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The Fruits of Silence


Cyril Hepher

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THE FRUITS OF SILENCE



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MATER SILENTII.

(From the Painting by Pisanello).

THE
FRUITS OF SILENCE

BEING FURTHER STUDIES IN THE COMMON USE
OF PRAYER WITHOUT WORDS, TOGETHER WITH
KINDRED ESSAYS IN WORSHIP

BY

CYRIL HEPHER

AUTHOR OF

'THE SELF-REVELATION OF JESUS,' 'THE REVELATION OF LOVE,'
AND EDITOR OF 'THE FELLOWSHIP OF SILENCE'

WITH A PREFACE BY

GEORGE CONGREVE

OF THE SOCIETY OF S. JOHN THE EVANGELIST, COWLEY

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

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PREFACE

MORALISTS sometimes remind us that the world is growing old,—that in the hurry, anxiety, and restlessness of our times we may recognize tokens of the end of all things being near. Even without their warnings we know instinctively that there is no return for us to the freshness and tranquillity of the *juventus mundi*; that the beat of this enormous world-machine—the society of to-day—can never relax, but must for ever increase to more and more waste of human life, more weariness and exhaustion. Our own heart is aware of something like an evening chill and gloom settling down upon us. We seem to wait not for light, but for deepening shadows. And here, to some of us

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who needed it, this little book comes with the secret of a spiritual hope, as the first star appears when daylight fades. It cheers us with the remembrance that whatever we may have to face in the future, in the rush of the world-forces outside, each of us has private access within himself to another world, where we may escape from the hurry, distraction, and gloom of this—a world where it is always morning, and the soul may bathe in light not of this world, and rest in a love that cannot be outlived. It reminds us that our true life is hid with Christ in God, and is not subject to the doom of a perishing order of things. It leads us to silence, which is the door of contemplation, a door that opens for us to the new age of the Holy Spirit, where we may find, not merely a hope of rest and of personal security amid the storms of the world, but God Himself, who is Life Eternal for us here already, and power to act with courage and good

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hope amid the ever-growing difficulties and sorrows of our time.

A stranger to the Silence here treated of might imagine it a fantastic subject that he is invited to consider. Silence? The mere absence of Sound? What can there be to say or read about it? In the first pages he will discover that the Silence here commended to him is no mere vacuum in the material world which vibrations of sound cannot reach; but that it is an act of faith and virtue in a Christian man. This Silence is the victory of his prayer, for in it his free will rises, passes beyond, and leaves behind all that would distract and divert him in seeking his supreme Good—the one central reality, the fruit of silence which is revealed in the text, *Be still and know that I am God.*¹

These sermons were read, as they appeared last Lent in the *Church Times* week by week, by a friend who visited him, to a patient in a London Hospital.

¹ Ps. xlvi. 10.

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Neither the reader nor the patient guessed the treasure they were to discover, as the first of the short addresses opened for them the Christian mystery of Silence. To a member of an active community two months' enforced retirement and idleness in hospital was a strain upon personal resource. How was he to survive this almost endless pause in life, as it seemed to him? He found in himself no reply, and dreaded the vast emptiness and solitude as he entered it. Then came happily his friend's visit, and the first of the sermons on Silence. This at once suggested to him a hope that long weeks to spend in the desert might be a gift of God to him, occupied, as he had been, so continually for half a century in work on the vineyards of others that his own vineyard he had failed to keep. If the interior life is a man's real life, in this retirement he might find at last the opportunity of learning in some degree experimentally and by practice

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the mysterious virtues of a more interior prayer, which he had ventured so often to recommend on external authority to others. And so in some measure by God's grace it turned out. He was encouraged by his study of these sermons to set himself to face the desert and explore its mystery.

It is not difficult to recognize the place and value of silence in religion. We feel that the truest token of the Divine Life in any soul is the desire to know and to possess God. God's Life in a Christian awakes in him a conscious need of God, and desire of God. But as God is never to be localized, or sought as if He were confined to any spot on the surface of things, as *He inhabiteth eternity*, and is everywhere hidden by His majesty and infinity, so the direction of the Christian's seeking of God will always be from the surface of things towards the depths, from the outward to the inward, from mere activity to love. Silence, then, offers to the soul a

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natural fortress, where she may from time to time take refuge from the emptiness and distractions of the external world, and awaken within herself the consciousness of an interior life, the desire of a deeper knowledge of God. *Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret.*¹

“Shut thy door behind thee, and call unto thee Jesus thy Beloved. Stay with Him in thy cell, for thou shalt not find so great peace elsewhere.”²

“Thou, O Lord, hearest my voiceless tongue, and my silence speaketh unto Thee.”

Hence the subject of Silence in religion may supply a real test of the life of faith. It is well to ask what place has retirement for prayer in our spiritual experience? Where comes the *Be still* in our worship? There is no lack, perhaps, of intellectual activity in criticism of the external framework of

¹ S. Matt. vi. 6.

² Á Kempis, Bk. I. xx.

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Christianity. The thought even of the interior relation of the soul of man to God no doubt arrests many a mind for a moment, but gives place quickly to the urgency of immediate concerns. It is disconcerting to find that even where religion, the highest principle of all, is revered, it effects for us little more than that in conduct we come up to the average morality of the civilized world around us that makes no profession of religion, and stop there. Why are there few saints to-day? Is it not that we have been content to approve of Christianity from outside, and perhaps help to maintain its external structure? But Christianity is Christ, and Christ, God and Man, cannot be known by those who remain outside, at a safe distance from Him. He cannot be known intellectually only, as we know other historical characters in the past. We come to know Him as the Christ into whose very Being, Divine and human, we were baptized, who became then for

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us no mere stirring memory, but the very Life of our life, the substance of our inmost consciousness, our hope, our exceeding great reward, Christ dwelling in us by His Holy Spirit, and we in Him. There are depths and heights in God that belong to us as members of Christ, and only wait for us to discover. A hurried superficial religion can no more reach them than a child's fishing-line can reach ocean deeps. The true Christian is the man to whom these mysteries are the very substance of his life; he lives and dies in the power of them. He constantly seeks the help of the Holy Spirit to enter more deeply into them in his prayer: while we who live outside of them complain that we have no time for the solitude and silence that prayer demands.

It is much to be observed how often the greatest things in the Bible are presented as inshrined in a sacred silence. We remember the silence of Blessed Mary, who kept all the

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wonders of the Christmas night, and pondered them in her heart,¹—the silence of the thirty years of Our Lord's hidden life at Nazareth, out of which grew the mysteries of His three years' ministry, and of His Sacrifice and triumph. His silence before His judges, and in His Passion, is a treasury of grace for every soul that should follow Him in the way of the Cross. The same mystery recurs often in the Old Testament: as in the Psalms, *God shall hide me in the secret of His tabernacle.*² *Thou shalt hide them that trust in Thee in the secret of Thy Presence from the strife of tongues.*³ *Praise is silent for Thee, O God in Zion.*⁴ (That is, praise is given to Thee in the deep stillness of the heart, as opposed to the noisy service of heathen worship.) *Truly my soul is silent, waiting all hushed for God.*⁵ *Hold thee still in the Lord.*⁶ (σίγησον, ἡσύχαζε, "tace Domino," expresses the calm

¹ Luke ii. 19.

⁴ Ps. lxxv. 1.

² Ps. xxvii. 5.

⁵ Ps. lxii. 1.

³ Ps. xxxi. 20.

⁶ Ps. xxxvii. 7.

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resignation which leaves itself absolutely in the hands of God. Perowne). *The Lord is in His holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him.*¹ Moses is called up into the mountain to be alone with God, and Elijah is sent into retreat in a cave of the wilderness for forty days, and in that solitude God speaks to him by *a sound of gentle stillness.*² (“Post ignem sibilus auræ tenuis.”) And there is a passage in the Book of Wisdom, appropriated by the Divine Office to express the Silence that shrouded the mystery of Our Lord’s Nativity: *When all things were in quiet silence, and night was in the midst of her swift course, Thine Almighty Word, O Lord, leaped down from heaven.*³

The Christian Fathers are full of the same doctrine. S. Augustine gives his experience. “Difficile est in turbâ videre Christum; solitudo quaedam necessaria est menti nostræ.” *It is not*

¹ Hab. ii. 20.

² 1 Kings xix. 12.

³ Wisdom xviii. 14.

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*easy to recognize Christ in the crowd. In order to see Him our mind needs some retirement and solitude. S. Gregory comments on the silence in Heaven about the space of half an hour.¹ The Church of the Elect is called Heaven, which, as it rises to eternal and sublime truths by the elevation of contemplation, abates the tumult of thoughts which spring up from below, and makes a kind of silence within itself for God. And since this Silence of contemplation cannot be perfect in this life, it is said to have been made for half an hour. For while the tumultuous noises of thoughts force themselves into the mind against its will, they violently draw the eye of the mind, even when steadily fixed on things above, to view again those of earth. Silence is well described as made, not for a whole but half an hour, because contemplation is never perfected here, however ardently it is begun. To Victorinus that silence symbolized *initium quietatis aeternae* (the beginning of that*

¹ Rev. viii. 1.

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blessed sabbatical state of rest, during which the people of God will be in full possession of those things which ear hath not heard, nor eye seen. Alford). Another¹ writes, *The habit of mental silence is the mother of prayer, a recalling from exile and bondage to liberty, a recognizing of the fire of divine love, a watch-tower against the enemy, it sends grief to prison, it is the friend of holy tears, is a secret journey to God, and an invisible ascent to Heaven.*

*It is an exercise of great value, says S. Gregory of Nazianzus, to speak of God, but there is one that is worth much more, namely to purify one's soul before God in silence.*² In the language of early and mediaeval devotion *The Silence* became even a name of God, the First Person of the Blessed Trinity. The Eternal Word was said to be generated by the Eternal Silence. *Within the Silence alone (that is, within the Divine Nature) may God be searched into. If the Angels had come*

¹ Climacus.

² Or. xxvi.

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*to search into God, they had met the Silence, and been restrained. Blessed is he that hath learnt that the Seraph crieth Holy, and is still. Blessed is he that hath been a mariner for his faith, and from the storms of controversy hath fled into the port of Silence.*¹

This name for God may have been derived by pious imagination from David's *Thou shalt hide me in the secret of Thy presence from the strife of tongues. Thou art my hiding-place, O Lord.* But a refuge in the Divine Silence was understood to be no shelter for the faint-hearted and despairing, but implied always the arming of the faithful soul for more vigorous assaults; as Isaiah said, *In silentio et in spe erit fortitudo vestra. In silence and in hope shall be your strength.*

It is interesting to notice the influence of silence upon simple human nature. Poetic imagination among the ancients before Christ learnt to hear in the still-

¹ S. Ephraim, R. iii. 4.

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ness of night *the music of the spheres* ;
the Christian Poet discovered what was
lovelier,

*The silence that is in the starry sky.*¹

The same poet observes the profound
effect of silence upon a boy, his school-
fellow, who died before he was *twelve*
years old.

Many a time
At evening when the earliest stars began
To move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting, he would stand alone,
Beneath the trees, or by the glimmering lake,
And there with fingers interwoven . . .
. . . he as through an instrument
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,
That they might answer him, and they would
shout
Across the watery vale, and shout again
Responsive to his call . . .

And when there came a pause
Of silence such as baffled his best skill :
Then sometimes, in that silence, while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain torrents ; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven received
Into the bosom of the steady lake.

¹ Wordsworth.

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The evening silence carried far into this boy's heart voices of nature inaudible before. The hooting owls that answered him were his accustomed playmates, but the silence brought surprise, for it opened in him :

. . . *the inward eye*
Which is the bliss of solitude,

and under its influence his spirit awoke to discover unimagined things in the familiar scene.

But the Silence that can awake in a soul the consciousness of mysteries in nature, has by God's goodness power to awaken within him also the consciousness of mysteries that are beyond nature. For every Christian child has within him the seed of the mystery of union with God in Christ sown in him by the Sacraments. The younger son in the parable left love and home, and taking his journey into a far country lost himself in riotous living. With the world round him he had lived an external life in the unsatisfying enjoyment of each

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day. In the solitude of the great famine he came to himself, and discovered within himself what he had lost, the need of God, the need of love. This is the reality that a Christian's silent hour brings him back to continually. He comes to it in order to escape from the ceaseless distraction and emptiness of things on the surface of life, and to take refuge in God at the centre, who is the source and significance of them all—and this at the cost of sacrifice, as he resists the impulse of fallen nature that presses ever outward, and unites himself by love and choice to the impulse of the new birth that tends for ever inward and towards God. While he lives in himself, for himself, and far from God, absorbed by the distractions of the passing hour, he cannot have the bliss of God's secret, the knowledge and love of God. A saying attributed to Our Lord by S. Clement of Alexandria illustrates this, *My mystery (or My secret) for Me and for the sons of My*

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house. An ancient ballad suggests the same principle. A certain Count, walking early by the sea, hears the notes of a song from one who, alone in a small boat, is coasting the shore. The landsman is so attracted by the melody that he begs the seaman to sail nearer inshore that he may catch the words of his song.

To him that Mariner replied
In a courteous tone but free,
“ I never sing that song,” he cried,
“ But to one who sails with me.”

If the discipline of silence sought for more intimate communion with God proves a valuable test of our religion, it will be because it involves something that requires a sustained effort of the will, a sacrifice. It implies some real forsaking of self, and of conventionality in religion—a desire to reach beyond words and thoughts about God to a personal meeting with God Himself, and to an entire surrender to Him. Here, for example, is an old labourer

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on his way home from his work ; the door of the Parish Church is open to all who pass. The old man comes in quietly every evening, leaves his tools by the door, and kneels there a long time before the Altar. The old Priest meets him one evening coming out of Church, and asks, "*What do you say to our Lord in those long visits that you pay Him?*" He answers, "*I say nothing to Him, I seek His Face, I look up to Him and He looks down upon me.*" Or here is an English seaman of to-day. Frank Bullen and "*one of his ship-mates spend the evenings under the shelter of the top-gallant fo'castle holding intimate communion with Him whom we knew to be our Saviour Brother.*" The seaman continues : "*Often we would sit after prayer, and an almost murmured song of praise, in perfect silence, while slow sweet tears of unutterable joy trickled down. . . . As far as a man may, I solemnly affirm that we were both as near perfect happiness as a man can be in this world. Reverently, as becomes one who*

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feels that he is treading upon holy ground, I declare that at times in these solemn moments of silence the tide of happiness rose so high that we were fain to ask the Lord to stay His hand ; the frail creature could hold no more and live. . . . This sensation was not in the least artificial, it came without any attempt of ours to produce it, it filled our hearts with love, joy, and peace, and made us in every sense truer men."

One feels that this silent prayer that one finds among men of toil and hardship in the world must have a very vital relation to the contemplation of the hermit soul learnt in the discipline of solitude or of the cloister. Father Baker, an English Benedictine in Queen Elizabeth's reign, quoting the *Apology* of Baltasar Alvarez, a Spanish Jesuit, thus describes it :

“ His prayer was now to place himself in God's presence, both inwardly and outwardly presented to him, and to rejoice with Him permanently

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and habitually. . . . Sometimes in his prayer he pondered a while on some text of scripture; sometimes he remained in cessation and silence before God, which manner of prayer he accounted a great treasure; for then his heart, his desires, his secret intentions, his knowledge, and all his powers spake, and God understood their mute language, and with one aspect could expel his defects, kindle his desires, and give him wings to mount spiritually unto Him.”¹

The subliminal
vital self

In regard to the prayer of Silence Father Baker observes that in this exercise the soul is not idle, but “is in a case like to a mother with unspeakable joy regarding her most dear child. She all the while says nothing, neither thinks any distinct thought of which she can give any account, yet both her mind and will also are busy, yea, the mind in one simple regard has the virtue of many long discourses, and the will in one quiet continued application has the

¹ *Sancta Sophia*, p. 887.

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quintessence of a thousand distinct affections. In like manner a soul does actually regard God (in the prayer of Silence), and being in His presence she does really with adoration, humility, resignation, and love behave herself towards Him. And what need is there that she should put this into words? She rather chooses the Psalmist's way of praising and serving God, who saith, *Domine tibi silentium laus est*¹—*Silence is praise to Thee, O Lord*. This most effectual and becoming praise proceeds out of a deep sense of His incomprehensible perfections and majesty, whom the Seraphim contemplate by covering their faces, and glorify most perfectly in that profound and awful half-hour's silence mentioned in the Apocalypse."²

No faithful Christian imagines that the more personal and intimate character which the silent hour brings to devotion implies that it alone is true, and that all external and public forms of worship

¹ Ps. lxiv.

² *Sancta Sophia*, pp. 499, 500.

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are proportionally less real and of little value. The truth is that the interior and the exterior devotion are both exercises of one and the same Life of God in the soul, and need one another. The object of any sincere form in religion is always to lead us one step further out of ourselves, towards a more intimate experience of the love of God, which silence implies and cherishes.

All a Christian's public and common devotions imply in him a personal spiritual movement from self to God, which in turn is nourished and quickened by his habitual secret communion with God, *solus cum Solo*. And the secret communion learnt in the retirement of silence gains vital energy, and the joy of spiritual fellowship, from all the Church's common devotions that went before. The interior prayer has gained for us a new draught of Divine Life, given, not for our personal satisfaction, but that it may enable us to take the part we owe in the daily public worship of the

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Catholic Church. And the public devotion sends us back to our silent prayer more joyfully conscious than ever of the support we gain from fellowship in the Body of Christ, and in the prayers of all the Saints.

I observed above an element of sacrifice involved in keeping set times of prayerful silence. In fact it has its difficulty; for it is no simple withdrawing from conversation when we are indisposed for it. We cannot acquire the habit without paying its price. It is found to involve a real mortification and forsaking of self. By nature each of us lives for himself, and this in a world that in its perpetual movement carries us along with it. I like to be saved the trouble of thinking, resolving, and choosing a course higher than that of the convenience of the moment. There is a soothing murmur of the tide of destiny that bears me along well content. But to seek God in silence involves a certain shock, a touch that awakes the

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soul occupied with the means of life to realize its eternal end, a coming to oneself, a sudden resistance to the stream of destiny, an assertion of freedom to respond to the call of God, and to choose a higher life. For a child of the world to seek silence in order to find God is a courageous denial of the world's claim; but it is more, it is a man's humble acknowledgment of God's claim upon him, and a sincere act of surrender to God for ever and at all cost—it is his sacrifice.

Notice how this silence of prayer and of a surrendered will came to an English lad the other day, a private soldier in the trenches. There is a horror in his circumstances which we little understand perhaps. The boy's soul seems to be almost in the grip of doom. Only the other day he was at school in England, and in the playing fields,—to-day he is facing death, and at the mouth of hell. And in a moment, in the very midst of the noise of battle, by his simple act of faith he has reached the

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Great Silence, the Home of Peace. He passes by his prayer out of the grip of destiny into the hands of God, the heart of God. Writing to a friend he refers to the "hot time" they had, and something done by his corps which he may not speak more of, and adds, "*I do wish when amid danger that I could place myself more in God's hands. One gets a little nervy when shells and bullets are bursting around. I try to place myself in God's hands, but I'm afraid my attempt is rather feeble. However, this is the fine time to improve, and by God's help I will try more.*" But to-day he is withdrawn to the rear with his regiment for rest. And here he finds a quiet village Church, with the welcome of its open door. Instinctively he seeks here restoration from the nerve-strain and the perpetual noise of the guns. In the sacred stillness he has time to realize on his knees afresh what it is to *put himself into the hands of God*; here is for him the "Silence in Heaven for half an

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hour." In mentioning this visit to the village Church he has nothing to say about its architecture or ornaments, but goes on to say, "*I was much impressed by a little girl there alone, and saying her private prayers with arms stretched out before a great Crucifix.*" Here was for an overstrained soul his escape from self, from "nerves" and bodily fear, into the good silence of prayer—"into the hands of God." (It is interesting to notice that he uses the same phrase as the Spanish Contemplative, to describe his prayer.) And here, too, in the stillness round the Altar he recognized in the child at her prayer before the Crucifix the sacred fellowship of that Divine Silence. Since writing of that young soldier's visit to the silent Church I have seen to-day a letter from another lad at the front who knew him at home, and writes: "*I was greatly impressed at one camp we were at, there was a small Belgian Church close to, and I thought I would like to go*

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inside. So in I went, and there I found our dear Horace kneeling deep in prayer, quite away from the noisy camp. And since his death (he was shot two or three days after that 'deep' prayer in the silent Church) I thought of this, and of his life among us, and what a real Christian he was."

It is observed by many how the real greatness of the human soul is being brought out for us at the present time by a war that threatens the very existence of the principal nations in Europe. Amid the terror of so vast a catastrophe individuals and nations are finding themselves in their return to God. At the point where all earthly comfort and security vanish, the spiritual life awakes.

But what such a crisis as this does for a nation, the silent prayer opened for us in this book is continually doing for the individual. I believe that the reader will discover in these addresses a way for himself every day out of the depressing littleness and disappoint-

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ment of the soul's experience in itself, if he has the courage to seek in the Silence to which it leads a daily forsaking of himself and of the world, in order that he may find God,—not a faint conception of a distant power, but God dwelling within Him, Eternal Life already possessed, the infinite Love, the mystery that makes all things new.

PART I

B

I

CONSCIOUSNESS OF GOD

ON Sunday the 9th of August 1914 England went to church heavy with the sense of the week's tremendous decision. Her century of peace with Europe was broken. She had declared war. No man could forecast the issue of the appalling conflagration that had so suddenly broken out. Our confidence was strong, but we knew that a day of God had dawned. Among the psalms for the 9th morning is the greatest of war-psalms, the psalm which inspired Luther's hymn, *Ein feste Burg*, doubtless being sung that day from end to end of Germany.

God is our hope and strength,
A very present help in time of trouble.

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But it was the climax that held us.

Be still then, and know that I am God.

What a paradox! Still, in the midst of war! The *sortes liturgicae* had spoken with the voice of God. Never had England greater need of God, and never more than in the confusion and noise of war was stillness necessary if we would find His Presence.

It is a strange setting for such a text of quiet, consecrated one might have thought to Quakers and Trappists, to secluded cloisters and the vigils of nuns. Yet this golden verse was cradled in a war-psalm, and it is in time of war that its message is most vital.

I endeavour in these pages to write of a certain deliberate use of stillness, nay even of silence, as a means to this same end, the knowledge of God as God, or, as we should now say, the consciousness of God. The sense of His very present help is indeed indispensable in days like these when sorrow is swelling to so great

Consciousness of God

a volume, and the world is being re-made before our eyes. We stand in need of God, and we can find Him in silence. The psalmist's experience holds to-day. Men are increasingly discovering that silence is a very direct way to God. For the encouragement of those who would visit this soul's garden of silence, this book endeavours to describe what fruits those who know that garden have gathered from its trees.

While the noise of war was echoing around us a congregation of men and women met last Lent in a London Church to practise this Silence together and to study its virtues. Week by week, as they entered deeper into the Silence, there came to them slowly but perceptibly the sense of the divine Presence that they sought. God was with them. The Silence was neither empty nor dark. As the weeks passed, and those who were using the corporate Silence for the first time grew more receptive of its influences, the silence itself grew more

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still, and fulfilled more perfectly its promise of the knowledge and sense of God.

The consciousness of God is not indeed easily attained. It is hardly to be expected that it should be. The unchanging proximity of God does not necessarily make it the easier to discern His Presence. We are not conscious in the physical sphere of the weight of the air which is nevertheless continually pressing upon our bodily frame. We have never known what it is to be without that pressure, indeed we could not, for it is one of the essential conditions of life in the body. Our entire life is lived in God. There is not a corner of our being from which it is possible to exclude God. The vacuum of Deity does not exist in heaven or earth. Yet nothing is more easy than to live without the consciousness of God. It is this very universality of His Presence which makes the difficulty of discerning Him. There are certain

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forms of life in deep ocean which have never touched the bottom of the sea, and have never reached the surface. They have no consciousness of water. They do not know what water is, though they live in it, because they have no experience of that which is not water. There lies our difficulty. We have lived our whole life in God. We have drawn every breath and thought every thought within God. We do not and we cannot know what it is to spend a single moment beyond or without God. Life itself, physical, intellectual and spiritual, is not merely derived from God, but continues only and so long as it is penetrated and sustained by that fountain of life from which it sprang, the Being of God. Were God to withdraw Himself but for an instant from the world, were He to slumber, the whole visible order would vanish as a dream, and the life of man would pass as smoke scattered by the wind, for it has no existence except in God. But the perception of

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this "secret force" is not inevitable, impossible though it be to live apart from it. It is difficult and perhaps impossible for a blind man to realize his own blindness unless he has once had sight. So it is not because He is far away that we find it difficult to attain to the consciousness of God, but because He is continually touching our life at every point, interpenetrating and enfolding us within Himself, and we are and must remain entirely without either the knowledge or experience of what life would be, could it exist isolated from its divine source.

But nevertheless the faculty for discerning His Presence has been given to us. We can gain sufficient control over our thought to isolate the different elements in our consciousness, and to concentrate our attention upon a single element in the complex whole. The art of education is to develop this power of thought-control in the intellectual sphere. The divine art of prayer is this

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same mastery in the sphere of the spirit. As it is true that no act of ours and no neglect of the spiritual can in reality put us beyond the reach of the Presence which is God, nor of the pressure of His holy will, nor of the operation of His love, and yet it is easily possible to miss all perception of this surrounding holiness, life and love by absorption in material things, or servitude to evil; so too we can, if we will, concentrate our entire soul upon God until He becomes to us the one reality, and our consciousness is not only aware of but absorbed in and dominated by the spiritual. This is truly to live in God.

Our life is designed to be a gradual unfolding of wider spheres of consciousness. A long development of the power of vision lies between a new-born babe's first discernment of light from dark and the artist's consciousness of colour and form. The evolution of the soul is even longer. The widening circles of perception spread outwards from the centre

I only know
I can not
drift
Beyond His
loving care

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till they cover the whole surface of life, till they touch the shore of that infinite Life that encircles and contains our little life in time. Nor is the development of human consciousness complete till man has gained the consciousness of God. If that be within our reach, it is assuredly worth any effort that we can make to attain it.

To be conscious of God is, in the first instance, to hear His voice, and for that silence is the most powerful of all aids. If we would hear that voice other sounds must cease; or, if that may not be, we must learn at least how to make them cease for us by withdrawing attention from them and concentrating it completely upon God.

I remember once being in a large building crowded with people. At the far end of the great hall an orchestra was playing some of the ethereal music of the new French School. Between the players and myself there was a multitude of chattering folk, and through

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the noise of their banal conversation I could scarcely make out what was being played ; but at last, to my surprise and delight, I began to discover that my straining ear was focussing itself, not upon the babel of voices, but upon the ordered sound beyond, and through the confusion there began to steal, spoiled and interrupted, yet not altogether lost, the distant beauty. But I longed to silence the voices.

In the Incarnation God has spoken, nay more, He has revealed Himself as the Word. *The Word was God*. It cannot be His will that we should go through life without being conscious of His speaking. How offensive to me that day were the clamorous tongues, how foolish and insensate, for had they been silent there was beauty and delight waiting to be theirs. For us there waits, if we will be still and listen for it, the consciousness of God, the hearing of the voice of the Eternal Word ; or if you would rather so speak, the seeing of the

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Light which comes from no other source than Him Who is the Light of the World. This stillness which has the promise of the knowledge of God is no dreamy musing: no *dolce far niente* of the soul. It is the silence that the soul demands in order that it may be free and undisturbed to fasten, by a strenuous act of the will, its whole and undivided attention upon God, and God alone. It is a stillness, as alert and active as a sentry upon guard, straining ear and eye through the darkness to catch the first and faintest sign of movement. What is more active than the attitude of such a listener? Were I an artist so would I draw activity. But it is an intense stillness and a deep silence. It is no mere escape from external sounds and no mere physical stillness. Thought itself lays aside for a while its eager restlessness. We forgo even our entreaties, and are content to be listeners rather than speakers. And well we may, for man is not heard for his much

2
ἐκίνοσις
ἡσυχία
ἀσκήσις

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speaking. Indeed, if prayer be communion with God, it would be strange were we to leave no space for God to speak.

“Go, lie down,” said Eli to Samuel, “and it shall be, if he call thee, thou shalt say, Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.” How still, how wide awake the boy would lie in the darkness, lit only by the flickering temple lamp, listening for the voice he now would recognize as God’s, awed yet eager. This was the schooling of a prophet, but the prophet was yet a child, and not for prophets only is that voice. We, too, seek the Silence and the shrine of the Presence and make the boy’s prayer our own.

The fruits of this Silence are not to be won without a stedfast perseverance. Three times already the voice had spoken before priest or child recognized that it was the voice of God. But if we will go to school in the Silence, returning again and again with the preparation of penitence, humility and desire, we

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shall not go unrewarded. Time and time again he who perseveres will find as he rises from his knees to go back to the world that he carries with him a sense of peace and strength, of an inward harmony and joy, the sign that he has been in immediate touch with God. The spiritual world is near enough to man to reach his consciousness. The immediacy of God and of the spiritual world is indeed the basis of this spiritual use of silence. Francis Thompson might almost have had in mind the experiences of such silent fellowship in his last verses in praise of the Kingdom of God within :

O world invisible, we view thee,
O world intangible, we touch thee,
O world unknowable, we know thee,
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee.

.
The angels keep their ancient places,
Turn but a stone, and start a wing !
'Tis ye, 'tis your estranged faces
That miss the many splendoured thing.¹

It cannot be impossible to reach the

¹ " In no strange land " (Francis Thompson).

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consciousness of God when, upon one side of the thin veil that hides Him from us, we with yearning and desire stretch out our hands to touch and hold the abiding world of eternity and reality, while upon the other the Almighty Will and the Infinite Love seeks to make Himself known to His children upon earth. Silence, when it is the living silence of true concentration upon God, if it does not tear in pieces this intervening veil, begins at least to render it translucent at that point before which the soul rests in its busy stillness. Supreme prayer outruns the powers of speech because of this absorption not only in God, but upon the one thought of God at which the soul establishes its contact with Him. Speech can hardly be other than a moving to and fro along the line of thinking, but, as its concentration deepens, prayer tends to come to a rest before a single conception. The Angelic hosts repeat the cry, Holy, Holy, Holy. The repetition is itself a form

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of silence. Speech halts. The language of adoration is exhausted; beholding the Beatific Vision they discern in the single divine attribute of Holiness infinity itself, and it suffices. Christ in Gethsemane, as the spiritual conflict within His soul reaches extremity, returns again and again in His prayer to the same words: "Not my will but Thine be done." He is in depths where words avail no more. In His agony His soul clings to the Father in that one single necessity of the will finally surrendered. These are the heights of prayer. But our little human prayer moves, infinitely below, along the same path. It too, as it concentrates, though slowly and uncertainly, moves from the many words to the few, from the few to one, repeated not vainly but with growing intensity; from the word repeated to the Silence, our far distant image of the "silence in heaven" and the long silences of the Cross.

As I write this I can imagine the

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criticism which will present itself to those who read of this Silence but have never pursued it. "Is it not a hard business, this concentrated Silence of which you speak? Is it not better fitted to the cloister than the world? As it is, when I pray, or read my books of prayer, my mind constantly strays, and this Silence would for me be nothing but distraction." I reply that in the first place the wandering thoughts are probably due to having never cultivated concentration. To concentrate one must be silent. In the second place, the Silence that I write of is a corporate silence. It is a Fellowship of Silence, and silence in fellowship is the easiest of all silences. In it we help one another. As we seek God together the Divine Life indwelling each separate soul overflows our individual separateness, and reaching forth unites soul with soul in the unity of the One Spirit. The help of fellowship is not dependent upon speech. It is thoroughly available in

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the Silence. Nor are words the only channels by which personality radiates its influence. Men who live in the atmosphere of God carry it with them everywhere. They communicate it in a measure to others. It is certain that those who come together for the express purpose of surrendering themselves to the simple waiting upon God will bring with them to the common Silence great help each for the other. The prayer of two or three in fellowship is a greater thing than the prayer of the same persons in isolation, and as such has Our Lord's express promise of power and reward.

This Silent Fellowship has its own spiritual atmosphere, varying from time to time as widely as one day differs from another, or morning from evening in light and colour or atmospheric effect. No one Meeting in the Silence will be quite like another, yet there are certain broad experiences clear enough to be recognized as especially characteristic.

There is first the sense of the Presence.

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Mystical experiences are incommunicable, but Quakers and Churchmen and all who have been faithful to the Silence agree that, when it is really achieving its end, there is the sense of an unseen Presence. It is something more than the meeting of a group of like-minded friends. Moving and stirring among them is Another, invisible but not imperceptible. Is this an incredible testimony? Why should it be? The charter of this belief and of this interpretation of experience is our Lord's promise :

*Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them.*¹

Crede experto. There are thousands, and I would desire humbly as their disciple to range myself with them, who have borne witness that they have found for themselves the power of fellowship in silence to quicken and to create the sense of the Presence of God.

Equally the Silence brings the sense of His voice and His will. By voice

¹ S. Matthew xviii. 20.

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I do not mean the sound of words, but the communication, in ways subtler than speech and baffling analysis or description, of the knowledge of the will of God. This communication may indeed assume a thousand forms of comfort or rebuke, of command or restraint, but when in the Silence we come to know what God would have us do as before we did not, and grow to perceive the pressure of His will upon our own as before we had not so perceived it, how else are we to speak of this experience but as the unfolding to our consciousness of the voice and will of God. It is not less His voice because it speaks not in thunder from the clouds, but in an interior stillness that befits the inmost shrine of God within the soul. From some depth that lies beneath the consciousness this Voice of the Silence seems to rise. Well do we know that it is no echo of our own voice to which we are listening. We have indeed become conscious of God.

II

THE INNER LIGHT

EXTREMES sometimes meet while moderation remains in isolation. Of late it has happened that some who seemed to be at the opposite poles of religious thought and feeling, certain Quakers and Catholics, have discovered that, far apart as they are, they have more in common with one another in their deepest spiritual experience than with most of those who occupy the neutral ground between them. Nor is this so surprising as might at first sight appear, for the central thought which has been the inspiration of all that is noble in Quakerism—and how much that is—its recognition of Our Lord as

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the Inner Light of the soul, is cradled in the same scripture to which the Catholic turns for the highest expression of his Catholicism. That common cradle is the prologue to the fourth Gospel. There, shining like a double star, are set the twin realities of the Inner Light and the Word made Flesh. If they dealt in outward reverences Quakers might well bow themselves low at the reading of the words which proclaim the Inner Light, *That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,*¹ as Catholics do at the unfolding of the mystery which is the foundation of all Catholicism, *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.*²

The latter is a divine benediction upon that insight into the underlying spirituality of the visible order, that feeling for the "value and significance of flesh," which is so characteristic of Catholicism. The truth which it reveals and enshrines

¹ S. John i. 9.

² S. John i. 14.

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is indeed the basis of the whole sacramental system. Upon it rests S. John's vision in his Apocalypse of the ideal city of life and light descending out of heaven to earth, in which He, Whose Incarnation was a revelation of the invisible God through the veil of the material, still extends through like tangible and external channels the hidden life of eternity.

The former stands for ever as the charter of the soul's freedom, of man's true spiritual dignity, and of that direct access to the fountain-source of all light and inspiration which is his birth-right.

What could be more catholic than S. John's Prologue? A sure instinct has accorded it a premier rank among the liturgical gospels. It is sacred to Christmas, and for centuries priests have recited it at the end of the Eucharistic Mystery. Nevertheless, at the very heart of it lies the so-called Quaker doctrine of the Inner Light. In reality

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this doctrine is nothing else but purest Johannine Christianity which it would be unorthodox and heretical to the last degree to deny. But the Inner Light is not denied: it is ignored, neglected and forgotten. Assuredly it is neither all truth nor the only truth, and must be held according to the proportion of the Faith, yet we who see so clearly and affirm so rightly that the doctrine of the Inner Light must be balanced by the doctrine of the Outer Light, may ourselves well remember that no Catholicism which does not reveal to the soul its full heritage is really deserving of the name. God approaches us alike from within and from without. He compasses the awakening of the soul both ways. The Light breaks in upon the soul from without, in the beauty and the majesty of nature, through other personalities, in friendship, counsel or ministry, beneath the veil of Sacraments, through the pressure of the external circumstances of life. Not least the

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Light is mediated externally through the Church, the fellowship of redeemed mankind indwelt by the same Holy Spirit Who is also the Inner Light of the individual soul. The Church is, in S. Paul's language, Christ's *Body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.*¹ She is the treasure-house of the spiritual experience of the millions who through the ages have been led by the Spirit, guided that is to say by the Light Within. She holds aloft the lamp of truth replenished from age to age according to Our Lord's most true promise of the Spirit Who should lead them—He spoke to the embryo Church as a society, not as individuals—into all truth. Here, then, external to myself, I find the Divine Light nobly enshrined humanwise in an extended incarnation of the Spirit of Christ. But S. John's mirror of hidden deity, such is this prologue, is explicit concerning the presence of this same Light in the individual soul.

¹ Ephesians i. 22-23.

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In Him was life ; and the life was the light of men.
And the light shineth in the darkness ;
And the darkness overcame it not.

There was the true light,
Even the light which lighteth every man
Coming into the world.¹

Here is the origin and authority for the belief in the Inner Light. Rising within the soul is a Light that answers to the Light that encompasses us around and above. It is mine, for it is the birthright of every man. I have but to retire within my soul, to enter the innermost chamber of my being, and, though I shut the door against all sounds and sights from the world of sense, alone I am not, nor in the dark.

Christ be with me,
Christ within me,
Christ behind me,
Christ before me,
· · · · ·
Christ beneath me,
Christ above me.

¹ S. John i. 4-5, 9.

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So runs the "Breastplate of St. Patrick." Penetrated, possessed through and through of God, the soul of man is no empty shrine. It is the tabernacle of a divine Presence which inhabits while it transcends it. That Presence is the Light, the Guide, and the Director of life.

This is the doctrine of the Inner Light, and a most catholic doctrine it is. To the Quakers this teaching of the Light has been everything. They have lived in it and loved it and witnessed to it by word, by life and by martyrdom. To their strong and unswerving concentration upon this one great truth may perhaps be traced the type of character which is so characteristic of them, a certain serenity of mind, an atmosphere of strength and peace, not to speak of other matters, of pre-eminence in good works, of a foremost share in ridding the world of such evils as slavery and the love of war. Nor is the doctrine of the Inner Light foreign to ourselves. We know

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it, and we have known it all along, though we call it by another name. The indwelling of the Holy Ghost is a cardinal truth of Catholicism. It is the foundation of the doctrine of the Inner Light. So he is no setter-forth of strange doctrines who bids men to remember their glorious birthright of the Light.

Let us consider, then, the operations of the Inner Light. It is, first of all, the light of conscience. Conscience is indeed a human faculty, but it bears every mark that it is sensitive to and directed by a higher than human guidance. It witnesses to the presence of a higher life within, yet above, our own. That Life is the Inner Light. So deep does conscience lie within the soul, that it is indeed possible to confound the Light which directs it with some quality of our own personality. But it is this Light which has both created and developed conscience: it is higher than conscience as the Creator is higher than the creature.

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Conscience is indeed a development, and is yet immature in the vast majority of men, but the Light which has evolved conscience and directs its growth is one, perfect and divine. Whether the operations of conscience be upon the crude materials that make up the relationships of savage life, or upon the spiritual problems which perplex a Christian saint, the Light itself is the same, in the soul of a savage or of a Teresa : the difference is in the capacity to perceive the Light. The development of the faculties of the soul has been a far greater evolution than that which separates the human organs of vision from the first light-sensitive pigment of a primordial fish out of which they are supposed to have developed. The evolutionary transition from the faintest sensation of light to the miracle of the human eye is as nothing to the interval that lies between the sensitiveness to the Light of God in the soul of the savage and the soul of a saint. But though the difference is so great,

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yet the Light is one and the same. The light which filtered through the waters till somewhere there it found something that could perceive that light was different from darkness, is the same light that falls upon the hills and to the eye of man speaks of God. It was the light itself that out of that first feeble response developed human vision, and it is the Light Within that in the long process of stimulus and response has fashioned the conscience of the saint.

But the Inner Light is more than the light of conscience. It is also the source of spiritual knowledge. Spiritual things are spiritually apprehended, and only spiritually. Spiritual truth is not unfolded to the intellect without the Spirit. A correct and orthodox theology might be acquired and often has been acquired unspiritually, but there is no book, no teacher, no creed that can impart the living knowledge of God, or the personal possession of the knowledge of eternal truth, without or apart from the Light Within.

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Within! That is the point. What worlds there are between direct inward apprehension of truth for oneself as indeed one's own, and the hearing or the reading of another's tale!

“I had known,” writes one, “the dry bones of the doctrine of the Eucharistic Sacrifice and instructed others therein for many a year, but one day as I was silent in God's Presence, suddenly God showed me not its dry bones, but its living soul. If I were to try to describe it I should have to say that it was something like the first sight I ever had of Mont Blanc. The dreary wall of earth, up which for hours we had been toiling as we climbed the long shoulder of the ridge, suddenly, within half a dozen steps, gave place to the vision of the whole white mass. There it stood, domes and pinnacles dazzling in the sunlight, revealed almost in a flash. I had often seen pictures of it and read of it. I could perhaps have sketched its outline, but never till then had I

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seen it. So it was, though images and metaphors will not say for me what, after all, perhaps no words can say; I saw then, revealed in the silence, the mystery of the Sacrifice of the Altar opened before me, rising as the summit and climax of the spiritual life. That, of which before I had heard and read and spoken, I now beheld.”

*Now, we believe, we are tempted to add, not because of Thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the World.*¹ It is surely a noble fruit of silence if, in our waiting upon that Light which, despite all our sins, negligences and ignorances, still shines, obscured but not extinguished, within the soul, the revealed truth of God becomes our own for ever like a vision of beauty. It is worth our while patiently to train ourselves in the use of the holy Silence for such a reward.

To be silent is to be receptive. All

¹ S. John iv. 42.

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about us shines the divine Light, for God is Light, and God is around us and within us. All about us is sounding the divine voice, for *the Word was God*. If we will be still and listen and watch, we shall hear and see.

I am not speaking of voices and visions, or of supernatural happenings, nor anything of the sort, still less of psychic excitements or hallucinations, but of a quiet certainty that we have been in the Presence, not of emptiness but of Life; that we have been ourselves in touch with God, and have known for ourselves something at least of His mind and will.

Yet again, the Inner Light is a true and practical guide in the affairs and decisions of daily life, and has by the Friends been ever so used. *Thy Word is a lantern unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*¹ By the time we are forty we have probably discovered for ourselves that our lives are being directed for us,

¹ Psalm cix. 105.

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action beyond its range. The stories of those extraordinary pilgrimages and journeys which Quakers made across the seas when crossing seas was no simple thing, under the sense, as they put it, of 'religious concern,' are a veritable romance of the Inner Light. They are also, if one were needed, proof conclusive that belief in the Inner Light rested on no fancy. Socrates was conscious of a spirit, a *daimon* that guided his life. It is generally thought to be a mistake to confuse this with conscience, for the spirit-guidance to which he was subject concerned itself with all manner of things which were not so much matters of conscience or moral judgment as of the ordering of daily life. There can be little doubt that Socrates was conscious of the Inner Light, which is a wider thing than conscience, and deals with other issues than moral right and wrong alone, covering, in fact, the whole field of our life, and directing it from end to end.

Thus silence holds the treasure of the

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Light for those who seek it. Silence and light, it may be said, are mixed metaphors. But we are speaking of things that are in a region where even metaphors may mingle unashamed, for no word, no image, can say what we try to say.

Week by week for two hundred and fifty years the Society of Friends has practised the silent waiting upon the Spirit, and from first to last it has been the love of the Inner Light which has drawn them into the Silence. Should we be poorer Churchmen if we learned to speak more, and to think more, of the Light Within the soul? The soul lies in equipoise between two poles. There is the pole of the Outward: of God's approach through things seen and touched, through the Sacraments, through the divine fellowship of Holy Church; and there is the pole of the Inward. God, dwelling within the souls of men, moves and stirs and acts there, emerging, if we surrender ourselves to Him, from His secret shrine till, as in Solomon's

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Temple when they consecrated it, the inner glory fills the whole being of man with its presence. The Light Within rises to meet the Light around and above him.

This Silence of a humble and sincere devotion to the Lord, the Christ, the Light-Giver, I recommend to all who read this book.

If you would use the Silence well, retire into the depths of your soul; banish deliberately one by one the intruding thoughts which disturb the quiet of your mind. Close door after door against all invasion from without. Gather your soul into its most secret shrine. That secret place is no solitude. It is the Presence-chamber of God, and God is the Light thereof.

III

PENITENCE AND POWER

As the Silence begins to yield to us its treasures, and these two especial gifts of silence, the consciousness of God and of the Inner Light, begin, in however small degree, to be our own, what is to be our response? What is the answer of our nature to this divine unfolding?

The first and immediate response is penitence. The sense of God is indeed the true cause of the sense of sin. Contrition is the first reaction that follows upon the quickened consciousness of God. Silence, if it quickens man's consciousness of God, if it brings him to the Light, must inevitably lead to that inward change of heart which alone is true

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repentance. It is only the coming of the Light which reveals the ugliness of the unclean. Job's friend Eliphaz knew the secrets of the Silence. He describes in his vision in the night the sense of the invisible Presence, and the fear that fell upon him, the silence and the still voice speaking. *Then the spirit passed before my face: the hair of my flesh stood up. It stood still, but I could not discern the appearance thereof. A form was before mine eyes: there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying, Shall mortal man be just before God? Shall a man be pure before his Maker?*¹ That voice awakened in him the sense of sin: "Shall mortal man be just before God? Shall a man be pure before his Maker?"

"No more sins!" was the first cry of S. Catherine of Genoa when, by the rising of the Inner Light within her soul, she first saw how ugly and distorted was her past. What, it has been asked, will be the most terrible experience after

¹ Job iv. 15-17.

Penitence and Power

death? The wise might well reply: "The sight of thine own soul."

That revelation may be anticipated in some degree, however imperfect, in the Silence in which we submit ourselves to the Light; for the light of the world to come is no other light than that which already shines within; the Lamb Who is the Light thereof is none other than that true Light which lighteth every man; and our still silence is nothing else than a humble submitting of ourselves to this true Christ-light.

"Come, my soul," said Suso, "depart from outward things, and gather thyself into a true interior silence that thou mayest set out with all thy courage, and bury and lose thyself in the desert of deep contrition."

This capacity to stir us to repentance is indeed the test of spiritual things, and the Fellowship of Silence will stand the test. Yet I should not be describing my own experience of the Silence if I left it at that. Silence is the author not of

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sorrow but of joy. The Light which convinces of sin heals as it pierces. The temper begotten of the Silence is removed by worlds from the worrying, anxious, morbid brooding over sin to which I should wish to think Sir Oliver Lodge's over-quoted phrase, that the best men of our day are not worrying over their sins, is alone intended to refer.

The Light Within which heals as it reveals is not the afterglow of evening. Penitence is no sad sunset ; rather it is the dawn of a new day, and its true intent is towards the future rather than the past. Penitence does not linger mourning over the days that cannot be recalled, but rather with S. Paul, forgetting the things which are behind, it reaches forward to those things which are before. Nor is abiding penitence an everlasting *miserere*, but an eternal hymn of praise :

Unto Him that hath loved us and washed us from
sin,

Unto Him be the glory for ever, Amen.

Penitence and Power

That, so far as I know it, is the true spirit which is to be found in the Silence. Nor does this Silence minister to the plague of self-consciousness and morbid introspection. On the contrary, it is the sovereign remedy for such ills. What other escape is there from self-consciousness save God-consciousness? The miserable miasma of self-consciousness is nothing else than nature's protest against our failure to achieve that for which we were created, namely, consciousness of God. We have thought of the Silence as a deep retiring into the inner recesses of our being; and this it is. But in that inmost chamber of life we find not self but God. The Father which seeth in secret is there found. It is only on the surface of life that we need fear to be obsessed with self and tyrannized over by the morbid consciousness of self. Not the least gift of the Silence is the power which, if perseveringly pursued, it most certainly gives of escape from self, and not only

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from self, but from slavery to the worries, anxieties and moods that constitute, unless we find release from them, so dangerous an element in life, and are so common a source of our feebleness and failure.

Quaker Silence deals with past sins in the same temper as the Catholic Church, which is a sign of grace and truth, and of the inspiration of the same Pentecostal Spirit. The Sacrament of Penitence wounds before it heals, but it wounds only that it may heal, and that is its glory. The word of power in absolution rings the death-knell of the old sins. They are dead and gone. The entail of the past is abolished. Thus the sacrament of sorrow is a most blessed sacrament of joy, and therefore of power. So also echoing and answering to the sacramental rising of the Light, the Silence, for all its fiery purgings and bitter condemnations, leads us out into a wealthy place, a place of life, power and liberty.

Penitence and Power

The word "power" carries us on a stage further in our thinking. Power is a true fruit of silence, though there is no gaining it but along this path of penitence. Christianity has been of late too little presented as a religion of power. Nietzsche's violent attack upon Christianity as he proclaims his new gospel of 'the will to power' is a reaction from the one-sided emphasis on pity and love as though there were nothing else in Christianity. S. Paul, if any man, knew the gospel of pity and love, but that did not prevent him from longing to reach Rome in order that there, at the very centre of world-power, he might preach Christianity, the gospel of power. "I am ready," he said, "to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."¹

If we have not discovered power in our Christianity, we have not discovered

¹ Romans i. 15-16.

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Christ. We are not meant to go on from Lent to Lent making the same confessions, so mesmerized by the consciousness of our own feebleness, that victory is as impossible for us as for an army convinced beforehand that it cannot win. Truly to know Jesus Christ is to know the power of God. Silence, by carrying us deeper into that emptying of self by which the disciple, if he would be filled with His Master's Spirit, must respond to His Master's self-emptying, opens the soul to God and leads directly to the knowledge of the power of God. "For man is come," writes Isaac Pennington in his beautiful seventeenth-century language, "into the poverty of self, into the abasedness, into the nothingness, into the silence of his spirit before the Lord; into the putting off of his knowledge, wisdom, understanding, abilities, all that he is, hath done, or can do, away from the measure of life into which he is to travel, that he may be clothed and filled with the nature,

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spirit, and power of the Lord. Now in this measure of life, which is of Christ, there is the power of life and death ; power to kill to the flesh, power to quicken to God, power to cause the soul to cease from its own workings, and power to work in and for the soul what God requires.”

It is to be observed that there exists a close relationship between Silence and power : first, in that this Silence is a silence of concentration. Power and concentration are almost identical. In all forms in which man has learned to apply natural forces, steam, electricity, hydraulics, it is purely a question of being able to concentrate upon one precise spot the latent forces which, spread out or dissipated, would accomplish nothing. In the soul the secret of power is the secret of being able to apply the entire self in all its varied resources upon one thing, one person. Desire, thought, will, the whole personality are, in our Silence, deliberately concentrated upon God.

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Gradually, as the power to do so grows with using, we learn more and more in this busy stillness how to focus our whole self upon God. Spiritual power is focussed personality. Our capacity to influence others is in proportion to our capacity to focus and concentrate our whole unified being, first upon God, and then upon those we desire to help. As thus we gain the power to give ourselves wholly to them and to their needs, so do they become ours to help, to serve and to influence.

What schools of power are these silent meetings where, not in isolation but with a heavenly unity of purpose in fellowship with others, we wait upon God in His grace and in His Spirit, learning the art which is indeed the science of the saints, of entire concentration upon His unseen Presence. In our ordinary daily life we too often waste our strength and dissipate our stores of energy by our uncontrolled thinking and our overmuch speaking. Spiritual spendthrifts,

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we squander in mere idle chatter, emotions, feeling, hopes and desires which, were they husbanded in the greater use of silence, might grow into character and into deeds. Silence cures us of this prodigality.

Speech is ordained to be the sacrament of thought and feeling. Its true function is to express, and more than to express, to intensify and strengthen that which it expresses. This alone is true speech. When lovers first declare their love, long cherished but long unspoken, the words of love are scarcely uttered before the love behind the words flows with a fuller tide. Love has found a sacrament in the spoken word, and its sacrament has magnified it. Yet the power of the word lay in the silence out of which it grew. In that long pent up silence had been accumulating the power which burst forth when the word was spoken.

Purposeful silence is the redemption of speech. It stores those stirrings and movements of mind and heart which,

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be they squandered in idle and heedless speech, make an empty soul ; Silence accumulates and develops all these various energies.

The second link between Silence and power lies in this, that the prayer of silence is the prayer of discipline, of deep interior discipline, mental and spiritual. Discipline is always the secret of power. Under the figure of the yoke Our Lord taught us that His grace was for those, and only for those, who would share His discipline. That is the twofold meaning of the yoke. The yoke is that which unites the strength of two to one purpose, and concentrates the resources of both upon the task. Under the yoke two are made one by being bound each to the other, and to the other's task. But this fellowship-strength is gained only beneath the burden and restraints which the yoke and the discipline of the yoke inevitably impose. The intimate friendship of Our Lord Jesus Christ

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cannot but draw His friends into His sufferings. If we would be His yoke-fellows, we must bear His yoke.

This prayer of Silence is not the easiest thing in the world although it be the simplest. It implies the willingness to discipline even our thinking, to lay aside our own impetuous thoughts that we may become receptive in the Silence to those thoughts which are not self-originated. It demands the surrender of all our schemes and plans, and the whole-hearted offering of ourselves in an obedience that has surrendered even its preferences to the divine will.

This is the discipline of the inmost self. We shall not expect it to be easy, but it will not always wear the appearance of discipline. Discipline in time becomes second nature. It confers liberty and power. The freedom of the pianist, his mastery of the keyboard, was only purchased at the price of discipline. The discipline of silence will come in time to be as free of the sense of

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restraint as the fresh air of a mountain-top. But before we have advanced so far in the gathering of the fruits of silence we shall have discovered, in our fight against the evils that beset us, that the discipline of silence is bringing us to power.

Yet it is not chiefly by stopping the leaks in the soul through which our own store of strength escapes that silence increases power. When we have husbanded all our little resources of energy and strength we are still weak, though knowing it is in itself a sort of strength, if it leads us to seek supernatural power. In the Silence the soul is opened to power at its very source. No man can fix his soul in concentrated attention upon God, but power must pass into him. His silent holding fast to God puts him in contact with the life-power of the worlds, with the moral force of the All Holy; with the depths and heights of infinite love. The completeness with which in the Silence we

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learn to cease from our own strivings and to become active only in receiving, is the measure in which the power which the Silence holds passes into us. We become accumulators of the current of divine Life. We store within ourselves in that holy Silence the energy of God.

How familiar an idea is this to those whose life is centred in the Blessed Sacrament! We find in this Silence at every point the spiritual experience of the sacramental life meeting us. The Life welling up from within the soul, from the presence of the most Holy Spirit of God immanent in man, is identical with the Life coming from above and coming from without through the veil of the material in those divine rites which Our Lord has bequeathed to His Church. To feed on Life at its source, that is the heart of the Blessed Sacrament. It is also the heart of the Silence.

Assuredly this is to possess a gospel of power. We too believe, more ardently than Nietzsche, in the will to power;

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but the will, like all else, to be powerful, must die that it may live ; and it is only by the completeness of its surrender, such as we may learn in this holy Silence, that the will of man can attain the power for which it was created. *When I am weak, then I am strong.*

This divine power vibrates through the Fellowship of Silence. Is it any wonder that personality itself in the Silence develops and expands as flowers grow by rain and sun ? There need be no little souls nor feeble folk while the liberty of Silence and the glory of the Blessed Sacrament, which none can take away, remain.



IV

FELLOWSHIP

IN Silence personality expands and develops; it could hardly be otherwise if these other fruits of silence of which we have spoken are the genuine fruits that so many have found them to be. If the Silence has the power to quicken our consciousness of God, if it carries us to the shining of the Inner Light, if it transmits to us the energies of the life of God, it is very certain that in it personality will grow and increase.

It is good to remember how large a growth is possible to the soul of man. S. Paul has described what he conceived to be the full growth of a human soul. *Till we all attain*, he said, *unto the unity*

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*of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.*¹ This is humanity fully developed. It is for this that we are destined, though whether we shall reach it depends upon ourselves. But this great end, the growth of the soul to the stature of Christ, is nobly served in the Silence.

But what, it may be enquired, is personality grown to the stature of Christ? This is to ask what is personality in God, and the answer lies perhaps in a word, Fellowship. It is life which, though One, is, as our Christian Creed confesses, the perfected fellowship of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Where God is, that is to say, solitude is not.

Silence, if it is of God, will not be a silence of inner solitude, in touch with God but cut off from man; rather it will be a silence of deep fellowship of man with man, no less than with God.

¹ Ephesians iv. 13.

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The spirit and temper of unity and of concord, which is the very soul of fellowship, is bred in this Silence.

Personality as it grows gains precisely this power of leaping over the narrow barriers of the individual to identify itself more and more absolutely with other human lives, to draw them into itself, and so to lose itself in them that they are blent into one; as S. Paul would express it, *attaining unto the unity*. A Napoleon, for example, lives in his armies and they in him. He lifts them above themselves, and his own personality, as it passes into them, grows to vast heights. Napoleon the Emperor is another man from the Corsican lieutenant. As his life has become theirs, so theirs has become his. This is great personality. It is the power of fellowship. It is the passing of self out of isolation, out of all narrowness of vision, sympathy and interest, into the wide spaces of charity and brotherhood.

Personality governs the world. But

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it is precisely this capacity of personality for fellowship, for living in the wide stream of human life, that has unified the thousands round the one, and so created the power that has made history. Certainly Our Lord emphasized the necessity of fellowship, and most of all its necessity in our approach to God. The only religious acts which Jesus Christ charged His followers to observe and Himself instituted were acts of fellowship, acts which indeed were impossible without fellowship.

Sacraments, Christ's gift to the world, rest on the basis of fellowship. Solitude and sacrament are ideas as mutually exclusive and contradictory as solitude and God. Who can baptize himself? A Robinson Crusoe alone with a Bible on a desert island, were he unbaptized, could not repair that omission for himself. Had Crusoe been a priest he could not have absolved himself from his sins, nor could he have celebrated Holy Communion till his solitude was broken

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by the arrival of man Friday, who, when instructed and baptized, might have made that element of the Sacrament, scarcely if at all less vital than the bread and wine, human fellowship. The whole sacramental system, from end to end, is fellowship. The Church, Christ's Bride, is the apotheosis of the fellowship of man. It is not surprising, therefore, that the great prayer of the Upper Room should rise to its climax in the words :—
*Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are . . . that they all may be one ; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. . . . And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them ; that they may be one, even as we are one : I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.*¹

This supreme prayer of Christ is assuredly the supreme prayer of human fellowship. It accords closely with S.

¹ S. John xvii. 11, 21-23.

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John's final vision of the Holy City, the New Jerusalem. That is, the city not of a nation but of all nations, not of a people but of all humanity. The city of life and light is the city of a fellowship which has triumphed over every barrier, in which there is no more Greek and barbarian, male and female, bond and free. It is this human fellowship that is the object of the love of the Heavenly Bridegroom. This is His Bride, a humanity that has grown up to its full stature, the Christ stature of fellowship, and is locked no more within the barriers of self.

Again, in His earthly life, is it too much to say that Our Lord Himself used this very Fellowship of Silence or at least desired to use it? There were three occasions on which Our Lord took with Him three only of His apostles, Peter, James, and John. An inner circle within the twelve, chosen, surely, because they possessed gifts of temperament, of devotion, of sympathy, and of under-

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standing, which especially fitted them for fellowship with Our Lord Himself.

The first occasion was the raising of Jarius' daughter. That was the first time that Our Lord raised the dead. It was therefore—we speak with reverence—a great moment in the life of Jesus the Healer. The Gospels describe the care which Our Lord took to exclude from the death-chamber all who would disturb its holy silence; the noisy flute-players and the curious spectators were cast out; only the dead girl's father and mother and the chosen three did He suffer to enter with Him into that chamber, still, not only with the stillness of death, but with the vivid silence which follows the cessation of noise and clamour. The Evangelist records no words of prayer. It may be that no words of prayer were spoken; it can hardly be that no prayer was made.

I retain still a memory from my boyhood of a Sunday in my father's church. It was the first Sunday in the month.

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The rest of the congregation were gone out, and only those remained who desired the Sacrament. As the last footsteps died away there fell a silence of reverence and awe. Through the door, which no one had troubled to shut, came the song of birds from the sunlit churchyard. The noisy lifelessness of Matins, rendered by the village choir, had given place to silence, silence filled with an influence and power which I could then perceive, and now in part can understand. My father's voice, presently breaking the silence, had a fresh solemnity, but before the words of prayer began the atmosphere of prayer had fallen.

Such sudden silence following upon noise fell, doubtless, upon the room in the house of Jairus where the dead girl lay. When the Christ had put them all out save the parents and the three, there remained a fellowship, a Fellowship of Silence. May we not so name it? Out of that stillness came the word of power: "Damsel, I say unto thee, arise."

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I conceive that Our Lord had then more in mind than the education of the three apostles. Did He not desire on this occasion, the first supreme trial of His power over death, to associate their prayer with His own in this strong fellowship of faith and love, for which they were qualified by their faith in Himself, and for which the parents were qualified by their love of their daughter ?

The second occasion on which He again so significantly associated these three with Himself was at the Transfiguration. The Transfiguration is definitely stated by S. Luke to have taken place while He was at prayer ; it was no solitary prayer. As He went to this tremendous event, and it was a mighty hour in the life of Christ, He took the three with Him up that mountain of prayer. Evidently there existed between our Lord and these three apostles some specially intimate bond of fellowship in prayer. There is no need for us to speculate here what was the actual significance of the

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Transfiguration, nor to ask what the Disciples lost when they fell asleep. The point that I desire to emphasize is that they were there as the chosen companions of His greatest hours of prayer, and that not merely for their own good, but that He might draw upon the spiritual resources of human fellowship.

Last of all, Gethsemane—prayer, indeed, of penitence and power!—Gethsemane was a prayer of fellowship of silent proximity. Again they slept, but not without a struggle, and when they slept He knew it. He felt the failure of that human aid when those, who were but a stone's throw from Him in His agony, slept at their prayer. He had not called them to unite with Him in spoken prayer. He had withdrawn Himself from them the distance of a stone's throw. In the unity not of words but of silence, even in His Gethsemane He might have been supported, but was not. Is there, in all human literature and history, more poignant entreaty and rebuke than

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the words with which He chid their sleep : “ Simon, sleepest thou ? Couldst thou not watch one hour ? Watch ye and pray.” It was something more than human pity that He asked. It was pity raised to the fellowship of wordless prayer. For that, Christ in His Gethsemane had a use.

Silence and fellowship are very near akin. Though it is true that one virtue of the Silence is that it is peculiarly personal since in the Silence our prayer must perforce be our own, and though the Silence brings to us, each for himself, the knowledge of God and the experience of God, yet it is eminently a corporate experience. Though it be but the Silence of two or three, there is a falling of the barriers of individualism that separate us from each other. Actually when our silent meetings are at their best—and that is not every time—the sense of fellowship is strong. I do not mean that every person in the Silence perceives equally the divine

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Presence or the human fellowship ; that could not be : we are not equally receptive ; but I do mean that there is a general sense which discerns when the Silence is a living Silence and when barren and dry. That is to say, the Silence is a corporate experience. If we were all Quakers, at the end of our meeting we should, rather solemnly and religiously, shake each other by the hand before we went our several ways, a simple outward and visible sign, rather sacramental and very Christian, of the grace of fellowship, to which our common approach to God had brought us. Those who have shared together a common experience of God are not bound by every convention of society.

It would be equally true were we to say that fellowship is a condition without which the silence cannot become vital. It is the unity of purpose, the common aim, that is the psychic, spiritual, and intellectual basis of the Silence. Hostile, critical, sceptical, or curious persons in

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a Silent Meeting, whose motive is not at all to wait upon God but to find a new excitement or a fresh sensation, will, unless they are shamed or kindled by the very silence to a better mind, not only gain nothing themselves from the Silence, but they will impoverish it for the rest; for the thoughts and dispositions of the heart radiate their influence without words. That which is the ground of so much of the blessing of our Silence is also its peril. All tender, gentle things are vulnerable, and what is there so tender or vulnerable as the spirit of fellowship and love, which is indeed the spirit of our Silence?

*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.*¹ There would have been no Pentecost without fellowship. Then it was there came the sound from Heaven and the light of fire. Fellowship was, indeed, the chief characteristic of the Pentecostal age. *The multitude of them*

¹ Acts ii. 1.

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*that believed were of one heart and one soul, neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own.*¹

But this Silence quickens and develops the fellowship it depends upon. Silence is the greatest solvent of prejudice in the world. It is no small service to the cause of fellowship to dissolve prejudice. Those who are silent together grow to understand one another, and that is half-way to understanding each other's ideas. I once was silent for half an hour daily for a week, with one whose life had been spent from childhood in the very narrowest circle of party Protestantism of the extremest type within the Church of England, a man by heredity and training bitterly hostile to half of my most cherished convictions. A singular chain of events had driven me into his parish as his Missioner, and almost compelled him to tolerate my presence there. At the

¹ Acts iv. 32.

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end of that week we understood one another, and he had discovered that the creed which he had most hated was beautiful and true, and had taken it for his own. It was not by wordy controversy, but by the power of the Silence, that prejudice faded, fellowship was created where none was, and this victory of the Inner Light was won. But even when the Fellowship of Silence does not end in intellectual agreement, it is scarcely less precious. Reunion will not come primarily through intellectual convictions. Spiritual fellowship, sympathy of heart with heart, and mutual understanding must precede intellectual concord. Silence helps that fellowship in that it carries us to the centre where all prayer becomes one. The flag of our Oriental ally might serve for a diagram of the Fellowship of Silence. From every corner of the Japanese flag come the divers paths narrowing to the central circle. There in the burning centre, which represents the sun whence

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radiates the universal light, all those separate rays are one. In that central space all paths converge. That is what Silence, living Silence, the Silence that arrives, does for those who unite in it. It carries each separate soul along his narrowing path of thought, concentrating more and more completely upon the one idea of God, to that central place of prayer, where all come whose prayer brings to them the consciousness of God.

Consciousness of God, which is the beginning and the end of all prayer, is also the meeting-place of all who pray. That is why though our forms of vocal prayer are so singularly divisive, and though our fashions of speech in prayer repel us from each other, the prayer of Silence unites. Pentecost is the antidote of Babel. Silence undermines that ancient tower of division.

It is sad indeed when our prayers keep us back from one another. But how many Churchmen are there who would enjoy, for example, the eloquent prayers

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of the ministers of Nonconformity? They would turn back, most of them, to the Prayer Book with a new appreciation; for there are few men in Nonconformist pulpits, or in any other, who have such gift of language combined with such transparent simplicity of soul that they can lose the consciousness of their audience in their consciousness of God, and at the same time find upon their lips words of beauty and of truth, sufficient to bear comparison with the liturgic prayers hallowed by memories and consecrated by the centuries.

Similarly, there are few Anglicans who would find their soul's release in the rushing rapids of the rosary, hearing it recited in some foreign church. Not for most of us would it open the gates of the spiritual world. Nor do I think that our own Anglican prayer habits would be likely to commend themselves any more readily to visiting Roman Catholics or Nonconformists. I could

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imagine a Nonconformist meeting a Roman Catholic on the steps of an Anglican church after they have been spectators of a much-monotoned Matins, congratulating themselves that at least their services were not such as ours. Is it not true that every man in his own language, Anglican, Nonconformist and Roman Catholic, finds his spiritual comfort in the very things which to others are a stumbling-block? Silence takes men into an atmosphere of peace where there is nothing to remind them of their divisions, and nothing to wound their susceptibilities. Beneath all our diverse forms of prayer the soul of prayer is one, for the soul of prayer is the consciousness of God. Thither Silence leads.

Yet again this gift of silent fellowship might be the salvation of many a solitary priest, buried, as we say, in the country, or isolated on the distant mission station, surrounded, as he thinks, by indifference and unspirituality. A little circle, though it be but two or three, is big

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enough to claim Our Lord's promise of His Presence manifested in fellowship. To many a discouraged man this fellowship of souls, would he but venture, would reveal in unsuspected quarters capacities for the spiritual, buried deep beneath our ecclesiastical conventions and the low levels of worship in which they hold us. Such a circle might be his life and joy, bringing him that thing for which every one of us is hungry, though he know it not—spiritual fellowship, spiritual sympathy and understanding and unity of heart with heart. Such a circle might bring to many a church that atmosphere of the spiritual world which never falls upon a church which is not a home of souls. And what is home if not the shrine of fellowship ?

V

SELF-SURRENDER

*BE it unto me according to thy word,*¹ said Mary to the angel. *Not my will but thine be done,*² said Christ to the Eternal Father. As with fellowship, so with self-surrender, it is at once the condition and fruit of our Silence.

The Annunciation of Our Lady is a festival of self-surrender. It is the beautiful feast of Spring : of the spring-tide of humanity, when flesh and blood in the Maid of Nazareth so responded to the overshadowing of God that, in her, humanity conceived and bore the God-Man Christ Jesus ; in her, humanity blossomed at the touch of God to new life and glory.

What was Mary's fitness for that un-

¹ S. Luke i. 38.

² S. Luke xxii. 42.

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speakable glory save this, that she, more nobly than all others, had the heart and soul of self-surrender: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word.*

John Cordelier, in *The Spiral Way*,¹ says of Mary in her Annunciation :

She did but carry to a sublime and simple operation humanity's greatest and most natural activity—the act of prayer. She stretched to God, and where a way is open, He cannot but come in. "Thy opening and His entering are but one moment," said Eckhart, for the spirit waits eternally at the door of the flesh, "and to wait until thou openest is harder for Him than for thee." Only the opposition of our separated will hinders the perpetual incarnation of the Spirit of God; hence Mary's willing receptivity, her humble self-surrender, was the direct condition of the inflow of His life, that "rippling tide of divine love" which breaks in light and colour on the human shore, but has behind it the whole weight of the ocean of Godhead pressing relentless to its bourne.

The spring of humanity came through a glorious self-surrender. But did not

¹ *The Spiral Way*, p. 26.

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Blessed Mary draw the grace to abandon herself so utterly to God from her love of silence? *Mary kept all these things, we read, and pondered them in her heart.*¹ That is the picture of a true lover of silence.

On her Annunciation day she asks but one question—God does not call for blind unreasoning obedience—*How shall this be?* Then, hearing, she speaks but one word, and that, self-surrender—*Be it unto me according to thy word.*

The spring-tide of the returning year carries us to Passion-tide, and we see her as she stands silent by the Cross, speechless, but surrendered. Ah, more than self-surrendered in her silence; she has made surrender of her Lord and Son, more dear to her than heaven and earth. Not her lips, but her heart cries in that spring-tide of redemption—*Be it unto Him according to Thy will.*—Like to her Son, in her passion-hour, Mary holds to silence.

¹ S. Luke ii. 19.

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How silent was Christ's passion ! We give our Good Friday to meditation upon His Seven Words. It would be useful sometimes to meditate upon His six hours of silence ; silence it was, for what are seven words spread over six hours ?

Seven words He spake, seven words of love,
And all *six* hours His silence cried
For mercy on the souls of men.

So Faber might have written. This last self-emptying, this final abandonment, this climax of all surrender is a surrender of silence.

Truly there is kinship between Silence and self-surrender : Silence is in itself a challenge to surrender, and all the fruits of Silence of which we have been thinking are nothing else but modes and rewards of self-surrender. What, for example, does consciousness of God mean if not the challenge to surrender ? Who could be conscious of the splendour of God and not be conscious at the same time of a claim upon his life, so wide, so

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penetrating, so imperative that all that he can answer is, "My God, I am Thine." Or who can come to the Light except first there is in him the will to follow the Light? *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine.*¹ The Inner Light, our second fruit of Silence, shines for those who, when they see it, will be obedient to it. Illumination is given to those who are faithful to the Light they have. Surrender to the Light and it will grow. Sunrise is no movement of the sun. It is the earth that moves as, surrendering herself more and more to the reign of light, she rolls on into the day. Power cannot pass into the soul that does not cease from self-reliance and abandon itself to God. And what is fellowship but the spirit of surrender, of self no more withheld even from our fellows?

This prayer of Silence is rightly called prayer of the will. It aims point-blank at the will and challenges it to surrender. Emotion has a true place in religion, but

¹ S. John vii. 17.

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it has no place in the aims of our Silence ; and what test is there of the sincerity of our prayer so searching or so true as its willingness to persevere, stripped of all the delights of religious emotion ? When prayer is no longer pleasant to the taste, when the splendours of divine worship no longer solace our senses, and yet we still hold to our prayer for the sake of God alone, though it be prayer in the storm and in the dark—that is the test of prayer. God leads all who love Him sooner or later through this desert. To find ourselves in the dry places of prayer may be the sign that we are making progress along the road that leads to God.

Silence does not shrink from this desert place, or linger in the pleasant paths of comfort. Silence cares nothing for emotion. It seeks no sort of sentimental satisfaction and no æsthetic stimulus. To the will, not to the feelings does Silence make its great appeal. Yet I would not say that Silence is without

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its own emotions. Its very simplicity may be emotional. It is not unlike the suggestiveness of the old English Lenten colour still to be seen in some of our churches. Colour, do I say? No, the Church of our forefathers did not keep Lent in royal purple, she fasted from colour for these forty days. She clad herself in vesture almost as unrelieved by the art of the dyer as the coarsest sackcloth. She wore the raiment of the desert; but as she stripped herself of colour and put upon her the serviceable clothes, the colourless khaki of her Lenten campaign, in spite of herself she achieved a new beauty, a new attraction. As altars, images and pictures melted in their Lenten array into the grey whiteness of stone or plaster walls, a new note of religious symbolism was struck, a note of austerity, of simplicity and purity, which also is beauty. *Amplius lava me.* "Wash me thoroughly and more thoroughly from my sin." So in days of old did our churches, clothed

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in their Lenten dress, cry to the soul through the long six weeks of Lent. In like manner does our Silence strip itself bare of all external appeal to the feelings, fastening itself upon one thing, the surrendered will. Silence keeps fast from all appeal to senses or to sentiment. Silence banishes music, that mistress of the emotion which touches chords of feeling that no words or sights can reach. Silence hushes the voice of the preacher which men too often think essential to the kindling of spiritual fervour. Silence needs no pulpits. There is no appeal to the eye in our Silence: no moving figures, as we pray, perform the age-old ceremonies which, to the initiated, suggest loftiest and tenderest thoughts of God; no moving mystery of holy rite stirs the soul in the Silence, no liturgic speech pregnant with the appeal of association and of memory, thrilling with the pageantry of language; instead, a motionless silence, a deliberate concentration, a single consistent act by

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which the will clings to God. Silence, only silence, the silence which demands an absolute sincerity, a scrupulous reality, a calm considered self-surrender to God ! But for all that, is it true that Silence is unemotional because it thus fasts from all the aids to feeling ? Far from it. No more than is the Lenten fast from colour void of beauty. There are times in the Silence, when as though by some unseen hand the floodgates of spiritual feeling are opened. Then the Silence is moving as neither music nor preaching nor ceremony. Nay, the very departing from excitement has an emotional value of its own. But that is not our goal nor our concern. The will not the feelings, the will and nothing but the will, is what the Silence seeks to consecrate to God, that we may the more completely, like Mary in Nazareth, like Christ in Gethsemane, surrender it to His.

Silence, as we have said, is the redemption of speech, lifting speech to

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higher levels, because in silence there is generated that force, that deep sincerity which gives to true speech its power. So too, I might say, Silence is the redemption of action. Our deep pondering has action for its end; some real movement of the will Godwards. As God calls us to some definite obedience, and in the Silence we give ourselves simply to do what He would have us do, our resolution is enabled by the very power of God Himself; and behind our little human acts there is the moving of the Will of God.

A leader-writer in the *Times* said of a certain war speech, "Some words are in themselves noble deeds." Some resolutions in the Silence are noble deeds, so certain is their ultimate translation into action, for the resolution in which the whole self is surrendered to God, has the whole power of God behind it. Resolution, God-enabled, this is the goal of our Silence.

Or, again, as we follow our threefold

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path in the Silence, at every step it is self-surrender that meets us. Thus the first act of our Silence by which we make ready for the Voice : *the stilling, silencing, and focussing of the soul upon God* is hardly to be described in any other language than the language of the will. The mental process upon which we engage is a grasping and a letting go ; both are acts of the will : a letting go of all our surface life, business, pleasures, ambitions, desires, memories, pre-occupations which crowd out God. One by one, by a deliberate act of a surrendering will, we dismiss them ; and as the will abandons outward things, the very act is a cleaving to God. How shall we hold fast to God with both hands until we let go all that is not God ? We may think of this first step in the Silence as a launching out into the deep ; but if our boat is to float upon the waters it must leave the shore. So in the Silence we deliberately cast loose from this shore of time. We adventure ourselves

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a little while upon the sea of eternity. A venture it is ; a true activity, but first and last an affair of the will.

The tremendous cosmic thoughts of God, with which we seek to bring our souls to silence, His infinite majesty, His eternity, His omnipotence, His almost terrible sanctity, His all-pervading immanence, these are not thoughts that send the soul to sleep or mesmerize the will to inaction. Rather they stab the soul awake, they quicken the will to a new intensity. Great concentration is always great activity. Hugh Benson in *The Light Invisible*¹ describes a nun kneeling at her prayers in the chapel before the Blessed Sacrament. At first, the old priest who was watching her thought it all a miserable inactivity ; he judged the poor nun to be squandering the treasures of her womanhood, which out in the active world might have served the noble ends of motherhood and mercy. But as he knelt he

¹ *The Light Invisible*, R. H. Benson, p. 120.

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was put to shame ; he was shown that the seeming inactivity was in truth a profound energy. Her soul, so he seemed to see, was in direct contact with the Christ. He compares it to two wheels in machinery linked together with a great leather band, so that when one wheel moves the other moves with it. So this silencing of self is an uniting of the human will to the divine activity, a sharing for a little while of the energy of God. Our Lord's metaphor of the yoke expresses this idea in agricultural language. The yoke binds the two together to one task. To be the companion of Jesus Christ is to share His activity, the activity of the life of God. No soul is idle that is touching God. Stillness and Silence establish that contact. It is only when the will is surrendered to God that it is exercised at the heights of power. The Silence, if we will give ourselves to it with humility and purity, with sincerity of heart and an absolute surrender, will take our

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little human wheel of life and bind it to the motive power of the worlds.

And the second division of our Silence, *the silent listening*—this is nothing else at all but pure self-surrender. Our Silence stakes everything upon one belief, but it is a belief which will bear the strain; it is the belief that God speaks to the souls of men, not merely to the rare saint, or to the inspired prophet, but to all who will listen. It is a tremendous belief; but how can God conceivably be our Father if it be not true? A father unwilling to speak to his children! That could not be. *He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?*¹ He that made the tongue, shall He not speak? Humanity has a spiritual ear. In every age there have been men who have heard God speak, so that when they told the tale their brethren recognized its authority. On this belief our Silence rests, and the corporate practice of these Silences, if only it might win its

¹ Psalm xciv. 9.

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way right through the Church, would be an outward and visible witness to that splendid belief which is, after all, but part of our belief in the Holy Spirit. It would be a witness, and more, a kind of protective shell to preserve from oblivion, and from practical neglect so glorious a heritage.

In the centre of our Silence we are listening. We are not cudgelling our brains to think new thoughts; on the contrary, we lay aside completely all mental striving, we suppress all self-originating thinking, not that we may make our minds empty or torpid but the very opposite, that in our silent listening we may catch the lightest suggestion coming up from the depths of our nature, from the God Who abides there. This is the self-surrender of the intellect. And, what other attitude befits man in the presence of the infinite Wisdom so well as the attitude of silence and of listening? The mind is not empty; thoughts come, and they are

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thoughts that are coming to us from God. Listeners we are, not anxious ; quietly, without stretching or straining or labouring we follow the lead. This is no blank mind, no listless will. Far from that ; for all the time even now, in the still centre of our Silence, the will is at work. The sailor will make but little progress if he is content to allow his sail to hang loose in the breeze. He must draw the sheet taut to the wind if it is to bear his boat forward. So in our Silence, the will is active, holding the soul up to God, to the blessed winds of heaven. The will is active, but it is surrendered ; it is emptied of its own thoughts and desires ; its only activity is holding fast to God.

It is well in this prayer to guard against spiritual pride. The prayer of the Silence is no lofty way of prayer. For a man to believe that God speaks to him is not to believe himself a saint or a mystic or a contemplative or any high thing at all. God's speaking to the soul

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God. So near are Silence and Sacrament.

It is an adventure, this Silence of ours, a great adventure. If we follow it we shall find ourselves called to sacrifices; sacrifices, maybe, that we little dreamed that the Silence would demand. Nietzsche was right when he said "live dangerously." What noble heart refuses risks? Who can tell, when he gives himself to God, whither God will lead him? Who stays to ask? He may part us from our friends, He may strip us of our possessions, He may rob us of comfort and success, He may take our health, and ask for life itself. It is certain that He will scourge us from our self-esteem, self-trust, self-interest, self-love. He will war against the self a war that has no armistice. He will make no peace with man except the peace without conditions, the peace of self-surrender. But He will be ours before we are His.

VI

PEACE

MICHAEL FAIRLESS in *The Grey Brethren*¹ describes a charming memory of visits paid in her childhood to two old Quaker sisters, Mary and Rebecca by name. It is an idyll of peace. From the moment when the garden gate closed behind her, the child felt, so she tells us, that she was shutting herself into peace. "I can feel now," she writes, "the touch of the cool dove-coloured silk dress against my cheek as I sat on the floor, watching the nimble fingers with the shuttle, and listening as Mary read aloud a letter received that morning, describing a meeting of the faithful, and a 'moving

¹ *The Grey Brethren*, Michael Fairless, p. 2.

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of the Spirit' among them. I had a mental picture of the 'Holy Heavenly Dove' with its wings of silver-grey hovering over my dear old ladies, and I doubt not my vision was a true one. . . . A city of peace this little house in which the same severely gentle decorum reigned in the kitchen as elsewhere. Now where is such a haunt to be found ? ”

So she writes. It is a just and delicate tribute, and there are still such homes of quiet peace known to most of us who number Friends among our friends, for Quakerism, like all powerful influences, stamps its impress on the character. As a man's school or college marks him, so does his religion. The Quaker mark is peace. The Friends seem to have discovered how to exorcise the nasty little demons of fuss, flurry, worry, and bad temper. They learn that secret, I doubt not, in their Silence, for the time which a man spends in worship, if his worship is truly “in the Spirit,” is the most formative of all

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influences in the making of his character. It is not, therefore, surprising that those whose one and only basis of worship is Silence should win from their Silence this quality of peace, for truly Silence favours peace.

Worship is indeed the supreme character-builder. In the hours given to worship all the powers of the soul are called into active exercise and concentrated intensely upon the sublimest of ideas, upon God. It is inconceivable that the soul thus deliberately opened to the Supreme Spirit, should be other than profoundly affected; the very bigness of worship and of the thoughts with which it deals tells directly upon personality. When a man deliberately and voluntarily approaches the Infinite Will, and places himself in adoration and in submission before that Will, surrendering himself to It without reserve, and that, not merely in the humility of a creature before the ineffable Creator, but as a lover adoring the eternal beauty,

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and consciously returning the divine love, it would be strange if worship did not create character; and the more worship is of that type in which the self is subdued, devoted, and surrendered, the profounder will be its influence upon the soul. In silent worship where even thought, so far as it is self-originated, is in quiescence that the soul may be receptive to the slightest movement of God, the influence of worship is at its height. Such worship will not only exalt and purify the soul, it will set upon it the seal of its own stillness and peace.

Nor is it only the silence of this worship that makes for peace; the ideas with which the silence is filled, the living faith in God's immediate Presence, and His personal guidance and direction of life, the belief in the Inner Light—how can one who has such a faith be any longer the slave of worry, or nerves, or of anxiety or restlessness?

It is with thoughts like these that the Silence of the Friends is filled. With one

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accord the worshippers resolutely turn themselves to the contemplation of God as light, life, and love. What wonder that they win peace ?

William James, the psychologist, in his book, *Talks to Teachers*,¹ describes the visit of a number of accomplished Hindus to his American University. "More than one of them," he writes, "has confided to me that the sight of our faces, contracted as they are with American over-intensity of expression, made a painful impression upon him. 'I do not see,' said one of them, 'how it is possible for you to live as you do without a single minute in your day given to tranquillity and meditation. It is an invariable part of our Hindoo life to retire for at least half an hour daily into silence, to relax our muscles, to govern our breathing, to meditate on eternal things. Every Hindoo child is trained to this from a very early age.' "

James's own comment is that the good

¹ *Talks to Teachers*, William James, p. 74.

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fruits of such a discipline were obvious in the physical repose and the lack of tension, and in the wonderful calmness of facial expression of his Oriental visitors, and that his own countrymen in America were depriving themselves of an essential grace of character; he proceeds to recommend that "American children should be taught to moderate their piercing voices, and to relax their unused muscles, and when sitting, to sit quite still." Good counsel for this side of the Atlantic also!

But the Quaker Silence anticipated this twentieth-century psychology and paralleled the practice of the East by providing a method of prayer which, though it makes no account of relaxed muscles and deep breathing, does nevertheless effectually train souls in tranquillity and in calm meditation upon the eternal things, and directs them to the thoughts and conceptions of God which bring peace to the soul.

Whittier, himself a Friend, in an ex-

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quisite poem, which happily has found a place in the *English Hymnal*, has described this corporate Silence, this simple yet profound waiting upon God, and its power of peace—

Drop thy still dews of quietness
Till all our strivings cease,
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and Thy balm,
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire,
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small voice of calm.

Let me say again with emphasis that the fruitful use of the Silence is no easy matter. Nothing which demands the discipline of the mind is likely to be easy. But we claim with confidence that the corporate Silence makes this mental discipline less difficult, and upon two grounds. First, because it is corporate. The presence of others, if they are fulfilling the essential condition of the Silence, sincere and humble desire to

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wait upon God, creates an atmosphere in which things spiritual are more easily reached than in isolation. Describe it, if you will, in the language of psychology; thought waves pass from brain to brain, desire and aspiration are radiated from soul to soul, and in each are intensified, because they are, there and then, being shared by others whose very presence in this corporate Silence is evidence, palpable evidence, that they share the same longings and intentions.

Or describe it spiritually. It is a definite and deliberate claiming of a most plain promise of Our Lord the Christ, that His presence should be the reward of fellowship where there are but two or three met together in His Name to claim it.

It is sound psychology, and it is also sound divinity to expect that such a thing, as is this corporate Silence of ours, will bring the fruits which those who persevere in its practice witness that they find in it, the sense of God's Presence,

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the shining of the Light—Penitence, Power, Fellowship, and Peace.

And secondly, because in itself this Silence is a real training, a mental and spiritual athletic, in the art of governing thought, of restraining its discursiveness, and controlling its wandering and restlessness, the prayer of Silence is the author of peace. The sense of the Presence of God puts to flight the discordant thoughts which destroy our peace. The quiet exercise of the will discovers how to substitute for false and unhealthy thinking the thoughts of hope and strength ; above all, the immediate direct contact with the light and life of God within the soul, immanent and realized as immanent, suffices for all our need. Silence brings the peace of satisfaction.

Our Lord promised peace, but He never promised freedom from adversity. He Himself did not win our peace by immunity from tribulation or pain. Nay, it was beneath the shadow of the

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Cross in the Upper Room, as He bade them farewell on the eve of His Passion, that He bequeathed His farewell legacy of peace. Already the traitor had sold Him to His foes when He said—*My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.*¹

In a letter written from a house of mourning which war, striking its cruellest blow, had robbed both of husband and father, I read these words: “We are indeed in sorrow, but we are not unhappy in our sorrow.” Mr. Gladstone’s last days of pain were cheered by the constant recurrence to his mind of the words of Dante, “In His will is our peace.” This conquest of pain, strife and death is a greater thing, far greater than if death, pain and strife had been impossible.

Our Silence is a silence of surrender, and surrender is the foundation of peace. It is no silence of monotony, and its peace is no monotone, no dull, insuffer-

¹ S. John xiv. 27.

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able unison ; it is a chord of divine harmony, the harmony of the will of God and of man.

Newman analyzed human consciousness into the ultimate perception of two final realities, "God and my soul, my soul and God." It is when these last realities are perfectly at one that peace is attained. There is but one way to that divine harmony, and that, by surrender without conditions. Our spiritual combat will never cease till it ends in the victory of Christ, which alone is peace.

But when the soul is surrendered, Jesus Christ imposes no dominion. Under the standard of the Cross there are no slaves, no subject souls crushed by His irresistible might. His victory is the victory of love. He will take no other. His terms of peace are nothing else than that we should claim our fullest liberty as sons of God ? To as many as receive Him to them gives He power to become the sons of God. Sons, do I say ? Nay,

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kings who reign with him. *Let the peace of God*, said S. Paul, *rule within your hearts.*¹ "Peace," said Robertson of Brighton, "is the manifestation of power; the real majesty of the soul is calmness, and calmness is the manifestation of strength."²

Our Lord's use of the peace greeting is remarkable. In His day it was the common salutation, "Peace be unto you," and He Himself bade His disciples use it on their journeys in the form, "Peace be to this house." It is perhaps too much to say that Our Lord never used "Peace" as a greeting, but the Gospels describe Him as using it only as a farewell until after His Resurrection. He would send away an anxious and troubled mother with the words "Go in peace," more accurately "Go into peace;" and His farewell to His Apostles on the night of the Maundy was "Peace I leave with you." Only when

¹ Col. iii. 15.

² *Sermons* (8rd Series), F. W. Robertson.

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He was risen from the dead were His first words of greeting, *Peace be unto you.*

Easter and Peace interpret one another. With man, peace is a prelude; with God, it is a consummation, and a divine climax of perfected union. When the grave of absolution closes over the old death of rebellion and sin, and Christ the Lord is risen anew in His Easter in the soul, there is peace. The Fellowship of Silence is no Lenten penance. It is as fit for the great forty days of Easter joy as for the forty days of Lenten sorrow. It offers the Easter gift of peace and light, of faith and love and of surrender.

I have been asked from time to time if I can tell people of a church where they will find this corporate Silence in practice. But those who have learned a little to love the Silence need but two or three like-minded with themselves, and an open door. No leave is needed to go into a church, whose door stands open for prayer, by twos and

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threes to pray together in the Silence. One such circle I actually found in the far north ; there were half a dozen people who, without any priest to suggest it to them, or to help them, or to encourage them, had actually used their church, which stood open for prayer, in that way ; they had maintained, upon their own initiative, that Silent Fellowship every Friday afternoon for two years. The Oxford Movement turned the key in the church door and opened it ; do we not need a movement which shall be as a magnet to draw people within the open church, and thus to make it a very storehouse of prayer ? Few, surely, are the priests who would not welcome such silent circles. But it is no law of God that spiritual movements can only begin with the clergy, and our Silence in its simplicity is the freest thing in the world.

To-day, when the Cross is set up in a Christendom that is well-nigh one vast and terrible battlefield, shall we not, good

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friends, lovers of silence, in the shelter of the Silence, make long and urgent prayer that this poor world at war may win again the light and peace which are the gift of the Cross. *Per crucem ad lucem.* Light and peace, the mottoes of our silence! It is this that is our prayer for the souls of our heroes who have fallen. This is the gift of Easter, of the Resurrection Life, of life beyond the valley of the shadow. It is theirs who in Christ pass through death into the great silence of the larger life beyond. And though the earth be filled with darkness and with war, let us in our Silence win for the world some share of these twin fruits of Silence, light and peace.

PART II

SILENCE and secrecy ! Altars might still be raised to them (were this an altar-building time) for universal worship. Silence is the element in which great things fashion themselves together, that at length they may emerge, full-formed and majestic, into the daylight of Life, which they are henceforth to rule . . . do thou but *hold thy tongue for one day* ; on the morrow how much clearer are thy purposes and duties ; what wreck and rubbish have these mute workmen within thee swept away, when intrusive noises are shut out ! Speech is too often not, as the Frenchman defined it, the art of concealing Thought, but of quite stifling and suspending Thought, so that there is none to conceal. . . . Speech is of Time. Silence of Eternity. Bees will not work except in darkness ; Thought will not work except in Silence. . . . Silence, the great Empire of Silence, higher than the Stars, deeper than the Kingdom of Death ! . . . Silence and the great silent men ! . . . A country that has none or few of these is in a bad way. Like a forest that has no roots ; which had all turned to leaves and boughs ; which must soon wither and be no forest.

CARLYLE (quoted by Maeterlinck in
The Treasure of the Humble).

Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God ; for to draw nigh to hear is better than to give the sacrifice of fools : for they know not that they do evil.

Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God : for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth : therefore let thy words be few.

Ecclesiastes.

I

MOVEMENTS OF THE SPIRIT

WE in England sorely need some new spiritual impulse. The last has spent its force, but we can perceive beneath the surface of the religious consciousness of to-day stirrings which are surely the presage of some fresh advance of the Spirit. The War is affecting men powerfully. Though the Germans are not on the road to London, and though we have not yet, thank God, reached the sense of extremity which sends the most thoughtless crying to God for help, yet here in England, though it is curiously reticent, there is a new feeling after God. What direction will this new movement of the Spirit take? There are, I think,

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signs which indicate a return to inwardness in religion ; an era of the Spirit. Missioners have, in some ways, special opportunities of discovering to what appeal men most readily respond, or at least what spiritual methods appear best to meet their needs. Almost all of them would, I believe, agree that a profound change has come over Missions and Mission methods in the last few years. A Mission is the most elastic and the freest of the Church's instruments. It knows neither rubric nor restriction : every line of attack upon the strongholds of evil which will advance Christ's Kingdom is open so long as it is Christian, and so long as it serves the great end of the salvation of souls. It readily reflects, therefore, the changing religious consciousness of the age, and almost compels the Missioner to recognize what message it is that brings back to him the unmistakable sense that tells him, if he have the temperament of his calling, that his

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words have gone home. What, then, is the change of emphasis that has insensibly passed over Missions and Mission preaching? Its most conspicuous feature is the passing of revivalism and of the appeal to excitement. The soul of this generation does not respond to perfervid oratory, or to emotional appeals either to sentiment or terror. The fear of death and hell are no longer the Missioner's "sword of Goliath," nor does the message of the Fatherhood and free forgiveness, which in the Moody and Sankey period burst on so many thousands as a new gospel, now create the same electric effect. I believe that the message which most directly ministers to the spiritual needs of this generation is the gospel of the spiritual life and of personal spiritual development, of prayer, communion, and meditation. Personal illumination, personal inspiration through life lived in the Holy Ghost, and the immediate touch with the spiritual world, for these things the

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men of our generation are hungry. There are signs that an age of the Spirit, and of interior religion is approaching. So may it be.

This was, I believe, the prevailing temper of the religious world when the War came. It may be that so great a cataclysm will strike suddenly across all movements of the mind and soul, and that from it will come unexpected and tremendous spiritual happenings. But the mind of man, even in its most apparently rapid changes, is marvellously tenacious of its past. Already over many a landscape, torn but a year ago by the ravage of war, the flowers and grass are creeping back. So does the mind return to its old paths. Behind the movements of men's souls that appear so sudden, lie long though hidden preparations.

It has been my good fortune to experience one such movement of the Spirit, the lessons of which, in more ways than one, may perhaps be signi-

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ficant for us in England to-day. I refer to the Mission of Help to New Zealand in 1910. From the first moment of that wonderful spiritual movement to the last the *élan vital* of the Holy Ghost was upon it. As the missionaries journeyed from end to end of the two Islands the divine impulse neither failed nor flagged. Their part was incredibly easy. They were borne along by the current. What was happening before their eyes was, as they well knew, no work of theirs. Those of their number whose experience dated back to the great days of missions declared that this exceeded them. Its note was as distinct as its power. It was the note not of excitement but of quiet. God was revealed to thousands, consciences were awakened, lives were transformed, but it was not by the action of a spiritual earthquake. How still they were, those kneeling crowds at prayer! It was the sunrise of a divine illumination. Sunrise has in it often an element of surprise. The

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first appearance of the ball of light above a clear horizon is sudden as a flash of lightning. Those who knew New Zealand, and the Forerunners who had visited it to prepare our way, had by no means led us to expect any great response. On the contrary, they had warned us to expect but little, so few and secret were the signs that heralded that act of the Spirit. But looking back after the event, and in the light of its experience, we could discover evidence that it was neither so sudden nor unprepared. A wave of intercession had preceded the wave of power. Far and wide a great volume of prayer had gone up, and on the eve of the Mission there were in Auckland remarkable meetings of prayer. There were also elements in the psychology of New Zealand which were in themselves a preparation for what happened. Life in the New World is free from the stiffness and conventionality of the Old. A touch of the pioneer spirit has worked its way into

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the soul, and a certain readiness to welcome the new and unfamiliar is the result. There was, too, the particular stage in its prosperity which the Dominion had reached. Poverty is practically non-existent. There are no slums. New Zealand boasts neither a submerged tenth nor a millionaire. It has the climate of a terrestrial paradise. It is the Utopia of the working man. He is better off there than anywhere on earth, though a strike or two can occasionally be manufactured for the sake of auld lang syne. But this prosperity is not new, as it is, for example, in Western Canada. Prosperity is ten years old in Winnipeg, sixty in Wellington, but it is yet attended with the element of struggle. If life is prosperous, it is also hard. But in this pleasant land beneath our feet men have had time to discover, as in the Far West they have not, that material prosperity can never satisfy the soul. I do not pretend that every New Zealander is seeking for God, but

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I do affirm with such grave emphasis as I can command—for it is, I believe, of high significance for ourselves—that in every town and village in which I ministered I found men and women in numbers hungry for the spiritual, and further, I found some who, having missed in their own Church the spiritual food for which they craved, had turned away to new religions and strange modern cults. They were in search of a more inward religion: a religion which would interpret to them their own spiritual instincts, and not only interpret but develop.

This is a generalization, and to be read as such, but it repeated itself so often in my experience, and I know also in the experience of some at least of my brother-missioners, that I do not shrink from describing it as typical of the spiritual consciousness of the Church in New Zealand. These people did not need to be aroused or alarmed to the thought of God. The stirring mission

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sermon, night after night, was left unpreached. They drank in, as a desert the rain, the truth of the indwelling Presence of God in man. The Divine Immanence was for them a converting thought. The New World has a soul that yearns for the immediacy of God. "Will you write in my book those verses about God being closer than breathing and nearer than hands or feet?" was an entirely characteristic request. It is not surprising, therefore, that the mystery in which the Divine Immanence becomes a Sacrament, the Blessed Eucharist, appealed with extraordinary force. The daily celebration was an entirely new conception. They came, often driving long distances in the early hours, in numbers which I have not seen paralleled elsewhere. There is nothing contradictory in this double drawing both to an interior religion and to the Holy Sacrament, for the Eucharist is meaningless except as itself a witness to the inward. All its

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power and all its attraction lie in the "inward part," the hidden Presence of of the living Christ.

I have dwelt on our New Zealand experiences with purpose, for I believe that in the freer life of the New World the tendencies that are more slowly developing here in England, retarded by the drag of old traditions and a more cautious conservatism of mind, manifest themselves more clearly and more quickly. We at home may in some ways see in the Colonies an enlarging and prospective mirror of the trend of life and thought amongst ourselves, as the weather in New York forecasts London's. It may be that a different stimulus will be needed to hasten this development. The sharp wounds of war and the pressure of poverty and sorrow may do for England what prosperity has done for New Zealand, but already there are signs that increasingly men and women are feeling after God, and are asking of the Church more help

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in the interior life, and a more direct access to the spiritual world than they ordinarily receive either from her pulpits or her services. The spiritual instinct is alive and craves satisfaction. Often this is a consciously perceived necessity, but more often it is the unrecognized cause which lies behind many different spiritual phenomena of our time. What is the attraction of Theosophy and Christian Science to so many minds? Certainly not the astonishing dogmas that they propound. It is, I believe, the method of spiritual development, the initiation into the mysteries of meditation, and the strong emphasis on the presence of God in the soul and upon the immanence of the spiritual within the material, that is the secret of their power. Men judge the life of the Church, and they have the right to do so, by the public worship of the Church. They judge the teaching of the Church by the message weekly delivered from its pulpits. If they have not found there either the

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emphasis upon the inward in the teaching, or the manifestation of the spiritual in the worship, they are at the mercy of any society or any teacher who may spring up to fill the gaps.

Even yet we constantly minimize the extraordinary power of public worship for good or ill according as it is or is not faithful to the Church's ideal. To the same cause may be attributed the decline of attendance at public worship in another and less earnest type of mind. We need to remagnetize our common worship that its spiritual power may become self-evident. It is not the fault of the Church in herself, or of her liturgy. It is ours who have imperfectly presented her system to the world. Life in the Catholic Church and life in the Holy Spirit ought to mean one thing. Ours is the fault if they do not, but it is sad indeed if men are to turn away from the Church which is in direct line with Pentecost in search of the Holy Ghost. Historically it is the Catholic

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Church that has been the greatest minister and purifier of man's approach to his Maker. She has consecrated in a noble synthesis of worship all that is highest and best in every avenue which in the history of mankind has led men to God. She possesses in her Sacraments the divinely ordained way to the Father. She preserves in just balance, as she stands at the altar, her ministry to the intellectual, the psychic and the spiritual in man, but I would not claim for her immunity from the dangers that beset all things human. Side by side with the synthetic process by which all that is true is recognized and preserved, there is need of a constant revivification and purifying. Of this last *Ecclesia Anglicana* is at this present time in need. A broom is wanted to sweep away despiritualizing conventions, the *débris* of an age of change from the slovenliness of the eighteenth to the ceremony of the nineteenth century.

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We are ready now for a spiritual movement which will rid us of much lumber by an eager return to the emphasis upon the inward. We shall not repeat the perhaps inevitable mistake of George Fox and his disciples, and reject the body of worship because the soul of it is of greater account. The body counts, and will count, as long as we are in the body. But though Fox was wrong at one point he was nobly right in the other. He need not have put away Sacraments, but he did well to draw men, and congregations of men, into Silence. There is no danger now of the Sacraments losing their hold. Every day they are strengthening it. The love of beauty, which grows apace in our midst, and the sense of its spiritual significance, is laying broad and firm for the future the foundations of sacramental religion. Quakers nowadays deny that they are sacramentless. Not two Sacraments, say they, or seven, but seventy times seven. They find a

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sacrament in every flower, and the divine beneath all common things; they would have us make of every meal a hallowed remembrance of the Upper Room; so irresistible is the sacramental idea, and so strongly does the diffused sacramentalism of nature appeal to this generation. This surely is more than half-way to perceiving why Christ broke the bread and blessed the wine. If I do not venture a prophecy I put up a prayer that another generation of Friends, preserving the precious heritage of their ancestors, that deep inward mysticism which so strangely resembles the spiritual experiences of the Catholic mystics, may perceive that the concentration of the sacramental significance, diffused throughout the visible world, upon the Christ-ordained Breaking of the Bread, rightly understood, does not deny but affirms this sacredness of common things. The rite wherein—

God's Presence and His very Self
And Essence all divine

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is by faith discovered in the Bread, of which He said, "This is My Body," sheds its radiance over all lesser symbols. Every cornfield and every vineyard shares in the reflected glory of the bread and wine of the altar. What traveller in Tirol but has felt the charm and suggestiveness of the wayside shrines that he meets so frequently. The image of the Redeemer seems to claim valley and hill for God, and to consecrate the entire scene by the shadow of His Presence. They are the symbols of the Universal Presence. They are the points where the sense of God is focussed. The gleaming chapel of "Our Lady of the Snows" high upon the sky-line, the bells in the white steeples in the valley below chiming the mid-day "Angelus"—these things do not take away the natural sanctities of natural beauty. They do not empty the world of God. Far otherwise, they keep in mind the Universal Presence as they focus at a point in time and place this vivid consciousness

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of God. This is the reflex of the Incarnation. But man is so made that he must focus the Universal before he can hold it fast. The Silence that Quakers love, and that we should all be the richer for, is in reality aiming at this very end, though in another way. Silence and Sacraments, symbols and the elimination of symbols, all have for their object one thing, the sense of God.

I make bold to say, therefore, that it is this sense of God, and of the immediacy of God, and this development of latent spiritual capacities, for which men and women to-day are waiting and longing, and that it may be reached by a fresh alliance of Silence and Sacrament. The way of escape from the dryness, deadness, conventionality and spiritual poverty that spreads its blight over so much of modern worship lies, I believe, in according a yet greater pre-eminence to the Eucharist, which the history of Christianity and the witness of the New Testament incontestably make the

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very centre of Christian worship. The Oxford movement failed only so far as it failed to recall the great body of the Church to its true worship-centre. But the Sacraments, and most of all the Blessed Sacrament, are no mere charms which work their miracles as by magic. They are divine enough to be powerless, as is God Himself, to redeem mankind without man's response. Something, at least, of spiritual development and of mystical response is necessary before the inner mystery of sacramental life can be discerned. It is this quickened spiritual sense which is the key to the "door opened in heaven." Silence awakens this dormant sense. By the severity with which it isolates the soul from lesser things it leads directly to the sense of God. Its noble insistence on the inward strengthens the faculty which discerns inward things. Communion is the richer for the listening times of silence. In truth there is more mysticism in the modern world than we

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provide for. Silence, like a wise school-master, teaches her pupils how to teach themselves. Forms are good. God gave us forms, but Heaven defend us from all empty forms, and the highest Sacrament is empty to him who does not discern the inward beneath the outward. It is good often to use the prayer that is stripped of all forms, even of words, in order that, concentrated solely upon the inward, we may make ready to yield ourselves with more perfect discernment and surrender to that deep inward Life which is the gift of the Blessed Sacrament. Silence guards us well from the peril, of which S. Paul wrote, of undiscerning approach.

The Roman Catholic Church has, by the use she makes of the Reserved Sacrament, taught her children to surround the altar with silence. What is the visit to the Blessed Sacrament but the prayer of Silence, a silence shared with every other wordless worshipper intent upon the same thoughts of adora-

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tion and love. It is this, more than dogmas, that, to minds bent upon the inward, is her chief attraction. But it is hardly to be claimed for this use of the Sacrament that it is in the fullest sense Catholic so long as the Eastern Church knows nothing of it. Nor will its practical advantage of drawing the faithful constantly to pray in the churches compensate us for the loss, if the effect of the devotion to the Reserved Sacrament is to lessen the sense of the Universal Presence. It is precisely according as it is a confession or a denial of this Universal Presence that this devotion must be judged. The "Prisoner of the Tabernacle" is a title which would appear fatal to high or spiritual conceptions of the Sacramental Presence, and so also is any teaching which in effect, even if not in words, so acknowledges the Presence of Christ in the Eucharist as to suggest that elsewhere He is not. Once let the idea obtain that a church without Re-

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ervation is empty and with it is full, and we are making for the rocks. But there is no gainsaying the benefit to souls of a church used, not at set times only, but daily and hourly for prayer. There the unseen world is strangely near to our perception of it. It is not the grandeur or simplicity of its decoration that gives to a church the precious atmosphere of home and of the other world, it is the constant stream of prayer, never long remitted, of which it becomes the treasury.

Is then this gospel of inwardness the direction, prepared in advance, along which the tidal wave of divine visitation will proceed? After the Evangelical movement came the Catholic; would it be strange if, after the rediscovery of the value and spirituality of the external, the pendulum swung in the direction of a new emphasis upon the inward? Such a movement would be no reaction towards evangelicalism; on the contrary, it would be an advance in the direction

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of mysticism, which is a different matter. The true heirs of each new movement of the Spirit are those who have drunk most deeply of the last. The richest catholicism remains profoundly evangelical. Such were men of the stamp of Body, Lowder, and Stanton. So it may well be that those best prepared to welcome a stronger emphasis upon interior religion will be those who approach it from the standpoint of an evangelical catholicism. Let us stand ready, watching for the beacon that shall summon us to fresh advance, that we may without delay follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, from light to light, from glory to glory, till we come at last to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

II

THE INTERCESSION OF SILENCE

IN days like these, Silence, if it can teach men how to intercede, will find many disciples. We are summoned to intercession with an unprecedented urgency of demand. Love of country, love of our kin, and love of God—our patriotism, our affections, and our religion—agree to bid us to strenuous and unwearied intercession. Nor must we relax our prayer as the months of war drag on. Suffer me then to commend to you the prayer of Silence as a good pedagogue to bring us to the Christ Intercessor. Silence with its splendid discipline of the energies of the soul will be found to furnish a sovereign

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remedy against the weariness which so soon overtakes the spiritual amateur.

Silence which is religious is no mere absence of speech. It is no failure of vocal prayer. Rather it is prayer gathering itself into an intensity of concentration in which it lays firmer hold on God, and on that for which it intercedes. The prayer of words is prayer in movement. It passes on from thought to thought, and from one to another object of entreaty. The prayer of Silence is free to halt before a single need. It opens to the soul the possibility of making its own, by a steadfast and deliberate act of compassion and love, the object for which it is interceding, and at the same time the realization of the Presence of God. It is of the essence of intercession firmly to establish this double relationship alike with God and man. Silence facilitates those acts of the soul by which it attains to the realization of the divine Presence and makes fast its hold on

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God. Silence enables imagination and memory to do their work of quickening into actuality and power the love and faith that underlie all intercession. The moving panorama, in which one object of prayer after another passes and is gone, gives but little chance for the intercessor to take them into his heart in any deep way. True desire lingers, drawing into itself with slow intensity the need for which it prays.

It may be doubted whether our litanies of intercession are ideal schools of prayer. Litanies had their origin, I imagine, in lands where the fervour of the people showed itself in oft-repeated cries. At Lourdes the ceaseless cry, "Ora pro nobis," scarcely allowing space for the priests to declaim the titles of the Madonna or the names of the saints, by its swift impetuosity serves to inflame devotion and to concentrate and unify it in one single desire. Such may well have been the earliest litanies. Such assuredly are not our island ways.

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Our litanies move with thoughtful deliberation. If they do not inflame the emotions they favour recollection. But they demand a considerable power of thought-control if they are to be well used, and they share with all vocal prayer the penalty of their perpetual motion. They must and do pass on; and even their deliberate pace is too rapid for the soul to take deep into itself their numerous petitions. They attain to something between the eager fervour of the southern races, and the depth of concentrated purpose which the intercession of the Silence seeks. Slow trains permit the traveller to see more of the country than fast; but if he would make the scenery his own he must alight.

They see all sights from pole to pole,
And glance and nod and bustle by;
And never once possess the soul
Until they die.

So wrote Matthew Arnold of those foolish travellers who, desiring to see everything, see nothing.

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The prayer of Silence teaches a man to possess his soul. It is better to have made one's own for life the beauty of a single valley, than to have glanced at a hundred and lost them all. Silence holds the possibilities of discovery, and of the identification of the intercessor with the object of his prayer. It is the school in which he may learn how to empty his soul of self and fill it full of God and man. The angelic song rests motionless before the single thought of the holiness of God. Repetition, when it is not vain repetition, is half-way along the road to silence.

1. *The Silence of the Crowd*

Multitudes of people are always impressive, a silent multitude is doubly so. Even when that silence is accidental rather than intentional, it is still positive rather than negative. An audience waiting for a singer to appear is, according to the degree of its expectancy, filling the atmosphere with a certain

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psychic force ; it is generating those thrills of delight which the artist, who moves his audience, not merely by his musical perfection, but by his gift of entering into psychical relationship with it, will presently set free. Instinctively he demands this focussed silence, not merely because he hates dissonant noises, but because he first must gather us under his spell. Incidentally, the many are being unified, the self-barriers are falling, the audience is becoming a fellowship. When silence is thus used, not merely for artistic pleasure, but with the single end of reaching God, and not merely as the accident of assembling, or of waiting for the voice which shall begin our worship, but as itself a solemn and deliberate act, the psychic becomes the servant of the spiritual. The many become yet more deeply one. The act of faith in the Presence and Immediacy of God, which is the basis of the Silence, claims at once its reward. God Himself draws near. We begin to understand

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the phrases in the Acts which speak of the Holy Ghost falling upon the assembled Apostles; the sense of the Presence of God is powerful enough to be its own evidence. The silences of the Pan-Anglican Congress and of the Edinburgh Conference are yet remembered. "Blue as a sapphire's depths," writes Violet Hodgkin, "was the wonderful silence at Edinburgh, a silence in which things happen and deeds are done, done so actually and truly in the inner sphere of power that the mere outward doing of them in the material world follows naturally and spontaneously."¹ Slowly this old silence is returning to the Church's worship. Timidly we venture at times upon a brief minute of it. But it will grow of its own virtue. The nave of Winchester recently saw such a silence of three thousand persons enlarge itself beyond that narrow limit. Silence has a way of deepening as the

¹ L. V. Hodgkin, in *The Fellowship of Silence*, p. 220. (Macmillan.)

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minutes pass. George Fox records that once he was silent with the people by the space of two hours, but he was not dealing with multitudes. Yet I hope to live to see a multitude silent before God for half the space of the silent half-hour of heaven.

2. *The Silence of the Few*

But if silence possess the power that we have claimed for it of blending into fellowship the separate elements that combine in it, its use will not be limited to the crowd. Our Lord, speaking of this same fellowship, which, He taught, clothes prayer with an added power, seems to emphasise the potentiality of small numbers. *If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*¹ The power of fellowship lies not in

¹ S. Matthew xviii. 19-20.

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the numbers, but in the intensity with which men give themselves to it. A small circle of friends known to each other, sympathetic in mind and united in purpose, may in this Silence before God set in motion mighty forces. Their silence will be very different from the silence of the multitude, less tremendous, but not less intense. The silence of the crowd has in it something almost terrible. It is charged with electricity like the stillness before the thunder-storm. The silence of the few is tenderer, calmer, more meditative. It is like the peace and satisfaction of the sunset stillness of a summer's night, or it is alive as with the expectancy of those who, motionless in the dawn, await the moment when the sun will climb above the horizon. Silence—thus deliberately and consciously employed—dissolving the barriers of self, opens heart to heart and soul to soul, and opens them, not alone to their fellows, but to God. The walls, within which the self is fenced and fortified, fall

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before this Silence as Jericho before the trumpets of the priests ; and it is God Who enters. If intercession be, as indeed it is, nothing else but the opening of the soul at once Godwards to the Life that encompasses us and manwards to human need that awaits the succour of that Life, silence, with its gift of fellowship, may seem to be its most friendly ally. There, as slowly the soul embraces alike man and God, prayer passes beyond words into action. True prayer is indeed always an act. In its energy things are done in the spiritual sphere which can no more be lost than energy in the material world. Things happen in the outer world of which the cause, hidden from the eyes of men, is intercession.

Hugh Benson's old priest in *The Light Invisible*¹ says of his holy office : " It was meant that I should be the meeting-place, as every priest must be, of creation's need and God's grace." This is indeed eternal priesthood, that priest-

¹ *The Light Invisible*, R. H. Benson, p. 236.

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hood, the birthright of every Christian, which is exercised by every true intercessor. Thus, establishing in his own heart the contact between the infinite resources of the divine Life and the deep necessity of friend and country, the intercessor becomes the vehicle through whom the currents of grace flow. But love may not be hurried. In the silence out of which it is born, slowly and tenaciously it strengthens its hold upon God and country. Silence is for the soul the land of liberty: it may follow each path of thought undisturbed and rest where it will, before the necessities of a single soul as before the world's. It alone contents that last instinct of submission which ceases even to suggest the answer to prayer. It wills what God wills, and holding up to God the objects of its prayer, desires only what He desires.

III

THE MAKING OF THE INTERCESSOR

WAR finds out all the weak points in our armour. It puts to the test Church as well as Nation, and lays upon her new obligations. She is called to sustain the spirit of the nation by that energy which it is especially hers to contribute, the energy begotten of prayer. She blessed the cause, she sent forth her sons in thousands to this new Crusade, but we are not able to record that our churches have been filled as the churches of Russia and France, and, if report be true, even of Germany, to pray for the men whose peril and blood are our shield.¹ England believes in God and

¹ "The churches are crowded in Germany; Catholics, Lutherans, Reformed, and the rest, have never had such

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loves her soldiers and sailors. What was lacking was sufficient knowledge of the power of prayer. The first instincts of the people did indeed set towards prayer, but many of those first spiritual impulses of war-time were lost for lack of that training in prayer, that spiritual education and discipline, which it was the Church's duty to furnish.

I

The first step in the training of the intercessor is repentance. He must rid himself of all that stands in the way of his approach to God if he would pray well. That note was not conspicuous at the first. It was a fatal omission. This alone is enough to explain why prayer flagged. We were clear that our cause was holy, and that our entry into the war was not a ground of penitence or humiliation. There I believe we

congregations, and even the outrageous treatment of the Archbishop of Malines and the ruin of Rheims and Arras have not affected them one iota."—"A Neutral" writing in the *Times*, August 24, 1915.

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were right. But penitence is, in generous souls, deepened by nothing so much as the sense that God has put His cause into their hands. Great vocations humble noble men. Has it never happened in the world's history that God's causes have gone down because those to whom He committed them proved themselves unworthy? We did not humble ourselves, did not kneel in confession, did not purify ourselves before we assumed the sword and armour of God, lest the enemies of England should be encouraged at the sight of England at confession. Our enemies would have found more cause for fear if we had had "Miserere" on our lips. Instead, we chanted "Tipperary" up and down the land. It stood for our love for our soldiers, but we should have loved them better if we had prayed better. God has taught us that it is not possible to pray without penitence. Our cause is not less clearly right. Nothing has happened to raise a doubt of that. We see more clearly

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how entirely the welfare of the world is involved in the destruction of that war-engine against which we are fighting. But we know now that there has been much in our national life which is not worthy of our national vocation. Which of us can think without shame of our handling of the evil of intemperance. We had before us the shining example of Russia and France. We had the solemn warning, for which our Allies did not wait, that alcohol was standing directly between us and the munitioning of our armies. We had a kindling voice that warned us that Germany, Austria, and Drink were our three enemies, and that the greatest of these was Drink. And what was our answer? Was there ever a clearer defeat of good by evil? Then we heard that the child-wealth of the nation was suffering from the same poison working in the increase of drinking among women. If we do not repent, we of the Church, for this mortal sin of national feebleness and irresolution,

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our prayers will be of little avail. This does not stand alone. Would that it did! We who desire to be good intercessors must realize the sins of the people as our own. No man can love his country and his God but he will be willing to take upon his heart his country's sin no less than his country's need.

The Church must be England's penitent before she can be England's intercessor. *De Profundis* must enter into her prayers. Penitence, indeed, is noble intercession. Our country has received the supreme sign of God's favour, the call to play a foremost part in the vindication, through suffering, struggle and sacrifice, of all that the civilized and Christian world had won in the slow discipline of history, and of all that is the basis of brotherhood amongst men and nations, or that holds the promise of a future universal peace. The great French philosopher has paid to England a tribute, French in its

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generosity. "A nation," writes M. Bergson, "which has hitherto trusted in its fleet, at the cry of outraged justice has brought forth out of the very earth one million, two million, three million soldiers." Behind every soldier and sailor, we might add, there stand in the shadow one, two, three it may be, who directly share his sacrifice as brother or father, mother or wife. These we shall not forget. It is a mighty total. But does it not add sharpness to our self-reproach as a Church? With the wealth of these millions of sacrificial lives can we not find a way to link these noble instincts directly to God and Christ? Sacrifice is the stuff of which great prayer is made.

A penitent Church at the head of a penitent people—that is our primary need. If we had been driven to panic it would no doubt have been different. But the prayer of panic is not the highest prayer. It is time that the love of our mother-country sent us to our knees

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like Nehemiah, penitents for our own sins and the sins of the people.

II

Yet, again, did we not at the outset forget that prayer of the sustained order needs a certain training? We acted, I think, as though it was sufficient to issue prescribed forms, ring the church bell, or give out a notice, and the people would pour into the churches to pray. So they did at first, but not in the numbers that should have assembled, nor in most churches were the original numbers maintained. I venture to think that adequate numbers would have meant, at least on special days, numbers equal to the crowds that came to the churches at the death of King Edward. A sufficient realization of the gravity of the occasion, together with a strong belief in God, would have brought the nation into the churches Sunday by Sunday. It may be that sustained effort in prayer is not to be expected of the

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crowds, but then what of those who formed the first congregations at special war-intercessions, why is it that so many in so many places fell away? I attribute it, at least in part, to the lack of teaching in the holy art of prayer. Any man can make an occasional effort in prayer, but perseverance in things spiritual demands discipline. In any campaign it is the steady, disciplined work of the trained man that turns the scale. Such discipline is as vital to the soul, and as essential in the spiritual task as in the industrial or military. The Church needed a spiritual Kitchener to recruit and train its army of intercessors. The steady stream of intercession in the quiet places of the religious communities of men and women trained to prayer needed to expand and multiply itself in the parishes throughout the Empire. It is one thing to summon the people to church and conduct an intercession service in a manner as nearly reproducing customary conventions as the

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unaccustomed form of special services and litanies allow, and it is another to set about the task of the spiritual education of the people in the art of prayer. Where the priest has been at pains to make himself thus a real teacher of prayer, neither dwindling congregations nor flagging ardour have been his experience. Intercession that is alive is not wearisome.

The model of all intercession is the Heavenly Intercessor. *For Christ entered not into the holy place made with hands . . . but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.*¹ Here are discovered the elements of prevailing intercession.

1. *Appearing in the Presence of God*

Heaven lies about us and within us. The living God surrounds and interpenetrates our being, but nevertheless if we are thus to appear in the Presence

¹ Heb. ix. 24.

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there must be a definite movement of the soul Godwards. Mind and heart must make their own the all-present Life. For this we must learn how to fix our consciousness on God, holding firm and fast to Him in the concentrated thought and desire which is a true act of the will. This is the first and vital step in intercession. I must come before the Presence of His Majesty to present my petition. This is, in an especial sense, the gift of silence. Concentration demands stillness, most of all when its object is God. *Be still then and know that I am God.* Silence permits to the soul that deeper retirement within itself by which it comes to the inner chamber of being, where, guarded by the closed door of the mind, excluding all else save God, it finds the Father that is in secret. Silence, when it is the silence of many intent upon one purpose, breaks down the isolating walls of self, and opening to the spirit of human fellowship admits the divine. Of this silence the official

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forms of war-intercessions have reminded us faithfully, but too often in vain. If we would enter upon our intercession with a deliberate silence in which the people had first been counselled to concentrate upon the single thought of the immediate Presence in our midst of the Infinite Power, Wisdom and Love, that exercise alone would go far to admit us to the heart of intercession. Silence is the ante-chamber of God.

2. Appearing in the Presence on behalf of others

If the first exercise of intercession be primarily of the mind, the second is of the heart. We carry with us into the Presence all that we have truly taken into our heart. Love has the prerogative of drawing into the soul of the intercessor the object of his prayer. As he abides in the mighty Presence his power of love and compassion is magnified. Touching God, it transcends by the inflow of divine Life its

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natural capacity. This love the true intercessor pours forth upon his country in her necessity. And as he does so that necessity becomes his own: it is drawn into his life. *He will give thee thy heart's desire.* All that he has taken into his heart is his to lift up into the heart of God. The old definition is profoundly true: Prayer is the lifting up of mind and heart to God. How can I pray without desire, how desire without love? The prayer of intercession is human love and desire lifted to the heart of God and held there. Thus the heart of the intercessor, opened wide to human need, becomes the door through which that need, be it national or individual, passes beyond the barrier of outward things to the centre of Life and fulfilment. There is in our human caring this divine possibility that, if it be consecrated to intercession, all its content is merged in the compassion and strength of God.

Silence here most of all is our friend.

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The long large spaces, guarded from intruding sounds that might recall us from the depths, give to the soul its opportunity to fill itself full of its desire. Its lingering embrace draws to itself the object of its intercession. He who fears to love should never intercede. The patriot in his prayer gathers his motherland into his soul, which first he has filled with God. He needs no words. England is being graven on his heart for God to read. He will not cast about in this deep silence to ask what to entreat for her. That he leaves to the infinite wisdom and love, but he bears her on his heart, her peril, her sin, and her glorious vocation. Not words but longing is his prayer. As thus with unwavering will he prays, holding in his heart his country and his God, through his soul in this wordless prayer, as a river between its banks, there flows the stream of Life. Through such intercessors is the soul of a people fed. Thus its feebleness of purpose is vitalized. Thus are

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a nation's sins forgiven, and its sickness vanishes before the inrush of divine health.

3. *Intercession and Sacrifice*

If this be intercession, its essence is sacrifice, the will to give oneself wholly and without reserve to God and man. As the intercessor opens his soul to the inrush of divine Life and of human need, so self is driven forth. He does not pray that he may accomplish his desires, or fulfil his will for himself or for others. He wills only God's will. He desires only God's desire. He offers himself to become, in whatever way God will accept the surrender of his prayer, the instrument of that Will and that Desire. Thus, in the sphere of the Spirit, he unites himself with the Heavenly Intercessor appearing in the Presence of God in heaven itself for us. The power of the intercession of Our Lord the Christ is the eternal sacrifice in which upon Calvary, before the foundation of the

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world, and upon the altar of heaven, He once for all, yet unceasingly, gives Himself both to the Father and to the world. Our pleading of the sacrifice depends upon our interior response to this spirit of sacrifice. "Here, Lord, we offer and present unto Thee ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy and lively sacrifice unto Thee."¹

It is there that we are being tested. If there is a refusal of sacrifice in the outward life of the nation, and if even now there are many who lag behind the great example of the rest, the cause lies in the neglect, and the cure in the revival, of sacrificial prayer. The more sacrificial our worship, the more it is centred in the Eucharistic adoration of the Lamb, the more imperative this call. England has the right to ask of the Church in these days the best she has to give: the highest worship, the strongest pleading, the most sacrificial intercession. She has the right to expect every church in

¹ *Prayer of Oblation, Book of Common Prayer.*

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the land to be a focus of daily prayer, and every priest a centre of the study and practice of the intercessory life. Why not every intercession service a veritable school of prayer? Why not a league of those who for their country's sake will devote half an hour a day to intercession? Why not the daily Eucharist in every church, or at least the vast majority of our churches, crowned by daily Communion? Who will be content at such a time as this with the standard that serves for common days? Restrictive rules and regulations are out of place now, but yet more the inertia which shrinks from spiritual effort, or the sloth which will not rise betimes to pray. The prayer of sacrifice avails.

IV

THE DIRECTION OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

(Ad Clerum)

“THE priest,” says Carlyle, “presides over the worship of the people; he is the uniter of them with the Unseen Holy. He is the Spiritual Captain of the people. The ideal of him is that he be what we can call a voice from the Unseen Heaven; interpreting, even as the Prophet did, and in a more familiar manner unfolding the same to men. The Unseen Heaven, the open secret of the universe which so few have an eye for!” Carlyle pierces to the heart of the matter when he places the priestly task of uniting men to the Unseen Holy in such close relation to worship. Wor-

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ship which does not at all fulfil that first and last instinct of the soul for union with Deity, is not worship. The worship of the people profoundly affects those who share it, and open their souls to its influence. It liberates the spiritual in man. When men are gathered together in one place, with one purpose, and that purpose is to approach God, there falls upon them, if they are sincere, the atmosphere of the Unseen, and of the Spirit.

True worship has in it always something of Pentecost. In that atmosphere the spiritual in man is released. His thoughts turn more easily to God. His affections respond to the spiritual environment in which he finds himself. Virtue and holiness become the objects of his desire, his will is drawn into sympathy with the Supreme Will of God, of Whose Presence, with greater or less conscious perception, he begins to be aware. The divine in his soul answers to the call of the mani-

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fested Presence of God. Thus man is united to the Unseen Holy. But common worship also unites man with man. For those who truly worship together are drawn into spiritual contact with each other. They are unified, as men who unite for any common expression of their desires and will are unified, and that which binds them together is God. Thus, common worship is the very essence of the Church's corporate life, and it is a sure index of the strength of that corporate life, as well as the main cause of its increase. Worship achieves yet a third function. It provides a powerful witness to the reality of the Unseen World. It may become a converting power of the first order. *But if all prophesy, says S. Paul, and there come in one unbelieving or unlearned, he is convicted by all, he is judged by all; the secrets of his heart are made manifest; and so he will fall down on his face and worship God, declaring that God is in you indeed.*¹

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 24-25.

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This converting and evidential value of the common worship is by no means a thing of the past. The modern unbeliever is not disposed to deny reality when it comes within his experience, but he is a sharp critic of it. On the other hand, worship which lacks the essential qualities of sincerity and truth, of purpose and reality, will act powerfully in the opposite direction. It will freeze and imprison the spiritual in man, which it ought to liberate; it will sap the strength of fellowship, which is the very life of the Church; and it will hinder faith, and send the ignorant and the unbelieving away confirmed in their rejection of religion.

The priest in the Church of England to-day holds a curious position in respect of his duty as the director of public worship. Technically, he is sworn in the most solemn way to direct that worship strictly according to one pattern, the Prayer Book, but actually, as things have come to be during the centuries

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which have elapsed since the Prayer Book in its present form was published, his freedom of action is wider than any free-church minister's. He can range from the untrammelled freedom of a Mission Service to the most magnificent ceremonies of solemn Eucharists, all consistently with recognized loyalty to his ordination vow. By the universally allowed liberty of adding hymns to the Service, he can colour and control its character, and, by the severity or indulgence that he shows to his choir and organist, he can bring the worship down to quaker-like simplicity, or surround it with the moving and romantic symbolism of music, till it attains an elaboration of art in the realm of sound, more complicated and more sensuous, in a good sense of that word, than the richest ritual in the world. Practically it is the Vicar who settles what the worship of his people shall be. It is certainly he who is personally responsible for its spiritual level. This

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is a very tremendous charge, and its gravity is not lessened by the vast difference for better or worse that a change of incumbency can effect. The priest, in his capacity as director of the people's worship, may attain his object in three ways, all of which may be traced to the New Testament :

i. The Free Service, without liturgy, order, or form : Mission Services and the like.

ii. The Liturgical Choir Offices : Matins and Evensong.

iii. The Sacramental and Sacrificial Worship of the Eucharist.

It is in his power within very broad limits to define what place and prominence each shall receive in the spiritual life of the congregation and parish that he serves.

1. *Free Service*

This alone can claim to be entirely original to Christianity, and to have no forerunner in the Jewish Church in

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which Christianity was cradled. It was evidently the spontaneous creation of the spiritual energy of the New Church of Pentecost, and it afforded the outlet and opportunity for the use of the Pentecostal gifts of tongues and prophecy. It is possible to see from S. Paul's correction of its errors something of its character. It was extraordinarily free. Any one, male or female, might intervene. There is, indeed, more than a suggestion of confusion and excitement, for S. Paul finds it necessary to ordain that the prophesying be limited to one prophet at a time. Prophesying was, it need scarcely be said, not foretelling the future, but an inspired, and probably fervent, type of preaching. Women, at the first, were among these prophets. S. Paul had evidently been scandalized by their prophesying with their heads uncovered. He made short work with the public ministry of women at Corinth by his sharp order that they should keep silence in the Church, and be

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content to ask their husbands at home anything they needed to know: a vigorous silencing, "It is a shame for women to speak in the Church." But if these primitive Mission Services had their faults, they had also a powerful appeal. Conducted with due regard to decency and order, they could and evidently did prove a strong witness to the reality of the spiritual power which the new religion had brought into the world. To be present at one of these services rightly conducted might be expected to produce, even on persons ignorant and strange to Christianity, such converting power as would bring them to their knees in confession and adoration. They represented the explosive force of Christianity. They formed also a point of contact with the unconverted Jewish and heathen world. It would be, if not irrelevant, at least too long a task to discuss the speaking with tongues, which was a feature of these meetings. It is sufficient to say

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that S. Paul preferred prophesying, with its appeal to the mind, and its food for the intellect, to these more showy yet not more spiritual gifts. *Desire earnestly to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.*¹

The Quaker alone has preserved this type of worship in its original element of democratic freedom, adding to it silence, which one imagines Corinth might have been the better for. Elsewhere, not least in Nonconformity, the one-man ministry has driven out this liberty of the Spirit, and many a *charisma* may go unexercised, and many a prophet be lost to prophecy, because of the absorption by the priest of all liberty of prophesying, though to this day it is in theory no part of sacerdotal endowment.

But some of the freedom of this primitive worship remains in the Mission Services, which have established their place in our Church within the lifetime of men still alive.

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 39.

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The Mission Service is entirely free and formless. Though peculiarly a one-man ministry, that one man is in it free to declare his message and lead the worship in his own way. Its aim is to present Christianity in its most challenging form: in everything, prayer, hymns, and preaching, to make so simple, direct, and unmistakable an appeal, that no man shall pass through one such service without at least being confronted with the great and simple realities of God, of the claim of God, of salvation in Jesus Our Lord, of the presence of God, and of the approach to God through prayer. It is unlike its Corinthian prototype chiefly in its limitation of ministry to one man; he, indeed, chosen for this special service because he is believed to possess the special *charisma* that such service needs, and given the largest liberty to exercise it. But its aim and function are still the same, and by comparison with other modes of worship its effects are not

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dissimilar. It is not unusual to find that through this kind of worship some, who have been for years habitual "worshippers" at more formal services, discover prayer and spiritual realities for the first time. Its objective is to arouse, arrest, convert, and challenge, to awaken the unawakened or dormant spiritual consciousness, and to lead the awakened in the first steps of the spiritual life.

If it be said that the "charismatic" character of this worship puts it beyond the reach of ordinary people and ordinary priests, I should be inclined to reply with the Quaker that the gifts are there, if not in every man, at least in every congregation, had we faith to provide for their use. The history of the Church of England might have been very different had there been in her any faith in, or recognition of, this charismatic ministry when Wesley was alive. She might have been able to contain a movement which a rigid uniformity lost to her, and the zeal and devotion

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of the Church would have gained as largely by the inclusion of these ardent thousands, as they in their turn would have been steadied and enriched by the sacramental grace, from which the Church's failure to understand God's evident dealing with them, ultimately alienated them. The clergy might well make fuller use of their liberty to resort to this primitive and Catholic free-worship in addition to the ordered services.

2. *The Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer*

Christian worship was cradled in the Temple and the Synagogue. The first Christians were no dissenters or separatists from Jewish worship. Expulsion from the Synagogue and the fall of Jerusalem appear to have been needed to thrust them from their old moorings out to sea. Christian worship was likely to inherit much from the Synagogue and Temple. Our own Mattins and

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Evensong have still a fair resemblance to Synagogue worship in the time of Our Lord. This was the order of the Synagogue Service. First came the recitation of the *Shema*, the great Jewish Prayer, still recited in every Ghetto in Europe, half-creed, half-benediction, half-prayer. Then followed the first and second Lessons, from the Law and the Prophets, and afterwards the sermon, which in Philo's account of Synagogue worship figures as the chief matter; which sermon by Our Lord and S. Paul was an opportunity used to the full. Possibly "the prayers" in Acts ii. 42 mark a very early imitation of the Synagogue model, with perhaps a Christian "Shema" like the transitional Jewish-Christian prayer used by the Apostles (Acts iv. 24 ff.) when they lifted up their voice to God with one accord. *Lord, Thou art God which hast made heaven and earth and the sea and all that in them is*, etc.

This liturgical worship of prayer,

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scripture, and preaching, Synagogue service with the addition of the Psalms (which appear to have belonged rather to the Temple than the Synagogue), has reached us *via* the monasteries, but they have left little mark upon it that has survived the ruthless simplifications of the Reformation. Mattins and Evensong are, at this period of the Church of England's history, the staple of her worship. Sacramental as she is in her formularies, Eucharistic centred in her Prayer Book, after sixty years of the Oxford movement the great majority of her sons spend their Sunday without the Holy Communion. This is, perhaps, her most marked difference from the Church of the Acts of the Apostles.

Mattins and Evensong have their own beauty. We are a fortunate clergy in being bound to the daily recitation of such offices. In their right setting they have an appeal to the people only less than to the priest. But what is that appeal? It is the appeal of a certain

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calm atmosphere of peace and meditative quiet. The Choir Office as performed in some of our cathedrals is the ideal of it. The grave suggestive beauty of the music, the vistas and spaces of the building, the restraint and reserve of the language of the prayers, and now and then some touching or arresting word whether of Lesson or Anthem may bring real consolation and inspiration, and send men away refreshed and re-made. About these Offices, interwoven with the sublime sequence of the Christian Year, there are intertwined tender associations, memories, and mystic meanings, which time makes more lovely, that serve to link our broken years. But there is little in the Choir Office, even at its best, for the ignorant, the unbeliever, the careless or indifferent, not to say for the sinner, to convict, to challenge, or to convince of God. There is little to quicken fervour, little sense of holy awe and mystery or of burning eager love. It seems like love in old

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age, rather than the passion and vigour of the Church's manhood. And, alas, the Choir Office depends so much upon the choir. In how many churches (I ask not in the spirit of criticism but in grave earnest) as offered Sunday by Sunday in our traditional mode, except in cathedrals, or great town churches, where music can be maintained on those levels where alone it liberates the spiritual in man,—in how many of our average town and country churches does the real soul of worship survive the manner of the rendering of the Office? Should I exaggerate at all were I to say that often, very often, the psalter is made not only meaningless, but repellent, by the transparent unreality of its rendering? Many a time and in many a place I have found the hour of divine service an hour of strain and conflict. It was a poor escape from the over-self-assertion of the days when the parson used to preach the prayers, to have fallen upon our present conventions. The recovery,

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if the clergy would be brave, is not so difficult. There needs but a little silence not destroyed by organ meanderings; a little simplicity; a little sense, dare I say it, of humour; a real effort to lead the worship of the people, the priest himself conscious the while of the divine Presence; courage to tear up artificialities, to be bold even to experiment; and an iron will never to rest till there comes back from the people that response which proves that he who presides over their worship has found a way in which, in that hour at least, he can be a true uniter of them to the Unseen Holy.

3. *The Holy Communion*

I come to that worship which is of higher authority than any other, not merely because of the place it occupies in the book which we are pledged to minister, but from its institution by Our Lord Himself. The Pentecostal Church from the beginning, while still

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joining in the Temple services, centred its worship in the breaking of the bread, and the history of the Church has been a witness to the vitality of that Sacrament. No part of the Church, which has maintained its unity in the apostolic ministry, has ever admitted by formal act and judgment any other form of worship as central and pre-eminent in comparison with the Eucharist. Our own Church in days of slackness and neglect, and by the undesigned action of a rubric intended to encourage frequency in Communion, but in the end destroying it, has practically allowed Mattins to take the place in the mind of her people that of right, alike by tradition, history, church order, and direct divine command, belongs to the Eucharist. But it has always been against the evident mind of the Prayer Book, as the instinctive removal of the sermon and public notices from their ordered place in Holy Communion to another testifies. It is worth while to observe the special

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elements in Eucharistic worship. In the first place, it stands at the head of all sacrificial approach to God. The end of sacrifice from the beginning was union with God. Sacrifice is that by which we inhere in God. It is scarcely possible to take a rational part in Eucharistic worship without being challenged by that idea. It is there embodied not merely in words but in a simple and sublime act. This alone has in it the "explosive" element of challenge and arrest. It asserts tremendously God's claim upon life and the immense dignity of human destiny. Actually it is invariably so perceived. Sacramental action translates ideas, spiritual ideas, into the concrete. Even those who reject them cannot ignore them. The world-sacrifice of the Cross of Christ, the divine call to entire self-surrender, and the offer of eternal life through union with God in Christ, these ideas are set before the mind in the Eucharist, not theoretically but in action, and so

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vividly that only the most heedless and indifferent worshipper could escape them, or preserve towards them an attitude of neutrality. Sacramental worship, being in the plane of action, calls into play the whole personality of the worshipper, thought, feeling, and particularly will and decision, in a more direct way than does non-sacramental worship. Psychologically, the act of communion and of consecration involves the worshipper in a certain climax which is of high value in the effect it produces on the personality. It is exactly this which is lacking in so much of other and non-sacramental worship. It never arrives. It remains indecisive. It therefore does the less to advance the spiritual development of the worshipper.

But Holy Communion is not only Communion with God, it is Communion with God in Jesus Christ. The Christian Sacrifice is supremely that by which we inhere in Jesus Our Lord. Again, not in words alone but in pregnant acts

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the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ lies in the Sacrament. It is the showing of His Passion and Death: it is the type of His Resurrection, for it offers to men the life which has passed through death: it is so universal in its manifesting of all that Jesus is that we scarcely know whether Calvary or the heavenly altar of the Ascended Priest is most in mind. It is profoundly centred in the Incarnation, of which it is the extension. Body and Blood, broken and shed, these central consecrating words link Bethlehem to Calvary, no less than the words of administration proclaim the presence of the Life, beyond and above the reach of death, which is God's very Self. No Church, it has been said, which centred its worship in the Eucharist has ever lost its hold upon the Incarnation and the Atonement. Actually in history it has proved to be the backbone of worship. The further Non-conformity has receded from it, the less has it retained of that awe and reverence

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which are the soul of adoration. (I must here except the Quakers, that inexplicable people who seem to exist in the world as a witness to the freedom of God to deal with the souls of men, neither by order nor rule, but solely as He listeth.) In Canada and New Zealand I found that the only denomination in which the love of worship stood the test of colonial difficulties and distances was the Roman Catholic. There is little doubt that their secret is the Eucharist. If, with all the disadvantages of an unknown tongue, and the maximum of difficulty that this places in the way of intelligible worship, our Roman Catholic brethren have learnt through the Latin Mass to love and to hold to worship in a way which might teach us a lesson, what might not we, with an English Communion Office and the liberty of reasonable Service, even yet do for the worship of the Anglo-Saxon race? But if that great end is to be attained it will have to be

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by methods of Eucharistic worship free from Roman imitations and arid conventions. Dignity, magnificence, wealth of colour, beauty of sound and symbolism will, I believe, mark the worship which will attract the men of to-morrow, nevertheless our race will always in its best moments ask for simplicity and intelligence as well as mystery and romance, and for sincerity and restraint as well as dignity and beauty. Nor are these seeming opposites incompatible.

It is therefore the business of the priest to maintain the just and true proportion between these three modes of worship; his one aim the welfare of his flock, how best he may so preside over the worship of the people that they fail not to attain union with the Unseen Holy.

V

A SILENT REQUIEM

RECENTLY it happened to me, arriving at a church to speak of and join in the Fellowship of Silence, that I found the people gathered there under the shock of sad news which had reached them that day. Their Vicar and his wife had made a journey to a distant land upon an errand which involved great personal danger. They were gone to minister to those who were fighting the typhus epidemic in Serbia. News had that day arrived of her death. I had said that I would speak that afternoon on the virtues of Silence, but our thoughts could turn only to the prayer of requiem for the nobly dead, and of compassion for

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the living. When the Silence fell upon us—great waves of silence that seemed to take our prayer and bear it away far beyond our ken—the intervening distances were felt to be annihilated: the tide of sympathy, lifted up to God, rolled out, we knew, to him in far-off Serbia, and to her beyond the barriers of the world. It was a Silence not to be forgotten. It held within it, as silence so often does, the element of discovery. It was, in truth, a wordless requiem which seemed to satisfy the deep necessity of the soul as it stands looking out across the unknown sea of death, beneath whose horizon the frail craft, which bore the spirit that we knew, had vanished. And well might silence satisfy at such an hour, for is not death itself the Great Silence. Azrael, the Angel of Death, stands ever finger on lip. He answers no enquirer however stricken. No message will he suffer to reach us who remain, telling what it is to die, nor how the spirit, that yesterday was

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here, fares yonder upon the farther shore invisible. Man asks in vain. In vain he strikes upon the doors of death. There is no bribing or cajoling the silent door-keeper. There is no escaping the watch he keeps.

In different ways men have sought, and yet seek, to force this impenetrable silence of death, but in vain. Spiritualism, which promises so much, has justified by its failure the unerring instinct of the Christian Church which condemns it. Its voices speak so clearly in the accents of earth that, less and less, do they convince us that they have any origin more remote than the subconsciousness of the spiritualist himself. It is incredible that the experience of death can do no more to enlarge our knowledge than is revealed in the messages of spiritualism. Meanwhile, the mental, if not the moral, deterioration of the medium is the evident sign that such a pathway of approach to the spirit-world is as illicit as it is vain. Spiritualism

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has but re-emphasized the silence of death.

Nor have certain types of Catholicism escaped the peril which besets those who will not confess the reign of this King of Silence. It is a hopeless task to interpret the unknown, or to map out the unseen territory of the Beyond. The visions and revelations of the saints, and still more the imaginations and romances of devotees, are too subjective to be other than an unsubstantial basis for dogmatic assertion, nor do the syllogisms and inductions of the theologians suffice to describe eternity in the terms of time. The promise of "300 days' indulgence applicable to the holy souls in Purgatory" is a more than doubtful inducement to prayer. What do we know, what can we know of timeless existence, or of life out of the body? Imagination is not knowledge, and imagination is but a sorry copyist. She has no materials but the fragments of our

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earth-experience, and though she turn her kaleidoscope never so deftly, she can but rearrange to look like new the broken pieces of our old experience. The attempt to fill the void does but leave the Silence more completely master of the field.

But Protestantism has repeated in another form the mistakes she most condemned in Catholicism. Tetzels himself fathered neither more nor worse superstitions than the multitude of man-made dogmas with which Protestantism has fenced the tomb. Here are some: "As a man dies, so shall he be all through the days of eternity" still solemnly chanted at Masonic funerals; that it is wrong to pray for the dead; that if it were not wrong it would be useless; that the dead have no need of prayer; that they are beyond the reach of it, and so forth. Said one to me, "When Catholics die their friends put candles round the bed and pray; when Protestants die, we spread a white sheet and go out

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and shut the door." Against reason and against nature, against every instinct planted in the heart, and against the whole spirit and temper of Christianity are these chill denials. But they are passing rapidly into oblivion. They leave the Silence still unbroken.

We may be grateful to the Prayer Book that it does not dogmatize upon the unknown nor offer invalid drafts upon the future, but even the Prayer Book is at its weakest when it faces death. We cannot be content to stand by the open grave thinking more of our own need in the hour of death than of the soul that has passed. Neither the great Pauline argument for the resurrection, nor warning counsels which bid us take to heart the lessons of mortality, are what the mourner's heart demands in the hour of bereavement. Nor does the reiterated phrase "we with them" add anything to the more ancient forms of prayer for the departed. If it is wrong to pray for the dead, it does not become

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pardonable if we include ourselves in the petition. The war has brought back into official forms the noble prayer of antiquity, than which nothing could be truer, or more satisfying :

Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord,
And let perpetual light shine upon them.

It is probably true that the Catholic revival has commended the right and duty of prayer for the dead to the mind of the nation more generally than any other of the neglected truths that it rescued from oblivion ; but if this ground gained is to be held we must guard ourselves against any return to those additions to the Christian revelation, in reaction from which the " wholesome and good thought " of prayer for the departed was abandoned. We are wise to be reticent where we pass beyond the limits of revealed truth.

But the heart cannot rest within those limits. It yearns to transcend them.

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The Prayer of Silence uses that yearning, transmutes it into a noble spiritual energy, contents the instincts of love if not the speculations of the intellect, consoles the living, and follows the departed with benedictions.

For, indeed, there is a blessing in the Silence of Death which the Prayer of Silence can lay hold upon. It is of priceless worth in the development of the spiritual life. To those who themselves must die God has given no nobler gift than this Silence of Death, and no better preparation for their own departure. By it faith is trained in advance for its own supreme trial. We must perforce abandon our beloved, when they pass from our sight, with an absolute surrender into the hands of God, and to the Silence. We know not where He will carry them, nor through what scenes of judgment and redemption they must pass. They are gone out into a world of mighty enemies and yet more mighty friends, into a world of new and

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inconceivable discoveries and of revelations, of which one moment's vision might be enough, so we imagine, to revolutionize human life could it be granted to us here. Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor can the heart of man conceive what God hath prepared for him upon the other side of death, what cleansing fires, what healing rest await him on his journey to that blissful city into which no defilement may find entry. We dream our dreams and sing our songs of paradise and heaven, but we know that they are dreams and that the reality is greater than these. The solemn imagery of the *Dream of Gerontius* may seem to bear the very stamp of truth, but Newman would have been the first to remind us that it is but the imagery of a dream. To the infinite and unknown possibilities of fear and hope, of judgment and mercy, we commit our dead, and only One voice has pierced the Silence. *Fear not ; I am the first and the last and the Living One ; and I*

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*was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and Hades.*¹ To that Word we commit them, our greatest act of faith until our last. The Silence of Death is indeed the friend of faith. It is not less the victory of hope. How wide is the gate of Silence opened to our hopes. Not one last piteous hope for the sinner is there rejected, nor are our boldest aspirations of new service, of victory and advance for those we love condemned as over-high. Silence offers infinity to our hopes. To the Christian the Silence of Death has always appeared gracious. To the pagan world death seemed a gloomy and foreboding ferryman. But for Christianity the Silence of Death wears the smile of hope, a smile so radiant that in its silence seems to speak. In the catacombs the hope that was for ever to surround the passing of the Christian soul stands written on the walls of death.

¹ Rev. i. 17-18.

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*Hilaris, vivas cum tuis feliciter
Semper refrigeris in pace Dei.*

Eterna lux tibi in Christo

Erenea, vivas in Deo. A.Ω.¹

But if the Silence be the minister of hope and faith, it is the priest of love. What is there so self-less as prayer for the dead? The Silence of Death safeguards this unselfishness. If there came back to us voices and messages in answer to our prayer, would that prayer long retain the entire self-forgetfulness of love? But as year succeeds year, and time effaces all other impressions, the soul in whose prayer the parent or friend long since passed lives silent and unseen, yet unforgotten, is learning the secret of a very pure and self-less love. It is perhaps this element of unselfishness in prayer for the departed that wins from it the reward of consola-

¹ Hilaris, live in happiness with thine own,
Ever mayest thou be refreshed in the peace of God.

Eternal light to thee in Christ.

O Erenea, live thou in God, the Alpha and Omega.

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tion, for in this prayer God tenderly assuages the grief that has not prayed that it may be comforted, only that its lost may live with Him.

The Silence of Death holds then for us rare and precious gifts. There are in it virtues which will stand us in good stead when our own hour strikes, and beyond, for they are indeed elemental. But it is the prayer of Silence that is the great ingatherer of the fruits of the Great Silence. Deep therein calls to deep, silence to silence. No words enclose our path. We are free to follow the soul out upon its journey. And as we gaze out through the mists we are grateful to be stripped of fancies and the unsubstantial creations of the mind. Better mist than mirage. For death is ruthlessly sincere. All phantasies vanish before its presence. Only the bed-rock certainties abide. But they are enough. They are the final realities, God and Christ, life and love.

What words have we that are adequate

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to death ? Words end where knowledge ends. But love advances farther in the silence. Love leaps from earth to scale the heights of God and find in Him its dead. Nor dare I say that there is no communion where there is only the communion not of words but of love. We no longer see their forms, we hear no more their speech, but love lies deeper than sight or sound. Are they unrelated to each other, though worlds divide them, who are in touch with God ?

There are three great words which have always gathered round the Prayer of Silence—*rest, peace, light*. They are the Catholic words of death. They are the words which inspire all lovers of Silence. They are also the words that ring through the Church's requiems.

How precious a heritage that Eucharist of death. It lifts the cross above the darkness. It proclaims the might of the Conqueror of death, and before that proclamation the unseen enemies of man are put to flight. Death itself is

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confounded by the Body that was broken and the Blood that was shed in the death that redeemed the world. Shall we in our extremity let go this all-prevailing sacrifice? Not so. When the altar opens wide the door of the world unseen, thither we will carry in our hearts our dead. But when the solemn splendour is ended; when the dark-robed ministers are gone, and the lights that gleamed against the blackness are extinguished; when the preacher has finished his praise of the dead and the songs of death are stilled; when no more the organ thunders its funeral marches; when silence falls upon the lingering few who kneel beside the bier; or when the fearful hours of the night vigil, heavy with sorrow, laden with mystery and pain, creep slowly by—then it is that silence seems to unlock the gates of Silence, and we know that he lives for whom we intercede. We have not lost him, nor has he lost our love. The Destroyer of death holds him safe.

VI

AN INSTRUCTION IN SILENCE¹

THE Prayer of Silence is prayer released not merely from vocal utterance but from all tyranny of words. Not that words are wholly to be banished from the mind—that would be impossible, for, unconsciously, the mind weaves words about its thoughts. We think, for the most part, in words, and the Prayer of Silence is not the cessation of thought; but the mechanism of speech has a bondage of its own. The construction of sentences, the selection of

¹ This instruction is intended to be of use to those who desire, perhaps for the first time, to practise the Prayer of Silence, either alone or with others. The author, regarding it as a practical summary, has not scrupled to repeat some things said elsewhere, and to develop and expand others.

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words in so far as they direct attention to the outer covering of thought, interfere in some degree with its absolute freedom. The Prayer of Silence is free from all such hindrances. And further, there are in the mind more thoughts than ever get so far even in the brain as words.

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into the narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped.

Who does not know the thought clear and full-formed in the mind, for which the right word will not come? It is the vividness and clarity of the idea that compel us to reject the wrong word. The Prayer of Silence does not need the word. The thought, naked and uncovered, speeds Godwards. The Prayer of Silence has no traditional language, no ecclesiastical Latin, and no Elizabethan English, it belongs to the universal language which antedates Babel, the interior language of the heart, for it deals not with the body but the

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soul of thought. Vocal prayer, in the literal sense, is necessary to the corporate spiritual life of the Church; it is a noble offering, and by it our souls are unified and set free, but the Prayer of Silence is an emancipation of another sort. Prayer that is drawn from books of prayer, though used silently, is not and cannot be the Prayer of Silence. It retains the character of vocal prayer, in that of necessity it sacrifices the spontaneity and freedom of the soul's utterance. When a book or a form is the basis of prayer, the business of the soul is then how to make its own, by a diligent attention, the language which embodies the spiritual experience of another soul. I am far from suggesting that this is a useless or foolish thing to do. The Psalter is the final proof to the contrary. It stands for all time indispensable, the richest treasure-house of the spiritual experience of humanity, an inexhaustible well of living water, nor does it stand alone. The saints and

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heroes of the spiritual life have left in their prayers a precious heritage to their descendants. But there is room and to spare in our devotional life for the prayer, which is more actually our own, springing directly from our own sense of need and of God. The Prayer of Silence is personal as well as free.

A child may learn to understand its father, and may even rightly approach him through the greater knowledge and experience of an elder brother. Such is the character of our prayer when it is clothed in the language of the liturgy, or of the books of devotion at their best, or of the saints. But to a father's heart the childish words of love, though faltering and foolish, need no excuse. They make their own appeal. What parent would prefer that his child should address him in a conventional formula, or in the ill-fitting language of grown-up people? The Prayer of Silence, since it is the prayer of absolute simplicity, rises direct to God, as the smoke

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ascends from the cottage chimney on a still evening. *Let my prayer be set forth in Thy sight as the incense.*

But to hear the voice of God is a great matter, and a man must qualify himself if he would hear it. In these days, could we discern them, we should find the air around us filled with wireless messages, but unless we possess the proper instrument, and unless that instrument is tuned to the other that is calling, not a word shall we discover. Nor shall we hear God's messages, unless the spiritual ear that He has given us be in order and attuned. Silence makes that preparation possible. I will try to set down some simple counsels which have helped me, who knew nothing of such matters, to find the pathway of the Silence, and to begin, slowly and feebly, to follow it.

First, let me speak of the use of Silence in our solitary prayer, and later of the use of it in association with others.

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I

Silence in solitude

(i.) *The Place.*—Choose a place free from interruption, best of all a church, or, failing that, a “Silent Room” dedicated to God, and to the thought of God. Every house of fair size might well possess such a place of prayer. Pictures of Our Lord, His Mother, and the saints, few and beautiful, would decorate the walls. Such a room, however small, becomes the centre of the spiritual life of the home, and, as it were, the soul of the house.

And so I find it well to come
For deeper rest to this still room ;
For here the habit of the soul
Feels less the outer world's control,
And from the silence multiplied
By these still forms on every side,
The world that time and sense has known
Falls off, and leaves us God alone.¹

To some a quiet garden or a solitary country place is most sympathetic for

¹ Whittier.

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prayer. But until we have made some progress in mental concentration, we had better seek a more protecting shelter from distraction.

(ii.) *Bodily position* is of importance ; though kneeling is by no means necessarily the best attitude for the main period of the Silence, it is good to begin and end in this posture of adoration. In the picture of Mary in her Annunciation, which forms the frontispiece of this book, Pisanello has painted her seated, and no picture has suggested better the *Mater Silentii*, pondering in her heart the divine mysteries. That attitude is best and most reverent in which the body as little as possible reminds us of its existence, whether it be sitting or kneeling. Bodily restlessness produces mental distraction. Still mind makes still body.

(iii.) *Preparation*.—Standing with the hands uplifted, the most ancient attitude of prayer, after a moment's silence, recite the hymn *Veni Creator*, directly

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invoking the aid of the Holy Spirit, and yielding unreservedly to His overshadowing. This marvellous hymn seems to gather into itself every aspect of the Prayer of Silence. Inspiration, light, peace, guidance, the strength of the divine life, and the fire of the divine love, all that the Quaker has found in his silence, are the theme of this great Catholic hymn. It is the unrivalled prelude to the Prayer of Silence.

Every approach to God requires of us that we put away our sins. Therefore, that the soul may be attuned to God, kneeling down make a brief act of confession and ask to be absolved.

There would seem to be three elements in the Prayer of Silence which must always in some degree be present. They are the silencing of mind and spirit before God; the quiet waiting upon God, as one listening and expectant; and the response to whatever in His mercy He has shown of His Will in the Silence.

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Entering into the Silence

The blessing of the Silence will largely depend upon our entry into it. As in all mental prayer, but more than in any other method of it, we must slowly and deliberately concentrate our entire attention exclusively upon God. Choose some thought which will bring vividly before the mind one single aspect of the being of God. His infinity, eternity, or omnipotence, His universal presence, His immanence in nature, in man, in the incarnate life, the redemption of man, or the sovereignty of God, conceptions that are indeed almost overwhelming, as we stay quietly to realize something of their meaning. Such thoughts bring to the soul that reverence and awe which belongs to the threshold of the Silence. Quietly dismiss all other thoughts, not wrestling with them, but letting go, and substituting in their place one such vast conception of God. It is not easy to over-

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state the value of this initial filling of the mind with the thought of God. It is indeed the essence of all prayer: without it we are in danger, even in our prayer, of never escaping from the domination of "circumstances and conditions," and of remaining still under the tyranny of things temporal. It is possible, for lack of this solemn enthroning of God within the soul, for our fears, anxieties, and worries to fill the central place in our thought even during our prayer. That central place belongs to the thought of God. We must beware of praying to our doubts and fears. Silence would be an evil if it meant sitting down to contemplate these dark and paralyzing thoughts. As we constantly return to the thought of God in His infinite mercy and power, gradually there falls upon the soul a deep stillness; the stillness not of drowsiness and sloth, for it is keenly awake, but of adoration. This has been admirably expressed in *The Sanctuary*: "Keep perfectly quiet

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with all thoughts shut off, except the thought of God. The Spirit of God will sink into your soul, and all your being will rest in harmony with Him, if you isolate yourself from all worldly things and keep your soul open to God. These moments are most precious, and as you learn their value you will love to rest longer in the Silence. In it you learn to know God ; in it your soul changes, because the life of God passes into it.”¹

If this preparation has done its work, mind and soul, having come to stillness and to a single and stedfast purpose, are ready to pass to the attitude of listening.

Listening to the divine Voice

One of the chief objects of the preparation is to bring the intellect to quiet. This is the evident necessity of all listening. Attention to another implies that we give him our mind. It ill behoves us to be for ever thinking our own

¹ *The Sanctuary*, Dr. Dearmer (Rivington).

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thoughts when we come into the presence of God. It is not until we have carried this attention to the point of concentration that we escape sufficiently from outward things, and from the dominion of our thought-habits, really to listen to God. We do not attempt to make the mind a blank. It would be useless. Nature abhors a vacuum. The mind of an intent listener is not blank, but it is pursuing thought-paths not of its own making. We believe that God will put thoughts into our mind. We shall follow them when they come. Such intellectual self-emptying is a deep "opening to God." Thoughts come to the mind whose origin is not in ourselves. What is the nature of the speaking of the divine Voice for which we listen? It is not for some supernatural event that we wait, some portent or wonder. Voices have spoken from heaven that seemed to those who heard them audible to the senses; it is not in search of these that we enter

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the Silence. Quietly, for the most part, there steals over the consciousness a change; it may be so gradual as to have been imperceptible while it was happening. But it is not imperceptible when we pass out of our silence to find that life and its problems look different. Worry, it may be, has been banished, fear or vexation of spirit exorcised, or it may be that some message for others has entered our mind, and quietly taken possession of it—these are the barest examples of the innumerable forms that this change of consciousness may take in the Silence. There are times of clear call, of decisions, and of resolves, and there are times of new illumination, in which our spirit, under the influence of the divine Spirit, has seized at last as living reality some truth concerning God or man which hitherto has been but the barren knowledge of the brain; God Himself, it may be, has become real to us as Power, Holiness, or Love. But why enumerate? Any of these is a

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communication from God however wordless. This is what we mean when we speak of hearing the Voice of God. It may be that there is no sense of Voice, only of a silent Presence. It is a Presence that suffices.

Our Response to the Voice

The third element in the Prayer of Silence is our response to the divine Voice. If God has shown us His Will, we must obey Him ; if He has revealed to us His beauty, then in return we owe Him our adoration. If we have been allowed to feel His love we shall desire to offer Him our own. So we remain in the Silence yet awhile, pouring out our gratitude, content to be near Him. But we must not hurry from His presence till we have given to God all that in the Silence He has asked of us. There are impulses, it may be, that need to be quietly and deliberately translated into resolutions, and offered in the divine Presence. Decisions so made and

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so offered will have behind them the power of God. If in the stillness God has spoken to the will, the will must make its offering. Or it may be that our response ought to take the form of a deep and strenuous intercession. If the Silence has carried us to the Presence-chamber of God, it is a true and beautiful response to open there to Him all that we carry in our heart, the need of our country and the sorrows of our friends. The Presence to which we are come is the presence of One in whose heart is that infinite pity which alone is sufficient for the infinite pathos of human life. The love of God communicates itself to us. We too, learning to love, open our hearts in this holy Presence to human sorrow. We think of brave lives, full of promise for the future, so ruthlessly cut short, and of those who mourn for them at home. What better response to the revealing of the divine love than to draw out of it for those in such sore need ?

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Silence brings us to a deep reality of speech. Our words are few, but behind them there is now the force, that has gathered in the silence of simplicity, reality, and love.

Silence and the Bible

But what, it may be asked, is the relation of this Silence to the daily use of the Bible. Certainly the Prayer of Silence enters into no rivalry with the Scriptures as a basis of meditation. They are indeed in the closest relation one to the other. The Bible is not indeed, in the strictest sense, to be spoken of as the Word of God. That title, as George Fox rightly maintained, belongs to the Son of God. Nevertheless that progressive revelation which culminated in the Word Incarnate is there contained, and if we seek the Voice of God we shall inevitably go to the Scriptures. The Bible is the natural store-house of the subjects of daily meditation. But Silence, in its use of

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the Bible, sends us direct for its interpretation to the source of its inspiration. It carries the open page to spread it out in the Light which was originally its author's guide. In the central division, the listening to the Voice, the book lies open, while Silence waits for this divine Interpreter. We do not laboriously with the toil of brain, or busy consultation of commentators and authorities, seek by intellectual effort to wrest their meaning from the sacred pages. The Prayer of Silence teaches us that to catch the spirit of the Gospel we must be in tune with the Spirit beneath whose inspiration the evangelist wrote. We are content to spend time, not accounting it wasted, on long and careful realisation of the Presence of God. Thus, if the Bible provides an inexhaustible store of subjects, the Silence develops the power of piercing through to their inner meaning. This is no exaltation of private judgment, or private interpretation in matters of doctrine, only the witness to the need

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of personal illumination in the life of devotion. The Bible fulfils two functions : it is the authoritative witness to and assurance of the integrity of the Church's teaching : to it the Church points in proof that, whatever be the development of her gospel in its application to the needs of the centuries, its essential content is unchanged. It is not here, in the sphere of revelation, that we turn each for himself to its pages, independent of all external guidance. Here the Church stands as the God-given Interpreter of Holy Writ, and her creeds enshrine her interpretation of the central Gospel testimony. But the Bible is more than a storehouse of doctrine ; it is the daily bread of the soul. Our Lord stands therein revealed, and in Him the Father. It is the foundation of our personal knowledge of the mind and heart of God, as the incarnate life of the Son of God is there opened to our understanding. But personality, be it human or divine, is

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known not only, or chiefly, to the intellect. Other qualities and gifts are needed than those of the brain. There must be some element of sympathy, some affinity of mind and soul before we can really know another. It is not otherwise with the Personality enshrined in the Scripture. Silence, bringing us to the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, places us before the record of that Life in the attitude of reverence and devotion to which God can reveal Himself. Such an approach avails us whether the Gospels be our study, or Prophet or Apostle. Silence is receptive of the Spirit, by Whom alone spiritual apprehension is possible. Bible study as an intellectual process is another matter: not indeed to be rigidly separated as unblessed by the Spirit, or as a profitless occupation. But the Prayer of Silence, turning to the Bible, is not occupied with the problems of history or theology. It seeks to know Him who is our Life, and that we may know Him each for

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himself. No man can make a friend entirely through a third person and without any immediate personal intercourse. The toil of the commentators has laid us under great obligation in many directions, but it is not to them that we turn for the personal knowledge of Jesus. For that we go direct to the Inner Light of the Spirit. Thus, following some such long and sustained preparation as is set forth above, entering into the Silence I would spread out the passage, holding it as it were to the Light, listening for the Voice which will draw out for every man from the sacred pages that Word of God of which his soul has need.

II

Silence in Fellowship

What is there to be gained when the Silence is corporate that is not to be gained in solitude, it has been asked. The answer is to be found in the words of

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Our Lord, *Where two or three are gathered together in My Name there am I in the midst of them.*¹ Our Lord is indeed always with us, but His words are a distinct promise made to fellowship, and it is a promise of Presence in some special sense. Presence is a word which seems to belong to persons, not things. It is a word of many degrees, for there are many levels of reality and power all covered by the one word presence. Thus, two friends may be in the same room, but occupied in different tasks, and entirely forgetful of each other. They are present each to the other, but their presence has little meaning or benefit. Physical nearness is a low level of presence. But if they enter into conversation, or unite in a common task, if they listen to the same music, or one reads aloud, presence rises to a higher level. Friends who have travelled far enough in friendship to be silent together, not with the unmeaning

¹ S. Matt. xviii. 20.

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silence of disregard but with the silence of deep communion of spirit with spirit, have reached the heights of presence. To Our Lord's promise of His Presence to the two or three is attached a condition. *If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven.*

This is the fellowship of unity of mind and purpose. It is no mere gathering together of bodily presence, but an inward community of thought and desire. It is the reality of presence. To the two or three who thus seek God in true fellowship of heart and soul Our Lord can make real His Presence. The sympathy which unites them to each other in this common purpose of drawing near to God, opens to them new possibilities of perceiving the divine Presence. The self-barriers fall where there is human fellowship, and when they fall the divine enters in.

There are other aspects upon a lower

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level of the Fellowship of Silence. Telepathy, thought waves, the "psychology of the crowd" are doubtless elements which are at work in the Silence, indeed it would be natural to suppose that they would apply more powerfully to an inner group of like-minded and sympathetic friends than to a heterogeneous assembly of strangers. The psychic was created by God, and is, like all His works, good and made for noble uses. We need not fear it when it is in prayer placed deliberately under the control of the Holy Spirit. The psychic may serve spiritual ends, for it is no part of the kingdom of Satan. But it is not with the psychic that we are concerned. We set our minds towards the spiritual, and beneath the shelter of the Holy Spirit Whom in our *Veni Creator* we have invoked we fear not :

Hostem repellas longius,
Pacemque dones protinus :
Ductore sic te praevio
Vitemus omne noxium.

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Which is thus translated by the Poet Laureate in the *Yattendon Hymnal* :

Our mortal foe afar repel,
Grant us henceforth in peace to dwell ;
And so to us, with thee for guide,
No ill shall come, no harm betide.

Silence in fellowship has its own character and power, and the silence of solitude may be enriched by its use. Let those who intend to use this corporate Silence assemble at a convenient hour in a church ; placing themselves neither near enough to one another to be crowded, nor far enough away to lose the sense of unity of purpose. Let one begin to say aloud the *Our Father*, the others joining, thus affirming our common brotherhood, and in the *Deliver us from evil* invoking the divine protection against spiritual enemies. No priest is needed to begin the *Our Father*. When half an hour has passed or sooner or later, let the silent meeting end with the *Nunc Dimittis*, and let the leader, if so small a duty deserves such a name,

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be responsible for beginning its recitation. If a priest be present let him bestow his blessing on the rest.

There are questions which I cannot here discuss, such as whether or no there should be any common subject, and whether the Silence should be left free to be broken by spontaneous vocal utterance. Of these I have written at length in the *Fellowship of Silence*,¹ as also of other possibilities of Silence, such for example as its service to the cause of reunion.

Dora Greenwell, the north-country mystic, was a true lover of Silence, as what mystic is not, and her words shall draw our thoughts to their conclusion :

It seemed as if a thought of God did fill
His world, that drawn unto the Father's breast
Lay hushed with all its children. This was rest,
And this the soul's true Sabbath deep and still.
Then marvelled I no longer that a space
Is found in Heaven for silence ; so to me
That hour made known its true sufficiency

¹ *The Fellowship of Silence*, edited by Cyril Hepher (Macmillan), a book in which Quakers and Churchmen unite in the praise of silence.

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Revealed not oft below, because its place
Is with the Blessed ! Speech is but a part
Of Life's deep poverty whereof the heart
Is conscious, stirring in its vague unrest
To fill its void ; but when the measure pressed
And running over to its clasp is given,
It seeketh nothing more, and Earth is blest
With Silence—even such as is in Heaven !

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USE OF PRAYER WITHOUT WORDS

NARRATED AND INTERPRETED BY

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