THE OBEDIENCE OF HOPE.

BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN, D.D.

As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance, but as he which had called you holy.—1 Peter i. 14, 15.

These words immediately follow, and are to be taken in closest connection with, the exhortation to "hope perfectly for the grace that is to be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Hope, then, is to be nurtured, not only by a believing contemplation of future glories and felicities, but by exercising ourselves to godliness and practical obedience. So strongly does Peter feel this necessity, that he precedes as well as follows his exhortation to hope perfectly with subsidiary exhortations as to conduct, setting it in the midst of these like a diamond in a bracelet of gold. "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober" go before "hope perfectly," and as "obedient children" comes after it.

Two points as to the words of this text must be noticed before dealing with the thoughts. As the Revised Version shows, the literal rendering is "as children of obedience." This is a well-known Hebrew idiom, of which we have many instances in the New Testament, such, for example, as Paul's "children of wrath," "children of disobedience," and the like. The essential or permanent characteristic of a person or thing is in it regarded as his or its parent. So disobedience is represented as the inalienable mark of a Christian. But the immediately following reference to God as our Father seems to suggest that the Hebrew idiom here is blended with the Christian thought of sonship, and that the full meaning of the pregnant words is to represent Christians as God's children whose essential and distinguishing mark is filial obedience. One other expository remark is necessary. The Revised Version reads in the margin, "but like the Holy One which called you." If we adopt that rendering, and connect the words closely with the preceding, God's own holiness is proposed as the pattern by which Christians are to fashion themselves. So if we take these explanations, and remember the context to which I have already referred, three thoughts emerge, about each of which I will say a word.

I. The first is that Christian hope and Christian obedience are inseparable companions.

The mark of a son is to obey. And obedience means not merely doing what we are bid, but being glad to be bidden to do it; and it means not merely the active submission of will to the loving command of that Father, but also the quiet acceptance of and bowing of the will to the wise appointments of that Father. So it is the exact opposite of that temper and attitude which are characteristic of the godless world which makes self and its own will its law. There are two courses of life, obedience and rebellion; and there is no middle point. So, dear friends, here is the touchstone by which to test our profession of being Christ's. The question is, Is your will flexible in His hands, like a bit of leather in the hands of the tanner, which has lain long enough among the bark to be made pliable? Does our obedience cover the whole ground of action and of surrender and submission? Such obedience can never be parted from the great Christian hope. Hope, if it is anything else than the fumes of an inebriated fancy rising into the brain and making it whirl, will be the ally of absolute submission. Hope will produce obedience.

Now, many professing Christians are a great deal stronger in the department of devout emotion than in that of practical righteousness. I should like all these people who find it so good to feed their souls on the meditation and on anticipation of future blessedness to notice how, as in one volume, Peter binds up the two things that they keep so distinctly apart, and how emphatically he affirms that, if we have any genuine Christian hope, it will have its effect in helping us, as children of obedience, to do and to accept all our father's will. There we come down to a very, plain practical test; not select emotions, not yearning aspirations after a future, not even the enjoyment of spiritual consolations in the present which are prophetic of greater ones to come—but are we doing what God bids us, and are we not doing anything that he forbids us? and are we taking his will as supreme and supremely loving, and therefore for us supremely good? If so, all right! We dare to hope on! If not, the best thing we can do is to despair until that cheerless darkness drives us to Christ, who is our light and our hope.

But then, on the other hand, these two things which the Apostle thus pairs off together, and couples by an iron band, have a reciprocal action. They work upon each other; in fact, they are the outside and the inside of the same thing; but we may look at them as being different. Just as strong hope will produce obedience, so true obedience will nourish and strengthen hope. For a little sin will go much further towards obscuring and sheltering a Christian man's hope than a great sorrow will. It is comparatively easy to keep up the temper of joyous anticipation of the future in the midst of the darkness of a present experience; but it is absolutely impossible for a man, at one and the same time, to be rebelling in heart and act against the will of God and to be entertaining and recreating his soul by the bright hope of a future heaven. That flower shuts up as soon as the barometer begins to fall and the clouds to gather. The rainbow, which is the emblem of hope, is often seen standing steadfast above the tortured waters of a cataract. Sorrow does not dim it. But let the mists arise from the undrained swamps of our own wills, and hide the sun, and what has become of the rainbow? No Christian man's hope will last through a sin. Therefore obedience and hope must co-exist and feed one another, and help each other to burn brightly; just as the two wicks in a duplex lamp assist each other's combustion. Thus hope and obedience are joined together; do not try to put them asunder, either by aiming at a slavish obedience, or by endeavoring to secure a non-obedient hope.

II. That hope, fed by and feeding obedience, should change us from the likeness of our former selves.

"Not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance"—that may be said to all people who have been brought out of the darkness into the light. For, whether this epistle were addressed to Jews or Gentiles matters very little in this respect. No man knows God who does not know him and trust him in the face of Jesus Christ. And no man who does not know God so, knows anything about himself or his duty, as he might know, and as he ought to know. It is but an uncertain light, or twilight mainly, at the best, that shines upon the mysteries of human life and duty, until the sunshine of God, manifested in Jesus Christ, rises and is welcomed by our hearts. So, then, non-Christian living is, in a profound sense, ignorance; and in the ignorance, just as the wild beasts of the forests go forth in the dark and are nocturnal in their habits if they are predatory, so the lusts that war against our souls expatiate and hunt and find their prey in the darkness.

But, says Peter if, hoping, you are obedient, and obedient you hope, then there will be a process of transformation going on in you. The word that he uses is only employed in one place in the New Testament, in the passage where the Apostle Paul beseeches the Romans that they "be not conformed to this world." Peter begins with "a negative precept," and then he comes to a positive one. "Do not" by itself is a very impotent thing. And although it is set here first in order of injunction, it is by no means first in the order of practice. But in a world like this, and with creatures like us, unless a man has learnt not to do wrong, there is little chance of his doing right. The evil that we have to fight against is in possession, and we have to turn it out.

There are temptations around us far more numerous, and in their appeals to sense, far more potent, than are the inducements to do the right and noble thing. So we have to obey the prohibitions, in order that we may really keep the positive commandments. Only let us remember that we shall never be able to resist, unless in the strength of a previous surrender to Jesus, in grateful requital of his work for us. A large part of all practical morality, Christian or not, consists in negative precepts; and the very heart and center, in one aspect, of Christian duty lies here; self-denial, self-suppression, self-crucifixion. You have to put off the old self as a part of the process of putting on the new. I have to say a word or two more about that presently, but I desire here to insist upon this, that no progress in positive holiness is possible for us unless we are willing day by day, hour by hour, to cast off the sin that has wrapped itself around us, and lodged itself within us. There is much moral teaching in the world, and there is not a little of it in the Church, that says a great deal—and we cannot say too much—about cultivating the positive virtues and excellences of the Christian character. But it fails, just because it does not give equal prominence to the other necessity of turning out of doors without mercy all those evil things that have crept into our hearts. "So did not I because of the fear of the Lord," needs to be taken side by side with So do I because of the love of the Lord.

Now, dear brethren, it is vain for me to talk about these general principles unless we can bring them to a point and apply them to ourselves. I have no doubt that there are good people in my audience who have found their efforts to grow in the likeness of Jesus Christ, and in the joys of the Christian life, foiled over and over again, just because they have forgotten that there is something to be got rid of as well as something to be acquired, and that if the house is full there is no room for Christ except in the stable. We have to forsake ourselves before you can possess him.

I press this upon you, "not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts, in your ignorance." And that will be a life-long task. For nobody knows how, like a cuttlefish, holding on to its prey by the suckers upon its arms, his evil habits cling to him, until he has tried to fling away the loathing thing that prevents him from freely using his limbs. "Hope?" Yes! "Obey?" Yes! and that you may crucify the old man with his deeds, and put off the garments spotted by the flesh, that you may put on the "fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints."

III. Lastly, this obedience and hope should change us into the likeness of the Father.

If we are children we have the Father's life in us; and we ought to have the Father's likeness. This is the great aim that we have to set before ourselves. And, oh! what an aim it is. Nothing less august than absolute perfection is worthy to be the goal of a soul. And partial approximation to that goal will only be reached, as I believe, when the goal itself is felt to be unreachable, and yet capable of being definitely approached nearer and nearer.

How different it is to say, "Try to be like God as you have learned to know Him in Jesus Christ," from what it is to say, "Try to be up to the ideal of humanity;" "try to cultivate a pure morality;" "be true to yourselves," and all those other sayings, noble in their way and to a certain extent, which people who turn away from Christianity try to set up as substitutes for its morality. They are all hard and icy; and no kind of inspiration comes out of them. They are like the statue of the goddess which some of us have doubtless seen, standing fair, pure, white, but marble, and with no arms to stretch out to help and lift. But when we hear, "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect," the ideal lives; the ideal loves. Yes! and more; the ideal is our Father, and so He will make His child like Himself, if His child will let Him. "Like the Holy One which calleth you," in him is our pattern, and if we are his children, we shall continually strive to mould ourselves after his likeness, narrow as is the canvas on which, and poor as are the colors in which, and feeble as is the hand with which we paint.

And that fashioning ourselves like our Father, if it does not precede obedience to the negative precept, must, at all events, be carried on simultaneously with it. It is a fatal mistake to try simply to obey the negative precept unless we aim along with it at obedience to the positive one. The more we get the image of God into us the more we get the image of the devil out of us. The more we come close to Him the further we withdraw from earth and evil.

But notice how hope animates the effort at becoming like God. He is "the Holy One which called you." Well, then, if He has called us to be holy, it will not be in vain that we shall try to be so. And, unless, we have this "hope of his calling," sure I am that we shall never earnestly and successfully aim at being like Him. Hope leads to obedience; obedience leads to hope; hope assures us that it is not in vain that we try the apparently impossible task of pressing ever nearer and nearer to the likeness of the Father. In the spirit of that hope, brethren, "let us perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord," never doubting that He which hath called will perform, and that if we will do our parts He will certainly do His; and that, "as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."—Watchman.

SERPENT WORSHIP IN INDIA.

DEAR EDITOR,—The following on snake worship in India, written by a native, who is ranked among the so-called reformers, may be of interest to some of our people at home. Knowing that it was written by a native you will pardon the literary style. H. Y. CORBY.

Parlakimedi, Sept. 19.

SERPENT WORSHIP.

One of the most ignominous superstitions which unfallingly arrest the attention of every right-thinking individual is the peculiar regard and reverence which a Hindu pays to a creeping creature the "Cobra." Although every one of us is more or less conscious of the worship of these reptiles and of the busy preparations made by men and women, old and young, on so-called solemn days of "Charvil" and "Srashti," occuring every year in the months of "Karthka," and "Margaara," respectively, still the adoration being widely different in different localities, I think, it would not be out of place to endeavor to give a short description of a few of the ways followed by our brethren of old institutions in various places. The custom of worshipping these serpent gods, has, as a matter of fact, taken a stronger hold on the minds of agricultural population than on the well-cultured minds living in cities and towns.

Let us now see how this heinous and unjustifiable homage is paid to these poisonous animals of the Torrid Zone.

Just a day or two before the arrival of this Nagachaturdhi, these merry men and women rejoicing at the thought of meeting one of their grand festive occasions, begin to bestir themselves and get ready all the things which the deadly creatures are supposed to be fond. These things are simple and do not cost much. They consist of a piece of cocoanut, a bunch of plantain, some dough and a cup of milk. At the dawn of the day the inmates of the house awake at the call of an elderly man or an old woman and resort to an adjoining well or tank to take a ceremonial cold bath. Here, each and all of these, one after another, sit down on a small wooden seat or a tablet of stone. Little boys and girls are, as a rule, among the foremost that take a wild delight in such savage festivities. Still the keen torrent of cold water fresh from a pond or well, doubtless makes them shrink and shiver on a wintry morn. When they finish bathing they set out from the spot and go home with wet clothes and half dry locks hanging down their backs, sweetly carolling as they pass. Then they take up in their hands all the pretty things previously arranged in brass or copper vessels and start in crowds for the abode of these serpents. This dwelling is generally a "white ants" hill or is situated in an open field or tope with several holes raised a little higher than the land around. It is an amusing spectacle to a foreigner to see that scores of persons pouring in from all directions to revere an irrational creature in these lands. These myriads of persons reaching the spot one set after another, drop down into the biggest of these holes all the articles of food with the firm belief they are really swallowed by the cobras residing in the holes. The milk which they pour in, cannot even go a few inches down the hills but mostly sinks on the surface and much of the food is thrown aside. If then the creature unfortunately happens to be in the hole (for it usually prefers the much wider and more commodious habitation of a field-mouse) it gets extremely frightened on the fall of these things and clings to the bottom till all the gabbling disturbance is gone and calm prevails. If on the other hand, the animal much irritated at the constant fall of hard substances, rushes out of the hole and displays his extended hood, the people fall a bawling and screaming, scatter in all directions and take to their heels. Here their ceremony ends and the rising sun goes nearly half way of his daily travels and every heart beats high. Pressed by hunger they follow their way homeward in breathless haste and greedily feast on the rich food provided on such occasions.

In other places this is performed on a less grand scale, yet the cost is more heavy since they have to take with them a Brahmin Pourohita and present him with money at the end of every mantram he pronounces to the serpent-god supposed to live in every spot or hole they visit. This class of men take nothing with them but a large tray of flowers with which they worship the creature in the way directed by the Brahmin.

And some others solely over-powered and guided by the goddess of superstition, think it beyond the limits of their reason to keep long waiting for the occasion on which the "poojas" to the venomous reptile is universally performed and make a serpent of gold or silver with their own hands and daily offer their worship to the idol at regular intervals. Let me dwell no longer on the description of the variety of ways of worship and turn my eyes towards the cause that led to this long established custom.

It is a well-known fact that all practices of man, both good and evil, are each based upon some firm foundation and it is necessary to note here that this worship has, in its turn, sprung up from similiar sources, when was it sprung up and why, are the questions that demand our serious attention.

Krishna, the sovereign of Dwaraka or Guzarat, whom we believe an incarnation of Vishnu put on, as our books declare, the largest and most fearful of the then existing cobras. He is said to have wonderfully performed sportive exploits with them and even slept on their soft coils.

Siva, our favorite god, has amongst his ornaments, a number of these live things hanging down his neck and above all, it is said, there exists Adeesha of Tiian progeny larger than the huge Magalouix and gigantic mammoth playing a prominent part in supporting the earth, the abode of man.

These are some of the numerous ways in which the hissing repile is said to be employed. It is no wonder therefore, that the animal so useful to man and his creator, is admired and adored by a Hindu who is, by nature, weak and timid and possesses, in general a disposition easily led to believe any idle tales and flattering or exaggerated stories.

Most of us are perfectly aware that the snakes hiding themselves in holes and never appearing in the day-time except by stealth, possess no better faculties and are doubtless less serviceable to mankind than the patient donkey, the faithful dog or the active and noble horse and that worship is due to the Almighty, to Him, to Him alone. He in his unparalled wisdom, has bestowed upon man intellectual powers to control and govern them all.

Let me now turn my attention to the District of Ganjam and to this Taluq in particular, where people in general, unlike the inhabitants of several other places and divisions of Madras, often fall victims to the ferocious fangs of the animal and consider they would highly incur Heaven's displeasure if they even attempt to kill the creature that causes as we evidently see, instantaneous death. When several deaths occur and loss of life is immense, they employ soft means to arrest the snake and when it is fairly caught, they resort with it to a neighboring grove or jungle, leave it there unhurt and return home; of course the animals thus deserted, find their way back to their usual habitations and commit their usual havoc among the human beings and their live stock.

K. GOVINDA RAO NAIDU,
Assistant teacher,
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THE WORLD FOR CHRIST.

Paul informs us that the gospel was preached, in his day, to every creature under heaven. In less than three hundred years after its first promulgation, christianity became the established religion of the Roman Empire. It is the duty of the church now to do so again, and make it the established religion of the world. This religion is adapted to the deepest needs of man; and it would be well for the race if the gods that did not make these heavens had long ago perished from beneath them. Mankind has forsaken (God) the fountain of living waters, and hewn out to themselves broken cisterns (gods of different kinds) that can hold no waters. Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father, and the brightness of His glory, has come to bring the world back to God; He left His Father's bosom that He might place us there. He was the first missionary sent from and by the Father; He voluntarily came from heaven to earth, and notwithstanding the inconceivable moral magnitude of His undertaking, He provided salvation for the lost inhabitants of this planet. He was God *from* eternity and by *becoming* incarnate, will be God man *to* eternity. In His humanity He is a home missionary, in His divinity a foreign one. He did missionary work with His creatures and fellow-creatures for thirty-three years. He then returned to heaven to officiate there, and the Holy Spirit became missionary to earth in order to prosecute the redemption work, abiding with the church forever, endowing her membership with gifts and graces, working salvation in His people and enabling them to work it out. While the God-man was on earth He said He was the light of the world. Since His departure, the church illuminated by the Holy Spirit and Bible truth, occupies that position. Ye are the light of the world. Hence the commission: I have redeemed the race, go ye into all the world and tell them so. This is the result of the love of the Father, Son and Spirit for the world; and in proportion as we are animated by love to God and man, and in our measure, we will be actuated in a similar way.

The church is the body of Christ, He being the spirit. As such He is as much missionary in principle now as when He left heaven for the world's salvation; and the church occasionally has been, in a considerable degree, and always ought to be, the same in order to carry on the work. If we have not the Spirit of Christ we are none of His—His being pre-eminently a missionary one; are we not predestinated to be conformed to His image in this respect? Does not the world need it? If we felt our accountability we would look upon each local church as being as much under obligation to preach the gospel to every creature as the first church at Jerusalem did. This first church made the salvation of man their work; and there is no better evidence that we are ourselves saved than that we are working for the salvation of others. The Moravian brethren carry out this principle probably more fully than any other body of Christ's followers. Instead of the church, they designate her "The Missionary Society." This is the ideal view—that is what Christ made her. Each of the brethren has to be a missionary, or aid in the support of one to the amount of ten dollars annually. One out of every sixty *has* to be a missionary. They realise the duty of the church and perform it better than many.

The consecrated cobbler said: "I am a preacher of the Gospel and pay expenses by shoemaking." This is the church's duty in a nutshell. This is the true spirit of Christ and missionary enterprise. The church should be a "Missionary Society" till the knowledge of God's glory covers the earth, and defray expenses by farming, fishing, etc.; the work being of sufficient importance, and such an ample reward is ensured, as to fully justify her in so acting. If we saw things in their true light very probably we would more resemble the primitive christians, the modern Moravians and William Carey. The first christians sold their property and laid the money at the apostles feet. The world is looking for unselfishness. When it *sees* that we love mankind it will embrace christianity—it will believe in its power and truth.

Maybe the Millennium will begin in some local church where Christ is faithfully preached, and where *practical* piety will attain a perfection not arrived at as yet, and from this centre, through the benediction of God, its blessings will undulate to all the rest of the world. Let us try to make ours such a church. Let ours be the candlestick giving the most light. Let our crowns, as we cast them at the Master's feet, be the ones sparkling with the most gems. May ours be the one effecting the most for the glory of God and the good of men. God help us for Christ's sake. Amen.

"The beams that shine from Zion's hill
Shall lighten every land;
The King that reigns on Salem's towers
Shall all the world command."

W. MCGREGOR.

Tancook, Oct. 14.

Work with a will at what your hands find to do. You can serve God in sweeping the floor, in washing dishes, and in any honorable work, no matter how humble. "In one of Murillo's pictures in the Louvre he shows us the interior of a convent kitchen; but those who are doing the work are not mortals in old dresses, but beautiful angels. One is putting the kettle on the fire to boil, and one is lifting up a pail of water, and one is at the kitchen dresser reaching up for plates. The painter depicts every one as so busy, and working with such a will, that you forget pans are pans, and pots are pots, and think only of the angels and the work that seems so beautiful. I think that here is a beautiful life-thought."

The highest duties oft are found
Lying on the lowest ground;
In hidden and unnoticed ways,
In household work, on common days.
—Monsell.

If souls are to be saved men must be pointed directly to Christ.—Ryle.

You will never find an easy place until you find it in the yoke of Christ.

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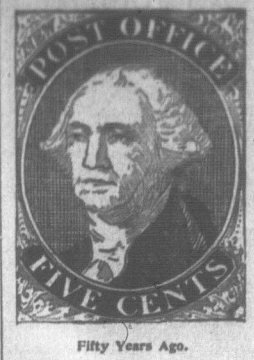

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