

meaning. I have myself taken it of the "defilement caused by the overflowing malice of the heart," referring to the preceding "wrath of man, which worketh not the righteousness of God." The A.V. rendering "superfluity of wickedness" is undoubtedly wrong.

J. B. MAYOR.

## *PERSONALITY AND GRACE.*

### XI. ETERNAL LIFE.

A LIFE every event of which is directed towards the realisation of its chief good would be a blessed life on the one condition that it could not be cut off before its good were realised. But it is blessed only in hope, and hope, even as faith, is illusion except in so far as it is based on reality.

To the world as it is, not faith but worldliness reconciles us. Thoughtlessness is only too easily reconciled to it, and such contentment is not divine, but is selfish and sensual. No man with large sympathies and spiritual aspirations can be reconciled to this life as it is, for the simple reason that it is not good. To be reconciled to anything is just to find it good, a thing impossible with respect to this present life, unless it has destroyed every fragment of a soul. Nay, its gifts are so qualified by the shadow of death, even if failure and struggle and sickness could be escaped, that the absence of soul itself will not shield any one to the close. The sunniest worldly face always ends in being a clouded, peevish one: worldliness under no condition being long justified in her children.

Ought we not, therefore, to have begun with this question of a future life? Unless we know whether our present life is the whole edifice or only the portico, how are we to judge it? Would not the whole business of faith be changed if we had some clear demonstration of another life? Suppose

we had it in one incontrovertible argument for the immortality of the soul, such as the indissoluble unity of the spirit, or better still in some indisputable fact, as the return of a traveller from the unseen or intercourse with the spirits of the departed, would not religion have something much surer to go upon ?

But neither would afford us religious assurance. If the arguments are valid, let them be weighed ; if the facts are genuine, let them be investigated ; but neither, nor both together, can give us a genuinely religious hope. Nay, if the grim silence of the grave has a religious meaning, it must be that our interests do not lie beyond it in that external way, but that the immediate business of religion is with this life and not with another. As a child should attend to the tasks of childhood and be cut off by not understanding them from the tasks of manhood, so should we give ourselves to the tasks of this life and be grateful that a thick veil prevents us from being distracted by the more glorious activities of another, even while we may be encouraged and sobered by the sense of it, as the child by the dim foreshadowing of the responsibilities of maturity.

As, by our father's wisdom and foresight, not our own, the tasks of childhood were the best preparation for manhood, so, by God's wisdom and foresight, to live well in the present is the best preparation for all futures. Wherefore, we here meet another antinomy of grace. Grace is concerned with another life. Eternal life is its business. But, for that very reason, another life is not our business. Our concern is the present scene and the present hour.

To make eternal life our aim and business is not to succour morality by religion, but to corrupt both morality and religion by the notion that men are to do good because religion is the external guarantee of heaven and hell.

A right life even here is a life blessed in hope, and that

requires a life which will fulfil that hope. The victory which overcomes the world is not through a love which some day will know us no more, but requires a love from which neither life nor death can separate us. God is not the God of the dead but of the living, precisely because He is love. Yet that would be the very assurance we should miss, if we accepted a future life of reward and punishment on the sole ground of an incontrovertible argument or of an indisputable fact, and made it our direct aim as we do other things we prove or see. It would at once become a selfish end, and we should have lost our lot in it as the expression of an endless love.

Morals, with that sanction, forthwith becomes utilitarian, distinguished only from the non-religious type by having a longer arm to reward and punish; and religion a kind of police magistrate who would fall into desuetude if people could learn to behave themselves without needing to have the fear of him before their eyes. Utilitarian morality so guaranteed has even been regarded as the foundation stone of religion and the attempt to show that goodness has its own law and its own motive has been denounced as the most subtle of all attempts to prove religion unnecessary and baseless. How, it is asked, with a selfish creature like man, can there be an absolute distinction between right and wrong, unless it be enforced by the infinite awards of heaven and hell? To seek the sanctions of morality in its own nature must surely be to ignore the importance of religion for making men moral. Then, the whole significance of this way of making men moral by religion appears in its nakedness when some bluff, worldly person, infinitely more interested in the rates than either in religion or morality or both together, defends religion as a cheaper way than prisons and workhouses of keeping men honest, law-abiding and industrious.

Thus conceived, heaven and hell are pure appeals to a selfish self-regard, and as it is precisely material consideration by which that is most swayed, heaven is apt to be a place of very material bliss and hell of very material misery. Nor would a more spiritual conception of its rewards afford much deliverance, for they are still sought in the same self-regarding way as material blessings. The practical effect is that a life, even of ascetic devotion, lived for another life, is not so unworldly as its outward form might lead us to suppose. An unworldly life is not a life for our own benefit either here or hereafter, but for God's purposes now.

That is an urgent practical truth. The reason why religion fails to touch the most genuinely religious souls, and that too at the very time of life when they most willingly respond to generous impulses, is just the absence of this truth from the common religious teaching. That failure is ill compensated for by success with the prudent worldly people who, having made a competence for this life, are warned by declining years of the advantage of securing a further competence in the world to come.

Young and generous souls are intensely conscious of life. Nothing could convince them that life is not their immediate and urgent business. When people who, in spite of their chilled blood, do not themselves believe what they urge, exhort persons standing on life's threshold, with all life's glorious possibilities before them, to say with an aged, sick, imprisoned saint, It is better to depart and to be with Christ, the result is disastrous. The impression left is that religion, finding no meaning of any sort in this life, has, in desperation, to fling itself upon another. Weakness, captivity and old age have a right to be weary of life; youth has not. And even in Paul that desire is only of nature, not grace. The true religious note is his triumph over

that natural impulse. It is the glorious assurance that his life to its last days will have meaning and value. That is the note of eternal youth. When we hear it, we know that religion can rescue our moral personalities from the abject fear of poverty, from warping cares, from small cramping personal ambitions, from the paralysing sense of failing strength and of life's narrowing opportunities, and enable us, in quiet possession of our own souls, to tread God's own high road, which, just because it carries us over time's crude material dominion, gives us an outlook upon eternity not at the end only, but all the way.

We are not to live for the life to come. We are to have eternal life. We are not to be miserable here to be happy hereafter. On the contrary, we should have a blessedness of such a quality now that we know it cannot end. Only by having in it already victory over many terrors, have we a right to depend on it for victory over the last enemy, death.

For that reason the first object of religion is not to demonstrate the reality of another life. It is to reconcile us to God in this. And reconciliation does not mean that this life, though evil in itself, can be tolerated without being angry with God because of the compensation waiting for us in another life. We should not be reconciled to God because we believe in another life; but we should believe in another life because we are reconciled to God. Reconciliation to God depends on seeing something in this life, not something quite different from it in another life. It is faith in the order of love as the real meaning of life, and, by acceptance of that order as God's purpose for our lives, finding that it is an eternal purpose for which every event in them works for our good.

Such a life is necessarily blessed. If all things work together for our true good, we could not have a more blessed life except by a nearer approach to that good itself. But

that is the very goal of which every appointment for us of discipline or duty, being of God's love, gives us assurance. As it is no less than the infinite goal of holy love, it can give us nothing less than the assurance of eternal approximation to it. To have that blessedness is, in spite of every present failure, to have eternal life. It is a life blessed in a hope which is eternally fulfilling itself. We only rightly and religiously believe in another life because we already serve a purpose of love for which this life is too small.

Arguments may help to meet objections to our hope, but they can do no more. Only when we find an endless purpose of God in this life have we any right to believe our hope larger than this life can contain. The hope of another life connected with this, at most by some link of responsibility, a link which must not be too firmly rivetted if that future life is not to be as miserable as this appears to be, can never be more than a dubious hypothesis, and it can never act upon us except as a consideration of prudence. Even as such, we must ever be exposed to the fear that a blank cheque upon the future, upon which nothing can be raised for our present necessities, may never at any time be honoured. To many souls in poverty and distress, their present unsuccoured evil state affords no encouraging prospect of being compensated for their miseries in a world to come, the transference of all good to another life sounding like an empty promise to silence their immediate, just demands.

Such a hope is not the power of an endless life working in the life because God is in it. It acts as an ulterior reward, which, by making us serve God only because He has heaven to bestow, corrupts the very assurance of love by which all hope lives. Not till we already know that the perfect rule of love would be the only heaven in which our souls could ever be perfectly blessed, can the hope of heaven be

at once a glorious personal hope and deliverance from the dominion of selfish desires.

That hope succours and emancipates, and does not corrupt and enslave the moral personality, because it provides morality with the three things it most needs but cannot provide for itself. They are an adequate moral subject, an adequate moral sphere, and an adequate moral order. By considering them for a moment, we may more clearly understand the true dependence of morals on religion and escape from the pernicious desire to make morals wrongly and selfishly dependent on religious motive, or from the equally pernicious desire to make religion a mere appendage to morality, or from what is little better, the determination to keep religion and morality in separate compartments.

Let us proceed in order. First, grace, by reconciling us to this life in such a way as to show us in it the issues of another, provides an adequate moral subject, and what is more, can provide it in any human personality, as it cannot without that reconciliation be found in the highest and holiest.

Without that succour of religion morality ends in what is for it unaided a sheer insoluble perplexity which refuses to remove from its path. It is this. A moral subject must be an end in itself. On that ground alone has it moral laws to announce. Moreover, the reverence by which it obeys these laws is reverence for its own personality as an end in itself. Both would cease if the moral subject could be regarded merely as a means to an end, even were that end the race or the kingdom of God itself.

Yet, on the other hand, self-realisation is not the moral end. Except for the higher service we can thereby render, it is not even a moral end. A true morality does not keep its eye on beautiful motives or a beautiful character, but

simply on doing right. Morality is thus faced by a problem it cannot solve—the eternal and infinite significance of the moral personality along with its perpetual subordination to its moral task, the fact that the moral person is the only final end, and yet that the supreme victory of the moral will is to be free from all self-regard.

Without a hope beyond the grave it is difficult to see that there would be a moral subject at all. We are rather things than persons, with the odd addition that we resent our real end which is corruption. The issue is obscured by a perversion of the argument that a moral person does not live to himself. He cannot, however, even not live to himself, if he cease to live at all. Self-denial is not consent to self-annihilation. Nor is self-denial a moral end in itself. It is only a necessary means to a moral end.

But, on the other hand, a mere hope of immortality would bring us back to the immoral position that the moral end is the perfection of the moral person. Only when the moral subject has already the power of an endless life in a world which serves His eternal good because law and love are one, can he be a true moral subject, the more loyal to himself the more utterly he forgets himself.

Second, the succour of grace above spoken of provides an adequate moral sphere. As Kant says, the essence of morality is to treat every man as an end in himself. That is the ethical meaning of love. But in that case we reverence man for what he ought to become, for what, if at the grave he is only "dust and ashes, dead and done with," he will never be. It is true that our tenderest associations are nourished by the sense that we are mortal creatures, but that is because there is behind, not the thought of total evanescence, but the sense that the frail vessel of our mortality has an immortal content.

But again, on the other hand we could not find our true



moral sphere in the mere expectation that another life would be linked to this by the tie of merit and reward. As a matter of fact that sense of a legal justice by which every man at some time or another must meet the reward of his deeds, can cherish the hardest indifference to sin and suffering. Only the sense that in every soul there is the eternal working of the eternal Father making its true good His end can cherish in us that love which reverences man for the possibilities of the image of God in him and make us more ready to succour than to condemn—a reverence and a sympathy surely essential to anything having a right to be called a moral sphere.

Lastly, grace by so reconciling us to this life as to show us in it the issues of another, provides an adequate moral order.

Because the moral order is not yet realised, it is sometimes made to appear that it would still be valid if it were never to be realised. But morality is not a castle in the air. It is life's ultimate meaning, or it is nothing. If the final moral order is love, it is absurd to say that it is valid though the final actual order were death.

The response to love is not self-regard, but self-abnegation. It is not, however, self-destruction or self-disregard. Only the assurance that it is itself our best self-realisation can confer on it the right to avert our gaze from ourselves. To be saved is just to be delivered from self, but to be delivered from self is also to be saved.

Here we find the distinction between utilitarianism and a right moral self-love. Utilitarianism says, conscience is only self-love carried to its final issue. What a true morality asserts is, that a right self-love is only conscience carried to its final issue.

That moral order, a mere belief in another life, on the grounds of moral retribution alone, cannot provide. Such

a belief is rather a confession of the bankruptcy of a moral order, a confession that it will only work with motives which are not moral at all but material, because, however they be spiritualised, they still work upon the self in the same way as material advantage.

Only an order of love which is at once self-sacrifice and self-realisation, which does not work by promises but is full of promise in all its working, which has, as it were, not a foot of earth in it which has not the whole infinite heaven above it, will avail. It can say, For great is your reward in heaven, only because its heaven will be nothing but its own perfect rule.

Here we see the true succour of morality by religion. "Nothing," as has been said, "should be done for religion, but everything with religion." It is a succour in which mere morality should rejoice to lose itself, because it has found the love which is more than the fulfilling of its law.

When that is seen again, religion may once more become, not what it is for many even professedly religious people, a part of life's play, but what it ought to be, the heart of life's business. Then the lives which without it are both self-indulgent and miserable, would at once become both austere and blessed.

JOHN OMAN.

### *IS THE TEACHING OF JESUS AN INTERIMSETHIK ? <sup>1</sup>*

THE strict eschatologist holds that the form and the contents of the teaching of Jesus were determined by a belief in the imminent passing away of the world-order, which was to give place immediately to the apocalyptic Kingdom of

<sup>1</sup> A paper read at Leiden, at the Fourth International Congress for the History of Religions.