

THE ANCHOR OF HOPE.

ROMANS viii. 24 ; HEBREWS vi. 19.

IT is a mere commonplace to remark how wonderfully Christianity has succeeded in changing the ideals and the ideas of men ; and how this is shewn in the mental associations habitually connected with particular words. Though the lessons taught by Christ have not been, and in the present Dispensation never will be, learned perfectly, yet they have been learned to an extent which to the ancient world would have seemed impossible. That pride should be recognized as a sin, humility as a virtue, and forgiveness as a duty, by any large and influential portion of mankind, with at least sufficient sincerity and earnestness to affect current ideas and current language, is, though infinitely short of sufficient or satisfying, yet a wonderful degree of success. I use the word wonderful, not as a mere careless synonym of very great, but in its proper meaning of something which may reasonably excite wonder.

As regards the traces of Christian ideas in the mere habitual use of words, the most striking instance, of course, is that reversal of associations, by which the cross, from being a symbol of punishment and shame, has become a symbol of victory, salvation, and glory. This is familiar to us all. But there is another, almost equally remarkable, which has passed unnoticed into common language, and has become a commonplace without one in a thousand remembering, or reflecting, that it was once a paradox. I mean *The Anchor of Hope*.

But is not an anchor the recognized emblem of Hope? Yes ; but it is scarcely possible to doubt that it has been made so by the latter of the two passages before us. An anchor is not by any means an obvious or self-explaining emblem of Hope ; and it could have become so only under the influence of Christian thought. An anchor is, naturally

and primarily, the emblem of stedfastness ; and in any but Christian thought stedfastness and hope have very little to do with each other. Not the stedfastness of hope, but its uncertainty and deceitfulness, are commonplaces of all non-Christian and merely worldly thought ; all the proverbs and the poetry in which such thought has expressed itself are full of this idea. The red and golden colours of the morning clouds which vanish after the sun rises, the dew which disappears when the day grows hot, flowers which blossom but to fade, Spring which gives place to Summer, and Summer to Autumn, life which ends in death ;—these, symbols not of fixity but of evanescence, are the emblems of Hope which seem natural from a merely earthly point of view. If any appropriate emblem of Hope from such a point of view is to be sought among things belonging to a ship, it is not the anchor but the sail. Hope, according to a merely secular philosophy, is not a means of fixity, but a useful, perhaps a necessary, motive power ; and its natural function is not impaired by its deceitfulness. Its function is that of a stimulus to exertion ; and this function is all the better discharged by its promising more than it is able to perform. Hope is the flower of early life, which no doubt fades, but does its work in preparing for the fruit.

“ If Nature put not forth her power
About the opening of the flower,
What is it that could live an hour ? ”¹

And this view of Hope is quite true so far as it goes. But were this all, to call Hope an Anchor would be simply nonsense—words used without a meaning ; and so it would have appeared to the ancient world.

According to a merely secular philosophy, whether the philosophy which alone was possible in ancient Greece, or

¹ Tennyson, *The Two Voices*. -

the Positivist and Agnostic systems of modern Europe, Hope is thus needful and yet necessarily fallacious. Is this a possible conclusion? Can this be the end of the whole matter? The question is nearly the same with, Is it true that all is vanity? St. Paul says that it is true of the present world; but that the present world has been created, and exists, for the purpose of preparing for, and ultimately giving place to, another, which shall not be subject to vanity and corruption (Rom. viii. 20, 21). And he says a little farther on, in the same passage, "For by hope were we saved" (viii. 24).

Now, what kind of hope is it that saves? In the first place, it must be fixed on a worthy object. There can be no saving power in a hope which is set on unworthy things.

In the second place, it must be at least in some degree an assured and stedfast hope. I do not say absolutely assured. No earthly hope can be absolutely certain. Yet many an earthly hope—such as the hope of success in war, or in love, or in professional advancement, has had enough of saving power to keep a man in the path of duty or of honourable ambition. But in order to do so, the hope, though it can never amount to assured certainty, must have some degree of strength. A very weak and faint hope can have no saving power, or power of any kind. The hope which can save must be strong enough to be of the nature of faith, and indeed must be almost synonymous with faith.

Thus the hope of the Christian has a saving power; and it has this power by reason of its being fixed on the highest objects, and fixed on them stedfastly. These truths, in their combination, are expressed in the two passages before us:—"We are saved by hope." "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that which is within the veil."

It is not in general safe thus to piece together two passages of Scripture, and to read on from the one to the

other, especially when they are from different books, and in all probability by different authors. But in the present case there appears to be no room for any error as to the meaning. Both in the passage from Romans and in that from Hebrews, the hope spoken of is a strong and confident hope, amounting to faith, and fixed on the invisible and eternal things "within the veil." "Saved by hope" (Rom. viii. 24), and "justified by faith" (Rom. v. 1), are in fact two not very different expressions for the same thought.

"A hope which entereth into that which is within the veil"—that is to say, a hope entering into, and anchored in, the invisible world—is another of the paradoxes of Christianity. In Christianity the invisible world is regarded as the only region of certainty. In the light of mere nature, and of all philosophy founded upon it, the reverse of this appears true. Certainty seems to belong to the visible and tangible world, the world of matter; the invisible and spiritual world is regarded as a region respecting which certainty is unattainable, and nothing possible but mere guesses.

Thus the same Gospel of Christ which has consecrated suffering,—

"And turned the thistles of the curse
To types beneficent,"¹

and made the cross the emblem of salvation instead of condemnation, has also given fixity to hope, and established as the emblem of hope, not evanescent things like flowers or dewdrops, but an anchor. And it has done this because it has at the same time shewn that the region of certainty and steadfastness is not where men naturally look for it, in the visible world, but in the invisible and spiritual.

In the following verse the Sacred Writer tells us how

¹ Wordsworth, *The Primrose of the Rock*.

this has been attained. "Whither" (within the veil) "the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." Until the resurrection and ascension of Christ, our own resurrection and immortality was generally felt to be little more than a pious aspiration. Eminent saints like Job, when he exclaimed "I know that my redeemer liveth, and in my flesh I shall see God;" or the author of Psalm xvii. when he declared, "I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness;" such men caught a glimpse, and a very vivid glimpse, of the resurrection and of immortality. Yet under the older Dispensation this thought does not seem to have ever dominated the entire mind and life, as it aims to do, and has often succeeded in doing, in characters formed by Christianity. But now that the divine Son of Man is gone up where He was before, now that Humanity is enthroned on the right hand of the Majesty on high, we are taught to regard Christ's resurrection, as not only the proof that He was the Son of God, but the promise and pledge of our own resurrection and immortality. We know that Christ has entered into that which is within the veil, into the Holy of Holies, into heaven itself, not only in his solitary Divine glory, but in his human nature as our forerunner. And it is the knowledge that Christ is thus gone before us into the eternal world, in order there to prepare a place for us, which makes it possible for us to cast our anchor of sure and steadfast hope, deeper than any waves or currents of change and chance, in the immoveable and eternal world.

"The veil" is of course a Hebrew metaphor for the boundary between the visible and the invisible world, between earth and heaven. The veil of the Temple separated the Holy Place, which, in the symbolic system expounded in the Epistle to the Hebrews, represented the

Church on earth, from the Holy of Holies, which represented Heaven itself.

But in another part of the Epistle (Chap. x. 20), the Writer gives a very remarkable and unexpected turn to the symbolism, by saying that the veil represents Christ's flesh. "Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say his flesh." Perhaps there is an allusion to the Lord's saying, "I am the way" (John xiv. 6). But what we have to remark is the change, we may almost say reversal, of meaning, here given to the interpretation of "the veil." The veil of the Temple was a partition wall between the parts of the Temple that symbolized respectively the Church on earth and that in heaven; and a partition wall separates the chambers which it divides. But Christ's flesh—that is to say, his human life and death;—though it stands at the boundary between the earthly and the heavenly worlds, because it belongs to both, and is in this sense the antitype of the veil of the Temple:—yet, in another sense, it is most unlike the veil, because it is not a wall of partition, to separate and divide, but, as we here read, a way of access. Through Christ we have access in the Spirit unto the Father (Ephesians ii. 18). It has been said, fancifully perhaps, that this was symbolized by the rending of the veil of the Temple at the earthquake which occurred when Christ expired on the cross.

And if Christ's human nature is the veil through which we have access to God, Christ's entire Being—Christ Himself—is the hope which we have as an anchor. It is obvious that the hope whereof the certainty and steadfastness are symbolized by an anchor cannot be the mere feeling of hope which is formed in our hearts, on however strong and sufficient grounds. No feeling, nothing within the soul, can be an anchor of the soul, or can enter into

that which is within the veil. The soul may be tossed about on the waves of its own feelings, its own fears and hopes, but it cannot be anchored upon them; the anchor of our hopes must be One stronger than ourselves, even Christ, whose steadfastness is elsewhere said to be that of a Rock, and is here called that of an Anchor. "We have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us, which hope we have as an anchor of the soul." It is evident that what we fly to for refuge, and lay hold of, must be something external to ourselves;—it would be unmeaning to say that we have fled for refuge to the feeling of hope in our own souls, however well grounded it may be. Nor can our own feelings enter within the veil. None but Christ has as yet entered there, and He has entered there as our Forerunner, that where He is, there we may be also (John xiv. 3). St. Paul calls Christ our hope (1 Timothy i. 1); and even if it is not expressly taught by the mere words of the passage now under consideration, it is implied by the entire teaching of the New Testament, that Christ Himself in his risen and ascended life, is our anchor of hope.

Christ has entered into heaven for us as "a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." Not as one of a succession like the sons of Levi, but standing alone and deriving his authority, like Melchizedek, directly from his Father, "Once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment; so Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation" (Hebrews ix. 26, 28). Had Christ no priestly office, and had He made no atonement for our sins, we do not see that his resurrection and ascension would have done anything for us. But now, "He that spared not his

own son, but delivered him up for us all, shall he not also, with him, freely give us all things?" (Romans viii. 32).

In St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians, Christ is called our hope of glory. The thought is the same as that in the Epistle to the Hebrews, but with a difference; for the words are "Christ *in you*, the hope of glory" (Colossians i. 27). In the passage in Hebrews, the thought is that of ultimate glory and bliss prepared by Christ for us, and of Christ who at his ascension went to prepare it. In the passage in Colossians, the thought is of Christ who dwells in us by his Spirit, and is preparing us for ultimate glory. The passage in Hebrews speaks of "Christ's work *for us*;"—the passage in Colossians speaks of "Christ's work *in us*." Both alike are the work of Christ, and each presupposes the other;—He has died and risen again and ascended on high to prepare the heavenly glory for us, and by his Spirit He dwells with us who are still on earth, that He may prepare us for the heavenly glory.

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CANON SCARTH'S THEORY OF THE EXODUS.

THE spade of the antiquarian, no less than that of the military engineer, is a formidable weapon. M. Naville's recent discovery of the site of Pithom has overthrown the hypothesis of Lepsius and Ébers, recently fortified by elaborate arguments contributed to *Knowledge* by Miss Amelia Edwards. This lady, one of the most distinguished of English Egyptologists, now acknowledges, with praiseworthy candour, that Tell el Maschuta is *not* Ra'mses, but Pithom. But Pithom has likewise been identified with Succoth. On this point both M. Naville and Mr. R. S. Poole are agreed. The words of the latter, in his communication to the *Academy* (Feb. 24th, 1883) may be