

who witnessed them a solemn lesson on sin. One who stood by, when she was in severe pain, said, "I never hated sin so much in my life." But there was a "needs be;" and if not on her own account, yet "for us they suffer, and for us they die." The manner in which she was supported and enabled to triumph in nature's last extremity, might well give the beholder "a deep and blessed persuasion of the reality of religion." She was "more than conqueror;" and it only remains for those who knew and loved her to tread in her footsteps, and prepare to meet her in the skies.

THE DAWN.

ROMANS XIII. 11, *seq.*

AN EXPOSITION FOR THE NEW YEAR.

ST. PAUL is here the watchman of the church. Standing between night and day, he proclaims *the time*: in tones of solemn joy he announces the end of darkness and the approach of light. Our first impression on hearing his cry is, that it summons the sleepers of a guilty world to awake, and join the watching church. But as we listen we find that he speaks to the watching church itself; his words imply that the shadows were already fast departing, and the morning already far advanced. The seeming inconsistency cannot be removed by supposing him first to address the children of the night, and then to encourage the children of the day. The two voices speak to one and the same company; they inextricably blend together exhortations apparently appropriate to both characters; and by this very combination they hint to our reflection the only solution of the ambiguity. This cry of the watchman of the Christian dispensation regards the church as being in a midway state between perfect night and perfect day; as a band of pilgrims awakened from sleep but still surrounded by the slumberous influences of night not yet wholly gone; waiting in the dawn for the revelations of the coming day, towards which they travel in hope, and for which they prepare in holiness.

These words, *the pilgrims of the dawn*, both borrowed from St. Peter, greatly help us to understand a passage of St. Paul, otherwise "hard to be understood." They throw a clear light upon the whole paragraph; reconciling its two voices; resolving its apparent paradoxes; and imparting to the mingled exhortation a charm irresistible to every devout heart. Let us trace the effect of this key-note in the interpretation of the passage. The dawn proclaims the end of night; it is in itself only the mingling of darkness and light; but it is the sure promise of a day that cannot be retarded, that must reach its perfection, and upon which the shadows of evening shall never fall.

1. The apostle sets out with an appeal to the Christian community : *Knowing the time.* The word carries us back to our Lord's sublime proclamation of the hour that struck at His first advent, when the night of death that had rested upon mankind for ever ended, and the light of a new and eternal life began. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, *and now is*, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God : and they that hear shall live." Another hour is yet to come,—not "now is,"—when all the dead in their graves shall hear His voice in the last resurrection. But the hour into which man's history entered when our Saviour spoke was the hour that marked the end of spiritual night and the beginning of spiritual day. The *time* of night then closed for the world at large ; and to all who *know* the time, the dark reign of sin is over for ever.

Night passed from the world when our Lord came into it. Before His advent the true light had never shone. Doubtless the night that preceded His coming was not and never had been perfect night ; dense, unrelieved, Egyptian darkness cannot be said to have encompassed the world since the first promise spoke into the gloom the prophetic, *Let there be light.* When Paradise was shut, something of its interdicted light remained outside to mitigate the darkness ; so that in the deepest midnight of heathenism some rays of truth and instincts of virtue have struggled with the darkness ; rays which, however inadequately "comprehended," were never entirely absorbed : and over one favoured land the moon and the stars shone brightly. The earlier revelation was, as St. Peter tells us, a light shining in a dark place, *until the Day should dawn.* Thus there was from the beginning a preliminary kindling towards the morning. But the New Testament evermore arrogates for the first Advent the prerogative of commencing the true light. Christ was Himself the Dawn and Morning-Star of His own coming day. And the time which Christians *know*, is the new era into which man's history has risen through the first appearance of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

When the apostle speaks of our knowing the time, he refers to an experimental acquaintance with its privileges, obligations, and responsibilities. How this knowledge is attained we learn in that memorable word which the Prophet Isaiah gave the Apostle Paul, and of which he makes such spirit-stirring use :—"Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Here the Lord Himself is the great Awakener, pouring the light of conviction into the chambers where sinners sleep the sleep of death,—that sleep to all good which is at the same time wakefulness to all evil. Those who hear His awakening voice, and receive the light of conviction, arise, but only to discover that they are themselves dead among the dead in trespasses and sins. They then receive from Him who awakened them the light of life. They leave the company of the spiritually dead, and find that He who had given them the light of

conviction, and poured into their souls the light of life, is there to go before them with the light of sanctification and guidance to eternal blessedness. And these are they who *know the time*.

To them the night, in its double empire, is past. They are no longer under the dominion of the leaden sceptre of the god of this world, who lulls his subjects into insensibility; they are no longer under the dominion of the tyrannous sceptre of the god of this world, who excites his subjects to all rebellion.

They sleep no more. That voice of the Awakener has entered into the depths of their soul, and they have been aroused once and for ever. Their whole being has been seized by the strong and subtle power of truths that have set every faculty on the full stretch of life, and vigour, and trembling activity. They have sprung up from the deep sleep of unconsciousness into a clear perception of the tremendous realities that link time with eternity. The sense of sin has come upon them with the overpowering force of a new and bitter experience: "as if an adder had stung them," their apathy is gone for ever. And they have seen the Cross; the unutterable scenes of that morning that redeemed the world have engrossed and filled their hearts. They have been plunged into the waters of a spiritual baptism, which have refreshed, and invigorated, and awakened them to the uttermost. They have a Book in their hands that enchains their attention with an infinite variety of truths for ever deepening the excitement of their interest. They have work to do that more than taxes every energy. And, above all, there is an expectation reigning in the morning air that keeps every thought alert:—the mystery that will be solved with the broadening day; the Person who is coming, surrounded by glories only less glorious than His own perfection; and all that His coming will bring to the fruition of His people's old desires, and the lighting up of new desires that shall have their fruition throughout eternity;—conspire to create a state of soul to which sleep is for ever impossible. These are they who truly *know the time*. Their night is gone, and they sleep no more.

And the guilty wakefulness of night is also past. The same Voice that disturbed their sleep summoned them to leave the company of the dead; to abandon for ever all fellowship with those who, dead while they live, and living while they are dead, make provision for the flesh, and serve it in its more refined or grosser lusts. The night is not quite gone; but the sacred morning sheds light enough around to reveal the hidden things of night, and make them for ever hateful. Not only are its more revolting abominations—those orgies of the flesh which darkness itself might be ashamed of—forsaken; but the entire course of life, as shown under the deep shadows of night, however innocent it may have once seemed, is renounced, and looked back upon as a vain though guilty dream. These watchers cannot indeed forget the past. It is part of their discipline to be haunted by the memory of

these dreams of sin and vanity so long as there is any possibility of relapsing into them. Until their souls shall need no longer to be kept humble and watchful, these remembrances of shame shall pursue them : it will be the prerogative of eternity alone to blend all guilty memories into one deep sense of infinite obligation without the shame. But, though their memories are not purged of the remembrance of the dark deeds of night, their consciences are purged from the guilt of those deeds, and their souls are saved from complacency in them. They count the night as over for ever ; and walk *as in the day*, with the holy decorum and dignity that befit the light. They have *cast off the works of darkness* ; throwing aside their former practices, as if they were a garment covering the soul ; hating the habiliments of night, in which they slept, and dreamed, and sinned, but which are to be worn no more for ever. These are they who truly *know the time*. Their night is gone, and they sin no more.

So far we have caught the spirit of the apostle's appeal as expressing the idea of a complete severance between night and day. There is in the intention of grace a great gulf fixed between the one and the other : the light is divided from the darkness absolutely ; nor can they have any fellowship one with the other. This is the sublime ideal of Christianity ; this is the high theory that runs through all its teaching. There is, therefore, an important sense in which the dawn is not a reality ; and, notwithstanding the gloom not yet entirely dissipated, the night is gone as such ; notwithstanding that the light is low and uncertain, the day is really come. Hence in the general current of New-Testament teaching two states, and only two, are broadly defined and distinguished : there are *children of night* and *children of the day*. Nor is any interval generally assumed between the *darkness* of sin and the *marvellous light* of holiness. But the peculiarity of our present passage is that it gives special prominence to the spiritual phenomena of a certain interval of transition, which reality requires and the Scripture never denies. Although the apostle does not say so, he means that the Christian state is at the best, in many respects, no better than *the dawn*.

II. The strain of the exhortation proceeds on the assumption that the night is only *far spent*, and that the day is only *at hand*. There are many in the Christian fellowship of watchers who are not fully awake, and among them are retained many relics of the night not yet entirely forgotten. Moreover, there are the old enemies begotten of the darkness who still infest the early morning. And finally, the salvation of the entire company is, at the best, only *nearer* than when faith ended the night.

It might be supposed, from the tenor of the apostle's watchman-cry, that the whole band of pilgrims were slumbering, or at least only half awake ; and that in their drowsiness they were acting over again

the sensual and contentious scenes of darkness. But his language is general only that it may find out the individual. There is from age to age a faithful succession of human "watchers and holy ones;" but the melancholy fact remains, that throughout the whole of this early morning estate of Christendom these notes of admonition are only too much needed. When the Bridegroom shall have begun His final approach, *all* shall be wakeful and watchful enough; but till then the pilgrim company shall never, alas! lack those who move in its watching procession "like men that dream," and who defile the sanctity of opening day by unholy echoes of the night. These sad memorials that it is only the dawn meet us at every turn. While there are many who are awake to all the powers of the world to come, who have renounced the hidden things of darkness, and are walking in the light of the Lord, there are very many more in these days who need to have the watchman-cry rung loudly in their ears, lest they relapse into the profounder sleep of a second death, from which not even the great Awakener shall ever rouse them. Hence the very same clarion note that sounds out of the church into the sleeping riotous world, is heard for ever resounding within the church itself. And it is the charitable duty of those who fully know the time, to echo that cry. We must all be watchmen over our brethren's souls; giving our slumbering fellows no rest until they have been plunged again into the bath of a spiritual reinvigoration; and giving our licentious companions no rest until they have put away their wantonness and strife. And here is the everlasting argument: "It is *high time* to awake out of sleep;" "let us walk *honestly, as in the day.*"

It is only a variation on the same theme when we speak of the danger inseparable from the dawn. When the apostle here makes the garment of holiness—the mystical character of "the Lord Jesus Christ put on"—an "*armour* of light," he suggests, by a single word, the whole mystery of evil that wars against the pilgrims of the dawn. The powers of darkness have not been scared away by the morning light. Rather they are awakened by it into more malignant alacrity. Never did they so furiously rage as around the sacred Person of Him whose presence in the world ended their reign. And, although He abated their power, destroyed their dominion, and announced their final discomfiture, He did not banish them from the path of His pilgrim company. The time is not yet come when *these* unclean ones shall not pass over the way of holiness. When the day shall have fully risen upon the church, our enemies shall be seen no more for ever. Meanwhile, they haunt the morning, obstruct the travellers, and do much mischief to the more unwary. They cannot retard the day; but they make its progress a perpetual contest; so that its final perfection will not be simply a consummation, but a victory. And in this the spiritual day of man's history differs from the natural. In the latter the dawn glows into morning, and morning melts into mid-

day with silent and sure predestination : day vanquishes night without resistance, and the daily victory is won without strife. But in the former the victory is the result of a desperate and unintermitting warfare between spiritual light and spiritual darkness. Hence the apostle's exquisite condensation into one word of the entire panoply that he elsewhere loves to dilate upon in detail. It is the "armour of light." The church's weapons of offence and defence are simply the light of a spiritual life. The victory will be the perfect light of universal holiness : the armour that insures and wins that victory is *light*.

Once more : it is characteristic of this midway state that the salvation of the Christian company is regarded as incomplete. The perfect day will bring, with all its other mysteries of glory, a full salvation ; but that, St. Paul tells us, is only "nearer than when we believed." There is a sense, indeed, in which the salvation of mankind is already accomplished in all its perfection : neither time nor eternity can add to it or take from it. The reconciliation between God and the human race was, by one offering once offered, ratified for ever. But the bestowment of salvation on the members of Christ's mystical body is progressive, and will not be a perfect gift until one last crowning act shall seal and ratify an infinite series of lesser deliverances. The church upon earth is only in the dawn of the day of its full redemption. That day will be perfect when Christ shall come "without sin unto salvation ;" when He shall come no longer bearing the burden of His cross, but bearing the burden of His glory and of His exceeding great rewards. Then shall He consummate ten thousand acts of forgiveness by one great act of irreversible mercy *unto eternal life*. Now, in the dawn, our hope subsists on a pardon not yet eternally ratified. Then will He consummate the sanctification of His saints, rendering the warfare between flesh and spirit for ever impossible, releasing them from the last vestige of infirmity, and uttering the final decree, *Be holy still*. Now, in the dawn, we are dependent on the ceaseless ministry of that grace which still retains the bason and the napkin to wash the disciples' feet ; we are encompassed about with such infirmities as make the full glory of Christian perfection a state too high for time. Then will He execute the long-suspended judgment written against death and all its satellites of sorrow ; recovering those whose bodies fell by the wayside, rendering death obsolete to the generation into which He shall come ; and, after having reversed in these the decree that "it is appointed unto all men once to die," He will "swallow up death" in the general victory, and obliterate from His people every trace that they had ever known this dread penalty of sin. Now, in the dawn,—but it is needless to dilate : Christ's people wrestle with sorrow, and mourn in bereavement, and prepare to die ; the physical nature of the redeemed does not as yet share even in the partial salvation which their spiritual nature attains. By ten thousand tokens of tribulation it is only the dawn—the early dawn—of the great day.

III. There can, however, be no question that the predominant tone of the passage is something higher than this: not ruled by the gloom of the dawn, but by its promise. It is full of the prophecy of the coming day; and every word is strictly appropriate to an exhortation—an exhortation never suspended—to the company of watchers who travel towards while they wait for the coming of the Lord. They are stimulated to believe in the certainty of the perfect day; to rejoice in the hope that it inspires; and to occupy themselves meanwhile with all holy preparation.

Knowing the time. The Christian church is appealed to as exercising a firm faith in the gradual consummation of the present dawn into perfect day. These words are a remembrancer: reminding these early travellers of the great secret which they know,—the most precious secret time has to disclose,—that the Lord is at hand, bringing with Him all and more than all their hope can conceive. The return of our Saviour—or, rather, His coming: for that is the scriptural word, as if His first appearance was but a transient visit—fills the entire New Testament with a glow that leaves no part dark, brightens into all but glory the dimness of the church's present vexation, and already almost swallows up death in victory. To *know the time* is to know this its greatest secret. But the apostle uses here an expression that occurs nowhere else: one which, without overstraining it, yields a very important truth. The coming of Christ will be to His church—to His mystical, spiritual people—the regular and peaceful consummation of a day already begun: the same light and no other, but raised into meridian glory. To the ungodly world a catastrophe, and to slumbering Christians a sore amazement, it will be to those who *wait for His appearing* what day is to the earthly traveller who waits for the morning. The elements of heaven are here; the dawn is the earnest as well as the pledge of the day; and all that will be needful for the redeeming of every pledge the Scriptures contain is the withdrawal of the veil, the appearing of the Sun in the heavens, the “showing Himself” once more to His people. The apostle's words do not permit us to think of the Christian world as being plunged into night again: “the night cometh” is never spoken of the church; only of the term of every individual's probation. One of the most impressive, and also the most common, *notes* of the Christian community is this, that they *wait for His Son from heaven*. And, in every age, those are most in harmony with the Scripture and the earliest disciples, who regard that as the one great prospect and future of the church.

But “knowing the time” does not signify any precise knowledge of its limits—at least its future limits. We know the human beginning of the time; but are forbidden even to investigate its human end. We are shut up to faith, which must in all things rule until the vision of Christ shall begin the reign of sight. It has pleased the Lord to keep this secret from every age, even from that of His elect

apostles. The benefit of the uncertainty is one that every generation of His followers, from the first who saw His retreating glory, to the last that shall witness His second shaking of the heavens and earth, must partake. It is pure and simple faith. "All things continue as they were," was the cry of dawning unbelief; and that cry is not less shrill, and not uttered by fewer voices, because it is reinforced by eighteen centuries of added argument. Impatient credulity—the counterpart of that unbelief—cries, "Lo, here is the promise of His coming, or lo there!" But simple faith waits on in hope that makes no calculation. There is no necessary, secular cycle to be computed: His return depends on His own will. The natural day may be subject of most precise calculation: we may ascertain on every meridian how many moments are yet from the dawn to the noon. But here the apostle's figure once more fails: our Lord may brighten any hour—from cock-crow to the third hour and the sixth—into perfect day.

This being the common prospect, it is not wonderful that here, as everywhere, the Christian state is described as one of joyful hope. Nothing in nature is more beautiful and more symbolical of eager expectation than the dawn that proclaims, "The day is at hand:" the day itself that fulfils its promise cannot surpass its beauty. Here the figure is again, in a certain sense, insufficient: the day that we expect will be so glorious as to cause its early splendours to be forgotten. But the brightness is a great reality: the estate of Christ's watchers is one in which an enthusiastic hope may well predominate. To the company as such there is nothing but joy in the future: its present inheritance is a hope full of immortality, and that knows no night; for "in its pathway there is no death." And the individual Christian is taught to enter into the common hope. True that he has the cares of life, the conflict with evil, the fear of death, to moderate his joy. But he is taught—and is "slow of heart to believe," if he is not effectually taught—to look through all and over all these lower glooms of his prospect to the brighter horizon into which these things merge. He must lose his particular sorrow in the general joy. He is one of the company that shall receive the Lord. He has come into their fellowship, and shall be separated from them no more. It may be that he will not be one of those who never taste of death. His own particular day may be followed by a certain night. He may be, and probably will be, buried by the holy wayside. But that accident of his lot will not sever him from his companions. His spirit will be with them still, and his body shall be given back to him before the august meeting shall take place, in time to welcome the great consummation. Hence to the faith and hope of every believer in Christ the present life is the dawn of a perfect day.

But the apostle reserves for the last his solemn exhortation to prepare. And that exhortation is in harmony with the whole strain: "the day is at hand;" the pilgrims are travelling towards it; and

their preparation for it is twofold. On the one hand, they are bidden to anticipate the day in the holy decorum of their lives; and on the other, to be clothed with the only garment worthy of the day, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

"Let us walk *honestly, as in the day*:" this one word "honestly" unites in itself every idea of dignity, decorum, and purity becoming the Christian day; in opposition to the degradation and unholiness of the night in which the flesh had its dominion of shame. Although the glory of the perfect day is not yet revealed, its purity is already present. The high ideal of Christian holiness is the living, through the effectual grace of God, under the light of a present heaven: under the eye of Him whose presence already throws the light of day around our souls. The holy "walk in the light, as He is in the light;" they "have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth them from all sin." This is their fellowship: while in all the houses of the Egyptians around them there is deep darkness, in all their dwellings there is light. They tolerate nothing in themselves that the light of day would rebuke. Hence it is the counterpart of this that they "make no provision for the flesh:" whatever provision they take for their heavenly journey, the flesh has no share in it. The sin adhering to their nature, the "old man" not yet dead, is an enemy whose hunger they do *not* feed, to whose thirst they do *not* administer drink, whose dying solicitations they regard not, but leave him to "perish in the way." But the supreme preparation—uniting all others in one—is the "putting on of the Lord Jesus Christ." In Him alone the dignity and purity of our nature meet: transformed into His character, we need nothing more to fit us for the holiest heavens; but nothing less will suffice His expectation at His coming. He will come "to be glorified in His saints," already the likeness in ten thousand reproductions of Himself; and they shall in turn "be glorified in Him." Hence the great business of the pilgrims is to occupy the precious moments of the morning in weaving into their nature the character of Christ, as the apparel of the eternal day. And if in faith that worketh by love—the love that "fulfilleth the law"—they diligently co-operate with the Holy Spirit, it will be His blessed function to see to it that before the Bridegroom cometh His Bride, and every individual soul that makes up her mystical Person, shall be found clothed in His spiritual perfection as with a "garment without seam, woven from the top throughout."

Beyond this we cannot go. This is the close and the secret of the whole exhortation to the pilgrims of the dawn. They have come up out of the night at the sound of His awakening voice; and have left their Egyptian darkness for ever. They are wrestling with the dangers of the morning, rejoicing in its partial satisfactions. But supremely and above all they are intent upon the coming day: "in their pathway there is no death," but they wait for the "more abundant life;"

they are full of trembling and solemn expectation of all that the day will pour out of its unfathomable mysteries. But the *end* of all their expectation is the Person of their Lord. And to prepare for Him by being like Himself is the sum of all their preparation.

W. B. P.

THE GOOD DEPOSIT:

A CHARGE DELIVERED AT THE ORDINATION OF SIXTY MINISTERS
AT BRADFORD, YORKSHIRE, AUGUST 3D, 1864; AND PUBLISHED
AT THE REQUEST OF THE CONFERENCE.

BY GEORGE OSBORN, D.D.

PERMIT me, my dear brethren, to offer you my sincere congratulations. You have reached the point to which many of you have for years been tending,—the goal of your highest and holiest aspirations. We have seen with unutterable joy the fathers of some of you taking part in this solemnity. We have reflected with equal delight that other fathers look down from their bright abodes with heightened happiness on the transaction of to-day. We think how many a mother's prayers in the temple and in the closet are answered in what we have this day taken part in; and we cannot but rejoice with them, and with you, and with one another, on the accession to the work of the ministry of the Gospel of so large a number of men who are, we trust, counted faithful by the Lord. In this estimate of the work on which you have entered, you have the sanction of inspired authority:—"If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a *good* work." You have attained an honour which, if an angel could envy anything, he would envy you, but which angels are not permitted to share; an honour which proceeds directly from an enthroned Saviour in the bestowment of an office which He has instituted, and to the due fulfilment of which there is annexed that stupendous promise to which you have already listened:—the Lord Himself, if you be faithful in the service to which you are now admitted, will come forth and serve you! (Luke xii. 35-43.) An angel might be overwhelmed with the vastness of the reward that is thus brought within your reach.

I have no intention of bringing before you anything like a complete view of the duties, responsibilities, and encouragements of the Christian ministry. All I aim at is to present a few hints which may furnish you with matter for meditation, which will, I hope, be treasured in your memories, and be reflected upon as occasion may require.

These hints are grounded upon 2 Timothy i. 14:—"THAT GOOD THING WHICH WAS COMMITTED UNTO THEE, KEEP BY THE HOLY GHOST WHICH DWELLETH IN US."

There has been "committed to" you this day, as you have already heard, the work and office of a Christian minister and pastor. And