

**GEORGE  
MACDONALD**

THE HOPE OF  
THE GOSPEL

George MacDonald

**The Hope of the Gospel**

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# George MacDonald

## The Hope of the Gospel

### SALVATION FROM SIN

—and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins.—*Matthew* i. 21.

I would help some to understand what Jesus came from the home of our Father to be to us and do for us. Everything in the world is more or less misunderstood at first: we have to learn what it is, and come at length to see that it must be so, that it could not be otherwise. Then we know it; and we never know a thing *really* until we know it thus.

I presume there is scarce a human being who, resolved to speak openly, would not confess to having something that plagued him, something from which he would gladly be free, something rendering it impossible for him, at the moment, to regard life as an altogether good thing. Most men, I presume, imagine that, free of such and such things antagonistic, life would be an unmingled satisfaction, worthy of being prolonged indefinitely. The causes of their discomfort are of all kinds, and the degrees of it reach from simple uneasiness to a misery such as makes annihilation the highest hope of the sufferer who can persuade himself of its possibility. Perhaps the greater part of the energy of this world's life goes forth in the endeavour to rid itself of discomfort. Some, to escape it, leave their natural surroundings behind them, and with strong and continuous effort keep rising in the social scale, to discover at every new ascent fresh trouble, as they think, awaiting them, whereas in truth they have brought the trouble with them. Others, making haste to be rich, are slow to find out that the poverty of their souls, none the less that their purses are filling, will yet keep them unhappy. Some court endless change, nor know that on themselves the change must pass that will set them free. Others expand their souls with knowledge, only to find that content will not dwell in the great house they have built. To number the varieties of human endeavour to escape discomfort would be to enumerate all the modes of such life as does not know how to live. All seek the thing whose defect appears the *cause* of their misery, and is but the variable *occasion* of it, the cause of the shape it takes, not of the misery itself; for, when one apparent cause is removed, another at once succeeds. The real cause of his trouble is a something the man has not perhaps recognized as even existent; in any case he is not yet acquainted with its true nature.

However absurd the statement may appear to one who has not yet discovered the fact for himself, the cause of every man's discomfort is evil, moral evil—first of all, evil in himself, his own sin, his own wrongness, his own unrightness; and then, evil in those he loves: with this latter I have not now to deal; the only way to get rid of it, is for the man to get rid of his own sin. No special sin may be recognizable as having caused this or that special physical discomfort—which may indeed have originated with some ancestor; but evil in ourselves is the cause of its continuance, the source of its necessity, and the preventive of that patience which would soon take from it, or at least blunt its sting. The evil is *essentially* unnecessary, and passes with the attainment of the object for which it is permitted—namely, the development of pure will in man; the suffering also is essentially unnecessary, but while the evil lasts, the suffering, whether consequent or merely concomitant, is absolutely necessary. Foolish is the man, and there are many such men, who would rid himself or his fellows of discomfort by setting the world right, by waging war on the evils around him, while he neglects that integral part of the world where lies his business, his first business—namely, his own character and conduct. Were it possible—an absurd supposition—that the world should thus be righted from the outside, it would yet be impossible for the man who had contributed to the work,

remaining what he was, ever to enjoy the perfection of the result; himself not in tune with the organ he had tuned, he must imagine it still a distracted, jarring instrument. The philanthropist who regards the wrong as in the race, forgetting that the race is made up of conscious and wrong individuals, forgets also that wrong is always generated in and done by an individual; that the wrongness exists in the individual, and by him is passed over, as tendency, to the race; and that no evil can be cured in the race, except by its being cured in its individuals: tendency is not absolute evil; it is there that it may be resisted, not yielded to. There is no way of making three men right but by making right each one of the three; but a cure in one man who repents and turns, is a beginning of the cure of the whole human race.

Even if a man's suffering be a far inheritance, for the curing of which by faith and obedience this life would not be sufficiently long, faith and obedience will yet render it endurable to the man, and overflow in help to his fellow-sufferers. The groaning body, wrapt in the garment of hope, will, with outstretched neck, look for its redemption, and endure.

The one cure for any organism, is to be set right—to have all its parts brought into harmony with each other; the one comfort is to know this cure in process. Rightness alone is cure. The return of the organism to its true self, is its only possible ease. To free a man from suffering, he must be set right, put in health; and the health at the root of man's being, his rightness, is to be free from wrongness, that is, from sin. A man is right when there is no wrong in him. The wrong, the evil is in him; he must be set free from it. I do not mean set free from the sins he has done: that will follow; I mean the sins he is doing, or is capable of doing; the sins in his being which spoil his nature—the wrongness in him—the evil he consents to; the sin he is, which makes him do the sin he does.

To save a man from his sins, is to say to him, in sense perfect and eternal, 'Rise up and walk. Be at liberty in thy essential being. Be free as the son of God is free.' To do this for us, Jesus was born, and remains born to all the ages. When misery drives a man to call out to the source of his life,—and I take the increasing outcry against existence as a sign of the growth of the race toward a sense of the need of regeneration—the answer, I think, will come in a quickening of his conscience. This earnest of the promised deliverance may not, in all probability will not be what the man desires; he will want only to be rid of his suffering; but that he cannot have, save in being delivered from its essential root, a thing infinitely worse than any suffering it can produce. If he will not have that deliverance, he must keep his suffering. Through chastisement he will take at last the only way that leads into the liberty of that which is and must be. There can be no deliverance but to come out of his evil dream into the glory of God.

It is true that Jesus came, in delivering us from our sins, to deliver us also from the painful consequences of our sins. But these consequences exist by the one law of the universe, the true will of the Perfect. That broken, that disobeyed by the creature, disorganization renders suffering inevitable; it is the natural consequence of the unnatural—and, in the perfection of God's creation, the result is curative of the cause; the pain at least tends to the healing of the breach. The Lord never came to deliver men from the consequences of their sins while yet those sins remained: that would be to cast out of window the medicine of cure while yet the man lay sick; to go dead against the very laws of being. Yet men, loving their sins, and feeling nothing of their dread hatefulness, have, consistently with their low condition, constantly taken this word concerning the Lord to mean that he came to save them from the punishment of their sins. The idea—the miserable fancy rather—has terribly corrupted the preaching of the gospel. The message of the good news has not been truly delivered. Unable to believe in the forgiveness of their Father in heaven, imagining him not at liberty to forgive, or incapable of forgiving forthright; not really believing him God our Saviour, but a God bound, either in his own nature or by a law above him and compulsory upon him, to exact some recompense or satisfaction for sin, a multitude of teaching men have taught their fellows that Jesus came to bear our punishment and save us from hell. They have represented a result as the object of his mission—the said result nowise to be desired by true man save as consequent on the gain of his object. The mission

of Jesus was from the same source and with the same object as the punishment of our sins. He came to work along with our punishment. He came to side with it, and set us free from our sins. No man is safe from hell until he is free from his sins; but a man to whom his sins, that is the evil things in him, are a burden, while he may indeed sometimes feel as if he were in hell, will soon have forgotten that ever he had any other hell to think of than that of his sinful condition. For to him his sins are hell; he would go to the other hell to be free of them; free of them, hell itself would be endurable to him. For hell is God's and not the devil's. Hell is on the side of God and man, to free the child of God from the corruption of death. Not one soul will ever be redeemed from hell but by being saved from his sins, from the evil in him. If hell be needful to save him, hell will blaze, and the worm will writhe and bite, until he takes refuge in the will of the Father. 'Salvation from hell, is salvation as conceived by such to whom hell and not evil is the terror.' But if even for dread of hell a poor soul seek the Father, he will be heard of him in his terror, and, taught of him to seek the immeasurably greater gift, will in the greater receive the less.

There is another important misapprehension of the words of the messengers of the good tidings—that they threaten us with punishment because of the sins we have committed, whereas their message is of forgiveness, not of vengeance; of deliverance, not of evil to come. Not for anything he has committed do they threaten a man with the outer darkness. Not for any or all of his sins that are past shall a man be condemned; not for the worst of them needs he dread remaining unforgiven. The sin he dwells in, the sin he will not come out of, is the sole ruin of a man. His present, his live sins—those pervading his thoughts and ruling his conduct; the sins he keeps doing, and will not give up; the sins he is called to abandon, and clings to; the same sins which are the cause of his misery, though he may not know it—these are they for which he is even now condemned. It is true the memory of the wrongs we have done is, or will become very bitter; but not for those is condemnation; and if that in our character which made them possible were abolished, remorse would lose its worst bitterness in the hope of future amends. 'This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.'

It is the indwelling badness, ready to produce bad actions, that we need to be delivered from. Against this badness if a man will not strive, he is left to commit evil and reap the consequences. To be saved from these consequences, would be no deliverance; it would be an immediate, ever deepening damnation. It is the evil in our being—no essential part of it, thank God!—the miserable fact that the very child of God does not care for his father and will not obey him, causing us to desire wrongly, act wrongly, or, where we try not to act wrongly, yet making it impossible for us not to feel wrongly—this is what he came to deliver us from;—not the things we have done, but the possibility of doing such things any more. With the departure of this possibility, and with the hope of confession hereafter to those we have wronged, will depart also the power over us of the evil things we have done, and so we shall be saved from them also. The bad that lives in us, our evil judgments, our unjust desires, our hate and pride and envy and greed and self-satisfaction—these are the souls of our sins, our live sins, more terrible than the bodies of our sins, namely the deeds we do, inasmuch as they not only produce these loathsome things, but make us loathsome as they. Our wrong deeds are our dead works; our evil thoughts are our live sins. These, the essential opposites of faith and love, the sins that dwell and work in us, are the sins from which Jesus came to deliver us. When we turn against them and refuse to obey them, they rise in fierce insistence, but the same moment begin to die. We are then on the Lord's side, as he has always been on ours, and he begins to deliver us from them.

Anything in you, which, in your own child, would make you feel him not so pleasant as you would have him, is something wrong. This may mean much to one, little or nothing to another. Things in a child which to one parent would not seem worth minding, would fill another with horror. After his moral development, where the one parent would smile, the other would look aghast, perceiving both the present evil, and the serpent-brood to follow. But as the love of him who is love, transcends ours as the heavens are higher than the earth, so must he desire in his child infinitely more than the

most jealous love of the best mother can desire in hers. He would have him rid of all discontent, all fear, all grudging, all bitterness in word or thought, all gauging and measuring of his own with a different rod from that he would apply to another's. He will have no curling of the lip; no indifference in him to the man whose service in any form he uses; no desire to excel another, no contentment at gaining by his loss. He will not have him receive the smallest service without gratitude; would not hear from him a tone to jar the heart of another, a word to make it ache, be the ache ever so transient. From such, as from all other sins, Jesus was born to deliver us; not, primarily, or by itself, from the punishment of any of them. When all are gone, the holy punishment will have departed also. He came to make us good, and therein blessed children.

One master-sin is at the root of all the rest. It is no individual action, or anything that comes of mood, or passion; it is the non-recognition by the man, and consequent inactivity in him, of the highest of all relations, that relation which is the root and first essential condition of every other true relation of or in the human soul. It is the absence in the man of harmony with the being whose thought is the man's existence, whose word is the man's power of thought. It is true that, being thus his offspring, God, as St Paul affirms, cannot be far from any one of us: were we not in closest contact of creating and created, we could not exist; as we have in us no power to be, so have we none to continue being; but there is a closer contact still, as absolutely necessary to our well-being and highest existence, as the other to our being at all, to the mere capacity of faring well or ill. For the highest creation of God in man is his will, and until the highest in man meets the highest in God, their true relation is not yet a spiritual fact. The flower lies in the root, but the root is not the flower. The relation exists, but while one of the parties neither knows, loves, nor acts upon it, the relation is, as it were, yet unborn. The highest in man is neither his intellect nor his imagination nor his reason; all are inferior to his will, and indeed, in a grand way, dependent upon it: his will must meet God's—a will *distinct* from God's, else were no *harmony* possible between them. Not the less, therefore, but the more, is all God's. For God creates in the man the power to will His will. It may cost God a suffering man can never know, to bring the man to the point at which he will will His will; but when he is brought to that point, and declares for the truth, that is, for the will of God, he becomes one with God, and the end of God in the man's creation, the end for which Jesus was born and died, is gained. The man is saved from his sins, and the universe flowers yet again in his redemption. But I would not be supposed, from what I have said, to imagine the Lord without sympathy for the sorrows and pains which reveal what sin is, and by means of which he would make men sick of sin. With everything human he sympathizes. Evil is not human; it is the defect and opposite of the human; but the suffering that follows it is human, belonging of necessity to the human that has sinned: while it is by cause of sin, suffering is *for* the sinner, that he may be delivered from his sin. Jesus is in himself aware of every human pain. He feels it also. In him too it is pain. With the energy of tenderest love he wills his brothers and sisters free, that he may fill them to overflowing with that essential thing, joy. For that they were indeed created. But the moment they exist, truth becomes the first thing, not happiness; and he must make them true. Were it possible, however, for pain to continue after evil was gone, he would never rest while one ache was yet in the world. Perfect in sympathy, he feels in himself, I say, the tortured presence of every nerve that lacks its repose. The man may recognize the evil in him only as pain; he may know little and care nothing about his sins; yet is the Lord sorry for his pain. He cries aloud, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' He does not say, 'Come unto me, all ye that feel the burden of your sins;' he opens his arms to all weary enough to come to him in the poorest hope of rest. Right gladly would he free them from their misery—but he knows only one way: he will teach them to be like himself, meek and lowly, bearing with gladness the yoke of his father's will. This is the one, the only right, the only possible way of freeing them from their sins, the cause of their unrest. With them the weariness comes first; with him the sins: there is but one cure for both—the will of the Father. That which is his joy will be their deliverance! He might indeed, it may be, take from them the human, send them down to some lower stage of being, and so free

them from suffering—but that must be either a descent toward annihilation, or a fresh beginning to grow up again toward the region of suffering they have left; for that which is not growing must at length die out of creation. The disobedient and selfish would fain in the hell of their hearts possess the liberty and gladness that belong to purity and love, but they cannot have them; they are weary and heavy-laden, both with what they are, and because of what they were made for but are not. The Lord knows what they need; they know only what they want. They want ease; he knows they need purity. Their very existence is an evil, of which, but for his resolve to purify them, their maker must rid his universe. How can he keep in his sight a foul presence? Must the creator send forth his virtue to hold alive a thing that will be evil—a thing that ought not to be, that has no claim but to cease? The Lord himself would not live save with an existence absolutely good.

It may be my reader will desire me to say *how* the Lord will deliver him from his sins. That is like the lawyer's 'Who is my neighbour?' The spirit of such a mode of receiving the offer of the Lord's deliverance, is the root of all the horrors of a corrupt theology, so acceptable to those who love weak and beggarly hornbooks of religion. Such questions spring from the passion for the fruit of the tree of knowledge, not the fruit of the tree of life. Men would understand: they do not care to *obey*,—understand where it is impossible they should understand save by obeying. They would search into the work of the Lord instead of doing their part in it—thus making it impossible both for the Lord to go on with his work, and for themselves to become capable of seeing and understanding what he does. Instead of immediately obeying the Lord of life, the one condition upon which he can help them, and in itself the beginning of their deliverance, they set themselves to question their unenlightened intellects as to his plans for their deliverance—and not merely how he means to effect it, but how he can be able to effect it. They would bind their Samson until they have scanned his limbs and thews. Incapable of understanding the first motions of freedom in themselves, they proceed to interpret the riches of his divine soul in terms of their own beggarly notions, to paraphrase his glorious verse into their own paltry commercial prose; and then, in the growing presumption of imagined success, to insist upon their neighbours' acceptance of their distorted shadows of 'the plan of salvation' as the truth of him in whom is no darkness, and the one condition of their acceptance with him. They delay setting their foot on the stair which alone can lead them to the house of wisdom, until they shall have determined the material and mode of its construction. For the sake of knowing, they postpone that which alone can enable them to know, and substitute for the true understanding which lies beyond, a false persuasion that they already understand. They will not accept, that is, act upon, their highest privilege, that of obeying the Son of God. It is on them that do his will, that the day dawns; to them the day-star arises in their hearts. Obedience is the soul of knowledge.

By obedience, I intend no kind of obedience to man, or submission to authority claimed by man or community of men. I mean obedience to the will of the Father, however revealed in our conscience.

God forbid I should seem to despise understanding. The New Testament is full of urgings to understand. Our whole life, to be life at all, must be a growth in understanding. What I cry out upon is the misunderstanding that comes of man's endeavour to understand while not obeying. Upon obedience our energy must be spent; understanding will follow. Not anxious to know our duty, or knowing it and not doing it, how shall we understand that which only a true heart and a clean soul can ever understand? The power in us that would understand were it free, lies in the bonds of imperfection and impurity, and is therefore incapable of judging the divine. It cannot see the truth. If it could see it, it would not know it, and would not have it. Until a man begins to obey, the light that is in him is darkness.

Any honest soul may understand this much, however—for it is a thing we may of ourselves judge to be right—that the Lord cannot save a man from his sins while he holds to his sins. An omnipotence that could do and not do the same thing at the same moment, were an idea too absurd for mockery; an omnipotence that could at once make a man a free man, and leave him a self-degraded

slave—make him the very likeness of God, and good only because he could not help being good, would be an idea of the same character—equally absurd, equally self-contradictory.

But the Lord is not unreasonable; he requires no high motives where such could not yet exist. He does not say, 'You must be sorry for your sins, or you need not come to me:' to be sorry for his sins a man must love God and man, and love is the very thing that has to be developed in him. It is but common sense that a man, longing to be freed from suffering, or made able to bear it, should betake himself to the Power by whom he is. Equally is it common sense that, if a man would be delivered from the evil in him, he must himself begin to cast it out, himself begin to disobey it, and work righteousness. As much as either is it common sense that a man should look for and expect the help of his Father in the endeavour. Alone, he might labour to all eternity and not succeed. He who has not made himself, cannot set himself right without him who made him. But his maker is in him, and is his strength. The man, however, who, instead of doing what he is told, broods speculating on the metaphysics of him who calls him to his work, stands leaning his back against the door by which the Lord would enter to help him. The moment he sets about putting straight the thing that is crooked—I mean doing right where he has been doing wrong, he withdraws from the entrance, gives way for the Master to come in. He cannot make himself pure, but he can leave that which is impure; he can spread out the 'defiled, discoloured web' of his life before the bleaching sun of righteousness; he cannot save himself, but he can let the Lord save him. The struggle of his weakness is as essential to the coming victory as the strength of Him who resisted unto death, striving against sin.

The sum of the whole matter is this:—The Son has come from the Father to set the children free from their sins; the children must hear and obey him, that he may send forth judgment unto victory.

Son of our Father, help us to do what thou sayest, and so with thee die unto sin, that we may rise to the sonship for which we were created. Help us to repent even to the sending away of our sins.

## THE REMISSION OF SINS

John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.—*Mark* i. 4.

God and man must combine for salvation from sin, and the same word, here and elsewhere translated *remission*, seems to be employed in the New Testament for the share of either in the great deliverance.

But first let me say something concerning the word here and everywhere translated *repentance*. I would not even suggest a mistranslation; but the idea intended by the word has been so misunderstood and therefore mistaught, that it requires some consideration of the word itself to get at a right recognition of the moral fact it represents.

The Greek word then, of which the word *repentance* is the accepted synonym and fundamentally the accurate rendering, is made up of two words, the conjoint meaning of which is, *a change of mind* or *thought*. There is in it no intent of, or hint at *sorrow* or *shame*, or any other of the mental conditions that, not unfrequently accompanying repentance, have been taken for essential parts of it, sometimes for its very essence. Here, the last of the prophets, or the evangelist who records his doings, qualifies the word, as if he held it insufficient in itself to convey the Baptist's meaning, with the three words that follow it—[*Greek: eis aPhesin amartiôn*:—*kaerussôn Baptisma metauoias eis aPhesin amartiôn*]—'preaching a baptism of repentance—unto a sending away of sins'. I do not say the phrase [*Greek: aPhesis amartiôn*] never means *forgiveness*, one form at least of *God's* sending away of sins; neither do I say that the taking of the phrase to mean *repentance for the remission of sins*, namely, repentance in order to obtain the pardon of God, involves any inconsistency; but I say that the word [*Greek: eis*] rather *unto* than *for*; that the word [*Greek: aPhesis*], translated *remission*, means, fundamentally, a *sending away*, a *dismissal*; and that the writer seems to use the added phrase to make certain what he means by *repentance*; a repentance, namely, that reaches to the sending away, or abjurement of sins. I do not think *a change of mind unto the remission or pardon of sin* would be nearly so logical a phrase as *a change of mind unto the dismissal of sinning*. The revised version refuses the word *for* and chooses *unto*, though it retains *remission*, which word, now, conveys no meaning except the forgiveness of God. I think that here the same word is used for man's dismissal of his sins, as is elsewhere used for God's dismissal or remission of them. In both uses, it is a sending away of sins, with the difference of meaning that comes from the differing sources of the action. Both God and man send away sins, but in the one case God sends away the sins of the man, and in the other the man sends away his own sins. I do not enter into the question whether God's *aphesis* may or may not mean as well the sending of his sins out of a man, as the pardon of them; whether it may not sometimes mean *dismissal*, and sometimes *remission*: I am sure the one deed cannot be separated from the other.

That the phrase here intends repentance unto the ceasing from sin, the giving up of what is wrong, I will try to show at least probable.

In the first place, the user of the phrase either defines the change of mind he means as one that has for its object the pardon of God, or as one that reaches to a new life: the latter seems to me the more natural interpretation by far. The kind and scope of the repentance or change, and not any end to be gained by it, appears intended. The change must be one of will and conduct—a radical change of life on the part of the man: he must repent—that is, change his mind—not to a different opinion, not even to a mere betterment of his conduct—not to anything less than a sending away of his sins. This interpretation of the preaching of the Baptist seems to me, I repeat, the more direct, the fuller of meaning, the more logical.

Next, in St Matthew's gospel, the Baptist's buttressing argument, or imminent motive for the change he is pressing upon the people is, that the kingdom of heaven is at hand: 'Because the king of heaven is coming, you must give up your sinning.' The same argument for immediate action lies in his quotation from Isaiah,—'Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.' The only true, the only possible preparation for the coming Lord, is to cease from doing evil, and begin to do well—to send away sin. They must cleanse, not the streets of their cities, not their houses or their garments or even their persons, but their hearts and their doings. It is true the Baptist did not see that the kingdom coming was not of this world, but of the higher world in the hearts of men; it is true that his faith failed him in his imprisonment, because he heard of no martial movement on the part of the Lord, no assertion of his sovereignty, no convincing show of his power; but he did see plainly that righteousness was essential to the kingdom of heaven. That he did not yet perceive that righteousness *is* the kingdom of heaven; that he did not see that the Lord was already initiating his kingdom by sending away sin out of the hearts of his people, is not wonderful. The Lord's answer to his fore-runner's message of doubt, was to send his messenger back an eye-witness of what he was doing, so to wake or clarify in him the perception that his kingdom was not of this world—that he dealt with other means to another end than John had yet recognized as his mission or object; for obedient love in the heart of the poorest he healed or persuaded, was his kingdom come.

Again, observe that, when the Pharisees came to John, he said to them, 'Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:' is not this the same as, 'Repent unto the sending away of your sins'?

Note also, that, when the multitudes came to the prophet, and all, with the classes most obnoxious to the rest, the publicans and the soldiers, asked what he would have them do—thus plainly recognizing that something was required of them—his instruction was throughout in the same direction: they must send away their sins; and each must begin with the fault that lay next him. The kingdom of heaven was at hand: they must prepare the way of the Lord by beginning to do as must be done in his kingdom.

They could not rid themselves of their sins, but they could set about sending them away; they could quarrel with them, and proceed to turn them out of the house: the Lord was on his way to do his part in their final banishment. Those who had repented to the sending away of their sins, he would baptize with a holy power to send them away indeed. The operant will to get rid of them would be baptized with a fire that should burn them up. When a man breaks with his sins, then the wind of the Lord's fan will blow them away, the fire of the Lord's heart will consume them.

I think, then, that the part of the repentant man, and not the part of God, in the sending away of sins, is intended here. It is the man's one preparation for receiving the power to overcome them, the baptism of fire.

Not seldom, what comes in the name of the gospel of Jesus Christ, must seem, even to one not far from the kingdom of heaven, no good news at all. It does not draw him; it wakes in him not a single hope. He has no desire after what it offers him as redemption. The God it gives him news of, is not one to whom he would draw nearer. But when such a man comes to see that the very God must be his Life, the heart of his consciousness; when he perceives that, rousing himself to put from him what is evil, and do the duty that lies at his door, he may fearlessly claim the help of him who 'loved him into being,' then his will immediately sides with his conscience; he begins to try to *be*; and—first thing toward being—to rid himself of what is antagonistic to all being, namely *wrong*. Multitudes will not even approach the appalling task, the labour and pain of *being*. God is doing his part, is undergoing the mighty toil of an age-long creation, endowing men with power to be; but few as yet are those who take up their part, who respond to the call of God, who will to be, who put forth a divine effort after real existence. To the many, the spirit of the prophet cries, 'Turn ye, and change your way! The kingdom of heaven is near you. Let your king possess his own. Let God throne himself in you, that his liberty be your life, and you free men. That he may enter, clear the house

for him. Send away the bad things out of it. Depart from evil, and do good. The duty that lieth at thy door, do it, be it great or small.'

For indeed in this region there is no great or small. 'Be content with your wages,' said the Baptist to the soldiers. To many people now, the word would be, 'Rule your temper;' or, 'Be courteous to all;' or, 'Let each hold the other better than himself;' or, 'Be just to your neighbour that you may love him.' To make straight in the desert a highway for our God, we must bestir ourselves in the very spot of the desert on which we stand; we must cast far from us our evil thing that blocks the way of his chariot-wheels. If we do not, never will those wheels roll through our streets; never will our desert blossom with his roses.

The message of John to his countrymen, was then, and is yet, the one message to the world:—'Send away your sins, for the kingdom of heaven is near.' Some of us—I cannot say *all*, for I do not know—who have already repented, who have long ago begun to send away our sins, need fresh repentance every day—how many times a day, God only knows. We are so ready to get upon some path that seems to run parallel with the narrow way, and then take no note of its divergence! What is there for us when we discover that we are out of the way, but to bethink ourselves and turn? By those 'who need no repentance,' the Lord may have meant such as had repented perfectly, had sent away all their sins, and were now with him in his Father's house; also such as have never sinned, and such as no longer turn aside for any temptation.

We shall now, perhaps, be able to understand the relation of the Lord himself to the baptism of John.

He came to John to be baptized; and most would say John's baptism was of repentance for the remission or pardon of sins. But the Lord could not be baptized for the remission of sins, for he had never done a selfish, an untrue, or an unfair thing. He had never wronged his Father, any more than ever his Father had wronged him. Happy, happy Son and Father, who had never either done the other wrong, in thought, word, or deed! As little had he wronged brother or sister. He needed no forgiveness; there was nothing to forgive. No more could he be baptized for repentance: in him repentance would have been to turn to evil! Where then was the propriety of his coming to be baptized by John, and insisting on being by him baptized? It must lie elsewhere.

If we take the words of John to mean 'the baptism of repentance unto the sending away of sins;' and if we bear in mind that in his case repentance could not be, inasmuch as what repentance is necessary to bring about in man, was already existent in Jesus; then, altering the words to fit the case, and saying, 'the baptism of willed devotion to the sending away of sin,' we shall see at once how the baptism of Jesus was a thing right and fit.

That he had no sin to repent of, was not because he was so constituted that he could not sin if he would; it was because, of his own will and judgment, he sent sin away from him—sent it from him with the full choice and energy of his nature. God knows good and evil, and, blessed be his name, chooses good. Never will his righteous anger make him unfair to us, make him forget that we are dust. Like him, his son also chose good, and in that choice resisted all temptation to help his fellows otherwise than as their and his father would. Instead of crushing the power of evil by divine force; instead of compelling justice and destroying the wicked; instead of making peace on the earth by the rule of a perfect prince; instead of gathering the children of Jerusalem under his wings whether they would or not, and saving them from the horrors that anguished his prophetic soul—he let evil work its will while it lived; he contented himself with the slow unencouraging ways of help essential; making men good; casting out, not merely controlling Satan; carrying to their perfect issue on earth the old primeval principles because of which the Father honoured him: 'Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.' To love righteousness is to make it grow, not to avenge it; and to win for righteousness the true victory, he, as well as his brethren, had to send away evil. Throughout his life on earth, he resisted every impulse to work more rapidly for a lower good,—strong perhaps when he saw old age

and innocence and righteousness trodden under foot. What but this gives any worth of reality to the temptation in the wilderness, to the devil's departing from him for a season, to his coming again to experience a like failure? Ever and ever, in the whole attitude of his being, in his heart always lifted up, in his unfailing readiness to pull with the Father's yoke, he was repelling, driving away sin—away from himself, and, as Lord of men, and their saviour, away from others also, bringing them to abjure it like himself. No man, least of all any lord of men, can be good without willing to be good, without setting himself against evil, without sending away sin. Other men have to send it away out of them; the Lord had to send it away from before him, that it should not enter into him. Therefore is the stand against sin common to the captain of salvation and the soldiers under him.

What did Jesus come into the world to do? The will of God in saving his people from their sins—not from the punishment of their sins, that blessed aid to repentance, but from their sins themselves, the paltry as well as the heinous, the venial as well as the loathsome. His whole work was and is to send away sin—to banish it from the earth, yea, to cast it into the abyss of non-existence behind the back of God. His was the holy war; he came carrying it into our world; he resisted unto blood; the soldiers that followed him he taught and trained to resist also unto blood, striving against sin; so he became the captain of their salvation, and they, freed themselves, fought and suffered for others. This was the task to which he was baptized; this is yet his enduring labour. 'This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for many unto the sending away of sins.' What was the new covenant? 'I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant which they brake, but this: I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people.'

John baptized unto repentance because those to whom he was sent had to repent. They must bethink themselves, and send away the sin that was in them. But had there been a man, aware of no sin in him, but aware that life would be no life were not sin kept out of him, that man would have been right in receiving the baptism of John unto the continuous dismissal of the sin ever wanting to enter in at his door. The object of the baptism was the sending away of sin; its object was repentance only where necessary to, only as introducing, as resulting in that. He to whom John was not sent, He whom he did not call, He who needed no repentance, was baptized for the same object, to the same conflict for the same end—the banishment of sin from the dominions of his father—and that first by his own sternest repudiation of it in himself. Thence came his victory in the wilderness: he would have his father's way, not his own. Could he be less fitted to receive the baptism of John, that the object of it was no new thing with him, who had been about it from the beginning, yea, from all eternity? We shall be about it, I presume, to all eternity.

Such, then, as were baptized by John, were initiated into the company of those whose work was to send sin out of the world, and first, by sending it out of themselves, by having done with it. Their earliest endeavour in this direction would, as I have said, open the door for that help to enter without which a man could never succeed in the divinely arduous task—could not, because the region in which the work has to be wrought lies in the very roots of his own being, where, knowing nothing of the secrets of his essential existence, he can immediately do nothing, where the maker of him alone is potent, alone is consciously present. The change that must pass in him more than equals a new creation, inasmuch as it is a higher creation. But its necessity is involved in the former creation; and thence we have a right to ask help of our creator, for he requires of us what he has created us unable to effect without him. Nay, nay!—could we do anything without him, it were a thing to leave undone. Blessed fact that he hath made us so near him! that the scale of our being is so large, that we are completed only by his presence in it! that we are not men without him! that we can be one with our self-existent creator! that we are not cut off from the original Infinite! that in him we must share infinitude, or be enslaved by the finite! The very patent of our royalty is, that not for a moment can we live our true life without the eternal life present in and with our spirits. Without him at our unknown root, we cease to be. True, a dog cannot live without the presence of God; but I presume a

dog may live a good dog-life without knowing the presence of his origin: man is dead if he know not the Power which is his cause, his deepest selfing self; the Presence which is not himself, and is nearer to him than himself; which is infinitely more himself, more his very being, than he is himself. The being of which we are conscious, is not our full self; the extent of our consciousness of our self is no measure of our self; our consciousness is infinitely less than we; while God is more necessary even to that poor consciousness of self than our self-consciousness is necessary to our humanity. Until a man become the power of his own existence, become his own God, the sole thing necessary to his existing is the will of God; for the well-being and perfecting of that existence, the sole thing necessary is, that the man should know his maker present in him. All that the children want is their Father.

The one true end of all speech concerning holy things is—the persuading of the individual man to cease to do evil, to set himself to do well, to look to the lord of his life to be on his side in the new struggle. Supposing the suggestions I have made correct, I do not care that my reader should understand them, except it be to turn against the evil in him, and begin to cast it out. If this be not the result, it is of no smallest consequence whether he agree with my interpretation or not. If he do thus repent, it is of equally little consequence; for, setting himself to do the truth, he is on the way to know all things. Real knowledge has begun to grow possible for him.

I am not sure what the Lord means in the words, 'Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.' Baptism could not be the fulfilling of all righteousness! Perhaps he means, 'We must, by a full act of the will, give ourselves altogether to righteousness. We must make it the business of our lives to send away sin, and do the will of the Father. That is my work as much as the work of any man who must repent ere he can begin. I will not be left out when you call men to be pure as our father is pure.'

To be certain whom he intends by *us* might perhaps help us to see his meaning. Does he intend *all of us men*? Does he intend 'my father and me'? Or does he intend 'you and me, John'? If the saying mean what I have suggested, then the *us* would apply to all that have the knowledge of good and evil. 'Every being that can, must devote himself to righteousness. To be right is no adjunct of completeness; it is the ground and foundation of existence.' But perhaps it was a lesson for John himself, who, mighty preacher of righteousness as he was, did not yet count it the all of life. I cannot tell.

Note that when the Lord began his teaching, he employed, neither using nor inculcating any rite, the same words as John,—'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

That kingdom had been at hand all his infancy, boyhood, and young manhood: he was in the world with his father in his heart: that was the kingdom of heaven. Lonely man on the hillside, or boy the cynosure of doctor-eyes, his father was everything to him:—'Wist ye not that I must be in my father's things?'

## JESUS IN THE WORLD

'Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.' And he said unto them, 'How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my father's business?' And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.—*Luke ii. 48-50.*

Was that his saying? Why did they not understand it? Do we understand it? What did his saying mean? The Greek is not absolutely clear. Whether the Syriac words he used were more precise, who in this world can tell? But had we heard his very words, we too, with his father and mother, would have failed to understand them. Must we fail still?

It will show at once where our initial difficulty lies, if I give the latter half of the saying as presented in the revised English version: its departure from the authorized reveals the point of obscurity:—'Wist ye not that I must be in my father's house?' His parents had his exact words, yet did not understand. We have not his exact words, and are in doubt as to what the Greek translation of them means.

If the authorized translation be true to the intent of the Greek, and therefore to that of the Syriac, how could his parents, knowing him as they did from all that had been spoken before concerning him, from all they had seen in him, from the ponderings in Mary's own heart, and from the precious thoughts she and Joseph cherished concerning him, have failed to understand him when he said that wherever he was, he must be about his father's business? On the other hand, supposing them to know and feel that he must be about his father's business, would that have been reason sufficient, in view of the degree of spiritual development to which they had attained, for the Lord's expecting them not to be anxious about him when they had lost him? Thousands on thousands who trust God for their friends in things spiritual, do not trust him for them in regard of their mere health or material well-being. His parents knew how prophets had always been treated in the land; or if they did not think in that direction, there were many dangers to which a boy like him would seem exposed, to rouse an anxiety that could be met only by a faith equal to saying, 'Whatever has happened to him, death itself, it can be no evil to one who is about his father's business;' and such a faith I think the Lord could not yet have expected of them. That what the world counts misfortune might befall him on his father's business, would have been recognized by him, I think, as reason for their parental anxiety—so long as they had not learned God—that he is what he is—the thing the Lord had come to teach his father's men and women. His words seem rather to imply that there was no need to be anxious about his personal safety. Fear of some accident to him seems to have been the cause of their trouble; and he did not mean, I think, that they ought not to mind if he died doing his father's will, but that he was in no danger as regarded accident or misfortune. This will appear more plainly as we proceed. So much for the authorized version.

Let us now take the translation given us by the Revisers:—'Wist ye not that I must be in my father's house?'

Are they authorized in translating the Greek thus? I know no justification for it, but am not learned enough to say they have none. That the Syriac has it so, is of little weight; seeing it is no original Syriac, but retranslation. If he did say '*my father's house*', could he have meant the temple and his parents not have known what he meant? And why should he have taken it for granted they would know, or judge that they ought to have known, that he was there? So little did the temple suggest itself to them, that either it was the last place in which they sought him, or they had been there before, and had *not* found him. If he meant that they might have known this without being told, why was it that, even when he set the thing before them, they did not understand him? I do not believe he meant the temple; I do not think he said or meant '*in my fathers house*'.

What then makes those who give us this translation, prefer it to the phrase in the authorized version, '*about my Father's business*'?

One or other of two causes—most likely both together: an ecclesiastical fancy, and the mere fact that he was found in the temple. A mind ecclesiastical will presume the temple the fittest, therefore most likely place, for the Son of God to betake himself to, but such a mind would not be the first to reflect that the temple was a place where the Father was worshipped neither in spirit nor in truth—a place built by one of the vilest rulers of this world, less fit than many another spot for the special presence of him of whom the prophet bears witness: 'Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.' Jesus himself, with the same breath in which once he called it his father's house, called it a den of thieves. His expulsion from it of the buyers and sellers, was the first waft of the fan with which he was come to purge his father's dominions. Nothing could ever cleanse that house; his fanning rose to a tempest, and swept it out of his father's world.

For the second possible cause of the change from *business* to *temple*—the mere fact that he was found in the temple, can hardly be a reason for his expecting his parents to know that he was there; and if it witnessed to some way of thought or habit of his with which they were acquainted, it is, I repeat, difficult to see why the parents should fail to perceive what the interpreters have found so easily. But the parents looked for a larger meaning in the words of such a son—whose meaning at the same time was too large for them to find.

When, according to the Greek, the Lord, on the occasion already alluded to, says 'my father's house,' he says it plainly; he uses the word *house*: here he does not.

Let us see what lies in the Greek to guide us to the thought in the mind of the Lord when he thus reasoned with the apprehensions of his father and mother. The Greek, taken literally, says, 'Wist ye not that I must be in the—of my father?' The authorized version supplies *business*; the revised, *house*. There is no noun in the Greek, and the article 'the' is in the plural. To translate it as literally as it can be translated, making of it an English sentence, the saying stands, 'Wist ye not that I must be in the things of my father?' The plural article implies the English *things*; and the question is then, What *things* does he mean? The word might mean *affairs* or *business*; but why the plural article should be contracted to mean *house*, I do not know. In a great wide sense, no doubt, the word *house* might be used, as I am about to show, but surely not as meaning the temple.

He was arguing for confidence in God on the part of his parents, not for a knowledge of his whereabouts. The same thing that made them anxious concerning him, prevented them from understanding his words—lack, namely, of faith in the Father. This, the one thing he came into the world to teach men, those words were meant to teach his parents. They are spirit and life, involving the one principle by which men shall live. They hold the same core as his words to his disciples in the storm, 'Oh ye of little faith!' Let us look more closely at them.

'Why did you look for me? Did you not know that I must be among my father's things?' What are we to understand by 'my father's things'? The translation given in the authorized version is, I think, as to the words themselves, a thoroughly justifiable one: 'I must be about my father's business,' or 'my father's affairs'; I refuse it for no other reason than that it does not fit the logic of the narrative, as does the word *things*, which besides opens to us a door of large and joyous prospect. Of course he was about his father's business, and they might know it and yet be anxious about him, not having a perfect faith in that father. But, as I have said already, it was not anxiety as to what might befall him because of doing the will of the Father; he might well seem to them as yet too young for danger from that source; it was but the vague perils of life beyond their sight that appalled them; theirs was just the uneasiness that possesses every parent whose child is missing; and if they, like him, had trusted in their father, they would have known what their son now meant when he said that he was in the midst of his father's things—namely, that the very things from which they dreaded evil accident,

were his own home-surroundings; that he was not doing the Father's business in a foreign country, but in the Father's own house. Understood as meaning the world, or the universe, the phrase, 'my father's house,' would be a better translation than the authorized; understood as meaning the poor, miserable, God-forsaken temple—no more the house of God than a dead body is the house of a man—it is immeasurably inferior.

It seems to me, I say, that the Lord meant to remind them, or rather to make them feel, for they had not yet learned the fact, that he was never away from home, could not be lost, as they had thought him; that he was in his father's house all the time, where no hurt could come to him. 'The things' about him were the furniture and utensils of his home; he knew them all and how to use them. 'I must be among my father's belongings.' The world was his home because his father's house. He was not a stranger who did not know his way about in it. He was no lost child, but with his father all the time.

Here we find one main thing wherein the Lord differs from us: we are not at home in this great universe, our father's house. We ought to be, and one day we shall be, but we are not yet. This reveals Jesus more than man, by revealing him more man than we. We are not complete men, we are not anything near it, and are therefore out of harmony, more or less, with everything in the house of our birth and habitation. Always struggling to make our home in the world, we have not yet succeeded. We are not at home in it, because we are not at home with the lord of the house, the father of the family, not one with our elder brother who is his right hand. It is only the son, the daughter, that abideth ever in the house. When we are true children, if not the world, then the universe will be our home, felt and known as such, the house we are satisfied with, and would not change. Hence, until then, the hard struggle, the constant strife we hold with *Nature*—as we call the things of our father; a strife invaluable for our development, at the same time manifesting us not yet men enough to be lords of the house built for us to live in. We cannot govern or command in it as did the Lord, because we are not at one with his father, therefore neither in harmony with his things, nor rulers over them. Our best power in regard to them is but to find out wonderful facts concerning them and their relations, and turn these facts to our uses on systems of our own. For we discover what we seem to discover, by working inward from without, while he works outward from within; and we shall never understand the world, until we see it in the direction in which he works making it—namely from within outward. This of course we cannot do until we are one with him. In the meantime, so much are both we and his things his, that we can err concerning them only as he has made it possible for us to err; we can wander only in the direction of the truth—if but to find that we can find nothing.

Think for a moment how Jesus was at home among the things of his father. It seems to me, I repeat, a spiritless explanation of his words—that the temple was the place where naturally he was at home. Does he make the least lamentation over the temple? It is Jerusalem he weeps over—the men of Jerusalem, the killers, the stoners. What was his place of prayer? Not the temple, but the mountain-top. Where does he find symbols whereby to speak of what goes on in the mind and before the face of his father in heaven? Not in the temple; not in its rites; not on its altars; not in its holy of holies; he finds them in the world and its lovely-lowly facts; on the roadside, in the field, in the vineyard, in the garden, in the house; in the family, and the commonest of its affairs—the lighting of the lamp, the leavening of the meal, the neighbour's borrowing, the losing of the coin, the straying of the sheep. Even in the unlovely facts also of the world which he turns to holy use, such as the unjust judge, the false steward, the faithless labourers, he ignores the temple. See how he drives the devils from the souls and bodies of men, as we the wolves from our sheepfolds! how before him the diseases, scaly and spotted, hurry and flee! The world has for him no chamber of terror. He walks to the door of the sepulchre, the sealed cellar of his father's house, and calls forth its four days dead. He rebukes the mourners, he stays the funeral, and gives back the departed children to their parents' arms. The roughest of its servants do not make him wince; none of them are so arrogant as to disobey his word; he falls asleep in the midst of the storm that threatens to swallow his boat. Hear how, on that same occasion, he rebukes his disciples! The children to tremble at a gust of wind in the house!

God's little ones afraid of a storm! Hear him tell the watery floor to be still, and no longer toss his brothers! see the watery floor obey him and grow still! See how the wandering creatures under it come at his call! See him leave his mountain-closet, and go walking over its heaving surface to the help of his men of little faith! See how the world's water turns to wine! how its bread grows more bread at his word! See how he goes from the house for a while, and returning with fresh power, takes what shape he pleases, walks through its closed doors, and goes up and down its invisible stairs!

All his life he was among his father's things, either in heaven or in the world—not then only when they found him in the temple at Jerusalem. He is still among his father's things, everywhere about in the world, everywhere throughout the wide universe. Whatever he laid aside to come to us, to whatever limitations, for our sake, he stooped his regal head, he dealt with the things about him in such lordly, childlike manner as made it clear they were not strange to him, but the things of his father. He claimed none of them as his own, would not have had one of them his except through his father. Only as his father's could he enjoy them;—only as coming forth from the Father, and full of the Father's thought and nature, had they to him any existence. That the things were his fathers, made them precious things to him. He had no care for having, as men count having. All his having was in the Father. I wonder if he ever put anything in his pocket: I doubt if he had one. Did he ever say, 'This is mine, not yours'? Did he not say, 'All things are mine, therefore they are yours'? Oh for his liberty among the things of the Father! Only by knowing them the things of our Father, can we escape enslaving ourselves to them. Through the false, the infernal idea of *having*, of *possessing* them, we make them our tyrants, make the relation between them and us an evil thing. The world was a blessed place to Jesus, because everything in it was his father's. What pain must it not have been to him, to see his brothers so vilely misuse the Father's house by grasping, each for himself, at the family things! If the knowledge that a spot in the landscape retains in it some pollution, suffices to disturb our pleasure in the whole, how must it not have been with him, how must it not be with him now, in regard to the disfigurements and defilements caused by the greed of men, by their haste to be rich, in his father's lovely house!

Whoever is able to understand Wordsworth, or Henry Vaughan, when either speaks of the glorious insights of his childhood, will be able to imagine a little how Jesus must, in his eternal childhood, regard the world.

Hear what Wordsworth says:—

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:  
 The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
 Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
 And cometh from afar:  
 Not in entire forgetfulness,  
 And not in utter nakedness,  
 But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
 From God, who is our home:  
 Heaven lies about us in our infancy!  
 Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
 Upon the growing Boy,  
 But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,  
 He sees it in his joy;  
 The Youth, who daily farther from the east  
 Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,  
 And by the vision splendid  
 Is on his way attended;  
 At length the Man perceives it die away,

And fade into the light of common day.

Hear what Henry Vaughan says:—

Happy those early dayes, when I  
Shin'd in my angell-infancy!  
Before I understood this place  
Appointed for my second race,  
Or taught my soul to fancy ought  
But a white, celestiall thought;  
When yet I had not walkt above  
A mile or two, from my first love,  
And looking back—at that short space—  
Could see a glimpse of His bright-face;  
When on some gilded cloud, or flowre  
My gazing soul would dwell an houre,  
And in those weaker glories spy  
Some shadows of eternity;  
Before I taught my tongue to wound  
My conscience with a sinfull sound,  
Or had the black art to dispence  
A sev'rall sinne to ev'ry sence,  
But felt through all this fleshly dresse  
Bright shootes of everlastingnesse.  
O how I long to travell back,  
And tread again that ancient track!  
That I might once more reach that plaine,  
Where first I left my glorious traine;  
From whence th' inlightned spirit sees  
That shady City of palme trees.

Whoever has thus gazed on flower or cloud; whoever can recall poorest memory of the trail of glory that hung about his childhood, must have some faint idea how his father's house and the things in it always looked, and must still look to the Lord. With him there is no fading into the light of common day. He has never lost his childhood, the very essence of childhood being nearness to the Father and the outgoing of his creative love; whence, with that insight of his eternal childhood of which the insight of the little ones here is a fainter repetition, he must see everything as the Father means it. The child sees things as the Father means him to see them, as he thought of them when he uttered them. For God is not only the father of the child, but of the childhood that constitutes him a child, therefore the childness is of the divine nature. The child may not indeed be capable of looking into the father's method, but he can in a measure understand his work, has therefore free entrance to his study and workshop both, and is welcome to find out what he can, with fullest liberty to ask him questions. There are men too, who, at their best, see, in their lower measure, things as they are—as God sees them always. Jesus saw things just as his father saw them in his creative imagination, when willing them out to the eyes of his children. But if he could always see the things of his father even as some men and more children see them at times, he might well feel *almost* at home among them. He could not cease to admire, cease to love them. I say *love*, because the life in them, the presence of the creative one, would ever be plain to him. In the Perfect, would familiarity ever destroy wonder at things essentially wonderful because essentially divine? To cease to wonder is to fall plumb-down

from the childlike to the commonplace—the most undivine of all moods intellectual. Our nature can never be at home among things that are not wonderful to us.

Could we see things always as we have sometimes seen them—and as one day we must always see them, only far better—should we ever know dullness? Greatly as we might enjoy all forms of art, much as we might learn through the eyes and thoughts of other men, should we fly to these for deliverance from *ennui*, from any haunting discomfort? Should we not just open our own child-eyes, look upon the things themselves, and be consoled?

Jesus, then, would have his parents understand that he was in his father's world among his father's things, where was nothing to hurt him; he knew them all, was in the secret of them all, could use and order them as did his father. To this same I think all we humans are destined to rise. Though so many of us now are ignorant what kind of home we need, what a home we are capable of having, we too shall inherit the earth with the Son eternal, doing with it as we would—willing with the will of the Father. To such a home as we now inhabit, only perfected, and perfectly beheld, we are travelling—never to reach it save by the obedience that makes us the children, therefore the heirs of God. And, thank God! there the father does not die that the children may inherit; for, bliss of heaven! we inherit with the Father.

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