

THE BIBLE HYMNAL. COMPILED BY W. LANCELOT HOLLAND, M.A. (Edinburgh: *Hunter*. 16mo, pp. lx, 382.) Mr. Holland has been dissatisfied with all existing hymnals, though there are many of them, and his dissatisfaction has gone so far as this. He has compiled a hymnal for himself, and this is its mark of distinction, that "everything is excluded from it that cannot stand the searching light of Holy Scripture." Now it is easy to retort that Scripture needs an interpreter, and so, after all, it is only Mr. Holland's interpretation of Scripture that is represented here. But there are hymnals that do not pretend to be merely scriptural, and hymns in hymnals innumerable. So it is something that Mr. Holland has made that his aim at least, his first and last intention. Did Mr. Holland fear when he began his work that he would not find hymns enough that were scriptural to make a volume? He has actually found three hundred and fifty-six. And they seem not only to be scriptural but to be hymns. There are a hundred and thirty-eight authors. And one of them is Thomas Toke Lynch. But Faber is not here, nor Newman, nor Baring Gould.

THE UNIVERSITY TUTORIAL SERIES. A MANUAL OF ETHICS. BY JOHN S. MACKENZIE, M.A. (*Clive*. Foolscap 8vo, pp. xxx, 355.) In outward appearance these manuals of the University Correspondence College are models of grace. In inward character they vary, it is said, not a little. This is probably one of the best works in the series. Towards the end the signs of excessive condensation are manifest, and that, unfortunately, just where we are most deeply interested in the subject. But we can supplement from Newman Smyth. On the subject as a whole the writer has laid a firm hand. He sees clearly, and is not afraid to say what he sees, even though great names are against him. And yet this is the characteristic mark of the book that no special *theory* of ethics is pleaded for and bepraised. As is most becoming in a school book, fairness is dealt out to all, choice is left to come after. But it is also worthy of emphasis that the practical character of ethics is never forgotten. It is the science that is here, but the science is always leading straight down to the experience.

## Exposition of the First Epistle of St. John.

BY PROFESSOR THE REV. RICHARD ROTHE, D.D.

CHAPTER IV. 19—V. 1.

"We love Him, because He first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God: and whosoever loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him."

VER. 19. In this verse John starts afresh with his exhortation to brotherly love. This new exhortation is also derived from God's love to us, viz. in Christ, just as in ver. 11 f. the same exhortation had been similarly grounded. But in each case the exhortation, though built upon the same foundation, is built up in a different manner. In vers. 11 and 12 it was said, if God has *so* loved us, we owe Him *gratitude* for such great love; we cannot, however, show Him our gratitude directly, but only indirectly, viz. by loving the brethren. Here, on the contrary, it is said, if God has *first* loved us, if He has anticipated us with love, we must cherish towards Him *responsive love*; but from the nature of the case this our love to God can be genuine

only if we love the brethren. This latter thought is developed in ver. 20—v. 1 from a threefold point of view.

Ver. 20. In the exhortation to love God, there is implied the exhortation also to love the brethren; for without love of the brethren the notion that one loves God is a delusion. This is set forth in three different ways. First, in this verse, by remarking that he who is unable to do what is less and easier cannot possibly do what is greater and more difficult. In the case in which the object to be loved is sensibly perceptible to us, and thus by its direct impression stirs us up to love, it is unquestionably (this is the unuttered presupposition of the author's argument) easier to love than in the case in which

the object to be loved cannot thus be perceived by us, and consequently makes no direct impression upon our mind. Now we have no sensible perception of God, whereas we have of our brethren; consequently he who is unable to love his own brother is still less capable of really loving God. "*How can he love God,*" i.e. how can we admit that he loves God?

John calls our attention to the self-deception into which we are apt to fall with regard to our love. We easily persuade ourselves that we love God, because between Him and us there is such a vast interval. The coldness of our love we derive from the greatness of the distance; we regard love to God as something which must be essentially of a different kind from ordinary love; and consequently we readily acquiesce in the faintest analogy of love to God. We readily admit the validity of the summons to love God, seeing we so understand it that it does not require of us a real love, and hence is not burdensome to us. Thus we are more inclined to lay upon ourselves the duties that are remote rather than those near at hand, because there is no immediate need of fulfilling them, and because they are present to us merely in idea. On the other hand, it is a very simple criterion of our love to God that it of necessity at once includes love of the brethren and excludes uncharitableness. To give ourselves credit for love to God without this brotherly love is to be guilty of a lie, and that too a lie that is an outrage against God. The presupposition underlying the apostle's argument is by no means flattering to us. The thought that it is easier for us to love man than to love God is a thought that should humble us. For in Himself God must surely be unspeakably more worthy of love than our neighbour. But our love is conditioned to a certain extent by the fact that we see its object. He to whom the invisible God should be as real to faith as his visible brother is to the physical eye, would certainly love God more readily. But to have the invisible God presented as clearly to the believing eye of our mind as our neighbour is to the physical eye, is not easily attained by us. It is our duty to let ourselves be put to shame by the argument of the apostle. So long as we have not attained to such clearness of faith, it is easier for us to love our neighbour than to love God. Herein also the Christian sees one element in the future blessedness of directly beholding God: he

is certain, viz. that then he will love Him with another and a fuller heart than as yet he is able to do. Till then he rejoices in the fact that God has already become visible to him in Christ, and in connexion with Christ he has an experience of the truth of the apostle's statement. His love to God, who loves him in Christ, has an altogether peculiar warmth, because he loves a God who is to him a living, visible, individual person. In connexion with our love of our brethren, however, we frequently experience it to be the case that it is in many respects easier for us to love God than our brother, and that we attain the latter love only by means of the former. It is true that we see our brother, but we do so in a form that is often not lovable. It is easier for us to love him if we do not see him; and this is more especially the case in the common relations of life. Men who are friendly with one another, so long as they are somewhat apart, become enemies when they come into close contact. We must learn to see our neighbour in God, and therefore as a brother; to see him, not merely as he seems to the bodily eye, but in the transfiguration that falls upon him in virtue of his divine calling to divine sonship. The Christian must accustom himself to single out, with the eye of faith, this trait of divine sonship, which is certainly in most cases not discernible by the bodily eye, in every human countenance that he meets.

Ver. 21. To pretend to love God without loving our brother is a vain delusion for this further reason that Christians have been expressly commanded to combine love to the brethren along with love to God. For Christians the commandments of love to God and love to the brethren are one and the same commandment, which merely unfolds itself in two directions. Consequently he who does not keep it in the one of these directions (in respect of loving the brethren) cannot possibly keep it in the other (in respect of love to God); for *in concreto* the two are inseparable; they can be distinguished only *in abstracto*. The expression "from Him" would be most naturally referred to God, as the immediately preceding subject, if it were not directly said "he who loveth God." From this it plainly follows that, when he says "from Him," John is thinking of a different subject from God. He is evidently thinking of the Redeemer; and this view is favoured by iii. 23, where mutual brotherly love is expressly represented

as being commanded by the Saviour. It is only in Matt. xxii. 36 ff. that we find the Saviour giving such a commandment in these very words; but it is plainly implied in the injunction in John xiii. 34 f., when we combine the latter with the general fundamental Christian presupposition, with the commandment, viz. to love God.

John proceeds here upon the assumption that we need to be reminded that in God's own mind these two commandments absolutely go together. Universal experience shows that such a reminder is required. Some cast into the shade the commandment of love to God; while others do so with the commandment of love to our brethren. Both these ways of thinking and acting are equally mistaken and unworthy. What a conception of God it presupposes, when one imagines that we can so separate His interests from those of men, that He is content to enjoy our love, however little we love our neighbour. We think we do God a special service and afford Him a special enjoyment if we love Him; as if He attached such a particular value to our personal love as to be willing to forget that our neighbour is sent by us empty away. We thus impute to God our own selfishness as well as our own folly. From every worthy conception of God there follows the conviction that when our neighbour enjoys our love it is tantamount to God doing so. With an idle love to Himself He cannot possibly be loved. This love to God merely with the understanding and the lips is a desecration of His nature rather than an honour and a sacrifice that we owe to Him. Simply because God is love, He will not even be loved to the prejudice of men, His children; He wills rather that all love to Him be shared in by men. It is only in appearance, however, that there is any partition of the one love.

Chap. v. ver. 1. From a *third* point of view it is impossible really to love God without at the same time loving the brethren, viz. on account of the essential homogeneity of the objects of this twofold love. Our Christian brother is essentially begotten of God, and is therefore essentially homogeneous with God; how, then, is it psychologically possible that one can at once really love God and not love his Christian brother, who is essentially homogeneous with God? John says: if only we do not forget that, in virtue of his faith in Jesus as the Christ, a Christian is essentially begotten of God and is essentially a child of God, it must be evident to us that God's (the father's) nature and kind are

reproduced also in our Christian brother (in the child), and that consequently he who really loves this nature and kind in God (in the father) must necessarily love them also in his Christian brother (in the child). The conclusion of the argument is not fully expressed in this verse. Only the two premisses are really stated; the conclusion (therefore he that believeth in Jesus as the Christ must love, not only God, but also all other believers in Jesus as the Christ) is left to the reader to draw for himself.

The close connexion in which faith in Jesus as the Christ stands to our love of the brethren, is frequently altogether overlooked and denied. Faith in Jesus, it is said, is of little consequence, provided we only fulfil the duty of loving our brethren; that faith and this love seem to have nothing to do with one another. Experience, however, shows that where faith in Jesus is lacking, brotherly love is also in a precarious condition. Such a misconception is possible only when one regards faith in Jesus as the Christ as something that touches merely the surface of our mind; as the adoption of a statement that has reached us from without. But John certainly does not thus conceive faith in Jesus; he sees in it rather an inner process, a being begotten of God, a new birth; and therefore he discovers an altogether new significance in brotherly love. To the man who knows his new relation to God in Christ through faith as a really new life derived from God, every other person who shares with him in this same faith must naturally appear in a wholly new light. He sees in him no longer a mere man, but a man born again of God to a really divine human life; and he draws the natural inference, that what he loves in God he must also love wherever it presents itself to him outside of God; and that, because the same holy life which in God is the object of his love is found in some measure at least in his brother, he cannot avoid loving him also. No doubt this inference only becomes perfectly evident when God becomes to us the object of a truly ethical love, and when it is God's holiness, including His compassionating love and grace, that we love in Him. Many a one, in a childish manner, loves in God rather the beaming splendour of His majesty and infinite power; and certainly of this he can find no reflection in his neighbour. It is otherwise if his love to God is love to God's heart; and this is the case with the Christian. It is the ethical in God, His holy graciousness, rather than His

omnipotence and infinity, that has been revealed to us by Christ; and hence the Christian can least of all question the inference which the apostle draws here. Still we ever need to be reminded that our love and our faith have to centre themselves in God's heart; that our love must be full of essentially

ethical contents. To seek to love God, the Father, without at the same time loving the brethren, must be to Him also the most grieving thing in us; just as it grieves a human father to see his son not loving his brothers and sisters. God Himself cannot possibly be precious to such a one.

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