

Thoughts for the Thoughtful

Through prayer we talk to God. Prayer is as the mouthpiece to the telephone. The Bible is the receiver which we place to our ear when we wish to hear God's answer to us.

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What does your anxiety do? It does not empty to-morrow of its sorrows, but it empties to-day of its strength. It does not make you escape the evil; it makes you unfit to cope with it if it comes.—Ian Maclaren.

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The true self of a man is safe from bayonet or bomb or bullet. Show me that these can kill the soul, only then will I be afraid. Until then, the prayer of the Master shall gather up my faith. "Into Thy hand I commit my spirit."—H. S. McClelland.

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The true calling of a Christian is not to do extraordinary things in an extraordinary way. The most trivial tasks can be accomplished in a noble, gentle, regal spirit, which overrides all petty, paltry feelings, and which elevates all things.—Arthur P. Stanley.

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The course of life is a thousand trifles, then some crisis; nothing but green leaves under common sun and shadow, and then a storm or a rare June day. And far more than the storm or the perfect day the common sun and common shadow do to make the autumn rich. It is the "every days" that count. They must be made to tell, or the years have failed.—William C. Gannett.

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It is a poor kind of trust that only trusts because it is blind, and not because it has any faith in those who lead it; to go on wondering and doubting and fearing, reaching out the hand, and feeling with the foot, as if those who lead haven't a bit more eyesight than the blind man himself. Trust—that is worth the name of trust—just feels so safe that it doesn't think of asking any questions about it.—Mark Guy Pearse.

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In his sufferings the Christian is often tempted to think himself forgotten. But his afflictions are the clearest proofs that he is an object of God's fatherly discipline. Satan would give the man the thing his heart is set on. But God hath better things in reserve for His children, and they must be brought to desire them and seek them. And this will be through the wreck and sacrifice of all that the heart holds dear.—Rev. R. Cecil.

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He who frets has lost his God—is indeed as if God were not. Surely it is worse than having no God, to kneel down and say, "Our Father Who art in Heaven," and then to go forth fretting and fearing, as if He never knew or cared. It is worse than being an orphan, to have a Father and yet forget His love. How perplexed the angels must be at the sight of the fretting child of a Heavenly Father! "Has he not a Father?" asks one in amazement. "Does not his Father love him?" says another. "Does not his Father know all about him?" says a third. "Is not his Father great and rich?" asks a fourth. "Has not his Father given us charge concerning him?" say they all. "How then can he fret?" If there be one grain of truth in our belief that there is a living God Who holds us unutterably dear, Who is seeking in all things and through all things ever to lead us to the highest, the fullest, to the best, what room is there for us to fret or fear?—Mark Guy Pearse.

Comfort and Hope

A Sermon preached by the Rev. Wm. Bertal Heenev on the Gospel for the Fourth Sunday after Easter.

IN these sad days, my dear friends, we need comfort and hope—comfort for the present and hope for the future. Both of these are near at hand in great abundance. But, strange to say, few only seem to know how and where to find them. Let it be our concern this morning to seek out the springs of comfort for ourselves and guide and help each other to them. We shall not treat first of hope and then of comfort, or first of comfort and then of hope. Why separate the two? Are they not near of kin, and something more? They may not be separated; they are complementary—neither is perfect without the other. The Angel of Hope and the Angel of Comfort must ever walk side by side and hand in hand, for surely that man has but poor hope who does not experience comfort in it, and that soul has a poor comfort if in that comfort there is not an element of hope. Now, for my part, I find many signs that the future life is not only certain, but delightful; that it is, in fact, made up of all those elements which combine to make the present life that splendid existence which we know it to be. Let us read the signs, therefore, which point to a bright future for the individual and the race, not only in this world, but beyond it. Surely the fact of life is an assurance of the life to come.

"My own dim life should teach me this,
That life shall live forever more,
Else earth is darkness at the core
And dust and ashes all that is."

What do we dread as we look to the future? We are disturbed with the thought that life may discontinue; the one thing man does not want is to perish.

"Whatever crazy sorrow saith,
No life that breathes with human breath
Has ever truly longed for death."

"'Tis life . . .
More life, and fuller, that I want."

In the fact, then, that I live, and that I long to live more fully, I see an assurance that both life and abundance of life will be granted me; for surely it is the law of the universe that demand carries with it the notion of supply. Hunger implies food, thirst implies water. Life and the longing not to perish no less clearly imply the existence of life and its satisfaction.

I behold another hopeful sign, one that indicates the character of the future. The sign I refer to is the existence of beauty all around us. One man goes abroad on the prairies and sees only the waste—leafless trees and brown and shrivelled grasses; another sees the crocuses and the unfolding buds—sweet, little messengers of hope. They give the denial to him who preaches the all-prevalence of the empire of ugliness, barrenness and death.

"To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

And there is beauty not only in the fields of springtime, but in the silver stars scattered on the blue sky. There is beauty in the golden dawn, and, ah! what beauty in a summer's day. I, therefore, will not be a pessimist. I will rejoice in beauty here, and will let it speak to me of the still more beautiful world to come.

But I see another sign of the kind of world it is to which we are moving on—that sign is music. Browning had more soul, I think, as well as more brain power, than any English poet since the mighty Shakespeare. Read his "Abt Vogler," and you will learn the witnessing power of music, both to the certainty and to the character of the future; to the survival of all that is good and the enhancement in Heaven of all that is purest and noblest in this present life.

"Is this your comfort to me?" he asks, when the music has ceased—
"The gone thing was to go,
Never to be again! But many more of the kind
As good, nay, better, perchance; 'Is this your comfort to me?'"

This will not satisfy Browning. His soul wants not similar things in the great beyond, but the same: "same self; same love; same God; aye!" he concludes, "what was, shall be."

"There shall never be one lost good;
What was, shall live as before!"

"On the earth, the broken acres;
In the heaven, a perfect ground."

But I see another sign—that the future will be to our utmost satisfaction. This sign is love. The existence of love here is a fact; we cannot gainsay it. This in itself is an evidence that love will continue. Love is likewise the dominating factor in human life. In some form love rules. Sometimes the form is low and bestial, sometimes sublime; but, taken in all its forms, from the lowest to the highest, it holds dominion over life, rendering it heavenly or rendering it hellish. We must take it in its highest form: love purified and ennobled in the Christian.

Now, there are two significant particulars about love which will teach us something if we note them well. The first is that love goes with personality; the second is that love in its highest form elevates everything that it touches. As to the fact that love goes with personality, let me say a word. It depends for its very existence upon personality, so much so, that no personality means no love. Love is not impersonal, like sunshine or a flowing river. It has no existence apart from personality. Love cannot fill vacant houses or empty churches. No persons in the city means no love in the city; no persons in this vast Dominion means no love in Canada; no persons in the world means no love in the world. What follows? No personal existence in Heaven means no love in Heaven above. Thus love is the assurance that personality will survive, otherwise love itself must perish. Ah! what hope is here and what comfort. What hope and what comfort for you whose loved ones have passed through the veil! "Let not your heart be troubled." The love you bore them is the best assurance that you have not loved in vain, that your soul will find the object of its quest beyond the borderland of the present life, and love him there as here.

"Eternal form shall still divide
The eternal soul from all beside;
And I shall know him when we meet;
And we shall sit at endless feast,
Enjoying each the other's good;
What vaster dream can fit the mood
Of love on earth?"

And I find in the struggle which is going on here another source of hope and comfort. It has been said of Robert Louis Stevenson, who, as you are no doubt aware, was a life-long sufferer, that his great ethical and