

Life's Journey

The Road to Emmaus

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FEW things in life have more interest for us than a journey. The ever-varying scenes through which we pass; the companions we may have, and even the life-long friendships we may make, on the way; its adventures and misadventures; its excitements and even accidents; the unexpected delays; the change of plans; the meetings and the partings; above all, the arrival—these and other things are incidental to a journey, and help to make it one of the best remembered things in all our experience. Moreover, it is a shadow, an illustration, whatever we choose to call it—a miniature, of that greater journey, which we are all pursuing, and which can be taken only once.

For life is a journey. It has a beginning and an end, with its halts by the way. Though from another point of view there is no standing still. We move from place to place, from scene to scene. Our fellow-passengers are constantly changing, as on a railway. Sometimes the journey may seem monotonous, at other times there are "crowded hours of glorious life". We may pass through dark tunnels. Life may become very lonely, or again be full of companionship. Above all, it has a destination, and each day brings us nearer to the goal.

There are scenes in a journey which may remain in the memory for ever. The writer recalls one such, though more than forty years have passed. It occurred on his first visit to Switzerland. Who can forget the introduction to those mountains? We had travelled all night through France, it was August, and the weather was hot and the track dusty. As the early morning broke upon the scene, we arrived at a little wayside station near the frontier, where coffee was served. With what relief we turned out of the carriage, with its close oppressive atmosphere, to enjoy the balmy morning air and a walk on the platform! But the mountains! they rose before us in their majesty. We were no longer cribbed, cabined and confined in a railway compartment; the spirit could soar to heights unimagined and unrealised. The greatness, the massiveness, the splendour of these towers of God, arrayed in all their morning freshness, and seen for the first time, can never be forgotten.

Perhaps it was the suddenness and unexpectedness of such a scene which imparted to it so striking and lasting an effect, for there were even grander sights in reserve. But whatever it was, this "vision splendid" remains impressed upon the memory for ever. It was a vision as of another world.

Happy are we if such visions come to us in the journey of life; when the curtain, which veils the unseen, seems drawn aside, and we discover things eternal. Visions of our own heart and our own need, it may be, and visions of God; when that revelation He has been pleased to give to the children of men in that one Book—for there is really only one in all the world: the Book we rightly call the Bible; becomes our own. On a journey we need a guide book—and on certain journeys it is an essential part of the equipment—and He Who gave us life and set us on the journey has not left us without direction. Someone has said that every thinking man puts three questions to himself—Whence came I? What am I? Whither do I go? The Bible can answer all these questions.

If every man—every wise man—seeks to get the utmost enjoyment and benefit from an ordinary journey, surely our intentions and our aims should not be of an inferior kind when we come to the one journey which matters. And which matters because, whatever we think of it,

no man, if he takes a rational view of it, even apart from what his Guide Book may tell him, can ever think lightly of his conduct, or think that it does not matter how he lives, or be so insensible as to consider that there are no responsibilities and no consequences attaching to his conduct. And, moreover, he knows this, that the journey once taken is ended for ever, as far as life here is concerned.

How foolish and rash, then, to waste it! What irretrievable loss we may suffer! The days and hours may be so spent as to bring happiness and gain inconceivable, or the reverse.

As we write these words another year will soon be upon us, and another twelve months will have been added to the record. What advance have we made and what has the journey been like during this another space of time?

We intend to dwell upon the features of that exquisite and touching story of the journey to Emmaus—those two and the Stranger who went with them. A story fertile in suggestion, unequalled for its simplicity and tenderness, and from which much instruction may be gathered. It starts at a point where the shadows of the Cross fall heavily and darkly across the scene, a darkness which the light of resurrection dispels—or rather, shall we say? the presence of the Risen One. Christ, and Christ known, solves every riddle and explains every mystery of life, and the promise holds good here, “It shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light.” His companionship and the way He is revealed to us make all the difference to life and to the journey.

II

“And behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near and went with them”(Luke 24: 13-15).

LITTLE they knew, as they pursued their way to Emmaus, how eventful that journey would prove. And with regard to our life, we often know as little as they did what will happen, before the end of the journey is reached. Is not this one of the wise provisions of Him Who gave us being, and has ordered our life, that we know not what awaits us? Could we see the whole of life from start to finish, the burden would be intolerable; and this quite as much from the side of joy as sorrow. We can see only a little span of the road at a time, and for this we may be prepared. What profound wisdom is contained in those words, “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

In the journey to Emmaus, the most unlooked-for events and circumstances occurred. Before these were finally unravelled, the whole outlook on life of these two was changed. They made certain discoveries. The terrible disaster which they thought had overtaken them, and which they believed was destined to overwhelm them, disappeared like darkness at dawn of day. To such an extent was this the case, that they actually retraced their steps, and travelled those eight miles over again!

What a rebuke all this is to our unbelief. How little we know! How little *they* knew! These two on the way to Emmaus, full of perplexity, their minds surging with a sea of doubt, emerged ere long into clear daylight, and reached firm ground. For they found an Interpreter, one in a thousand, Who set all the stupendous happenings of the past few days in their right perspective, explained their meaning, showed that they followed one another in proper sequence, and were all part of a pre-ordained and ordered plan. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things? is the question the unknown Companion addressed to them. There is such an Interpreter Who can make things plain to us. Our difficulties often arise because we know only half the truth, and misinterpret the half we do know. All this suggests that it is easily possible, nay, it is the most natural thing in the world, that some extraordinary change may come in our own life, and that things which are dark and perplexing now may all become clear.

The greatest change that can come to us is in regard to the One about Whom we are speaking. If there is a God, if our life here—we mean for the moment our natural life—is His gift, if He calls Himself a faithful Creator, should we be surprised that if He works, He should work wondrously? or that if “in Him we live and move and have our being,” He should touch our life, and there should be a transformation? The fact of God—that one supreme fact—makes all other facts not only intelligible but possible.

Let us then begin with the fact of God. Next, let us accept the inevitable conclusion which follows upon that, namely, if there is a God and He has made us, He wants a place in our life. Consider, in this connection, what it was that altered the whole outlook of these two of whom we are thinking and the whole course of their lives. Someone drew near. Someone made Himself known to them. And this brings us face to face with a further thought. Not only is there a God, not only has He made us, but He has drawn near to us. Let that thought also sink down into our hearts.

Now comes the question, how has He drawn near to us? And the answer is found in our narrative: “Jesus Himself drew near.”

The fact is, there has been another Journey. But for that, the journey to Emmaus would have had no interest, and all journeys would have been aimless and hopeless. So great, so stupendous, so momentous is this other Journey, that one who had learnt the consequences of it as regards his own life's journey and the bearing of it upon his own destiny, when he thinks of it and wants to speak of it to others, states it thus: “This is a faithful saying and worthy of universal acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” What a journey that was!

The tenth chapter of Luke's gospel tells us something about it. There we find a man travelling along the road from the city called The Vision of Peace to another named Destruction. We have all been on this road at some time or other. He met with thieves who robbed him of everything, and wounding him, left him half dead. Now this represents one phase of the journey we are all taking. It has its pleasures, it has its fair landscapes, it has its sunny hours, but it has its dangers. There are thieves about, and if we are not careful we may lose everything worth having both for time and eternity. These thieves have different names, but, whatever they are called, they are hovering near. They are sometimes called the World, the

Flesh, and the Devil.

But with regard to this particular man, we read, "But a certain Samaritan as he journeyed came where he was." This is the Journey of which we have spoken, and the Samaritan represents the One of Whom Paul speaks, the One Who came into the world to save sinners. Do we not recognise Him also to be the same as the Stranger on the road to Emmaus? Think of these three statements with regard to Him: "He came into the world to save sinners "; "He came where he was "; "He went with them." It is the same Person in each case.

Now here is the One we all need. We were saying just now that God had drawn near to us, and we asked, How? And the answer is: In the One Who came into the world to save sinners; Who acted the part of the Samaritan, and brought us all we need lying by the roadside wounded and weak, helpless and alone.

This is the great fact which must be accepted. When we accept this fact, we shall begin to find out how much we need Him. We need Him just as much as the one in the parable, for by nature we are all guilty, lost, and helpless. And will you notice, not a single want was left unsupplied? The only thing necessary was for him to be willing to receive the services of the other; and for those services no demand for payment of any kind was made. Of this Samaritan we read, "He went to him and bound up his wounds," and before he left him, past, present and future needs had been provided for. His wounds, his weakness and his wants were all attended to.

Christ came to do all this for us, He "came into the world to save sinners." He had to die the death of the Cross. He must be wounded for our transgressions, for only "with His stripes we are healed." In no other way can the comfort of the oil and the wine be ours. What comfort flows from the sight of those wounds on account of our sin! But the man was not left merely with his wounds bound up, his weakness is taken account of and his wants are supplied. He is brought to an inn and taken care of. We notice here five journeys. The journey of the man down to destruction, the journey of the Good Samaritan: "A certain Samaritan as he journeyed "; the journey to the inn, the journey on the morrow when the Samaritan left, and that future journey when he said he would return. We must understand the meaning of these journeys if our journey in life is to be all that it may be.

But to return to the two on the road to Emmaus. We read:—" They talked together of all these things which had happened." After all, as someone has said, there are only two things worth talking about, and one of these is religion, using that word in the widest sense. The reason, of course, is obvious. We are in a world of mystery—we are a mystery even to ourselves. We feel the unseen world to be very near, and at times very real. There is the mystery of life and death, of gain, of sin, of good and evil. Things happen which we cannot explain. Man has the sense that he has lost something, and he feels incomplete without God. And with all this mystery surrounding us, and these ever-present questions, insoluble by us, there are yet those who seem to have found the solution, and they have found it in a Book, and the whole contents of this Book centre in a Person—the Son of God become flesh—Who was to appear, and eventually did appear, on earth. What can surpass in importance such subjects of conversation?

Now all their talk that day was about Him. "They talked together of all these things which had happened." Yes, things do happen, and we may accept this at once, as a fact which is undeniable, that very strange things have happened in this world of ours, and they are as important as they are strange. Let us not overlook this fact, certain things had happened of such a character that these two could not help conversing about them; and they had happened with regard to this very Person of Whom we have been speaking. He had appeared according to promise, for there had been many predictions as to His coming. But what puzzled these two was the fact that this very One, the One upon Whom they had placed so much reliance, the One Who had come in fulfilment of all their hopes—as they afterwards declare, "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel"—He, instead of being received by everyone, had been shamefully treated, rejected by the rulers, and put to death.

And so it came to pass that they "communed together and reasoned." Is not this what we are very apt to do? Are we not prone to give way to reasoning? We reason about the difficulties, the perplexities of life, and we conclude that God's ways are often strange and unaccountable. We say to ourselves, "Until this difficulty and that other perplexity— until the things which cause doubt are cleared up, we cannot believe."

But we shall never get very far by reasoning. Very often we shall find, as these two found, the solution of all is close at hand. For it is not a question merely of reason, but of revelation. While they thus walked and talked, and pondered and argued, and discussed, the very One about Whom all the difficulty arose was close at hand. And that fact, had they known it, would have dissipated immediately all the clouds that had gathered round Him and them.

"Jesus Himself drew near"—that solved everything. Not all at once, as we shall see, but in Him and in all that He had to tell them—in the truth as to Himself, there lay the solution of their difficulties.

Does this not teach us a great lesson? The explanation of everything, whatever that thing is, and however it affects us, is found in a Person, and that One, the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Jesus Himself drew near." Has that become a fact yet in your own case? Has He drawn near to you? If not, do not take another step in life's journey without Him; make His acquaintance before going further. The journey is too great to be taken alone, and its end will be too mysterious and dark if He is not there. You need Him now, you will need Him on the road, you will need Him at the end.

What compassion for those two filled the heart of the Saviour that day! Just as on another occasion He had seen some of them toiling in rowing in the storm, and had come to them saying, "It is I, be not afraid," so now He sees the sadness of those two, returning disconsolate and dejected to their home, and He knew all that was perplexing and grieving them. He knew also that the moment He revealed Himself all would be changed.

And so with you. First and foremost you need Him; and first and foremost, He is *all* you need. Once He is known, you will discover that the difficulties which once seemed so great have vanished. We do not say that no questions will remain, but we do say that when the true Light

begins to shine for you, as it does when Christ is accepted as Saviour and Lord, doctrines, problems, questions of science, apparent contradictions, your own and other people's difficulties about the Bible, questions of evolution, looked at in that light, will assume another aspect altogether. They become food for faith instead of food for doubt. Above all, the question of sin, of its guilt and mastery of us, and of the responsibility attaching thereto which cannot be evaded—Jesus is alone sufficient to meet these. Thus we see how all centres in a Person.

Be assured then that He, Who joined those two on the road to Emmaus, is ready to join you on your journey.

III

“But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him” (Luke 24: 16).

WE were saying, with regard to these two on the road to Emmaus, that the One Who could solve all their difficulties was close at hand. In almost every matter, the same is generally true; the explanation of anything that perplexes us is not, usually, far to seek. “Say not in thine heart,” says the Apostle, “Who shall ascend into Heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above), or, who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what saith it? The Word *is nigh thee*, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart” (Rom 10: 6, 8). The work has been done. Christ has died, and never will die again. All we have to do is to believe the Message. God tells us in His Word what Christ's death, resurrection and ascension mean, and in accepting His Word about it all in simple faith we find salvation. And that Word is close at hand.

So with some difficult passage of Scripture. The explanation almost invariably lies in the context. There is wonderful continuity, and a remarkable unity, about Scripture, and what has gone before generally has some bearing upon that which follows, and provides the key to its explanation.

Nor is it otherwise in the perplexing circumstances and unexpected happenings of life. The reason for their occurrence is often found in ourselves. Very often we have not to look beyond the state of our own hearts and our own conduct for an explanation, and we may discover the reason for the discipline there.

So with these two. The very One about Whom they were perplexed and Who was the subject of their conversation and discussion, drew near and went with them; He was actually by their side. And He knew that the moment He revealed Himself all would be changed! Yet the surprising thing is, we are immediately told, “Their eyes were holden that they should not know Him.”

How strange and unaccountable the ways of God seem to us sometimes! Instead of the easiest way, He seems to choose the hardest; instead of the path being smooth and plain, it is often rough and intricate. There is darkness and no light. We grope amid the gloom, and amid the ruins of earthly hopes and ambitions, and perhaps we cannot discern the reason for all the

failure. Things often turn out so differently from what we expected.

It was not otherwise here. We should have said that had Christ revealed Himself, had these two immediately discovered Who this Stranger was, their suspense and anxiety would have ceased; at one stroke, it seems to us, all their difficulties might have been cleared up. But the very opposite happens. Not merely is it that they fail to recognise Him, but a positive hindrance seems placed in the way of their doing so—" Their eyes were *holden* that they should not know Him."

Yet, all the time, this was for their ultimate good. The sequel proves it. Christ knew what He was doing. When He did reveal Himself, He wanted it to secure their fullest blessing.

The fact is, their knowledge of Him had been too limited, as their subsequent language indicates—" We trusted it had been He which should have redeemed Israel,"—and Christ was about to make Himself known in a fuller way. They had not believed *all* that the prophets had spoken, and He has to rebuke their ignorance with these words: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" "His glory!" They had never grasped that. Israel's glory!—that appealed to them. Israel's triumph over their enemies! to be redeemed from the power of Rome I— that they could appreciate. But, alas! their thoughts had never travelled beyond such narrow confines. They had made themselves the centre and object instead of Christ.

Are we not guilty, too, of this very foible—the foible of making ourselves the centre of everything? God's centre is Christ. If we have not the right centre we cannot be rights anywhere. This is why we miss our way and become so perplexed. Christ knew the spiritual and mental condition of these two, and His love would not permit Him to leave them with everything out of focus, and with a wrong perspective.

Had He made Himself known at first, they would have received Him back with all their old prejudices unchanged. Were they to think of Him in relation to themselves, or themselves in relation to Him? this was the question. And the answer is, everything was to be on a new footing, they were to know Him in a closer relationship and in a way infinitely higher than could ever have been possible after the flesh or as Israelites. But for this there needed to be preparation. And this is why their eyes were holden.

Moreover, had Christ revealed Himself to them at once, it is more than probable that their very joy would have incapacitated them for receiving the instruction He had to give. Their minds would have been unbalanced, the very recovery of the One they had lost would have bewildered them and proved their greatest hindrance. Remaining a stranger, they could listen without distraction to the wonderful exposition of Scripture concerning Himself (though not as from Himself) which He was about to give them.

Our eyes are often holden for the same reason. God has to prepare us, often through disappointment, darkness and disillusionment, for the highest revelations of His goodness. He works in unseen ways, and is often at hand with the choicest blessings when, as someone has said, "we are most of all sinning against Him." He has told us not to cast our pearls before

swine, and we may be quite sure He does not act contrary to this injunction Himself, and although He will not call us swine, yet we sometimes act as if we were hardly better, preferring the husks and garbage of human philosophy to the pearls He has to bestow. If His ways seem strange, yet, if we allow Him to deal with us and instruct us, He will at last open our eyes, and we shall see, as these two did, eventually, along what a wondrous path He has been leading us all the time.

“Their eyes were holden”—this was true kindness, though at first sight it did not appear so. The story is told that, on one occasion, through some accident, a number of people were thrown into the water. There they were struggling and floundering and in danger of being drowned. A man stood watching, whom people knew to be a strong swimmer. “Why do you not jump in and rescue them?” enquired someone. “I am waiting,” he replied, “until they have left off struggling. If I try to rescue them now they will drag me under, and we shall all be drowned together.”

God waits that He may be gracious.

“Therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you; for the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for Him” (Isa 30: 18).

Does not this passage from the Old Testament find its exemplification in our Lord’s dealings with these two, who are the subject of our meditations? Nor need this surprise us, for the Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Jesus of the New. He *waited* that He might be gracious to them. And it cost Him much to do so. How His heart must have yearned to allay their fears and forebodings, and banish all their doubts! How intensely He must have desired to make Himself known! One word from Him could have done it— one look. But He held back, and He did so in love. His conduct towards them did not indicate callousness, nor was it the result of ignorance, for He knew all that they were feeling. As we shall see, if permitted, on another occasion, He knew that they were sad. But to have removed their sorrow, at that moment, would have injured rather than helped them.

“Therefore will the Lord wait that He may be gracious unto you.” This is His purpose in regard to everyone. Never imagine God to be indifferent to your trial.

His wisdom ever waketh, His sight is never dim.

And in His wisdom and love He knows what He wants to accomplish, and in what way the end He has in view can be reached.

If there is one thing more characteristic of God than another, it is that He can *wait*. If there is one thing, generally speaking, more characteristic of ourselves than another, it is that we do not know how to wait. We are so eager, so restive, so impatient. The verse just quoted from Isaiah closes thus: “Blessed are all they that wait for Him.” While further on in the same prophecy, chapter sixty-four, we are assured that “Since the beginning of the world, men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, a God beside Thee which

doeth so for him that *waiteth* for Him”(verse 4, margin).

Can we wait? “Blessed are all they that wait for Him.”

The verse which, for the moment, we are considering, from that thirtieth chapter of Isaiah, informs us of another reason why God waits. It is that He may be exalted. We would drag everything down to our level, and make even God subservient to our wishes and plans. We would like Him to put forth His might to accomplish our will. No wonder it was needful for the eyes of these two to be holden, for their thoughts centred mainly upon the exaltation of Israel, oblivious of the moral condition of the people, and their consequent unpreparedness. How often we miss the very end we are seeking, which may be a right end in itself, failing to see it must be accomplished in God’s time and way, even as the exaltation of Israel will be.

Let us take one lesson deeply to heart; namely, that our blessing is never more secure than when God is exalted. Is not this how our text explains it? “Therefore will He be exalted *that He may have mercy upon you.*” All this came true in the experience of these two disciples that day. Christ waited in order to be gracious. How gracious, I hope we may be permitted to see. And He was exalted—” He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself “—and then how abundant the mercy they were permitted to taste!

“Their eyes were holden” This may happen to ourselves, and from various causes. To whatever this curious effect was due, in their case, whether to direct interposition or to natural causes, we are not told; perhaps we shall not be far wrong in attributing it in some measure to both. So preoccupied were they, so overshadowed by the unlooked-for events of the previous days, so perverted was their outlook, such little expectation had they of the presence of the One they had recently seen crucified—that little more was needed to make them altogether insensible to the fact that the very One they most of all desired to see was by their side.

How often, too, we may fail to discern the Lord, and for similar reasons. It is recorded of Mary Magdalene, she “saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.” Frequently, a perverted outlook obscures Him, or preoccupation. Sometimes it is the glory of the world, or the glamour of success. It may be we are too busy, too self-occupied, too carnal, or we may be even too sad. Jesus draws near—He would make Himself known—but we are unprepared, and we do not recognise Him. We need to enquire the reason why we see Him so little, for the true characteristic of the Christian is “We see Jesus.” Surely, if we have seen Him once, we must want to see Him often.

Is there one reading these lines to whom Christ is a total stranger? One who has never seen Him? We read “the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ should shine unto them.” May your eyes be opened that you may “turn yourself from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God.” Then you will see Him and know Him. Jesus Himself will draw near, and you will have Him as your companion.

IV

“And He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?” (v. 17).

THE conversation which ensues is commenced by our Lord. Up to this point we have had merely a description of events—the journey of the two to Emmaus, the subject of their conversation, how Jesus drew near and went with them, and their failure to discern Him. The first words spoken fall from the lips of Christ. Is not this always so in the history of the soul's intercourse with God? His voice breaks the silence, even as it did at Creation's dawn. That voice may speak through Providence, or in the Gospel, but, in any case, His voice first disturbs the slumbering of the soul, whatever the special circumstances; be it sickness or bereavement or disappointment, or through some more direct communication.

Let us learn from the incident before us that Christ may be hovering on the outskirts of our life, seeking to enter it, knowing all about us, and waiting to make Himself known.

Now, although the Lord knew all about them, knew the subject of their conversation, just as He knew that they were sad, He assumes to be unacquainted with what was oppressing their minds.

For surely it is a well-known fact that, on occasion, you can help people more by allowing them to unburden and unburden themselves than by any amount of talk on your side. Especially is this the case when people are sad at heart. Indeed, one way of winning the confidence of another is to be a good listener.

There is a double gain in allowing anyone with a burden or sorrow to speak of it. In the first place, it affords comfort to the troubled one; and, in the next, when the tale is told, you are left in a much better position to offer consolation. This was our Lord's method in the instance before us, and we may be sure His way is best.

We have said that He knew that they were sad. This it was brought Him to their side. Human nature is capable of being sad. It is one of the experiences of life. Our very greatness lays us open to such experience. No doubt, to some extent, the brute creation share these feelings, but in a very modified degree—and their griefs cannot reach the same intensity or be of quite the same character as ours. St. Paul says that “every creature groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Rom 8: 22). And although pain and sadness are not necessarily the same, yet they are very much akin.

The other day, we were reading the story of two dogs— one big, the other little. The big dog took the other under his protection on one occasion when it was being attacked, and ever after, the two were always seen in company, the little one sharing the meals of the other—for both lived a homeless, wandering life. This went on for a considerable time, and the dogs were known everywhere, when one day the larger animal was found dead, and the little one was lying by its side—dead too—with its head pressed hard against the other's heart. Evidently it had died of grief.

But sadness in its highest and divinest form can be felt only by those made in the image of

God. For God Himself knows what sadness means. We read, "It repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth and it grieved Him at His heart" (Gen 6: 6). And our Lord could say on one occasion, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death" (Mark 14: 34). While with regard to the Holy Ghost it is written, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph 4: 30). That we are capable of the same emotions is, as we have said, an indication of our greatness.

No doubt, if there were no sin, there would be no sadness. The description of a sinless state is, "Then I was by Him as one brought up with Him and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." "No cloud of grief e'er stains that scene. And again, "In Thy presence is fullness of joy, at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore/" Man is often ready to quarrel with God because it is otherwise now. Yet, did we but know it, perhaps nothing so enriches our life as sadness, properly regarded, and when accepted from the hand of God. Indeed, it is hardly going too far to say that there is a defect in every character where sadness is comparatively unknown. A young servant of God was leaving a house into which sorrow had entered, when he met a friend. "I am no use there!" he exclaimed, "they are in deep sorrow, and I have never had a real sorrow in my life."

What is applicable in the physical world has its counterpart in the sphere of morals. Just as frost and snow play their part, equally with sunshine, in making the earth productive, so sadness is conducive to moral health and vigour, and a life of pleasure and ease, alone, may be a bane instead of a blessing.

How much sorrow there is in the world is known only to those who have visited much. Here is one day's record:

After describing a visit to one who was a nervous wreck, from constant weeping, imagining herself a lost soul, until her poor mind had become unbalanced, and spending an hour in seeking to minister comfort, the writer proceeds:—

"I had a letter asking me to look in at a house where the people were known to me, and found that the man had been embezzling, had been discovered, and had fled, and there was the stunned wife with her world tumbled in sudden ruins.

"I turned into another house to find that a splendid young fellow, climbing rapidly to fame in the engineering world, had that morning touched a live wire and was paralysed from the arms downwards, which he is unto this day.

"Tired out and sick at heart, I turned for home. But, as I was hanging up my coat the telephone bell rang, and an excited voice from the far end of the city cried to me that a member of ours had just fallen dead, and that his wife, unnerved by the shock, had gone hysterical and was shrieking for me." (Adapted from *In Christ's Stead*. A. J. Gossip, M.A.).

The element of sadness enters, more or less, into the life of most, and in that of some it proves to be one of the outstanding experiences of Life's Journey. How much there is in the very

constitution of things to produce sadness! How uncertain life is! What endless calamities, moral and physical, threaten us! What dangers hover around our path! People may lose their property, they may receive injury to their persons, or death may snap the dearest and sweetest relationships.

An instance of a particularly affecting nature occurred the other day. A young lady in her teens, accomplished and attractive, was courted by a young man, but was considered too young to be definitely engaged, and the gentleman went abroad. After five years' absence he returned, and was with his parents in the south of France. He wrote requesting that the young lady and her mother might join them. This was done, and the visit led to a definite engagement. Only nine days after, days filled with new-found happiness, the party went for a motor run in the Alps. An accident occurred, and the young lady was killed. What a world of sadness seems wrapped up in such a tragedy!

A mystery of course, in part, hangs over all such occurrences. The why and wherefore may never be explained down here. All we can say is, there is One Who comes to us in our sadness. And if He is known and received, His presence will bring healing, and of this the narrative we are considering affords an illustration.

Possibly, in some respects, no greater cause for grief had ever been experienced among the children of men, than was known to these two. What an effect the presence and the ministry of Jesus must have produced! These two were amongst His nearest and most intimate followers. They had witnessed His miracles, they were fully acquainted, not only with the testimony of John the Baptist, but with His own claims. One of the disciples had confessed Him as the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and He had accepted the confession as being true. John himself, on one occasion, had asked the direct question, through two of his disciples, "Art thou He that should come, or look we for another?" "And our Lord, instead of declining all such suggestions, proceeded to work miracles to establish His claim to be in very deed the Messiah. These two on their way to Emmaus bear their own testimony to the hopes and expectations which had been awakened. "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." Instead of this redemption they beheld Him taken and delivered over to the Roman Governor by the leaders of the nation, and far from exercising any power on His own behalf, He seemed completely at their mercy, for He is eventually led forth to execution, and they see Him crucified between two malefactors, amid the jibes and scorn of the onlookers. Not only are all their hopes dashed to the ground, their national pride humbled in the dust, but their trust in Him had received a rude shock, and what is more, having won their hearts, the sight of Him thus subjected to every cruelty and indignity that malignant hatred could devise, must have filled their minds with the most poignant anguish.

But the One beside them addresses Himself to this very need. "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? "Will He not do the same for any who are sad to-day? Surely He will. We need Him as much for our sorrow as for our sin. And what is more, the salvation He offers includes the one quite as much as the other. Let us recall those words in Isa 53: 4. "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows/" These words occur before we are told, "He was wounded for our transgressions," and they refer to His life, while the latter refer to His death. We were speaking just now of

someone who could not sympathise or comfort because he had never known sorrow. Not so the Lord Jesus. "He was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." That was as regards His own path and experience. But the words quoted before go further even than this. Not only were there His own sorrows and His own griefs, but He made Himself acquainted with those of others. He bore their griefs and carried their sorrows. Was there ever such a Saviour, such a Friend!

The Epistle to the Hebrews enlightens us further as to this. There we are told, He has been made "perfect through sufferings." That is, He has by this method become qualified to fill a certain office. It is in this sense that the word "perfect" is used. Perfect He always was in His own Person.

And the office for which He has become qualified is one in which He undertakes to succour His people and sympathise with them in sorrow. "We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tried like as we are, sin apart "(N.T.). "For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted (tried) He is able to succour them that are tried/" He knew weakness and weariness; hunger and thirst; bereavement, opposition, misrepresentation and the loss of friends. He knew what it was to be left alone, and for the nearest to forsake. And so He is able to feel what we are feeling—He knows exactly how things affect us.

In that remarkable book, "De Profundis," Oscar Wilde tells what sorrow had done for him, and the discovery he had made of its necessity and value. Indeed, the entire book might almost be said to be in praise of sorrow. Whatever other mistakes there may be in life, he tells us, sorrow is never a mistake.

He belonged to a family distinguished in art and literature, and according to his own account "the gods "had showered upon him every gift it was possible to bestow. He went to Oxford, and was determined, he once told a fellow-student, to taste the fruit of every tree that grew in the garden of the world. But he overstepped, at length, the bounds, and came within the grip of the law, and disgrace and ruin were the result. He was sentenced to two years' imprisonment. This refined pampered person, who had given himself up to every indulgence, had to wash the floor of his prison, clean the tin cans and do other menial work. On one occasion he was transferred from one place of detention to another and had to stand for half an hour on a public platform at a certain junction to be gazed upon by the curious crowd. His soul touched the deepest depths, but he came to rejoice in it for its own sake and the experience it gave; but whether from a merely philosophical point of view or because he had really found Christ does not appear from his book. He speaks of Christ, but not exactly as the Christian would; yet he praises sorrow as few Christians have ever done. But unless sorrow leads to Christ it has not done its appointed work,

It is when we walk and are sad that He so often draws near.

There is more satisfaction to be found in the record of Dostoyevsky, the Russian writer. He was banished to Siberia for some slight offence, and there went through unspeakable horrors, but found Christ amidst circumstances of the most wretched description. "One sees the truth

more clearly when one is unhappy” he once wrote. What was the means of his conversion?

“On his arrival in that desolate region, we are told, two women slip a New Testament into his hand, and taking advantage of a moment when the officer’s back is turned, whisper to him to search it carefully at his leisure. Between the pages he finds a note for twenty-five roubles. The money is a vast comfort to him: but the New Testament itself proves an infinitely vaster one.

“It was in Siberia that Dostoyevsky discovered the beauty of the parable of the Prodigal Son. Siberia was the far country. It was there that he saw the prodigal among the husks and the swine. His companions were the lowest of the low and the vilest of the vile. Imagine, he says, an old crazy wooden building that should long ago have been broken up as useless. In the summer it is unbearably hot, in the winter unbearably cold. All the boards are rotten, on the ground filth lies an inch thick; every instant one is in danger of slipping. The small windows are so frozen over that even by day one can scarcely read; the ice on the panes is three inches thick. We are packed like herrings in a barrel. The atmosphere is intolerable; the prisoners stink like pigs; there are vermin by the bushel; we sleep upon bare boards.” Yet amid such scenes he found Christ, and then he began to preach Christ. The Saviour drew near to him in his sadness.

Someone has said recently: “I am learning slowly, very slowly, to thank Him with all my heart for every bit of suffering He has given—I know it is He who gives it. In the end it is the only thing one cares about.”

What a ministry is His! A ministry that addresses itself to every sickness, every sorrow, every bereavement, every loss. Great as the accumulated sorrow of all the believers in the world must be, it does not overwhelm Him—it touches Him, but never exhausts Him—only awakens His sympathy and draws forth the virtue which can heal.

The words of the great poet come to mind. Macbeth enquires of the doctor with reference to his wife:

“Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart!”

And all the doctor can reply is, “Therein the patient must minister to himself.” But what a resource the Christian has! He is not required to minister to himself; that were indeed impossible. But there is One Whose special office it is to perform this ministry for His own.

And truly sorrow is perilous stuff, if we do not know what to do with it, or where to carry it. The One of Whom we are speaking can do all that Macbeth asks for. “He can minister to a mind diseased and pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow.” Again we are forced to exclaim, What a ministry is His! We think of Him as the Lamb of God bearing away the sin of the world, and that truly comes first, but not only can He take away the burden of sin, but the burden of sorrow, also.

And it is just here we learn to know Him in a deeper way, for this ministry of succour and sympathy endears Him to us, and has the power of drawing us to Him in a peculiar manner. Who that has ever known it can possibly forget the succour afforded in some moment of pressure, so that though the burden was not removed we were sustained under it? Who can fully estimate the power and preciousness of sympathy? The One who accompanied these two on the road to Emmaus is equal to all the sadness of life in whatever form it may come to us. And it will make all the difference to us, whether we have Him with us in the sadness or not.

And here we touch upon a point of the very utmost importance, for it cannot be doubted that it is just here that many fail. Many lives have been shipwrecked because those in control did not know what to do in the storm. Many a noble ship has gone to pieces on the sharp rocks of suffering and sadness, because there was no pilot on board—no one to turn to in the distress.

There are three ways in which we can meet discipline, and all sorrow is more or less of that character. We may despise it, we may faint under it, or we may profit by it. Some natures try the first, they affect the “unconquerable will” as someone puts it. They harden themselves against it and are determined there shall be no joints in their armour where the “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” can find an entrance. This shows great courage and, as a philosophy, it may be right, but it is poor and mistaken at the best. It leaves God and Christ out of the question. It supposes man to be sufficient of himself, which is a fallacy. The sorrow is sent, not so much that we may fight against it, but that we may profit by it, and that can only be as we are, first of all, subject to God’s will; as we set ourselves to learn the lesson intended in the discipline our experience becomes enriched by the discovery of what the One, Who permitted the trial, can be to us in it. Supposing these two had fallen back simply upon their own reserves, what company they would have missed! what consolation! and, may we not add, what instruction!

While there are some who affect to despise the chastening of the Lord, there are others who are disposed to faint when they are rebuked by Him. And this latter is the more common, and perhaps one would not be wrong if we included in this category the two going to Emmaus. Nor is this to be wondered at, for from their point of view a tremendous cataclysm had occurred, which left them amid a scene of ruin and desolation.

But surely we may learn from their experience this lesson at least: that if God permits our castles in the air to be overthrown it is only that He may build something fairer and more substantial.

And this brings us to the real point in all discipline; it is sent that we may profit by it. God’s object is not to grieve us, or to make us desolate, but “He chastens us for our profit,” as it says, “that we might be partakers of His holiness”. That is, the end to be reached is to lead us to accept His plans and purposes instead of our own.

Are we not beginning to see how indispensable Christ is to Life’s Journey? How different that journey to Emmaus would have been without Him! His company made all the difference to that tramp of eight miles! And before the day finally closed joy and gladness had once more

returned, and hope had revived, never again to be quenched! The Lord Jesus, and the words He spoke, did it. "Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. And He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?"

Are there not many to-day of whom it can be said that they walk and are sad? What they need to know is that this same Jesus lives still, ready to perform the same office for all who feel their need of comfort. There is One, but only One, all-sufficient for the sadness of the world.

Since we commenced writing this book a letter comes to us from one who has quite recently been bereaved of her husband, and is left with five young children, and in very altered circumstances. The cause of death was blood poisoning "caused by a slight scratch on the right hand, so small that he had not even noticed it, until the doctor drew his attention to it." The letter proceeds:—

"The doctors did not give up hope until two days before the end, when the poison unexpectedly reached his lungs, septic pneumonia set in, and he became unconscious at once. After twenty-seven hours of this he rallied most wonderfully, and we had three precious hours together, in which time, I think, we spoke of all that one loves to think of afterwards. Among other things he said: My times are in His hands . . . but I can't bear to think of what it will be for you and the children.' I told him that if the Lord took him home it would be in love, and that same love would undoubtedly take care of us. The end came at 2.50 a.m. The Lord gave such wonderful sustaining grace and has been so marvellously near ever since, until this morning, when the full force of the word ' desolation ' became my portion."

But the letter closes: "I love these words and often repeat them to myself:—

"Peace, perfect peace, our future all unknown? *Jesus we know*, and He is on the throne."

Is not the secret of abounding consolation found there— Jesus we know—the same yesterday, and to-day and for ever? He will walk with us on Life's Journey—never more wanted and never nearer than when we are sad.

V

"And one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto Him, Art Thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?"(v. 18).

NOW, for the first time, we gain some little insight into the identity of these two disciples. The information does not carry us very far, and what little there is has given rise to a good deal of speculation and discussion. Some identify Cleopas with the Cleopas of John 19: 25 (margin). Nor is it at all unlikely that Clopas should be returning home with his wife, feeling that all was over, and that no reason existed for further prolonging their stay in Jerusalem. In any case, from what happens at the close, when they invited the Lord to share their hospitality, we may be safe in concluding that, whoever they were, these two, at least, were husband and wife. "And one of them whose name was Cleopas." From time immemorial it has been customary to

bestow names. Adam “gave names to all cattle and to the fowl of the air and to every beast of the field “(Gen 2: 20). “And Adam called his wife’s name Eve,” and so on. Names in those early times were very significant. Each one of us had a name given us at the beginning of life’s journey, and that name, as representing a certain individual, may appear in various human records; while many a grave-stone in the churchyard bears the name of the one who lies beneath. Our name accompanies us, and identifies us, from the beginning of life’s journey to its close. And even beyond, for Scripture speaks of names written in the Book of Life, and in the last dread crisis, when heaven and earth flee away, names will be found inscribed in this book. Whether they are or not becomes the deciding factor. Thus the identity is retained. Every individual has his own separate existence, and in the final resort, a responsibility, which no one can share. Just as we came separately into the world, distinct from everybody else, so we shall leave it. Each one has his or her own life to live, and that life can never be put away. If we lay it down in one scene, we take it up in another. In one sense, we shall never have done with it.

What we make of it, then, is of supreme importance. And everyone is making something of it, even the most frivolous; even the gayest butterfly, who flits from flower to flower in one ceaseless round of pleasure in seeming forgetfulness, is forging an existence that will last for ever. All is helping to fashion, all is contributing to, a character which is being fitted for, and will be wedded to, a condition that will one day be eternal, without any possibility of change. The solemn words uttered about Judas are true of everyone: “Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to *his own place* “—a place for which during his life and by his habits he had fitted himself; a statement which is confirmed by other words equally solemn: “He that is unjust let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous let him be righteous still; and he that is holy let him be holy still” (Rev 22: n). All our actions, the whole course of our life, with all its conditions and circumstances, and the use we make of them, with their effect upon us—all are contributing to some end. Each one of us will at last go to “his own place.” We are all fitting ourselves for some final condition. The outstanding demonstration of this solemn truth is afforded by the legion of demons who were cast out of the man and entered into swine, and, we are told, the “herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake and were choked.” Both demons and swine alike found their level. The punishment of the wicked will not be some arbitrary judgment; they have been preparing themselves for it all along, and will reap what they have sown. How important, then, that in life’s journey we should keep the end in view, and remember that day by day we are fashioning our future.

“And *one* of them.” If there is one thing more evident than another, it is that Scripture has the greatest regard for the individual. This is only to say that God and Christ do the same. When our Lord was here, how often He went aside to discourse with a single soul. He tells us the value of one soul. He informs us that “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over *one* sinner that repenteth.” He speaks of the shepherd who went after one lost sheep. With man—and this is particularly so in the day in which we live —the very opposite is true. Man thinks of the mass, the individual is lost sight of. This is specially noticeable in trade movements. The individual conscience is ignored. Men are thought of in crowds and treated like dumb driven cattle. This is one of the weakest elements in twentieth-century civilisation, and one of the darkest blots upon its organisation. God thinks of the single man and loves him, but to his fellow-man he is little more than a pawn in the game. Men are moved in masses, and

the recalcitrant individual is coerced into line.

Now, with regard to the matter of which we are speaking, in our life's journey everything will depend upon whether our Lord Jesus Christ is a stranger or not. The words of Cleopas addressed to our Lord may well be taken to heart by ourselves. "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?" "Cleopas expresses surprise at the apparent ignorance of this Stranger. As if he would say, "Can you be surprised that we are sad after all that has happened?—events so great and so public, which have moved the whole populace so deeply, and must be fraught with the most direful consequences to our nation—is it possible you can be ignorant of these things? "But was He ignorant? He knew all about the events which had happened, and knew their significance far better than they did. What assurance this gives that He Who goes with us knows all things, He knows our "down-sitting and uprising and understandest our thought afar off."

But is there not a greater wonder even than this? Is it not more astonishing that, remembering Who He is and all He has said and done, Christ should be comparatively a Stranger to so many in this Christian land of ours?

Art Thou only a Stranger? Is He not a Stranger to multitudes? He comes not within their circle, He is not admitted within the precincts of their lives. Yet He is the only-begotten Son. He has a place in the bosom of the Father, though we may give Him no place. He is the One the Father sent into the world, not to condemn it, but to save it. He offered Himself on the Cross as a Propitiation for the whole world, and His miraculous birth, His unique life, His atoning death, His resurrection and ascension are facts recorded by those inspired of God to relate them, and can be read by us any day we please.

What can we expect to make of our lives if He is a Stranger? And is He going to be a Stranger for ever? What will eternity be without Him?

Let us think again of this narrative. Here He is amid our own scenes and circumstances. So great and yet so near. The universe is filled with His power and glory, and yet He condescends to walk our earth and sojourn amongst us. And the greatest thing that He will ever accomplish—His death— was accomplished on our earth. He is a Man, and has vanquished all that is opposed to man—and yet with all His victories about Him, but veiled, He joins these two as a Stranger, in order that He may speak to their hearts and bring them just the consolation they need. "Jesus Himself drew near and went with them.¹" He will join us too and go with us, if we will admit Him, our Saviour and Lord, and oh! what a difference, between having Him and having Him not!

VI

And He said unto them, What things? And they said unto Him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people (vv. 19-24).

WE now arrive at a most important part of our narrative. For the first time a Person is definitely brought before us, One so great that it is not too much to say that around Him gather all the facts of the Universe. His is the greatest Name in history.

So far, we have been occupied with two people on a journey. And this is interesting because we ourselves are on a journey. They “talked together “: and a large part of our life is made up of talk; and, more than that, a good deal depends upon how we talk and what we talk about. They were making for a village; and a village suggests simplicity, retirement and quiet. It is a great question whether humanity gains much, in the end, as life becomes more complex and artificial. We fear, to-day, that with aeroplanes, motor cars, wireless and all the rest of the paraphernalia of modern life which now dominate our existence—we fear that life is losing much of its simplicity, and that, with the loss of this simplicity, a good deal that might be worth retaining is going with it.

But although Emmaus was but a quiet village, the conversation of these two travellers was concerning matters of the greatest moment. A crisis in the world's history had occurred, and events had transpired which were to leave their mark upon humanity so long as men and women inhabit this globe. And all this was concerning Jesus of Nazareth. The habits, the customs, the ways of men were henceforth to be affected and moulded by these happenings. The world's chronology even would be affected. Very shortly, time was to be reckoned in view of, or as dating from, the birth of Christ. To-day, a great part of mankind date their letters and documents from this event. A proclamation of the King, some time ago, was said to be given “in the year of our Lord 1926.”

These facts are so commonplace, so universally accepted, that we are apt to miss their import. And one might do worse than pull oneself up with the challenge, How do I stand with regard to an event which has exerted such an influence over mankind, and compelled men, often in spite of themselves, to recognise it? If this event is of such world-wide importance, and confronts us every time we date a letter, can we afford to disregard it? Can I afford to shut it out of my life? Can it be right to attempt to live as though it had never been?

Our life, if it is to be in any sense on right lines, must be in proper relation to the great facts of the universe. Otherwise, there is something radically wrong, and sooner or later we must suffer the consequences. No one, with impunity, can cut himself adrift from the facts of history, can place himself in antagonism to the order of the universe of which he forms part, or dissociate himself from the God Who made it. No one has a right to say, nor will he gain anything by saying, “I am going to live my own life just as I please, without reference to anyone or anything/” There is an order of the universe, there are facts of history which have their relation to mankind, and to this order, and to these facts we are bound to pay some attention. There may be some whose inclination is to say, “I am absolutely indifferent to it all, I don't understand it, nor do I want to understand it. I am indifferent to everything but my own little life and that which interests me. And when this life is over I want to pass into oblivion.” This is not only unwise, and in every way to be deprecated, but it is impossible. In this connection, we are, every one of us, perfectly helpless. Once we enter upon life, once we form part of the universe, we cannot quit it, or deny our obligations. Resistance and rebellion can bring upon us only the direst consequences.

Surely, instead of talking as we have supposed, it is at once more reasonable and calculated to lead to greater satisfaction, to enquire how we can make the best of the situation. There is abundant evidence to prove, in spite of all that happens to the contrary, that God is good, and the order of the universe is right.

But life is very mysterious, and our planet (let alone ourselves) is but a speck in a boundless immensity; and we need all the light and all the help we can find. Someone has recently put this matter very strikingly:

“As a matter of fact,” he says, “it cannot be denied that man is imprisoned on one of the smaller of the planets, that he is enveloped by infinity on all sides, and that he lives but for a day in what seems to be a pitiless procession. The things in which he is interested, the whole of his world, form but an imperceptible oasis in the desert of immensity. Strange it is that he can be absorbed in things which from the vantage ground of infinity must seem smaller than the smallest playthings. ... In the midst of his trivial life, there rises in his mind one strange and overpowering thought—the thought of God . . . Back of the red, mysterious silent depths, beyond the silent meeting place of sea and sky, there is an inscrutable power. In the presence of it man is helpless as a stick or stone.”

And then the writer asks the question, “With what assurance can we meet the infinite power?” And he answers the question thus:

“There is for us no hope; we stand defenceless at length in the presence of unfathomed mystery, unless . . . our Saviour, this Jesus in Whom we had trusted, were Himself in mysterious union with the eternal God. Then comes the full rich consolation of God’s Word—the mysterious sentence in Philippians: * Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.”

And this brings us right up to our subject, for it is in this Jesus of Nazareth—travelling that road to Emmaus—making the third on that journey—revealing Himself at last to those two disciples—it is in Him we meet God: God and life and the universe are seen to be in harmony in and through Jesus Christ, and the heart in the presence of such a revelation is at rest.

“Concerning Jesus of Nazareth” It is to be observed that this is in answer to a further question from our Lord. In this way He makes them feel perfectly at home and free to disclose all they have to tell. He invites their confidence. Let us listen to what they have to tell us. “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.” Can we doubt this simple statement? Do we not feel, at once, we are listening to two reliable witnesses? And are we not bound to be interested in what they have to relate? The coming of such a One into the world must have had some meaning. He was mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. Jesus of Nazareth is as truly an historical personage as any other notable figure in the world’s history. And further, from the point of view of history, surely the Gospels have their historical value, and not only so, but they are far more reliable than any mere human records.

But this is not all that can be said of Him. What filled these two with sadness and perplexity

was the fact that this very One had been condemned to death, and that a death of a most ignominious nature. He had been crucified. "But we trusted," they declare, "that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel."

This last sentence demands some consideration, however brief. For unless we understand the history of Israel, nothing in Divine revelation will be clear. From this standpoint, our minds are carried back 2000 years. God had intervened in the world's history at that time in a way entirely new, which was destined to produce great changes and affect the whole of mankind. Certain words spoken by Moses to Israel as they were about to enter the Promised Land throw light upon this event:

"Remember," he says, "the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance"(Deut 32: 7-8).

This refers to the calling out of Abraham, consequent upon the confusion of tongues and the dispersion at Babel, and God's provision to make of him a great nation, and give to him and his seed the land of Canaan, with this further promise, "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

But before this was accomplished there was to be a strange and trying interval. God says to Abraham, "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance/'

In Genesis 15: where this is recorded, three things stand out in relation to it—sacrifice; a smoking furnace; and a burning lamp. In the interview between Jehovah and Abraham, the moment Abraham enquires as to the promised land, "Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? "sacri-
fice is mentioned. Sacrifice became the basis of all God's relations with His people, and the final guarantee that the promised land would be secured to them for ever.

Moreover, these sacrifices were the foreshadowing of a greater sacrifice, and reveal the purpose God had in His dealings with Israel, viz., that Christ should be born, and offer Himself up as a sacrifice for all men.

The smoking furnace has a significance of its own. There was a moral preparation necessary for the inheritance. "We must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God." "If children then heirs ... if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction/' was said of Israel. And the four hundred years that elapsed before they were given the land was an illustration of this fact.

Lastly, there was the lamp of prophecy. God ordained a prophetic ministry in Israel, which no other nation enjoyed— "I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed" (Ps 132: 17). While Zacharias declares:

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David; as He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began; that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant; the oath which He sware to our father Abraham.”

From all this we see that God had a double purpose in connection with Israel. Christ would be Abraham’s seed—the Son of God sprang out of Judah—and for this reason it was necessary that Israel should be a separate people; and, further, God intended, through Israel, with Christ as their King, to bless all nations.

Here was the warrant, then, for the expectation which filled the hearts of these two—Israel had a wonderful place in the mind and purpose of God, and their expectation all centred in the coming of their Messiah, Who was no other than the Son of God. That marvellous forecast of their future pre-eminence and glory contained in Isaiah 60:, closes thus: “They shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified.” And unless we understand the place designed and predestined for Israel as a nation, we shall never have correct views either of Scripture or of the Divine plan. When these two spoke of the redemption of Israel, they meant literally Israel, and no one else. And it is through Israel as a nation that God will fulfil His promise to Abraham, that in Him should all the families of the earth be blessed.

But let us return to the narrative. Something still more wonderful had occurred.

“Beside all this,” they say, “to-day is the third day since these things were done, yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; and when they found not His body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but Him they saw not.”

All these remarkable things are mentioned “concerning Jesus of Nazareth.” “A prophet mighty in deed and in word before God and all the people “: the redeemer of Israel: He had been crucified, but He was risen. This by no means exhausts what can be said of Him. The Scriptures testify that He is God incarnate, that all things were created by Him and for Him; and that He upholds all things by the word of His power; He has made purgation of sins and taken His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on High. And yet that same Person has been on earth as a Man. He walked with those two to Emmaus. Of Him it is written “Jesus Himself drew near and went with them.” He was deeply interested in them. He knew all about them. He conversed with them, and at length made Himself known, to their joy and delight. Again we ask, How can we be right unless we are right with Him? He is the centre of the world’s history: He should be the centre of each individual life.

VII

“Then He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And

beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (vv. 25-27).

AT this point, we arrive at a distinct change in our Lord's dealings with these two. Questionings are over. The case from their point of view has been stated: their hopes and fears have been revealed: and now, at last, the One beside them, into Whose ears they had been pouring their tale of woe, and concerning Whom all their anxieties had arisen, speaks. And what He is about to say will hush those fears, and change for ever their whole outlook upon life.

Has such a crisis ever arisen in the lives of any reading these lines? Can you look back upon a moment when something happened, which changed the current of your ideas, altered your outlook, and directed your life into a new channel? Happy indeed for you if this has been brought about by contact with the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the revelation of Himself in the Scriptures! For by these things you may test the genuineness and worth of such a change, and decide whether advance or decline has been the result. For many siren voices may be heard to-day, often bewitching, and not a few are beguiled thereby. These voices invite any who will listen to put their trust in tradition or ceremonies or ritualism; in Christian Science, which is not Christian; and in Science, which is falsely so-called; in Spiritism, and one knows not what beside. The one test, the safe test, the all-sufficient test is, Does the voice proclaim Christ to you? If you listen to it, will it give Him a larger place in your thoughts and affections, and will the Scriptures become more authoritative and more precious? The importance of what we are pressing is confirmed by the words our Lord now addresses to these two. He upbraids them for want of faith in what the prophets had spoken, and calls attention to the purport of their message. "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning Himself."

But whether or not any such great and sudden crisis has ever been your experience, still it is possible for a fuller revelation of Christ to be given you, and for a deeper understanding of the Scriptures to become yours, such as will give a new turn and colour to your life, and assure you a fullness of blessing to which hitherto you have been a stranger.

Such was very much the case with these two. We know nothing of their youthful history or early training; but it is possible, nay probable, that they had been brought up in devout Jewish households, and had some familiarity with the Scriptures. In any case, they had believed in Jesus as their Messiah, and they had become His followers. But a moment had now arrived which was to be to them like the dawn after a night of terror and darkness. Their horizon was to be extended beyond anything they had ever dreamed. For long they had been groping in the twilight. That twilight was to disappear in the light of the perfect day.

Does my reader know Christ as He is to be known? Do you walk in the continual enjoyment of that Light of Life? Is your heart being drawn closer to Him, charmed and captivated? Is He your object, your all? With adoring worship do you fall at His feet, in the sense of utter humiliation at what you are, yet overwhelmed with a sense of His worthiness?

"Jesus speaks and speaks to thee, Say, poor sinner, lov'st thou Me?"

Do you love Him? It will make all the difference to Life's Journey whether this is true of you or not.

The Lord Jesus now ceases to question and proceeds to reveal the true nature of the event which has perplexed these two. And He speaks with all the authority and the insight that belong to One Who is Master of the situation, Who is conscious of His own mission and perfectly acquainted with the Scriptures, and that these Scriptures concerned Himself. "O fools and slow of heart to believe," He says, "all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" These few words explain everything.

The whole of life really gathers around two things—the Bible and the One it reveals. The statement, at first, may seem to some to present a very limited conception of life, and to be somewhat crude, but the more it is pondered, the more, we believe, will its truth be conceded. For, in the first place, although other books may supplement the Bible, yet the Bible alone speaks at first hand and with absolute knowledge of all these great facts which are bound up with life and inseparable from it; what it is, whence it came, how it is to be lived, its responsibilities, relationships and final issues. The Bible alone gives us an authentic history of man upon the earth, from its beginning to its close; it alone deals with both his origin and destiny. And not only so, but the Bible views all these matters in their entirety—in their relation to God, and in relation to time and eternity. No other book presents these matters in their highest and broadest aspects. So that we cannot understand the problem of life—its true nature and meaning—except from the Bible. In regard to other books, even one which comes nearest to telling us anything of worth and of value about life, we should find that the nearer such a book comes to the truth, the more it approximates to, and borrows from, this Book of books.

Moreover, the Bible treats of subjects the most profound and universal to which we can address ourselves, and in a way no other book attempts to do. With such clearness and authority does it speak as to compel every honest soul to say, Here is truth. There is not a single subject which has any intimate and important bearing upon life, which the Bible does not touch. Its pages speak of God, as Maker, Governor, Redeemer and Judge. His Being, His attributes and His activities are presented with a fullness and preciseness as to leave nothing wanting. Do we ever think that apart from the Bible we should be entirely ignorant of the true nature of God, and we should have no explanation to give of the origin of things, of the history of man or how and why he was made? Enlightened as this age is believed to be, with its ceaseless investigations and experiments, yet science has arrived at no final conclusion as to the origin of matter, and seems as far as ever from reaching such finality, and the Bible account of Creation is the only one which holds the field, and it has held it for three thousand five hundred years.

We have said that the Bible treats of the most profound subjects. It speaks of sin and salvation—heaven and hell—good and evil; while one of its outstanding features is that it discloses the final end and aim of all things. This feature alone places the Bible in a category by itself. But more, it tells a sinner how he may escape from the guilt and power of sin. It reveals One Who is so interested in man that He numbers the very hairs of his head, Who bids

us cast all our care upon Him, and Who encourages us to pray to Him and invites us to trust Him. If asked to say, in one word, what is the great subject of the Bible, the answer would be, Salvation. Salvation from Satan, sin and death—salvation in Christ Jesus with eternal glory, for the one who believes and accepts its message. Salvation also from the bondage of corruption, so that eventually those who are brought into blessing will be emancipated from all the effects of sin and of the fall, and creation itself will be brought into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. And this salvation is in and through a Person and the work He accomplished, which God gave Him to do. Are we not right then in saying that these two things—the Bible and the One it reveals—lie at the centre of man's world, and touch him at every point? And can we not understand why, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets "our Lord "expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself"?

We shall do well, then, to pause here and give earnest consideration to the first clause of our Lord's opening remark. He upbraids them, and what He upbraids them for is, being "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." Notice the word "all," for there are many to-day who, while admitting that parts of the Bible are the Word of God, deny its plenary inspiration; but if there is one thing more certain than another revealed in our Lord's intercourse with these two, it is that He does not admit this distinction.

We ask our reader's attention to this subject because the Bible has a special relation to our main topic. We are thinking of Life and of Life's Journey, and, as someone has said "Literature is Life." This is pre-eminently true of the Bible, for it is the Word of Life and it lives and abides for ever. And your whole life will be affected by your attitude towards it.

"Turn the Bible o'er and o'er, Read its pages more and more: All the heart can e'er conceive, Or the loving heart believe, In its pages can be found— Turn the Bible round and round: O my soul, thou hungry bird, Taste the honey of the Word!"

God has been pleased to give us a Book, and that Book is capable of influencing our life more than anything else in the world, and it makes for all that is highest, and best, and most enduring. And if God has undertaken to write a book, will it not be as perfect as all His other works? The Book itself declares, again and again, how He gave directions for the writing of it. And although He employed human instruments, all was done at His command and under His control. Beware, then, of any suggestions that would belittle your estimate of its inspiration. Shun, as you would the plague, any suggestions which would lead you to believe that it is a very imperfect book; such as, that the opening chapters of Genesis are the product of a dark age, that the writer of it borrowed from folk-lore and fable, not worthy of credence. This may be safely accepted at the outset, that not one—yes, we repeat, not one—of the theories of the Higher critics, which, if true, would prove the Bible to be unreliable and tend to damage its veracity and authority, has ever been shown to be true, and they remain nothing more than theories to-day. The supposed contradictions, the alleged falsification of historical facts, are not there, and the assertion that the discoveries of science have made the Bible a back number is an assumption which has never been justified.

Accept this Book, then, as the very Word of God, and let it stand or fall, not by what men say about it, but by its own claims, and by whether it is able to justify those claims to a humble and

devout believer. It does not speak to men who approach it with an air of superiority, or with any animus, or who come merely to criticise, but it will speak to you, if you wish it and expect it, and when once it has spoken, and you respond, you will not very easily doubt it again.

Read the account of the Fall—Genesis 3:—one of the chapters against which criticism has specially directed its aim. Ponder it. And you will come to see that truth is written upon its very forefront. It is not a question of what lies on the surface, but of what lies within its depths, for it has depths which the shallow mind of the critic has never discovered. Truth mostly lies beneath, and seldom on the surface. We need not go beyond the first three words: “Now the serpent” How tragic and how true! Here we are, in three words, right at the heart and centre and core of things. Is not the trail of the serpent everywhere to-day? The whole story is true to life, true to experience, true to the facts as we know them. Fancy people losing sight of all this, and discussing the credibility or otherwise of a serpent able to talk! Then the apple—the forbidden fruit, whatever its nature. Are not people eating forbidden fruit to-day? and as regards their own individual lives falling lower and lower in consequence? The sin—the tragedy—lay in the disobedience. What that disobedience concerned is an altogether secondary matter. The fact is, in this wonderful chapter we have the world as it was, and is, and as it will remain, and the chief actors are all there. God is represented as seeking man: He is doing it to-day. Satan is depicted as the deceiver: he is that still. His “Yea, hath God said?” is being echoed on all sides of us. He is the arch-critic, and the father of them all. And man!—he is still disobedient, still at a distance, hiding away from God, and seeking to cover his nakedness with fig leaves of religion or morality. All this is true to life and to facts, as we know them.

VIII

“Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24: 27).

(CONTINUED)

THE subject of the Scriptures has come before us, with special reference to our Lord’s words in the above passage. We have dealt with the bearing of Scripture upon life, and endeavoured to show that our views of the Bible would necessarily influence our life, but all has not been said which needs to be said on so important a subject. It will be remembered that our closing reference was to Genesis 3: We pointed out how true to life, as it has always been and as it is to-day, are the facts and features therein set forth. Satan is still questioning God’s Word and substituting a lie for the truth. Man is still trusting to the sight of his eyes, grasping at some fancied gain, and seeking to be wise above that which is written. The description which the apostle John gives of the world—“the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life”—corresponds with Genesis 3:

“When the woman saw that the tree was good for food “— “the lust of the flesh “: “and that it was pleasant to the eyes “—” the lust of the eyes “: “and a tree to be desired to make one wise “—” the pride of life.”

Further, that marvellous statement of verse 15 still remains the key-stone and kernel of all prophecy. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." It shines as some beacon light across the waste of waters, the goal, even to this day, to which all hearts and eyes are directed. For while finding its partial fulfilment in the Cross, its full fruition is not yet. This statement, which occurs at the very opening of the inspired page, finds its complete answer in the last book of the Bible, for in The Revelation is depicted, in all its developments, the final conflict between the seed of the serpent—that old serpent called the Devil and Satan—and the seed of the woman—the Man Child, of whom it is predicted that He is to rule all nations (chaps, xii-xiv).

For ourselves, we are prepared to base the truth of the whole Bible, and the fact of its inspiration, upon the opening chapters of Genesis.

We would urge the reader to accept the Bible at its own valuation. Let your views of inspiration be grounded upon what the Book says of itself. Surely the inspired writers know better than anyone else the nature and source of the inspiration that was theirs. The Book's own testimony ought to be accepted. The people best qualified to give us the truth as to its origin and character are those who wrote it, and those to whom these sacred writings were committed. The apostle asks, "What advantage then hath the Jew?" "And he answers his own question thus: "Chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." "Chiefly! "When we remember some of the advantages of the Jew, what a place this gives the Scriptures! Paul calls them "oracles of God." That is, they reveal and interpret God's mind to us. Now first, how can God's mind be known unless He reveals it? And secondly, if He reveals it, does anyone suppose that He will allow Himself to be misrepresented? Why, we should do better than that ourselves. May not the people to whom these oracles were committed be trusted to know something of their true character? Would God have committed to their custody such a priceless treasure—a favour He granted to no other people on earth—without acquainting them fully with its nature?

This is the Bible's estimate of its contents—" oracles of God." According to the critics, all that was committed to the Jews were some very doubtful records of uncertain value and date, containing, of course, something good and important, but of a very mixed character.

Not only would we urge upon everyone to accept the Bible's own estimate of itself, but above all, to accept our Lord's estimate. He is called "the faithful and true witness," and He never hesitated about this matter. Our Lord spoke of that part of the Bible we know as the Old Testament, and which is substantially the same as in His day—as the very Word of God. "What is written in the law, how readest thou?" He enquired, as though that were the final court of appeal. "The Scriptures cannot be broken," He declared on another occasion, and then immediately uses the expression "the Word of God," which could only have reference to the Scriptures He had just spoken of. In this passage He puts "your law," "the Scriptures," and "the Word of God" all together and on one level (see John 10: 34-35). On another occasion He said to those who challenged Him, "Have ye never read?" "To the Sadducees, who called in question the resurrection, "Do ye not therefore err because ye know not the Scriptures?" "And on one occasion He even puts the writings of Moses on a level with His own

words: "If ye believe not his writings," He declares, "how shall ye believe My words?" (John 5: 47).

The testimony of the writers of the New Testament is in full accord with the above. In the Epistle to the Hebrews there are many references to the fact of God having spoken. Indeed this great fact confronts us all through the history of Israel and of the early Church. "God spake all these words saying "": this is how the giving of the law is introduced. "God spake ... by the prophets." This covers another most important period. God "hath in these last days spoken unto us by (or in) His Son," here is the climax. But in every case, it is equally God who spoke. Let us ask again, If God has spoken, is it conceivable that He would allow His words either to be forgotten or to be so distorted as to lose their value and meaning? or would He allow them to become so mingled with fable that it is left to us to disentangle truth from error, and fiction from fact, as best we can? If God has indeed spoken to men, is there anything more important than that we should have such communication on record, and know exactly what was said? It is this priceless boon that inspiration secures to us. Apart from inspiration, the Divine message must have been mutilated in its transmission, inasmuch as it concerns matters far above and outside the ordinary affairs of men, and which are beyond human ken. Thus the apostle Paul tells us, not only that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," but that these things can only be communicated by spiritual means, that is, by the power of the Holy Ghost. "Which things also we speak," he says, "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth: comparing spiritual things with spiritual." This last clause is translated by one as "adapting spiritual words to spiritual truths." Not only must the truths be revealed, first of all, but *words* must be given in which to communicate them. And this gift is constantly in the Scriptures attributed to the Holy Spirit—the Third Person in the Holy Trinity. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost "; and again, "As the Holy Ghost saith "(Heb 3: 7; 2Pet 1: 21; 1Cor 3: 3-4)

The wonderful truths contained in the Scriptures never could have been given to us apart from inspiration. And one proof of this is that when men—even the very best of them— have attempted, with their ordinary powers, to formulate creeds, such efforts have been more or less a failure¹; and this in spite of the fact of having the Bible before them, containing the very truths they wished to embody in their own words.

Moreover, these holy men knew when they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Some of the prophets tell us the exact day and month and year when the word of God came to them (e.g., Ezek 1: 1-3; Hag 1: 1, 2: 1; Zech 1: 1, 7). So distinct was the message, so different was this experience from every other, that doubt as to its origin there was none.

Further, inspiration, such as we speak of, is outside the will of man altogether. We are distinctly told this in so many words: "the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man." And certain facts confirm this. Moses was the first inspired writer, and he did not live until after man had been on the earth at least 2,500 years. That there were communications from God earlier than the time of Moses, we know, and these communications were doubtless preserved in the memory, and handed down from one to another. The longevity of the people at this period made this comparatively easy. But as far as there is any record, the first command to write a book was given by God to Moses. This is to be found in Exodus 17: 14,

and has a very special interest. It seems to indicate that as soon as Israel's birth as a nation took place, so important was this fact, both to themselves, to the whole world, and to God, that they must have a book, not only to record their history (that was only by the way), but that, through their history, God's ways might become known on earth, His saving health among all nations, and His purposes of blessing be accomplished, through the incarnation, death and resurrection of His beloved Son. And so great were these transactions, so closely affecting all mankind, that God saw to it they should be recorded, and recorded correctly. So that there was a space in the world's history of 2,500 years, at least, during which there was no inspired record, such as we have in the Bible. And the only explanation is— for if inspiration, as we now speak of it, is but an ordinary natural gift, this fact is difficult to explain—the only explanation is that God did not choose to inspire men in this special way until the nation was present through whom He would bring into the world the One who should accomplish all His will. Another interval—not to mention minor ones —occurs between the prophet Malachi and the birth of our Lord. The gift of inspiration was renewed when Christ appeared. And then Scripture was completed. Now for nearly two thousand years nothing has been added to these Divine Oracles. How and why is this? There seems to be a double answer. The revelation is complete, on the one hand, and nothing more can be added, because nothing more has been revealed. While on the other, inspiration, as we have said, is a special gift, and for two thousand years it has been withheld. It was bestowed for a special purpose, for as we have indicated, apart from it the revelation given could not have been transmitted. When that revelation was complete, inspiration was no longer needed, and it ceased.

People sometimes talk as though Paul might have been a great Christian, but, after all, he only wrote as a man, and merely gave us his own impressions. Well, let any who think this try to give us another epistle to the Romans or Ephesians, and if we mistake not, their very ideas and expressions will betray them, and in addition, it would be found, either that they were repeating what had already been said and were unconscious borrowers, or that their utterances were altogether out of harmony with other parts of the inspired Word.

If God can make a world, He can surely write a book, if He chooses to do so; and that He should thus choose is as worthy of Himself as it is beneficial to His creatures. Has He no power, or no will, to communicate His mind? Blessed be His name! He has both, and, if He does so, His work here will be as perfect as is His work everywhere. It may be objected, in creation He worked directly, but in the case of this book there was human instrumentality. This may seem to be a serious difference and to create a difficulty, but is it really so? Cannot God control the creature He has made? In other connections—unhallowed ones—we hear of "controls/¹ and the medium is credited with transmitting the exact message received. Surely this is not confined to what is evil. Can seducing spirits and demons communicate, but God, Who is a Spirit, cannot? In this connection, it is not a little remarkable that in one particular verse in the New Testament these two facts are presented side by side. The passage referred to will be found in Paul's first epistle to Timothy, chapter 4:, verse 1: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons." Here we are told that the Spirit speaketh, which of course means God. But evil spirits and demons also speak, or how could people give heed to them? While, in both cases, these communications are to men and through men.

Of all the facts of the universe, amongst the most interesting must be placed this one, that God is an Author and that He has written a book. And, like other authors, He employed an amanuensis. The first reference to God as a writer is, we believe, in Exodus 24: 12:

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to Me into the mount, and be there, and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written.”

And this is no isolated reference. In chap. 31: 18 we read:

“And He gave unto Moses . . . two tables of testimony, tables of stone, *written with the finger of God.*”

Chapter 32: 16 is even more emphatic:

“And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.”

To say that all this was said simply to impose upon the people and give to these laws a fictitious value would be unworthy, if not something worse. Surely, when the Governor and Judge of the Universe set forth His laws and claims, and gave to the nation He had selected for a special purpose a moral standard, it need not surprise us if He caused them to be put on record and preserved. And if this was so with regard to law, would it be otherwise with regard to His grace? Was nothing to be written about His own beloved Son and the love that gave Him? or about His advent and the manner of it, or of what He came to accomplish? How could any record of such stupendous transactions, with all that they involve, ever have been worthy or adequate, if left to man's caprice or to his unaided powers! If Paul could say, “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?” “may not we with equal force enquire, Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should give to mankind a reliable account of His ways and purposes?”

When people ask how was it done? how were those men inspired? the “how” may be difficult to explain. But, thank God, it is equally unnecessary to ask the question. The great and essential point is not the “how/” but the fact. The *how* is with God. People asked the apostle, “how are the dead raised up?” and he replied, such was a foolish question, if not a little stronger than that. Yet there is one passage of Scripture which comes somewhat near to explaining the “how” of inspiration. It is with reference to the building of the Temple, and the pattern given to David. In I Chronicles 28: 19, we read: “All this, said David, the Lord made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern.” That Temple was to be God's house; it was to enshrine and set forth spiritual truth of a most exalted nature, even as the Tabernacle did before it, and both David, as well as Moses, were shown the pattern. In some mysterious way every point and part of the structure was made known to them. All was exactly according to the original design. If God took such pains with regard to two buildings which were ultimately to disappear, would He be less careful about His other communications which concern more intimately His own character and the revelation of Himself in Christ? If He could make known His mind, in the one case, could He not equally do so in the other? “All this, said David, the Lord made me understand in writing by His hand

upon me.” Surely this is a sufficiently clear and satisfying definition of inspiration.

Do those who speak so glibly, and with such assurance, about the errors of the Bible, and who alas! instead of revealing its treasures are everlastingly occupied with attempting to discover its defects, and who think it childish and superstitious to believe in the inerrancy of Scripture—do these gentlemen ever trouble to think of the effect of their doctrines? We are left in a state of uncertainty and confusion, and that is where multitudes are to-day, as a direct consequence of such pernicious teaching. If the Bible is not trustworthy, where shall we find the infallible referee to decide what is truth and what is error? The Higher Critics are not agreed amongst themselves. And when every individual sets himself up to be a judge as to what part of the Bible he is to accept and which reject, we are not in a cloud of uncertainty merely, we have reached chaos.

May we invite the reader to note this difference: The Higher Critics, the Modernists, throw doubt upon the Scriptures. Our Lord says “O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.” Now, our spiritual happiness and prosperity will depend upon which view we accept. Under Modernists’ teaching we are bound to have less faith in Scripture. Our Lord and Master summons us to a greater faith. To which shall we listen? He places no limitation upon the amount of faith or the scope of it. He says we are “to believe all that the prophets have spoken.” The Bible is a miracle, and man, left to his own resources, could no more have produced it than he can make a sun.

As to this vital matter, then, what are the authorities ranged on opposite sides? On the one side are the Critics, differing widely amongst themselves, and separated into opposing schools, the teaching of earlier schools being rendered completely obsolete by that of later ones; and we have the so-called Modernists, and along with these we have all shades and degrees of speculation and doubt. And on the other side, we have the direct, unqualified testimony of our Lord: we have the united witness of the first preachers of Christianity, and we have the Book itself, making claims which would be utterly preposterous and presumptuous, if made on behalf of any merely human document.

In view of this, let us accept without reservation and more firmly than ever, the inspired estimate given us by the apostle Paul: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect” (2Tim 3: 16). They can indeed “make wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” This being so, we can understand the bearing of the Scriptures upon life, and this is why we have felt called upon to enlarge upon the subject. Perhaps there is hardly any topic of such importance at the present time. And as showing the effect of the Bible upon practical conduct, we may close this section of our subject with some words of Richard Green, the historian. In his *Short History of the English People*, he declares:—

“No greater moral change ever passed over a nation” (as the effect of the translation of the Bible into the English tongue, commonly known as the Authorised Version). “Its literary effect was however less than its social, and by far the greatest of all, was its effect on the character of the people at large. ... A new conception of life, a new moral and religious impulse, spread through every class.”

How different to-day! A friend of ours was told recently by a worker in the Salvation Army, that their work on the spiritual side was declining. When asked the reason, she replied without hesitation that it was due to the Higher Criticism. "Once/' she said, "I could make people tremble by quoting a text—I cannot do so now".

Need we wonder, then, that some of the final words of our Lord to His disciples before He left them have special reference to the Scriptures? This one fact alone should be enough for us, for all He said tended to enhance their value.

"And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, *Thus it is written*, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day."

IX

"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? "(Luke 24: 26).

OUR Lord sums up the whole situation in these few words —" Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? "He is the centre of all—the centre round which everything gathers, in time and eternity, in heaven and earth: all Scripture, all God's words and purposes refer to Him. As He said: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."

Notice the contrast between the way the two disciples summarise the matter, and the way in which our Lord presents it. They say, "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel/" Our Lord says, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? "They made Israel the centre. In the other case, Christ becomes the centre. The Holy Spirit by the pen of the apostle Peter uses identical language with that just quoted, when he sums up the teaching of the prophets thus, "The sufferings of Christ and the glory which should follow." Here we find the true centre of the circle, and if we are in proper relation to Christ, we are in proper relation to everything else. Everything concerns Him first, and us in Him—He has entered into His glory, but it was by way of suffering, that He might bring us there.

Sufferings and glory! How these two things fire the imagination and fill the heart! What an appeal, when glory is reached through suffering! So often in this world glory is associated with selfish desires and aims. Here, the suffering which led to glory was the highest, deepest, noblest ever known. World-wide in its aspect, eternal in its efficacy, fraught with incalculable good, the suffering that Christ endured will fill a world with bliss, and be a means of blessing to countless millions. These sufferings are distinguished from all others:—

1. They were sufferings at the hand of God. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? "was the cry of this Sufferer. These words set forth the peculiar character of Christ's

- death. The forsaking by God, when made sin, is the essence and kernel of the Saviour's propitiatory and sub-stitutionary work. It tells us that Christ was a Sin-bearer, taking the sinner's place and bearing the sinner's judgment. This is the only explanation of the cry. Read Psalm 22: and, if you believe the Scripture, you must be assured of this. It is confirmed by other Scriptures. "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him, He hath put Him to grief. When Thou shalt make His soul (or when His soul shall make) an offering for sin." Christ's death as a sacrifice for sin is the central truth of Christianity. He "was delivered for our offences." "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." "He was once offered to bear the sins of many."
2. He suffered at the hands of man. "He being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God ye have taken and by wicked hands, have crucified and slain." That death which was for man, became the occasion of man's deepest offence—sin was exhibited in its most diabolical form. Man's heart was laid bare. Divine love, at the moment of its greatest sacrifice, was confronted by human hatred. While Christ was making atonement for sin, man was filling up the cup of his iniquity. He afflicted the One Who bore the stripes that his sin deserved.
 3. But thank God, all this did not place man beyond the reach of Christ's atoning work. "He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." "The Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Thus, these sufferings stand alone. This is one of the glories of the Redeemer. He could suffer on behalf of others, and His sufferings availed. They have been accepted by God on behalf of all that believe; and as a consequence, "Their sins and iniquities," says God, "will I remember no more."
 4. The reason is, that these sufferings were according to the will of God. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God," was His utterance in view of all He came to do, and this utterance stands in relation to His sacrifice. He was "fore-ordained before the foundation of the world." "In the volume of the Book," He declares, "it is written of Me." "Thus it is written and thus it behoved Christ to suffer."
 5. Another peculiar feature of these sufferings is, they were foretold. Possessing a character all their own and accomplished in fulfilment of God's will, so unlike all others are they and so absolutely necessary to our redemption, that God spoke of them beforehand. He draws attention to them for a double reason, not only that we might realise their importance, but that we might understand their meaning. Thus these sufferings are the subject of inspiration, and inspiration is witnessed to by the sufferings, for only God could tell men what those sufferings would be and what they meant.
 6. They have a double character, (a) They are substitutionary. Christ took our place, and in that place bore all that was our due. But they have another aspect, (b) There is what God found for Himself there. In the very place of distance, where sin had placed man under God's judgment, there arose to God a sweet savour of all that Christ was. Love, obedience, self-sacrifice, all went up as an offering to God. There was what Christ presented to God, as well as that which came upon Him from God. In addition, that death was a revelation of God. The veil was rent, that is, God's heart was fully revealed. In that death God came out to man in perfect love, yet in accordance with absolute justice, and this has opened the way for man to go in to God.

If such were Christ's sufferings, is He not worthy to enter into His glory? Sufferings and glory! Who can measure the one? who can measure the other? The glory is commensurate with the

sufferings. God the Father has given His own answer to the sufferings of God the Son! That Son became the Man Christ Jesus. He became Man to fulfil all the Divine purposes; He became Man that He might traverse that road to Emmaus—that He might join those two on the journey, and be entertained by them in their home.

But above all, He became Man to bear the judgment that lay upon man. And the glory is God's answer to it. Just as surely as those two at Emmaus, long ago, received Him into their house, so surely will He receive us into His glory, that we may be with Him for ever. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory? "His glory! but that glory is ours—and every ray of that glory tells us of the sufficiency of His work and the security of those who rely upon it. The sufferings and the glory are complements one of another.

"We trusted it had been He which should have redeemed Israel," said these two elect Israelites. Yes, Israel will be redeemed. Glory awaits her, for it is written as to her future, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." And God says He will do this that He may be glorified. But the glory we are now contemplating embraces more than this. It is *His* glory. He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. He said on the night of His betrayal, when Judas had gone out, "Now is the Son of man glorified"—and added, that God would "straightway glorify Him." He prayed "Glorify Thou Me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." He has ascended on high, He has led captivity captive. He has "gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him." He has "set Himself down at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens." Hear the Divine voice declaring the decree: "Jehovah said unto my Lord, sit Thou at My right hand." "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Stephen, "being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God and Jesus."

Nor is it untrue, or any exaggeration, to connect that road to Emmaus with this surpassing scene of glory. He who traversed the one, has entered the other. The home at Emmaus, the dwelling-place of these two pilgrims like ourselves, is in one sense linked with His glory. He "dwelt among us "and His glory was once seen here, as it is now seen amid far different surroundings. They welcomed Him into their surroundings down here. He will presently welcome us into His, and we shall be as much at home with Him there, as they and others were at home with Him here. Indeed more so. And if only we know Him—know Him as He is to be known, and dwell near enough to Him, we shall welcome the thought that where He is there we shall be. His sufferings are the all-sufficient justification and reason for our being there. He will not be alone, and, on the other hand, we shall not feel that we are strangers.²

All this will be the answer to His sufferings. No wonder the hearts of these two burned within them. Christ's sufferings and glory are enough to make all hearts burn, and this not only for time, but for eternity. In Luke 24: we see Him with us—we see Him on the road and in the house, but before the chapter closes He is received up into heaven. Yet He is ever the same Person. He does not forget us. And He Who has entered His glory will one day come to receive us to Himself, and those words will be fulfilled: "The glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them."

The sufferings—the glory: and the glory tells us what the sufferings are worth.

Matthew Arnold, who drifted away from the Churches, and some of whose ideas and opinions were very far removed from what is termed orthodoxy, died suddenly, one Sunday in Liverpool, where he was on a visit to relatives. In the morning he had listened to a sermon on “The Shadow of the Cross.” He confessed afterwards, he had seldom been so deeply impressed by any sermon. As he came down to dinner, a servant overheard him singing softly to himself,

“When I survey the wondrous Cross On which the Prince of glory died.”*

In the afternoon he went for a walk. He referred to the sermon, and made this remark: “Yes, the Cross remains, and in the straits of the soul makes its ancient appeal.” An hour later his heart had ceased to beat.

X

“And they drew nigh unto the village whither they went; and He made as though He would have gone further. But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.¹ And He went in to tarry with them”(Luke 24: 28-29).

WE are now reaching the end of our journey, and two thoughts arise. (1) Was there ever a journey like it? Christ and these two—a pattern journey—the model on which all journeys should be begun, continued and ended. For unless the Lord is our companion on the road, whatever else or whoever else accompanies us, life is a failure. His company alone can make life all it ought to be and may be. (2) The second thought is, Does not the simplicity we behold here, warn us against that mysterious and superstitious form of belief with which Christianity, during the ages since, has become encrusted? Let us be assured of one thing, that what Christianity was at the beginning, such it is now, when known in its reality, for Christ has not changed. In the scene before us, we witness simple, direct, personal intercourse with Him, we behold all His gracious solicitude on their behalf, and such it is still, between Christ and every soul that knows Him. This scene, if souls only entered into it and understood it, would sound the death knell of all priestcraft, and of every religious system which puts the soul at a distance, and brings in frail human intermediaries between God and the worshipper. And the remarkable thing is that all we have been looking at took place after the death and resurrection of Christ. Had all this happened before, it might have been said that now there is a difference. But Christ was in His resurrection state when He met these two, though not yet glorified. The fact is, the work He had accomplished had only brought Him nearer and made Him more accessible.

As we have said, the end of the journey is reached, and Christ, by His presence and ministry, had made it for ever memorable. He had given a new meaning to life. He had explained and made coherent all the facts which before had seemed so mysterious and out of place, and He can do this for every one of us. And now we read: “They drew nigh unto the village whither they went.” As we have said, the end of the journey was at hand. Whither are we going? Has our life, as to its future and finality, any aim, any goal? Are we apt to banish such thoughts

entirely, as gloomy or out of place? Or, if we at times entertain them, do they take any definite shape? Have we only some faint dim hope that all will be well at the end? True Christianity inspires something more definite than this. One who had the very deepest experience of what it means could say, "To depart and to be with Christ, which is far better!" At another time, he spoke of being "absent from the body, present with the Lord." The end for him was to be with Christ.

There is an end to the journey of life, and it is of the utmost importance how it ends. That depends upon the way life has been lived, and upon the company we have kept on the road. Thank God, there are last-moment acquaintances with Christ. The soul may turn to Him in its extremity, and not be refused. There is the instance of the dying thief, in the chapter before the one we are considering. But let not any presume upon this. It may be, the dying thief had never had any previous opportunity. But where opportunities have been slighted, they do not always recur, and where the soul has become hardened in opposition, the very desire to turn may no longer remain.

But even where there is death-bed repentance, how unsatisfactory! Years of intercourse and communion with Christ lost, and opportunities of growth and of usefulness missed, which can never be recovered. How important then that we should begin the journey of life at the earliest possible moment with Him Who is the light of life, so that "all our days may be bright!" As we draw nigh to the grave, there is no company like the company of the One Who is "the Resurrection and the Life!"

Night was drawing on as they reached the village. We must remember that, so far, the Saviour had not disclosed Himself. He was still, in one sense, a stranger. Yet a remarkable thing had happened. They were conscious of an influence stealing over them for which they could hardly account. They describe it later when they compare experiences, and say to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" "And this blessed experience made them ardently wish for more of His company.

In one way, it is impossible to lay too much emphasis upon experiences of this kind. An experimental Christianity is ardently to be desired and sought after. Indeed, a Christian without experience of this nature is not properly a Christian. To suppose that we can be in contact with Christ without such contact producing any effect, or that such a tremendous fact as the indwelling of the Holy Spirit can be true of us without having an experience which, to some extent, corresponds with these realities, is to suppose something which certainly God never intended. The Scriptures are so wonderful, the blessings they unfold are so marvellous, the revelation of God they contain is so affecting, that when they are opened to us, and their glories made known, we are bound to exclaim, as did these two—"Did not our heart burn within us!"

But, at the same time, there is need to warn the reader, first, against looking within and trying to work up such experiences—occupied with them for their own sake; for they are only healthy as they flow from occupation with Christ; and secondly, especially to warn him against a most subtle snare of the present day, which not only insinuates a false experience, but sets it in contrast with, if not in opposition to, the authority of the Bible. We are told not to trouble about

authority, but to accept the collective experience of religious people. And we are told to do this even when that collective experience runs counter to the Scriptures. All this is entirely opposed to the teaching of our chapter. The experience we are dwelling upon is very different from that of people who are not agreed as to the nature of the experience which they deem so essential, and which certainly does not harmonise with that of these two at Emmaus, nor does it spring from the same cause. Their happy experience was due to the fact that the Lord had talked to them and opened to them the Scriptures. These others speak of an experience independent of Scripture and even antagonistic to it. Our Lord magnified the Scriptures in every possible way.

Let it be said, and tenaciously held, that all true experience flows from the knowledge of Christ and of the Scriptures. It is through the Scriptures God talks to us, and He never says anything that is contrary to Scripture. To put experience in the place of external authority is like imagining the furniture inside a house to be the foundation. We cannot discover truth, or be assured that when discovered it is truth, apart from some external authority. And thank God, we have that external authority in the Bible.

So blessed had been the experience of these two, listening to an unfolding of Scripture such as never had fallen upon human ears before, they invite their unknown Companion to enter their dwelling. "He made as though He would have gone further." Supposing they had allowed Him to proceed, how great would have been their loss! Are we not reminded that important matters sometimes depend upon trivial circumstances? If those words, "Abide with us" had remained unspoken how much would have been missed! Blessed indeed is it when we want more of His company. And we can have as much of it as we like, but He will not force His presence upon us any more than He did upon these two. "But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them."

They had known His company by the way, they were now to enjoy it in their home. We need Him everywhere. How different home life becomes when Christ is a welcome Guest. Over the front door of a large house known to us, on a stone in the centre of the doorway, are engraved these words, "With Thy blessing let the house of Thy servant be blessed for ever" (2Sam 7: 29). Where His presence is known blessing is secured. There is an atmosphere of peace and contentment unknown in worldly households. Especially do we need Him when life has reached its eventide. Strength may fail, many things may have to be relinquished, and former friends may have passed away, but if, like these two, we say, "Abide with us,"^M He will not leave us. How readily He responds! "He went in to tarry with them."

Is the day far spent with us in the journey of life? Is evening drawing on? Is there anything more solemn and sad than for Christ to be unknown and unwanted, when everything is slipping from our grasp and the candle of life is burning low in the socket? He will come to us even then, if we want Him and invite Him. But if we have spent the day in His company, if we set out on our journey hand in hand with Him, and He has walked and talked with us by the way, then we may be assured that even a fuller revelation may be ours as the day draws to a close, and we say:—

“Abide with me: fast falls the eventide;

The darkness deepens, Lord, with me abide; When other helpers fail and comforts flee, Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day,
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see,
O Thou Who changest not, abide with me.

Be Thou Thyself before my closing eyes,
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies;
Heaven's morning breaks and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.”

XI

“Known of them in breaking of bread”(Luke 24: 30-35).

LET us not forget that up to this point Christ was still a Stranger to these two. But He is now about to make Himself known, and therefore we have arrived at a most important point in the narrative. And the means the Saviour chooses to employ by which to make Himself known becomes a point of utmost consequence to us.

We read “He sat at meat with them.” Behold Him! He has responded to their invitation, He is their guest. How near, how familiar, how condescending and how kind! Yet we cannot forget Who He was—the Creator of all worlds, the Heir of all things, the One Who dwells in the bosom of the Father, Immanuel, God with us. Immeasurable difference and distance separated Him from the other two. Yet He is sitting at their board, and so at home is He with them, so perfectly human, so humble and so gracious they do not realise, at the moment, the tremendous character of the occasion. No terror seizes them, as when that Heavenly Visitor appeared to Daniel, and he felt his comeliness turned to corruption and he retained no strength (ch. x). For the moment, they are unaware of the nature of their Guest. He sups with them. Their provision is shared just as if He were one of them, when lo! of a sudden, there is a change. From being the guest, He becomes the host. “He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.” And, in a moment, He is revealed. “Their eyes were opened and they knew Him.” The Lord becomes the Giver, and dispenses fare such as they had never tasted before. Bread that He blesses is food for soul as well as body.

What are we to learn from this? We need to notice, first, that the broken bread was the symbol of His death. And there can be little doubt that one reason why the Lord chose to employ this means was to bring home to them the fact that the very event which had filled them with consternation and perplexity was really to be the means of their greatest blessing. That, we believe, is one reason why He used the broken bread to open their eyes.

But He chose this method also for another purpose. It was not an arbitrary choice, nor was it

accidental. We believe with all our heart that this action of His was intended to have special significance—a significance that would continue so long as this dispensation lasts. The Lord adopted this peculiar and special means to open their eyes to convey to us the lesson that as long as the Church is here, He will make Himself known to His people “in the breaking of bread”.

It is unnecessary to raise any academic questions as to whether this was actually the Lord's Supper. To these two it could not be exactly a feast of remembrance, for Christ was with them. Nor was the Lord's Supper *formally* instituted as a Church rite until Paul addressed his letter to the Corinthians. Nevertheless, and none the less, our Lord's action here was with special intent, and more than one feature of the Supper is present.

Notice that the phraseology agrees exactly with the words used at the institution of the Supper. Two chapters earlier in this same gospel, we read, “He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them.” The only difference between this and what we have now before us is “gave thanks “for “blessed,” which really is no difference, for blessing is giving thanks (1Cor 10: 16.—Here it might read “The cup of blessing which we give thanks for”). Indeed in Mark's account of the Supper it is “blessed” (Mark 14: 22). So that the words here in Luke 24: are identical with those used at the institution of the Supper.

Next, the effect. The effect in both cases is the same. In partaking of the Lord's Supper there is not only remembrance, but there is something which accompanies that remembrance. He shows us His hands and His side. In other words, we become conscious, if only for a moment, of His presence, and thus as with these two, He is “known of us in the breaking of bread”.

We repeat, the Lord chose this special means of making Himself known. It is a remarkable fact that the broken bread did for those two what even the wonderful exposition of Scripture, to which they had listened, had not done. They had listened until their hearts burned within them, but their eyes remained closed. Why did the Lord choose some other means unless with a special object? What further proof is necessary that the method the Lord employed was pre-ordained and intentional? Does it not become more and more clear that the lesson He intended to convey was this: that all down the ages, until He comes again, the breaking of bread would be the means by which He would make Himself known?

We are considering life's journey, and we would say here and now that if, so far, any have not enjoyed the experience of which we have spoken, then the richest experience this life can yield has remained unknown. Perhaps some reading these lines have never partaken of the Lord's Supper, while to thousands who have partaken, it is little more than a formal commemoration or a mere religious rite. The Lord Himself is not seen. His death and all that it means is but faintly realised, if apprehended at all. We do not mean that such disbelieve in Christ and His work. As a matter of course, the greater number accept both as facts. But into the deep meaning of His death they do not enter. How many, even professed believers, fail to see that His death put away all their sins, removed the distance between them and God that sin had brought in, and is the expression of Divine love in all its fullness? The broken bread and poured-out wine are the symbols of that death, and we are privileged to pass, in spirit, beyond the symbols to the reality, until we are face to face with a love stronger than death, and

which many waters could not quench. We know Him in all the fullness of that love—changeless and measureless—which poured itself out in death.

The effect of this upon us would be the same as upon these two: “And they rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem/” All their weariness, all their depression, has passed. They thought not of fatigue, nor of the darkness of the night. That return journey of eight miles seemed as nothing. Such is the effect of seeing the Lord! Their hearts were so full of joy, they found it impossible to keep it to themselves; others must be told of their discovery. They had set out from Jerusalem, earlier in the day, sad and hopeless, their only thought being to hide their discomfiture and bury their sorrow, if they could. But one sight of Christ had changed all that. Sorrow invariably makes us feel we want to be alone. Not so joy. Joy we like to share. Joy makes the heart young and lifts up the head. Such is the effect of the presence of Christ. We read in John 20: “Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.” They had met “for fear of the Jews.” When Christ appeared, their fear was changed to gladness.

This may be our experience to-day. The love of Christ consciously enjoyed—that love of which His death is the great token—will send us on our way rejoicing. We may bring our toils and cares, our business and burdens with us, as we approach the feast, but they roll away like the morning mist before the sun, the moment we are in touch with Christ. Sorrow can no more be in His Presence, when all that His Presence means is realised, than darkness can dwell with light.

That Christ intended to signify by this act something more than what is accidental or local or temporary, we cannot doubt. This incident is of no private interpretation. As already intimated, we believe that by it He intended to convey to His Church this truth, that through all time He would commune with His own in this way. He would use the Supper to reveal Himself! How simple, yet how satisfying, was that feast at Emmaus. There was no gorgeous ceremonial; He came to them where they were and as they were. There was no temple, nothing but a humble dwelling. There was no priest, they sat at the table with Him. How all this rebukes the pomp and circumstance of our day! How far we have travelled from the simplicities of Bethany and Emmaus! Yet all Scripture agrees in witnessing to the fact that Christ comes to the heart that desires His company. There may be direct communion. And the last word to the Church, spoken by an ascended Christ, is but a rehearsal of this same truth, and tells us that the scene at Emmaus may be enjoyed by ourselves.

“Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with Me” (Rev 3: 20).

What is this but the experience of Emmaus over again? The same Presence, the same simplicity, the same method. The only difference is that we have not now to constrain Him. We have only to hear His voice. It is He who speaks, we have but to respond.

But to return to Emmaus. A surprising thing happens. The moment they knew Him, He ceased to be seen of them. This seems, at first sight, as extraordinary as what occurred at the beginning, when He joined them, and their eyes were holden that they should not know Him. Their eyes had been holden all the time up till now. When they are opened and they know Him,

He vanishes. But here again, this action on His part throws further light upon the main purpose the Lord had in taking that journey. Just as, in the first instance, their eyes had been holden because they were no longer to know Him after the flesh and as Israelites, His purpose being to enlighten them as to the true character of the events which they had found so perplexing, so now He would teach them the truth of the new position brought about by His death and resurrection. These two were going away from the others, they were scattering; His object was to gather them, to bring them all together to form a new company; and so, the moment they know Him, He vanishes. He does not remain with them, as though the climax had been reached, there was one step further.

The effect of His action is that “they rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem and found the eleven gathered together and them that were with them” (v. 33). And when this is accomplished something else happens. He comes into their midst, and then He does not vanish (see 5: 36 to end).

On the contrary, He abides, and takes pains to make Himself known and reassure their hearts.

Thus there are three ways in which the Lord manifests Himself, and three circles in which He can be known,

- He will talk with us by the way. He comes to us individually on life's journey, and reveals Himself to us in our circumstances, and through the Scriptures. Jesus Himself draws near, and the day of eternal blessing has begun. This is the beginning—He puts us right individually first.
- But we may also know Him in the home circle, and the importance of this it is impossible to exaggerate. How many a home circle has been wrecked for want of His presence! The home without Him, where there is no mention of His Name, no family worship, is not really home. The love which is the crown and completion of natural love is unknown. His presence sheds a peace, which is otherwise wanting.
- But we may know Him in a still higher way. To know Him by the way, in life's daily toil and conflict, is much; to know Him in connection with family relationships is more; but to know Him in connection with His own interests, in the midst of those He gathers, is to know Him in the highest relationship of all. It is there, in the midst of His own, that He manifests Himself as nowhere else. These three circles are found throughout Scripture.

In Exodus 12: in connection with the lamb we read: “They shall take to them *every man* a lamb,” and then it adds “A lamb for an *house*” This is in verse 3, while in verse 6 we read: The whole *assembly* of the congregation of Israel shall kill *it* in the evening. See also Leviticus xvi, the Day of Atonement, verse 17—“*Himself* and his *household*, and for all the *congregation of Israel*”

And notice what He does when He joins the company of His disciples. He takes the central place, and His presence at once changed the character of that assembly, and gave it a distinction it could not otherwise have possessed. It became the most august assembly in the world. They were gathered to Him. And all the glory of His Name, and the authority of it,

became theirs. A company was now formed distinct from Israel and the world. His first word is, Peace. That is the atmosphere of His assembly. Next, He reveals Himself.

Thirdly, He gives them their commission, "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations." And they were to be endued with "power from on high." Finally, He leads them out as a company. They are outside and distinct from everything else in the world. Since His death, Christ had shown Himself only to them. If the walk to Emmaus was blessed, what must have been that walk to Bethany 1 And before He takes His farewell we see Him with uplifted hands blessing them. "And it came to pass while He blessed them, He was parted from them." What may not Life's Journey mean with those hands lifted up in blessing!

* * * * *

And now having taken this journey together, dear reader, and reached the close, we must part. May it not be without His blessing. If so, then we shall meet in His presence by and by. He was carried up into Heaven, but He has promised to come again and receive us unto Himself. There remain only two questions to be asked. Has your life's journey brought you into touch with Him? and if so, will that journey henceforth be in His company? He has said, "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of *life*." He knows what life here means. He has fathomed all its mysteries, and He can meet all its demands.

"Our Saviour from all grief and thrall, Our Life in death, our all in all."

Footnotes

[1] In saying this, we do not wish to disparage the creeds unduly. They are not seldom very remarkable productions, and serve a useful purpose. But they do not compare with the Scriptures, and certainly are no substitute for these Divine oracles

[2] In all that is said here as to "His glory" the distinction between John 17: 5 and 22 is not forgotten. We are thinking, for the moment, only of the glory in which we share.