

married or a widower; and their dispute was referred to the Apostle for decision. We have already seen that much of the theorizing as to the doctrines held by the four supposed parties in Corinth proceeds on a wrong interpretation of Paul's words; and that the parties were not nearly so definitely opposed to one another as those theories assume. Now we find that the question propounded to Paul by the Corinthians was not "is it better to marry or not?" but rather "is it to be regarded as a duty incumbent on Christians to marry, as the Jews and the Roman law maintain?"

W. M. RAMSAY.

*JOSEPH: AN ETHICAL AND BIBLICAL STUDY.*

IV.

"THE CHOICE OF A SIDE."

(GEN. XXXIX. 1-20.)

It is interesting and suggestive to reflect that this picturesque moral story, before it was in any book, would be doing for generations the same work as, within the verses and leaves of our Bible, it is now doing for us. The larger event and the lesser incidents of the life of Joseph were divinely arranged and grouped by time and place, so that the mark of God's presence and purpose in it might be seen plain and indelible. The tale, as it was told from lip to lip, would carry God with it into people's thoughts and lives. It would educate the human soul. Children would receive from it their earliest sense of a world where there is peril and pain, and their "first mild touch of sympathy"; and the youth would be taught by it that goodness and purity and truth are a safe defence. The facts would fall into the memory like seeds, and the spiritual life which they contained would there germinate and strike;

then they would spring up in new imaginative shape and hue, and, as they grew, they would entwine themselves with people's lives. The story was, in this way, ethical before it was Biblical; and now, because it is Biblical, it is none the less, but all the more, and it is to all time, ethical. The supersensuous element in Joseph's life here plays around a set of languid powers in our being, and awakens and reminds; and that prevailing force of good which came to him, not by lineage and descent, but from alliance with God, and which, far from being a natural product of the human organism, had to contradict and thwart instinct and impulse in a large area of his nature, is not created by this Scripture, but only here receives Divine recognition and new sanction and reinforcement. When drought has parched a land, the rains from heaven are sent down to do more than refresh what is weary; they bring a larger blessing, for they reach down to the secret power of nature's own wells and stir them to fuller flowing. Such is the power of the Bible's inspiration from on high upon this simple story of a human life in the long ago.

To get the current, in order the more easily to follow the meaning among these verses, we may fall back on the narrative till we feel the pressure of what we have already read. We know something of Joseph's training at home; something of his open face and straightforward gait; something of his felicity and speed; something of his nerve and muscle; and something also of the arena, down in Egypt there, where the Fates have even now entered his name. We have even seen already, though at the time we knew not why, the stripping off him of the coat of many colours—the pleasant garment of home-life and home-love in which a father's fond affection last swaddled him. For home-care does not help or count, it rather entangles and hinders, when a young man steps forward into the wrestling-ground; he may wear the memory of home

like a favour on his heart, but no hand or heart of home can win him one point in his fell tussle in the ring. He must begin by putting off every suggestion of coddle and leading-strings; and in absolute self-reliance, stripped to the skin, he must give or take his fall. The Bible writes up Joseph as an ideal moral athlete; and here we see him with picturesque distinctness in every line of limb and frame receiving his first challenge; and before a more serious foe, as truly as David before Goliath, our stripling will lose or win according to the man he is. The great game is only now about to begin, and, behold! how "great a cloud of witnesses!" The whole world is interested in Joseph! and here we see him choose his colours and take his side!

"Joseph was brought down into Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmaelites." The boy was bought and sold in the open market; he himself had no more say in the matter than dumb, driven cattle have; he would not know his own price, fast though his large black eyes flash from the lank brown Ishmaelites who own him to the Egyptians, grave as bronze, with whom they chaffer. A bonnie boy, we ween, as ever was turned into money in the public street! Light and lissome rather than broad or big, the head built more on the arch than the square, the look one of open-eyed wonder rather than of surprise, and the whole of him from head to foot obedient to a central will—no nerve twitching, no joint loose, no muscle off duty! Potiphar bought him for a servant in his own house; and we wish we could paint our glimpse of him as we seem to see him turn round and go up the street with that officer of war leading him—as innocent and willing as a lamb, and yet with the suppressed swiftness and strength of a tame panther in his alert and supple step. We may well hold our breath in a moment's awe when

the door of one house in the street closes upon him ; for he is being taken within to be tempted of the devil, and there at a lonely hour and in a solitary place his tempter will come to him.

“The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man.” Outstandingly, and as all the world says, Joseph was a man of *genius*—as distinctively a type of genius as Abraham, solitary and indefinite in an almost Hegelian mystery, is the type of faith—ever, in vague grandeur, rising up into the blue infinite and in communion with the stars of eternity ; or, as Isaac is the type of the contemplative man, shy and quiet in his going out and coming in, busy only among his own thoughts and with his own feelings, the Wordsworth of the ancient faith ; or, as Jacob is the type of the shrewd business man, worldly-wise first and “other-worldly” afterwards. Quite as distinct and separate as all these others is Joseph, the Bible’s type of genius, perfectly master of himself and his circumstances, doing and saying the right thing with the immediateness and ease of instinct ; a man to whom, wherever he was, everybody referred and deferred, and yet graceful and gracious, and even child-like in it all. The Hebrew way of putting it is to say, “The Lord was with him” ; and doubtless in a certain supreme sense “The Lord *was* with Joseph.” For great world-issues were at stake in the immediate future ; famines were coming on and nations were to be in pain, and a new nation was to be born and to be laid on the lap of Egypt and nursed there till it was strong. New junctures and departures were imminent in history, and God needed a *man* to take care of His world. Joseph was that man ; and he was specially endowed with capacity and intellect adequate to a crisis, for he was to be at the helm while God steered the earth round a wintry cape. Still no one must lift this life too high above the level of his own, nor overshadow it too much under some mysterious near-

ness to God. In his rare equipment for life and work—with an eye of insight and a hand of irresistible silent pressure among circumstances—the Lord was with Joseph just as He may be with the simplest of ourselves when we leave our father's house and prepare to act our own little part in the world. "Lives of great men all *remind* us"; and, in so far as the Lord was with him, Joseph was a little child who feared to take any steps alone, who confided in God and told Him everything, who kept by His side and asked for help in every trouble and difficulty. It was Jehovah, the God of Presence and Promise, the God of his father and his home, who was with Joseph in that perilous house in Egypt. It was well that he had not there a God to seek and find; the quest thence would have been a defenceless one across the parallels and trenches of the foe; and, if a father can do no more, he can at least so live and influence a son at home that he will start on life with his father's God by his side or at his call. But this truth has double edges, and cuts two ways at once. For whatever be a man's deepest motive and his most constant thought and intent in daily life, that is his religion, and therein you will find his God—noble or ignoble, exalting or degrading him silently all the time. Thus is made the atmosphere of the home, and therein young character grows with a bias so determined that sometimes a youth seems as if he had to accept his fate rather than make his choice of a side.

"And Joseph's master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper"; and "the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake"; and "Joseph was a goodly person and well-favoured." From these words there steps out and there stands forthright a very distinct personality. The background is black enough; he emerges from thick clouds, but he is radiant and mature; his limbs as if bred for

courtesy, and his looks as if not a sin lived within him. His strength is quiet and equally spread all over him with a Grecian grace; and, though he shows no sword, there is a sword belt on his waist. There are "manners" that "maketh" this man; and, in touches that are transmitted through that outward hue and likeness which men call celestial and have deified, we feel the fine magnetism which plays from his reticent strength. A man is before us of fascination as well as of power, with no more absolute mastery of circumstances than with that subtle spell-like influence over men which Goethe has called *dæmonic*, and which is an attribute of the rarest genius. A man who was felt to be good as well as great; a man to be loved as much as trusted; a man whom children would draw to and play with as naturally as counsellors and kings would call to and consult. This is the kind of man that Joseph was; and yet the Lord sent this man into Egypt, and has had him there sold for a servant! This shining life was tethered and harnessed to drudge and obey in a profane house; any one who called at Potiphar's door might have seen this splendid presence at some mean task. And yet, perhaps, only they who could forecast the ages and foresee the Christ could have understood this life and beheld its glory.

We do meet from time to time a man of this kind; we may come upon him even in unlikely places. There are men who in every environment of circumstances can get the keys into their grasp and do anything they please, who are natural overseers in the house of life, so that other men leave all they have in their hand, who are never excited, and never hesitate, and never seem to have put forth all their strength, who act and seem never to need to review or repent of or adjust what they have done, and who are indeed supreme in all their work and way. More rarely we meet those who combine that power with an inexpressible

ease and sweetness, who work in a clear atmosphere of grace, or beget a halo around them if they walk in mist, and who make us feel their charm even more than their strength. Some influence mystic and spiritual quivers around them; it is the token of other worlds that is upon them; and while they lay one stout hand on circumstances and affairs, with another they touch men's souls, and so allay fears and win confidence that no one disputes or interferes. Some such mysterious power over men and circumstances seems to have been with Joseph. There was a suggestion of the supernatural about him—a dash of inspiration in his word and method. Potiphar saw and said that a God was with him; a light from within seemed to shine out and open up his way before him; he *believed* and therefore he spoke; he saw, as if by a flash of the Divine, the right thing to do, and he did it with one stroke. No wonder that a slave lad like this in Potiphar's kitchen should soon have everything in the house in his hands; and, by the way he holds and handles keys of iron and brass there, he will show that he is meant to handle golden keys in larger rooms elsewhere.

As we here read, we may realize the adaptation of the Bible to men in all their condition and circumstance. Like the Bible itself, this life of Joseph is laid out at different levels; the narrative is graduated and brought near us whatever our position and power in life may be. The genius of this man at its far range and height may be beyond our reach and our calling, but there are many levels in our life where goodness and patience and character can do all that genius could, where virtue indeed *is* genius. The administration of a kingdom, or the interpretation of dream fantasy to the reading of the Divine purposes may be far beyond the level of most of us; but here is success below stairs, the swift foot, the immediate hand, the faithful eye and the valiant heart all instant and sworn to duty,

and these work a Divine miracle in the midst of drudgery. Goodness is God's commoner and yet more precious endowment; He puts this power of being good, and thus of doing good, into every one's hands everywhere; He means us all to covet earnestly this best gift. The path of progressive human life is up the stairs of God, and these "slope through darkness"; we never can see far ahead; the white marble way upwards has to be scaled one step at a time. But we are sure that if Joseph had not been good at this meaner level of life, he had failed to be truly great at any higher. Duty done by him under these humble conditions brings the word of his life very nigh to us all; and we have grand alliance in our endeavour, and great heights before and not beyond us, whenever we address ourselves to duty. Character was proved in this instance in obscure and disheartening service, and then Joseph's name was enrolled on the lists for promotion. To be good is the surest way to do good; to be blessed is the surest way to carry a blessing into any room of the great Master's house; and to plant one's foot firm and square upon the step of duty which God has placed there just before one is the true way to ascend to life's diviner honours. The one talent doubled by Joseph in slave service was an earnest of the ten talents by the throne with the ten talents more.

The narrative of God's word always leads along some line of interesting human circumstance to some intenser incident of moral interest and moment. This battle with his luck, his valour in adversity, make Joseph a hero with us all; and his comeliness and grace, as he glides through the rooms of the Egyptian house, with shapely limbs and shining face, fling a fine *glamourie* around him as if he were a young god in banishment. But circumstances and manners are only small dust on the balance when the man himself must be weighed; they are nothing accounted of when God makes His assay of a man's soul. A human life



may be beset and driven, may seem even to be overwhelmed, by circumstances; it may be mercilessly beaten back and reversed by adverse fate; but a man's fate can never be his doom. Even in slave bonds and at slave tasks he may be a prosperous man, and may be unfolding a victorious strength. Men test and prove the Damask sword before the battle by bending point to hilt in sorest strain, and they pass a line of searching electric fire through each link of the cable chain when the ship must face the stress of roughest weather; and God tries and tests all His men ere He lays His work heaviest on them. He puts the strain of eternity upon their soul. So did He with Joseph in the house of Potiphar; and thence, after his lonely jousts with sin day after day renewed, and the one terrific hour of onset in which everything crashed except his own invincible soul, Joseph came forth approved, God having stamped His own likeness secretly on his soul, and with—for finer outward eyes to see—God's aureole on his brow.

To every man there comes some such spiritual crisis as that in the life of Joseph, of which these verses tell. Things thicken around every human soul to serious stress and issue. Things are to be far more decisive than for long they seem to be. There is much spiritual secret hidden in the three short words "day by day" in one of these verses. Far-travelled armies are encamped for tournament and war around every human life; and we may, in our little environment of a cottage and a garden, try to live apart and be undisturbed in our happy seclusion. But "day by day" we are drawn into acquaintance and responsibility in relation to what is involved. There is many a brush between the foes before they fall on one another in force. We cannot but know what is going on. The instinct of the soul does much fine scouting and feels the enemy entrenched. The eyes that are the haunts of lust do much signalling "day by day" in adulterous air, and the eye of

purity will detect and be alert. The whole Divine scheme of life would be frustrated if men could be made or marred for eternity in one sudden moment. They are not to be surprised into either life or death; the choice is deliberate and after much sign and warning. Yet why are we amazed when we hear the bugle blown and ourselves involved in the press of the battle? Day by day we may hear the two voices calling in our soul; we take our daily rounds in the familiar garden ground which we have enclosed and to which we think ourselves entitled, and we see the two diverging paths that lead afar, and we toy with the two gates that swing to our hand. Evil may call us there, and good impulse may recall us, and we may linger long indecisively oscillating between good and evil in an easy and trifling way. But too much and too serious is involved to admit of this going on always. Indeed we are choosing secretly and gradually "day by day"; and, if in no calmer way, we shall find ourselves actually involved sooner or later with all the whirl and press of the fray around our own soul. Every soul is a prize, and will be fought for if it be not surrendered. Satan desires to have it, and Jesus wishes it for God; and it is our own choice and our own word that will determine this great contest and fix our fate. Wise is the man who soon and deliberately makes choice of his side in life, comes to a decision on his oath as to the two paths which lead out from his own little lot in life, and says once and for all "yes" and "no" to himself, in face of the two king masters and the two eternities.

Joseph made a splendid choice when he took unto him the white armour of an invincible moral valour and put it on. Yet one of the most bewildered moments in any noble human life in our strange world must have been his when "he fled and got him out." But whither was he to go? He did not want to escape; he was guilty of nothing. It must have been with a divine sense of insult and wrong

that he surrendered to those, inspired by a woman's lie, who were sent to take him; and yet it would be with a majestic self-possession that he stood forward and yielded, as if saying, "Whom seek ye? I am he." What faith he must have had! and what a sense of a Divine Presence by his side, if he did not waver when he knew that there was not one in all that land of exile to listen to his word of truth, and if he did not falter when his victory on the heights of God was succeeded by captivity in a prison cell—one little cruel hand closing its door and turning its lock. Surely God's good angels must have closed their ranks very swiftly around to sustain and reinforce this man's soul, when sin won temporarily this base success. This is not defeat; it is one of God's victories—a victory by the cross. There was victory in his soul; and defensive alliance there with the power of the eternal. He has kept for God His Thermopylæ; he has fought his own Bannockburn; he has purchased the glorious liberty for himself in all the land of life, and no walls or bars of man will daunt or bind him. These bonds and that imprisonment cannot lessen by one jot his divine prestige; and he can look himself and God and all the world in the face. He is still unconquered; he is the captive of no foe; and henceforward he cannot ever be defeated, for he has conquered himself, and he is sworn to God.

The lessons of this whole passage seem to be laid out along two different levels. There are high enough lessons for every-day and ordinary duties; and also lessons for the hours when life is condensed into the amaze and press of a spiritual agony; and those high duties here form a sort of substratum upon which these highest rest. We may read and learn at both levels.

The immediateness and thoroughness with which Joseph buckled to his work as a house slave come down the ages to us "as if a voice were in them." They say aloud with

a fine moral *timbre* in their tone, "Work, and despair not!" In the most chaotic circumstances Joseph acts as if God had set him there, and as if he was working in the dark with God in the evolution and shaping of some Divine good. The game of life seemed lost ere he had got it begun; he seemed set where he had not even a chance. Yet he began, and he tackled the menial service of his master the Egyptian's house, as if in the face of the impossible the passion of success was breathed into his soul. This was genius, ye say; but if ye, any of you, have the Lord with you, ye all may have this genius. A God-inspired life rides its boat on the crest of storms; it never quarrels with circumstances; it never loses heart; it never doubts itself; it does not know the impossible. Everything was, at first and for long enough, against Joseph except himself and his God—the calm as much as the storm. But even when for many days no sun or star appeared, and in mist and darkness his life lay becalmed and no effort availed, yet his compass is always true, and tells him where the Divine is; his steering apparatus is strong; his keel is deep and steady, and his mast still points to the zenith. Though storm come and he be whirled round and round, and swept here and driven there, yet you will find him as soon as ever he may drawing himself together and settling himself to duty. The most adverse circumstances do not justify negligence or neglect. No man was ever more wronged than Joseph. Every wheel seemed to turn against him. His life was driven from its orbit; the ordinary lines of justice and fairness were in his chart of life not marked; and he might have deemed himself destined to wreck. But he never for a moment loses his equilibrium or steers carelessly. He cannot resist the stormsweep of forces, but he moves like an inspired planet with a mild radiance—steady to its centre and right within itself. He has been caught in all the cross currents that could well run, but there is always

a grand competency in him, a splendid composure in his life. Landed in the most unlikely, treacherous circumstances, he almost at once rights himself and rises to the occasion; he accepts the situation and makes the best of it. Call it not genius! it is genius and more! "The Lord is with him."

We may impress ourselves with this as a principle of action. Never quarrel with circumstances! Make the best of every set of hard circumstances! Let us believe that God is in every chance that befalls us; and, against the seemingly most hopeless odds, let us stand up to duty! This principle is a mainstay of life in a world where the cards seem to beat all the players, where circumstances are often too strong for the strongest, and where, like the wind on the sea, the spirit of an age seems sometimes to retard the tide of the world. No man ever gets quite the post he would have chosen in life; yet no man gets past his duty. The shortest and easiest, as well as the longest and most twisted, paths only bring a man face to face with duty; and though we were but scullion slaves in an Egyptian kitchen, God's orders are given us there, and we dare neither be idle nor be negligent. If we have but to stand with our face to a bare, black wall—if *such* is our post of duty—we must stand as if *God* had set us there; the Lord will be with us, and even there, in every deep and Divine sense of the word, we shall be *prosperous*.

More or less of strain and trial come into every life; the strife and conflict in life are the condition of all its virtue. Promotion here is as with soldiers; in all the high places you will find the men who have been in the thick fight and who have the scar on their face and the stain on their scabbard. For God administers His world after a severe military order, yet not so sternly but that the gentle soul may be the firmest hero after all. The life of each of us must have more than the heroic in it, inasmuch as it stands

up to duty at God's call everywhere; we must have, in deeper recesses of our being than where men see, the inextinguishable life of God. More needs to be done than that a man be sheathed in armour, and go safe from outward cuts and thrusts and carry a heroic spirit into all the fray of life. We have heard of the skeleton in armour; and behind the legend is the truth of some brave soldier who put on his harness and went to the war, and whom no sword stroke felled down, but who dropped dead before the battle and his bones were bleached within his iron garments, because, though he knew it not, his heart had been growing to stone. The truly heroic man in life's intenser conflict with fate must have within him the power of an undying life. For one whom a death, reigning and prevailing silently in his heart, cuts off, there are a hundred whose diviner life is frustrated and fails because of anarchy and insurrection in their soul. If any man would be truly valiant and divinely victorious, he must do something more than face hardship like a hero. He must look to *himself*. And it is well to realize, once and for all, that within our own nature, as behind iron bars, we have each to restrain many an evil impulse and fiery passion. As long as these *are* restrained, they are ours and we are masters of ourselves; but let them once get out and break away, we are in their power, for they are masters then; all our voices to recall, all our endeavour to capture, and all our desire to subdue, may then be in vain. We should therefore look to our inner nature. We should be alarmed when these caged powers rear and fling themselves against the control of our better judgment and roar at the voice of conscience. We should see that they are secure; put on double bars if need be, and heat the irons hot. One way or another they must be mastered, whether trained to obey the rein of a slender bridle or subjected continually to a cruel curb and a loaded whip.

The significance and secret of our life lie far beneath its surface and outward seeming. A life of leisure or one of work, of hardship or of peace, of even failure or of success, signifies but little, if it were not that at every step in them all a deeper law of our being is being obeyed or broken. The whole tumult of human life in the world is hardly worth heeding, if there be not in the silence beyond it a judgment bar before which the secrets of the soul will signify far more than outward condition. Our lips will be silent after all their words, and our lives still after all their effort; but the most secret and silent thought of our heart, that we never once put into words even to ourselves, is that which we shall first hear reverberating in eternity and telling itself aloud in the halls of judgment. Evil is rife in our world and within ourselves; so also is good. But neither can the one harm us nor the other bless us, until we have so listened to the one or to the other, that we have been by it charmed and entranced and amazed. No man is responsible for his temptation, every man is for his choice. No one is sent out on these perilous waters of Time in an unseaworthy ship. Life is full of compensations and checks. The man with the hues of genius on his cheek, and whose capacious soul makes his life swift and keen and tender to every breath and breeze, is furnished with the more sensitive apparatus to steer and the finer leverage to control. Such seems outstandingly the lesson in this searching episode of this finely-poised and highly-strung Hebrew in the days of old, whose life and circumstances seem so typical of much that is rare and precarious in human nature to all time, and whom, it seems to us, in a far away and early time, "of His own will God begat by the word of His truth, that he should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures." To men of coarser fibre and slower heart there is Divine promise and warning—we know not which the more—in the wide-reaching word:

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.”

ARMSTRONG BLACK.

A FURTHER NOTE ON THE NAMES OF THE  
TWO ROBBERS IN THE GOSPEL.

IN a recent communication to this magazine I endeavoured to use the instruments of palæographical reasoning to elucidate the meaning of the names assigned to the two robbers in the Gospel by certain copyists or legend-makers.

The names fell into two groups, one of which was represented by the body of legends known as the Acts of Pilate or Gospel of Nicodemus; the other was found in the old Latin copies of the Gospel. The former were seen to be the result of a misreading of words written against the figures of the two robbers in an early Greek representation of the crucifixion, describing one of the robbers as the faithful or believing one (ὁ πιστός) and the other as the one hostile to God (ὁ θεομάχος).

But when we came to treat of the names that are actually found in a group of Latin gospels, we were not able to reduce them to the same form, and were obliged to leave it as an unsolved problem, reserved for further and future consideration. To this problem we now return.

The group of MSS. referred to consists of the Codex Colbertinus (cod. *c*), the Codex Rehdigerianus (cod. *l*), and the Codex Ussherianus (cod. *r*), from which are extracted the following data for the names of the two robbers:

		Right-hand.	Left-hand.
Cod. <i>c</i>	Matt.	zoatham and	camma.
	Mark	zoathan „	cammatha.
		(?) Right-hand.	(?) Left-hand.
Cod. <i>l</i>	Luke	ioathas „	maggatras.
Cod. <i>r</i>	Luke	„	capnatas.