

we need not on that account doubt that they are true children of God. There may have been no call to service, and consequently no baptism for service; and in living the life of Christ, and thereby witnessing for Christ, they are doing all that God requires of them. Generally to each child of God there will be a call to some service, and with the call will come the baptism; but the service may be a humble one, unnoticed by others, and leaving the impression that there has been neither the baptism nor the work.

Finally, there may be the baptism of the Spirit without the life of the Spirit. While I do not believe that the call to service would come without the call to life, nor the power for service be given without the power for life, yet it is a very solemn and awful fact that the latter may be resisted and the former cherished; with the result that there may be enduement of the Spirit without life in the Spirit, service in the kingdom without being born into the kingdom. Hence we have

such a character as Balaam endued with the highest prophetic gifts of the Spirit, and yet living a life at enmity with God and His people. Hence we have to the present day instances of men of high evangelistic power, a means of blessing to others, and yet themselves living in sin. Our Lord tells us that there will be many such, many who will say, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Thy name, and by Thy name cast out devils, and by Thy name do many wondrous works?" Yes, they had the power for service, and perhaps also the call to service, but not the life. And so Jesus says to them, "I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." It is the new birth that is the condition of entering the kingdom of God; without that no service, however distinguished, will avail. And it is one of the mysteries of free will in conflict with divine grace that it may resist the call to salvation and the power of salvation, and yet listen to the call to service and experience some of the power for service.

Religious Reserve on the Subject of Heaven.

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BEDE, in his *Church History*, tells how he had heard from some traveller in the Holy Land of a church dedicated to the ascension of the Saviour. Year by year, as the festival came round, and the congregation was gathered for worship, a rushing wind was wont to pass through the building so exceeding strong that the people were fain to fall low on their knees until its force was spent. The narrative is exceedingly characteristic of the historian, and its suggestive teaching is of more significance and value than any inquiry is likely to prove as to the evidence for the facts of the story. It is enough that it indicates that there can be no serious and devout contemplation of any truth of faith without some correspondent manifestation to men of the Divine Presence.

In such a spirit must every inquirer search the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven if he would look for any reward for his task. For after he has spent upon any such investigation the fullest powers of a God-given intellect, there still remains the devotional attitude, the self-surrender of the heart without which he will never feel the breath of God

about him, lifting him heavenward, because it casts him on his knees.

Happily this spirit is not rare, and yet it is impossible not to be conscious, either through personal experience or through observation of men, how close that habit of reserve is which wraps up each individual in regard to all private aims and hopes, and that this disposition reaches a kind of climax in the religious sphere. Men may think with much seriousness upon the things which concern their common salvation, and their thoughts may pass into the natural expressions of devotion. But here the nearest and dearest of friends is a stranger. To share any such experience is an intrusion, and is resented as such. Let us admit at once that much of the sentiment which prevents Christian people from free interchange of thought, and from any expansive communication on the high and holy themes of their faith, is not a blameworthy sentiment. The freedom of speech (*παρρησία*) which in New Testament literature is observed at once as a commendable habit and as a right object for prayer, has for its main refer-

ence the presence of persecution, before which Christians must wear a bold front, and speak the things they have heard and seen. It does not refer to the communications of Christians with each other. In no age of the Church was Talkative quite good company. When our Lord consecrated, as so often a current proverb, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," He would appear chiefly to have had in His regard the evil thoughts which being harboured within a man were bound to find their vent. Certainly speech affords a safer index of a bad than a good man. Religious reserve is thus seen mainly as the outcome of that private independence of feeling which makes our national character the solid thing it is. The Latin races do not share in it, nor in that terror of unreality which possesses the Teutonic peoples; Orientals do not feel it at all. So far we are morally the better, but it is easy to exaggerate the advantage. The fear with us, certainly, operates too widely and strongly. We should be at once better and bolder Christians for cultivating a greater freedom of speech with each other on religious issues. The first attempts may seem awkward and unnatural; maybe they could never be made if we had only ourselves to look to; but with many it is a part of the discipline of the Christian character, the last but not the least necessary training, to be rid of self-consciousness. There is no habit which grows so strongly upon men as such reserve, and its last stage—that of silence—is liable to grave misinterpretations; it is taken to mean a negative attitude towards the faith, or actual indifference to its truths.

But on some religious questions this reserve is apt to be intensified, and becomes not merely a paralysis of expression but of thought. There are issues of the faith in which Christians prove reserved even to themselves. The present subject will serve to illustrate this. Do Christian people commonly permit themselves any sober and steady contemplation of heaven? Occasionally some devotional classic, a passage in Thomas à Kempis, a page of Hooker, or some rapturous lines of a hymn-writer, ancient or modern, attracts their sympathetic consideration, but this passes as a sentiment, the subject is put aside, and it is often instinctively avoided, while its supreme significance and importance remain unchallenged. Some minds will answer that the subject is vague, and therefore speculation is likely to be incautious or even irreverent, and an

apology is drawn from the Holy Scriptures themselves for this attitude of reserve. Does it not truly reflect their teaching? This is a defence which it is worth while to examine. There is no silence about the life of heaven either in the Old or New Testament. But there is a characteristic and persistent use of figure, metaphor, and parable whenever the subject is presented. It would be sufficient to quote the Book of Daniel in the Old, and the Apocalypse in the New Testament, in justification of this. But too much must not be made of this. The employment of tropes and figures in all literature inspired or uninspired is not to obscure or confuse, but to reveal and illustrate truths which from the nature of the case could not otherwise be conveyed. Holy Scripture does not justify, but warns us against indiscreet speculation about the subject of heaven, and rebukes by anticipation all extravagance whether of thought or expression upon it. The full revelation is as yet denied to mortal men of "things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love Him."

"Expect not," says Bishop Beveridge, "that I should describe heaven to you, that is past my skill; mine, did I say? The great Apostle Paul could not do it, although he was caught up thither."

It must also be frankly admitted that there is much in popular teaching about heaven which goes far beyond scriptural warranty.¹ Our hymns through which people are at once taught so widely and yet so little, have surely something to answer for in their occasional extravagance. Whatever else their suggestions may be, they are often not scriptural. But a sober, reverent regard of the subject of heaven is one thing, and commendable; an intense reserve passing, as it so often does, into an absolute silence about it is another and deplorable thing.² For any doctrine of the faith which is held with such a nerveless timidity, as deprecates the devout exercise of the mind upon it, and ties the tongue, is itself in peril by its own adherents.

Are there no other causes for this reserve on the subject of heaven beyond an anxious reverence? Unhappily it is indisputable that many Christians

¹ "The impulse of the imagination" on this topic, "is not to illegitimate demolition but to illegitimate construction."—J. B. Mozley, *Lectures*, No. III. p. 47.

² "It is of the essence of true belief" on this subject, "to be communicative."—*Ibid.* p. 31.

shrink from the thought of heaven, because they have radically erroneous conceptions about it. These will be found to have been formed, in most instances, through the powerful associations of childhood, and therefore through the original impress given by an inadequate or misleading religious education. With many Christians there is not only much to be learned about heaven, but much to be unlearned, before they can fully and freely address themselves to its contemplation, or share its enthusiasms with their brethren. It will be best to meet this early bias, and the consequent prejudices against thinking or speaking upon the life of heaven by certain positive statements which may be made fearlessly, because they rest finally upon no merely human authority. Our Lord has then given one tremendous definition of the life eternal which runs counter to two of the most common and most mischievous misconceptions of it. In the revelation of the Son to the Church and to the world (John xvii. 3), He declares that "this is the life eternal, that they may know Thee the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ."

In this great definition, two most noticeable features appear. The life eternal laid up in the heavens is seen to have a present character as well as a present influence; and secondly, that life is presented as one of advance and development.¹ It is, however, precisely these two aspects which are so often ignored in the commonly received views of heaven, and the consequences of the neglect are plainly disastrous in our experience.

The life eternal is now. Death is indeed an awful fact, but it is not the complete and final interruption, such as it is sometimes wrongly described in the face of science, or as the fear of it pictures it even to Christians. Countless obstacles shut out the real² life from full view, and cast shadows upon a clearer vision. But those who know God, and whose souls are in communion with Him, do here, and now, share life eternal. The open eye of Christian faith will regard it as present, even though earthly conditions and hindrances compel us to look for its manifestation hereafter and elsewhere. The more we encourage ourselves and others with this present conception of the life eternal, the better it will prove for our purest

hopes and highest anticipations. Children should be taught an even deeper intention than underlies the phrase prompted by poetic instinct, that "heaven lies about them in their infancy," and children of the larger growth may yet be warned against the relegation of heaven to the mere shadowy imaginings of the future; such a heaven is at least too "far off" for the purpose of uplifting the soul from the dust of earth.

There is a second and no less fruitful consideration which grows out of this same divine definition. The essence of the declaration lies in an identification of the life eternal with knowledge of the highest and most excellent kind to which men can attain. Now the most characteristic mark of knowledge is progress. Thus it is no mere probability but a simple truth, that the life of heaven will be no mere Nirwâna—no idle, monotonous existence, but a scene of work, a sphere of boundless activity, and advancing energy. Before this conception can be fully embraced, many Christians have to extrude much that is false, Oriental, and pagan in their ideas of heaven.

There remains most surely in heaven a rest from that unceasing conflict which is the condition of sinful humanity here. But with the increase of this purest knowledge of God must be a parallel advance of powers now checked and hampered by earthly lets and hindrances, a development—so the fine phrase of the apostle words it—of "the powers of the world to come." "The entrance into that life," writes our chief living English theologian, "implies not only capacity for purer pleasures, but powers for higher efforts." What an encouragement this to fresh and fearless contemplation of heaven, and to freer, less reserved communication of thought upon the subject! How refreshing and bracing must such suggestions be to those—always the finer spirits among men—who, finding their chief happiness in work here, look for corresponding enterprises in the world to come. How glad these will be to know that their service then will be, as the English Prayer-Book phrases it, a "royal"³ one, one of perfect freedom, not marred by the failures and defects of earthly ministers, not spoilt by selfishness, not stained by sin! But if the tendency to reserve on the subject of heaven still remains strong, there is one other consideration which may help to break it down. Students of the Gospel narratives know that St.

¹ See Westcott, *in loco*.

² *ὄρασις*—the student will note the present force of this striking adverb (1 Tim. vi. 19).

³ *Cui servire [est] regnare.*

Thomas appears as the spokesman of the apostolic anxiety, just as St. Peter was of their hopes, St. John of their love, and Iscariot of their shame. In St. John's Gospel (chapter xiv. 5, 6), Thomas appears characteristically to express for the apostles the hesitation which they all felt in anticipation of heaven. "How know we the way?" And Christ was, as ever, ready to relieve their distress. Did they with one of old find heaven's gate a dreadful place? Did they fear as well as long to enter that cloud which shut out the Father's presence? Then He could satisfy that longing and calm that fear by the present manifestation of Himself as one with the Father. If they knew not the way, He would be such a guide as they could not possibly err. His answer is, as so often, fuller than the anxious inquiry. He not only teaches that His

ascension is the supreme act whereby the Son of the Father has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, He is not only the Way, but also the Truth and the Life. "The Way," as à Kempis finely puts it, "which we are bound to follow, the Truth which we are bound to believe, the Life for which we are bound to hope."

Is there not then some element of disloyalty to the Master Himself in our habit of reserve on this stupendous topic? Should there be no serious effort to fling it aside, and to speak freely one to another upon heaven, even if our thoughts are not so high and our words not so brave as we would wish, and so win the blessing that those two companions won as they walked and talked together on the road to Emmaus?

