's work is always such. He accepts life in the cell; He makes it the fertile mother of other life. He honours the neglected, the impaired, instrument, the uncertain possession of which first made us capable of receiving even the first impressions of spiritual life: He makes it the finished power which brings into the emptiness of man no less than the fulness of God; until in the faith with which he began, man finds the very fulfilment of life. It brings to mind the children's

story of the giant's child whose groping hand closed upon its father's fingers, when the father's magic strength flooded the feeble fingers, until the child too had a giant's grasp and held its father in a grip from which the father could not escape. Our uncertain groping is so much of faith as makes us willing to obey. There is no man upon God's earth but may find the rudiments of that power in himself. Our giant's grasp is the same trust, obedience, faith—we may call it what we will—quicken by contact with God, thrilling with the energy of the Eternal, and 'neither life nor death nor any other creature shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Ro 8³⁹).

The power is from faith; it began in 'the obedience of faith' (Ro 1⁵). It is to faith. It issues in peace and power, in right conduct, in joy, in the enthusiasm of sacrifice, in fruitfulness. It becomes the sum of all that we call 'life.' The righteous man finds that his life has come from, out of, his faith (*ἐκ πίστεως*).

Faith is obedience. That is the teaching with which Paul begins and ends his greatest Epistle (Ro 1⁵ 16²⁶). And in this teaching we find the clue that leads us out of our modern labyrinth. In it faith is seen to be—

The submission of man's nothing perfect to God's all-complete,

As by each new obeisance in spirit I climb to His feet.

BROWNING, 'Saul.'

But St. Paul is not content with the beginnings of faith, and he speaks of its effects as only St. John of New Testament writers does. He describes it as seen in that enthusiastic personal adhesion of the individual to Christ which makes him one with his Lord, and he says it is realized in that spiritual communion which is our eternal life. Faith is the trust of the impotent man: it is also the passion of St. Paul (Gal 2²⁰).

Spiritual obedience is not mere outward conformity to laws external to ourselves: it is spiritual conformity to that of God which speaks within our hearts, when Deep calleth unto Deep, and God makes His appeal to the human heart. But that conformity, beginning as it does in obedience, issues in the reproduction in us of the note that makes the music of the world.

We are in danger of making the religious life into the working of a piece of machinery. The

mechanical view of life, so common to-day, is a danger that threatens to destroy its beauty in robbing it of its vitality. The round of observances, the cold and lifeless performance, the dull and dismal round of service accepted with so much complaisance or complaint, these are things which one might build a machine to perform. They do not indicate the heart with its glow, its passion, its tenderness, its love (Jn 5³⁹). There is no life in it; and thus it is that the years bring no mellowness; activity is never beautified by the grace of unselfishness; the outlook never widens; everything is bounded by the formal and narrow confines within which the machine first found its place. And the projected issue of such a life closely corresponds. The man has before him a crown, a harp, a paradise almost wholly material.

Heaven is nothing of that kind. If it were, men of noble spirit would prefer this life, with its warm tears of sympathy, with the many exultations of its simple joys. But the pity of it all! Men would develop a spirit with that which is material, and would find a motive in what is but dead machinery.

'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,
More life, and fuller, than we want.

TENNYSON, 'Two Voices.'

Is it so very far from us? The appeal of our Lord is always in our ears: 'He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life.' Says Emerson: 'The whole course of things goes to teach us faith. Our one need is to obey, and by lowly listening—a beautiful rendering of *ὑπακοή* = obedience—by lowly listening we shall hear the right word, the word that gives us life.'

The simple act in which we take Christ at His word, the self-abandonment in which we 'let ourselves go,' that we may obey Him,—that is ever the beginning of life; and the end, the reward—if we must have it so—is that act made the rule, the description of our life. The initial act becomes the constant law. Obedience becomes enthusiasm. We begin by obeying the first feeble movement of the life of Christ within us; we end by reproducing in truth, in power, and in joy, the perfect life of God. He lives in us; we 'feed upon him in our heart by faith with thanksgiving.' Until at last the consummation of life is reached, and in man there appears the righteousness of God.

The trouble of our life is that that great end is so far away. Our crowning and constant discontent

is our own impotence, our personal failure to conform to God as we have seen Him in the face of Jesus Christ. We fail in the answer of our own hearts to that heavenly beauty. But as once more we stand before Him, and all the palsy that years of sloth and sin have wrought make us limp and helpless, impotent, faith will obey, even when she

sees no power of obedience in herself. We shall take Him at His word, and that word shall become the expression of our life. He is the author and the finisher of our faith, and at last upon our uplifted brows He will write the name that shall describe our life; and that name shall be His Own (Rev 3¹² 22⁴).

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF ST. LUKE.

LUKE XVIII. 8.

'I say unto you, that he will avenge them speedily. Howbeit when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?'—R.V.

EXPOSITION.

'I say unto you, that he will avenge them speedily.'—'Quickly,' without delay—*celeriter* (a), *confestim* (d), *cito* (Vulg.). Although He bears long, and to those who are suffering seems to delay, yet He really acts speedily. This interpretation is confirmed by Ac 12⁷ 22¹⁸ 25⁴, Ro 16³⁰, 1 Ti 3¹⁴, Rev 1¹ 22⁶. Others prefer *repente*, *inopinato*. Thus Godet says, that although God delays to act, yet, when the moment comes, He acts swiftly, as at the Déluge and the destruction of Sodom. In any case the *ἐν τάχει* (speedily) is placed last with emphasis.—PLUMMER.

As when 'His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel' (Jg 10¹⁶), so 'His bowels are troubled' for His own elect, crying to Him day and night from the depths of their oppressions. He is pained, as it were, at the long delay which His wisdom sees necessary, and at the sore trial to which it puts their faith; and is impatient, so to speak, till 'the time, the set time,' arrive to interpose.—BROWN.

'Howbeit when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?'—The interrogative particle *ἄρα* is to be accentuated thus (not *ἄρα*), as bearing a major force of reasoning, and interrogative. The two words are one in essence, but *ἄρα* has more emphasis in utterance, and therefore the first syllable is lengthened.—BRUCE.

'THE necessary faith, the faith in question, faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Saviour.' Others prefer 'the faith which perseveres in prayer,' or again 'loyalty to Himself,' which is much the same as faith in Christ. The answer to this desponding question, which seems, but only seems, 'to call in question the success of our Lord's whole mediatorial work,' has been given by anticipation (17²⁰): the majority, not only of mankind but of Christians, will be absorbed in worldly pursuits, and only a few will 'endure to the end' (Mt 24^{12, 13}). No doubt is expressed or implied as to the coming of the Son of Man, but only as to what He will find. There is therefore no reason for conjecturing that the parable received its present form at a time when belief

in the Second Advent was waning. Still less reason is there for interpreting it of the Christian Church seeking help from pagan magistrates against Jewish persecutors, and then concluding that it must have been composed after the time of St. Luke (De Wette). On the other hand, Hilgenfeld sees in the thirst for vengeance, which (he thinks) inspires the parable, evidence of its being one of the oldest portions of the Third Gospel.—PLUMMER.

THE SERMON.

The Faith of the Church.

By the Rev. James Owen.

In the end of the preceding chapter, Jesus spoke of a sudden and fearful judgment that would befall men. And the disciples asked Him, 'Where, Lord?' 'Where and on whom is this judgment to come?' He answered them, 'Where-soever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.' As the carcass attracts the vultures, so does moral guilt demand the judgment. It was as if Christ had said, you need not ask where or when or how the judgment will take place, but remember wherever death and corruption are, thither must the vultures come. Life, then, is the only security against this judgment, and the condition of life is communion with God. To live always, men ought always to pray. To impress on the disciples the necessity of prayer, Christ then told them the Parable of the Importunate Widow, and ended it with the promise that if the elect cried to God, He would 'avenge them speedily.' And then comes this question, 'Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?' and it seems to cast a gloom over the future. Is the time not coming, then, that has been prophesied when 'all