

**THE OLD EVANGELICALISM
AND THE NEW.**

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BY

R. W. Dale.

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A DISCOURSE DELIVERED IN ARGYLE CHAPEL,
BATH, ON OCTOBER 8, 1889, ON OCCASION
OF THE HUNDREDDTH ANNIVERSARY
OF ITS OPENING.

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BY

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BIRMINGHAM.

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“And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they did take their food with gladness and singleness of hearty praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved.”—ACTS ii. 46–47.

THESE words give us the impression that the Christian Church was distinguished for some time after the day of Pentecost by great buoyancy of spirit; and that this buoyancy of spirit was one element of its attractiveness and charm. Only a very few weeks before, the friends of Christ were in despair. All seemed lost. A great darkness had fallen upon them. At His resurrection the dawn came. But I suppose that at first they were unable to receive all the blessedness of it. Christ was restored to them; but His relations to them were not just the same that they had been before. He ap-

peared among them at unexpected times and in unexpected places; remained with them for a few hours and then vanished—they knew not where. There was a mystery which must have awed them. During the forty days between the resurrection and the ascension theirs must have been a “fearful joy.” Then came ten days of prayer and hope and wondering expectation. Then Pentecost. The great promise was fulfilled. The Holy Ghost descended. The new morning in all its splendour broke upon them. The visible presence of Christ was no longer with them; but there is no hint or trace that they looked back with any regret either upon His earthly ministry or upon those six weeks in which they knew that at any time their Lord might appear to them. They had abounding happiness—the energy, the spring, the high spirits of youth. “And the Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved;” and this increased their joy.

We are celebrating the hundredth anniversary

of the opening of this building for Christian worship. When it was opened there was a similar buoyancy of spirit in the Evangelical Churches of this country; and of them, too, it might be said, in the very words of Luke, “the Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved.”

The Congregational Church meeting in this place was founded in the year 1785. Their first minister was Mr. Tuppen. Some years before, while living an irreligious life, he had gone to hear George Whitfield, who was preaching on a common near Portsmouth. He went—not, indeed, from mere curiosity; nor did he go with any wish to receive religious benefit, but to disturb the congregation and to insult Mr. Whitfield. He says, “I had therefore provided myself with stones in my pocket, if opportunity offered, to pelt the preacher; but I had not heard long before the stone was taken out of my heart of flesh, and then the other stones, with shame and weeping, were dropped one by one out upon the ground.” He became one of Mr. Whitfield’s

preachers, and was, for some time, a minister at Portsea.

When he came to Bath in 1785 the congregation was very small, and consisted of less than thirty persons; in the course of three or four years it rose to 700 or 800. They worshipped for a few years in a building on the Lower Borough walls, but this soon became too small for them, and they built a new chapel on this site, which was opened on Oct. 4, 1789. When the chapel was opened, however, Mr. Tuppen's health was broken, and he was never able to preach in it

The first sermon was preached by Mr. Jay, who was at that time about to leave his first pastorate, at Christian Malford, and who had often preached for Mr. Tuppen during his illness. Early in 1790 Mr. Tuppen died, and Mr. Jay, who had become the minister of a chapel at Clifton, belonging to Lady Maxwell, accepted the invitation of the Church to become his successor. Mr. Jay remained the pastor of the Church for sixty-two years; in October, 1852, he

resigned. He had recently been suffering from severe and alarming illness, and felt that his strength was gone. In the December of the following year he died.

It is not my intention to follow the history of the Church and congregation during the years which have passed since Mr. Jay's death. But I propose to say something of the Evangelical Revival of the last century, of which this building is the visible monument and memorial.

This building, I say, is the visible monument and memorial of the Evangelical Revival. Those who erected the original chapel on this site—which, I think, was twice enlarged during Mr. Jay's ministry—had caught the new fire which the Revival had kindled in innumerable Christian hearts. Their first pastor, as I have reminded you, was drawn to Christ under the preaching of George Whitfield, and his conversion, in its suddenness, and in all its circumstances, was typical of the conversions of that glorious time. Mr. Jay's conversion was also

the result of a Methodist service. He was careful indeed to express his dissent from those unwise persons who, he says, "refer to their conversion not as the real commencement of a work which is to continue increasing through life, but as something which may be viewed as a distinct and unique experience immediately produced, originated, and finished at once, and perfectly determinable as to its time and place and mode of accomplishment." He had no such story to tell. His boyhood was free from grave sins; "but I began," he says, "to feel my deficiencies with regard to duty, and to be dissatisfied with the state of my heart towards God." Just then a private house in the village where he was living was opened for Methodist services, and he tells us that he was "peculiarly affected" by "the singing, the extemporaneousness of the address, and the apparent affection and earnestness of the speaker; and what he said of 'the faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,' was like rain upon the

mown grass, or cold water to a thirsty soul. I scarcely slept that night for weeping and for joy; and as the preaching was to be renewed the next morning at seven o'clock (not to interfere with the service of the Established Church) I happened to be the first that came." So that Mr. Jay, your second pastor, as well as Mr. Tuppen, your first pastor, learnt from Methodism the glory of the Christian redemption.

And to the last, Mr. Jay remained one of the great representatives of the Revival. In his early life, indeed, there were some who were disposed to regard his Evangelicalism with a certain measure of distrust. This distrust appears to have been principally due to two causes. There was great simplicity and naturalness in his style. Sheridan said that he was the most manly preacher that he had ever heard.—While he used the language of Scripture very freely and felicitously, he had no liking for the conventionalisms of ordinary Evangelical preachers. He had a freshness of style, which came from the freshness of his

intellectual manner, and I suppose that some earnest Evangelical people missed the phrases which they were accustomed to. But there was another reason for the distrust. It was the habit of some Evangelical preachers at the close of the last century to preach doctrinal and controversial discourses incessantly; they reiterated in sermon after sermon elaborate expositions and demonstrations of the great articles of the Evangelical creed; they assailed in sermon after sermon the theological systems in which these articles were denied. Mr. Jay thought that this was an error. He preferred to give Evangelical truth in solution. I doubt whether if he had attempted to give it in a dogmatic and controversial form he would have done it very successfully. In his later years, however, he thought that if some of the preachers who were his early contemporaries had erred in one direction, he himself had been somewhat deficient in another; and he came to see that it was necessary to state the great truths of the Christian faith in a more formal

and dogmatic manner. But from first to last, in the substance and spirit and aims of his ministry he was a child of the Revival. "Nothing could satisfy him in his preaching," said one who knew him well, "but bringing forth the whole story of Matthew Henry's three R's, Ruin, Redemption, and Regeneration."

When this place was built and he commenced his ministry in this city, George Whitfield had been dead only nine years. John Wesley was still living. While Mr. Jay was a minister at Clifton, he met Wesley in private more than once, and heard him preach. The Evangelical movement, when Argyle Chapel was opened one hundred years ago, had passed through its earlier and stormier period, but still retained its Divine energy. A considerable number of the clergy of the Established Church had already caught its spirit, and were preaching its characteristic gospel with vehement zeal. The older Non-conformist Churches, which had at first regarded the movement with coldness and dislike,

had discovered that it was a new manifestation of the power and grace of God; and from one end of England to the other they were kindling with the Divine fire. There was a buoyancy, an ardour, a courage, a zeal, in a very large number of the Independent and Baptist Churches at the end of the last century and the beginning of this which enormously increased the effectiveness of their work.

Meeting-houses which had been deserted were crowded. Meeting-houses which had been more than large enough for their congregations for two or three generations had to be made larger. New meeting-houses in great numbers were erected. Cottages were rented in villages; farm-house kitchens were lent; old barns were turned into chapels; and young men who had been hard at work all through the week at the smithy, at the carpenter's bench, or behind the counter in drapers' shops, went out in companies from the towns on Sunday mornings to conduct the services. The Baptist Missionary Society, the

Church Missionary Society, the London Missionary Society, the Bible Society, creations of the Revival, were beginning to extend the interests of Christian men beyond the limits of their own country, and were gradually creating an enthusiasm of zeal for the restoration of the whole world to God. For the first forty years after the opening of this building the Evangelical Churches of England were distinguished for their ardour, their hopefulness, and their courage; they were confident that the evil times had passed away, that the very glory of God had broken upon the darkness of many centuries, and that the day was not remote when all nations would rejoice in the blessedness of the Christian redemption.

I propose, as I have said, to give an account this evening of some of the characteristics of this great religious movement, and I shall ask you to consider whether there are any considerable contrasts between the religious life and thought of the Evangelical Churches at the end of the last century when Argyle

Chapel was built and the religious life and thought of those Churches of our own times which claim, and rightly claim, to be Evangelical. In pursuing this inquiry I shall, of course, think principally of the Congregational Churches. About the other great communities which inherit the Evangelical traditions it would not be fitting for me to say anything.

I.

The Evangelical movement had its characteristic \sqrt{qoj} or spirit, as well as its characteristic creed; and this \sqrt{qoj} or spirit it is not hard to discover. Its supreme care in the days of its strength was not for any ideal of ecclesiastical polity; it contributed to the extinction among Congregationalists, and, I think, among Baptists and Presbyterians, of that solicitude for an ideal Church organization which had so large a place in the original revolt of the Nonconformists against the Elizabethan settlement of the English Church. Nor were the

Evangelical clergy zealous supporters of Episcopacy; their imagination was not touched by that great—though, as we believe—false conception of the Church which fired the passion of the leaders of the Tractarian Revival—a Church whose living ministers can claim to inherit, by unbroken succession, awful powers and prerogatives attributed to the original apostles. The Evangelical movement encouraged what is called an undenominational temper. It emphasized the vital importance of the Evangelical creed, but it regarded almost with indifference all forms of Church polity that were not in apparent and irreconcilable antagonism to that creed. It demanded as the basis of fellowship a common religious life and common religious beliefs, but was satisfied with fellowship of an accidental and precarious kind. It cared nothing for the idea of the Church as the august society of saints. It was the ally of Individualism.

Methodism, indeed, owes very much of its enduring strength to those special institutions,

of which the class-meeting is the most conspicuous example, by which its members are permanently drawn into the most intimate religious relations with each other; but these institutions are the distinguishing characteristics of the Methodist societies; and they have never existed in the other communities which were transformed by the Revival

The tendency to Individualism, which is one of the marks of the Evangelical movement, appears in other directions. Although its leaders insisted very earnestly on the obligation of individual Christian men to live a devout and godly life, they had very little to say about the relations of the individual Christian to the general order of human society, or about the realization of the kingdom of God in all the various regions of human activity. As the Revival had no great ideal of the Church as a Divine institution, it had no great ideal of the State as a Divine institution; nor had it any great ideal of the

Divine order of the world. It had no such dreams as came to an ancient Jewish saint of the glory of Christ as the true Lord of the human race, and of the whole life of the race, the King who will listen to the cry of the oppressed and break in pieces the oppressor. It had no eagerness to take possession of the realms of Art, Science, Literature, Politics, Commerce, Industry, in the name of their true Sovereign and Prince. Hence its ethical ideal of the individual Christian was wanting in wealth and variety; for the ethical perfection of the individual is determined by his relations to the Church and to the whole order of the world.

And, further. Evangelicalism was wanting in what I may call a disinterested love of truth. Even in the ardour of its youth, and during its creative period it had no eager hope that it was on the verge of great discoveries concerning God and the ways of God to men. Among its leaders there were men of learning,

men of great intellectual vigour and keenness, men of an audacious temperament; and it is remarkable that the movement had in it so little of that passion of adventure which strives to find its way into regions where the thought of the Church has never penetrated. It would not be accurate, indeed, to say that the Evangelicals cared nothing for truth; for the two great divisions of the party, the Arminian and the Calvinistic Methodists, fought for their respective theological positions with great fierceness, and occasionally with great bitterness. But on both sides, as I venture to think, the main, though not the exclusive, source of the controversial earnestness was not the love of truth for its own sake, but the love of truth as a necessary instrument for converting men to God, and placing them permanently in a right relation to Him. They cared for their truth as a general cares for his guns and ammunition, or as a mechanic cares for his tools; not as an artist of genius cares for his canvas. Or, to employ a juster and closer analogy, they

cared for their truth as a manufacturer cares for his science; he can use it for the purposes of his business—not as a scientific student cares for it, for its own sake and apart from its material services.

In brief, Evangelicalism cared supremely—this was its power, this its glory, this its claim to the eternal honour and veneration of the Church—Evangelicalism cared supremely for men, for living men who were to be saved or lost, and on whom it had to press, with tears and agony and prayers, the gospel of Christ in order to save them. It saw the flames in which they were in peril of being consumed, and the city of God from which they were in peril of being irrevocably excluded. It cared nothing for building up ideal Churches, or for creating an ideal social order; it did not care very much for any development of personal life and character which was not necessary to make sure of eternal blessedness and to augment it; it cared very little for any truth which had

not a direct relation to salvation. What it cared for was to save individual men from eternal death. This done, Evangelicalism was apt to assume that everything would come right with them either in this world or the next. This was the $\hat{\eta}\theta\omicron\varsigma$, the spirit, of Evangelicalism. To what extent do we, who belong to the Congregational Churches of England, retain it?

Nearly fifty years ago a great panic was created among English Congregationalists by charges coming from high authorities against the faith of the younger ministers and of the students who were at that time in the Congregational Colleges. The charges were set out with great elaboration in a series of articles which appeared in *The Congregational Magazine* of those days. The articles discussed the Theology of the College, the Theology of the Study, and the Theology of the Pulpit. The editor of the magazine was the Rev. John Blackburn, a man of very considerable intellectual force and of large public influence. The young men

protested vehemently; declared that they held fast to the Evangelical faith; that if there were any differences between their own creed and the creed of their elders, the differences were differences of form, not of substance; that the charges brought against them were unjust, and wholly without foundation. Their protests did not quiet the fears of the older men, nor cause the agitation which the charges had produced in the Churches to cease. The young men felt and said that they were cruelly wronged.

Looking back upon that controversy, which I had occasion to examine a few years ago, I think I see that the older men were in error in charging their younger brethren with having surrendered any of the central articles of the Evangelical Faith. But I think that they would not have been in error if they had said that the $\hat{\eta}\theta\omicron\varsigma$, the spirit, of their younger brethren was not precisely the same as that of the Evangelical Revival.

For about that time the younger men began to care for truth for its own sake—not merely

as an instrument for converting the world. What may be called the scientific spirit, the disinterested love of truth, which had previously been illustrated in only a few exceptional men began to take possession in large numbers of the younger ministers. They were interested in Biblical criticism. They wanted to make sure of the authorship and the dates of the books of the Old Testament and the New. They discussed the nature of Inspiration. They distinguished between verbal inspiration and plenary. The Bible was authoritative; but they wanted to construct a theory of its authority.

They felt a still keener interest in Exegesis—an interest which, happily, has lasted to our own time, and is now keener than ever. They became impatient of the traditional exegetical methods. Any text that *looked* like a Biblical proof of a great truth was quoted by many of the older men as proving it. The young men said: “We believe the truth—believe it with all our heart; but this text and that text and half a dozen more, which you have

quoted to prove it, do not prove it. You have missed their real meaning." The older men could not see why they should be so scrupulous. The young men, with their disinterested love of truth, insisted that they were under the most solemn obligations to be scrupulous; that since the Bible contained the record of Divine revelations, they were bound to discover exactly what it meant; that to put a meaning of their own into a Bible sentence and to claim Divine authority for it, was just as bad as to put a *sentence* of their own into the Bible and to claim Divine authority for it.

They, therefore, read the Bible, not merely for personal edification, like many of the older men, who put more gospel into the Book of Leviticus and the Book of Judges than some people now-a-days can find in the Epistle to the Romans; nor merely for the purpose of collecting fresh materials to use for the conversion of sinners; but to discover what the Bible really meant. And that was surely admirable. The gentle—the violent—pressure which used to be

put on reluctant texts by theologians and preachers of all creeds to *make* them *say* the right thing or to *prevent* them from saying the wrong, was as bad as the gentle or violent pressure put on obstinate heretics by the Inquisition with precisely the same object. There should be a conscience in the study as well as in the counting-house. To attempt by skilful manipulation to get a better meaning out of a text than it contains, is as fraudulent a proceeding as to attempt by skilful manipulation to get a better meaning out of a cheque than it contains. The text—as a devout soul might say—is more precious when you have put a great Christian truth into it than it was in its natural and original state. No doubt. And a cheque for £10 is more precious when you have added a couple of noughts to the ten and made it a thousand. But the two proceedings are very much of the same character.

With us Congregationalists, as I have said, the old Evangelical passion for saving men came to have associated with it, forty or fifty

years ago, a passion for truth for its own sake, and the passion for truth found its principal exercise in the province of exegesis. That seems excellent; in itself it is very excellent.

But if we ministers, and our people care more for truth than our fathers cared, do we care for men less? Let us test ourselves. Are we as *anxious*—ministers and people—about men as our fathers were? On any theory of eschatology there is a dark and menacing future for those who have been brought face to face with Christ in this life and have refused to receive His salvation and to submit to His authority. I do not ask whether the element of fear has a great place in our *preaching*, but whether it has a great place in our *hearts*—whether we ourselves are afraid—whether the Christian people who have been trained by us are afraid—of what will come to men who do not believe in Christ; whether we, whether our people, are filled with an agonizing earnestness for their salvation.

And, secondly, do we and our people, as the

result of the passion for truth, know the real meaning of the Bible better than our fathers knew it a hundred years ago? We may not make the same blunders in dealing with its form; but the form is unimportant compared with the substance; and the substance is to be mastered not merely by the help of Bible Dictionaries and Hand-books, but by deep and devout meditation. Do we brood over the revelations of God contained in the Old and the New Testaments as our fathers brooded over them? Do we give as much time to serious thought on these surprising discoveries of the thought and life of God as they gave? If we have lost something of the passion for men which characterized the Revival, is there adequate compensation in the results of the passion for truth?

But perhaps we have developed Evangelicalism in other directions and have supplemented, or contributed to supplement, some of its acknowledged deficiencies. It may be urged,

for example, that while some of the earlier leaders of the Revival, especially John Wesley, said a great deal about Christian morals, moral instruction and discipline were not favoured by the dominant influence of Evangelicalism. Before the Revival began, the people had listened to moral sermons which had more of Epictetus and Seneca in them than of Christ; and Evangelical congregations seem to have assumed that all moral sermons were necessarily Pagan; they also assumed that what they called mere moral teaching was unnecessary to spiritual people. They were apt to say: "Make the tree good and the fruit will be good as a matter of course." They forgot that grapes under culture are very much better than grapes which are left to grow wild. *We* insist much more earnestly, and with greater detail of practical illustration, on common duties. In this we are wholly right; and I believe that this practical teaching has had a wholesome effect. And yet I sometimes ask myself whether it is quite clear that we are producing a more

vigorous and a more austere—a less compromising and a less self-indulgent type of moral character than that which was created when moral teaching was too much neglected. Are we cultivating the more robust as well as the more genial virtues? Do we think—not too much of the details of moral conduct—but too little of those great forces which give to the whole moral life its strength and its dignity?

We are probably right in thinking that the spiritual discipline of Evangelicalism, its method of treating spiritual experience, had the fault of excessive subjectivity. Good men and women wrote diaries in which they recorded all the vicissitudes of their interior history. But it is by the contemplation of God, rather than by an incessant watching of our own moods, that the Divine life in the soul is enriched, and that we come to bear fruit in all good works. Our own religious thought is far less introspective. I suppose that what used to be called ex-

perimental preaching is not very common. We are not anxious about our frames and feelings. But are we quite sure that this forgetfulness of self IS the result of the vision of the glory and the grace of Christ and of the righteousness and love of the Eternal?

Further, Evangelicalism, as I have said, was eager to bring individual men to God; we should have supplemented one of its deficiencies if we had surrounded them with a Christian society which would have educated and disciplined their personal life. For the protection and development of the Christian life and the formation of the ideal Christian character, a Christian environment—a Christian Society—is necessary. The fellowship of the saints, with its ethical and spiritual traditions, with its spiritual brotherhood and with its supernatural atmosphere, is a great means of grace.

Methodism, as I have said, made one striking and original contribution to the institutions of

the Church in the class-meeting. Never, as far as I know in any church, has there been so near an approach to the ideal of pastoral oversight as the class-meeting, in its perfect form, provides; and it also provides for that communion of saints which is almost as necessary for the strength and the joy and the harmonious growth of the Christian life as fellowship with God. In addition to its class-meetings, Methodism has had its bands and its love-feasts.

But how is it with the rest of us? Evangelicalism has always tended to sporadic forms of fellowship—to Bible-readings in drawing-rooms, conventions, private, occasional, unorganized meetings for the more devout members of Evangelical Churches. The result has been that those to whom intimate fellowship with devout and earnest people is most necessary are left to themselves, and are in danger of drifting into religious indifference; and, on the other hand, there is some danger lest those who habitually attend these select

assemblies should come to regard themselves as in some special sense the elect of God. It may be that those who through God's grace have been moved to attempt the highest form of spiritual life, and who have found in God exceptional joy, need for their defence against some of the perils of their blessedness the nearest religious association with Christian people who, while they see no visions and experience no raptures, are loyally endeavouring to do the will of Christ in common things. I go further, and say that Christian men and women who are striving for perfection cannot, without suffering from it, withdraw themselves from those of their Christian brethren whose love for Christ is -wanting in ardour, and whose faith in the unseen and eternal is almost mastered by the cares, the riches, or the pleasures of this life. There is an evil spirit in the world—and we severely condemn it—which leads some people to be always attempting to make friends with those who are in a higher social rank than them-

selves, and to dissolve their connection with their social inferiors. The same spirit, in another form, appears in the Church. It leads some Christian people to attempt to live in exclusive association with the best and the devoutest of their brethren and to disregard the obligations of brotherhood which bind them to Christian people whose knowledge of God is inferior to their own, and who are strangers to the loftier and deeper experiences of a Christian life.

But it must be acknowledged that in Congregational Churches there is some excuse for yielding to this evil tendency. For we make no definite, or at least no adequate, provision for the free communion of saints as a regular part of the life of the Church. Among us, this is a specially flagrant piece of neglect; for to secure this communion was one of the principal objects for which the founders of English Congregationalism withdrew from the Anglican Establishment and founded separatist Churches.

Again: it is our modern habit to insist that all secular things are sacred to the Christian man, and we sharply condemn the Evangelical disposition to leave a great part of the world to the devil. We insist that men should not care exclusively for their personal salvation—and should not even care exclusively for the salvation of other men; that it is their duty to get the will of God done everywhere and in all things. Nothing can be truer or nobler. But if we care less exclusively for the salvation, either of ourselves or of other men in the next world—do we really care more—not for ethical, social, or political reforms on mere ethical, social, or political grounds—but for the realization of the Divine thought in the actual order of this world?

If we have been emancipated from the superstition that art, literature, politics, are alien from the kingdom of God; have we really come to believe that art, literature, politics, are to be made divine? We have gone into the world in a sense in which

Evangelicalism thought it sinful and dangerous to go into the world; but are we mastering the world by the power of God and making it what God meant it to be, or is the world mastering us?

These questions are naturally suggested by the more conspicuous characteristics of that great religious movement to which our thoughts are recalled this evening. I will not attempt to answer them. Any answer that could be given to most of them would have to be surrounded with reserves and qualifications. I propose them with the hope they may lead to serious and devout thought. In the grace bestowed upon our fathers we may find new supports to our own faith in the great love and power of God. We should be thankful that God has revealed to us some of the errors and defects of their conception of the Christian life and the kingdom of God; but we should not assume that in every particular in which we differ from them we differ for

the better. We have gained much; but have we lost nothing?

II.

Evangelicalism had its characteristic \sqrt{qoj} or spirit; it had also its characteristic doctrines: of these I must speak very briefly. I may dismiss the Calvinistic controversy on which the leaders of the Revival were divided. Nor is it necessary to refer to those great articles of the Christian creed which they held in common with the Reformers, the Puritans, and all those Protestant Churches which are described as orthodox. All these articles they believed, but about some of the greatest of them—as for example the Trinity—they said very little. The characteristic doctrines of the Revival, those which its preachers were constantly reiterating and on which they—insisted most vehemently, were the Death of Christ for the sins of men which they maintained was the ground of the Divine forgiveness, and the only hope of a sinful race; Justification by Faith; the reality and the necessity of the

supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in Regeneration; and the Eternal Suffering to which they believed that those are destined who have heard the Christian Gospel in this life and rejected it.

In relation to the last of these, the belief of large numbers of persons now belonging to Evangelical Churches has undergone a great change. As yet there has been no general consent in an alternative doctrine. There are some—but I imagine that they are comparatively few—who have come to the positive conviction that all men will certainly at last reach the blessedness and glory of eternal union with God. The Freedom of the human will seems to most serious persons to interpose an insuperable obstacle to that conclusion. Men have the awful power of resisting both the Divine authority and the Divine grace in this world, and it is hard to understand how they can lose that power in the world to come. The Will would cease to be a will if it were forced; Goodness would cease to be goodness if it were compelled:

and therefore the possibility of persistent and eternal refusal to receive salvation from sin and from the sorrow and loss which sin brings with it seems to be inherent in the moral nature of man. There are, however, many who believe that through age after age the mercy of God will continue to pursue, even in their farthest wanderings, the lost sheep of the flock, and that He will never despair of finding them all at last. Others, again, have come to the conclusion that the most obvious and most natural interpretation of the language of our Lord and of His apostles on this awful subject requires us to believe that those who in this world have rejected Christ are destined to eternal destruction—to a second death from which there is no resurrection; that separated from Christ who is the Fountain of life, men will not live for ever; that eternal life is to be found only in Him. Others, again, can reach no definite and positive position; they find in the words of Christ and of His apostles apparently conflicting teaching.

It may seem that whatever passion for the sal-

vation of men came from the belief of our fathers, that those to whom they preached were in danger of dwelling in eternal fires, eternally unconsumed, must be absent in all to whom that belief has become incredible. But this is not quite clear to me. The words of Christ, however indefinite they may be with regard to the kind of penalty which is to come upon those who live and die in revolt against God, and however indefinite they may be with regard to the duration of the penalty, are words which shake the heart with fear. There is a judgment to come, and its issues, though varying with varying guilt, are to be awful to all the condemned. Even while the question of the ultimate destiny of the impenitent remains unresolved, there is enough to fill us with a passion of zeal for the salvation of men from the certain doom—whether it be temporary or final—which threatens them if they live and die without God.

It is not so much the uncertainty about the *duration* of the penalty which lessens the urgency of the motives for saving men from it,

as the disposition to doubt whether there is any penalty at all from which to save them. Human life; according to the faith of the old Evangelicalism, is at once a discipline and a probation. There are many who insist that it is a discipline, but deny that it is a probation; and by denying that it is a probation they lessen immeasurably its moral power as a discipline. This conception does certainly withdraw one of the forces which made the Evangelical preachers urgent in their appeals to men to repent and to believe the gospel. The Evangelical preachers were under the power of all the great reasons for endeavouring to bring men home to God which still remain if man's earthly life is a discipline and nothing more; and in addition to these there was the tremendous consideration that, within the limits of these mortal years, those to whom they were preaching were determining their destiny in the life which lies beyond death.

The reality and the necessity of the super-

natural work of the Holy Spirit in the regeneration of man stills holds its place in the faith of Evangelical Churches; though perhaps most modern Evangelicals would shrink from the severer statements of the Calvinistic and Augustinian theology concerning the corruption of human nature. They would probably shrink from saying with the great bishop of Hippo, that even the virtues of the unregenerate are only splendid sins. Nor am I quite sure that their real conception of human nature, apart from the life of God given in the new birth, would find its most natural expression in the words of Paul: "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." But they hold firmly the substance of the great truth that, "Except a man be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God." For they insist that the life which dwells in Christ is the true life of man, and that only as we receive that life and live in the power of it can we really know God, and love God, and reach the perfection and blessedness for which God created us. This

life becomes ours by the power of the Holy Ghost, and its first access to the soul is Regeneration.

Less emphasis, I suppose, is placed by modern Evangelicals than was placed by many of their fathers upon the definite moment of our transition from death to life, and upon the act of the Divine grace by which that transition is effected; but they insist constantly on the necessity, on the blessedness, on the glory of that Divine life which God gives to men in Christ; they entreat men to receive it: they believe that it is because that life may be ours that the perfection of Christ is the prophecy of our own, and that we may become in the truest, and deepest, and completest sense sons of the Eternal.

Still, I think, there is a difference between the newer and the older conception of this truth. The difference is due to many causes; and among these, very considerable importance must be attributed to the great place which is now given to the fact of the Incarnation and to what

the Incarnation reveals concerning the true and ideal relations between God and man. The leaders of the Evangelical movement believed with their whole heart that the Eternal Word, who was in the beginning with God, and who was God, became flesh in our Lord Jesus Christ, and that to see Christ is to see the Father; the true and proper Deity of Christ was a fundamental article of the Evangelical creed. But it was the common belief of Evangelicalism that the Incarnation was a kind of after-thought in the mind of God; that it was contingent on human sin; that the Eternal Son of God would never have descended from the heights of His glory, and made our life His own, had it not been necessary for Him to die for men in order to accomplish their salvation; and that we receive the life of Christ, and live in Him only because we have not been strong enough ourselves to stand fast in our integrity. This, I say, was the practical and current belief of the older Evangelicalism.

But, according to the faith of modern Evangeli-

calism, it was God's eternal thought and purpose that the race should be one with Christ, and should live in the power of Christ's life. This was the ideal perfection of man; for this glory man was created; and if the race had never sinned, we should still have said, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ"; we should still have said that it was God's eternal purpose that in Christ we should be "holy and without blemish before Him in love"; that we were "foreordained to be the sons of God through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us through the Beloved." Our sin gave occasion to a further and still more wonderful revelation of the infinite love of God; and we have to bless and to praise Him, that in Christ, in whom we should have had righteousness and glory and eternal joy if we had never sinned, "we have our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness

of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace." But I repeat that, even apart from the sin of the race, the Son of God would have shared the life of man, and man would have shared the life of God in Him.

This faith, strongly held by large numbers of modern Evangelicals, is affecting, I think, the whole current of modern Evangelical thought. It is a noble faith, and as a living force it is re-organizing the Evangelical conception of God, of human life, and of the universe. Of its far-reaching effects on our ethical and religious theory of the family, the state, commerce, industry, literature, science, art, there is no time to speak. It is obvious, however, that consciously or unconsciously, those who are under its power will not regard the new birth, the access of the life of Christ to the soul of man, as something abnormal; they will regard it as the fulfilment of the true idea of human nature. This Divine life is man's original inheritance. He had forfeited it by sin; through the death of Christ, it is still his. God's eternal purpose is

not to be baffled and defeated except by the persistent refusal of man to receive His grace.

On the other hand, it was the tendency of Evangelicalism to regard the supernatural life which is given in Regeneration very much as they regarded the Incarnation, as if, apart from human sin, it would have been unnecessary. No doubt the deeper and more careful theologians would have asserted that even the elect angels retain their righteousness only in the power of God's grace, and that if the race had never sinned its continuance in well-doing would have been the result of God's strong support; but the popular and current thought regarded the supernatural life as something alien and foreign to the natural life of man, and as rendered necessary by sin. To the newer Evangelicalism man never becomes truly man except in the power of the life of God, which is given in Regeneration; to the older popular Evangelicalism Regeneration was the beginning of a life which had become necessary to man through sin.

The results of the ascendancy secured by the Incarnation over modern Evangelical thought are seen in some other directions. The earlier Evangelicals could say, like Paul, "I delivered unto you first of all"—among the first things—"that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." Many of the modern Evangelicals must say, "I delivered unto you first of all that 'the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth,' and *we*, even *we*, in these last days have 'beheld His glory, glory as of the only-begotten from the Father.'" I do not mean that the Death of Christ for the sins of men is denied by Modern Evangelicals—if it were denied they would cease to be Evangelicals—but it is practically relegated by many to a secondary position. The Incarnation, with all that it reveals concerning God, man, and the universe, concerning this life and the life to come, stands first; with the early Evangelicals the Death of Christ for human sin stood first.

It may be said that the Incarnation must

stand first; that no living and effective conception of the relations of the Death of Christ to the sins of men can be reached until we have a living and effective conception of the relations of Christ Himself to the race. That is true. In theology the Incarnation lies deeper than the Atonement; and the great and august mystery of the Trinity lies deeper than the Incarnation. But even in the Christian life truths do not necessarily take rank according to their order in theology; their precedence is determined by their power over the great forces of the soul and over conduct. And in what the New Testament writers call "the gospel," the truths which have the first place are not those which necessarily have the first place in a theological system.

Theology is man's attempt to organize a coherent conception of all that he has learnt concerning God and the ways of God to man; it is a form of "wisdom"; and Paul tells the Corinthians that among full-grown men, that is, among Christians whose spiritual life was fully

developed, he spake "wisdom." But the gospel he describes as the *power* of God. And the truths which constitute its chief power—especially among those who have not yet received the supernatural life at all—may not be the same as those which, to Theologians or to those who have long known God, come first in the order of thought, and are the foundation of all the rest.

The Incarnation may be the deeper truth. It is certainly the larger truth: for it includes the truth that Christ died for the sins of men. But the truth, which, according to the experience of eighteen centuries, lies nearest the conscience and heart, is that special element of the doctrine of the Incarnation which has been determined by human sin. It is this which touches men who have not yet found God. It is this which inspires penitence and faith. It is this—let me say further—which, long after the grandeur of the larger truth has been discovered, kindles a passion of love, gives a perfect peace, inspires a vigorous faith and a victorious hope. The

larger, the inclusive truth, is that the Word became flesh in Christ, and that in becoming flesh the eternal relations between God and man were revealed; the truth which moves men and converts them is that, having become flesh, Christ died for our sins.

The doctrine of Justification by Faith, like the doctrine of the Death of Christ for the sins of men, is involved in those central and fundamental truths concerning the relations between the Lord Jesus Christ and the human race which are revealed in the Incarnation. According to the Divine idea and purpose Christ's relations to the Father determine ours. We are justified in His righteousness as we are the sons of God through His Sonship.

The two great truths of Justification by Faith and the Atonement rest on the deeper truth of the union between man and Christ. As the awful shadow of our sin fell on Christ, we pass into the security and glory of His righteousness. The remission of sins and justification are actually

realized, as our true relation to Christ is actually realized by faith.

That Christ died for the remission of sins and that we are justified in His righteousness—not in our own—were, as I have said, among the characteristic elements of the creed of the early Evangelicals. They not only believed these truths; their belief was inspired with passion; they exulted in them; they triumphed in them; and they preached them incessantly. These truths were among the most powerful forces in the actual life of all who caught the spirit of the great Revival.

I sometimes wonder what place Justification by Faith holds in our own thought; what measure of strength and courage we derive from it; and whether it is commonly maintained in modern Evangelical preaching. The truth may be taught in a new form—defined in new terms; but it would be curious to discover how often the phrase Justification by Faith or any one of the kindred phrases occurs in modern sermons. The old terms may be retained; it would be

curious to discover how often a sense is imposed upon them that is altogether alien to the sense in which they were understood by Luther and by the early leaders of Evangelicalism. There is in some directions a tendency to represent the inherent righteousness which is the result of the power of Christ and of the Spirit of Christ working in our own heart and life as the ground of our justification; and as this gracious power reaches us in answer to our faith, and cannot reveal all its energy apart from faith, faith is said to be the condition of justification. In other words, we are said to be justified by faith because through faith we become personally righteous—and the personal righteousness which is the fruit of faith is the ground of our justification.

I do not know what strength there is in this tendency, or how far it has affected the religious thought of other Evangelical Churches or our own. But if it has any real force, and if it has produced any serious effect on the thought and faith of those who still describe themselves as

Evangelicals, we have to fight the great battle of the Reformation over again; and we have to fight it, not merely with those who come to us in vestments which are the outward and visible sign that they are no friends of Protestantism—and who claim to offer a sacrifice in the Eucharist and to absolve from sin in Confession—we have to fight the battle of the Reformation over again with those who imagine that their whole position is most hostile to Rome. For it was on Justification by Faith that the great controversy turned. It was on this that the fight between the Reformers and Rome was fiercest. And it was the glorious vigour with which the Reformation declared that we are justified by Christ's righteousness, not by our own, by Faith, not by works, that gave new life and hope and robust strength to the northern nations of Europe. Strike at the root of the Roman doctrine of justification by inherent righteousness and good works, and Romanism has received a mortal wound and will perish. Leave the root and the life remains

in it: within a generation or two all the worst evils of Romanism will re-appear—perhaps in their old form; or, if in a new form, the new form will be as injurious to the freedom and strength of the Divine life of man as the old.

There is something startling in the place which is attributed to the doctrine of Justification by Faith by Paul. The Christian gospel, he says, “is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” Why? Because it tells the wonderful story of Christ’s earthly life—His gentleness, goodness, and compassion, and assures us that having seen Him we have seen the Father? That is not what Paul says. Because it declares the glorious mystery of the Incarnation? That is not what Paul says. Because it reveals that God is the Father as well as the Creator and Lord of men? That is not what Paul says. Because it makes known to the whole race the infinite love of God? That is not what Paul says. The Christian gospel “is the power of God unto salvation;”

“for therein is revealed a righteousness of God by faith unto faith.” It has other elements of power; but this is the element which in one of the greatest of his epistles he singles out and exalts; and to this he gives the supremacy. The reason, perhaps, why he asserted it with such vehement vigour, and spoke of it as though this and this alone constituted the Divine force by which the Christian gospel achieves human salvation, was the antagonism which it provoked, and provoked at that time. But Paul could not have used language like this unless he had believed that when this truth is denied or suppressed the power of the gospel is fatally impaired. Other truths may be necessary; but this also is necessary, and without this the others lose a large measure of their force. And if Paul asserted its greatness because it was denied, there are the same reasons now for asserting its greatness again.

Thank God, this truth is so great a truth and it is so implicated with all the contents of the

Christian gospel, that even when it is not recognized by the understanding, and even when it is formally rejected, it may be received by the heart. But the clear apprehension of a truth adds greatly to its effective energy. When Luther proclaimed it millions of men passed out of darkness into the light of God. It was like the angel that came to Peter while he slept; at its touch their chains fell away from them, and the prison doors were opened; and they were free. It gave vigour, buoyancy, abounding hope to men who had been striving painfully to make sure of eternal salvation, and who were still doubtful of the issue. It inspired them with new moral energy, and gave them a nobler moral ideal. And wherever the great discovery comes it works similar wonders. Even the excessive introspection which was encouraged by the spiritual discipline of the Revival could not quench the joy which it created, or paralyze the strength. One sad and weary soul after another caught the spirit of the great apostle, and with accents of triumph exclaimed, "Being justi-

fied by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom also we have had access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

We are at once the trustees and the heirs of the great traditions of Evangelicalism. The Congregational Churches of England strike their roots, indeed, into a remoter past, and are the living representatives of an earlier, and, in some respects, greater religious movement. Puritanism had a majesty and grandeur to which Evangelicalism could lay no claim. It had profounder learning, and more friendly relations to all the provinces of human thought, and all the triumphs of human genius. It had more intellectual vigour and courage. It had a loftier and a more masculine moral ideal. It encouraged a profounder religious life. But when the Evangelical movement began, the descendants of the Puritans had declined from the greatness of their fathers, and Evangelicalism, through

God's great mercy, gave them new life. We cannot recover—we should not desire to recover—the forms of religious thought and life which characterized either Puritanism or Evangelicalism. “The old order changeth, giving place to new.”

But this service recalls to us one of the greatest manifestations of the power and grace of the living God to be found in the history of the Christian Church, and a review of what it achieved for Great Britain and for America may well suggest serious questions and searchings of heart. Have *we* a firm hold of all the truths of that gospel by which, under God, the Evangelical Revival recovered a large part of this country from heathenism, and restored the faith and re-kindled the zeal of decaying Churches? The forms in which these truths were expressed may be intolerable to us; but in our intellectual resentment against the forms have we rejected the substance? It may be necessary to reconstruct the whole system of theological thought; but are we retaining the materials out of which

it is to be reconstructed? It is only when the truths of the Christian faith are living forces in the Church that theology can organize them into a noble system of thought; and if any of the greater truths have ceased to be energetic in life the system will be fatally defective.

It may seem to us that the moral ideal of Evangelicalism was gravely defective; but had it no great merits? And have we created for ourselves a more Christian method of conduct? It may seem to us that its development of the religious life was imperfect; but is there nothing to humble us in that passion for the salvation of men with which it was inspired? There is very much that is admirable in modern Evangelicalism that was not present in the earlier; but if we have gained much, I ask once more,—have we lost nothing?

But the fires of Christ's passion for the salvation of men from sin, from eternal death, and from earthly suffering are unquenched; and *we* are one with Him; His glorious passion

may become ours. The Spirit of God still dwells in us; let us turn from all inferior teachers and listen to His teaching; from the broken lights of human thought and human theories concerning eternal things to His illumination; let us pray and hope for His descent upon ourselves and all the Churches of Christ with larger power—a power which will make us strong to master for ourselves the world, the flesh, and the devil, and strong to subdue the unbelief and indifference of those to whom we make known the Christian gospel. Let us entreat Him to give clear vision to those of us whose vision of God is dim; and speech to those of us who are dumb concerning the redemption which God has achieved for us in Christ.

The Eternal Father—His strength is not spent—His compassions fail not. His children, in these last days, are as dear to Him as those of earlier generations, who now dwell with Him in His glory; and to us, too. He will reveal His august majesty, His great power. His infinite

love; and He will fill us with awe and faith and unmeasured joy. If only we accept from our very hearts His will as the law of life, He will enable us to discover nobler and completer ideals of righteousness, and those forms of service by which we may do our part towards the restoration of earth to heaven and man to God. The revelations of His thought and of His love to past ages are ours; the Word of the Lord liveth and abideth for ever. But He has not ceased to speak. To the new time He will give new grace. If our hearts are docile, if, despairing of our own strength in the presence of the duties and perils of these troubled times, our trust, our whole trust, is in God, we may witness the manifestations of the exceeding greatness of His power in forms more wonderful than those which in past centuries have renewed the life of dying Churches and flooded whole nations with the very light of heaven. Be strong and of good courage, all ye that hope in the Lord; and let us trust that those who celebrate the second

centenary of this building will be able to give God thanks that, in our own days and in the days of our children, the greatness of the Christian redemption was illustrated still more gloriously than in the days of our fathers.

[NOTE.—Mr. W. Tuck, of Bath, was kind enough to furnish me with some of the particulars concerning the early history of the Argyle Church contained in this discourse.—R. W. D.]

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