

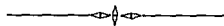
And this wonderful and all-blessed Lord thus satisfies the human soul because He is not the echo but the answer. He is not a splendid figment of speculation. He is revealed through events of history; in lines of fact which do not depend on our moods, and cannot change. He is revealed in a historical though supernatural birth, a historical though sinless life, a historical while propitiatory death, a historical while supremely miraculous resurrection. As He is history, He stands clear of this sinful, anxious, inner world of mine; and He is therefore able, as He is the Truth, to be its refuge and its peace. Jesus Christ, immovable in Himself, is my point of rest, my spring of life.

Such are some of the thankful thoughts with which we may stand by the empty sepulchre while the Apostles walk away to their own homes. The garden, the rock, the cave, the winding-sheet, are no scene of romance; they are historical: "Handle them and see." Jesus Christ has actually suffered and risen again in anticipation of my needs, and of my complete incapacity to meet those needs out of the resources of self.

Let us often walk to Joseph's garden accordingly. When the heart is heavy and weary, casting about for peace, or when it is preoccupied and earthly, and refuses to attach itself in conscious, affectionate faith to its one and perfect hope, Jesus Christ, then let us not go deeper into the heart, for it will only disappoint us, but let us return to the facts—to the Person who is our Life. Let us stand again beside the open and vacant sepulchre, and see again and trust again the risen Son of God. There let us leave behind alike self's sinfulness and its imagined righteousness, and calmly give thanks for His great glory and accomplished work, joining Bonar as he sings:

"Thy works, not mine, O Christ,
Speak gladness to my heart;
They tell me all is done,
They bid my fear depart."

H. C. G. MOULE.



ART. V.—THE SERVANT OF CHRIST.

NO. I.—PRUDENCE.

IT may be taken for granted that all sincere Christians are eager to seize hold of our Lord's own words as the simple rule of their life. They know, of course, that what has, in the providence of God, been handed down to them of His discourses does not represent the hundredth or even the

thousandth part of the whole mass of His human conversation. It is no news to them to be told that if all the memoirs had been put together which might have been reported, it would have been difficult for any conceivable place to contain all that would have been written. For three years the Light of the World never ceased offering, to all who could listen, the wisdom which every place, occasion, and character suggested; whereas all that we now have could be read through in a single day. If we are reminded of this, we answer that such a consideration only makes us the more tenacious of those gem-like summaries of His sermons, illustrations, revelations, warnings, and promises which God has allowed the inspired memories of the evangelists to give us. Christians know again that our Divine Lord condescended to speak as an Eastern to Easterns, as a founder to His Apostles, as a wanderer to an unsettled society, as a perfect man to imperfect men, who could only understand a certain order of ideas presenting points of contact with the range of their experience and their thoughts. They do not, therefore, expect to find in His special directions and advice particular provisions directly applicable to every contingency of European organizations, rules distinctly fitted for every variety of modern institutions, or anticipations, communicated to minds which could not understand them, of all the phases of modern usage and speculation. When this is put before us, we answer that it would have been the very opposite of what we know to have been the genius of our Lord's reformation of religion, if He had framed a second law to the stringent clauses of which all Christians of every age and every sort of circumstances must conform. What He came to do in the way of teaching was to breathe a new spirit on the earth, to supply new principles of action in those great questions which underlie all others, and by showing what a perfect life would be under certain surroundings, to establish a model by consideration of which men might discover, in harmony with what general outlines their own lives must be drawn in order to fulfil the will of God, and to have an assured and living faith in His mercy through Christ. And, therefore, when we say that Christians are eager to seize hold of our Lord's words as the simple rule of their life, we mean that, wherever He has laid down a wide principle, wherever He has given a lesson of conduct, wherever He has thrown heaven's light on human meanness, depravity, and folly, wherever He has told us the purposes and thoughts of God, there we believe that, unless we feel ourselves bound to follow, we are no true disciples. If we do not literally pluck out the right eye or cut off the right hand, it is because we know that our Lord was establishing a principle by a paradox, and we, at any rate,

acknowledge the grievous folly of not trying to rid ourselves of every hindrance to our better life. Although we do not go and sell all that we have and give to the poor, at all events, we have little reason for satisfaction if we do not wish to act as though we and all things that we have are not our own, because we are bought by God with a price that cannot be repaid. Like our Lord, we do not refuse to be put on oath before the magistrate, but we insist on the impiety of lightly binding ourselves under solemn sanctions. We do not give a man our cloak if he has already taken our coat, because under the resources of modern civilization he would immediately take it to the pawnshop; nor do we lend indiscriminately to all who may wish to borrow, because under the imperfect constitution of contemporary society such loans end, as a rule, in the public-house, and we know that our Lord was illustrating a principle in the most forcible and picturesque language at His hand; but we recognise in these parables the principle that all that we can do for others is nothing but our reasonable service. We find, in fact, in our Lord and in His words the perfect ideal towards which every day we must struggle, and in accordance with which all the plans of our life must be detailed.

In the Sermon on the Mount, as everybody knows, our Lord said, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink." Here we seem to have a really wide and general principle expressed in plain and simple language, addressed indeed to His own disciples, who had, of course, many special circumstances which do not belong to us, but evidently written for our learning, that we might have life. "Take no thought for the morrow," as it is put in another place. Here seems at once a considerable difficulty, because, if we read them rightly, the words appear absolutely to cut away the ground from all human prudence and foresight, and the qualities which make men into good citizens. Is the statesman to be depreciated in proportion as he lays his plans deeper and wider for futurity? Must the merchant no longer accumulate those vast stores of wealth which alone can accomplish gigantic works of benevolence, and erect the magnificent buildings which prevent the life of towns from becoming altogether mean and sordid, and encourage those arts which help so truly to raise the soul above itself some stages towards God? Has it become wrong for a father of a family to think anxiously and laboriously for the future of his children, or to provide for his own old age? Take no thought for the morrow? May none exercise caution in choosing and preparing that path of life in which he may best develop himself for the service of God, Him of whose forethought the whole

world is an expression? Is it even forbidden to execute careful plans for acquiring by daily struggles fresh habits of virtue, and for stripping off all the old remnants of evil which may still be clinging about us? In a word, is it better to be improvident than provident, careless than thoughtful, indolent than sagacious? Did Christ denounce Prudence?

This apparent contrast between the most elementary suggestions of common-sense and the supposed direction of our Lord is no mere thing of straw, but a real difficulty, which has often seriously been urged by Christian people, and which either gives them an uncomfortable feeling, only half acknowledged, that they are not actually living or attempting to live as Christ would have had them; or else makes them clumsily try to adopt a purely unreasonable mode of action, which our Lord would have been the first to condemn.

But the contrast is, fortunately, after all only apparent, because the direction itself is only supposed. This is, in fact, one of those cases where an imperfect translation in the Authorised Version, by not giving full force to the sense, has altered the whole meaning. Readers of the Revised Version are aware, as scholars have of course known all along, that our Lord did not really use the words "Take no thought," at all, but a much stronger expression: "Be not anxious," "Be not distracted," "Be not bewildered with care"; or, as it is in the parallel passage in St. Luke, "Be not tossed about at sea." The whole passage in the Sermon on the Mount is an illustration of the impossibility of serving God and mammon at once. Therefore, in all those tendencies which we are to understand as forbidden, the idea of mammon, greed, covetousness, ambition, worldliness, must enter in and be recollected. So that this Divine teaching does not mean any such thing as "Never take any thought for the morrow"; far from that; it is "Be not distracted about your life and your position in it, be not distracted about your food, be not distracted about your dress." Such distraction will spoil your spiritual life, and your bodily life also. Your Father is not the Father of flowers and birds in the same sense as He is of you; yet He gives them their principle of growth which arrays them in their proper beauty, and provides them with their proper food; so, if you are not too much set upon lower objects, will He give you also such an inner spring of moral health, strength and development, which will lead you up through every grade of happiness. If you can grasp firmly, through faith in your Father, the right frame of mind, it will be a necessary consequence that you will exercise that Prudence which is one of His own eternal attributes; but it will be such a Prudence as seeks in all things first the Kingdom of God and His righteous-

ness, brings all words, thoughts, motives, actions, to the test of His truth, and never allows itself in any situation whatsoever which may involve a conflict with His will. Do not merely follow after holiness first in point of time, and then think yourselves free for unrestricted worldly occupations; but make the true life the one great object of every day and year, and then nothing will be wanting.

To this effect, also, there is a very beautiful traditional saying of our Lord given by Origen: "Ask for the great things, and the little will come; and ask for the heavenly things and the things of earth will be given you also."

"And do not vex and distress yourselves," He goes on in this passage, "by taking to-day the cares which properly belong to to-morrow; for, in spite of My wishes for you, and My warnings, while you are yet in the world you will no more be able to avoid thought and trouble than you will be able to leave the world at your own time and choice. Each day will bring its own business. All I ask is that you do not allow yourselves to be so far harassed by these provisions, that you are compelled to neglect the better part; so much choked with the thorns and thistles of the plans of this world, and beguiled by the deceitful attractions of riches, that the word within you would become overgrown, and you yourselves be made unfruitful. In this, as in all other cases, I have given you the principle, the inner spring; it is for you to apply it, each to his own case, with earnest sincerity, under the indwelling power of the Divine Spirit. Be not distracted. Be not bewildered with anxiety. Be not tossed about at sea."

The meaning of the injunction thus brought out by the Revised Version is in entire accordance with those other lights which fall from our Lord's personal example and precepts across the same subject. He was not, of course, likely to recommend this virtue with any direct stress, for it is a habit of mind so natural to sensible men, and particularly to His own countrymen, that they were far more likely to exaggerate it into a vice than to neglect it as an excellence. A very ordinary moralist can sufficiently tell us its advantages. Isaac Watts can say, "Without a prudent determination in matters before us, we shall be plunged into perpetual errors." Collier can say, "Prudence is a necessary ingredient in all the virtues, without which they degenerate into folly and excess." We can learn from Milton that "Prudence is that virtue by which we discern what is proper to be done under the various circumstances of time and place." We can learn from Goldsmith that "want of Prudence is too frequently the want of virtue; nor is there on earth a more powerful advocate for one than poverty." There is truth in the sonorous remark of

Dr. Johnson that "The great end of Prudence is to give cheerfulness to those hours which splendour cannot gild, and acclamation cannot exhilarate." But such observations did not come within the scope or the style of our Lord. His mission as a teacher was rather to spiritualize and give vitality to the moral elements which He found to His hand, than to call attention to the commonest rules of ordinary conduct. Having all the lessons of the Old Testament before Him to explain and to fulfil, to lift out of the region of the letter into the sphere of the spirit, He did not need to repeat the cautions of the Book of Proverbs against indolence and improvidence, nor the triumphant songs of the poets in favour of the blessings insured in this life by righteousness, sobriety, and forethought.

Yet, on this point also, we are not left without instruction. The constant reference to the tender care and watchful protection of our Father in heaven is not without its own practical application when we are told to be perfect even as He is perfect. Again, in spite of the circumstances which made the society of our Lord and His company so very exceptional, He submitted in all things to the ordinary rules of human existence, and did not live actually from hand to mouth; for one of the number was definitely the treasurer, and carried a purse to supply the wants of the Master and His followers. We are told in impressive words that we are to make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; words which, while they expressly inculcate a wise, righteous, and spiritual use of property, cannot certainly mean that we are to neglect and despise it altogether. That the blessings of comfort and of earthly happiness in all its manifold variety were not to be austere repudiated is abundantly shown by the emphasis of the promise that our heavenly Father is to give good things to them that ask Him. That this life, in its changing aspect of our country, our homes, our families, our responsibilities, our capabilities, our interests, has a particular claim is clear from our Lord's direction about the Roman coinage: "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." Our Lord Himself gave the sanction of a miracle to the duty of providing for obligations and contingencies, when He directed Peter to look for a piece of money in the fish's mouth. By the preparation previous to the Passover we see that it was not His habit to take things at haphazard. "Lord," asked His disciples confidently appealing to His custom, "where wilt Thou that we prepare for Thee the Passover?" The story of the five wise and five foolish virgins depends, in fact, for its point on drawing on our sympathies with careful provision for the future, and on our

natural quickness to acknowledge the absurdity of indolent procrastination. On watchfulness He constantly and solemnly insists; and if we do not manage well the affairs of this life, who shall commit unto us the heavenly treasure? Lastly, when the unwise servant hid his lord's money in a napkin, the severest reproach with which his master could upbraid him was this: "O foolish and slothful servant!" "If any man," says St. Paul, "provide not for his own kindred, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

This, then, is the result of our Lord's teaching on Prudence. What restrictions does His warning against distraction place on our conduct and disposition of our minds and time? In what key is the tenor of our lives to combine with the melody of this elevated spirituality? "Ye cannot serve two masters." That is the leading note—not God and the world at once. One must come before the other when questions arise, and crises involving choice and judgment impend. Which is it to be? In some way or other to every man, many times over, in larger plans and schemes, in the smaller details of every day, the test will present itself: Is my motive God or the world? Do I act as if I thought God merely a useful and honourable appendage to my daily interests; or do I recognise Him as the mainspring of all thoughts and doings, the source of my hopes and wishes, the aim towards which my whole activity tends, the breath and atmosphere in which it moves, the sustenance on which it is nourished, the medicine by which it is strengthened and corrected? Or do I allow myself to be distracted from my true being by attributing importance to such a thing as food, through that mean and deadening attractiveness which degrades it from being God's daily and pleasant gift into the debased character of becoming an object for its own sake? Do I disturb the even tenor of my upward progress by permitting the poor folly of vanity about dress or personal appearance to obtain a serious thought in my mental economy? Do I rust the brightness of God's armour by setting my heart on gain, wealth, pomp, display, the emptiness of passing human greatness and society, the deplorable stupidity of spending my time and money on the treacherous commodities of the markets of Vanity Fair?

Some may be placed in more difficulties of this kind than others, both by position and natural temperament. Some may have little to wish for, and may find it easy to look up for the light of God's friendship in all things. Others may be by nature ambitious, and to them the false delights of vain things may seem real enough. To one the world may mean one thing; to another, something quite different. To all alike the spiritual ideal is given; by all alike must be remembered the

homely truth that if we are to have this deep sense of tranquillity about the future on reasonable grounds, those grounds must be that we have done our best to provide for it.

WILLIAM SINCLAIR.

Notes on Bible Words.

No. XVI.—“VIRTUE.”

IF there be any ἀρετή (Phil. iv. 8): *virtus*, in the Vulgate; hence our “virtue”: “whatever virtue there is;” (Alford). Any particular moral excellence; whatever may rightly be called “virtue.”

This common heathen term for moral excellence, ἀρετή, seems to have been studiously avoided by St. Paul; he uses it only here. Is there in this passage, with ἀρετή and ἔπαινος, a summation? Or (with Bishop Lightfoot) thus: “Whatever value may reside in your old heathen conception of virtue, whatever consideration is due to the praise of men . . .”²

This word is used elsewhere in N.T. only in 1 Pet. ii. 9, of God; 2 Pet. i. verse 3 of God, verse 5 of believers.

1 Pet. ii. 9, “. . . show forth the praises” (marg. or, “virtues”)³: perfections. The R.V. has “the excellencies.” Sept. in Isa. xliii. 21, here quoted, for “praises” has ἀρετὰς. (Isa. xlii. 12 and xliii. 7.) The praises, says Canon Cook, are the recognition of the divine attributes.

2 Pet. i. 3, “. . . called us to glory and virtue”; marg. “or, by.” R.V. “by his own g. and virtue,”⁴ ἰδίᾳ δ. κ. ἀρετῇ. *Excellency*, says Dr. Lumby; in exact accordance with the usage in the first Ep.: “the manifestation of God’s working in and for believers.”

Verse 5, “add to your faith virtue.” R.V., “in your faith supply virtue.” Vulg. ministrare in fide vestra virtutem: ἐπιχορηγήσατε ἐν τῇ . . . in (in the exercise of) your faith provide, or furnish. The “special sense” (Lightfoot) in this verse seems to be *vigour*; earnestness, moral courage; as Bengel, “a strenuous tone and vigour of mind.”

“Virtue” also stands (A.V.) for δύναμις, *power*. Mark v. 30, “perceiving in Himself that virtue (δύναμιν, virtutem) had gone out of Him”: R.V., “that the power *proceeding* from Him had gone forth.” Luke vi. 19; viii. 46: “power.”

¹ See P. Book: “. . . true religion, and virtue.” Cf. Bishop Butler. Diss. II. “Of the Nature of Virtue.” Meyer says ἀρετή designates moral excellence in feeling and action.

² “Praise is the reflection of virtue.”—Bacon.

³ Vulg. ut virtutes adnuntietis (les vertus). *Virtus*, properly, by derivation, manliness, courage, and so like the classical ἀρετή, of action, or in ethical sense, excellence. Cf. Wisdom iv. 1.

⁴ Vulg. propria gloria et virtute. Cf. Hab. iii. 3 and Isai. xlii. 8.