

land, and she may have sold it while she was settled in Moab. It is true that *vv.* 5 and 9 speak of the transaction as a purchase direct from Naomi, and no third party who had purchased the land is mentioned; but redemption seems to imply that the land had been previously alienated.

5. *Thou must buy it also of Ruth.* The LXX. and Targ. attest the antiquity of this reading; but a comparison of *v.* 10 makes it very probable that the Vulg. and Syriac are right in reading "thou must buy also Ruth," *i.e.* נָסָא רֹחַל for נָסָא, the change of a single letter.

15. *A restorer of life.* The same phrase is better rendered, "refresh the soul," in Prov. xxv. 13; Lam. i. 16.

A. F. KIRKPATRICK.

CHRISTUS CONSUMMATOR:

LESSONS FROM THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

II. THE DESTINY OF MAN FULFILLED BY CHRIST THROUGH SUFFERING.

"Not unto angels did He subject the world to come, whereof we speak. But one hath somewhere testified, saying,

What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?
 Or the Son of man, that Thou visitest Him?
 Thou madest Him a little lower than the angels;
 Thou crownedst Him with glory and honour,
 And didst set Him over the works of Thy hands:
 Thou didst put all things in subjection under His feet.

. . . But now we see not yet all things subjected to Him. But we behold Him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that by the grace of God He should taste death for every man. For it became Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings."—HEB. ii. 5-10 (Rev. Vers.).

IN these pregnant words we have a view of the destiny, the position, the hope of man, which answers alike to the noblest aspiration and to the saddest experience. We see

the purpose of God in creation, and the failure of the creature, and then the triumph of Christ through suffering, which is for us the pledge that the Divine counsel of love will not fail of fulfilment.

So the writer of the Epistle met at once the central difficulty of the Hebrews. The Hebrews since they believed had been doomed outwardly to the bitterest disappointment. They had looked for a national welcome and they found themselves outcasts; for sovereignty, and they were the victims of popular outrage; for visible triumph, and, as the years went on, they were required to endure *as seeing*, through the thicker gathering gloom, *Him who is invisible*.

Therefore the apostolic teacher, with abrupt and majestic eloquence, reaffirms in the beginning of his Epistle the glory of the Christian Faith, by disclosing a fuller prospect of the person and the work of Christ. Without preface and without salutation he opens the innermost treasury of God, and brings out things new and old. He shows how them anifold lessons of earlier revelation were crowned by the coming of Him who was not servant but Son, the Maker and Heir of the world. He shows how the angels, through whose ministry the Law was given, waited to do homage to Him, proclaimed King of the renovated order. He shows how our responsibility as Christians corresponds with the grandeur of the Truth which is placed within our reach. He shows how nothing is taken from the universal range of man's dominion, but—and this is his peculiar message—that it must be reached, that it has been reached, through suffering.

To this end He places in sharpest contrast the Psalmist's description of human destiny and the actual condition of things. He abates nothing of the inspired estimate of man's nature, and honour, and sovereignty. At the same time he claims no premature accomplishment of the promise assured to him. *We see not yet*, he confesses, *all*

things subjected to him. So far there is failure, failure though the Christ has come. *But we do behold . . . Jesus—the Son of man—because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour.* There is the spring and the pattern of attainment, the interpretation of the shame and of the Passion of the Christ, which is for all time the interpretation of every grief that clouds the world.

For, as we have already seen, the writer of the Epistle, when he met the difficulties of the Hebrews, meets difficulties which press sorely upon us. Time has not softened the sharpness of the impression which is made upon thoughtful spectators by the sight of the sorrows of life. If the contrast between man made *a little lower than angels*—nay literally *a little less than God*—and man as man has made him, was startling at the time when the Apostle wrote, it has not grown less impressive since. Larger knowledge of man's capacities and of his growth, of his endowments and of his conquests, has only given intensity to the colours in which poets and moralists have portrayed the conflict in his nature and in his life. Whether we look within or without, we cannot refuse to acknowledge both the element of nobility in man which bears witness to his Divine origin, and also the element of selfishness which betrays his fall. Every philosophy of humanity which leaves out of account the one or the other is shattered by experience. The loftiest enthusiasm leaves a place in its reconstruction of society where superstition may attach itself. Out of the darkest depths of crime not seldom flashes a light of self-sacrifice, like the prayer of the rich man for his brethren when he was in torments, which shows that all is not lost. We cannot accept the theory of those who see around them nothing but the signs of unlimited progress towards perfection, or the theory of those who write a sentence of despair over the chequered scenes of life. We look, as the Psalmist looked, at the sun

and the stars, with a sense which he could not have of the awful mysteries of the depths of night, but we refuse to accept space as a measure of being. We trace back, till thought fails, the long line of ages through which the earth was prepared to be our dwelling-place, but we refuse to accept time as a measure of the soul. We recognise without reserve the influence upon us of our ancestry and our environment, but we refuse to distrust the immediate consciousness of our personal responsibility. We do not hide from ourselves any of the evils which darken the face of the world, but we do not dissemble our kindred with the worst and lowest, whose life enters into our lives at a thousand points. We acknowledge that *the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now*, but we believe also that these travail pains prepare the joy of a new birth. We make no effort to cast off the riddles or the burdens of our earthly state, but we cling all the while to the highest thoughts which we have known as the signs of God's purpose for us and for our fellow-men. We allow that man and men are uncrowned or discrowned in the midst of their domain, but we hold that they cannot put off the prerogatives of their birth. We ask, as prophet and apostle asked: *What, O Lord, is man that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that Thou visitest him?* without any expectation that we shall find an answer to the questions; but none the less we proclaim what we know, and confess that He is mindful of us, that He has visited us, that *the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, full of grace and truth.*

And indeed this Gospel reconciles the antagonisms of life. The fact of the Incarnation shows the possibilities of our nature as God made it. The fact of the Passion shows the issues of sin, which came from the self-assertion of the creature. The fact of the Resurrection shows the triumph of love through death. Christ, in a word, fulfilled

man's destiny, fellowship with God, by the way of sorrow; and the Divine voice appeals to us to recognise the fitness of the road. *It became Him*—most marvellous phrase—*It became Him for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*

When we ponder these words we shall all come to feel, I think, that they have a message for us on which we have not yet dwelt with the patient thought that it requires, though we greatly need its teaching. The currents of theological speculation have led us to consider the sufferings of Christ in relation to God as a propitiation for sin, rather than in relation to man as a discipline, a consummation of humanity. The two lines of reflection may be indeed, as I believe they are, more closely connected than we have at present been brought to acknowledge. I do not however wish now to discuss the propitiatory aspect of the sacrifice of Christ's life. It is enough for us to remember with devout thankfulness that *Christ is the propitiation not for our sins only, but for the whole world*, without further attempting to define how His sacrifice was efficacious. And we move on surer ground, when we endeavour to regard that perfect sacrifice from the other side, as the hallowing of every power of man under the circumstances of a sin-stained world, as the revelation of the mystery of sorrow and pain. Of this truth the writer of the Epistle assumes that we are competent judges. Again and again he presents the thought as the motive and the issue of the Incarnation. He shows that the Advent fulfilled the words of the Psalm: "*Lo! I am come to do Thy will, O Lord,*" "*a body didst Thou prepare for me*"; and he describes the whole sum of the Lord's earthly work in a phrase which, if we can take it to our hearts, must become a transfiguring of life: *though He was Son, He*

yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered, and having been made perfect—perfect by suffering—He became to all that obey Him the Author of eternal salvation.

Yes, Christ, *though He was Son*, and therefore endowed with right of access for Himself to the Father, being of one essence with the Father, for man's sake, as man, won the right of access to the throne of God for perfected humanity. *He learnt obedience*, not as if the lesson were forced upon Him by stern necessity, but by choosing, through insight into the Father's will, that self-surrender even to the death upon the Cross which was required for the complete reconciliation of man with God. And the absolute union of human nature, in its fullest maturity, with the Divine in the one Person of our Creator and Redeemer, was wrought out in the very school of life in which we are trained.

When once we grasp this truth the records of the Evangelists are filled with a new light. Every work of Christ is seen to be a sacrifice and a victory. The long years of obscure silence, the short season of conflict, are found to be alike a commentary on the Lord's words, "*For their sakes I sanctify myself.*" And we come to understand how His deeds of power were deeds of sovereign sympathy; how the words in which Isaiah spoke of the Servant of the Lord, as "taking our infirmities and bearing our sicknesses," were indeed fulfilled when the Son of man healed the sick who came to Him, healed them not by dispensing from His opulence a blessing which cost Him nothing, but by making His own the ill which He removed.

Dimly, feebly, imperfectly, we can see in this way how *it became God to make the Author of our salvation perfect through sufferings*; how every pain which answered to the Father's will, became to Him the occasion of a triumph, the disciplining of some human power which needed to be

brought into God's service, the advance one degree farther towards the Divine likeness to gain which man was made; how, in the actual condition of the world, His love and His righteousness were displayed in tenderer grace and grander authority through the gainsaying of enemies; how, in this sense, even within the range of our imagination, *He saw of the travail of His soul and was satisfied.*

Dimly, feebly, imperfectly we can see also how Christ, Himself perfected through suffering, has made known to us once for all the meaning, and the value of suffering; how He has interpreted it as a Divine discipline, the provision of a Father's love; how He has enabled us to perceive that at each step in the progress of life it is an opportunity; how He has left to us to realise "in Him" little by little the virtue of His work; *to fill up on our part*, in the language of St. Paul, *that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ* in our sufferings, not as if His work were incomplete or our efforts meritorious, but as being living members of His Body through which He is pleased to manifest that which He has wrought for men.

For we shall observe that it was because He brought *many sons to glory*, that *it became God to make perfect through sufferings the Author of their salvation.* The fitness lay in the correspondence between the outward circumstances of His life and of their lives. The way of the Lord is the way of His servants. He enlightened the path which they must tread, and showed its end. And so it is that whenever the example of Christ is offered to us in Scripture for our imitation, it is His example in suffering. So far, in His strength, we can follow Him, learning obedience as He learned it, bringing our wills into conformity with the Father's will, and thereby attaining to a wider view of His counsel in which we can find rest and joy.

We must dare to face this solemn fact. For the most part we are tempted to look to the Gospel for the remission of the punishment of sins, and not for the remission of sins. But such a Gospel would be illusory. If the sin remains, punishment is the one hope of the sinner; if the sin is forgiven and the light of the Father's love falls upon the penitent, the punishment, which is seen as the expression of His righteous wisdom, is borne with gladness. Responsive love transfigures that which it bears. Pain loses its sting when it is mastered by a stronger passion. The true secret of happiness is not to escape toil and affliction, but to meet them with the faith that through them the destiny of man is fulfilled, that through them we can even now reflect the image of our Lord and be transformed into His likeness.

For the power of love is not limited by its personal effects. It goes out upon others with a healing virtue. Not only does the mother know no weariness in ministering to her child, but the sympathy of a friend can change the sorrow which it shares. So love kindles love; and in the world such as we see it, suffering feeds the purifying flame. Was I not right then when I said that the thought of Christ perfected through suffering, does indeed bring light into the darkest places of the earth? In that light, suffering, if I may so speak, appears as the fuel of love. Up to a certain point we can clearly perceive how the vicissitudes, the sadnesses, the trials of life, become the springs of its tenderness and strength and beauty; how the stress of the campaign calls out the devotion of him whom we had only known as a self-indulgent lounge; how a cry of wrong stirs the spirit of a nation with one resolve; how a cry of agony is answered by the spontaneous confession of human kinsmanship; how the truest joys which we have known have come when we have had grace to enter most entirely into a sorrow not our own.

And even where sight fails, the virtue of the Lord's life made perfect through suffering guides us still. We know that not one day of His hidden discipline was fruitless. Each had its lesson of obedience; each marked a fresh advance in the consummation of manhood. So taught, we can feel how the lonely sufferer is still a fellow-worker with Him; how in the stillness of the night-watches a sleepless voice of intercession, unheard by man, but borne to God by a "surrendered soul," may bring strength to combatants wearied with a doubtful conflict; how the word "one soweth and another reapeth," may find a larger application than we have dreamed of, so that when we wake up we may be allowed to see that not one pang in the innumerable woes of men has been fruitless in purifying energy.

Looking then to Christ, Born, Crucified, Risen, Ascended, we can look also on the chequered scene of human life without dissembling one dark trait or abandoning one hope, and claim, in spite of every sign of present disorder, the promise of man's universal dominion as the watchword of our labour. *We see not yet all things subjected to Him; but we behold . . . Jesus because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour. . .* And again looking at the conditions of our own life, we can confess through the experience of quickened love that the Gospel justifies itself: that *it became Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*

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