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Title: Gloria Crucis

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Release date: January 3, 2008 [eBook #24153]

Language: English

\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK GLORIA CRUCIS \*\*\*

Transcribed from the 1908 Longmans, Green, and Co. edition by David Price, email [ccx074@pglaf.org](mailto:ccx074@pglaf.org)

# GLORIA CRUCIS

ADDRESSES DELIVERED IN LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL  
HOLY WEEK AND GOOD FRIDAY, 1907

BY  
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LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.  
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON  
NEW YORK, BOMBAY, AND CALCUTTA  
1908

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## INTRODUCTION

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These addresses, delivered in Lichfield Cathedral <sup>[0]</sup> in Holy Week, 1907, are published at the request of some who heard them. It has only been possible to endeavour to reproduce them in substance.

The writer desires to express his obligations to various works from which he has derived much assistance, such as, above all, Du Bose's *Gospel in the Gospels*, Askwith's *Conception of Christian Holiness*, Tennant's *Origin of Sin*, and Jevons' *Introduction to the History of Religion*.

To the first and the last of these he is especially indebted in regard to the view here taken of the Atonement.

It seems to him that no view of that great and central truth can possibly be true, which (i) represents it as the result of a transaction between the Father and the Son, which is ditheism pure and simple; or which (ii) regards it as intended to relieve us of the penalty of our sins, instead of having as its one motive, meaning, and purpose the "cure of sinning."

So far as we can see, the results of sin, seen and unseen, in this world and beyond it, must follow naturally and necessarily from that constitution of the universe (including human nature) which is the expression of the Divine Mind. If this is true, and if that Mind is the Mind of Him Who is Love, then all punishment must be remedial, must have, for its object and intention at least, the conversion of the sinner. And, therefore, the desire to escape from punishment, if natural and instinctive, is also non-moral, for it is the desire to shirk God's remedy for sin, and doomed never to realise its hope, for it is the desire to reverse the laws of that Infinite Holiness and Love which governs the world.

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Yet this must be understood with one all-important reservation. For the worst punishment of sin, is sin itself, the alienation of the soul from God, with its consequent weakening of the will, dulling of the reason, and corrupting of the affections. And it was from this punishment, from this "hardest hell," which is sin, or the character spoiled and ruined by sin, that Christ died to deliver us.

It follows that it is high time to dismiss all those theories of the Atonement which ultimately trace their origin to the enduring influence of Roman law. There is no remission of penalty offered to us in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The offer which is there held out to us, is that which answers to our deepest need, to the inmost longings of the human soul, "the remission of our *sins*."

The idea of a penalty owing to the "justice" of God is a thoroughly legalistic one, the offspring of an age which thought in terms of law. It deals throughout with abstractions. The very word "justice" is a general notion, a concept, the work of the mind abstracting from particulars. Justice and mercy are used like counters in some theological game at which we are invited to play. "Penalty," again, is a term which serves to obscure the one important fact that God, as a Moral Person or, rather, as the One Self-Existent Being, of Whose nature and essence morality is the expression, can only have one motive in dealing with sinners, and that is, to reconcile them to Himself, to restore them to that true ideal of their nature, which is the Image of Himself in the heart of every man. Who can measure the pain and anguish which that restoration must cost, to the sinner himself, and (such is the wonderful teaching of the Cross) to God, the All-Holy One, Who comes into a world of sin in order to restore him?

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There is no room here, at all events, for light and trivial thoughts of sin. That charge might be levelled, with more excuse, at the view that sin only incurs an external penalty, from which we can be cheaply delivered by the sufferings of another.

And theories of the Atonement which centre in the conception of penalty are often only modifications of the crude and glaring injustice of the Calvinistic view. The doctrine of a kind of bargain between the Father and the Son, while it revolts our moral instincts, at the same time logically leads to the purely heathen notion of two gods.

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There are two main principles which are essential to a right understanding of the Atonement: (1) The oneness of Christ both with God and with humanity. In regard to neither is He, nor can He be, "Another"; (2) the death of Christ was the representation in space and time of a moral fact. It happened as an "event" in history, in order that that moral fact, of which it was the embodiment and symbol, might become a fact in the spiritual experience of mankind. That death was more than a symbol, because it was the actual means by which that which it represented might be, and has been, in the lives of all Christians accomplished. These two principles the writer has, with whatever degree of failure or inadequacy, endeavoured to embody in the following addresses.

And yet the Atonement, which is, in the broadest aspect of it, Christianity itself, is a fact infinitely greater and higher than any mere theories of it. For it is nothing less than this, the personal action of the living Christ on the living souls of men. That his readers and himself may experience this action in ever-increasing measure is the prayer of him who, as he fears, too greatly daring, has endeavoured to set forth, yet once more, "The Glory of the Cross."

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### I THE GLORY OF THE CROSS

"God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."—GAL. VI. 14.

There are at least two reasons, unconnected with Holy Week, why the subject of the Cross of Christ should occupy our attention.

1. The first reason is, that the Cross is commonly recognised as the weak point in our Christianity. It is the object of constant attack on the part of its assailants: and believers are content too often to accept it "on faith," which means that they despair of giving a rational explanation of it. Too often, indeed, Christians have proclaimed and have gloried in its supposed irrationality. To this latter point we shall return. But in the meanwhile it is necessary to say this: all language of harshness towards those who attack the doctrine of the Atonement is completely out of place. For the justification of their attacks has very often come from the Christian side. In former times, far more commonly than now, the sacrifice of Christ has been represented as a substitutory offering, necessary to appease the wrath of an offended God. It used to be said, and in some quarters it is said to-day, that the sins of the human race had so provoked the Divine anger that it could be appeased by nothing short of the destruction of mankind. In these dire straits of mankind, the Sinless Son of God presented Himself as the object on which the full vials of the Father's wrath should be outpoured. God having been thus placated, and His wrath satisfied, such as believe in this transaction, and rest themselves in confidence upon it, are enabled in such wise to reap its benefits that they escape the penalty due to their transgression, and are restored to the Divine favour.

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Now this is the crudest representation of a certain popular theology of the Atonement. With some of its features softened down, it is by no means without its adherents and exponents at the present day. But when its drift is clearly understood, it is seen to be a doctrine which no educated man of our time can accept. We may consider four fatal objections to it.

(a) It is true that there is such a thing as "the wrath of God." It is not only a fact, but one of the most tremendous facts in the universe. It is a fact as high as the Divine purity, as deep as the malignity and foulness of sin, as broad as all human experience. It is impossible to construct a theistic theory of the world which shall leave it out. The nature of the fact we shall investigate at a later point. But we can say this at once. It cannot be such a fact as is represented by the theory under review. For that represents the wrath of God as a mere thirst for vengeance, a burning desire to inflict punishment, a rage that can only be satisfied by pain, and blood, and death. In other words, we are driven to a conception of God which is profoundly immoral, and revoltingly pagan. If we are rightly interested in missions to the heathen, are there to be no attempts to convert our fellow-Christians whose conception of God scarcely rises above the heathen one of a cruel and sanguinary deity? Not such, at least, is the New Testament doctrine of Him Who is God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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(b) There is no moral quality which we esteem higher than justice. Fairness, equity, straight dealing are attributes for which all men entertain a hearty and unfeigned respect. There is no flame of indignation which burns fiercer within us than when we conceive ourselves, or others, to be the victims of injustice. But what are we to say of a view of the Atonement which represents God Himself as being guilty of the most flagrant act of injustice that the mind of man has ever conceived, the infliction of condign punishment upon a perfectly innocent Person, and that for the offences committed by others? It is a further wrong, and that a wrong done to the offenders themselves, that they are, in consideration of the sufferings of the righteous One, relieved of the merited and healthful punishment of ill-doing.

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(c) A third defect of this theory of the Atonement is, that it is profoundly unethical. The need of man is represented as being, above all, escape from penalty. Whereas, at least, the conscience of the sinner himself is bearing at all times witness to the truth that his real necessity is escape from his sin, from the weakness and the defilement of his moral nature, which are of the very essence of moral transgression. We are now dealing with the matter from the moral standpoint; but we have to support us the authority of the earliest proclamation of the work of the Christ: "He shall save His people from their sins," not from any pains or penalties attached to their sins. Relief from punishment is not the Gospel of the New Testament, it is not a gospel at all.

(d) Finally, the idea of a transaction between the Father and the Son is clean contrary to the fundamental Christian doctrine of the Unity of God. Once locate justice in the Father, and love in the Son, and view the Atonement as the result of a bargain, or transaction between the Two, and once more we are left with a doctrine not Christian, but heathen and polytheistic. There is unhappily little doubt, that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity suffers, just as that of the Atonement, even more from its defenders than from its assailants. Properly understood, that doctrine is the vindication of the complete fulness of the personal life of the One God. Too often it is so held, and so preached and represented, as in this case, that monotheism is tacitly abandoned in favour of ditheism or tritheism. It needs to be plainly said, that the transaction theory is inconsistent with the trinitarian doctrine. The Three Persons are so called in our Western theology owing to defects inherent in human thought and speech. To set one over against the other as two parties to a contract, is to found a theory upon those very defects. The Miltonic representation of the Father and the Son is Arian; the popular view is, more often than not, a belief either in two gods, or in a logical contradiction.

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To sum up, the view of the Atonement with which we have been occupying ourselves, is opposed to the fundamental moral instincts, and to the Christian consciousness, both as it finds expression in the New Testament, and as it reveals itself in the best minds of to-day. And this type of theory, although without some of its coarser features, is by no means extinct. There is all the more need then, in spite of all that has been so well done in this direction, to exhibit the Atonement as the supreme vindication of those instincts which are the witness of the Divine in man. There is laid on all who would preach or teach Christianity to-day to show that Calvinism, and all that is touched with the taint of Calvinism, is not the doctrine of the Atonement which is taught in the Bible or held by the Church. But, as nothing can be built on negations, there is an even greater and more imperative need to exhibit the truth of the Atonement in its beauty and majesty and transcendent moral power.

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2. The second of our two reasons for the choice of the Cross of Christ as our subject, is the failure on the part of those who believe in it, trust in it, and even build their lives upon it, to realise the true vastness of its meaning. We are too apt to regard the Cross as one of the doctrines of our religion, or as supplying a motive to penitence, or to Christian conduct. Our view, when we are most in earnest, is one-sided, limited, parochial. We must rise, if we would really understand the Cross, to the height of this conception: that it contains in itself the answer to the problem of human existence, and of our individual lives. The secret of the universe, of our part of it at least, that tiny corner which is occupied by the human race, was revealed in that supreme disclosure of the Divine Mind which was made on Calvary. It was a disclosure necessarily given under the forms of time and space, else it could not have been given to us at all. But it transcends all forms and limitations, and belongs to the spiritual and timeless order, which is also the Real. But it is a disclosure which requires the thought and study, not of one generation only, but of all. It can never be exhausted. There is no view of it (including even that

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miserable caricature which we have just considered) that is altogether without some elements of truth. There is no view which embodies the whole of the truth. Each generation is meant to read that secret of God, which was uttered to mankind from the Cross of the Christ, a little more clearly than its predecessors. No theology of the Atonement which is not both new and old, can be a true theology. It must be old, because the disclosure was made under the form of historic facts which belong to the past. It must be new, because each age, in the light of the progressive revelation of God, interprets the disclosure under the forms of its own experience, scientific, moral, spiritual, which belongs to the present. "Therefore is every scribe that is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, like unto a householder which bringeth forth out of his treasures things both new and old."

But the present point is, that we should realise the far-reaching significance of the disclosure of God made on and from the Cross. Human history is like a long-drawn-out drama, in which we are actors. How long is that drama, stretching back beyond the long years of recorded history to our dim forefathers, who have left their rude stone implements on the floors of caves or bedded in the river drift, the silent witnesses of a vanished race. And how short is that little scene in which we ourselves appear, while, insignificant as it is, it is yet our all. And we ask, we are impelled to ask, what is the meaning of the whole vast drama? What is the meaning of our own little scene in it? No questions can be compared in interest and importance to these two. And the answer to them both, so we shall try to see, was given once in time from the Cross. That is one of the chief aspects under which we shall regard the Cross of Christ, as the key which unlocks the mystery of human existence, and of my existence. There is no more majestic or pathetic conception than that of the veiled Isis. But the Cross is the removal of the veil, the discovery of the Divine Secret.

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Before, however, we proceed to our main subject, it will be well to set first before our minds a few elementary considerations.

The existence of God appears to be necessitated in order to account for two things: (i) the appearance of control in the universe; (ii) the facts of moral consciousness.

(i) It seems impossible to get rid of the ideas of direction and control. If we regard the world as it exists at the present moment, as one stage in an age-long process, then at least *δυναμει* the facts which now appear were contained in the earliest stage of all. Man appears with his moral and spiritual nature. Then already the moral and the spiritual were somehow present when the first living cell began its wonderful course. *το πρωτον ου μεν σπερμα αλλα το πελειον*. All movements have converged towards this end, and the co-ordination of movements implies control.

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This then is our first reason for our belief in God. We live in a universe which seems throughout to manifest evidence of direction and control.

(ii) But I have much surer and more cogent evidence within myself. Whence comes that ineradicable conviction of the supremacy of righteousness, of the utter loveliness of the good, and utter hatefulness of the evil? I am not concerned with the steps of the process by which the moral sense may have developed. The majesty of goodness, before which I bow, really, sincerely, even when by my acts I give the lie to my own innermost convictions, that is no creation of my consciousness. Nor do I see good reason to believe that it has been an invention of, or growth in, human consciousness during the slow development of past ages. There is something deeper in my moral convictions than an outward sanction wondrously transmuted into an internal one. Moreover, in the best men, those who have really developed that moral faculty which I detect, in beginning and germ, as it were, in myself, I see no abatement in reverence for the ideal. Rather, the better and saintlier that they are, the keener do they feel their fallings off from it. A moral lapse, which would give me hardly a moment's uneasy thought, is capable of causing in them acute and prolonged sorrow. The nearer they draw to the moral ideal, strange paradox, the farther off from them does it ever appear, and they from it. It is an apostle who writes, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief." Nor can I discover any tolerable explanation of all this, except that the guiding and directive power in the world, reveals itself in the moral consciousness of men, and with growing clearness in proportion as that consciousness has been trained and educated, as the moral ideal.

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I find myself then, when my eyes are opened to the realities of the world in which I live, confronted with the facts of directive control and of the moral ideal. If I seek for some interpretation and coordination of the facts, I am compelled, judging of them on the analogy of my own experience (which, being the ultimate reality I know, is my only clue to the interpretation of the ultimate reality of the universe) to regard them as the activities of a Person, Whom we call God. Certainly to call the Ultimate Reality a Person, must be an inadequate expression of the truth, for it is the expression of the highest form of being in the terms of the lower. But it is an infinitely more adequate presentation, than to represent that Reality as impersonal. For personality being the highest category of my thought, I am bound to think of God as being Personal, if I would think of Him at all. I can be confident that though my view must fall far short of the truth, it is at least nearer to the truth and heart of things than any other view I can form. It is in fact the truth so far as I can apprehend it: the truth by which I was meant to live, and on which I was made to act.

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But the question of questions remains—What is the relation of the Person Whom I call God to my own personal being, to my spirit? And, in answering this question, popular theology makes a

grave and disastrous mistake. It regards that Person as being isolated from all other persons, in the same way as each of us is isolated from all other persons. God, that is, is viewed as but One Person among many. Now, without inquiring as to the truth of this conception of personality, as being essentially an exclusive thing, we may at least say this, following the teaching of our best modern thinkers, as they have followed that of St. John and the Greek Fathers, that God is as truly conceived of as being within us, as external to us. His Throne is in the heart of man, as truly as it is at the centre of the universe. No view of God is tenable at the present day which regards Him as outside His own creation. His Personality is not exclusive, but inclusive of all things and all persons, while yet it transcends them. And as He includes us within Himself, as in God "we live and move and have our being," so also He interpenetrates us with His indwelling Presence as the life of our life.

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To this point we shall presently return, for it is the keynote of all modern advance in theological knowledge, so far as that is not concerned with questions of literature, history, archæology, and textual criticism. But we are concerned to notice now, that this recovered truth of the immanence of God in our humanity, affords the full and sufficient explanation of that dark shadow which lies athwart all human lives. That shadow has loomed large in the minds of poets, thinkers, and theologians. The latter know it by the name of sin. But what is sin save the conscious alienation and estrangement of man from the Divine Life which is in him? And if this be true, we can now see clearly why sin, moral transgression, always makes itself felt as a disintegrating force both without and within the individual life. Without, it is for ever separating nation from nation, class from class, man from man. Within, it produces discord and confusion in our nature. And both results follow, because sin is the alienation from the Divine Life, which is both the common element in human nature which binds man to man by the tie of spiritual kinship; and also the central point of the individual life, the hidden and sacred source and fountain of our being, which unites all the faculties and powers of our manhood in one harmonious whole.

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Now the Cross of Jesus Christ is the overcoming of this disastrous estrangement and alienation. It is the victory of the Divine life in man. That is the most fruitful way in which we can regard it. The Cross stands for conquest—the triumph of the Divine Life in us over all the forces which are opposed to it. And in this lies the glory of the Cross; that which made the symbol of the most degrading form of punishment—that punishment which to the Jewish mind made him who suffered under it the "accursed of God," and which to the Roman was the ignominious penalty which the law inflicted on the slave—the subject of boasting to that apostle who was both, to the very heart of him, a Jew and also a citizen of the empire.

The object of these lectures is to show how this is indeed the meaning of the Cross. There, in Him Who was the Son of man, the Representative and the Ideal of the race, the Divine Life triumphed, in order that in us, who are not separate from, but one with Him, it may win the like victory.

We fight against sin, and again and again succumb in the struggle. But as often as with the opened eye of the soul we turn to the Cross of Jesus, we behold there the victory, our victory, already won. Already, indeed, it is ours, by the communication to us of the Spirit of Him Who triumphed on the Cross. It only remains for us, by the deliberate act of our whole personal being, our will, our reason, our affections, to appropriate and make our own the deathless conquest won in and for our humanity on the Cross.

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## **II THE HISTORICAL AND SPIRITUAL CAUSES OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST**

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"Him, being by the determined will and foreknowledge of God given up, through the hand of lawless men, ye affixed to a cross and slew."—ACTS II. 23.

St. Paul places this in the very forefront of that gospel which, as it had been delivered to him, so he in his turn had delivered to the Corinthians, that "Christ died for our sins." Neglecting all, deeper interpretations of this, it is at least clear that in the apostle's mind there was the closest and most intimate connexion between the death of Christ and the fact of human sin.

Now it is important to remember that that connexion was, in the first place, an historical one.

Christianity is a religion founded upon facts. In this is seen at once a sharp distinction between our religion and that which claims the allegiance of so many millions of our race—the religion, or better, perhaps, the philosophy of the Buddha. Certainly there is such a thing as a Christian philosophy. For we cannot handle facts without at the same time seeking for some rational explanation of them. The plain man becomes a philosopher against his will. In its origin our Christian theology is no artificial, manufactured product. It is rather an inevitable, natural growth. Neither the minds of the earliest Christian thinkers, nor our own minds, are just sheets of blank paper on which facts may impress themselves. Scientists, some of them at least, while repudiating philosophy put forth metaphysical theories of the universe. Theology is simply the necessary result of human minds turned to the consideration of the Christian facts. But it makes all the difference which end you start from, the facts or the theory: whether your method is à posteriori or à priori; inductive or deductive; scientific or obscurantist. And Christianity follows the scientific method of starting with the facts. In this lies the justification of its claim to be a religion at once universal and life-giving. It is universal because facts are the common property of all, although the interpretation placed on those facts by individuals may be more or less

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adequate. It is life-giving, because men live by facts, not by theories about them; by the assimilation of food, not by the knowledge how food nourishes our bodies.

Following, then, the Christian, which is also the scientific method, we now set out in search of the facts, the historical causes which brought about the death of Christ.

Now these causes appear to have been, mainly, these three: prejudice, a dead religion, and the love of gain and political ambition.

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1. Prejudice may, perhaps, be best defined as the resolution to hold fast to our belief, just because it is our belief; to adhere to an opinion, and close our eyes to all that has been said on the opposite side. Now nowhere and at no time has prejudice exerted a more absolute dominion over the minds of men, than it did in Judæa in the first century of our era. The people had inherited a traditional conception of the Messiah, from which they could not imagine any deviation possible. He was the Deliverer and the Restorer predestined of God. He would throw off the hated foreign yoke, and make the people of God supreme over all the nations of the earth. It was for a long time doubtful whether Jesus of Nazareth intended to claim the position, and to enact the part of the Messiah. "How long keepest thou our soul in suspense?" was the question put to Him as late as the Feast of Dedication, 28 A.D., the year before He suffered. But, finally, the people found themselves confronted with a type of Messiah differing *toto caelo* from the accepted traditional type. The kingdom of God, which meant the Divine rule over the souls of men, was at least not such a kingdom as they were looking for, as they had been taught to expect. There is a long history in the gospels of the gradual rise of a popular hope, more than once seeming to have attained its eagerly longed-for goal; but at last doomed, and conscious that it was doomed, to bitter and final disappointment. And it turned to hatred of Him Who had aroused it from a long and fitful sleep of centuries. "Crucify Him" was now their cry. Jesus was put to death on the legal charge of being "Christ, a King," a provincial rebel. He really died because He was not "Christ, a King," in such sense as He had been expected to be. Thus the first historical cause of the death of our Lord was prejudice, inveterate and ingrained, in the minds of the people.

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2. The second historical cause of the death of our Lord was the existence in His day and place of a dead religion. This is, when we consider the meaning of the phrase, the strangest of paradoxes, the existence in fact of a logical contradiction. For religion is in its essential nature a living thing, for the very reason that it is part of the experience of a living person. As experience is not merely alive, but the sum of all our vital powers, it is ever growing, both in breadth and in intensity. So far then as we are in any true sense religious men, our religion, as part and parcel of our experience, must be alive with an intense and vigorous activity, growing in the direction in which our experience grows. Hence a dead religion is a logical contradiction, as we have said. But, as truth is stranger than fiction, so life contains anomalies and monstrosities which simply set logic at defiance. A dead religion is indeed a monstrum, something portentous, which refuses to be reconciled with any canons of rationality. But it exists—that is the astonishing fact about it; and it found its almost perfect expression and embodiment in the normal and average Pharisee of our Lord's time. There are three characteristic features about a dead religion, and all of them receive a perfect illustration in the well-known picture in the gospels of Pharisaic religion.

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(a) It tends less and less to rest on experience, and more and more to repose upon tradition. It is academic, a thing on which scribes may lecture, while the voice of the scholastic pedant with blatant repetitions overpowers the living, authoritative voice within the soul. "They marvelled, because He taught with authority, and not as the scribes. A fresh (not new) teaching, with authority!"

(b) It removes the living God to an infinite distance from human life. Religion is a matter of rules, of minute obedience to a code of morals and of ceremonial imposed from without, not of a fellowship of the human with the Divine. In fact, God is banished to a point on the far circumference, and the centre is occupied by the Law. He is retained in order to give authority to that Law, as the source of sanctions in the way of rewards and punishments. In short, the idea of the living God degenerates into the necessary convention of an ecclesiastical tradition.

(c) Closely connected with this second feature is the third characteristic of a dead religion—its inhumanity. When men substitute obedience to a code for service of the living God, it is no wonder that the truth—the central truth of religion—fades rapidly from their minds, that the service of God is identical with the highest service rendered to our fellow-men. "This commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also." This explains why the Pharisee held aloof from the outcast and the sinner. They might be left to perish—it mattered not to him.

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Now, all through the Gospel history our Lord appears as standing in absolute and sternest opposition to the dead religion of the Pharisees. He could make no manner of terms with it. He acted against it. He denounced it at every point. He rebuked them for "making the commandment of God of none effect" by that tradition which they loved so dearly. He brought the idea of a living God into closest touch with the actual lives of men. He deliberately consorted with publicans and sinners. And, finally, He condemned, in set discourse, the whole system, traditional, Godless, inhuman, with scathing emphasis. Christ died, not only because His words and acts ran counter to the prejudice of the people, but because He spoke and acted in opposition to the dead religion of the Pharisees.

3. The third historical cause of the death of Christ was the love of gain and the political ambition

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of the Sadducees. Their hatred, indeed, would have been powerless if our Lord had not already provoked the enmity of the people and of the Pharisees; but that enmity, in turn, without the unscrupulous intrigues of the Sadducees, a small but most influential section, would never have proceeded to its fatal and murderous issue. The Pharisees gave up the conflict in despair: "Perceive ye that ye prevail nothing? Behold, the whole world is gone after Him." It was the Sadducean High Priest who gave the counsel of death. "It is expedient that one man should die for the people."

We must remember that the Sadducees represented the aristocracy of Judæa, and that, as resulted necessarily from the nature and constitution of the Jewish state, was an ecclesiastical aristocracy, an hierarchy. They are the party denoted several times in the New Testament by the term "the High Priests." The nearest analogy to their position is supplied by the political popes and bishops of the Middle Ages. Their interests were political rather than spiritual. A considerable amount of independence had been left to the Jews in their own land. The Sanhedrin, the native court, exercised still very considerable power. And the Sadducean minority possessed a predominating influence in its consultations. What political power could be wielded in a subject state of the Empire was in their hands. Incidentally, a large and flourishing business was conducted under their control and management in the very Temple Courts, in "the booths of the sons of Hanan." Our Lord struck a blow at their financial interests when He drove out these traders in sacrificial victims and other requisites. But, much more, and this was the head and front of His offence, by His influence with certain classes of the people, and by the danger thus presented of a popular movement which might arouse the suspicion of the imperial authorities, and lead to very decisive action on their part, He threatened the political position of the Sadducean aristocracy. So with complete absence of scruples, but with great political sagacity, Caiaphas uttered the momentous words, an unconscious prophecy, as St. John points out, at that meeting of the Sanhedrin when the death of Jesus was finally resolved upon.

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Thus the main historical causes of the Crucifixion were these three, prejudice on the part of the people, a dead religion on the part of the Pharisees, love of gain and political ambition on the part of the Sadducees.

We may see then how absolutely true St. Peter was to the facts of the case. "Him . . . through the hand of lawless men, ye affixed to a cross and slew." God was not the cause of the death of Jesus Christ, as in popular and ditheistic theory, forgetting "I am in the Father, and the Father in Me." The real causes of His Death were the definite sins of lawless, of wicked men. God's part was a purely negative one. He held His hand, and allowed sin to work out to its fatal issue. The Resurrection, indeed, is the sublime act of God's interference, at the most critical point in all human history, at the one point supremely worthy of such Divine interposition, in order to finally and completely vindicate the cause of moral goodness. But up till then, sin was allowed to have its own way, to display fully its malign character, to reach its ultimate result in the Death of the Sinless One.

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But behind the historical causes of our Lord's death, were deeper and spiritual causes. "Him being by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God delivered up. . . ." God foreknew the result. There is no difficulty here. But in what sense can He be said to have "determined" it?

The answer leads us to a consideration of decisive importance. God works by law, in the spiritual, no less than in the physical region. The Death of the Christ, at the hand of lawless men, came about in virtue of the working of those laws. As we have said, sin is the alienation and estrangement of man from the Divine life which is in him, and by virtue of which he is man. Now, in the human character of Jesus Christ, we see, for the first time, the perfect, genuine, uncaricatured humanity, in which the human will is at every point in absolute agreement and fellowship with the Divine Will. Shortly, He represents the complete and absolute contradiction and antithesis of sin. It could not have been, that that Life should have been realised in a world of alienation from the Divine, without the result, which followed as necessarily and inevitably as any of the physical happenings of nature, of the death of the Sinless. "He became obedient unto death." A deeper meaning lies in these words of St. Paul, which contain the whole secret of the Atonement. But, for the present, we may understand them to mean, that death was the natural issue of the Life of perfect obedience lived in a world permeated by the spirit of disobedience. Thus we gain a clear knowledge of the manner in which the death of Jesus Christ happened in accordance with the determined counsel of God. That which takes place, in the spiritual or in the physical world, as the result of the working of those laws of God which are the constant expression of His will, may be said to have been determined by Him.

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There is a yet more profound meaning in the Death of Christ as the result of sin, than any which we have as yet considered: that Death is the outward sign and sacrament of an inward and spiritual fact. When we sin we are, in a measure proportioned to the deliberateness and heinousness of our sin, doing to death the Divine life, the Christ within us. That which happened once on Calvary is renewed time after time in the inward experience of men. The outward fact is an historical drama representing an ever-repeated spiritual tragedy. Daily, by the hands of lawless men, by ourselves in our moments of wilfulness and disobedience, Christ is being put to death. There is no sin which, in its measure and degree, is not a rejection and crucifixion of the Christ.

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The Cross of Christ, viewed in the light of its historical and spiritual causes, is (i) the revelation of the malignity of sin. There we see our favourite sins stripped of all pleasing disguise, and revealed in their true horror, and cruelty, and selfishness. The Incarnate Son of God put Himself

at the disposal of sinful men, and His violent and shameful death was the result. There is the true meaning of the sins in which we delight. (ii) It reveals the disastrous result of sin, the death of the Divine Man within each one of us. There is no sin which is not an act of spiritual suicide.

It will not then be altogether in vain, that we have now considered the causes of the Death of Christ if, in the "solemn hour of temptation," we, remembering the Cross, and Him Who died thereon, and why He died, "stand in awe, and sin not."

### III THE CHRISTIAN AND THE SCIENTIFIC ESTIMATE OF SIN

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"Christ died for our sins."—I COR. XV. 3.

Nothing is more characteristic of Christianity than its estimate of human sin. Historically, no doubt, this is due to the fact that the Lord and Master of Christians died "on account of sins." His death was due, as we have seen, both to the actual, definite sins of His contemporaries, and also to the irreconcilable opposition between His sinless life and the universal presence of sin in the world into which He came. But it is with the Christian estimate of sin, and with the facts which justify it, that we are now concerned.

Briefly put, Christianity regards sin as the one thing in the world which is radically and hopelessly evil. Pain, physical and mental, is evil no doubt, but in a different sense. Without going deeply into the intensely difficult problem of animal and human suffering, we may at least say this: that he would be a bold man who would undertake to say, viewing the moral results of suffering in human lives, that all, or the majority of the instances of pain which we observe, come under the head of those things "which ought not to be," that is, are, without qualification or extenuation, evil. But this is precisely the statement which Christianity makes with regard to sin. Of one thing only in the universe can we say that it "ought not to be," and that one thing is moral evil. Perhaps then, broadly and roughly, the Christian standpoint may be summed up in four words, "sin worse than pain."

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Of old, St. John wrote that "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." In its outward aspect, the world has greatly changed since these words were written. And yet they are as true in the twentieth century as they were in the first. The world has adopted Christian language and manners and modes of thought. But always and everywhere it is to be detected by its antagonism to the Christian estimate of sin. The spirit which accuses Christianity of gross exaggeration in this respect, is the very spirit of the world. Now, as in days of long ago, when torture and death hung on the refusal to scatter a few grains of incense before the statue of Cæsar, the same eternal choice is presented to a man, Christ or the world? Which estimate of sin are you going to make your own, the world's, as a lamentable mistake, or failure, or necessity; or the Christian, "worse than any conceivable pain"? It is not a matter of academic interest, but an intensely vital and practical one, affecting a man's whole outlook upon life. Which is right—there is the clear and definite issue raised—the Christian estimate, or the world's estimate of sin? Is it worse than a blunder, a misfortune, a fault? Is it something interwoven into the very structure of our present stage of existence? Or, is it an alien and flagrant intruder into a world where it has no business, which is so constructed that, sooner or later, wilful transgression meets with the direst penalties? There is no question as to what is the Christian estimate of sin. Christ or Cæsar? is the issue still presented. But, we wish to ask, is there any reason for believing that the Christian estimate is true? I bring forward three reasons, based respectively on experience, on conscience, on the ultimately similar views of the origin and nature of sin given by science and in the Bible.

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1. First, then, consider the argument from experience. It is very easy and tempting to use the language of exaggeration. But probably we are not saying more than would be admitted by nearly every one, when we make the assertion that a very large part of the misery and suffering which exists in the world is traceable, directly or indirectly, to human sin. We are not dealing with the results of their own sins upon offenders, though these are in some cases conspicuous enough. But that the world is full of human lives, often wrecked, more often partially stunted and spoiled, in most cases falling short of the full measure of vitality and happiness to which they might have attained, is a statement not admitting of denial. And I think we are still on secure ground when we say that at the root of a very large proportion of these failures is some one of the myriad forms of sin and selfishness. The strange thing, the bewildering and baffling, although, as I believe, not wholly inexplicable thing, is that men in a very large number of cases suffer on account of sins for which they are in no sense responsible. But the fact remains of the close connexion which experience shows to exist between human sin and human suffering. It is impossible to prove wide assertions, but a strong case could undoubtedly be made out for the statement that sin is a more prolific source of misery and failure in human life than all other factors put together.

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2. Next, we turn to the witness of conscience, of our moral reason. The main point here is that so often brought forward, of the uniqueness of remorse. I may make a foolish blunder. I may do some hasty and ill-considered act, and in consequence suffer some measure of inconvenience, or perhaps experience a veritable disaster and overthrow of my hopes. But in either case, though I may feel poignant regret, I am as far as possible from the experience of remorse, save in so far as my blunder may have involved neglect of some duty, or a carelessness morally culpable. But when I have committed a sin, then it would be a most inadequate description of my state of mind

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to call it regret. I suffer from that intense mental pain which we have learnt to call remorse, the constant and relentless avenger which waits upon every transgression of the moral law. And when, leaving my own experience, I interrogate the experience of men better than myself, above all, that of the saints of God, I meet with the same phenomenon a thousandfold intensified. And I have a right in such a matter to accept the witness of the experts. A saint is an expert in spiritual things, and his evidence in spiritual matters is as cogent and trustworthy as that of the biologist or geologist in his special field of experience.

So far, then, as the witness of the moral consciousness goes, both in myself and in those who have in an especial degree cultivated their moral faculties, it bears out the contention that sin is the only thing which can be described as absolutely, without qualification, evil.

3. The same result follows from the consideration of the origin and nature of sin.

Here we have two sources of information—modern science, and the account given in the Book of Genesis. To my mind, the enormously impressive thing is that these two sources, approaching the same subject from entirely different points of view, find themselves at last in agreement on the main issue.

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(a) According to the teaching of science, then, man is the result, the finished product, of æons of animal development. He is, in fact, the crown and so far ultimate achievement of an age-long evolution. He falls into his natural place in zoological classification as the highest of the vertebrates. But also, in man we find moral faculties developed to an immeasurably greater extent than in those animals which stand nearest to him in physical development. It is the possession of these, above all, which constitutes the differentia of man. And it is this possession which makes man, alone of all animals, capable of sin. For sin is simply the following out of the instincts and desires of the animal, when these are felt to be in opposition to the dictates of the peculiarly human, the moral nature. Men have said that the only Fall of Man was a fall upwards. They have given an entirely new meaning to the medieval description of the first transgression as the “*felix culpa*.” But this would seem to involve confusion of thought. The first emergence of man as man, the appearance on this planet of a moral being, at once involved the possibility of sin. That, the rise of man did necessarily include. An animal follows the bent and inclination of its own nature. For it, sin is for ever impossible. For it, there can be no defeat, no fall, for the conditions of conflict are absent. But the actual occurrence of sin is quite a different thing from the appearance of a being so highly exalted as to be capable of sinning; so constituted as to experience the dread reality of the internal strife between flesh and spirit, the battle between the lower and the higher within the same personal experience. I can never act as the animal does, because I possess what the animal does not—a moral nature, which I can, if I will, outrage and defy. No animal can be either innocent or guilty. Moral attributes cannot be assigned to it.

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This result follows. When I sin, I am indeed doing what I alone can do, because I am a man. But also, I am, by that very act, contradicting my nature, violating the law of my well-being. The possession of a moral nature makes me man. Sin is just to act in defiance of and in opposition to that nature. Sin, then, is the only possible case in the universe, falling under our observation, in which a creature *can* contradict the law of its being. Science has at least given the final refutation of the devil’s lie that sin is natural to man. It is the only unnatural thing in the world. It is not non-human, like the actions of animals. The age-long history of the race can never be reversed. I cannot undo the process which has made me man, and act as the non-moral animal. My sinful actions, my transgressions, are just because they are, and just in proportion as they are, immoral, for that very reason, and in that very measure, inhuman, not non-human.

Much more might be shown to follow from this most important consideration. But here we adduce it for this sole reason, that science may be allowed to bear its witness, a most just and passionless, and an unconscious and tacit witness, to the truth of the Christian estimate of sin.

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(b) Nothing, at first sight, could be more different from the scientific account of the origin of sin, than that account of it which is given in the third chapter of the Book of Genesis.

There we have, to put it shortly, the most profound spiritual teaching in the form of a story, a piece of primitive Hebrew folk-lore. The Divine Wisdom made choice of this channel to communicate to man certain great truths about his nature, realities of the highest plane of his experience, where he moves in the presence of God and realities unseen, unheard. And we can discern at least some of the reasons for the choice of these methods.

The most adequate revelation of the origin of sin which has ever been made to man, must (we are almost justified in saying) have been made to us in some such form as this for the following reasons.

(i) Truth expressed in the form of a story is thereby made comprehensible to men of every stage of culture. “Truth embodied in a tale, shall enter in at lowly doors.” At the door of no man’s mind, who is spiritually receptive, will it knock in vain. To simple and to wise, to the unlearned and the learned, to the young and to the old, it appeals alike. This form of instruction alone is of universal application.

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(ii) Truth thus conveyed can never become obsolete. Scientific treatises in the course of a few years become out of date, left far behind by the rapidly advancing tide of knowledge. Moreover, if we can imagine it possible that in the ninth century B.C., an account could have been composed, under some supernatural influence, in the terms of modern thought, it would have had to wait nearly three thousand years before it became intelligible, and then, in a few decades, or

centuries at most, it would in all probability have become once more incomprehensible or, if not that, then at least hopelessly behind the times.

The form of a story, as in the case of our Lord's parables, alone ensures that truth thus conveyed shall be intelligible to all men at all times. To object to the form, to scoff at or deride it, is as unintelligent as it would be, for example, to disparage the sublime teaching of the parable of the Prodigal Son on the ground that we have no evidence for the historical truth of the incidents.

Moreover, when we place this and the similar stories we find in the early chapters of Genesis side by side with the Babylonian myths with which they stand in some sort of historical relationship, we can trace in the lofty moral and spiritual teachings of the former, as contrasted with the grotesque and polytheistic representations of the latter, the veritable action of the Spirit of God upon the minds of men. Modern research has, in fact, raised the doctrine of inspiration from a vague and conventional belief to the level of an ascertained fact, evidenced by observation. Just as a scientific man can watch his facts under his microscope or in his test tubes, so such comparison as has been suggested, between Genesis and the cuneiform tablets, enables us to watch the very fact, to detect the Divine Spirit at work, not superseding, but illuminating and uplifting the natural faculties of the sacred writers. But we now turn to the spiritual teaching enshrined in this particular story.

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(i) First, we have the fundamental truth that man is made capable of hearing the Divine Voice. Not once in the distant past, but to-day, and day by day, the Voice of God is heard speaking within the depths of consciousness as clearly and as decisively as of old it sounded among the trees of the garden.

(ii) But, secondly, other voices make themselves heard by us, and woe to us if we listen to them.

There is the voice which bids us gratify our animal appetite. The woman "saw that the tree was good for food." I am conscious of the strength of bodily desires. Let me seek nothing, from moment to moment, but the satisfaction of my inclinations. There is the voice which bids us gratify the desire of the eyes. She "saw that the tree was pleasant to the eyes." The world is full of beauty. Let me make that my end, the satisfaction of the æsthetic sense; let me rest in the contemplation of that beauty, which was made for me, and I for it, precisely in order that I might not find repose there, but might be led thereby to Him Who made this scene so fair that His dear children might be drawn to Himself, Who is the eternal and uncreated loveliness.

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There is, lastly, the voice which bids us gratify the desire of the mind. Eve "saw that the tree was to be desired to make one wise." I desire to know. Let me indulge this desire at any cost, even if it mean the filling of my mind with all manner of foul and loathsome images. It is all "knowing the world." We forget, poor fools, that mere knowledge is not wisdom, and that there is a knowledge which brings death.

The desires of the body, the eyes, the mind, are good and healthful and holy in their proper place and sphere. Through these we reach out to the life and love and knowledge of God. And yet, if gratified against the dictates of that clear-sounding, inner, Divine Voice, they are precisely the materials of sin and death. To gratify them against the dictates of the moral and spiritual nature is to exclude oneself from the garden of God's delight, from the health and joy of the Divine Presence. We know it. We have learnt it by saddest experience of our own. To sin against the voice within is to find oneself separated from God; the ears of the soul have become deaf to the warnings of conscience, the eyes of the soul blind to the vision of the glory and holiness of God.

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Is it wrong to say that such teaching as this can never be outgrown? That, as time goes on, as the spiritual experience of the race and of the individual grows and broadens, still new lessons may be found to be contained in it?

The Bible adds to the teaching of science that without which that teaching is incomplete. It bids us know and feel and recognise the Divine Presence within us and, in the light of that ultimate truth of ourselves, realise something of the appalling grandeur of the issues of common life. But, different as are the forms in which their respective lessons are conveyed, science and the Bible unite their testimony to that of experience and conscience, that the Christian estimate of sin, and not the world's estimate of it, is the right one.

And the teaching of experience, conscience, science, and the Bible receives its final confirmation in the Cross of Jesus Christ. Henceforth sin, all sins, our sins, are to be estimated and measured in the light of the fact that sin brought about the death of the sinless Son of Man. Sin is the real enemy of ourselves and of the race. It is the destruction of the true self, the Divine Man in every son of man.

We need, for ourselves, to strive to attain to the genuinely Christian estimate of sin. "Had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory." But we have the Cross lifted up before our eyes and when, in the light of that, we begin to hate and dread sin worse than pain, then we shall have begun to make some real advance towards becoming that which we long to be, and all the time mean and aspire to be—Christians, disciples of the Crucified.

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#### **IV THE MEANING OF SIN, AND THE REVELATION OF THE TRUE SELF**

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"In this we have come to know what love is, because He laid down His life for us. And

It is important that we should arrive at some clearer understanding of the nature of sin. Let us approach the question from the side of the Divine Indwelling. The doctrine of the Divine Immanence, in things and in persons, that doctrine which we are to-day slowly recovering, is rescued from pantheism by holding fast at the same time to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. God the Transcendent dwells in “all thinking things, all objects of all thoughts” by His Word and Spirit. The Word, the Logos, of which St. John speaks, is the Eternal Self-Expression of God, standing as it were face to face with Him in the depths of His eternal life. “In the beginning the Word was with God.” He is the Eternal Thought of God, Who includes within Himself this and all possible universes. And the Spirit, One with the Father and the Word, gives to the Thought of God its realisation and embodiment in what we call things. And that realisation of the Thought of God by the Spirit of God is a progressive realisation—

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1. In inorganic nature, as power and wisdom and beauty.
2. In organic beings, as vegetable and animal life.
3. In men, as the higher reason, including our moral and spiritual nature.

The long process of evolution is thus the progressive realisation of the Thought of God now becoming the Word, the expressed Thought of God. And this realisation is from within, a growing manifestation of God *in* created things. And its climax was reached in the Incarnation when

4. The Word became flesh; the Thought of God perfectly embodied in our humanity. And now this same progressive revelation of God is continuing on the higher plane into which it was uplifted at the Incarnation. The work of the Spirit is to form within the members of Christ’s Body, that Body which is constituted by His indwelling, the Mind and the Life of God Incarnate. “He shall take of Mine and shall show it unto you.” So we get

5. The work of the Spirit of Christ within the Church, extending the Incarnation.

“He,” writes St. Paul, “gave Him [Christ] as Head over all to the Church, which is His Body, the fulness of Him Who at all points in all men is being fulfilled.”

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The application of this to our present subject is as follows. The animal life in us, and the Divine life in us, are both alike due to the indwelling God, both alike are manifestations of His Presence. But they are manifestations at two different levels of being. What follows?

The animal nature is good; the moral and spiritual nature is good. What do we mean in this connexion by “good”? We mean, they are the results of the action of Him Whose Will is essential goodness.

The peculiarity of human life is, however, the conflict between these two elements of man’s nature—the lower and the higher. Neither as yet, *from the human standpoint*, is good or bad. Moral attributes belong only to the will, which we may provisionally call the centre of man’s personality. For man is a personal being, and as such stands apart from God.

God, Whose power brought man into being,  
Stands as it were a handbreadth off, to give  
Room for the newly made to live,  
And look at Him from a place apart,  
And use His gifts of mind and heart.

Man alone can bring into existence the morally good or the morally bad. And the materials of his choice are presented by the co-existence within him of the lower and the higher. Sin is the choice by the will of the lower, when that is felt to be in conflict with the higher. It is the resolution, previous to any action, to satisfy the desires of the animal, when these are known to contradict the dictates of the moral and spiritual nature.

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Here we pause to notice a point of great importance for clear thinking on this subject. The conflict we have spoken of is that described by St. Paul as between the flesh and the spirit. Now the flesh is not equivalent to the body. The works of the flesh are by no means necessarily sensual sins; they include strife and envy. The flesh, the animal within us, is not to be identified with our physical organisation.

Now we are drawing near to the very heart of the matter. What is it which distinguishes the lower nature from the higher, the animal from the Divine in us, the flesh from the spirit? The distinction lies in the objects to which the desires of each of these natures are directed.

The animal, predominantly, desires the good of self: the Divine, the good of others.

This we must now expand. There is nothing morally wrong in the self-seeking of the animal. Moral evil—sin—only arises when two conditions are fulfilled.

The self-seeking desire must be felt to be in contradiction to the unselfish dictates of the higher nature.

The will, having this knowledge more or less clearly before it, chooses to give effect to the lower rather than to subordinate it to the higher. We may express the same truth somewhat more accurately.

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The material of human sin is the co-existence of the animal nature and the Divine Nature within us.

The occasion of sin is the conflict between the two.

The conditions of sin are two—knowledge and freedom; knowledge of the antagonism between the desires of the two natures, and freedom to give effect either to the one or to the other.

The actual fact of sin is the movement of the will, making its choice in favour of the lower in opposition to the higher.

These two corollaries follow:—(i) Sin belongs only to the will, not to the nature. “There is nothing good in the world save a good will.” And the converse is true: there is nothing sinful in the world save a sinful will.

(ii) Sin does not lie in the act, but in the movement of the will, of which the act is but the outward symbol. We must carefully distinguish between sin and temptation. No temptation is sinful, however strong and however vividly presented to the mind. Sin only comes in when the will makes the choice of the worse alternative. A sin in thought is an act of inward choice, the deliberate indulgence of, the dwelling with pleasure upon, the temptation presented to us. But if I am only prevented by circumstances or by fear from embodying the wrong choice of my will in action, I have, in the sight of God, committed that sin. If I have made the wrong choice, and am deterred by the faintest of moral scruples, as well as, perhaps, by other considerations, from carrying it out, I am really, although in a less degree, guilty.

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Now we can fall back upon our main thought. The animal matter is essentially self-regarding. This is not (a) the same thing as to say that all actions of all animals are self-regarding. I see no difficulty in believing that there may be adumbrations of the moral and spiritual in animals below man, if the animal life is the manifestation, on a lower plane, of the same Word Who is the Life of nature and the Light (the higher reason and spiritual life) of man. Nor (b) is it the same thing as to say that the desires of the animal nature are selfish. For selfishness is a moral term and, as we have seen, moral attributes are inapplicable except to a wrong choice of the will.

These self-regarding impulses of the animal nature are due to the fact, that that nature is the result of the age-long struggle for existence. These impulses have secured the survival and the predominance of man.

But man is more than a successful animal. He is made in the image of God. In him, the Word is revealed, not as life only, but as light. In an altogether higher sense than can be predicated of any part of creation below man, he is a sharer in the Divine life.

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Now that Divine life is the very life of Him Whose very essence and being is Love. God is Love. What does this mean? It has never been better expressed than in the following words: “God is a Being, not one of Whose thoughts is for Himself. . . . Creation is one great unselfish thought of God, the bringing into existence of beings who can know the happiness which God Himself knows” (Dr. Askwith). What happiness is that? It is explained, by the same writer, as the happiness which is found in the promotion of the happiness, that is, in the largest sense, the well-being of others.

We can now see the reason of the antagonism between the animal and the Divine in ourselves, the real meaning of the Pauline antithesis between the flesh and the Spirit, the old man and the new.

We are to “put off the old man.” He is old, indeed, beyond our imaginations of antiquity, for he is the product of the hoary animal ancestry of our race. Our progress as successful competitors in the struggle for animal existence, has been the waxing stronger of the old man day by day.

To put on the new man, is to continue our evolution, now a conscious and deliberate evolution, on an entirely different plane. It is to subdue the self-regarding impulses, in obedience to the movements of the Divine life within us, which bids us deny ourselves—not some particular desire, but our own selves—and to seek the good of others; to seek and, seeking, surely to find, “the happiness which God Himself knows.”

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To put on the new man is synonymous, in St. Paul, with putting on Christ. For He is the perfect revelation of the Divine in our humanity.

He is this perfect revelation of the Divine self-sacrifice in His Incarnation, when “He became poor for our sakes,” when “He emptied Himself.” So the Incarnation is, it may well be, but the climax of the Divine sacrifice involved in creation, when God limited Himself by His manifestation in “material” things; involved, we may say with greater certainty, in the creation of man, who can, in some real sense, thwart and hinder the Divine Will.

He is the revelation of the Divine in us, in the whole course of His earthly life. “Christ pleased not Himself.” “He went about doing good.”

And, above all, He is that revelation in the supreme act of love and sacrifice upon the Cross. “In this have we come to know what love is, because He laid down His life for us.” We have come to know love, in its supreme manifestation of itself, for ever the test, the standard of all true love; and in coming to know love, we have necessarily come to know God. The Cross is the perfect self-utterance and disclosure of the Mind of God, the crowning revelation of His Word. And in

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coming to know God, we have come to know ourselves. For the true self of man is the self conformed perfectly to the Divine Life within him.

Thus the Cross of Jesus Christ is the crowning revelation of man, as well as of God. There, side by side with humanity marred and wrecked and spoilt by sin, which is selfishness, we see man as God made him, as God meant him to be, clothed with the Divine beauty and glory of self-sacrifice.

In the Cross we see ourselves, our true selves, not as we have made ourselves, but our real and genuine selves, as we exist in the Mind of God.

In the light of that wonderful revelation, we can recognise that which is Divine and Christ-like in us, that spirit which bids us seek not the things of self, but the things of others, "even as Christ pleased not Himself."

All this may be summed up in one short phrase, which goes near, I believe, to express the innermost reality of the Christian religion. Christ, the Son of man, is the true self of every man. To follow Him, to be His disciple, in thought, and word, and deed, is to be oneself, to realise one's own personality. In no other way can I attain to be myself.

Thus the Cross is the supreme revelation of the Divine Life in man. And now we shall go on to see how it brings to us, not merely the knowledge of the Ideal, but also, what is far more, the very means whereby the Ideal may be realised in and by each one of us.

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We have dealt with the Cross as illumination; we now approach its consideration as redemptive power.

## **V THE GREAT RECONCILIATION**

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"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." 2 COR. v. 19.

Such considerations as we have had before us, are of far more than theoretical interest. They are of all questions the most practical. Sin is not a curious object which we examine from an aloof and external standpoint. However we regard it, to whatever view of its nature we are led, it is, alas, a fact within and not merely outside our experience.

And so we are at length brought to this most personal and most urgent inquiry, What has been the result *to me* of my past acts of sin? I have sinned; what have been, what are, what will be the consequences?

The most hopelessly unintelligent answer is, that there are no results, no consequences. It behoves us to remember that we can never sin with impunity. This is true, even in the apparent absence of all punishment. Every act of sin is followed by two results, though probably a profounder analysis would show them to be in reality one.

(i) Whenever I sin I inflict a definite injury on myself, varying with the sinfulness of the sin; that is, with its nature and the degree of deliberation it involved. I am become a worse man; I have, in some degree, rejected and done to death the Divine in me, my true self. Every sin, in its own proper measure, is both a rejection of the Christ within, and also an act of spiritual suicide.

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Again (ii), each sin, once more according to the degree of its guilt, involves separation from God. And, as union with God is life, it follows that sin is, and not merely brings death. That is the death of which the outward, physical death is the mere symbol. It is death of that which makes me man—the weakening of my will, the dulling of my conscience, the loss of spiritual vision. Hereafter, it may be, all this will be recognised by me as being death indeed, when I see how much I have missed, by my own fault, of the life and happiness which might have been mine in virtue of that unbroken communion with God, for which I was made.

These two results may be regarded as the penalties of sinning; more truly, they are aspects of sin itself. We can hardly be reminded too often that the worst punishment of sin is sin itself. The external results of sin, where such occur, are not evil, but good; for the object for which they are sent is the cure of sin. "To me no harder hell was shown than sin." If hell is this separation from God, this veritable and only real death, then hell is not an external penalty inflicted upon sin, but is involved in the very nature of sin itself. Or, it would be still more accurate to say, the constitution of the universe (including ourselves) being what it is, and the nature of sin being what it is, these results necessarily follow.

p. 51

Now, the universe is not something which God has created and then, as it were, flung off from Himself, standing for ever outside it, as it is for ever outside Him. The universe, at each moment of its existence, is the expression, in time and space, of the Divine Mind. What we call its "laws," whether in the physical or the spiritual sphere, are the thoughts of the Mind of God: its "forces" are the operations of the Will of God, acting in accordance with His thoughts: material "things" are His thoughts embodied, that is, Divine thoughts rendered, by an act of the Divine Will, accessible to our senses.

Now we are in a position to understand both what is meant by the Wrath of God, and the manner in which it acts.

By the expression, "the Wrath of God," we are to understand the hostility of the Divine Mind to

moral evil: the eternal antagonism of the Divine righteousness to its opposite. We are not now dealing with the question of the real or substantive existence of evil. But revelation amply confirms and enforces the conviction of our moral consciousness that, with a hatred beyond all human measures of hatred, God hates sin. It is hardly necessary to add, that that eternal and immeasurable hatred and hostility of the Divine Mind towards sin is compatible with infinite love towards His children, in whose minds and lives sin is elaborated and manifested. In fact, all attempts to reconcile the Wrath of God with His love seem to be utterly beside the mark. They only serve to obscure the truth that the Divine Wrath is itself a manifestation of the Divine Love. For if sin is, as we have already seen, in its very essence, selfishness, and if Love is the very Being of God—if He is not merely loving, but Love itself—then the Wrath of God, His hostility to sin, is His Love viewed in one particular aspect, in its outlook on moral evil, in its relation to that which is its very opposite and antithesis. Hell and Heaven, separation from God and union with Him, are alike expressions of the Eternal Love, which, because it is love, burns with unquenchable fire against all forms of selfishness and lovelessness.

p. 52

This is the true, the ultimate reason why, in a universe which is the expression of the Mind of God, we cannot sin, and never have sinned, with impunity.

From these two fundamental truths—

- (a) The universe is the expression of the Mind of God;
- (b) God is love,

There follow, by a natural and inevitable law, the two results which accompany every act of sin.

- (a) The destruction of the true self, the Christ, the Divine Life within man.
- (b) Separation from God, which is death. We separate these results in thought; but it will now be sufficiently obvious that they are, in fact, one.

p. 53

Is this taking too serious a view of sin? I do not think that this can be maintained in view of our whole preceding argument.

But are we taking too serious a view of little sins, of sins which spring from ignorance, of the sins of children?

We have already seen that knowledge and freedom are both necessary to constitute an act of sin. If ignorance is complete, then complete also is the absence of sin. For sin lies not in any material act, but in consciousness and will. The will alone can be sinful, as the will alone can be good. And it is entirely consistent with our standpoint, to admit the existence of an almost infinite number of degrees of sinfulness.

\* \* \* \* \*

Now we reach this immensely important result. We having sinned, our supreme need is forgiveness. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a Gospel for this precise reason, that it meets, as it claimed from the beginning to meet, this uttermost need of men. Its offer is, always and everywhere, the forgiveness, the remission of sins.

But what are we to understand by forgiveness? The forgiveness which is offered to us in the name of Jesus Christ is not, and our own moral sense ought to assure us that it could not be, the being let off punishment. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins," not from any external pains or penalties of their sins. To be saved from sin, is to have sin brought to an end, abolished within us. It is the recovery of the true self, the restoration of that union with God which is, here and now, eternal life. In other words, understanding the Divine Wrath as we have seen reason to understand it, forgiveness must mean to cease to be, or to cease to identify ourselves with, that in us which is the object of the Divine Wrath. In short, forgiveness is, in the great phrase of St. Paul, reconciliation with God.

p. 54

How, then, is forgiveness or reconciliation to be obtained? The answer which the apostle gives is this: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself." Let us try to see what this means.

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There can only be one way of ceasing to be the object of the Divine Wrath, and that is by identifying oneself with it; if we may use the catch-phrase, by becoming its subject instead of its object. This means that, so far as is in our power, we must enter into the Divine Mind in regard to sin, and our own sins in particular. Up to the limit of our power, we must make that Mind our own mind, we must hate sin, and our sins, as God hates them.

p. 55

There is one word in the New Testament which expresses all this, and that is the word only partially and inadequately translated "repentance." The word thus represented is μετανοια, and μετανοια is exactly "a change of mind." It really means the coming over to God's side, the entire revolution of our mental attitude and outlook with regard to sin. The word stands for self-identification with the Wrath of God, with the Divine Mind in its outlook upon sin. That change of mind is itself reconciliation, forgiveness, remission of sins. And that which alone makes μετανοια and, therefore, forgiveness, possible, is the Death of Jesus Christ upon the Cross.

For that Death is the perfect revelation, in the only way in which it could be interpreted to us, that is, in terms of our common human life, of the Wrath of God, the Divine hostility to, and

repudiation of sin. For the Death of Christ was the complete repudiation of sin, by God Himself, in our manhood. The Incarnate Son laid down His life in the perfect fulfilment of the mission received from the Father. "He became obedient unto death." He died, rather than, by the slightest concession to that which was opposed to the Divine Will, be unfaithful or disobedient to that mission. "He died to sin once for all." His Death was His final, complete repudiation of sin. And thus it was the absolutely perfect revelation of the Divine Mind in regard to sin.

p. 56

This is the truth which underlies all the utterly misleading language about Christ's Death as a penalty, or about Christ Himself as the Ideal Penitent. Both penalty and penitence imply personal guilt and the personal consciousness of guilt. Both conceptions destroy the significance of the Cross. Only the Sinless One could die to sin, could perfectly repudiate sin, could perfectly disclose the Mind of God in relation to sin.

The Death of Christ was indeed, as we have seen, the result of His perfect obedience in a world of sin, of disobedience. The historical conditions under which He fulfilled His Mission, necessitated that His repudiation of sin should take the form which it did actually take. We may be sure, too, that He felt, as only the Sinless Son of God could feel, the injury, the affront, the malignity, the degradation of sin. It is the sense of this which has given rise to the modern idea of Christ as the Penitent for the world's sin. But if we are to understand the word in this sense, then we are entirely changing its meaning and connotation. And we cannot do this, in regard to words like penitent and penitence, without producing confusion of thought. It is time, surely, that this misleading and mischievous fallacy of the penitence of Christ should be finally abandoned by writers on the Atonement.

But, so far, we have only seen that the Death of Christ to sin, His repudiation of sin to the point of death, is the complete revelation of the Divine Wrath, the Divine Mind in regard to sin. If we could only make all this our own, then we should have actually attained to the changed mind, the μετανοια, which is reconciliation with God.

p. 57

Now, it is a most significant fact that, in the New Testament, repentance is ever closely coupled with faith. Faith, in its highest, its most Christian application, is not faith *in* Christ, in the sense of believing that the revelation made by Christ is true, but in the strange and pregnant phrase of St. Paul and St. John, faith *into* Christ. And by this is meant entire self-abandonment, the utter giving up of ourselves to Christ. To have faith into Christ is the perfect expression of discipleship. It is the supreme act of self-surrender by which a man takes Christ henceforth to be the Lord and Master of his life. It implies, no doubt, the existence of certain intellectual convictions; but the faith which rests there is, as St. James tells us, the faith of the demons "who also tremble." In the full sense, faith is an act of the whole personal being. And as the will is our personality in action, we may say that faith into Christ is, above all, an affair of the will.

But thus to surrender oneself to Christ, to make Him, and not self, the centre and governing principle of our life is, in other words, to make His Will our will, His Mind our mind. St. Paul is exactly describing the full fruition and final issue of faith when he says of himself, "I live, yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me."

p. 58

Faith *is* self-identification with the Mind of Christ. And that Mind is the Mind of Him Who died to sin, Who by dying repudiated sin, and revealed His implacable hatred of and hostility to it, which is the hatred and hostility of God, in our manhood, to the moral evil which destroys it.

Thus the man, who, by the supreme act of faith into Christ, has made Christ's Mind his own mind, has thereby gained the changed mind, the μετανοια, in regard to sin, which is the ceasing to be the object of God's wrath, because it is the being identified with it. He is, henceforth, reconciled to God. The state of alienation and death is over. In Christ he, too, has died to sin. The false self, in him, has been put to death. With Christ he has been crucified. With Christ he lives henceforth to God, in that union and fellowship with Him, which is the life eternal, the life which is life indeed. His true self, the Christ in him, is alive for evermore in the power of the Resurrection.

That is the final issue, the glorious consummation, of faith. But so far as faith is in us at all, so far as daily with more complete surrender we give ourselves to Christ, and take Him for our Lord and Master, the process, of which the fulfilment, the perfect end, is reconciliation, union, resurrection, eternal life, has begun in us. And He Who has, visibly and manifestly, "begun in us" that "good work," will assuredly "accomplish it until the day of Jesus Christ."

p. 59

But something more yet remains to be said. Every theory of the Atonement in the end must come to grief, which is based upon the assumption that Christ is separate from the race which He came to redeem, or the Church, which is the part of humanity in actual process of redemption. Professor Inge, in his work on *Mysticism and Personal Idealism*, has justly denounced the miserable theory which regards human personalities as so many impervious atoms, as self-contained and isolated units. This popular view is theologically disastrous when the Atonement is interpreted in the light, or rather the darkness of it.

As the Son of man He is the Head of the human race, "the last Adam" in the language of St. Paul. No mere sovereignty over mankind is denoted by that title. He is that living, personal Thought of God which each man, as man, embodies and, with more or less distortion, represents. He Who became Incarnate is, as He ever was, the Light which lighteneth every man coming into the world.

It was because of this, His vital and organic connexion with the race, and with every member of

it, that He could become Incarnate, and that His sufferings and triumph could have more than a pictorial, or representative, or vicarious efficacy. His work of redemption was rendered possible by His relation, as the Word, to the whole universe, and to mankind.

p. 60

It was because of this, that He could become "the Head of the Body, the Church." Former ages interpreted the Atonement in the terms of Roman law. It is the mission of our age to learn to interpret it in terms of biology. We are only just beginning, by the aid of modern thought, to discover the true, profound meaning of the biological language of the New Testament. "As the body is one, and has many members, so also is the Christ." Not, let us mark, the Head only, but the Body. The Church is "the fulness of Him Who at all points, in all men, is being fulfilled." The words tell us of an organic growth. "I am the vine, ye are the branches." Can any terms express organic connexion more clearly than these?

It is our Head, to Whom we are bound by vital ties, in the mysterious unity of a common life, Who has repudiated sin by dying to it. By personal surrender to Christ we make His Mind our own; but we are enabled to do so, because, in so doing, we are attaining to our own true mind, we are entering into the possession of our own true selves, we are "winning our souls," realising the Christ-nature within us. By faith and sacraments, that which is potentially ours becomes our own in actual fact.

In simpler language, and in more familiar but not less true words, we who are members of Christ's Body, in all our weak attempts after repentance and faith, are not left to our own unaided resources, but are at every point aided and enabled to advance to final, complete reconciliation and union by the Spirit of the Christ working in us.

p. 61

He is no merely external reconciler. He reconciles us from within, working along with our own wills, to create that changed mind which is His own Mind revealed upon the Cross for no other reason than that it might become our mind, the most real and fundamental thing in us, that "new man, which is being renewed after the image of Him Who created him."

## VI REDEMPTION

p. 62

"Ye shall therefore be perfect, as your Father in Heaven is perfect."—MATT. V. 48.

"Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver from the body of this death? Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."—ROM. VII. 24, 25.

We have studied the meaning of reconciliation through the Cross. We have said that to be reconciled to God means to cease to be the object of the Wrath of God, that is, His hostility to sin. We can only cease to be the objects of this Divine Wrath by identifying ourselves with it, by making God's Mind in regard to sin, and our sins, our own mind. The Cross gives us power to do this. For it reveals to us in the terms of humanity, that is, in the only way in which it could be made intelligible to us, the Divine Mind in its relation to sin. By faith, which is personal surrender to Christ, His mind thus revealed becomes our mind. Thus we attain to "repentance," in the New Testament sense of the changed mind and outlook upon sin. And the motive power to faith and repentance is supplied by our union with Christ.

But all this is not yet enough. We have not exhausted the glory, the full meaning of the Cross. If this were indeed all, the work of our salvation would be incomplete. For I may indeed have, in Christ, died to sin; in Him I may have repudiated it; but the task of life still lies before me to be fulfilled, and that task is nothing short of this: the complete putting off of sin, the complete putting on of holiness, the final achievement of that union with God which is life eternal.

p. 63

For this I was made. "Ye shall therefore be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." Our Lord is not, in these words, enunciating a rule of perfection for a few saintly souls. He is laying down the law, the standard of all human lives. To fall short of this, is to fall short of what it means to be a man.

The proof that this is so, is to be found in our own consciousness, bearing its witness to these words of Jesus Christ. The one most constant feature in human life is its restlessness, the feeling of dissatisfaction which broods over its best achievements, the attainment of all its desires. That very restlessness and dissatisfaction is the witness to the dignity of our nature, the grandeur of our destiny. We were made for God, for the attainment of eternal life through union with Him. No being who was merely finite, could be conscious of its finitude.

Spite of yourselves ye witness this,  
Who blindly self or sense adore.  
Else, wherefore, leaving your true bliss,  
Still restless, ask ye more?

"Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart knoweth no rest, till it find rest in Thee."

p. 64

Then look at the other picture. Side by side with the glory of our calling, place the shame and the misery of what we are. My desires, my passions are ever at war with the true self, and too often overcome it. "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin and death which is in my members." And so there goes up the bitter cry, "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this



death?"

Now the Cross of Jesus Christ is the Divine answer to this great and exceeding bitter cry of our suffering, struggling, sinful humanity. For the Cross is not merely an altar, but a battlefield, by far the greatest battlefield in all human history. That was the crisis of the conflict between good and evil which gives endless interest to the most insignificant human life, which is the source of the pathos and the tragedy, the degradation and the glory, of the long history of our race. It is the human struggle which we watch upon the Cross: the human victory there won which we acclaim with endless joy and exultation. Man faced the fiercest assault of the foe, and man conquered.

O loving wisdom of our God!  
When all was sin and shame,  
A second Adam to the fight  
And to the rescue came.

O wisest love! that flesh and blood,  
Which did in Adam fail,  
Should strive afresh against the foe,  
Should strive, and should prevail.

p. 65

Man conquered man's foe, and in the only way in which that foe could be conquered, the way of obedience. "He became obedient unto death." The Death was in a real sense the victory, for its only meaning and value consisted in its being the crown and culmination of His life-long obedience. The Resurrection itself, in one aspect of it, was but the symbol, the "sign," of that victory which was already achieved upon the Cross.

But what has this to do with us? It cannot be too often repeated, that it has nothing to do with us, if Christ be merely "Another," separate from us as we are, or imagine ourselves to be, separate from each other. That which He took of the Virgin Mary, and took in the only way in which it could have been taken, by the Virgin Birth, was not a separate human individuality, but human nature; that nature which we all share. It was in that nature that He faced and overcame our enemy.

Here we pause to note a difficulty based on a misunderstanding. If Christ were a Divine Person, working in and through human nature, if that humanity which He assumed were itself impersonal, then how could He have had a human will? And, after all, is an impersonal human nature really human? That is the difficulty, and the very fact that we feel it as a difficulty, is a proof that we have not yet grasped that conception of the Divine Nature which underlies the belief in the Incarnation. God and man are not beings of a different order. The humanity of every man is the indwelling in him of the Word Who became flesh. Each one of us is a shadow, a reflection of the Incarnation. In Jesus Christ God came; and, it would be equally true to say, in Him first, man came. All human nature, I believe it would be true to say all organic nature, pointed forward to the Incarnation as its fulfilment, as the justification for its existence.

p. 66

Thus, when it is said that the human nature of Christ was impersonal, what is meant is, impersonal in the modern and restricted sense of personality. The phrase is useful, when explained, to guard against the idea, which is contrary to the very principle of the Atonement, that the Son of man was just one more human soul added to the myriads of human souls who have appeared on this planet. He Who became Incarnate is the true self of every man, the very Light of true personality in all men. As a matter of fact, He was more truly humanly Personal than any of the sons of men, and all the more truly humanly Personal, because He was Divinely Personal, the Word in the image of Whom man was made.

The immense significance of these truths in regard to our redemption is this, that a separate individuality cannot be imparted to us, but a common nature can. And that nature which the Eternal Word assumed of the Virgin Mary, and in which He conquered sin and death, is communicated to us by His Spirit, above all, in the sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Communion. Here is the heart of the Atonement.

p. 67

That victory over sin and death is mine, and yet not mine. That is the splendid paradox which lies at the very root of Christianity. It is mine, because I share in that Human Nature, which by its perfect obedience, the obedience unto death, "triumphed gloriously" upon the Cross. It is not mine until, by a deliberate act of my will, in self-surrender to Christ, I have made it my own. By grace and by faith, not by one of these without the other, we become one with Him Who died and rose again. It is faith, the hand of the soul stretched out to receive, which accepts and welcomes grace, the Hand of God stretched out to give.

These great thoughts we will pursue in our next address. But meanwhile, we have at least seen that the Cross is both victory and attainment: victory over the sin by which I have been so long held in bondage; attainment of all I can be, all I long to be, all I was made by God to be. "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

## VII REDEMPTION (CONTINUED)

p. 68

"He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath life eternal."—JOHN VI. 54.

We were made for holiness, union with God, eternal life. These are but different expressions for one and the same thing. For holiness is the realisation of our manhood, of that Divine Image which is the true self, expressing itself and acting, as it does in us, through the highest of animal forms. That perfect self-realisation is not merely dependent upon, but is union with God, at its beginning, throughout its course, and in its final consummation. And the life of self-realisation or holiness, which is the life of union with God, is eternal. Eternal life is not, as in the popular idea of it, an endless and wearisome prolongation of mere existence. Primarily, the idea is of the quality, not the duration of life. In the teaching of the New Testament, eternal life is a present possession of Christians. "These things I write to you, who believe on the Name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." Being as it is a moral and spiritual reality, it is outside time and space. It is unaffected by "changes and chances." It is for ever beyond the reach of the temporal processes of decay, corruption, death. Here it manifests itself in service, that service of our fellows which is the service of God. Hereafter, it will be manifested in higher and more exalted forms of service. "Have thou authority over ten, over five, cities."

p. 69

Now all this, the consummation and glorious fruit of our humanity, holiness, union with God, life eternal, we see already realised in Jesus Christ, the Son of man. We see it realised, as we have learnt, not in a separate, solitary, individual, isolated life, but in that common nature which "for us men and for our salvation" He assumed of the Virgin Mary.

All that is in Him was in Him first, in order that it might be in us. And this is the important point: it can only be in us by virtue of our union with Him. That union He describes under the vivid and forcible metaphor of eating His flesh, and drinking His blood. "He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath life eternal." His flesh and blood—a common Jewish phrase for human nature—is precisely that common nature which He assumed, in which He died to sin, which He raised from the dead and exalted to the Right Hand of God, and which He imparts to us, by His Spirit given to dwell in us for evermore.

The doctrine of the Atonement is incomplete, it is irrational, until it is completed by the doctrine of the Spirit, the Giver of Life. As He is the source of life in all living organisms, so He is in Christians the source of the Christ-life. He comes to dwell in us, not simply as the Spirit, but as the Spirit of Christ—the Spirit Who first created, and then "descended" to abide in the Perfect Manhood. That gift of the Spirit of Christ as the indwelling source of the life of Christ, and the means of the Presence of Christ in us, is the characteristic gift of the New Dispensation. It is His work to make us ever more and more partakers of Christ, to be perpetually feeding us with His flesh and blood.

p. 70

And, as we are about to speak of the Holy Communion, it is well to insist first on this, that the work of the Spirit in there feeding us with the flesh and blood of the Son of man is a continuous process. It is of the very essence of what is meant by being a Christian. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." The sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel is not a mere prediction of the Eucharist. It is the revelation of that principle of which the Eucharist is an illustration. Our Communion is the supreme moments, the crises, in a process which is for ever going on, the feeding of us, by the Spirit, with the flesh and blood, the holy and victorious manhood, of the Redeemer.

What relation, then, can this spiritual process have to the material substances, to the bread and wine which are used in the Eucharist? This question at once opens out into the larger one, as to the relation between matter and spirit. Now, that question could not be dealt with at all satisfactorily without undertaking a vastly larger task than we are prepared for at the present moment. We should have to ask, What is, after all, meant by "matter," and what by "spirit"?

p. 71

But something may be achieved on a much humbler scale. It will suffice for our present purpose to concentrate our attention on a remarkable fact which seems to underlie all our experience. And we will approach the statement of this fact by first recalling the familiar definition of a sacrament, which fastens upon the union of the outward and visible with the inward and invisible as being the essence of what is meant by a sacrament. Now, the fact we have in view is this: *every* outward object in the world is, in this respect, a sacrament. What we seem to see is everywhere spirit working through what we call "material" objects. That sacramental principle of the universe is the very principle which underlies our Lord's parables of Nature. Speaking more accurately, we see in "matter" (1) the means of the self-revelation of spirit; (2) the instrument by which spirit acts.

The human organism may serve as a type of this. Here is a spiritual being, the Ego, in its will, its thoughts, its affections, invisible, and it makes its presence manifest, and it acts, through the material manifestation and instrument of itself, the body. To believers in God, nature itself, in its deepest reality, is the revelation of the Divine Presence, and the instrument of the Divine action. A beautiful sunset is a veritable and genuine sacrament. In the light of this profound truth, of matter as the manifestation and instrument of spirit, we are enabled to see how futile was the ancient dispute concerning the number of the Sacraments. In view of the fuller and larger knowledge which has come to us, this, like so many other objects of theological strife, ought before this to have been consigned to the limbo of forgotten controversies.

p. 72

But in all this we have been, in fact, interpreting the whole universe in the light of the Incarnation. For that is the supreme sacrament of all, the very type and complete embodiment of the sacramental principle. There we see the Divine manifesting Itself through, and using as the instrument of its action, a Human, a "material" Body.

The Eucharist thus for the first time becomes intelligible. It is only one particular illustration, although a most momentous one, of the universal sacramental principle, of which all things else in the world are also illustrations. There we have the Spirit manifesting itself and acting, as always and everywhere, wherever "matter" is found; but in a particular way, and for a particular purpose.

p. 73

The bread and the wine are the material substances which He uses at the critical moments in His perpetual action of feeding us with the flesh and blood of the Son of man. And these elements were obviously chosen, "ordained by Christ Himself," for their most significant symbolism. There is no truer philosophy of the Eucharist than that which is contained in the familiar words of the Church Catechism, which speak of "the strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the Body and Blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine." That wonderful, and in itself essentially sacramental process, by which the organism lives by the incorporation and assimilation into its own substance of other substances which we call foods, is the exact analogue of the way in which our true, spiritual manhood lives by the incorporation and assimilation of the manhood of Christ, that manhood which is holy, which exists in the Divine Union, which has perfectly realised eternal life in the complete dying to sin, and the complete putting on of holiness.

The Eucharist is, in the broadest sense, the final act in the drama of our salvation. It is the means by which, by His own appointment, all that Christ achieved *for* us upon the Cross, the repudiation of, or dying to sin, the realisation of perfect obedience, obedience unto death, comes to be *in* us, is made all our own.

p. 74

But it is most important that we should ever remember that this truth has two sides.

(i) It is Christ Who saves us; that is, Who is the actually putting away of sin, attainment of holiness, union with God, eternal life, by what He does in us. "Christ *for* us" finds its perfect fulfilment and end in "Christ *in* us."

(ii) Yet, Christ does not save us apart from ourselves. Else the Eucharist would be degraded to the level of some heathen, magical charm. We must will and intend the putting off of sin, and the putting on of holiness. We must recognise, and this is a truth of experience, our complete inability to attain this without Him. That will, and that recognition, are the repentance and faith which constitute the necessary contribution on our part to the work of Christ for our salvation.

Our Communion are the most important moments in our lives. Each marks a distinct and definite stage in the fulfilment of the purpose of God for us, the fulfilment in us of all that is meant by the Death and Resurrection of the Lord. We ought to come, therefore, not only after due preparation, with repentance and faith, but also with hope and joy; not to perform a duty, but to receive the best gift which God Himself can bestow upon us—that gift which is the perfect conquest of sin, the complete realisation of holiness, union with God, eternal life; the fulfilment of every aspiration, the accomplishment of every dream, the achievement of every glory, the crown, the consummation, the attainment of our manhood in union with Jesus Christ the Son of man.

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## VIII THE SACRIFICE

p. 76

"For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"—HEB. IX. 13, 14.

No Christian doctrine is more commonly misunderstood than that of the sacrifice of Christ. This misunderstanding arises from ignorance as to the meaning of sacrifices in the ancient world.

Sacrifice is one of the earliest and most widely spread of all human institutions. Behind the laws regulating sacrifice in the Old Testament there lies the long history of Shemitic ritual and religion. These sacrificial rites were not then introduced for the first time. They formed part of the inheritance of the Israelites from their far-off ancestors; an inheritance shared by them with the Ammonites and Edomites, and other kindred and neighbouring nations. They differed from these not in matter or form, but in the loftier moral and spiritual tone which formed the peculiar and distinguishing mark of the Hebrew religion, and in which we to-day can clearly trace the actions in the minds of men of the Spirit of God.

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It follows that it is hopeless to attempt to understand the sacrificial teaching of the Old Testament without some grasp of the meaning of sacrifice in the ancient world. Failure to attain this has led to the idea that the sacrifice of Christ must mean the appeasing of an offended Deity by blood and death. But this view of sacrifice is not merely a heathen, but a late and debased heathen conception. "Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of the soul?" was the cry of the King of Moab, and it marks the lowest depth into which the pagan idea of sacrifice had sunk. It is a genuine instance of deterioration in ethnic religion. The primitive view was far loftier and more spiritual than this.

Recent researches, dependent on the comparative method, into the earliest forms of religion have brought to light two principles which underlay the conception of sacrifice, and which to a great extent can be discerned more clearly in the most ancient period than in later times. Now these two principles which, taken together, constitute the primitive theory of sacrifice, which make up

the fundamental idea of it, however little prehistoric man may have been capable of giving distinct and logical expression to them, were these:

1. Death is necessary to the attainment of the fulness of life.
2. Man is, by his very nature, capable of sharing in, becoming a partaker of, the Divine life.

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The earliest known form of sacrifice is the killing of the sacred animal of the tribe, the animal which was held to be the representative of the tribal god, followed by the sacred tribal meal upon the victim. There, in this earliest *totem* rite, we have already implicit the two great ideas of sacrifice, the communion of man with God by actual participation in the Divine life (the feast on the sacrifice), and that this communion is rendered possible by the death of the sacred victim.

These ideas were very largely obscured in ancient times by the conception of sacrifice as a gift, a tribute, or a propitiation. But these ideas, though they bulk largely in modern minds unacquainted with the recent researches of specialists in comparative religion, were, in fact, of later growth. They are accretions which, by a very natural and intelligible process, have overlain the oldest and really fundamental ideas which lie at the root and origin of sacrifice.

These two ideas were, however, present all through, in what we might perhaps call (without committing ourselves to any psychological theories) the racial subconsciousness. They were always there, ready to be evoked by the appropriate stimulus, whenever applied. They constituted the real essence and meaning of the ancient mysteries, which from 800 B.C. downwards formed so important a part of the real religion of the ancient world, and which have left their mark on the language of St. Paul and other early Christian teachers. These mysteries, roughly and broadly speaking, were of the nature of a religious reformation. They represented the discarding of the propitiatory idea in favour of the original meaning of sacrifice as communion.

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These earliest notions of sacrifice really underlay the sacrifices of the Old Testament, especially in the case of the peace offerings. But, in these, we become conscious of a third element, the conviction that sin is a barrier to the Divine Communion. When the worshipper, in the sin-offering, laid his hands upon the head of the victim, he was, by a significant action, repudiating his sin, and presenting the spotlessness of the victim as his own, his own in will and intention henceforth. The blood was sprinkled upon the altar as the symbol of the life offered to and accepted by God; it was sprinkled upon the worshipper as the sign of the communication to him of that pure Divine life, by virtue of his participation in which man can alone approach God.

All this can be summed up in one word, "symbolism." All the value of ancient sacrifices, including those of the Old Testament, lay wholly in the moral and spiritual truths which, in a series of outward and significant actions, they stood for and symbolised. To attach objective value to that which was external in the Old Testament sacrifices, or even to the outward accompaniments of the Supreme Sacrifice, the Death of Jesus Christ upon the Cross, is to be guilty of a relapse from the Christian, or even the prophetic spirit, into the late and debased pagan idea of sacrifice, from which the ancient mysteries of the Eastern and Greek world were a reaction. Certainly, the outward sufferings of our Lord should sometimes form the subject of our thoughts as a motive, and one of the strongest motives, to penitence and love. But to lay such stress on these as to exalt them into the real meaning of the sacrifice of Christ, as constituting its value as a sacrifice, to regard them as in some way changing the Mind of God towards us, is contrary to the whole spirit of the New Testament. What the real teaching of the gospels is in the matter, is made plain by two significant facts.

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(i) While it is quite clear that the inspired writers regard the Death of Christ, and the Christian life, as being, each of them, in a real sense, a sacrifice, direct sacrificial language is applied sparingly to the former, but without stint or hesitation to the latter. This is a point which has been strikingly brought out by Professor Loftus in his recent work on *The Ethics of the Atonement*.

(ii) While devoting a large portion of their narrative to the account of the Death of Christ, they exercised a very great and marked reserve as regards the physical details of the Crucifixion. In this respect the gospels are in harmony with the earliest Christian representations, as distinguished from the repulsive realism in which the medieval artists revelled.

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To ask, then, in what sense the Death of Christ was a sacrifice, is to ask how far that Death realised the moral and spiritual truths which underlay the ancient institution of sacrifice, and to which all sacrifices ultimately pointed.

1. The first of these ideas, as we have seen, is that death is necessary to the fulness of life, that life can only be won by the surrender of life. That ancient conception constitutes the fundamental teaching of Christ: "He that willeth to save his life, shall lose it, and he who willeth to lose his life . . . shall save it unto life eternal." And of that great truth, which is nothing less than the formative principle of the Christian life, the Cross was the supreme expression "Herein have we come to know what love is, because He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

The laying down of life, self-sacrifice, of which the Cross is the highest manifestation, alone brings life, alone is fruitful. "Except a grain of corn fall into the earth and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

Selfishness, whether as self-assertion or self-seeking, is essentially barren and unproductive, both in regard to the lives of others and our own lives. Only so far as we are, in some real sense, laying down our lives for others, denying (not that which belongs to us, but) ourselves, for their sake, can we hope to influence other persons for good, to be the cause of moral fruitfulness, of spiritual life in them. And for ourselves, we only win the fulness of our own lives, so far as we lose them in the lives of others, so far as we identify ourselves with their joys, sufferings, interests, pursuits, well-being; for our lives are real, and rich, and full exactly in proportion to the extent to which they include the lives of others.

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And the Death of Christ ceases to be an unintelligible mystery, when it is regarded as the consummation of His Life of self-sacrifice. "Christ also pleased not Himself." "He went about doing good." And at last, in the fulfilment of a mission received of the Father for the good of men, His brethren, He crowned the Life, in which self-pleasing was not, by His Death, the necessary result, as we have seen, of His carrying out that mission in a world of sinful men. For Himself, that Death was, so He willed, the portal to the glory of the Resurrection. And the fruits of His uttermost self-sacrifice are still, after all these centuries, being gathered in, as in innumerable souls brought back from the darkness of sin into the light of the Divine Life, "He sees of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied."

2. But what answers, in the Death of Christ, to that in regard to which the death of the victim served but as a means to an end, the sacred meal of communion? The sacrificial principle has been laid down by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "without shedding of blood, there is no remission." Blood to the modern mind speaks of death, and usually of a violent and painful death. To the ancient mind, heathen or Israelite, blood stood for and symbolised life. "The Blood makes atonement by the Life that is in it." Man can only be made at one with God, can only have "remission of sins"—the barrier which sin interposes to communion with God can only be removed, he can only be restored to that Divine fellowship for which he was made—by actual reception into himself of the Divine life, of the life of Him Who, being God, became man, in order to impart His own Divine Life to our humanity which He assumed. And Christ's Life only then became available for men, capable of being imparted to each man, when it had passed through Death to Resurrection. If the grain die—only if it die first—"it bringeth forth much fruit." "If I go not away, the Comforter, the Paraclete, will not come unto you." Only by virtue of that "going away" of Christ, which includes His Death, Resurrection, and Ascension, could the Spirit which indwells His glorified manhood, come to impart the life of Christ to the members of the Body of Christ. Pentecost is the final consummation of man's atonement and redemption.

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We may still more briefly summarise these two fundamental principles which constitute the sacrificial aspect of the Death of Christ.

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1. Christ died, not that we should be excused from offering, but that we might be enabled to offer the one acceptable sacrifice to God, that is, the sacrifice of ourselves in that service of God which is the service of our fellow-men.

2. Christ died, in order that we might receive His Divine Life into ourselves, through the indwelling Spirit of Christ bestowed by the Ascended Lord.

Thus the Death of Christ is not merely a sacrifice, one out of many, or (as has been so mistakenly taught) simply the last of a series. It is rather the one sacrifice which alone realises the ideas of which all other so-called sacrifices were but the faint adumbrations. As the one true sacrifice it stands at the end of an age-long spiritual evolution. In the physical evolution, the first protoplasmic cell was not man, though it pointed forward to man, and implied man. So the *totem* feast and the old Jewish rites, were not truly and genuinely sacrifices, though both pointed forward to and implied the realisation of sacrifice in the Death of Christ. That Death was the fulfilment of the universal human aspiration, the assurance of the truth of that ancient dream of mankind, that man was capable of being, and might attain to be "partaker of the Divine nature."

And this whole teaching of ancient ritual as fulfilled and accomplished on the Cross of Jesus Christ, is summed up for us in our Christian Eucharist where on the one hand we, in union with the sacrifice of Christ, "offer and present ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice "to God; and, on the other hand, by eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of man, become partakers of Him Who, in the words of St. Athanasius, "was made man, that we might be made God," became partaker of our human nature, in order that we might realise the end of our manhood, by being made partakers of His Divine Life.

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## THE DEVOTION OF THE THREE HOURS

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### I INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

The object with which we meet here can be expressed in a Pauline phrase of three words, it is "to learn Christ."

But, in those three words, there is contained, in the manner of St. Paul, a wealth of meaning. To learn Christ is clearly an affair of the intellect, in the first place. It quite certainly, in this sense,

does not mean merely to accumulate information regarding the words and acts of our Lord. St. Paul himself is singularly sparing of allusions to the history of Christ, if we exclude from that His Death, Burial, and Resurrection. The phrase, in fact, describes that kind of knowledge to which a detailed study of the Saviour's Life is related as means to an end, the knowledge, namely, of Christ's character, of His Mind and Will. Such knowledge is not to be acquired in one hour or in three. It is, it ought to be, the life-long object of a Christian man to gain it in an ever-increasing measure of fulness and accuracy. But the last words of the Lord, the seven sayings from His Cross, constitute a special and in some measure unique disclosure of His Mind and Will. And, therefore, to meditate upon them, as we are now proposing to do, will be to advance one stage further, and a distinct stage, in the process of "learning Christ."

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1. But we do well to remind ourselves, at the very outset, that our aim is not merely intellectual, but also practical. There is no real gain arising from the knowledge of Christ's Mind and Will, save so far as that knowledge enables us to make that Mind and Will our own mind and our own will. *That* is the very meaning of Christian discipleship. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

2. The end thus set before us is one capable of attainment by all. The individual, indeed, cannot hope to realise that end completely by himself. The embodiment of Christ's Mind and Will is the supreme task and the final achievement of the whole Body of Christ. The purpose of the long development of the Church on earth is, that "we should *all* (not *each*) arrive at a perfect man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ." The whole Church, the Body in its completeness, is meant to reflect back in the eyes of the Father, the moral glory of the Son of man. Each individual has been called into membership in the Body, in order that he might reflect some one of the scattered rays of that glory; might embody in himself one aspect of the infinite perfection of the Son of man. So would each of us truly "come to himself," realise all that he is capable of becoming.

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That progress of the Body of Christ towards its goal is described by St. Paul as being a growth of the Christ Himself. He is "at all points in all men being fulfilled." There is a true and important sense in which the Incarnation is as yet incomplete, in which the life-history of the Church is its growing completeness. Our individual task is the realisation in ourselves of that part of the Christ life which we, individually, have been created to embody.

3. It will be useful to sum up the Character, the Mind and Will of Christ, in a single phrase. Consider how He impressed His contemporaries. What was it which they saw in Him, who knew Him best, and had been united to Him by close ties of comradeship and discipleship? In one word, what they saw was Sonship. "We beheld His glory, as of an Only-Begotten from a Father." The Mind and Will of Christ are the perfect realisation of the Divine Sonship in our humanity.

But what is the meaning of God's Fatherhood and man's sonship? The ultimate truth of the relationship, the truth which underlies all such conceptions as care, love, obedience, is community of nature. Our human nature is really akin to the Divine. We are sons of God because our spiritual life is of one piece with His as derived from it. Baptism introduces no new element into our nature. By sacramental union with the Only Begotten, the Ground and Archetype of all sonship, it enables us to realise that which is in us, to actually become that which, potentially, we are. It gives us "power to become children of God," to attain the meaning of our manhood, to regain our true selves.

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4. Baptism gives power, all sacraments give power, but in such wise that that power is useless, even, *in a sense*, non-existent, till we make it ours by deliberate exertion, by co-operation of mind and heart and will with the Divine in us.

The end of our living, to become truly and completely the sons of God, is to be attained by the joint action of two factors—

- (1) The Spirit of Christ conforming our minds and wills more and more to the likeness of Christ.
- (2) The co-operation of our whole personality with the work of the indwelling Spirit.

Our meditations this morning on the Seven Words in which Christ made some partial disclosure of His Mind and Will, will form some part of that co-operation, one little stage in the accomplishment of our life-long task.

## II THE FIRST WORD

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"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." ST. LUKE XXIII. 34.

1. Here we are watching the behaviour of the Son of God, the Ideal and Ground of Divine Sonship in humanity.

Is this supreme example of forgiveness an example to *us*? Is it not something unnatural to humanity as we know it?

We must recall, from a former address, the distinction which we then drew between the animal in us, with its self-assertive instincts, and the Divine in us, that which constitutes us not animal merely, but human, of which the very essence is the self-sacrifice of perfect love. Christ came to reveal God in our manhood. And I need this revelation, just because the animal in me has won so

many victories in the past over the Divine, because in me the spiritual fire habitually burns so low and dim.

It is a very different thing to say that forgiveness of all serious injury is a hard thing. It is hard, but not impossible. That which makes it to be possible is the serious intention of discipleship, co-operating with the indwelling Spirit of Christ transforming us into His likeness.

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To assert, on the other hand, that forgiveness of serious wrong is impossible, is to ignore the fact that He Who uttered these wonderful words is the true self of me, and of every man who breathes. He Who hung on the Cross, and spoke these seven words, is the Son of man, the Representative to all ages, to all varieties of human character, of true humanity.

2. Christ-like forgiveness is no weak thing, but the strongest thing in the world.

Yet, for its true effect to be produced, its true character must be recognised. No suspicion of cowardice or impotence must cleave to it. The man who being obviously able to resent an injury, and not lacking in the capacity of resentment, yet for Christ's sake forgives, exercises on earth no inconsiderable share of the moral power of Christ. God now, as of old, "has made choice of the weak things of the world," those things which the world accounts weak, "to confound the strong." "The meek" still "inherit the earth."

We are dealing, all through, with the injury which is personal, with the resentment which is the reaction of the individual against unprovoked wrong. Personal resentment we are bidden to relentlessly crush out—"to turn the other cheek" is the command of Christ. But the Christian man will recognise that the interests of the social order are not to be disregarded. These interests, and those of the offender himself, will sometimes demand that the wrong, even if it primarily affects ourselves, shall not go unpunished. Again, no one can be in the full sense a Christian, that is, a fully developed man, or a man on the way to the full development of his nature, who is without the capacity of moral indignation, in whom no flame is kindled by the oppression of the weak.

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What the Christian moral law does demand of us, is the complete suppression of the merely personal anger which sometimes burns so fiercely in us when we receive unmerited insult or injury. That kind of anger belongs to "the flesh," is part of the defensive equipment of the animal nature. Before we can in any sense be Christ-like, the spirit must win many hard-won victories over its ancient foe.

To say "I will forgive, but I can never forget," is only to conceal from ourselves the defeat of the spiritual man, the Christ in us.

3. But carefully note the reason appended to the prayer: "they know not what they do." That is true, with every variety of degrees and shades of truth, of every sinner. It was true, clearly, of the soldiers then performing their duty: it was less true, but still in a real sense it was true, of the Pharisees, of the High Priests, of the Roman judge. It is true, but to a far less degree, even of us, that when we sin, we "know not what we do."

Sins are, in the language of St. Paul, works of darkness. That is the element in which alone they can exist. Sin is a huge deception. The very condition of its existence is the concealment of its true character. All this is summed up in that experience which we call "temptation." We are so familiar with sin, the atmosphere we breathe is so infected with it, we have given way so many times in the past, that it needs the objective revelation of the Cross to bring home to us the real horror and malignity of sin. It has been finely said, "Sin first drugs its victims before it consumes them." We, too, or some of us, have known the strange petrifying, hardening effect of sin on the conscience.

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Great, then, is our need that we should pray that the revelation of the Cross may more and more come home to us; great our need to pray for an ever fuller measure of that Spirit of Christ, Whose first work it is "to convince the world of sin," to make men realise its true character and its inevitable issue.

### **III THE SECOND WORD**

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"Verily I say unto thee, To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." ST. LUKE XXIII. 43.

We judge of any power by the results which it effects. We gain some knowledge of the power of steam by its capacity to drive a huge mass of steel and wood weighing twenty thousand tons through the water at the rate of twenty knots an hour. There we have some standard by which we can gauge the force which sends our earth round the sun at twenty-five miles a second, or that which propels a whole solar system through space. But we may apply the same method, of estimation by results, to the powers of the moral and spiritual worlds. Judged thus, it was indeed a stupendous power which was exerted by Christ from the Cross. For what result can be more amazing than the reversal, at the last, of the character slowly built up by the habits of a lifetime? It is, of course, useless to speculate on the antecedents of the robber (not "thief") who turned to our Lord with the words, "Jesus, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom." We know only what is implied by the word "robber" or "brigand," and the fact that he had joined, with his fellow-sufferer, in the mockery of our Lord. But the words thus addressed by him to Christ, in their context, represent the most wonderful "phenomenon" of human life, a genuine

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and thorough-going conversion. And the power which wrought that stupendous result was the patience and forgiveness of Jesus Christ. The weak things had, as so often since, confounded the strong. In His matchless forbearance, in the prayer for His executioners, the royalty of Christ our Lord was disclosed, and the "title" over His head was vindicated.

1. First then, we learn from the Second Word the Mind and Will of God towards penitence. There is no interposing of delay. Forgiveness is instantaneous. No pause intervenes between the prayer for pardon, and the pardon itself. But, that instant response was to genuine "change of mind," not to the repentance which is merely regret for the past, still less to a cowardly shrinking from a deserved punishment, but to a definite act of the man's will, repudiating sin, and ranging himself on God's side. The rejection of sin, the identifying of self with God's attitude towards it, that, we have seen, is alone, in the New Testament sense of the word, repentance.

2. The penitence of the robber, on analysis, discloses the three familiar elements—

(a) Contrition is obviously implied in the whole action.

(b) Confession—"we receive the due rewards of the things which we wrought."

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(c) Amendment—in the separation of himself from those with whom he had hitherto joined in reviling Christ.

Now it is worth noting, that our Catechism bids us examine ourselves not about our sins, but about our repentance; "whether they truly repent." We are meant to ask ourselves—

(a) Is our contrition real? And here, for our comfort, we remember that God accepts as contrition the sincere desire to be contrite.

(b) Have we made such a painstaking self-examination as to ensure our making a good confession? "If we confess our *sins*" (separate, detailed sins, not our sinfulness in general terms), "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

Have we used "sacramental" confession, according to the teaching of the Prayer Book, that is, when our conscience told us that we needed it?

(c) Is our resolution of amendment a clear and honest one? What sins are there, some of whose results we are able to modify or in part reverse (false impressions, untruths, acts or words of unkindness)? God is generous in forgiveness. Surely we are bound to be generous in our amendment. There is a sense in which the results of sin abide beyond possibility of recall. Yet I believe that the instinct which bids us "make up for" a hurt inflicted on a beloved person, is a Divine instinct in our nature, and one which we are to carry into the region of our relation to God.

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3. We notice another important truth as regards the Divine forgiveness. It has nothing to do with the removal of punishment, the release from penalty or consequence of sin. The forgiveness of the robber was immediate and complete. But he had still to hang in agony, and there awaited him the frightful pain of the *crurifragium*, the breaking of the legs by beating with clubs.

The sooner we learn the two great truths about the punishment of sin, the better.

(a) Punishment is inevitable. It is a necessary result of the constitution of the physical and moral universe, of the working, in both regions, of those laws which are the expression of the Divine Mind.

(b) Punishment is remedial. Many Christian theologians have fallen far below Plato's conception of God, as One Who can only punish men with a view of making them better.

Think of one of the punishments of repented sin, the haunting memories of past evil. In this case, both principles are very clearly discernible. Each recollection may be made the means of a renewed act of rejection of sin, and thus become an opportunity for the deepening of repentance.

And what disclosure does this second word contain of the Mind and Will of God in us, as manifested not towards, but by ourselves? Our lesson is the prompt recognition and welcome of any, even the slightest signs of amendment. It may be our duty to punish. It is always our duty to keep alive, or to kindle, the hope in an offender of becoming better. In that hope, alone, lies the possibility of moral amendment. There is the golden rule, laid down by St. Paul for all who have to exercise discipline over others, in words which ring ever in our ears—"lest they be discouraged."

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## IV THE THIRD WORD

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"Lady, behold thy son."  
"Behold thy mother."

ST. JOHN XIX. 26, 27.

In this Word we see the Son of God revealed as human son, and human friend, all the more truly and genuinely human in both relations, because in each and every relation of life, Divine.

1. The first lesson in the Divine Life for us to learn here is the simple, almost vulgarly commonplace one, yet so greatly needing to be learnt, that "charity," which is but a synonym of



the Divine Life, “begins at home.”

Home life is the real test of a person’s Christianity. There the barriers with which society elsewhere hedges round and cramps the free expression of our individuality, no longer exist. We are at liberty to be ourselves. What sort of use do we make of it? What manner of self do we disclose? Would our best friends recognise that self to be the person whom they admire? If we are to be Christians at all, we must begin by being Christians at home.

At home, and beyond the limits of home, one great Christian virtue stands out as the supreme law of social behaviour—that is, for a disciple—the virtue of consideration for others. p. 100

In the midst of torturing physical pain, in the extreme form of that experience, of which the slightest degree makes us fretful, irritable, self-absorbed, our Lord calmly provides for the future of His mother and the disciple whom He loved.

What is required of us is not high-flown sentiment, but the practical proof of consideration, that we have really learnt the first lesson of the Christ-life, to put others, not self, in the first place. The proof, the test, is our willingness to put ourselves to inconvenience, to go without things, for the sake of others. If in such a little matter as so ordering our Sunday meals as to give our servants rest, as far as may be, and opportunity for worship, our practical, home Christianity breaks down, then we must not shirk the plain truth, there is in us *nothing* of the Spirit of Him Who spoke the Third Word. On the other hand, the readiness with which we do yield up our comforts is a proof—nothing short of that—a proof of the indwelling of God in us. “In this we know that He abideth in us, from the Spirit”—the Spirit of the Christ—“which He hath given to us.”

2. We notice, in the second place, that Christ’s proof of friendship is the assignment of a task, the giving of some work to do for Him. “Behold thy mother.” We are His friends, as He Himself has told us. “No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave is one who knows not what his master is doing; but you I have called friends.” St. John had forsaken his Friend: p. 101

a torchlight and a noise,  
The sudden Roman faces, violent hands,  
And fear of what the Jews might do,

had been too much for the disciple’s courage and the friend’s devotion.

And it is written, I forsook and fled:  
That was my trial, and it ended thus.

But St. John had returned. There he is, in his true place, beside his Master and Friend.

We too have forsaken, sometimes denied, the same Master and Friend. We too with true repentance have returned, and are struggling to take up the old allegiance. What is the proof, where is the assurance for which we long more, perhaps, than for anything else in the world, that our repentance has been accepted, that we are once more in the number of those whom He calls His friends?

There is one decisive test. Upon all His friends He lays some task. If we have anything to do for Jesus Christ, then we may assure our hearts. Our desertion has been forgiven. He has spoken to us the words of peace, “Behold thy mother, thy brother, thy son.” For, let us not forget, all work for others, for the bodies, the minds, the souls of our brethren in the family of God, is capable of being raised from the level of professional drudgery, and of becoming the direct service of Jesus Christ. p. 102

To work for Christ is the real foretaste of heaven, far removed from the sensuous imagery of some modern hymns. “Be thou ruler,” there is the supreme reward, “over ten cities.”

If we are doing any work for Christ, i.e. for others for Christ’s sake, and as part of our service to Him, willingly and cheerfully, then we have the final and convincing proof that we are indeed forgiven, that the offer of renewed allegiance has been accepted, that we have been restored to His Friendship.

## V

### THE FOURTH WORD

“Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani.”—ST. MATT. XXVII. 46; ST. MARK XV. 34.

There are three peculiar and distinguishing features of this fourth word which our Saviour uttered from His Cross.

1. It is the only one of the Seven which finds a place in the earliest record of our Lord’s life, contained in the matter common to St. Matthew and St. Mark.
2. It is the only one which has been preserved to us in the original Aramaic, in the very syllables which were formed by the lips of Christ.
3. It is the only one which He is said to have “shouted” (εβησηεν), under the extremity of some overpowering emotion.

In fact, we are here at the very heart of the Passion. In this dread cry I see something of the height of the Divine love, something of the depths of my own sin.

The meaning of this dread “cry” is not perhaps so difficult to understand as some have thought. It is to be found in the entire reality of that human nature which the Son of God assumed—not merely a human body, but a human consciousness like our own; in the thoroughness with which He identified Himself with every phase of our experience, the knowledge of personal sin alone excepted.

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In this identification more was involved than we commonly think. Sin cannot be in a world of which the constitution is the expression of the Mind of God, without introducing therein a fatal element of discord, confusion, and pain. To all consequences of sin the Saviour necessarily submitted Himself, by the mere fact of His entry into a world which sin had disordered. In respect of the external consequences, this is abundantly clear. We have seen, and it is, in fact, obvious, that His sufferings and Death were the result of the actual sins of men. But there were, it is important to remember, internal sufferings attributable to the same cause. We are at once reminded of His tears over the doomed city, doomed by the persistent refusal to recognise the Divine voice. But we are here on still deeper ground. The true explanation of the fourth word is to be found in that great principle which St. Paul has laid down in a familiar, but little understood, sentence: “the sting of death is sin.”

The simplest and most obvious meaning of these words is that, whatever be the physiological meaning and necessity of human death, its peculiar horror and dread, that which makes death to be what it is for us, is to be found in sin, in the separation of man from God.

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Now that horror consists, ultimately, in the fact that death is the analogue, or, in New Testament language, the “sign,” of what sin is—separation. If sin is, essentially, the violent and unnatural separation of man, by his own act, from his spiritual environment, death is clearly the separation—and, *as our sins have made it*, the violent and unnatural separation of man from all that has hitherto been his world. It may be, that the final, extremest pang of death is the supreme moment of agony, when we feel that we are being made to let go our hold on reality, are slipping back into what, in our consciousness of it, must appear like nothingness, the mere blank negation of being. Here, then, we have the explanation of this awful cry. He Who came “for our salvation” into a world disordered by sin, willed so to identify Himself with our experience, as to realise death, not as it might have been, but as man had made it, the very sign and symbol of man’s sin, of his separation from God. That moment of extreme mental anguish wrung from His lips the Cry, not of “dereliction,” but of faith triumphing even in the moment when He “tasted death” as sin’s most bitter fruit, “*My God, why didst Thou forsake Me?*”

What this view involves is briefly

(i) Death is an experience natural to man.

(ii) Sin has added to this natural experience a peculiar agony, a “sting.”

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(iii) This “sting” is an experience of utter isolation at some moment in the process of death, the feeling that one is being violently rent away from one’s clinging hold of existence.

(iv) This “sting” is due to the disorder sin has introduced into the constitution of the world and of man.

(v) In virtue of this, death has become the “sign” in the “natural” world of what sin is in the spiritual.

(vi) Our Blessed Lord so utterly identified Himself with our experience, with the internal as well as with the external consequences of our sin, as to undergo this most terrible result of man’s transgression.

(vii) And He felt the full agony of it as realising, what none but the Sinless One could realise, the horror of sin as separation from God.

In a word, the Cry represents the culmination of our Lord’s sufferings, a real experience of His human consciousness.

The experience was “objective,” as all states of consciousness are. Our sensations are as objective as “material things.” It was, as we have just said, real: inasmuch as the only definition of reality is that which is included in personal experience.

Thus understood, this fourth word teaches us at least two valuable lessons.

1. It discloses to us the Mind of Christ, which is to be our own mind, in its outlook upon human sin. We, if “the same mind” is to be in us “which was also in Christ Jesus,” must hate sin, and our sins, not because of any results or penalties external to sin, but because sin separates us from God, our true life. The worst punishment of sin, is sin itself. Into depths which make us tremble as we strive to gaze into them, Christ our Lord descended to deliver us from that deadly thing which is destroying our life. That appalling Cry burst from His lips, that we might learn to fear and dread sin worse than any pang of physical pain.

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2. This Word, again, discloses the Mind of Christ, true Man, in its relation to God. He possessed fullest self-consciousness both as God and as Man. Thus He Himself alone knew, in their absolute fulness, the joy and the strength which come from the communion of man with God.

That joy and that strength, in the measure in which we can attain to their realisation, are to be the goal of all our striving. Thus this Word has for us more than a merely negative teaching. Not only are we to shrink from that which destroys union with God. We must seek far more earnestly to make that union a greater and a deeper reality. This end we can achieve by making our prayers more deliberate acts of conscious communion with that Person Who is not merely above us, but in us, and in Whom "we live, and move, and have our being." We must all make the confession that we have not yet nearly realised all that prayer might be to us, if only we were more energetic, more strenuous, more utterly in earnest, in our attempts to pray. It is by prayer that we are to attain to our complete manhood, to "win our souls," to become our true selves.

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For what are men better than sheep or goats,  
Which nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer,  
Both for themselves, and those that call them friend?  
For so the whole round world is, every way,  
Bound with gold chains about the feet of God.

## VI THE FIFTH WORD

p. 109

"I thirst."—JOHN XIX. 28.

This is the only utterance of our Blessed Lord in which He gave expression to His physical sufferings. Not least of these was that intolerable thirst which is the invariable result of all serious wounds, as those know well who have ever visited patients in a hospital after they have undergone a surgical operation. In this case it must have been aggravated beyond endurance by exposure to the burning heat of an Eastern sun. This word, then, spoken under such circumstances, discloses the Mind of the Son of God, perfect Man, in regard to physical pain.

1. Notice then, in the first place, the majestic calm of this word. It was spoken in intensest agony, yet with deliberation, exhibiting the restraint of the sovereign and victorious will of the Sufferer. "After these things, knowing that all things had now been accomplished, He saith [not 'cried'], I thirst." We cannot be wrong in reading this marvellous word in the light of that strange passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the writer tells us that Christ, "although He was Son, yet learnt He obedience by the things which He suffered." How are we to reconcile this with the moral perfection of our Lord's humanity? We can only do so, by applying the Aristotelian distinction between the potential and the actual. The obedience of the Son of God, existing as it did in all possible perfection from the first moment of His human consciousness, yet existed, prior to His complete identification of Himself with all our human experience, as a potentiality. It became actual, in the same way as our obedience can alone become actual, as a result of that experience, and, above all, in consequence of those sufferings which were part of that experience. In this sense He "learnt obedience," where we too must learn it, in God's school of pain.

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Therein lies the answer, as complete an answer as we can at present receive, to the problem of pain. While that problem is, beyond doubt, the most perplexing of all the questions which confront us, the real difficulty lies, not in the existence of pain in God's world, but in the apparent absence, in so many instances, of any discernible purpose in pain. In itself, pain does not, or at least should not, conflict with the highest moral conception which we can form of the character of God. But purposeless pain, if such really occur anywhere in the universe, is hard indeed to reconcile with the revelation of the Highest as Infinite and Eternal Love. The real answer to the problem lies in our gradually dawning perception of the high purposes which pain subserves.

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It is well, then, to remind ourselves of the teaching of natural science in regard to the function of pain in the animal world. There, at least, it has originated, and has survived, only because of its actual use to the possessors of that nervous system which makes pain possible. It serves as a danger signal of such inestimable value that no race of animals, of any high degree of organisation, which could be incapable of suffering pain, could for any length of time continue to survive. Pain here, at any rate, so far from being purposeless, owes its existence to the purpose which it subserves.

Ascending higher in the scale of being we see, as has been recently pointed out, that the progress of human civilisation has been very largely due to the successful efforts of man to resist and to remove pain. The most successful and progressive races of mankind are those which inhabit regions of the world where the conditions of life are neither so severe as to paralyse all exertion, or even to preclude its possibility, nor so favourable that men can avoid the pain of hunger or of cold without strenuous and unremitting effort. The stimulus of pain has been the means of perfecting the animal nature of man, and the secret of those victories which he has won over the inclement or dangerous forces of the material world, and which we call, in their totality, human civilisation.

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And thus we come in sight of a great law, "perfection through suffering." And the revelation of the Cross is the exhibition to us of this law acting in the higher reaches of man's existence, in the moral and spiritual regions of his life. As the animal has gained its victories in the past, so the spiritual is advancing towards the final triumph of man, along the same path, of healthy reaction stimulated and necessitated by pain.

For wherein lies the triumph of the spiritual nature, save in its complete and sovereign control over all the other elements in our complex being? The spiritual man is not the man who has starved his physical or intellectual being; but the man whose whole nature, harmoniously developed in the whole range of its varied gifts and powers and faculties, is altogether brought under the mastery of that which is highest in him, that spirit in which he is akin to God, the wearer of the Divine Image. The saintliest, loftiest characters of men and women have been the fruits of this discipline.

We see the final demonstration of the purpose of pain in Him Who “learnt obedience by the things which He suffered.” This one word which tells of physical suffering, tells also, as we have already seen, of the victory gained over it by His human Spirit. It was by the reaction of that Spirit under sharpest bodily pain, that the moral perfection of the Son of man ceased to be potential, and became actual. So it is with us, so at least it may be in ever-increasing measure, when pain is accepted and met in the way in which Christ accepted and met His pain, not in the spirit of useless and wild rebellion against the laws of the universe, nor in that of a blind, fatalistic, and unintelligent fatalism, which calls itself resignation. We may, hence, learn to look beyond and behind pain to that great law of perfection through suffering which takes effect, as it were, spontaneously in lower forms of life; but which, in the realm of the moral and the spiritual, demands the co-operation of the human mind and will.

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2. We may see also, in the fifth word, the revelation of the attitude of the Son of God towards His own body. That attitude, and hence the only genuinely and characteristically Christian attitude, may be best described as the mean between the pampering of the body, and its savage neglect in the interests of a *false* asceticism.

As at first He put aside “the slumberous potion bland” and willed “to feel all, that He might pity all,” so, now His task is over, He craves, and accepts, alleviation of His bodily pain. It is a wonderful illustration of the true, the Christian way of regarding the body. The human body is essentially a good and holy thing. Those sins which we call “bodily,” like all sins, have their origin in the rebellious will. They are only distinguished from other sins, because in them the will uses the body, and in other sins other God-given endowments of our nature, in opposition to the eternal goodness which is the Will of God. We cannot too often remember, that “good” and “evil” are terms applicable to the will alone.

p. 114

That splendid gift of the body has been given to us, in order that in it, and through it, we might “glorify God”; that is, do His Will, the only thing utterly worth doing. *Therefore*, we have to keep our bodies “fit,” fit in all ways for their high and holy purpose. There is the law, the standard of all Christian self-discipline. Think of the glory of the prospect which it holds out to us, of the development and destiny of the body. Think of the care which we should bestow upon it, of the awful reverence with which we should regard this (in the Divine intention) splendid and perfect instrument for the fulfilment of the Will of God. For what reverence can be too great for that which the Eternal God chose as the tabernacle in which He should dwell among men, as the instrument by which He should do the Father’s Will on earth?

Of all the religions of the world it is the religion of Jesus Christ alone which bids us “glorify God” in the body, that is, do His Will in and by that glorious instrument which He has created and redeemed for His service.

3. Finally, we may remind ourselves, very briefly, that we, in our own day, may share the blessedness of the Roman soldier who relieved the sufferings of Christ. “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.”

p. 115

As Christians, we *must* have *some* ministry to fulfil towards the suffering members of Christ’s Body. In the parable of the sheep and the goats, the eternal destiny of men is shown to depend, in the last resort, upon the manner in which they have performed, or failed to perform, this ministry. The complexities of modern life call for careful thought in regard to the manner in which we are to fulfil this duty, but they cannot relieve us of it. Somewhere or other in our lives we must be diligently relieving the necessities of others, ministering to their needs of body, mind, or spirit. Else—there is no shirking this conclusion—we are simply failing in the most characteristic of all Christian virtues; we are far removed from the Mind of Him Who “went about doing good”; we are on the way to hear that final condemnation, “Because ye did it not to the least of these My brethren, ye did it not to Me.”

## VII THE SIXTH WORD

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“It is accomplished.”—ST. JOHN XIX. 30.

1. What had been accomplished? In the first place, that work which Christ had come into the world to do. All that work may be resumed in a single word, “sacrifice.” The Son of God had come for this one purpose, to offer a sacrifice. Here is room for serious misunderstanding. The blood, the pain, the death, were not the sacrifice. Nothing visible was the sacrifice, least of all the physical surroundings of its culminating act. There is only one thing which can rightly be called sacrifice—or, to put it otherwise, one sacrifice which alone has any worth, alone can win any acceptance in the sight of God—and that is, the obedience of the human will, the will of man brought into perfect union with that Divine Will which is its own highest moral ideal.

The perfect obedience of the human will of Christ to the Divine Will, could only be realised—such were the circumstances under which the mission received of the Father was to be fulfilled by Him for the good of man—by His faithfulness unto death. “He became obedient unto death,” because in such a world perfect faithfulness must lead to death. But the death of Christ was no isolated fact, standing out solitary and alone from the rest of His ministry. It was not merely of one piece with, but the natural and fitting close of the whole. The death of uttermost obedience was the crown and consummation of the obedient life. On the Cross, He was carrying His life’s work to its triumphant close. His Death was, itself, His victory.

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This victorious aspect of the Passion is that on which St. John chiefly dwells. The “glorification” of the Son of man, His “lifting up,” was the whole series of events extending from the Passion to the Ascension. So the first Christians loved to think of the Cross, not as the instrument of unutterable pain, but as the symbol of their Master’s triumph. It is this feeling, this apprehension of the Johannine teaching on the Passion, which accounts for the late appearance of the crucifix. Even when, at last, the actual sufferings of the Saviour are depicted, we are still far removed from medieval realism. There are no nails—the Saviour is outstretched on the Cross by the moral power of His own will, steadfast and victorious in its obedience. The Sacred Face is not convulsed with agony, but is turned, with calm and benignant aspect, towards men whom He blesses. The earliest representations of the Passion, as we have noticed before, are far nearer to the spirit of the gospels, that of St. John above all, than those of the Middle Ages.

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2. But the ministry itself was but the consummation of the age-long work now “accomplished.” Throughout the whole course of man’s history, in the entire spiritual evolution, whose first steps and rude beginnings we trace in the burial mounds of prehistoric races, He Whose lips now uttered that great “It is accomplished” had been the light of men, never amid thick clouds of error and cruelty and superstition wholly extinguished. In every approach of man to God however dimly conceived of, the Word, the Eternal Son, had been offering Himself in sacrifice to the Father.

So here, in the perfect act of the moral obedience of a human will, is that to which all sacrifices not only pointed forward but, all the time, meant, and aimed at, and symbolised, as men so slowly and so painfully groped after, felt their way to God, “if haply they might find Him.”

“It is accomplished”—the true meaning of sacrifice, of all religion, heathen and Jewish, is attained and laid bare.

Thousands of years of human development reach their climax, find their issue and their explanation in these words.

3. In its teaching, this sixth word ascends to the heights, to the mysterious and ineffable relationships of the Godhead—which are the inner reality and meaning of all morality and religion—and it descends to the depths, to the lowliest details of the most commonplace life.

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All work, for the Christian, is raised to the level, to the dignity of sacrifice. Once and for all we must rid ourselves of that idea which has wrought so much mischief, that sacrifice necessarily connotes pain, loss, death. Essentially our sacrifice is what essentially Christ’s sacrifice was, the joyous dedication of the will to God, the Source and Light of all our being.

The daily round, the common task,  
Will furnish all we need to ask.

All work is sacred, or may be so, if we will. For all work has been consecrated for evermore by the perfect obedience, that is, the perfect sacrifice of the Son of man, the Head of our race. There is no task which any Christian, anywhere, can be called upon to do, which cannot be made part of that joyous service, that glad sacrifice, which, in union with that of Jesus Christ our Lord, we, one with Him in sacramental union, “offer and present” to the Father.

## VIII THE SEVENTH WORD

p. 120

“Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.” ST. LUKE XXIII. 46.

The consummation of sacrifice, the union of the human will with the Divine, leads to the perfect rest in God.

1. We have tried to deal with the Seven Words as constituting a revelation of the Divine Sonship of humanity. From this point of view it is significant that the first and the last begin, like the Lord’s Prayer, with a direct address to the Father.

The service of the Christian man is that of a son in his father’s house, of a free man, not of a slave. The Fatherhood of God is the very key-note of the Christian view of life and of death. In both alike we are the objects of the Father’s individual care and love; in both we bear the supreme dignity of “the sons of the Most High.”

That dignity belongs inalienably to our human nature as such. Baptism conveys no gift alien and extraneous to our manhood. Rather, that union with the Only Begotten Son is not an addition to, but the restoration of our nature by Him in Whose Image it was created. United thus to the Eternal Son, we are placed in a position to realise the possibilities of our being, to become that

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which we are constituted capable of becoming. That is the true answer to the question, how can we be made children of God by Baptism?

And through work, and prayer, and suffering, we are to grow into, and perfectly realise, our Divine sonship.

2. These dying words of the Son of God breathe no spirit of mere passive resignation. That is the spirit of the Oriental fatalist, not of the son conscious of his sonship, of his heirship. Even the Lord's Death was not the yielding to inexorable necessity, to the inevitable working of the laws of nature. It was, if anything in His Life was, the deliberate act of His conscious Will. "I commend," rather, "I commit My Spirit." "I lay down My life . . . therefore the Father loveth Me."

Submission to the Will of God is not necessarily a Christian virtue at all. What is Christian is the glad recognition of what manner of will the Divine Will is, how altogether "good, perfect, and acceptable," how infinitely righteous, and holy, and loving; the doing of that glorious Will with mind, and heart, and will, and body; the praying with all sincerity and intention that that Will, which is the happiness and joy and life of all creatures, may increasingly "be done, as in heaven, so on earth"; the free and glad surrender, in life and death, to that Will which is the perfection and consummation of our manhood.

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3. Such an attitude of our whole being, which is what is meant by being a Christian, can only be ours by virtue of the Spirit of the Son of God dwelling and working within us, and moulding us into His perfect Likeness. In Him alone we can come to our sonship, to that which is from the first, potentially, our own. "Ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus; for as many of you as were baptised into Christ did put on Christ." Work and suffering, life and death, can only be borne, and lived, and endured by us in the spirit of sonship, so far as we are actually "in Christ."

Let us pray that the Mind and Will of the Son of God, disclosed to us in these Seven Words, may be ours in ever-increasing measure. They can be ours, if we are in Him, and He in us.

The foundation fact of the Christian life, that which alone makes it possible, is our union, through sacraments and faith, with Christ; our actual sharing in His Life, imparted by His Spirit to the members of His Body. We are meant to be ever drawing upon the infinite moral resources of that Life by repeated acts of faith. For, as with all other gifts of God, so it is with this, His supreme gift; we only know it as ours—it is, in a real sense, only truly our own—in proportion as we are using it.

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## **X ADDRESS ON EASTER EVE**

p. 124

"We were buried, therefore, with Him through baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life."—ROM. VI. 4.

"I delivered unto you, among the first things, that . . . He was buried."—I COR. XV. 3, 4.

St. Paul lays extraordinary and, at first sight, inexplicable stress, on the fact of our Lord's Burial. It is certainly strange that, in the second of these two texts, he mentions it as constituting, along with the Death of Jesus Christ for our sins, and His Resurrection on the third day according to the Scriptures, the foundation truths of the apostolic gospel, as being one of those "first things" of the Christian religion which, as he had "received," so had he "delivered" to the Corinthians.

This extreme importance attached by St. Paul to the Burial of Christ, can only be explained by the mysticism of the great apostle. To him the outward facts, however wonderful and striking in themselves, are of value only as "signs," as representing great moral and spiritual realities. To him, as to every man who thinks soberly and steadily, the internal is "real" in a sense in which the external is not: thought has a reality denied to "things."

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The real meaning of Christ's Burial is the mystical meaning, that meaning which was brought home to the minds of the early Christians by the picturesque and symbolic ritual of baptism. The man who had, by faith, accepted Christ as his Lord and Master, was baptised into His Death; that is, in Him he died to the old life. His submergence beneath the baptismal waters, the very likeness of the Burial, was the assurance and the sealing of that death. As truly as the man who is dead and buried is cut off for ever from the life of this world, so was the baptised separated, once and for all, from the old heathen life with all its associations. As clearly did his emergence from those waters show forth his actual participation in the Lord's Resurrection. He had not merely left the old life behind, he had from that moment entered upon the new life, the "life of God"; that is, the life which henceforth had God for its foundation, its centre, and its goal; the life of moral health and sanity; the life which was to be, in all its relations, open and clear and undismayed; the life "in the Light."

1. The first thought, then, of Easter Eve must surely be one of profound sorrow and humiliation. We ought to be bowed to the very earth with self-abasement by the thought that we have been, so many times in the past, untrue to our baptism.

Soldiers of Christ, we have denied our Lord. More, ours has been the guilt, not of Peter only, but of Judas. Too often we have betrayed Him for the veriest pittance of this world's good.

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We have missed the glory of the Risen Life. All the magnificent language of the Epistle to the Ephesians, the quickening with Christ, the raising together with Him from the dead, the enthronement in Him in the heavenly places—all this was written of Christians in this life. All this might have been true of us, and is not; for, worse than Esau, we have bartered away an incomparably more magnificent heritage.

What remains for us to do on this Easter Eve but, with truest penitence, with utter loathing of self, and utter longing for Him Who is our true self, to cast ourselves at the Feet of Christ?

2. But the second thought of Easter Eve is one of boundless hope. But remember, hope can only begin at the Feet of Christ. For Christian hope has evermore its beginning and its ground in humility. We only find safety, comfort, joy, encouragement, as we lie, prostrate in penitence, before our Redeemer. It is clear, is it not, what we mean by all this? We are, simply and naturally, to kneel before our Lord, and acknowledge to Him all our untruth, all our disloyalty, all the manifold failures of our service. And the very fact that we can do this sincerely and honestly, is the earnest of all good things to come in us. If only we can make this genuine and heartfelt confession, there is no degree of moral recovery beyond our reach.

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For on Easter Eve we try to realise once more that greatest of Christian truths, the *power* of Christ's Resurrection. The power which was manifested in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the power which is universally present in nature and in mind, which is the reality behind all forces of nature, which all forces reveal. It has been finely said, that "the opening of a rose-bud and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ are facts of the same order, for they are equally manifestations of the one force which is the motive power of all phenomena."

We see that power in the glories of the opening spring; we are conscious of it in ourselves, in every good resolve, every upward aspiration. There comes to us the inspiring thought, that the physical and the moral Resurrection alike, in nature, in ourselves, in Jesus Christ, are different manifestations of one and the same power. Was the Resurrection of the Lord a mighty fact, the greatest of all the facts of history, a transcendent and astonishing miracle? The power which wrought it is in me; the same wondrous fact, the same stupendous miracle, if I will, may be accomplished in me.

That was the very meaning of my Christian calling—that "as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father," so I, by the self-same power, might be raised from the death of sin, and enabled "to walk in newness of life." The Death, the Burial, and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ are not merely historical facts, external to me: they are meant to be spiritual facts in my own experience, in the experience of all Christians. And spiritual facts are beyond measure greater in value and meaning and influence than those historical facts which happened in space and time, in order to serve as signs and symbols of the inward and eternal realities.

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So let us come to our Easter Communion, not only in the spirit of penitence, but in the spirit of undying and unconquerable hope. There is no limit to that which the power of God, symbolised, embodied externally, in the Resurrection, may effect within us, in the region of our moral and spiritual life. Or rather, there is no limit to the exercise of the Divine power, save that which we ourselves impose upon it, by our failure to correspond with it. Now as ever it is true, true of the work of God's grace upon our souls, as of the healing power of Christ over the bodies of men, that "according to our faith" it shall be done to us.

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## FOOTNOTES

[0] Some of them also in the Parish Church of Colton, Staffordshire.

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