

whilst the very life of our life has become
 "to love and serve His Divine Majesty
 in everything"
 with Him in the mute togetherness of love
 watching Him
 listening to Him
 in the reverence of inexpressible nearness
 "so that the initiation of every task
 is a look to Him
 for advice
 as to the Father of all kindness and Wisdom
 He our entire confidence
 a listening to that which the Lord says
 within us
 a putting into effect
 of His inspiration"
 all activity manifesting
 exteriorly
 tireless effort
 and "an application of all human means
 with as much energy as if all success depended
 on these
 but seen
 from within
 "such a surrender to God and such dependence
 on His Diving Providence
 as if all our human means
 were utterly without meaning
 and of no avail
 living
 working
 become uninterrupted prayer
 a kneeling before His Divine Majesty
 "a constant inner liberation and elevation."
 (*To be continued*).

THE LIGHT OF LIFE

BY

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

It has been maintained that with Chaucer a light—we should call it the light of faith—was extinguished from English letters.

Though we may not agree altogether there can be no doubt that modern English writers do lack a sense of assurance. Geoffrey Chaucer is known to us for his good tempered satirising of the evils of his time and his genuine enjoyment of the commonplace things of life. Shakespeare and his contemporaries en-

joyed life, too, and in spite of less reputable interludes we are compelled to admire their assurance. Yet both these men ended their lives with a *Confiteor* and *Orate pro me*. Chaucer retracts his Tales, "thilke that sounen into sinne," and begs the reader "that ye preye for me, that Crist have mercy on me and foryeve me my giltes"; and Shakespeare in the person of Prospero appeals to his audience,

"And my ending is despair
Unless I be relieved by prayer."

Still, there is no sense of shame: mild frustration, perhaps, but not shame. The gust and lechery of the Miller and the Wife of Bath remain side by side with the smiling coyness of the Prioress and the poverty of the Parson; the monumental lust of Anthony and Cleopatra stands by the heavenly serenity of *The Tempest*. These men regretted not so much the worldly vanity of their works, though of that they were indeed aware—"my giltes—and namely, of my translacions and endytinges of worldly vanitees,"—as their inadequacy to mirror the goodness of God. They had tried,—"al that is written is written for oure doctrine"; and that is myn entente,"—but had failed to portray faithfully "the pleine felicitee that is in hevене above."

We have never got any nearer than they, for the solidity of Chaucer's world grew out of the certainty of his heaven. Love of creatures rooted in the love of Christ was for him the essence of life on earth and a foretaste of heaven. His love for his neighbour came from and led back to the love of God. Yet Chaucer was no saint: merely a man born and bred in the Christian tradition. He had learnt of sin, and he had learnt of the grace which forgives sin; he was certain of both and his certainty of evil was measured by his certainty of good. Shakespeare inherited some of this certainty, and through three centuries and a half we have snatched intermittent glimpses of it in the words of the George Herberts and Francis Thompsons, more self-conscious in expression, a remote ideal. With the shaking of our faith the joy of living has gone. Where we have tried self-consciously to enjoy life we have failed; where Chaucer never attempted consciously he succeeded. We have attempted to substitute earth for heaven. Scientific 'progress' has helped to make earth 'heavenly', but spiritual progress has not kept pace and we have allowed ourselves to be swamped with ease and comfort and soft living. We have learnt to substitute complacency for content and to eschew whatever might stir us out of our rut of safety, with the result that the startling sinfulness of Shakespeare's and Chaucer's worlds is pushed aside together with their equally startling goodness.

From time to time the veil has been drawn aside to reveal
"the traffic of Jacob's ladder

Pitched betwixt Heaven and Charing Cross', usually at the cost of great pain to the one who draws it. Francis Thompson's *Hound of Heaven* and Gerard Hopkins' poetry have been named as modern instances, and it can be claimed that given the necessary technical skill all poetry and prose achieve greatness in the measure that they draw this veil and try like Chaucer to portray the 'pleine felicitee', and that the process has become a painful one since it involves the eradication of self-centredness. No one would dream of claiming literary greatness for Evelyn Underhill's Letters,¹ still less consider ranging them by the side of a Shakespere nor yet of a Lionel Johnson. Yet they do reveal a woman who had learnt to love the world well by understanding just how far it is from heaven, and that

"there is good news yet to hear, and fine things to be seen

Before we go to Paradise by way of Kensal Green";

and as is so often the case, the lesson to be learnt is infinitely greater than the teacher.

The enigma of Evelyn Underhill, an Anglican with a Catholic mind, will remain unsolved, and fittingly so. It is not for us to dictate how God shall distribute His gifts; but the sight of one so close to God, yet without the gift of Faith in the Church, might move us to humble thankfulness for our gift, which, to our way of thinking, at any rate, we have so much less deserved.

Evelyn Underhill's outstanding attribute was her charity—a word so ill-understood nowadays—a genuine love of the human race and all God's creatures, the love of her parents, her husband, the enjoyment of her holidays at sea, in France and Italy, of her life in Camden Town with her cats, all integrated in what could be called a God-fearing life, all coloured by her understanding of her and their dependence on God—love of creatures rooted in love of Christ. A love which was unstinting and led her to fear that squalor would blind us to God before beauty would distract us from Him. It was this same charity which led her to devote her life to retreat giving and spiritual direction, but for the average person the most important lesson is to be drawn from thinking back to the principle which underlay her attitude: the principle that earth is the ante-room to heaven. I may be accused of reading too much into the letters, but not when passages like the following are recalled: "When you are *really sure* that every bush is 'afame with God' you will no longer feel contempt for this bush . . . This aspect of the material universe as a veil, through which, under the present dispensation, we must see the Divine, received its final sanction in the Incarnation of Christ".

" . . . it means getting beyond the idea of Christ as a 'perfect

¹Edited by Charles Williams (Longmans, 10/6).

example', 'spiritual genius' and so forth, to a realisation of the principle of incarnation . . . as involving the special self-expression and self-imparting of the Infinite God in humanity and for humanity".

" 'Love and do what you like'. If you like wrong things you will soon find the quality of your love affected. This same condition of love governs everything else. Try to see people by His [Christ's] light. *Then* they become 'real'. Prayerful and direct intercourse is only half one's job; the other half is to love everything for and in God."

That Evelyn Underhill is a child of the Post Reformation world appears in her asserting self-consciously again and again what was for Chaucer an accepted fact. In these self-conscious assertions she gives us glimpses of an ideal. Glimpses such as these help us to understand, though recapture it completely we never shall, the atmosphere of a world made solid by the certainty of heaven. We may be seduced, intermittently at least, by the garish trappings of a mass-produced civilisation, and the danger of slipping into sentimental naturalism is patent. Hence the need for continuous self-discipline. But that is only half the way: we do not reach heaven by walking gingerly and fencing ourselves in with artificial barricades;

"We are set upon this earth a space
To learn to bear the shafts of love".

Yet we fear to love our neighbour because the only meaning we have been taught to give that word is expressed in the hollow travesty of love put across the cinema screen. To hear what Christ means by love shatters our complacency, and that is the last thing we want. We have cherished the notion that charity means sitting back comfortably in our armchair observing with the beneficent eye of the philanthropist the success of our generous bequests. The words generous, benefactor, charity have lost their vigour and taken on a dim, comfortable significance. That love means giving more than we can spare, giving everything, is an unacceptable creed. Good enough if charity means writing out a cheque which will not make much impression on a well established banking account; but when it comes to taking up our time, giving our energy, showing an interest in dull people, writing tiresome letters to equally tiresome people, there's the rub. We have lost this conception of love because we have lost the sense of God; and we shall never regain it until we learn that all true love, whether of man for wife, parent for child, friend for friend or even acquaintance for acquaintance is a gift from God to be treated with reverence and has its source in the love of Christ for man.

Certainly we shall never learn from comfort, the breeding ground of self-centredness. The gift of love comes only by self-

less generosity of soul and the clearness of vision that turns our eyes outwards from ourselves to seek God in the lowest creature; it is only perfect when we give ourselves, our love, our energy, our talents, not for what we gain, not for creatures in themselves, but in God. So long as our eyes are turned to the Lover of Calvary we shall suffer that pang of world-weariness which will lead us back to Him. Prophets are not lacking nowadays, but it is a safe reading of the signs of the times that God has a not very obscure purpose in breaking a complacent, self-centred world upon the wheel of two wars,

"Let him be rich and weary, that at least
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
May toss him to my breast".

A TREATISE ON THE INEFFABLE MYSTERY OF OUR REDEMPTION

BY

LUIS OF GRANADA, O.P.

CHAPTER IV. (*Continued*).

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The admirable proportion found by Divine Wisdom in this Mystery between the atonement and the sin, which deprived the devil of his prey by means of justice.

Besides what has been said, in the manner of this remedy the plan of divine wisdom and justice is wonderfully evident, since God ordained that our blessings should come to us in the same manner as our ills, so that as by one man came sin and death, justice and life should come through the sanctity of another man. For it was not reasonable that holiness should have less efficacy as a remedy than guilt had for injury, that mercy should not compete with justice, or that if justice condemned the multitude for one man's sin, mercy should not suffice to save the many by the sanctity of one person.

Nor are there wanting other congruities that show how justly sin was exonerated and man redeemed. For as the pride of the first man, who, though but a man, sought to usurp the semblance of God, condemned his whole race, so the humility of the other Man who, though very God, lowered Himself to take on humanity, and saved us all, so far as lay with Him. For no humility could be found so radically opposed to such pride as this. As the man who by the law of nature was subject to God, exempted himself from this duty by his disobedience, thus injuring us all, so the obedience of the second Man, who by the same law was exempt from all subjection, obtained pardon and justification for us all. The Apostle says, "As by the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners: so also by the obedience of one, many