

be appalled if it knew how much depended on it and its labours, but I am sure it never thinks of that, but just quietly and steadily does the work God has given it to do, and, as we have seen, achieves a great end. Let us all try and do the same; never stopping our work because it does not seem to be very heroic, or very successful, or even very pleasant; but, like the little worm, let us do the task that lies before us, and it may be we will realize in time the great truth that God has need of us all and that His world would be incomplete without us and our work.

If that is so, and I know it is, then we are all of supreme importance in this world of ours, and while this need not make us conceited, it should give us a new self-respect and also a new understanding of our kinship with every living thing on God's earth which is there because God has placed it there for His own divine ends. We are kin with the worm not merely because it is in a very real sense our mother, but also because we are, after all, both of us, part of God's great plan of life, and from this point of view stand somewhat

on the same level. Coleridge must have felt this when he wrote the well-known lines:

He prayeth best who loveth best  
All things both great and small;  
For the dear Lord who loveth us,  
He made and loveth all.

In closing this study of the worm, let us take to heart these other wise words of another poet and another lover of animals small and great—they represent the attitude we ought all to adopt to these humble little creatures to whom we now know we owe so much:

I would not count among my list of friends  
(Though graced with polished manners and fine  
sense,  
Yet wanting sensibility), the man  
Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm.  
An inadvertent step may crush the snail  
That crawls at evening on the public path;  
But he that has humanity, forewarned,  
Will turn aside and let the reptile live.

## The Ordering of the Spiritual Life.

BY THE REV. J. M. E. ROSS, M.A., GOLDERS GREEN.

'Seven times a day do I praise thee.'—Ps 119<sup>164</sup>.

THE Psalmist's habit need not be turned into a rule for every man. The only commandment that we in the New Testament era have on this subject is St. Paul's 'Pray without ceasing.' And to pursue that ideal, which must be a matter of spiritual attitude rather than of spoken words, is better than to follow any hard-and-fast plan of prayers and praises, seven or any other number of times a day. The Moslems have a very instructive legend which tells how Mohammed by divine counsel ordered his faithful people to pray fifty times a day. But when he was taken up to heaven to receive his final instructions for the ordering of the new faith, he met Moses, who said to him, 'Your people will never be able to bear it, for I tried the children of Israel with fifty times a day, and they could not accomplish it.' So Mohammed went back to the Throne of the Highest and asked for some remission. Ten prayers were

taken off the day's demand, and again ten more at his renewed request, and so on until the number of daily prayers was reduced to five. Then Mohammed met Moses again, and told him how things now stood; and Moses said, 'I tried the children of Israel with five, but they could not carry out even that. Return to your Lord and ask for a further remission.' But Mohammed answered, 'I have asked until I am ashamed, and I cannot ask again.' There is much human nature in that story,—human nature of all ages, races, and creeds, which feels a certain tedium in the ordered uplift of the soul to God, and finds it easier to make rules of devotion than to keep them when they are made. We shall agree, being Christians, that 'without ceasing' is a better rule than seven times or five times a day, and a spontaneous flight of the spirit better than a fixed round of devotion. Without ceasing!—so be it then: if we interpret it not in terms of spoken

words but of perpetual aspiration, it sounds an easier rule than the Psalmist's sevenfold utterance. Is it really easier? There may be different opinions as to that.

Nevertheless the fact may be worth thinking about that the Psalmist had a method of his own of conducting and ordering his spiritual life. It is very evident that most if not all of those who have made much out of the traffic between their own souls and the unseen have arranged that high commerce upon some definite plan: perhaps why some of us make so little of it is that we treat it in too haphazard a fashion, having no method at all. The soul might learn a lesson here from its brother the body. Structure of some sort is necessary to growth: the higher the type of growth the more necessary does the underlying structure become. We do not expect achievements from invertebrates: the bones of a growing child are at once the foundation on which the rest of the bodily system is built up, the support to which it clings, and its protection against serious assault upon its more vital portions. Yet this all-important structure must not be too rigid so long as growth is going on: nature leaves even in the bony structure soft cartilaginous parts that do not harden into bone until the growth of the whole is complete: she combines with the solid basis of our physical life a certain amount of elasticity and adaptability. The analogy might help us in the spiritual region. There ought to be some degree of method in our spiritual and devotional life, if we really want it to grow. Yet, in the one realm as in the other, the structure must not be too rigid: otherwise it may harm the very growth it seeks to serve. The Pharisees were abundant in rule and regulation, but their religion became a yoke which free spirits were not able to bear. Monasticism was equally emphatic in matters of order and discipline, but it became a bondage in which liberty faded and died, a prison-house darkened by the shades of accidie. It ought to be possible to hit the happy mean,—to have a plan of ordering our spiritual life which shall deliver it from the casualness which is its bane, without, on the other hand, degenerating into a mechanism or a tyranny.

Two things are very visible in the pages of Christian biography. One is the discontent some good souls have had, who were painfully conscious of the untidiness of their spiritual life and longed

for the power to put into it some sort of method and order. They knew that if they treated their bodies, or their businesses, as they treated their souls, it would go hardly with them. One of the most famous and touching instances is Dr. Samuel Johnson, a constitutionally untidy man, who was always trying and hoping to order his life, especially on its Godward side. 'My resolution, to which I humbly implore the help of God, is to methodise my life;' and he tried to put his resolution into practice by drawing up papers of rules for himself about rising at a certain hour in order to make time for his devotions, about periodical self-examination, about going to church twice and reading the Scriptures 'methodically with such helps as are at hand.' It is something gained merely to have felt this untidiness and shiftlessness of the inward man, and to have had the desire to reduce that untidiness to order. The other thing that is equally manifest in the records of the people of God is this—the comfort and joy they have when they succeed in getting some order, method, and discipline into their lives. This was one of the chief reasons which drew men to the monastic life, and gave it a charm which outweighed for many its dangers and its tyrannies, 'It was a methodism,' Dr. Rainy says, in describing the rise and spread of monasticism,—'a ruled-off way of being good: how dear this is to human hearts a thousand instances have proved.' Take as another instance that same word Methodism, not in its general sense, but in its more special significance. The purpose of John Wesley and his friends in 'The Holy Club' was to make themselves more regular, thorough, and orderly in their performance of their religious and philanthropic duties,—such as prayer, study of Scripture, visitation of prisoners and the poor: it was a characteristic resolution of the little group that they should take communion regularly. It was on account of this emphasis upon order and regularity that a student of Christchurch threw at them the happy nickname of Methodists, and so unconsciously gave a name to what was destined to be one of the largest sections of Christendom. But keeping now to the beginning of the matter, the Holy Club itself, we cannot doubt that a part of its attractiveness was the regular method it established in the affairs of the divine life. There is another accessible illustration in *Grace Abounding*, in the passage where Bunyan pays his tribute of gratitude to the ministry

of Gifford. 'Now, how was my soul led from truth to truth by God,—even from the birth and cradle of the Son of God to His accession and second coming from heaven to judge the world. . . . I mean not one part of the gospel of the Lord Jesus, but I was orderly led into it.' These two words are worth underscoring—*orderly led*. There is an ideal here for preachers and teachers, and there is a gleam of something that all their wiser hearers dimly desire. It is good that, alike on the intellectual and devotional sides of their religious life, men should be led orderly; by orderly leading they are more likely to make ordered progress, and share the joy of those who in their ordered lives confess the beauty of God's peace.

1. It remains to make this practical. Perhaps the first step for any who feel the need of some rule and order in their spiritual life is to draw up some simple regulations for themselves as to the time they can give to prayer and spiritual reading,—how much time and when; and then keep to these regulations with some measure of grave constancy. A man must do this for himself: nobody can do it for him,—even though he may sometimes sigh to have, like his Roman Catholic brother, a 'director' to settle these things from outside his own will. There are various Societies and Fellowships of Bible Reading and of Intercession, but I do not know that they help us much. Only we ourselves can know our lives and our needs, the occupation and proportion of our days. After the assassination of Julius Cæsar, the Roman world reeled for a time into chaos: there was no government and no order; and Cicero wrote to a friend: 'You must be your own Senate yourself.' That is a counsel that applies to the ordering of the untidiness of Mansoul: a man must be—of course with due submission and deference to the Prince of the place—his own Senate himself. But a Senate that is going to govern must be in earnest about governing: it must have some simple laws at least, and it must enforce them. There must be a law of regularity; and a law against hurry; and a law of concentration—'When thou prayest shut the door'; and withal a willingness to try new experiments in prayer and reading that shall take us out of the rut of habit and open to us untrodden pastures. A man should be his own Senate so far at least as to enforce these things upon himself.

2. And yet there is more in this than merely being one's own Senate. The Christian man can scarcely legislate for himself in entire oblivion of the great Church and Kingdom of which he is a member. If he legislates for himself with any completeness, he will legislate for a regular traffic between his own soul and the privileges of the Church, so that some of her broader order and vaster dignity may become a part of his personal life. We are concerned for the moment with the man who is not indifferent to the concerns of the soul, but who believes that he has a spiritual life and wants to make the most of it. His legislation for himself will make him regular at the House of Prayer. It will not allow him to be careless of the Table of Communion. It will ordain that festivals of the Church are to be festivals of the heart as well. It was an unspeakable loss to multitudes of lives that the observance of the Christian Year fell so much out of use in large sections of the Church. Doubtless it is possible to overdo a round of days or seasons, and a multitude of saints' days tends to formality and an empty use of names. But does not one find in the main outline a magnificent training for the thoughts of the individual believer, an 'orderly leading' round the main orbit of the Christian revelation? From the Advent hope to the glorious mystery of the Incarnation; from the Incarnation, by a way that is shadowed with thoughts of sin and of repentance, to the Cross and the Easter triumph; then on to the descent of the Holy Ghost and the full-orbed thought of God; and then, after a long lull in which no great thing seems to happen, a return to the Advent hope and to the prayer, 'Even so come, Lord Jesus.' If we enter individually and prayerfully into this majestic order, it at any rate secures that our minds are in contact at some point of the year with the thoughts that are best worth thinking: there is the opportunity of carrying with us out of this hallowed sequence a regular harvest of knowledge and of joy.

3. There may be room for difference of opinion as to the amount that can be expected from the average busy life in the way of definite ordering on the spiritual side. Probably the minimum on which a healthy spirituality can be nourished is that of a daily and inflexible regularity of spiritual reading and prayer, along with a regular and seasonal entrance into the larger sequence of the Church's privilege and devotion. On that basis

there is plenty of room for us to legislate for ourselves in matters of detail. When one turns back to the book of Christian experience, the impression deepens that legislation of some sort is necessary to success. If we went in quest of the great masters of devotion, Lancelot Andrewes would shine in almost solitary splendour, and his daily prayers were ordered prayers,—moving through the sequence of adoration, confession, supplication, profession of faith, intercession, thanksgiving. There was ordered spirituality indeed,—life and order together as in the beat of eagles' wings. Yet again it must be said that no man's wisdom suffices to lay down rules for another man's life. When we read the paper of rules William Law drew up for himself in his student days, ' . . . to call to mind the presence of God whenever I find myself under temptation to sin, to pray privately thrice a day besides my morning and evening prayers; to spend some time in giving an account of the day, previous to evening prayer . . . ' we need not necessarily accept all his rules: the question that stirs is this—whether our devotional life would not be richer and more victorious if we laid down some simple rules for ourselves and

kept to them. It is not beneath the dignity of the freemen of Christ to make such rules and to obey them. George Herbert has an answer for those who despise living by rule:

What doth not so, but man?  
Houses are built by rule, and commonwealths.  
Entice the trusty sunne, if that you can,  
From his ecliptick line; beckon the skie.  
Who lives by rule, then, keeps good companie.

And he was not the last to learn that lesson from the stars. One remembers Meredith's Lucifer:

Soaring through wider zones that prick'd his scars  
With memory of the old revolt from Awe,  
He reach'd a middle height, and at the stars,  
Which are the brain of heaven, he look'd, and sank.  
Around the ancient track march'd, rank on rank,  
The army of unalterable law.

An ordered spiritual life is the negation and conquest of the soul's revolt. The stars keep their orbits; and they shine. The two things are connected: a lost orbit would mean a lost splendour. Let us discipline ourselves in the high task of living near to God.

## Literature.

### THE RELIGION OF THE ANCIENT CELTS.<sup>1</sup>

CANON MACCULLOCH needs no introduction, especially to those of our readers who have made acquaintance with his admirable article 'Celts' and other articles in the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*. It is only recently, as he points out, that a really scientific study has been made of the ancient Celtic religion, notably in our own country by Sir John Rhys. If this scholar has at times, as Canon Macculloch believes, carried the 'mythological' theory too far, he has certainly materially helped to elucidate the difficult problems involved. Our author himself has special qualifications for the work he has undertaken in the present volume, not the least of which has been a long residence in the Isle of Skye, where the *genius loci* and surviving

customs have aided him to realize the spirit of the ancient faith, for the reconstruction of which the materials are lamentably meagre. These materials are enumerated in the Introduction: they consist of more or less reliable statements by classical authors, dedications to gods found within the Romano-Celtic area, figured monuments, coins, symbols, place and personal names, 11th and 12th century Irish manuscripts, the Welsh *Mabinogion*, etc. In the hands of Canon Macculloch surviving folk-customs are made to yield most important conclusions. We can also fall back upon folk-tales, Celtic burial-mounds and other remains.

The earliest form of Celtic religion is found to be a cult of Nature-spirits, and an important point is that the men and the women seem to have had separate cults. The vaguer spirits tended to become gods and goddesses, and 'worshipful' animals to become anthropomorphic divinities. War-gods and culture-divinities emerged till in course of time the pantheon became quite a large

<sup>1</sup> *The Religion of the Ancient Celts*, by J. A. Macculloch, D.D., Hon. Canon of Cumbrae Cathedral. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1911. Price 10s. net.