

Passover was an anxious matter for both Jewish and Roman officials. The Jews especially dreaded any riot which might give the Romans an excuse for indiscriminate, bloody severity. To the chief priests, therefore, Jesus seemed a public danger, a view of the matter heartily endorsed by His old enemies, the scribes and Pharisees; so that the priestly officials, for the most part Sadducees, and the popular religious leaders, the Pharisees, were equally desirous of getting rid of Jesus. But for the moment He held the walled enclosures of the Temple with a formidable following; and an attempt to arrest Him would have caused a fresh riot. So for the time they left Him alone; and in the evening He let the crowd disperse, and departed quietly from the city with His disciples.

W. H. BENNETT.

THE ETHICAL TEACHING OF ST. PAUL.

(4) THE PASSIVE VIRTUES.

CHRISTIAN morality is founded on natural morality. It is the republication of the law written on the heart. The findings of that "silent court of justice" which each man bears about within his breast, it adopts and makes its own. The virtues of Paganism, no less than the specifically Christian virtues, are essential to the completeness of the Christian character. So much we have seen in the last paper. We have now to turn to a type of ethical doctrine in which Christian teachers own no master save Christ, and in which the ethical originality of Christianity is most strikingly revealed. When St. Paul exhorts the Thesalonians to industry, or the Ephesians to truthfulness,¹ he is doing no more than any Roman moralist might have

¹ 2 Thess. iii. 10-12; Eph. iv. 25.

done; but when, in his letter to the Colossians, he bids them, "Put on, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye,"¹ he has far out-soared the loftiest flights of ancient morality. It is this class of ethical precepts with which we are concerned in the present paper. We seek to learn how St. Paul would have a Christian man bear himself in face of an adverse lot, and especially of the wrongs and injuries done to him by another.

I.

The exceeding wealth of the Apostle's teaching on the subject is in itself full of significance. Disregarding for the moment what he has to say concerning anger, or resentment, his precepts may be grouped around those three great ethical maxims:

"Doing nothing through faction or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself."²

"Love suffereth long and is kind."³

"Even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye."⁴

Humility, meekness, forgiveness: these are the root, the flower, and the fruit of the truly Christian temper.

(1) *ταπεινοφροσύνη*, or lowly-mindedness,⁵ comes first. It is well, as a rule, in the interpretation of the New Testament, not to make much of the mere order of the words in such a passage as that quoted above from the Epistle to the Colossians; but the position of *ταπεινοφροσύνη*, both there and in the parallel passage in the Epistle to the

¹ Col. iii. 12, 13. ² Phil. ii. 3. ³ 1 Cor. xiii. 4. ⁴ Col. iii. 13.

⁵ It is a little difficult to understand for what reason the Revisers have rendered the same word in one place (Col. iii. 12) "humility," in another (Eph. iv. 2) "lowliness," and in yet another (Acts xx. 19) "lowliness of mind."

Ephesians,¹ is probably significant. "Humility" is named before "meekness" and "long-suffering," since it is only through a wise and lowly estimate of ourselves that we come to know what is due to others. In similar fashion St. Paul introduces the great ethical injunctions of the Epistle to the Romans: "I say, through the grace that was given me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think."²

Ταπεινοφροσύνη describes the spirit of one who has come to the knowledge of himself in his relation to God. This is the primary and true meaning of the word. Humility is not so much a social as a religious virtue; it has reference, first of all, not to man but to God. Once this is clearly understood the mean and shabby associations which so often cling about the skirts of the word are immediately shaken off. Humility does not consist in telling lies about ourselves, nor in thinking worse of ourselves than we deserve, nor in allowing others to trample upon us at their pleasure. So far from being a sign of weakness, it is a badge of the strong. By true humility men are delivered from all slavish fear in the presence of their fellows; they can stand erect before men because they have learned to kneel before God. "The first test of a truly great man," says Ruskin, "is his humility." But, he continues, "I do not mean by humility, doubt of his own power, or hesitation of speaking his opinions. . . . All great men not only know their business, but usually know that they know it; and are not only right in their main opinions, but they usually know that they are right in

¹ Eph. iv. 2.

² Rom. xii. 3. There are interesting parallels in our Lord's teaching: "Blessed are the poor in spirit" is the first of the Beatitudes. See also the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, concerning which Dr. Alexander Whyte says: "In His last analysis of the truly justified man and the truly reprobate, our Lord made the deepest test to be their opinion of themselves" (*Bunyan Characters*, vol. i. p. 140).

them ; only they do not think much of themselves on that account . . . they do not expect their fellow-men, therefore, to fall down and worship them. They have a curious under-sense of powerlessness, feeling that the greatness is not *in* them, but *through* them—that they could not do or be anything else than God made them.”¹

(2) Though, however, humility, rightly understood, has reference primarily to God, such an estimate of self cannot but have immediate results in our whole bearing towards our fellows. Arrogance may carry its head high, and insist upon its rights, refusing to surrender one jot or tittle of what is due to it ; but lowly-mindedness, remembering its own past, and the greatness of the Divine forbearance, will gladly bow its head and forgive. It is but natural, therefore, that St. Paul, when he mentions humility, should couple with it meekness and long-suffering. Yet these two words—*πραΰτης* and *μακροθυμία*—do not declare the Apostle’s whole mind on the matter. Perhaps in no department of ethical duty have we a terminology so rich and varied as that furnished by the New Testament concerning our duty in the presence of suffering and wrongdoing. Let us bring together some of the treasures with which its pages are so thickly strewn.

(a) *Ἀνάρκεια* (contentment) is a term which St. Paul uses in common with the Stoics to describe the prevailing temper of a wise man’s life.² It denotes the sufficiency

¹ *Frondees Agrestes*, p. 13. So also Mr. John Morley: “The grace of humility is one of the supreme moral attractions in a man. Its outward signs are not always directly discernible; and it may exist underneath marked intrepidity, confidence in one’s own judgment, and even a strenuous push for the honours of the world. But without humility, no veracity” (*Miscellanies*, vol. iii. p. 249).

² 2 Cor. ix. 8 and 1 Tim. vi. 6; see also Phil. iv. 11. There is some uncertainty about the exact significance of the word in the first of these passages. Ellicott interprets it objectively—“sufficiency”; Meyer, subjectively—“An inward self-sufficing.”

Findlay has an admirable note on the contrast between the Pauline and Stoic ideas of *ἀνάρκεια*: “The Christian self-sufficiency is relative ;

of him who is independent of external circumstances, and is able to say, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content."

(b) A much more frequent word in the Pauline Epistles is *ὑπομονή*, which is usually rendered "patience."¹ It should be noted, however, that while our word is only passive, St. Paul's word is both active and passive. It denotes not only patience but perseverance as well. It describes the temper of the man "that endureth to the end," the constancy of blind Milton, which both "bears up" and "steers right onward," the *brave* patience which under a great siege of trials does not lose heart.

(c) The previous words describe the Christian temper under suffering. We turn now to a group of words in which the suffering is considered as inflicted by others. Foremost among these is *μακροθυμία* (long-suffering). "While *ὑπομονή* is the temper which does not easily succumb under suffering, *μακροθυμία* is the self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate a wrong." As *γλυκύθυμος* means "sweet-tempered" and *ὀξύθυμος* "quick-tempered," so *μακρόθυμος* is literally "long-tempered," the opposite to our "short-tempered." If "longanimity," like "magnanimity," had gained for itself a footing in the English language—an attempt was made to introduce it—this would have

it is an independence of the world through dependence upon God. The Stoic self-sufficiency pretends to be absolute. The one is the contentment of faith, the other of pride. Cato and Paul both stand erect and fearless before a persecuting world: one with a look of rigid and defiant scorn; the other with a face now lighted up with unutterable joy in God, now cast down with sorrow and wet with tears for God's enemies. The Christian martyr and the Stoic suicide are the final examples of these two memorable and contemporaneous protests against the evils of the world" (*Christian Doctrine and Morals*, p. 34).

¹ Rom. v. 3, viii. 25, xii. 12; 2 Cor. i. 6 (R.V. "patient enduring"); Col. i. 11; 2 Thess. ii. 5 ("the patience of Christ," not, as in A.V., "the patient waiting for Christ"); and elsewhere.

² Rom. ii. 4; 2 Cor. vi. 6; Gal. v. 22; Eph. iv. 2; Col. i. 11, iii. 12; 2 Tim. iii. 10, iv. 2, etc.

been, perhaps, our most exact equivalent of St. Paul's *μακροθυμία*.¹

(d) As *ὑπομονή* is opposed to cowardice and *μακροθυμία* to revenge, so is our next term *πραΰτης* (meekness)² opposed to harshness or rudeness. It denotes the bearing towards others which results from a lowly estimate of ourselves. "The meek man thinks as little of his personal claims as the humble man of his personal merits."³

(c) Closely akin to *πραΰτης* is the beautiful word *ἐπιείκεια*,⁴ which has given our translators so much trouble. In Acts xxiv. 4 it is rendered "clemency," in 2 Corinthians x. 1 "gentleness," in both A.V. and R.V., while in Philippians iv. 5 the A.V. has "moderation," and the R.V. "forbearance," with "gentleness" in the margin. "Sweet reasonableness" is Matthew Arnold's well-known equivalent. *Ἐπιείκεια* is equity as opposed to strict law, gentleness as opposed to contentiousness. "Let your forbearance be known unto all men" means "Do not make a rigorous and obstinate stand for what is your just due."

(f) One word still remains to be mentioned—*χρηστότης*,⁵ which in the R.V. is rendered "good" (Rom. iii. 12), "goodness" (Rom. ii. 4, xi. 22), but elsewhere "kindness." In Rom. xi. 22 it is set in contrast with *ἀποτομία* (severity). The central idea of the word is *benignitas*, or

¹ See Lightfoot's *Colossians*, p. 140; J. B. Mayor's *Epistle of St. James*, p. 149; and Trench's *Synonyms of the N.T.*, p. 196.

² 1 Cor. iv. 21; 2 Cor. x. 1; Gal. v. 23, vi. 1; Eph. iv. 2; Col. iii. 12; 2 Tim. ii. 25; Tit. iii. 2. A different word of similar meaning—*πραΰθθεια*—occurs only in 1 Tim. vi. 11.

³ The difference between *μακροθυμία* and *πραΰτης*, which is very slight, has been defined thus: *μακροθυμία* does not get angry soon, *πραΰτης* does not get angry at all. But this is surely untenable; with all its commendations of meekness, the New Testament commends no man for inability to be angry.

⁴ Acts xxiv. 4; 2 Cor. x. 1. The corresponding adjective occurs in Phil. iv. 5; 1 Tim. iii. 3; Tit. iii. 2.

⁵ Rom. ii. 4, iii. 12, xi. 22; 2 Cor. vi. 6; Gal. v. 22; Eph. ii. 7; Col. iii. 12; Tit. iii. 4.

sweetness of disposition, a grace which, as Trench says, pervading and penetrating the whole nature, mellows there all which would have been harsh and austere. "Wine is *χρηστός*, which has been mellowed with age (Luke v. 39); Christ's yoke is *χρηστός*, as having nothing harsh or galling about it (Matt. xi. 30)."¹

Even yet our list is not complete. We may pass over *ἀνοχή* (forbearance; *ἀνέχομαι* = to hold one's hand), since it is used in the New Testament only of God (Rom. ii. 4, iii. 26); but we still have *ἀνεξίκακος*, "patient of wrongs" (R.V. "forbearing"), and *ἡπιος*, "gentle" (both in 2 Tim. ii. 24),² and the many passages in which the Apostle exhorts his readers to be at peace both among themselves and with all men (1 Thess. v. 13; Rom. xii. 18), and to follow after things which make for peace (Rom. xiv. 19).³

(3) And now of this goodly edifice of apostolic doctrine, of which humility is the foundation, forgiveness is the completion and the crown. We are bidden to endure suffering with patience and meekness, to school ourselves in the hard lesson of forbearance, to put out the fierce fires of vindictive wrath. But even this is not enough. It is possible to put such a constraint upon ourselves that neither with hands nor with lips do we offend, and yet fall far short of the law of Christ. We must not only forbear, we must forgive; not the manifestations of enmity only, but the enmity itself must be subdued. "Non-resistance" is a feeble word indeed by which to express what is the true Christian attitude towards those who would do us hurt. We must resist, but not with our enemies' weapons; we must clothe ourselves with the victorious might of love and fight against evil until we have overcome it with

¹ *Synonyms of the N.T.*, p. 233.

² There is a doubt about the reading in 1 Thess. ii. 7: Westcott and Hort have *νήπιοι* (babes), the Revisers *ἡπιοι* (gentle). See Ellicott's note *in loco*.

³ See also 1 Cor. iii. 3; 2 Cor. xiii. 11; Phil. ii. 3, iv. 2.

good. "See that none render unto any one evil for evil": with this word the Apostle stays our feet when we seek the wrong way; but he does more than merely call a halt; he points out the right way: "Follow after that which is good, one toward another, and toward all."¹ And this is his message in every epistle. The beautiful letter to Philemon is one earnest plea for the forgiveness of the runaway slave Onesimus. He bids the Corinthians forgive the penitent evildoer in their midst, and so confirm their love to him, lest he "should be swallowed up with his overmuch sorrow."² "Bless them that curse you; bless, and curse not." "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink."³ "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you."⁴

II.

Such a contribution to ethical doctrine as is indicated above, from whatever quarter it had come, could not have failed to arrest attention. The thirst for revenge is so strong in the natural man that any voice speaking with authority and declaring such a thirst to be sinful would at least be sure of a hearing. But the fact which multiplied a hundredfold the impressiveness of the Christian message was this, that what it enjoined it also exhibited; its ideal was there, visibly set forth in a perfect human life. Or rather, the actual *was* the ideal; St. Paul's ethic was not constructed out of his own head; it was simply the unfolding of the moral significance of the life and mind of Jesus. And if, beyond the words of others, his words concerning patience and meekness and forgiveness speak to us with authority to-day, it is because in them we hear the voice of Him of whom it is written that He was meek and

¹ 1 Thess. v. 15.

² 2 Cor. ii. 7, 8.

³ Rom. xii. 14, 20.

⁴ Eph. iv. 32. Cp. also Col. iii. 12, 13.

lowly in heart, that when He was reviled He reviled not again, that when He died He prayed even for His murderers, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

This relation between the Divine example and human duty is continually present to the mind of St. Paul in his reference to the passive virtues. The long-suffering (*μακροθυμία*) and kindness (*χρηστότης*) which we are bidden to show in our dealings with others are abundantly made manifest in God's dealings with us¹; the forgiveness we receive from Him is the true measure of the forgiveness we owe.² Nor are these qualities merely the deductions of a devout mind arguing back from its own perceptions of duty to the character of the Deity which it worships. Indeed, the method of St. Paul's thinking is exactly the reverse of this; he begins with God, and the revelation of God given in the historic Christ, the Incarnate Son, and deduces thence the character and measure of human obligation. Take, e.g., the great passage on the Incarnation in the Epistle to the Philippians, where the self-emptying and humiliation of our Lord are dwelt upon in order to lend emphasis to the exhortation to lowly-mindedness: "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."³ "The Lord direct your hearts," the Apostle prays, "into the love of God and into the patience of Christ,"⁴—"into such a patience, i.e., as Christ Himself in His earthly life exhibited. "I intreat you," he writes in another place, "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ"⁵; and here again his eyes are on that radiant Figure as once it moved

¹ Rom. ii. 4, xi. 22.

² Col. iii. 13. Cp. George Macdonald's lines:—

"Make my forgiveness downright—such as I
Should perish if I did not have from Thee."

³ Phil. ii. 5-8.

⁴ 2 Thess. iii. 5.

⁵ 2 Cor. x. 1.

amongst men. But it was in the death and cross of Christ that St. Paul found the supreme motive to the love that suffereth long and still is kind. "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we intreat¹": where had that hard lesson—doubly hard for a man like St. Paul—been learned? To ask the question is to answer it. When Apostles told the story of the Gospels, and took for the symbol of their faith a cross, patience and meekness were lifted out of the dust and clad in white raiments.

III.

A few brief notes may be added in order to complete as far as may be this brief exposition of the passive virtues.

The originality of the type of character in which the gentler virtues hold the foremost place, and the new dignity conferred by Christianity on humility and forgiveness have already been pointed out.² There can be no clearer indication of the estimate put upon humility by the ancient world than the fact to which reference has already been made, that the Greek language had no word of good credit by which to describe it. "In heathen writers," says Bishop Lightfoot, "ταπεινός has almost always a bad meaning, 'grovelling,' 'abject.'"³ In the New Testament, on the contrary, it is always, save once, a term of praise.⁴ No less sharp is the contrast in the case of forgiveness. Isolated instances of generosity towards a foe on the part of a noble heathen—such, e.g., as are

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 12.

² See EXPOSITOR, Feb., 1905, p. 141.

³ *Philippians*, p. 109.

⁴ The exception is 2 Cor. x. 1, where St. Paul is quoting one of the sneers current in Corinth at his expense; the speakers were familiar with the word only in its contemptuous sense (see Denney's *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 292). It may be noted, also, that in Col. ii. 18 and 23 St. Paul himself speaks of *ταπεινοφροσύνη* in disparagement; but this is the sole exception to the general usage of the New Testament (see Lightfoot's note *in loco*).

recorded of Pericles—do nothing to efface the deep distinction between ancient and modern morality which has been established by the Christian law of forgiveness. The inscription which Plutarch tells us was written on the tomb of Sulla in the field of Mars—"No man did ever pass him, neither in doing good to his friends nor in doing mischief to his enemies"—sums up with memorable exactness the mind of the ancient world upon this matter. And if further illustration be needed, we may ask if any greater contrast to the pure and gentle ideals which these pages have sought to portray can well be imagined than is to be found in that hard, cruel, Roman world of which to this day the vast ruin of the Colosseum remains "at once the most imposing and the most characteristic relic"?¹

In speaking thus in praise of the passive virtues it is necessary to point out how easily they are counterfeited and how worthless are the imitations. Humility is good, but "the devil's darling vice is the pride that apes humility." Humility is good, but not that ignoble self-depreciation which ignoble natures sometimes use to cloak their unwillingness to obey the call of duty and of God. So, too, meekness is not tameness; to be "poor in spirit" is not to be what we call "poor-spirited." The nature which in presence of the claims and needs of others abates its own demands and puts a stern constraint upon itself has nothing in common with the weak amiability which is always ready to be all things to all men, only because it has no settled convictions of its own. Nor, again, does a forgiving spirit imply incapacity for anger. So far is it from being true that love and anger cannot dwell together in the same breast that he who has lost the power to be angry has lost more than half the power to love.

These various misconceptions of the passive virtues usually spring from one root: the idea, viz., that they are

¹ Lecky's *History of European Morals*, vol. i. p. 275.

all in some way or other associated with weakness. There could hardly be a greater mistake. "Passive" we may call them, yet they demand something much more than mere passivity of soul; indeed, only by the most strenuous moral energy can they be maintained. So far from being the badge of weakness, they are the sign-manual of the strong. Let any man set himself to practise in the rough-and-tumble of daily life the virtues of humility, patience, meekness, and forgiveness, and it will not be long before he will discover that if he is to hold his own he will need to call out his last reserves of moral and spiritual strength. *Strengthened with all power, according to the might of His glory, unto—what?* No proud feats of spiritual heroism, but simply this: *all patience and long-suffering.*¹ The Apostle is right; never do men more need the heavenly girding that when they are called to forbear and to forgive. *Stronger* is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.²

It is indeed sometimes asserted that Christianity has wholly failed to teach men forgiveness.³ We may with

¹ Col. i. 11.

² The passive virtues not only call for strength, they reveal it. The point is well put by Horace Bushnell: "Have you never observed the immense power exerted by many Christian men and women whose lives are passed in comparative silence? You know not how it is, they seem to be really doing little, and yet they are felt by thousands. And the secret of this wonder is that they know how to suffer well—they are in the patience of Jesus. They will not resent evil, or think evil. They are not easily provoked. They are content with their lot, though it be a lot of poverty and affliction. They will not be envious of others. When they are wronged they remember Christ and forgive; when opposed and thwarted, they endure and wait. They live in an element of composure and sweetness, and cannot be irritated and fretted by men, because they are so much with God, and so ready to bear the cross of His Son, that human wrongs and judgments have little power to unsettle or disturb them. Now before these a continual flood of influence will be continually rolling. Their gentleness is stronger than the onsets and assaults of other men. They are in the kingdom of Jesus, reigning with Him, because they are with Him in His patience" (Sermon on "The Efficiency of the Passive Virtues" in *The New Life*).

³ Thus, e.g., a writer in the *Spectator* (Feb. 27, 1904) speaks of forgive-

justice question a judgment so extreme as this, and at the same time admit that there is no sharper test of the Christian temper than that which is furnished by the virtues we have just been considering. Revenge, it has been truly said, is the last stronghold of the natural man¹; it is the last fort which he holds against the spirit of the gospel, and in its capture we have the most decisive evidence of the triumph of the Christian spirit. Indeed, so peculiarly characteristic of Christianity is forgiveness felt to be that, as the author of *Ecce Homo* has pointed out, when a Christian spirit is spoken of it is a forgiving spirit that is usually meant.² The pagan in us all dies hard; but when from our hearts we have learned to forgive we have dealt him his death-blow.

GEORGE JACKSON.

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN SYMBOL OF THE OPEN BOOK.

II.

As it is now clearly established that during the early centuries the Christians sometimes indicated on grave-stones an open book or pair of tablets, it is necessary in the next place to try to discover the origin of this custom. It may be regarded as certain, in view of the symbolic character which is clearly shown in early Christian art and

ness as "the one thing in which Christian ethics may be said to have absolutely failed." Readers of *Ivanhoe* will recall Wamba's quip: "'I forgive you, Sir Knight,' said Rowena, 'as a Christian.' 'That means,' said Wamba, 'that she does not forgive him at all.'"

¹ Take as an illustration the words which Rolf Boldrewood puts into the lips of an old man who had led a wild, rough life in the Australian bush: "Mine ain't been such a bad innings, and I don't owe much to any man. I mean as I've mostly been square with them that's done me a bad turn. No man can say that Ben Marston was ever back'ard in that way; and never will be, that's more. No! them as trod on me felt my teeth some day or other."

² Pop. ed., p. 272.