

restatements of the principle. As examples of conduct they are absurd. They are incredible, impossible—all the ugly things that the enemies of Christ have been accustomed to call them. They are not, as they have been taken to be, typical cases according to which a man is to regulate his whole conduct and life. They are simply, we say, restatements of the all-comprehensive principle of love. And they are purposely expressed in an impossible form in order that it might never be possible to take them as examples.

Yet it is just as examples that we have always taken them, and thus landed ourselves in our present chaos of interpretation. There is no evidence, and we do not suppose for a moment, that the early disciples took them so. John understood the law of love and universally applied

it. But who has forgotten his encounter with Cerinthus? Paul understood it and applied it. But who has forgotten his encounter with Simon Peter? Peter himself understood it and exercised it as whole-heartedly as any of them. But who has forgotten his encounter with Simon Magus?

Words, words, you say. Yes, words: but words may cut as deep as deeds. And our Lord Himself did not withhold Himself from the act when it was necessary, even the aggressive act, that day He turned the buyers and sellers out of the Temple. One hour you hear His cry, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together'; the next His stern command, 'Take these things hence.' They were both the expression of the one all-comprehending principle of love.

The Christian Hope.

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In these days many hearts are turning wistfully to the hope of the future life for consolation under the burden of bereavement and desolating sorrow. The secret of the consolation of this hope lies largely in the prospect it offers of reunion with those loved ones who counted not their own lives dear to them that they might secure the liberties and peace of others, and, under God, bring in a new day of truth and righteousness among the nations. What ground have we for cherishing with stablishing and strengthening assurance such a hope and such a prospect? And can we with any degree of certainty and definiteness portray the nature of this future life, its circumstances and conditions?

I.

The hope itself is native to the heart of man. It is the natural and instinctive inclination of man always and everywhere to believe that beyond the tumult and the waste of death there is a continued personal existence. This instinctive or intuitive faith of the normal human heart can be analysed

into different elements or component factors with a view to showing its rationality or reasonableness. For one thing, there is the very character or constitution of man's being, his make and mould, which has stamped on it the mark of the infinite and the eternal. That which is distinctive of man, differentiating him from the brute creation—his reason, his affections, his moral and spiritual consciousness—these all imply and demand a life beyond this world of time and sense. By endowing him with desires and aspirations after truth and love and holiness which are not fulfilled in the present, God hath set eternity in man's heart. And if these ambitions and aspirations are given him only to be for ever silenced by death, then not only is human life in its characteristic attributes and 'values' reduced to a mockery and illusion, but the whole long process of evolution which has issued in man ends in an irrational anti-climax, and thereby a fatal blow is struck at our belief in the very reasonableness of the universe. No wonder a well-known scientific writer, approaching the matter just from this point of view, is compelled

to confess, 'I believe in the immortality of the soul as a supreme act of faith in the reasonableness of God's work' (Fiske, *Destiny of Man*, p. 62). 'That for one thing. And for another this: the character of the world in which at present we have our being, the manifest incompleteness and imperfection of the present scene of things. This life with its abounding anomalies and enigmas, the apparently unjust incidence of suffering, for example, the sense of an unredressed balance of wrong in the arrangements of life and society, the sight too of tragically unfinished purposes and shattered hopes, the true and the good cut down when their life-work has often but begun—these and such like facts demand a future state in which the mysteries of the present shall be made clear, its moral tangle unravelled and rectified and a completion granted to noble lives broken off prematurely here.

Such arguments—usually spoken of as 'the philosophical arguments for immortality'—undoubtedly have their place and value, but they do not amount to proof of a future life. What they do is to analyse and rationally support a faith derived by other means; and history and literature are witnesses how little these 'natural intimations of immortality' can of themselves sustain an assured confidence in a future conscious existence or give comfort and peace in the prospect of it. The hope they beget is, as one of the greatest of the ancients confessed, but 'a frail raft'—'a raft upon which man sails through life not without risk, if he cannot find some word of God which will more surely and safely carry him' (Plato, *Phaedo*, 85). And the same applies to the more properly scientific arguments for immortality. Nothing, indeed, is more striking in this connexion than the change within recent years in the attitude of accredited science to this question. Whereas formerly it was the fashion for science, under the influence of materialistic assumptions as to the relations of mind and body, to deny or call in question the possibility of the survival of personality after the dissolution of the present body, the whole tendency of present-day science, with its increasing emphasis on the essential spirituality of matter, is to encourage rather than to discourage such a belief. But science equally with philosophy cannot afford real proof in this matter. There are, it is true, those who claim to-day to supply such positive proof by direct experimental evidence of

personal survival along the line of the investigations of Psychical Research. Now I will confess that in my judgment there is strong evidence for at least some cases of alleged 'communications' with the departed. But even if such 'communications' are admitted, they do not establish anything which satisfies the craving of the human heart for immortality. At best they testify only to a continuance or temporary survival of the spirit after the death of the body, not to such a survival as permanently conserves the moral and spiritual personality in its distinctive characteristics and values, which is the only immortality worth having. The investigations of Psychical Research by disclosing new possibilities in the spirit world may assist or corroborate belief in a future life by removing prejudices from the scientific side, thus at once clearing the ground for and making more reasonable such a belief. But real proof of and certainty for the belief in immortality must be sought in another direction than that of scientific or philosophical arguments. To find the 'surer word' which Plato desiderated, and which we must have if we are to venture our souls with confidence across 'the swelling flood,' we must turn to the specifically religious argument, namely, to a consideration of the revealed character and purpose of God.

II.

In the Old Testament faith in a future personal existence was felt to be involved in the very nature of religion as life in fellowship with God. The man whom God in His love has called into fellowship with Himself is His for ever. That God should call men into such a holy and blessed fellowship or friendship only to leave them at last in the dust—this for prophet and psalmist was an unthinkable contingency. That were to deny either the love of God or His power, making death and the grave stronger than He, and either alternative was impossible. No; fellowship with the eternal Father, it was felt, must be itself eternal. It was the energizing conviction of this that made the minds of the highest souls among the Old Testament saints overleap death and the grave, and trust themselves into the hands of the Father Almighty. 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in Sheol; neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right

hand there are pleasures for evermore.' It was to this fundamental religious conviction, this Old Testament bed-rock of faith in a future life, that Jesus Himself appealed in His argument with the Sadducees to justify belief in a continued personal existence. 'As for the dead being raised,' He said, 'have ye not read in the book of Moses how God said to him, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He is not the God of dead people, but of living. Ye do greatly err.'

But while this is the ground-basis of the Scriptural faith in a future personal life—the love of God to the individual involved in the religious relationship—it is only in the New Testament and in and through Christ that we have the final pledge and assurance of the certainty of it. And that in this way. Jesus is the crowning example of the man who has trusted God and lived in fellowship with Him. He lived with God as a Son with the Father all the days of His life. In the experience of Jesus, therefore, in contact with death and the grave we have the great test case, what scientists call the 'crucial instance,' of death's reaction on a life lived in fellowship with the Father. Here is a life which, it would seem, closed prematurely so far as earth was concerned. In the prime of His strong and holy manhood, at the age of thirty-three, He, the Son of God, made the supreme sacrifice in the cause of truth and righteousness. It is history's crowning instance of the seeming disaster of a noble and promising life tragically cut short. But Easter morning proved once and for all that over this world of griefs and graves there rises the love of a Heavenly Father, stronger than death, which will not suffer the life of filial fellowship with Him to be destroyed, and which even through the suffering and sacrifice of a seemingly premature death can work out His great and mighty purpose for the world's redemption. This is what makes the Resurrection of Jesus not indeed the basis of our faith in the future life, but the final pledge and assurance of the certainty of it. Even before the Resurrection, as we have seen, there were those who had laid hold of the conviction as involved in the very nature of religion that they whom God has loved and called into filial fellowship with Himself cannot be left for ever in the dust. But, as it has been said, it is one thing to know that spring is coming because the almanac tells us so; it is quite another

thing some April day to feel upon the brow a gust of vernal air telling us that spring is actually come. And what the Resurrection of Jesus does is to reveal the future life in actual being, to exhibit it, to show the promise of victory over death and the grave as fulfilled and verified in Him, and thus to bring life and immortality to light. 'In Christ,' as Augustine puts it, 'immortality is no longer a hope, but a fact.' Were it not for the Resurrection, faith in immortality would still be but a promise, a hope unverified. Other raisings from the dead, indeed, are recorded for us in the Gospels as wrought by Jesus Himself—the raising of Lazarus, of the son of the widow of Nain, and of Jairus' daughter—but these were simple revivifications, cases of mere restoration to the same conditions of life as before, again at some future time to face death and the grave. But not so in the case of Jesus. 'He being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more hold over him.' He has vanquished death, and so become 'the firstfruits of them that sleep.' And in His Resurrection we have not only the decisive confirmation and illustration of victory over death, we have also the very pledge and ground of the Christian's resurrection. Through Christ, and in virtue of His crucified but now risen power, we are brought into a new life of reconciled fellowship with the Father; and this life in fellowship with a risen Saviour—life in the Spirit—guarantees the resurrection triumph to all believers. 'For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him.' So that the Apostle as he contemplates death, so far from shrinking at the thought of it, greets it with a shout of exultant, triumphant joy: 'O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?' 'I am persuaded that neither death nor life . . . nor things present, nor things to come . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' And the man who believes, with the Apostle, in God the Father Almighty and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, must go on to say also, in the great words of the Apostolic Creed, 'I believe in the life everlasting.'

III.

But what, we ask, of the nature of the life to come? It is a natural yearning and craving of the human heart to 'go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan.' Have we any data, or

facts, to warrant us portraying with any definiteness or certainty the nature and conditions of this life beyond death? There are many to-day, among them some of the noblest and most serious of souls, who by investigations along the line of Psychological Research seek to lift the veil and peer into the future world. They take promise of the dying that, if they can, they will send back messages from across the gulf. But any messages or communications alleged to be received in this way cannot be said to be either spiritually or intellectually edifying, in the way of adding to our helpful knowledge of the other world. After all, there is only One who has gone over the sea for us and has returned, and we are on safe ground only when we follow His guidance. But even in the case of Christ, when we ask what He has told us about life beyond the tomb, we have to acknowledge at first a sense of disappointment that He has revealed so little on the subject, He who alone could speak with full and certain knowledge where all others can only guess or speculate. It may be that this Divine reserve of Christ was rendered necessary by the impossibility of making the future life and the glory of it intelligible to understandings limited as ours are at present. But however this may be, we have always to remember that Divine revelation has been given not to gratify our curiosity, but to show us the path in which we may walk now with assured and certain hope. And on this matter as on others just so much has been revealed as is sufficient for our guidance in the present, to enable us to tread across the distances in quietness and in confidence. On the basis of what Christ has revealed, however, by His word and life and Spirit we are justified in making the following assertions:

1. The future life will be a life of *embodied existence*, not that of disembodied spirits. This is the distinctive position of the Christian hope, a position which carries with it the assurance not only of the continuance of personal identity, but also of the satisfaction of that craving which has been called 'the most passionate and pathetic yearning of human nature,' the craving for mutual recognition in the after-world. And few things are more striking or significant than the way in which present-day science is increasingly supporting and corroborating the Christian position. It is not that the very same body that has been committed to the dust—blown to fragments it may be on

the battlefield or gone down to a watery grave—is to be raised again from the dead. This is neither the scientific nor the Christian affirmation. 'What you sow,' says the Apostle, 'is not the body that is to be' (1 Co 15³⁷). 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God' (v.⁵⁰). Even here the body is continually changing, and its identity consists not so much in the material particles of which it is composed as in the 'soul' or 'spirit' which through all material changes is the animating and organizing principle of the whole. The risen body if continuous with the body of earth is yet this body so transfigured and transformed as to be free from all earthly elements of weakness and corruption and decay; so transfigured and transformed indeed that the Apostle calls it a 'spiritual' body (v.⁴⁴)—not because it is less than before material, but because in it matter is wholly and finally subjugated to spirit, so that it has become a fitter and more adequate instrument of spiritual purpose than the body of earth. The nature of this 'spiritual' body we may be unable to understand. But we have the pledge of it, and the first-hand look at it, in the risen glorified body of Christ, a body changed and transformed from that of earth, yet in and through which the identity of the personality was able to manifest itself. And for us at present it is enough to know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him who is 'the First-born of the dead.' 'If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you,' that they may be 'conformed to the body of his glory.'

2. The future life will be a life of *continued but unimpeded activity and service*. The heavenly life is indeed a life of rest. 'They rest from their labours,' saith the voice from heaven (Rev 14¹³). The word 'labours' in the original Greek carries with it a sense of weariness, of spentness, of exhaustion—'wan and drooping, like a stricken plant.' And entry on the heavenly life means redemption from the drooping and the wanness, and entrance into the tireless, never-withering life:

There everlasting spring abides
And never-withering flowers.

The redeemed of the Lord will gather home weary with their journey, and wounded, it may be, with their sore warfare; and there they will find rest

and healing, like King Arthur in the island valley of Avalon :

Where falls not hail or rain or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard leaves
And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.

But this rest of the heavenly life is not a rest of mere ecstatic inactivity or passivity. It is a rest of glorious harmonious activity. 'They rest from their labours, *for* their works follow with them' (R.V.). It is a striking collocation. There is a contrast between the two words, 'labours' and 'works.' 'The labours of the redeemed end in the grave; there the element of weary struggle and painful effort is left behind for ever. 'They shall rest from their labours'—from the laboriousness thereof—but not from their works, 'for their works follow with them,' in their methods and resultant capacities and habits they remain and go with them into their new life. As Milton nobly puts it:

Thy works and alms and all thy good endeavour
Stood not behind nor in the grave were trod,
But as faith pointed with her golden rod
Followed them up to joy and bliss for ever.

We shall carry with us into the future, that is to say, not our characters only but our capacities and powers, those powers and capacities which we have acquired through honest effort and service here. There we shall resume the work for which we have qualified ourselves here, only there it will be no longer checked and hampered by the struggles and failures of our mortal life. Have we not here a ray of light on the mystery of earth's unfinished lives, so many thousands of them in this day of awful struggle cut off in the very prime of their manhood? When the old and the spent are gathered home we do not murmur or complain; but when youth falls in life's morning, when the strong are cut off in their strength and that in such desolating numbers, we are dumb oftentimes before the mystery and the strangeness of it. But this is the word of promise: 'His servants serve him,' there as well as here. Their work is not done; in ways beyond our thinking it is going forward still.

3. This life in the future world, though thus harmonious and satisfying, will be a life of *varied glory*, a life where there will be differences of honour and reward according to the quality of our

service here. This is a part of Christ's teaching which perhaps has not been given its proper place in our thoughts of the after-life. To Zebedee's sons who requested the place of honour in the heavenly kingdom, Jesus replied, 'To sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it hath been prepared by my Father.' It is a matter, that is to say, not of mere arbitrary personal favour: it depends on fitness (Bruce in *E.G.T.* on Mt 20²³). Places of honour are not bestowed, they are won: they go to those who are fit to receive them, to those who have prepared themselves for them by sacrifice and service here along the line of Christ's sacrifice and service. 'Are ye able to drink of the cup that I am about to drink?' And in the 'money parables' of our Lord—the parables of the 'talents' the 'pounds' and the 'pennies'—we have a more detailed indication of the principles on which apportionment is made. Shall not they who have given their lives in suffering and sacrifice to the last full measure of surrender for the redemption of the nations from untruth and unrighteousness go before in heavenly honour and glory those who while Christ's professing followers, have counted the cost and thought it too great to pay? 'These are they which come out of the great tribulation.'

A life of transformed embodied existence, of unimpeded activity and of varied glory. And for the rest, the Master Himself has pledged His word for it that no true instinct of the human heart shall at last be doomed to disappointment. 'If it were not so, I would have told you'—the wonderful frankness of the loving Saviour. Only a parenthesis this in the midst of one of His great teachings, but a parenthesis of such singularly meaningful significance as to carry with it more assurance than the most elaborate of arguments. 'If it were not so,' if the cherished dreams and hopes of the human heart were to be disappointed, 'I would have told you.' 'In my Father's house are many mansions, many abiding places, and I go to prepare an abiding place for you.' Just as when a little child is born into the world it comes to a place made ready for it by the thousand little thoughtfulnesses of a tender mother's care, so if we are 'in Christ' death will but usher us into a place and a sphere prepared for us by Divine redeeming love, that we and ours may abide with Him for ever.

So then—this is what by the grace of God it comes to—amid all the racking agony and bereavement of the present we have a hope that ‘putteth not to shame.’ It is some lightening of the grief of those who are bereaved to know that their loved ones died well and nobly in a great cause, a cause which is the very cause of God Himself; that they gave what they had to give, and gave it freely, keeping nothing back. This in itself is much, but it is not all. Christ has sanctioned the hope and given it a sure ground of verification that separation from our loved ones is only for a time. In the heavenly home are gathered by the grace of God the brave who loved us and died for us. God has through sacrifice and death taken their lives back to Himself, and we shall find them

again in the Father’s presence. And if among those who have died in this manner there are some whose lives have seemed unhopeful and unpromising, we remember that it was the Saviour and the Lord Himself who said to the dying thief, ‘To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.’ If this was said to such an one, whose life was touched even in the circumstance of death to more serious issues, what shall we say of those who even if they knew it not were filling up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ for the sake of a sinful and needy world? Who can tell how many of them have through the struggle and the sacrifice, it may be in the very moment of making the last full surrender, thrown open their lives to the saving energy of God?

Literature.

UNCLE REMUS.

THE biography of the creator of Uncle Remus, a creation that appeals equally to childhood and old age, has been written by his daughter-in-law, Mrs. Julia Collier Harris. The title is *The Life and Letters of Joel Chandler Harris* (Constable; 18s. net). Why was it not written by one or other of his own large family, so many of whom had the literary gift, a gift, moreover, that was so carefully fostered by their father? The reading of the book seems to say that, one and all, they gave way to their eldest brother’s wife, because she had the gift in greater measure. It is easy enough to see that it was not an easy biography to write. Arresting incidents in the life of Joel Chandler Harris were rare, and there was nothing supremely attractive either in his outward appearance or in his inner personality. Yet the biography is an unmistakable success, most interesting throughout and even deeply impressive.

The biographer had one advantage. Joel Chandler Harris was a writer of letters. An extremely awkward and sensitive country lad, he sought refuge from the very beginning in the writing of letters, and when he had confidence in his correspondents he wrote them at length and intimately. There is especially a long series of

letters written in later life to his children at school, which are almost enough of themselves to be the making of a biography.

Sensitiveness was the stake in his flesh all through life. ‘With some people,’ he says, ‘the quality of sensitiveness adds to their refinement and is quite a charm. With me it is an affliction—a disease—that has cost me more mortification and grief than anything in the world—or everything put together. The least hint—a word—a gesture—is enough to put me in a frenzy almost. The least coolness on the part of a friend—the slightest rebuff tortures me beyond expression, and I have wished a thousand times that I was dead and buried and out of sight.’ ‘I have a suspicion sometimes,’ he says again, ‘that it is the result of some abnormal quality of the mind—a peculiarity, in fact, that lacks only *vehemence* to become downright insanity. I have been convinced for many years that the difference between lunacy and extreme sensitiveness is not very clear. Like the colours of the prism, they blend so readily that it is difficult to point out precisely where the one begins and where the other leaves off.’ When he became famous, concert-managers, including the redoubtable Major Pond, tempted him with large offers of money to give readings from his own books. But in vain.