

going to be those of the Mystic Union and the Subliminal Self, if indeed he would concede that they are two ideas, and not rather one. But the exposition of this theory in more detail, with whatever criticism may offer, must be deferred.

Looking backward, we can see that we have been under the leadership of a singularly and congenially appreciative mind. 'I am perhaps conscious of a certain call to offer to mediate,' are the writer's own words. This sympathy and knowledge are manifest throughout, and they enable him to be always courteously conciliatory without being complaisant. No wonder he is so widely trusted. True sympathy and a feeling for the delicacies of spiritual thought are, if not rare, at any rate never too abundant. Though much less common than before, the *hard* type of divine is still with us; sagacious, shrewd, circumstantial, business-like, sceptical of everything

that cannot be set down instantly in plain words. Paley, as a fond admirer once happily expressed it, 'had the credit of putting Christianity into a form which could be written out at examinations.' Now of all this Dr. Sanday is the antipodes: he has no dry, stony confidence in arguing with other men, never treats ideas as if they formed a fixed, dead skeleton, refuses to ignore the delicate organic laws of growth and change. At least I have noted but one exception to this rule of sympathy. That exception is Luther. He is mentioned only once, a little unkindly; and of his contributions to the interpretation of Christ there is not a word. And yet it is not too much to say that with the Reformation, and particularly with Luther, there came into the world a richer and more profound, because a more religious, understanding of our Lord's Person than had been known since the Apostles.

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF REVELATION.

REVELATION XXII. 17.

'And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely.'

There are two kinds of 'coming' in this verse. There is the coming of the Saviour, and there is coming to the Saviour. First there is the invitation to the Lord Jesus Christ to come. The invitation is addressed to Him by the Spirit and the bride, and every one that hears is invited to join in it. And then there is the invitation to come to the Lord, or, as the expression is, to 'take the water of life freely,' an invitation which is addressed first to 'him that is athirst,' and next to 'whosoever will.' So we have—

- I. The Invitation to Christ to come.
 1. From the Spirit.
 2. From the Bride.
 3. From the Hearer.
- II. The Invitation to the Sinner to come to Christ.
 1. To the Thirsty One.
 2. To every one that is willing.

I.

THE INVITATION TO CHRIST TO COME.

The invitation is given (1) by the Spirit, (2) by the bride, and (3) by the hearer. The Spirit and the bride are not identical, as if the Spirit simply spoke through the bride, that is, the Church. And yet the writer of the Apocalypse does not mean that the Spirit, as the third Person in the Trinity, gives the invitation directly to the second Person to hasten His coming. By the Spirit, St. John means those who are specially endowed with the spirit of wisdom and of utterance. There was in the early Church a distinct order or school of 'prophets' to whom the word of the Lord came, as it came to the prophets of the old dispensation. But it did not come from without. The word was in their heart. It was the Spirit within them; it was the Spirit of God expressing itself by them. People, says Dr. W. M. Macgregor, had the wisdom and the courage in those days to believe that in their lowly gatherings the voice of God was sometimes heard. When plain men spoke above themselves, in words all depth and fire and essential insight, speaking so as to catch their

fellows up to God, it was reverently confessed that the Spirit of God was speaking; and on the lips of these men who for the moment had the inspired utterance, the recurring word was 'Come, Lord Jesus.'¹ Then the bride, the whole Church of Christ, joined in the invitation. And last of all the hearer, every hearer of this book; not only the Church in her ideal unity, but each individual member of every Christian congregation where the book shall be read is invited to demand the fulfilment of the Lord's promise, 'Behold I come quickly.'

I. The Invitation of the Spirit.—'The Spirit says, Come.' It is true, indeed, that the spirit of this world and age does not speak thus. The more it strives after ease and comfort in this life, the further it is from wishing to have the present state of things ended by the coming of the Lord. But the Spirit of God and of Christ, which is meant here; the true spiritual life-throb of the children of God; the power of faith and salvation, of hope and patience, by which they fight their way victoriously through this world; this Spirit cries at all times, Come, Lord Jesus; come to our aid in every difficulty; come and advance Thy kingdom; even by the very obstacles raised by Thine enemies, come, and by Thine advent make an end to all sorrow and suffering! This Spirit, emanating as it does from eternity, implants in our hearts a holy longing after this eternity, and is itself the innermost strength of this holy longing, of this love for the Lord and His appearing. It is this same Spirit which creates a deep yearning for freedom from all the bonds of sin and death, and for entire unity with the Lord; which creates the burning desire to see the Church of Christ healed of all schisms and corruption, and the honour of the glory of the Lord made manifest before the whole world, and incontestably established for all eternity. Thus does the Spirit continually incite to the prayer, 'Come, Lord Jesus!' The Spirit cries and prays through the mouth of the Church, and in this cry the Church, in unison with the Spirit, pours forth her whole longing and yearning, as in Jn 15^{26, 27}, 'The Spirit shall testify of me, and ye also shall bear witness.'

2. The Invitation of the Bride.—'And the bride says, Come!' This is not indeed the heart-cry of the whole visible Church; for in so far as she allows herself to be rocked to sleep by the spirit

¹ W. M. Macgregor, *Jesus Christ the Son of God*, 264.

of this world, she becomes, with all her hopes and wishes, so completely a citizen of this world that she wishes the day of the Lord may long be delayed, until she herself has enjoyed life. Therefore *she* does not say, or at least does not say from her heart, 'Come, Lord Jesus!' But the bride who has given herself wholly to the Lord, who keeps the covenant of faith which she has made with Him, and as His betrothed keeps herself unspotted from the world, who knows full well that the good things of this world are fair but poor and perishable, who knows that by the appearing of her Beloved a time of unclouded, endless joy and glory will dawn for *her*, *she* it is who says and prays with earnest longing, 'Come, Lord Jesus!'

Who is 'the Bride'? A beautiful body, knit together in one holy fellowship, pure and spotless, spotless in God's eyes for His sake who loves her, 'arrayed in the fine linen, which is the righteousness of the saints,' and decked with the ornaments of grace. She has accepted Christ for her Beloved, and is bound to Him in a perpetual covenant, never to be forgotten. In Him she has merged her name, her nature, her property, her being; while He pays all her debts, pledges Himself for all her wants, sustains her with His arm, satisfies her with His love. It is the Church, elected by grace, united by faith, sealed by baptism, kept by mercy, prepared for glory.

The Bride is represented here on earth. The Bride is represented there in glory:

One family we dwell in Him,
One Church above, beneath;
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death.

But, whether it is here on earth or yonder in glory, still the Bride speaks one language. Wherever you meet with a soul in whom there is the spirit of the Bride, and who belongs in God's eternal foreknowledge to that elect company, you will find one whose life is a continuous invitation; for, wherever the Bride is, she still seems to say, 'Come.'²

3. The Invitation of the Hearer.—Not all the Lord's people are prophets, not all within the Church are sharers in its hope, but there ought to be a process of infection by which the outsider in these matters begins to be interested at second hand, as it were, interested not in the object itself, but, at least, in his neighbour's interest. Many come by that way to the knowledge of Christ. On Stephen's face Paul saw a light which should not

² W. H. M. H. Aitken, *God's Everlasting Yea*, 242.

have been there if the Sanhedrin's view of the martyr were the true one; but 'light there was from far-off fountains' hid from Paul, making death itself a new and radiant thing. That caught Paul's eye and fretted his sense of what was fitting, but it also set him questioning; and one day he discovered the source of that strange brightness, and it seemed to him like the first day of creation, as fresh and startling as if a man had never looked on light before. That is how ideas move. They are like the seeds of plants meant for the winds to bear, scattering themselves by suggestion, not by direct instruction. There are eyes that look in the Church, and ears that listen; and the power and the awe of great sincere desires are felt by many who are not yet Christians in the deeper sense. A Church which comes to meet them half-way, on a footing of familiarity and lightness, has little power with men; but those who grow up in an atmosphere of noble longings are silently constrained to set amongst the objects of their own desire something of the same order. Though they cannot yet say, Come, they envy those who can; and thus they are drawn by admiration nearer to the Christian temper.¹

'Let him that heareth say, Come.' I do not know of a better evangelist than a fresh convert. When the love of God is first shed abroad in our hearts, and we receive the fulness of His first blessing, it is so natural that we should go and tell other people of what the Lord has done for us. About three weeks after a mission had been held in the north of England, the mission preacher paid another visit to the neighbourhood, and asked those who had received benefit to meet him in the schoolroom of the church. One of the very first to come forward was a little boy. He came forward like a man, and held out his little hand and grasped the mission preacher by his. His eyes were sparkling with joy. 'Well, my dear boy, how are you getting on? Have you been doing the part of a mission preacher?' 'Yes,' said the boy; 'and now, sir, we are all of one mind in our house, mother and brothers and sisters, all except father, and *we are bound to have him too.*'²

II.

THE INVITATION TO THE SINNER TO COME TO CHRIST.

Here we have a remarkable change. We pass at once, and quite abruptly, from an invitation to Christ to hasten His coming to an invitation addressed to those who are thirsty, and those who are

willing, to come to Christ. It is as if the writer had intended to ask the thirsty one and every one that had any good will at all, to join in the welcome to the coming Christ, and then suddenly remembered that that could not be until they knew Christ. So he turns his sentence into an invitation to them to come to Christ, that they may taste and see how gracious the Lord is. Then will they be ready to welcome His coming.

I. The Invitation to the Thirsty One.—There is no craving so fierce and so intolerable as the craving of thirst. This may be due to the fact that the deprivation of liquid is a condition with which all the tissues sympathize. Every atom of the body joins in the cry, and the expression is concentrated in the parched mouth, and the dry and feverish lips. And this great craving of thirst is used in this book to symbolize the craving of the soul, and these plenteous waters are used to shadow forth the abundance of the satisfaction which is found in the Lord Jesus Christ.³

A man felt this thirst, but was too proud to come. One evening after his wife had gone to a revival meeting, he was restless and walked the floor. His little girl asked, 'What ails you?' 'Nothing,' he said; but still he walked the floor. The girl, in her artless way, asked, 'If you were thirsty, would you not go and get a drink of water?' He felt that it was God saying, 'Let him that is athirst come.' He put his hat on, went to the meeting, and before he returned drank deeply from the water of life.⁴

Will anything allay this thirst? 1. Not *sin*. The wonderful thing is that we can ever persuade ourselves that it can. But the devil can mix the most insidious potions and can make them sparkle like the water of life, but when we drink them it is as though a man consumes salt water to appease his thirst. Animal gratification can never quench a spiritual craving. It is the most pathetic of all tragedies when a man or woman flees to drink to quieten his soul. It shall be 'as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold he drinketh; but he awaketh, and behold he is faint, and his soul hath appetite.'

2. Nor *work*. I will join any man, says Jowett, in singing a psalm of blessedness on work; but if hard work will lead to spiritual contentment, the great majority of my congregation will be in the enjoyment of spiritual rest. And yet after the

¹ W. M. Macgregor, *Jesus Christ the Son of God*, 270.

² W. H. M. H. Aitken, *God's Everlasting Yea*, 245f.

³ J. H. Jowett, in *The British Congregationalist*, September 24, 1908.

⁴ W. Armstrong, *Five-Minute Sermons to Children*, 112.

hardest day's work, often in the midst of it, there is a sigh, a weariness, a state of staleness, a certain out-of-jointness, which is abundant proof that the old craving is still there like a smoking volcano, and that its inner fires are not yet quenched. Thank God for work, but work can never take the place of God.

3. Nor *money*. The most awful weariness in the world to-day will be found where money abounds. The fact of the matter is, spiritual satisfaction is to be obtained at a counter where money is not accepted as a means of exchange. 'Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God can be purchased with money.'

4. Nor *honour*. Satisfaction cannot be found even in the higher and finer cultures of the mind, in music and art and literature. These ministries can soothe, they can excite, they can gratify, but they cannot satisfy; and when the volume is closed, when the harmonious strains have died away, when the creations of art have been laid aside, the secret yearning asserts itself, and the unsatisfied soul cries out, 'I thirst!'

5. 'If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink.' The Lord Jesus claims to satisfy the soul; yes, to satisfy the soul as a babe is satisfied to find its mother's breast. 'The water that I shall give shall be in him a well.' The Lord creates a new well of peace and fruitful satisfaction. For, look you, solid satisfaction lies in the possession of a certain quality of spirit. What is that spirit? What sort of gift would send this congregation away in radiant triumph? If God were now to give me the choice as to what every member of this congregation should receive before we leave the building, what would I choose? I think I would choose three things. First of all, pardon; forgiveness for all our ill doings and all our wasted treasure. Secondly, purity; the washing away of all stains, the searching out of hidden germs and defilement. And thirdly, peace; the sense of the glorious at-one-ness with the glorious God. And if we obtained those three gifts, we should all go away with feet like hinds' feet. And these are just the gifts to be found in Christ. 'Let him come unto me and drink.' We should find pardon; 'in whom we have the forgiveness of sins.' We should find purity; 'He hath washed us from our sins in His own blood.' We should find peace; 'My peace I give unto you.' He is the fountain

of these secrets of blessedness. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.'¹

2. The invitation to every one that has any will to come.—Behind the thirsty there is yet this other class who are invited to come—those who are willing. Willingness to receive the truth may exist where as yet there is no thirst for it, and such willingness is of God, and a first step towards eternal life.

This seems to include every one. But it does not. It excludes a great many persons. 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' The Bible invitation turns on the human will. It invites every man that chooses, but there it stops. The Bible rests on the assumption that every man, if he enters into life, must enter into it by his own free choice.

God pays His child no finer compliment than when He trusts him with his destiny. There must be something inexpressibly great in man to merit this surpassing confidence. True, God was held by the alternative of making a race of automatons or a race endowed with choice; and He made the latter. It was counted that such a creature was worth all the cost of pain and woe, of evil and despair; worth the cost of Calvary. But God leaves us not alone: a highway of truth is blazed by revelation, sweet voices counsel us to walk thereon, an inner Spirit offers holy motive, and a Saviour takes the thrust of an avenging sword. Above, below, around, within us tender help is proffered; but no power may touch with lightest hand the sceptre of the soul. There in the throne-room man is master. A thousand ministries from heaven wait his nod; a thousand demons from the pit attend his will.²

If you ask me why the Queen is upon the throne, I reply in the words she insists should be on all her coins, 'Dei Gratia'—by the grace of God. But, on the other hand, if you ask me why yonder criminal is in the cell, I dare not reply, By the will of God; but I say, Because he has done wrong; and I insist that he is morally responsible, else you must not shut him up as a criminal. You may confine him as a lunatic, as one who is dangerous to society; but do not punish him as a criminal for what he had no power to avoid. No, these two things are quite compatible—the Divine sovereignty and the free agency of man; and herein consists the glory of God. He performs His purposes not by mere machines, but by living moral agents, who have this power of will. We all acknowledge that the power of the statesman, who moulds the will of the people, is of a higher

¹ J. H. Jowett, in *The British Congregationalist*, September 24, 1908.

² C. G. Doney, *The Throne-Room of the Soul*, 11.

order than the power of a blacksmith, who moulds a dead, resistless piece of iron to his purpose. So God carries out His own will, though liable to be crossed at every turn by the will of man.¹

The Water of Life.—When we are roaming through the Bible we are never far away from the sound of waters. We have not gone far before we discover ‘a fountain of water in the desert’; there are wells on every hand; water gushes forth out of the rock of flint. Away in the Psalms there is ‘a river which maketh glad the city of God’; we sit in the shadow of trees which are planted by the flowing streams. In Isaiah there are ‘wells of salvation’; rivers breaking out in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; the wilderness becomes a pool, and the dry land springs of water. And so on by the ‘great waters’ of Ezekiel, and the clear, strong mountain streams of Amos. On by the well of ‘living water’ in John, to the sunlit fountains of the Apocalypse. Yes, the sound of the book is as ‘the sound of many waters,’ and we are never beyond the reach of their voice. And so everywhere there is a promise of refreshment, of satisfaction, the offer of sweet, plentiful waters to allay the thirst of man.

The spiritual drink comes from the Spiritual Rock, says Paul, on which Bengel’s comment is, ‘Qualis Petra, talis aqua,’ what the Rock is in quality that also is the water which comes from it. So when you gaze on Christ and realize what He is, you may be well assured that from Him no mean or meagre gift can come, but one which will give life and death another look.

In the desert when a caravan runs short of water they sometimes send the swiftest camel with its rider forth to seek for it. And the camel’s unerring instinct guides it in the direction of the well. When it is nearly out of sight—only a speck on the horizon, they send out another camel and its rider, and when he is afar, they send another and another, and another. And when the first camel reaches the wells, its rider leaps to earth, and stoops and tastes the water to see if it is sweet, and if it is, he mounts once more and turns and waves his hand to the next rider, and shouts, ‘Come!’ and when he sees the signal and hears the shout, he wheels and rides back, crying, ‘Come!’ and the next man does the same, and the next, and the next, until the desert rings again with shouts of ‘Come, Come, Come!’ and the travellers rise and hasten gladly to the living spring.

Freely.—We use the word ‘freely’ for that which is given without money and without price. It is

¹ E. A. Stuart, *Children of God*, 162.

opposed to all idea of bargaining, to all acceptance of an equivalent, or that which might be construed into an equivalent. A man is said to give freely when he bestows his charity on applicants simply on the ground of their poverty, hoping for nothing again. A man distributes freely when, without asking any compensation, he finds it more blessed to give than to receive. Now God’s love comes to men all free and unbought; without our having merit to deserve, or money to procure it. I know it is written, ‘Come, buy wine and milk,’ but is it not added, ‘Without money and without price?’ ‘I will love them freely’; that is, ‘I will not accept their works in barter for my love; I will not receive their love as a recompense for mine; I will love them, all unworthy and sinful though they be.’

The Trevi Fountain stands in a busy part of Rome. It is in the Strangers’ Quarter, but also not far from the Palace of the Quirinal, where the King of Italy resides. It is one of the sights of the city which every tourist goes to see. The present structure is built as a front of marble to one of the old Roman palaces, and was completed in the year 1762. The water gushes out with great force, and the basin into which it is poured fills nearly the whole of the public square. The aqueduct yields daily at its three outlets thirteen million cubic feet of water. ‘It is interesting,’ says a recent writer, ‘to watch the people flocking to the Trevi Fountain. People from the country are there: they are thirsty, and turn aside to quench their thirst. Maidens from the city are there, carrying their pitchers, and bearing them away, when filled, on their heads. The cigar dealer from his shop stands side by side with an English lord. The fruit woman from her stall has as her next companion a grandly dressed duchess. Newspaper boys, travellers, young and old, rich and poor, are all at the fountain, and they have an equal right to it. It is free to all.’²

Whosoever will.—‘Thank God,’ said Richard Baxter, ‘for that “whosoever.” Had it been—“Let Richard Baxter take,” I might have doubted if I were meant; but that “whosoever will” includes me, though the worst of all Richard Baxters.’

A visitor to Dr. Horatius Bonar’s church (about 1876) says: ‘His address was founded on the words “The Spirit and the bride say, Come”—“the last invitation in the Bible.” It was marked by the absence of all attempt at originality. It was simply an invitation—warm, loving, urgent. With one of the most winning faces I ever saw, he closed: “Whosoever—that includes you: whosoever will—does that include you?”’

² C. Jerdan, *Pastures of Tender Grass*, 255 f.