

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE FAITH OF JESUS

THE question will at this point, no doubt, be asked, "Whither does your argument tend?" Does not the endeavour to make the miracles of Jesus part of the substance instead of the accidents of the Christian faith unduly complicate matters and lay an unnecessary burden on that faith in so difficult a time as our own? Have we not by the singular grace of God to our generation recovered the Jesus of history, and a simplified faith in the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man which is easy to believe and which yields a sufficient light for daily life? I should be disposed to say, in reply to this, that I share with those who feel the extraordinary value of the recovery of the Jesus of history. This is one of the greatest spiritual events in the story of Christianity and is working as a potent leaven both in the thought and life of our age.

But there are two things that make it impossible for many of us to-day to be satisfied with this simplified version of Christianity. In the first place, it is precisely the use of historical methods in the study of the personality and teaching of Jesus that has compelled us to see that there is something in His teachings about the power of faith and of prayer that is not to-day finding any

adequate expression in our current theology and religion, and that the simplified version, which tones them down to something little better than commonplaces about the power of a hopeful and courageous disposition in practical Christian endeavour, is anything but true to fair historical methods of interpretation. To reduce the plain meaning of such sayings in this way is to impose our modern limitations upon something of primitive genius and inspiration.

Secondly, we have a further difficulty. We whole-heartedly agree with all that is said about the immeasurable gain to religion of the re-discovery of the historical Jesus, and the humanising and deepening of the idea of God which has come with the realising of His universal Fatherhood. But we find it impossible to silence the question that immediately arises from that very deepening of our thoughts of "the Father." Why does Nature often seem so appallingly unfatherly? Under the old Jewish faith in "the great and terrible God," or under the God of the Schoolmen, or the Sovereign Lord of Calvin, or the great First Cause of the rationalist, the problem is not nearly so acute. But why do such things happen in the realm of the Father, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"? In a word, the recovery of the earliest revelation of God as the universal Father has sharpened the edge of the master problem of Theism, the problem of evil. The more full of light the revelation is shown to be, the more sharply stand out the sinister and tragic elements in human destiny, and the more strange

seems to be the martyrdom of man. It is as if each new and deeper affirmation about God awoke a new and stronger denial from the unexhausted antagonist. Some minds do not seem to feel this difficulty. It is mainly to these, I think, that the simplified Humanitarian conception of the personality of Jesus appeals most strongly. They do not feel deeply the unexplained and apparently sinister side of Nature's dealings with man, which made the Jews of our Lord's time think of the tragic element in the world as due to the power of the Evil One, and which, as we have seen, led to such passionate protests against Nature from some of the most penetrating thinkers of our time.

We have already shown that on a sufficiently wide view of Nature, and of her total reaction on mankind, these pessimistic estimates of Nature lose much of their power, for historically we owe the very ethical standards by which we condemn Nature to the hard discipline to which she has subjected mankind. But does this widening of our view of Nature, which makes her the foster-mother of the intellectual and moral development of the human race, carry us all the way in explaining her remorseless and sinister side? I confess that to me it does not go quite so far. It goes a long way, but it does not go the whole way. It makes a very great deal of the human tragedy removable and therefore educative. We can see that if men grow in loyalty to each other, in love, in the sense of honour, in strength and courage, and the social virtues generally, then a very great many of the evils to which mankind are at present subject from

Nature will disappear. So, too, with the expansion of Science, man's sovereignty over the dark material forces must still further force back the realm of suffering and darkness. But few are those who believe that the utmost advance of ethical development and intellectual growth can ever abolish the tragic element in human destiny. That is to say, they practically all admit that there is at last an unconditionally fixed and fated element of the tragic in man's lot, an irremovable element of evil inherent in the earthly conditions of human life.

I think I should admit this, so long as we think of man as being purely an ethical and intellectual being. I cannot conceive of the utmost growth in the purely social virtues or the utmost extension, say, of physical science ever giving men that power over all physical limitations, which work suffering, evil, and death. But if man is capable of fuller growth than can be comprised under the words "moral and intellectual progress," if he is capable of coming into the fullest harmony of spiritual communion with the stupendous Being who is sovereign over all the material world, I see no coherent reason for not believing that all tragedy whatsoever is removable from his life, that he may not grow through fellowship with the Sovereign Father of All into complete mastery over all that chains and maims the immortal spirit.

If that, indeed, be the case, then all outward evils whatsoever are removable, and all alike fall into one great system of Divine education of the human race. It is, indeed, difficult to think of

any system as being a system of education unless its penalties are removable by the growing teachableness and fidelity of the pupil. Therefore if human experience is really an education of mankind, it would seem to require this conception of the removability of all evil whatever, in order to complete it.

If this be sound reasoning, then it is clear that we must not only look upon Nature as man's educator in science and in morality, but also in religion. Her purpose must not only be to elicit intelligence and the great social virtues, but her ultimate and consummating purpose must be to drive him to God, and to teach him faith, faith in God's power, God's holy love, and God's perfect liberty to help him. In other words, the whole history of man's religion, as well as his moral and intellectual development, has behind it the sublime and austere background of Nature.

Cardinal Newman has given noble expression to this thought of the necessity of Nature as meant to drive men not only into fellowship with each other, but into the beginnings of communion with God. Man, he says, "is permitted much" in the way of controlling "brute mischiefs" of Nature. But there is a reserved region into which he cannot enter, the region of "the Elements."

But o'er the Elements  
One Hand alone,  
One Hand has sway.  
What influence day by day  
In straiter belt prevents  
The impious Ocean, thrown

Alternate o'er the ever sounding shore?  
Or who has eyes to trace  
How the Plague came,  
Forerun the doublings of the Tempest's pace?  
Or the Air's weight and flame  
On a set scale explore?  
Thus God has willed  
That man, when fully skilled  
Still gropes in twilight dim;  
Encompassed all his hours  
By fearfulest powers  
Inflexible to him,  
That so he may discern  
His feebleness,  
And e'en for earth's success  
To Him in wisdom turn  
Who holds for us the keys of either home,  
Earth and the world to come.

The austerity of Nature is thus the foster-mother not only of the ethical virtues and of knowledge, but of the prayer of faith, faith in the unseen Reality and Power, as able and free and willing to help the suppliant to escape from or to master the destroying powers of Nature, and to give him that life which God Himself possesses by inherent right. The history of religion shows quite clearly that it is in its historic roots, as Sabatier has said, essentially "a prayer for life," a prayer which becomes wider and expands into communion with God as it develops, but which never loses this fundamental character. It reveals, also, that always in this prayer, inspiring and sustaining it, there is this vital thing, faith, conviction as to the reality and the friendliness of the unseen world. No one would ever pray unless he thought it worth while to pray.

To believe that it is worth while to pray means faith in the ultimate nature of things.

We now turn from these general considerations to determine what Jesus Christ believed about faith, and what is implied in that for His revelation of God.

We have seen in an earlier chapter how great was the position of faith in the religion of the Old Covenant. As Prof. A. B. Davidson has said, faith to the Hebrew was the fundamental virtue. But this discloses itself to the reader only when one looks for it, and discovers it under varying synonyms and parts of speech. So much is this the case that some scholars have maintained that there is surprisingly little about faith in the Old Testament. But when one turns to the Apostolic and sub-Apostolic literature there can be no question of their absorption in the importance of faith, or the all-determining place that it has in their thoughts. For any reference to faith<sup>1</sup> and its two synonyms, belief and trust, in the Old Testament, there are thrice as many in the New, as a reference to any good concordance will show, and when one remembers that the Old Testament is about thrice the length of the New, this, rough as is such a test, is full of meaning.

St Paul's writings, of course, afford the most conspicuous examples of this in the Apostolic writings. To him faith is the great fundamental human virtue, the indispensable condition of all salvation and life and blessing. The references which prove this will be found in an Appendix. They are so

<sup>1</sup> Verbal or substantival.

numerous that to give them here in the text would gravely overload the argument. "It is beyond doubt," says Titius,<sup>2</sup> "that for Paul the Christian life in its beginning and throughout its progress, in things great and in things small, is borne up by faith. This is true not only of the religious functions in the narrower sense, but of the moral functions also." From writings of the New Testament, slightly later and coloured by Alexandrine thought, we need take only one instance.

So deeply persuaded is the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews of the central and vital place of faith in the spiritual life that, in what is perhaps the deepest and truest account of the Old Testament religion ever committed to writing, he goes through the long roll of its heroes and saints and finds faith the vital and characteristic virtue in them all. It is that in them which made them what they were and enabled them to do what they did, and by virtue of which they have written their names for ever in history, and made it easier for all other men to believe in the unseen world and in God.

Now while this is, I believe, absolutely true of these heroes, it is none the less also true that you get in the Old Testament itself nothing like this explicit and sweeping estimate of faith common both to St Paul and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Where did the New Testament writers get this new insight into the all-important character of faith? Something has happened in the interval which has deepened their whole sense of

<sup>2</sup> *Paulinismus*, p. 214.

the value of faith. There cannot really be any doubt as to where these writers got this new and vital emphasis. They got it straight from Jesus of Nazareth. Indeed the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews leaves us in no doubt whatever as to this. In the verses which immediately follow the roll of heroes in the eleventh chapter, he speaks of Jesus as "the author" and the "perfector" of faith. The force of this passage is weakened in our Authorised Version by the gratuitous insertion of "our" before "faith," but this seems to me, clearly, a mistake.

The obvious meaning of this expression is that great as the faith of these heroes was, it was as nothing in comparison with the faith of Jesus. He was its real author, its real beginner. They were like stars that died out in that sunrise of real faith which men saw in Christ. The writer has probably in his mind here the words of Christ Himself when the apostles said to Him, "Lord, increase our faith!" "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and removed hence, and it shall obey you." We have the same thought in the Epistle to the Hebrews freely reproduced in the writer's own noble fashion. As compared with Jesus, the heroes had faith only like a grain of mustard seed!

When we turn to the Gospels the secret of this great development in the mind of the apostles as to the sovereign importance of faith becomes, as I have said, perfectly clear.

It is due to the profound impact which the personality, the deeds, and the teaching of Jesus have made upon the whole Apostolic age. I need not repeat what has been said in an earlier chapter about Christ's constant call for faith in God. A reference back to that chapter will show that in effect Jesus said to the men of His land and time, "I have brought the Kingdom of God and all its blessings within your reach. It is for you to take it by faith." He welcomed all such adventurous faith as rose up within men's hearts in answer to His challenge, however crude and undisciplined that faith might seem to be, provided it did not presumptuously seek to use physical violence. But He who forbade this, seems to have preferred vehement faith to mere prudence.

Harnack has, I think, established that this is the meaning of the difficult passage: "From the days of John the Baptist even until now the Kingdom of God is preached and violent men are entering into it." As we have seen, all through His ministry He is continually inciting and encouraging faith, and towards the end, when the shadows of the approaching sacrifice are gathering around Him, the one doubt that seems ever to have crossed His mind as to the certainty of His approaching victory, is as to whether, even when He returns in glory and power, there will be faith enough in the earth for men to take what is brought.

Surely when we sum up what He says about the blessings of the Kingdom, and the need for faith,

we have precisely the same emphasis as in St Paul and in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In the Gospels the blessings of the Kingdom are the filial life in God, the hearing and answering of the prayer of faith, and the glory of the life to come. In St Paul we have the same things expressed in terms of his rabbinical training in analogies borrowed from the life of his time—justification, adoption, sanctification, and the manifestations of the Spirit, gifts or “charismata” of “prophecy,” “healing,” “miracles”—the potent influences that had come into the life of the Church with Pentecost, and, finally, the blessedness of life in the coming æon, when sin and death should be finally broken. All come from God by faith. In all this he is a true disciple of Jesus, who is the unquestionable historical “author” or “pioneer” and “perfection” of faith.

Turning again to the Gospel narrative, we find Christ's call for faith on one and all around Him so constant that one cannot but feel that if He were here in the body in the world once more, and we all gathered round Him, and each of us told Him in turn the story of our failures and tragedies and sins, He would say to each of us: “What has been wrong with you, and what is wrong with you still, is that as yet you have not enough faith in God. You think that the trouble has been due to your indolence, your hatred, and your pride. It may be, but there is something deeper. You must have more faith in God. If you realise that, all evil and tragic things will lose their power.”

Now, it may be said, this diagnosis may be true,

but does it really help us? Is there not something even discouraging in His call for faith as the one thing primarily needful? We may discipline our anger, and mortify our pride, and suppress our fleshly thoughts, but who can create faith?

But surely if we look deeper there is something profoundly heartening for humanity here, an implicit assurance about God and the ultimate nature of things of the most sweeping kind.

If a father standing on the frozen waters of a lake encourages his timid child to come on the ice beside him, telling him to trust it, and that there need be no fear, is he not putting the whole force of his personality into telling him something about the ice?

It is quite clear that the whole teaching of Jesus Christ about God, expressed alike in His words and in the whole fashion and mould of His character, implies that God is always nearer, mightier, more loving, and more free to help every one of us than any one of us ever realises. This alone is what makes His incessant summons to faith, and to more faith, coherent and reasonable. This, again, seems to me to imply that mankind generally is under a kind of hypnotic spell about God, which is always contracting and chilling their thoughts of Him, and leading to all kinds of depressing and terrifying illusions about Him. The story of the growth of the disciples' faith is the story of the breaking of that evil spell. If we transport ourselves in imagination into the little company of His disciples, it is not difficult to imagine what the effect upon them of His continual demand for faith in God must

have been. Taken along with His own unbroken confidence of God's presence, power, and love, He must have seemed like one holding a continued dialogue with the Unseen One. Yet a doubt must have sometimes crept in. Was it not rather a monologue? No man but He heard the other Voice. We know what to think of men who hold long monologues, talking to people who are not there! Was He mad? The men who sat in the seat of authority, the wise and prosperous and devout, said He was. "He hath an evil spirit!" The issue, as He meant that it should, gradually became inevitable. Either He was a dreamer, or they and all other men were dreamers, walking in the darkness and deeming it to be light. Was He mad about God, thinking Him real, near, mighty beyond imagining, loving beyond hope, when really He was far away in His Heaven, terrible in His justice, and with difficulty restraining His anger? Or were they and all the world mad about God?

Such I doubt not was the early struggle of faith. The issue does not seem to me vitally different to-day. Either Jesus Christ was a dreamer about God, or we are all together dreamers, unbelievers and Christians alike. The difference is only one of degree. We are all alike wrapped in the great earth dream, and He alone was fully awake of all the sons of men; or we men and women of the twentieth century are broad awake to the reality, and He was dreaming His solitary dream. Nothing is more certain than this, that in His teaching about faith in God, and in His practice of it, Jesus was

absolutely unique among all the great leaders of religion that history has known. The science of religion has established this once for all. We know more or less exactly what all the acknowledged greatest have taught—the Chinese sages, Gautama, Socrates, Mohammed. In the midst of them stands this figure with His unique and immovable confidence in the Father, His faith that God is always nearer, mightier, more loving, and more free to help every one of us than any one of us ever realises, and that therefore our supreme duty is faith in Him, and the staking of everything we have upon Him, and His purpose of good for mankind. Christianity is this or it is nothing at all. Everything turned then and everything turns still on whether on this central matter Jesus was a dreamer, or the only human being broad awake to the eternal, in such a fashion that if we would come into touch with ultimate Reality we, too, have to follow Him. No other option indeed in such a case is open to us, for not only has none of the great leaders of religion said such things of God in the past, but no one is saying them to-day, except such as, whether they know it or not, are His disciples. This is still His solitary and peculiar teaching about God, the very core and essence of His Revelation.

The first disciples, I take it, must for a time have wavered between the two worlds, the old sane Jewish world of thought as it must have seemed to them, and this new, startling, fascinating, and glorious Presence of the Divine that was breaking in upon them, at first a dreamlike vision of Beauty and then taking to itself, more and more, the firm

outlines of Reality and making the old Jewish thoughts in turn dreamlike. As St Paul put it, the first Christians "saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." I remember that many years ago I was at a long concert of classical music, and not having any adequate understanding of its greatness, I was feeling rather weary of it, and my attention was wandering, when my eye fell on the face of a man sitting near me. I was startled, for his face was transfigured as by an interior light, and his eyes were shining. He seemed like one carried beyond all fear and care and sorrow. It was quite impossible for me to doubt that he was hearing things I could not hear, and seeing things I could not see. I saw the "light of the knowledge of the glory" of music on his face, so that for the moment I could see that it was, though I could not hear what it was. Something like this was the first Christian experience, and it has remained the standard ever since. The typical Christian name for the Supreme Being is, it has been truly said by Ritschl, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and so unique was the vision and the experience even to a Hebrew, that, as we have seen, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews can say that Jesus was to him, the beginner and the perfection of faith. The power of the personality of Jesus was so great that, working through the disciples, it broke the hypnotic spell of unbelief and swept the whole first Christian generation, the generation that wrote the New Testament and reared the Christian Church into something of His own faith in God, and so perpetuated the seed of it in the world.

What makes this immovable confidence of Jesus in God so profoundly reassuring is the other great marvel of His personality,—His profound sense of the sacredness of man. There have been not a few among the heroes and even among the saints of faith of whom we must admit that this cannot be said. We feel that such God-intoxicated men and women have been so absorbed in the Divine glory that they seem to have had too little sense of the pathos of human life, its cruel mysteries, the haunting "sense of tears in mortal things." Their very zeal for God has made them sometimes, we feel, unduly hard upon men. What are we to make of the saints who condoned and even encouraged persecution, and the theologians who have given us great thoughts of the Divine purpose, "deep as the grave, high as the Eternal throne," but have combined them sometimes with inhuman thoughts of men?

Something of Christianity was surely lacking there, which makes us feel that they never adequately felt the real anguish of the unsolved "riddle of the painful earth," and the shadow that it seems to cast on the face of God. But we cannot say this of the Crucified. He has taught us all humanity, just as He has taught us faith. From Him the modern world has learned the secret of that "enthusiasm of humanity," which is the very leaven of all that is finest and best in our civilisation. Yet He who kindled this fire of the enthusiasm of humanity is the same who has taught us, and who to-day above all others stands for unbounded confidence in Him who ordained the whole tre-

mendous system of discipline under which all men live and suffer and die.

Their compassion for suffering humanity has driven not a few in our day into rebellion against "the Cosmic order," and denial of a conscious, loving, and Almighty Creator and Sovereign, who has ordained, it would appear, "the martyrdom of man." That this is one of the tensions in the mind of our own age, is manifest not only in the philosophical writers quoted at length in an earlier chapter, but in the works of a great artist like Thomas Hardy, the secret of whose pessimism I take to be that he strove to combine the Christian valuation of man with the negation of the Christian view of the cosmic order, and made a futile attempt to derive human reason, nobility, and piety from a Being who is in effect lower and meaner than man. How could Hardy's mocking "President of the Immortals" ever have created human beings like Tess and Gabriel? How could the Unconscious Mind ever blindly work its way out to the "all things fair" that the author of *The Dynasts* hoped for? With Lord Bacon we may surely say that we "could sooner believe all the fables of the Alcoran." There must be a more reasonable account of a cosmos that every true man of science believes to be greater and more full of order than he has discovered, every great painter knows to be lovelier than he has painted, and every great poet knows to be nobler than he ever sang. Is it not all in perfect conformity with this inner conviction of thinker and artist alike that God must be mightier and more loving and readier to help us all than any

one of us has ever realised, and that Jesus should put at the centre of His message the call to unbounded faith?

The solution of Jesus is that the Absolute is so much greater and better and fairer than we are that we cannot as yet fully understand Him, but none the less can go beyond our knowledge by faith, just as genius continually wings its way beyond demonstration, showing the road that the slower-footed understanding must follow. He Himself is embodied Faith and so becomes embodied Revelation. The glory of God shines through Him, and the Universe responds and reveals its hidden depth and meaning in His life and deeds and death and resurrection. Thereby a way is broken through the dense cloud of unbelief for the coming of His Spirit.

The faith of Jesus in the Almighty Father, like all faith, is woven of three strands—faith in God's power and reality, faith in His love, and faith in His perfect liberty to help men.

(1) The first is the primitive thing in all religion: "Power belongeth unto God." Whatever weakens this primitive thing in religion weakens faith. In the very nature of the case Religion conceives of this Power as power over the world. This excludes the identification of God and the world, for all real religion appeals to God against the immediately threatening or tempting world. We may use the term the Supreme Reality instead of the term the Supreme Power, because it conveys even more strongly the sense of superiority over the world of appearance. Compared with God

the world is a vanishing mist, but it is not a mist that He cannot control. Some may feel that there is something lacking in the words "appearance" and "reality" as descriptive of the world and God. Control is certainly essential to the religious conception of their relation.<sup>4</sup> It appears to me that Jesus had a unique awareness of the reality and power of God and that He was able to communicate this in a unique degree. With most of us the real plague is "the seeming unreality of the spiritual life." The world to-day is so urgent and so interesting that we can hardly help conceding reality to it in the full sense, and giving only what remains of our energy and thought to God. There is a curious and pathetic passage in one of William James's letters in which, in reply to a questionnaire, he says that for himself he has no immediate sense of the Divine Reality, but that he recognises that other men, and notably the great mystics, have it, and that he believes their testimony. I think this is to-day a very common experience. Again, even when men have this "open vision" it fluctuates. Great experiences of danger and great scenes in nature suddenly call it forth. I remember one friend telling me that sometimes in the acutest dangers of the war an almost physical sense of the reality and power of God came to him and drove away all fear. The brother of another, travelling alone by night to London on the way to the front, experienced, as the hours went by, an ever-deepen-

<sup>4</sup> Professor Hogg shows how the Idealist conception of appearance and reality may be combined with the Christian conception of the miraculous. *Redemption from this World*, ch. v., and pp. 262-5.

ing sense of the presence of God, which changed the whole course of his life. Yet another once described to me how, in rock climbing in a remote and sterile region in the north-west of Scotland, his companion was suddenly killed beside him, and how in the vast and wonderful mountain solitude around him, as he stood beside the shattered body far from human aid, the whole scene became suddenly full of the Divine Presence. If such experiences are truthful, their only possible explanation is that something that blinds us has been taken away.

Most of us have direct or indirect experiences of this kind in our memories. They do not seem to us hallucinations. Rather do we recognise them as moments of awakening to what is always there. Always there is that sense of Power, Sovereignty, and Reality as an essential part of the experience.

Now it is impossible to study the personality of Jesus without seeing that this awareness of God was part of the very substance of His daily life. What is momentary and transient with most of us, was for Him unbroken. It comes out in His words. "God is to Him the Almighty Presence and Reality. In opposition to the Almighty power, man simply does not count for anything. And more must be said. Not only in the domain of ethical and religious life is God the only Mighty One. The same is true in the physical Universe. The world signifies nothing, God alone signifies everything."<sup>5</sup>

Even more strikingly does it come out in His actions. Take, for instance, the story of His

<sup>5</sup> Titius, *Die Neutestamentliche Lehre von der Seligkeit*, vol. 1. *Jesus Lehre von Reiche Gottes*, pp. 108-109.

raising the daughter of Jairus. He is making His way through the crowd with the father, when the messengers meet them with the fatal words—"Thy daughter is dead, why troublest thou the Master any further?" One may safely say that every other human being in history would have taken that word "dead" as final, and turned back. Nobody would have blamed Him if He had done so, and He risked His whole reputation by going on. Yet He went on. What was death in comparison with God? That lets us see deep into His spirit. The going on is every whit as unique as the wonder which followed. The unique quality of His religious life explains the unique event which followed.

I have said that this profound sense of the Reality and Power of God is the fundamental thing in all religion whatever. The note of the Sovereign Power of God resounds through the whole Old Testament and finds its richest expression there in those sayings about His omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, and eternity, of which the literature of the Old Covenant is so full. Theism, as Tiele has truly remarked, can never compromise on this point of the Divine omnipotence without losing half its power. We must, of course, distinguish here between true and false ideas of omnipotence. God may limit Himself by creating free human spirits. It is difficult indeed to see how He could be really omnipotent if He could not create what He pleased. But it is inconceivable that He can be limited by any independent and rival power. This is fundamental to the whole mind of Jesus. and is an essential element in His faith.

(2) But it would be quite conceivable that if this profound sense of the Sovereign Reality of God stood alone, the possession of it might be a curse instead of a blessing and emancipation to men. The "seeming unreality" of God may in fact be a condition of man's preserving his sanity until he wins such confidence in the love of God that He is not only able to bear, but to exult in the sense of His Sovereign Reality. So we come to the second strand of the threefold cord of Faith, the Love of God.

Jesus Christ reveals this by His teaching, by His signs, by His whole personality, and supremely by His Cross. His seizing upon the relationship of fatherhood as yielding the truest name for God, and His assertion, "If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him," at once give us an enduring symbol of the Divine Nature, and the assurance that the Reality excels the symbol.

Further, His own filial personality mediates to us by its incomparable human sympathy more perfectly than words can do, the very heart of the unseen Father.

Yet again the "miracles" are surely part of that revelation. They show us how we are to think of the Divine Love and Pity, which cares not only for the souls of men, but for their bodies. They show us that we are to think of the Divine Love in the simplest way as delighting in the dispelling of pain, the restoring of sanity, the satisfying of hunger, the preservation of life, the dispelling of

premature death, just the things which ordinary human love glories in being able to do. But supreme sacrifice is the most convincing thing of all, when it is freely chosen for love's sake. So by teaching, by living in converse with His fellows, by His signs, and by His Cross, Jesus reveals that the Supreme Reality is the Supreme Loving Kindness, so that they who receive the revelation know the awakening of Faith.

(3) But all would have been of little avail unless there had gone along with faith in God's Sovereign Reality and His Fatherly Love faith in His perfect Liberty to help men, His power to intervene in the ordinary course of events, to act creatively whenever the real spiritual interest of His children requires it. The weakening of this is, perhaps, what to-day hampers Faith more than any other cause. The shadow of the "closed system" falls upon prayer, obsesses men's imagination and limits their hopes. The world becomes rigid. The glove of silk becomes a glove of stone.

Now it is perfectly clear from all the Gospel narratives that Jesus Christ had no such chilling shadow upon His faith in God. One of His best modern interpreters has put the matter here decisively. Jesus, he of course admits, knew nothing of our modern science. But even if He had, it would not have made the least difference to Him in this regard. As it was He had a definite idea of the course of nature. "He knows about seed-time and harvest, and the rules of the weather; He knows the need of preparation for the building of houses and vineyard towers, as for the waging of war; He

knows all this and gives it its due place, and even praises the unfaithful steward for his cleverness. Yet, nevertheless, His summons to trust in God and prayer sounds as absolute as if there were no such thing as prudence and human toil. In the miracle-working faith this thoroughgoing and universal way of looking at things comes to the point in the sharpest way. The world of Nature is, in comparison with God, nothing, and He alone is the Almighty Lord."\*

I do not think that there can be any doubt that this is a true account of the faith of Jesus. It was an essential part of His response to the Sovereignty of God. He believed, as I have said, in His perfect liberty to help men, a truth which was obscured so long as men believed in the completeness of the scientific explanation of reality, but whose possibility is now in process of being demonstrated by our fuller knowledge of the limits of science.

\* Titius, *Jesus Lehre vom Reiche Gottes*, p. 109.