

keeps us in all our temptations, so that they overcome us not" (*Form of Living X*; Heseltine's ed: p. 43).

'Conscience, here said to be the realization that Christ knows truly whether we are obeying the moral law or not, is a reference to Conscience in the proper sense: the inexorable judgment of Reason on the moral goodness or badness of human actions. . . . The Decalogue (with the sole exception of the determination of the Sabbath) is merely the Natural Law, the Old Law of the Israelites, and is the preliminary step—as Langland here depicts it—to the New or Evangelical Law, here signified by the Court, "clear as the sun".'⁵

This is Fr Dunning's comment on the passage where Piers describes the way to Truth:

You must go through meekness, you men and women,
Till you come to Conscience, and till Christ knows surely
That you love our Lord liefest of all things,
And your neighbour next, and in no way hurt him
Otherwise than you would he should do to you.
Etc., etc. (*Passus V*, 694 sqq.)

OUR KNOWLEDGE AFTER DEATH

By

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It is a commonplace to talk of death as the Great Change, but even men who revert quite often to the life of the spirit may sometimes realise with a kind of mild shock how utterly spiritual our lives must then become. We have before us an altogether unique experience, and it is natural enough that we should await its inevitable advent with interest and curiosity.

Yet the liveliest imagination will not help us in a matter so completely beyond the veil of the senses. In *Paradise Lost* Milton uses all the mighty imagery of a great poet to depict the war of the angels, and yet leaves us with a profound sense of unreality. We find ourselves in the position of being able to imagine almost any set of circumstances on this side of the grave, and yet quite unable to use such power to illumine conditions on the other, simply because it is a realm of the spirit. Neither does it help us to reflect upon our entry into this world, for that was the beginning of life and thought itself. Most of us cross that other river as developed, thinking beings.

Nevertheless, we can gather some definite ideas as to the nature of the change that awaits us, for even now we are spiritual as well

⁵ Dunning, *Piers Plowman A-Text* pp. 120 sqq. The whole of his treatment of *Passus V* gives strong support for our having used Langland for the First Conversion and it should be read in extenso.

as material beings, although receiving all impressions of the outside world through the channels of the senses. It is reasonable enough to ask why any spiritual being should need bodily senses at all, though we may not agree with the Platonists that the soul is accidentally imprisoned in the body rather than united to it by its very nature. St Thomas, however, gives us an answer and it is one that deals a powerful blow to our pride. We are the lowest of all intelligent creatures—the infants of the spiritual universe. Above all, and illuminating everything below, is God, by his nature knowing all things utterly and immediately. At the head of a descending scale are the great spirits, understanding a great number of things with superb clarity, by means of a few acts of their intelligences. Below them, in their several gradations, are the lesser angels, understanding less perfectly, and needing to make more acts in order to do so. And so at last we come down to man himself, who not only needs to make the greatest number of acts, but also requires to have things presented to him pictorially, as it were, through the senses. We are spirits, but of the lowest order, and like children we need our crayons and our bricks, although like children we can rise above them.

After death we must dispense with all sense images—all pictures of the imagination. Things will be made known to us as they are revealed to the angels, i.e. directly by the simple influence of the divine light. This means that all our knowledge will come to us in a higher manner than is proper to our nature. This of course means an immense change in our mental life, and one that will be impressed upon us in several different ways.

In the first place, our knowledge of the natural world that we have left behind will be of a dim and a general kind. Our senses will no longer be in contact with it; our senses will be left behind with the body, and God will have drawn us away into the world of spirits. In short, we shall have entered, not merely into a new life, but into a new mode of living.

This being so, the question very naturally arises: How shall we remember those things that we have loved in the world that we have known? Can we revert to them when we wish, or will all past experiences be borne away on a river of lethe?

Here we have to remind ourselves that all our knowledge in this life has a two-fold aspect; everything is grasped both by our bodies and by our minds. The first grasp must obviously be loosened by death, but the second will certainly remain. In other words, the sensation fades, but not what our minds have drawn from it. This mental grasp will, in fact, become firmer than ever, because forgetfulness, or fading in the memory, really belongs to the shifting scenes and changing appearances of this life. Thus, although our knowledge of the world we have left must become misty, those things which we have loved and which our intellects have embraced, will remain within our knowledge, and perpetually.

Of course, it is one thing to remember our former loves when we are dead, and quite another to know what is happening to them. Knowledge of that sort cannot come to us naturally, but in the next life, as in this one, we can be informed on matters with which we are unacquainted. It might be possible that the newly-dead continually arriving in the spiritual realm would be allowed to communicate the latest information. In addition, such information could be conveyed to us by the angels, who have perfect knowledge of the natural stage, and all the dramas enacted upon it. Or God himself might grant us such knowledge in a direct manner by the simple influence of divine light. We can easily visualise circumstances in which such knowledge might well form part of the purgatorial flame. A good instance is suggested by Roger Pater's story of the Superior of a convent who used all kinds of tricks and artifices to convince people of her sanctity. The essence of her Purgatory was to know, after death, that her ruses had been successful, and that she had become the centre of an illicit cult. There can be no doubt that whatever knowledge is conducive to our progress will be in some manner conveyed to us.

A particularly important feature of life after death which we must not fail to note is its far greater intensification. In this life an immense amount of the soul's energy is expended upon the body. The human frame is a vast organisation of intricate mechanism and systems in a state of ceaseless activity. The soul is the living principle of it all, and is vitally concerned with every portion of it. It necessarily follows that, when death takes place, this stream of energy is diverted from the body into spiritual channels, for the disembodied soul has no activity apart from thought and will. Consequently, although we must know the natural world that we have left behind less perfectly, we shall enter the spiritual universe with a freedom and intensity far beyond anything previously possible. This will particularly make itself felt in that extraordinarily intimate manner in which we shall know our fellows who are with us in the same state. In this life we are continually at work gathering what people mean from the words they use and the gestures they employ. Words are ancient and yet living things, used to convey many delicate shades of meaning, whilst the message of a sign is coloured by the mood or temperament of the man receiving it. But it is certain that after death we shall no longer need to interpret the expression of a face or assess the tone of a voice. The nature and the mode of being of the human spirits with which we associate will be of the same kind as our own, and we shall understand them perfectly.

Space, we know, cannot be a condition of the spirit world, and neither can time, as we understand it now. Not that we really understand it, even at present. An hour spent in waiting for an operation is, in a very real sense, much longer than the same period spent with an absorbing novel. Yet the position of the sun

has changed and the hour hand has moved with the same precision in either case. Even in this world, although the mind accepts the sun and the clock, a sort of reservation is made to the effect that these gauges are not absolute. Beyond this world, the tides and the rhythmic beats of nature are no more. Past, present and future—the succession of events—are to be understood in the intensity of our spiritual life.

In the *Dream of Gerontius*, Cardinal Newman has expressed this situation well. In the immaterial world, he says, 'Time is not a common property'. In this world, of course, it is, as an hour is an hour all the world over, despite our various mental reactions to it. But in the hereafter it is an intensely individual matter, and the only gauge is the soul's experience of what takes place. The passage is well worth quoting:

For spirits and men by different standards mete
 The less and greater in the flow of time.
 By sun and moon, primeval ordinances—
 By stars which rise and set harmoniously—
 By the recurring seasons, and the swing,
 This way and that, of the suspended rod
 Precise and punctual, men divide the hours.
 Equal, continuous, for their common use.
 Not so with us in th'immaterial world;
 But intervals in their succession
 Are measured by the living thought alone,
 And grow or wane with its intensity.
 And time is not a common property,
 But what is long is short, and swift is slow,
 And near is distant, as received and grasped
 By this mind and by that, and every one
 Is standard of his own chronology.

Our knowledge after death will extend, in a partial manner, even to the angels. 'Like calleth unto like', and we are akin to the angels in the sense that we are spirits. On the other hand, as we are so much lower in the scale than they, they might seem, from one point of view, as far removed from us as the divinities of pagan pantheons. Yet these 'divinities' will be in constant touch with us, for we shall have entered their world. The exploration of an angelic intelligence by a human soul, even in a partial manner, cannot fail to prove a majestic experience; not outside the possibilities of our nature, but certainly beyond any depths of knowledge to which we have previously penetrated.

It seems evident enough, too, that for the lost, angelic association of the reprobate order would bring them into touch with depths of infamy beyond any wickedness of which they themselves were capable. In other words there must be an introduction to a world of darkness having boundaries beyond their ken. For the holy souls, these remarkable experiences attendant upon death—the

great intensification of knowledge and love, the clear recollection of all spiritual experiences, freedom from spacial distances and from time sequence as we understand it now, perfect knowledge of other human spirits, together with angelic association—are changes that are scarcely a reflection of the knowledge that awaits them in the blessed vision of God. The holy souls stand upon the threshold of experience, and in a true sense all knowledge is before them. In God, of course, lie all the secrets of the universe as they are known to its Author, and the possession of God involves knowledge of so searching a kind as to defy all treatment of tongue or pen.

THE PASSION OF ST ANDREW

By

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AFTER our Lord's ascension the Apostles were separated and went to preach in different countries. Andrew went to preach the Gospel in Scythia. From there he came into Europe and preached in Epirus and in Thrace, and after that in Achaia which is a part of Greece. There he converted many people and established churches. Among those whom he converted was Maximilla, the wife of Aegeas, who was governor of that part and chief judge. Aegeas was angry when he found that his wife had become a Christian and began to try to force Christians to sacrifice to the heathen gods. Then St Andrew went to him in the city of Patras, and said:

'You who are a judge should know your own judge, who is in heaven. Knowing him you should worship him and withdraw your support from false gods'.

Aegeas answered: 'You must be Andrew, who preach the false law which the princes of Rome have ordered to be destroyed'.

'The princes of Rome', said Andrew, 'have not known how the Son of God came and taught that idols are devilry, and support of them an offence against God. Those who cling to idols will be left by God. He will have nothing more to do with them'.

'That', retorted Aegeas, 'is the nonsense preached by your Jesus who was nailed on the gallows of the cross'.

'He was nailed on the cross with his own consent, for no sin or blame on his part, but for our redemption', Andrew said.

'When he was given up by one of his own disciples, seized by the Jews and nailed to the cross by the soldiers, how can you say that it was all with his own consent?'

Then Andrew began to show how Jesus went to his death willingly. First, because Jesus foretold his passion when he said to his disciples: 'We shall go up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man shall be betrayed'. Secondly, when Peter would have kept him