

IT SHALL NOT BE FORGIVEN

And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven. [Luke xi. 18].

Comment [DB1]: Error. Should be Luke 12:10

Whatever belonging to the region of thought and feeling is uttered in words, is of necessity uttered imperfectly.

- For thought and feeling are infinite,
- and human speech,
 - o although far-reaching in scope, and marvellous in delicacy, can embody them after all but approximately and suggestively.
- Spirit and Truth are like the Lady Una and the Red Cross Knight; Speech like the dwarf that lags behind with the lady's "bag of needments."

Our Lord had no design of constructing a system of truth in intellectual forms.

- The truth of the moment in its relation to him, The Truth, was what he spoke.
- He spoke out of a region of realities which he knew could only be suggested-not represented-in the forms of intellect and speech.
- With vivid flashes of life and truth his words invade our darkness,
- rousing us with sharp stings of light
 - o to will our awaking,
 - o to arise from the dead and cry for the light which he can give,
 - not in the lightning of words only, but in indwelling presence and power.

How, then, must the truth fare with those who, having neither glow nor insight, will build intellectual systems upon the words of our Lord, or of his disciples?

- A little child would better understand Plato than they St Paul.
- The meaning in those great hearts who knew our Lord is too great to enter theirs.
 - o The sense they find in the words must be a sense small enough to pass through their narrow doors.
- And if mere words,
 - o without the interpreting sympathy, may mean, as they may, almost anything the receiver will or can attribute to them,
- how shall the man, bent at best on the salvation of his own soul, understand,
 - o for instance, the meaning of that apostle who was ready to encounter banishment itself from the presence of Christ, that the beloved brethren of his nation might enter in?
- To men who are not simple, simple words are the most inexplicable of riddles.

If we are bound to search after what our Lord means

- -and he speaks that we may understand-

we are at least equally bound to refuse any interpretation which seems to us unlike him, unworthy of him.

- He himself says, "Why do ye not of your own selves judge what is right?"
- In thus refusing, it may happen that, from ignorance or misunderstanding, we refuse the verbal form of its true interpretation,

- but we cannot thus refuse the spirit and the truth of it, for those we could not have seen without being in the condition to recognize them as the mind of Christ.
- Some misapprehension, I say,
 - o some obliquity,
 - o or some slavish adherence to old prejudices,
- may thus cause us to refuse the true interpretation,
 - o but we are none the less bound to refuse and wait for more light.

To accept that as the will of our Lord which to us is inconsistent with what we have learned to worship in him already,

- is to introduce discord into that harmony whose end is to unite our hearts, and make them whole.

"Is it for us," says the objector who, by some sleight of will, believes in the word apart from the meaning for which it stands, "to judge of the character of our Lord?"

I answer, "This very thing he requires of us."

He requires of us that we should do him no injustice.

- He would come and dwell with us, if we would but open our chambers to receive him.
- How shall we receive him if, avoiding judgment,
 - o we hold this or that daub of authority or tradition hanging upon our walls to be the real likeness of our Lord?
 - o Is it not possible at least that,
 - judging unrighteous judgment by such
 - while we flatter ourselves that we are refusing to judge,
 - we may close our doors against the Master himself as an impostor,
 - not finding him like the picture that hangs in our oratory.
 - o And if we do not judge-humbly and lovingly—who is to judge for us?
 - Better to refuse even the truth for a time, than,
 - by accepting into our intellectual creed that which our heart cannot receive, not seeing its real form,
 - to introduce
 - o hesitation into our prayers,
 - o a jar into our praises,
 - o and a misery into our love.
 - o If it be the truth, we shall one day see it another thing than it appears now, and love it because we see it lovely; for all truth is lovely.
 - "Not to the unregenerate mind."
 - But at least, I answer,
 - to the mind which can love that Man, Christ Jesus;
 - o and that part of us which loves him let us follow,
 - o and in its judgements let us trust;
 - hoping, beyond all things else,
 - o for its growth and enlightenment by the Lord, who is that Spirit.
 - o Better, I say again, to refuse the right form, than,

- by accepting it in misapprehension of what it really is,
 - to refuse the spirit, the truth that dwells therein.
- Which of these, I pray, is liker to the sin against the Holy Ghost?
 - To mistake the meaning of the Son of man may well fill a man with sadness.
 - But to care so little for him as to receive as his what the noblest part of our nature rejects
 - as low and poor,
 - or selfish and wrong,
 - that surely is more like the sin against the Holy Ghost that can never be forgiven;
 - for it is a sin against the truth itself,
 - not the embodiment of it in him.

Words for their full meaning depend upon their source.

- the person who speaks them.
- An utterance may even seem commonplace,
 - till you are told that thus spoke one whom you know to be
 - always thinking,
 - always feeling,
 - always acting.

Recognizing the mind whence the words proceed, you know the scale by which they are to be understood.

- **So the words of God cannot mean just the same as the words of man.**
 - "Can we not, then, understand them?"
 - Yes, we can understand them—we can understand them more than the words of men.
 - Whatever a good word means, as used by a good man, it means just infinitely more as used by God.
 - And the feeling or thought expressed by that word takes higher and higher forms in us as we become capable of understanding him,
 - -that is, as we become like him.

I am far less anxious to show what the sin against the Holy Ghost means, than to show what the nonforgiveness means;

- though I think we may arrive at some understanding of both.

I cannot admit for a moment that there is anything in the Bible too mysterious to be looked into;

- **for the Bible is a revelation, an unveiling.**
- True, into many things uttered there I can see only a little way. But that little way is the way of life; for the depth of their mystery is God.
 - And even setting aside the duty of the matter, and seeking for justification as if the duty were doubtful,
 - it is reason enough for inquiring into such passages as this before me, that they are often torture to human minds,
 - chiefly those of holy women and children.
 - I knew a child who believed she had committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, because she had, in her toilette, made an improper use of a pin.

- Dare not to rebuke me for adducing the diseased fancy of a child in a weighty matter of theology. "Despise not one of these little ones." Would the theologians were as near the truth in such matters as the children. Diseased fancy! The child knew, and was conscious that she knew, that she was doing wrong because she had been forbidden. There was rational ground for her fear. How would Jesus have received the confession of the darling? He would not have told her she was silly, and "never to mind." Child as she was, might he not have said to her, "I do not condemn thee: go and sin no more"?

Human Forgiveness

To reach the first position necessary for the final attainment of our end, I will inquire what the divine forgiveness means. And in order to arrive at this naturally, I will begin by asking what the human forgiveness means;

- for, if there be any meaning in the Incarnation, it is through the Human that we must climb up to the Divine.
 - I do not know that it is of much use to go back to the Greek or the English word for any primary idea of the act
 - -the one meaning a sending away,
 - the other, a giving away.
 - It will be enough if we look at the feelings associated with the exercise of what is called forgiveness.
1. A man will say: "I forgive, but I cannot forget. Let the fellow never come in my sight again."
 - a. To what does such a forgiveness reach?
 - i. To the remission or sending away of the penalties which the wronged believes he can claim from the wrong-doer.
 - ii. But there is no sending away of the wrong itself from between them.
 2. Again, a man will say: "He has done a very mean action, but he has the worst of it himself in that he is capable of doing so. I despise him too much to desire revenge. I will take no notice of it. I forgive him. I don't care."
 - a. Here, again, there is no sending away of the wrong from between them-no remission of the sin.
 3. A third will say: "I suppose I must forgive him; for if I do not forgive him, God will not forgive me."
 - a. This man is a little nearer the truth, inasmuch as a ground of sympathy, though only that of common sin, is recognized as between the offender and himself.
 4. One more will say: "He has wronged me grievously. It is a dreadful thing to me, and more dreadful still to him, that he should have done it."
 - a. He has hurt me,
 - i. but he has nearly killed himself.

- b. He shall have no more injury from it that I can save him.
- c. I cannot feel the same towards him yet;
 - i. but I will try to make him acknowledge the wrong he has done me, and so put it away from him.
- d. Then, perhaps, I shall be able to feel towards him as I used to feel.
- e. For this end I will show him all the kindness I can,
 - i. not forcing it upon him, but seizing every fit opportunity;
 - ii. not, I hope, from a wish to make myself great through bounty to him,
 - 1. but because I love him so much that I want to love him more in reconciling him to his true self.
 - 2. I would destroy this evil deed that has come between us.
 - a. I send it away.
 - b. And I would have him destroy it from between us too, by abjuring it utterly."

Which comes nearest to the divine idea of forgiveness?

- nearest, though with the gulf between, wherewith the heavens are higher than the earth?
 - o For the Divine creates the Human,
 - o has the creative power in excess of the Human.

It is the Divine forgiveness that, originating itself, creates our forgiveness, and therefore can do so much more.

- It can take up all our wrongs, small and great, with their righteous attendance of griefs and sorrows, and carry them away from between our God and us.

Christ is God's Forgiveness.

Before we approach a little nearer to this great sight, let us consider the human forgiveness in a more definite embodiment-as between a father and a son.

- For although God is so much more to us, and comes so much nearer to us than a father can be or come,
 - o yet the fatherhood is the last height of the human stair whence our understandings can see him afar off, and where our hearts can first know that he is nigh, even in them.

There are various kinds and degrees of wrongdoing, which need varying kinds and degrees of forgiveness.

1. An outburst of anger in a child, for instance, scarcely wants forgiveness.
 - a. The wrong in it may be so small, that the parent has only to influence the child for self-restraint, and the rousing of the will against the wrong.
 - b. The father will not feel that such a fault has built up any wall between him and his child.
2. But suppose that he discovered in him a habit of sly cruelty towards his younger brothers, or the animals of the house, how differently would he feel!
 - a. Could his forgiveness be the same as in the former case?
 - i. Would not the different evil require a different form of forgiveness?

1. I mean, would not the forgiveness have to take the form of that kind of punishment fittest for restraining, in the hope of finally rooting out, the wickedness?
2. Could there be true love in any other kind of forgiveness than this? A passing-by of the offence might spring from a poor human kindness, but never from divine love. It would not be remission. Forgiveness can never be indifference. Forgiveness is love towards the unlovely.

Let us look a little closer at the way a father might feel, and express his feelings.

1. One child, the moment the fault was committed, the father would clasp to his bosom,
 - a. knowing that very love in its own natural manifestation would destroy the fault in him, and that, the next moment, he would be weeping.
 - b. The father's hatred of the sin would burst forth in his pitiful tenderness towards the child who was so wretched as to have done the sin, and so destroy it.
 - c. The fault of such a child would then cause no interruption of the interchange of sweet affections.
 - d. The child is forgiven at once.
2. But the treatment of another upon the same principle would be altogether different.
 - a. If he had been guilty of
 - i. baseness,
 - ii. meanness,
 - iii. selfishness,
 - iv. deceit,
 - v. self-gratulation in the evil brought upon others,
 - b. the father might say to himself: "I cannot forgive him. This is beyond forgiveness."
 - i. He might say so, and keep saying so, while all the time he was striving to let forgiveness find its way that it might lift him from the gulf into which he had fallen.
 - ii. His love might grow yet greater because of the wandering and loss of his son.
 - For love is divine, and then most divine when it
 - loves according to needs
 - and not according to merits.
 - iii. But the forgiveness would be but in the process of making, as it were, or of drawing nigh to the sinner.
 1. Not till his opening heart received the divine flood of destroying affection,
 2. and his own affection burst forth to meet it and sweep the evil away,
 3. could it be said to be finished, to have arrived, could the son be said to be forgiven.

God is forgiving us every day

- -sending from between him and us our sins and their fogs and darkness.

- Witness
 - o the shining of his sun
 - o and the falling of his rain,
 - o the filling of their hearts with food and gladness,
 - o →that he loves them that love him not.
- When some sin that we have committed has clouded all our horizon, and hidden him from our eyes,
 - o he, forgiving us, ere we are, and that we may be, forgiven,
 - sweeps away a path for this his forgiveness to reach our hearts,
 - that it may by causing our repentance destroy the wrong,
 - and make us able even to forgive ourselves.
 - o For some are too proud to forgive themselves,
 - → till the forgiveness of God has had its way with them,
 - has drowned their pride in the tears of repentance,
 - and made their heart come again like the heart of a little child.

But, looking upon forgiveness, then,

- as the perfecting of a work ever going on,
- as the contact of God's heart and ours,
 - o in spite and in destruction of the intervening wrong,

we may say that **God's love is ever in front of his forgiveness.**

- God's love is the prime mover, ever seeking to perfect his forgiveness,
 - o which latter needs the human condition for its consummation.
- The love is perfect, → working out the forgiveness.
- God loves
 - o where he cannot yet forgive
 - o -where forgiveness in the full sense is as yet simply impossible,
 - because no contact of hearts is possible, because that which lies between has not even begun to yield to the besom of his holy destruction.

Some things, then, between the Father and his children, as between a father and his child, may comparatively, and in a sense, be made light of

- -I do not mean made light of in themselves:
 - o away they must go-inasmuch as, evils or sins though they be, they yet leave room for the dwelling of God's Spirit in the heart, forgiving and cleansing away the evil.

When a man's evil is thus fading out of him,

- o and he is growing better and better,
 - that is the forgiveness coming into him more and more.
- Perfect in God's will, it is having its perfect work in the mind of the man.

When the man hath, with his whole nature, cast away his sin, there is no room for forgiveness any more,

- for God dwells in him, and he in God.

- With the voice of Nathan, "Thou art the man,"
 - o the forgiveness of God laid hold of David,
 - o the heart of the king was humbled to the dust;
 - o and when he thus awoke from the moral lethargy that had fallen upon him, he found that he was still with God.
 - "When I awake," he said, "I am still with thee."

But there are two sins, not of individual deed, but of spiritual condition, which cannot be forgiven;

- o that is, as it seems to me, which cannot be
 - excused,
 - passed by,
 - made little of
- o by the tenderness even of God,
- inasmuch as they will
 - o allow no forgiveness to come into the soul,
 - o they will permit no good influence to go on working alongside of them;
 - o they shut God out altogether.

Therefore the man guilty of these can never receive into himself the holy renewing saving influences of God's forgiveness.

- God is outside of him in every sense,
- save that which springs from his creating relation to him,
 - o by which, thanks be to God, he yet keeps a hold of him,
 - although against the will of the man who will not be forgiven.

The one of these sins is against man; the other against God.

The former is unforgivingness to our neighbour;

- the shutting of him out from our mercies,
- from our love-so from the universe,
- as far as we are a portion of it-the murdering therefore of our neighbour.
- o **It may be an infinitely less evil to murder a man than to refuse to forgive him.**
 - **The former may be the act of a moment of passion:**
 - **the latter is the heart's choice.**
 - It is spiritual murder, the worst,
 - to hate,
 - to brood over the feeling that excludes,
 - o that, in our microcosm, kills the image, the idea of the hated.
 - We listen to the voice of
 - our own hurt pride
 - or hurt affection
 - (only the latter without the suggestion of the former, thinketh no evil)
 - o to the injury of the evil-doer.
 - In as far as we can,
 - o we quench the relations of life between us;
 - o we close up the passages of possible return.

- This is to shut out God,
 - the Life,
 - the One.
 - For how are we to receive the forgiving presence while we shut out our brother from our portion of
 - the universal forgiveness,
 - the final restoration,
 - thus refusing to let God be All in all?
 - If God appeared to us, how could he say, "I forgive you," while we remained unforgiving to our neighbour?
 - Suppose it possible that he should say so, his forgiveness would be no good to us while we were uncured of our unforgiveness.
 - It would not touch us.
 - It would not come near us.
 - Nay, it would hurt us,
 - for we should think ourselves safe and well, while the horror of disease was eating the heart out of us.
 - Tenfold the forgiveness lies in the words,
 - "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses."
 - Those words are kindness indeed.
 - God holds the unforgiving man with his hand, but turns his face away from him.
 - If, in his desire to see the face of his Father, he turns his own towards his brother, → then the face of God turns round and seeks his,
 - for then the man may look upon God and not die.
- With our forgiveness to our neighbour, in flows the consciousness of God's forgiveness to us;
 - or even with the effort, we become capable of believing that God can forgive us.
- No man who will not forgive his neighbour, can believe that
 - God is willing, yea, wanting to forgive him,
 - can believe that the dove of God's peace is hovering over a chaotic heart, fain to alight, but finding no rest for the sole of its foot.
- For God to say to such a man, "I cannot forgive you," is love as well as necessity.
 - If God said, "I forgive you," to a man who hated his brother,
 - and if (as is impossible) that voice of forgiveness should reach the man,
 - what would it mean to him?
 - How would the man interpret it?
 - Would it not mean to him,
 - "You may go on hating. I do not mind it.
 - You have had great provocation, and are justified in your hate"?
- No doubt God takes what wrong there is, and what provocation there is, into the account;
 - but the more provocation, → the more excuse that can be urged for the hate,
 - the more reason, if possible, → that the hater should be delivered from the hell of his hate,
 - that God's child should be made the loving child that he meant him to be.
- The man would think,

- not that God loved the sinner,
- but that he forgave the sin,
 - which God never does.
 - Every sin meets with its due fate-inexorable expulsion from the paradise of God's Humanity.
- He loves the sinner so much that he cannot forgive him in any other way than by
 - banishing from his bosom the demon that possesses him,
 - by lifting him out of that mire of his iniquity.

No one, however, supposes for a moment that a man who has once refused to forgive his brother, shall therefore be condemned to endless unforgiveness and unforgivingness.

- What is meant is, that while a man continues in such a mood, God cannot be with him as his friend;
 - not that he will not be his friend, but the friendship being all on one side-that of God-must take forms such as the man will not be able to recognize as friendship.
 - Forgiveness, as I have said, is not love merely, but love conveyed as love to the erring, so establishing peace towards God, and forgiveness towards our neighbour.

To return then to our immediate text: Is the refusal of forgiveness contained in it a condemnation to irrecoverable impenitence?

- Strange righteousness would be the decree, that because a man has done wrong-let us say has done wrong so often and so much that he is wrong-he shall for ever remain wrong!
 - Do not tell me the condemnation is only negative
 - -a leaving of the man to the consequences of his own will,
 - or at most a withdrawing from him of the Spirit which he has despised.
 - God will not take shelter behind such a jugglery of logic or metaphysics.
 - He is neither schoolman nor theologian, but our Father in heaven.
 - He knows that that in him would be the same unforgiveness for which he refuses to forgive man.
- The only tenable ground for supporting such a doctrine is,
 - that God cannot do more;
 - that Satan has overcome;
 - and that Jesus, amongst his own brothers and sisters in the image of God, has been less strong than the adversary, the destroyer.
 - What then shall I say of such a doctrine of devils as that, even if a man did repent, God would not or could not forgive him?

Let us look at "the unpardonable sin," as this mystery is commonly called, and see what we can find to understand about it.

All sin is unpardonable.

- There is no compromise to be made with it.
 - We shall not come out except clean,
 - except having paid the uttermost farthing.

- But the special unpardonableness of those sins, the one of which I have spoken and that which we are now considering, lies in their shutting out God from his genial, his especially spiritual, influences upon the man.
 - Possibly in the case of the former sin, I may have said this too strongly;
 - possibly the love of God may have some part even in the man who will not forgive his brother,
 - although, if he continues unforgiving, that part must decrease and die away;
 - possibly resentment against our brother, might yet for a time leave room for some divine influences by its side,
 - although either the one or the other must speedily yield;
 - but the man who denies truth, who consciously resists duty, who says there is no truth, or that the truth he sees is not true, who says that which is good is of Satan, or that which is bad is of God, supposing him to know that it is good or is bad, denies the Spirit, shuts out the Spirit, and therefore cannot be forgiven.
 - For without the Spirit no forgiveness can enter the man to cast out the satan.
 - Without the Spirit to witness with his spirit, no man could know himself forgiven, even if God appeared to him and said so.
 - The full forgiveness is, as I have said, when a man feels that God is forgiving him; and this cannot be while he opposes himself to the very essence of God's will.
- As far as we can see, the men of whom this was spoken were men who resisted the truth with some amount of perception that it was the truth;
 - men neither led astray by passion,
 - nor altogether blinded by their abounding prejudice;
 - men who were not excited to condemn one form of truth by the love which they bore to another form of it;
 - but men so set, from selfishness and love of influence, against one whom they saw to be a good man, that they denied the goodness of what they knew to be good, in order to put down the man whom they knew to be good,
 - because He had spoken against them, and was ruining their influence and authority with the people by declaring them to be no better than they knew themselves to be.
- Is not this to be Satan?
 - to be in hell?
 - to be corruption?
 - to be that which is damned?
 - Was not this their condition unpardonable?
 - How, through all this mass of falsehood, could the pardon of God reach the essential humanity within it?
 - Crying as it was for God's forgiveness, these men had almost separated their humanity from themselves, had taken their part with the powers of darkness.
 - Forgiveness while they were such was an impossibility.
 - No. Out of that they must come, else there was no word of God for them.

- But the very word that told them of the unpardonable state in which they were, was just the one form the voice of mercy could take in calling on them to repent.
 - They must hear and be afraid.
- I dare not, cannot think that they refused the truth, knowing all that it was;
- but I think they refused the truth, knowing that it was true
 - -not carried away, as I have said,
 - by wild passion,
 - but by cold self-love,
 - and envy, and avarice, and ambition;
 - not merely doing wrong knowingly,
 - but setting their whole natures knowingly against the light. Of this nature must the sin against the Holy Ghost surely be.
- "This is the condemnation," (not the sins that men have committed, but the condition of mind in which they choose to remain,) "that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." In this sin against the Holy Ghost, I see no single act alone, although it must find expression in many acts, but a wilful condition of mind,

*As far removed from God and light of heaven,
As from the centre thrice to the utmost pole.*

Comment [DB2]: Paradise Lost

For this there could be no such excuse made as that even a little light might work beside it;

- for there light could find no entrance and no room;
- light was just what such a mind was set against, almost because it was what it was.

The condition was utterly bad.

But can a man really fall into such a condition of spiritual depravity?

- That is my chief difficulty.
 - But I think it may be. And wiser people than I, have thought so.
- I have difficulty in believing it, I say;
 - yet I think it must be so.

But I do not believe that it is a fixed, a final condition.

- I do not see why it should be such any more than that of the man who does not forgive his neighbour.
 - If you say it is a worse offence, I say, Is it too bad for the forgiveness of God?

But is God able to do anything more with the man?

- Or how is the man ever to get out of this condition?
 - If the Spirit of God is shut out from his heart, how is he to become better?

The Spirit of God is the Spirit whose influence is known by its witnessing with our spirit.

- But may there not be other powers and means of the Spirit preparatory to this its highest office with man?
- God who has made us can never be far from any man who draws the breath of life-nay, must be in him; not necessarily in his heart, as we say, but still in him.

- May not then one day
 - o some terrible convulsion from the centre of his being,
 - o some fearful earthquake from the hidden gulfs of his nature,
 - shake such a man so that through all the deafness of his death, the voice of the Spirit may be faintly heard, the still small voice that comes after the tempest and the earthquake?
- May there not be a fire that even such can feel?
 - o Who shall set bounds to the consuming of the fire of our God, and the purifying that dwells therein?

The only argument that I can think of, which would with me have weight against this conclusion, is, that the revulsion of feeling in any one who had thus sinned against the truth, when once brought to acknowledge his sin, would be so terrible that life would never more be endurable, and the kindest thing God could do would be to put such a man out of being,

- because it had been a better thing for him never to have been born.

But he who could make such a man repent,

- could make him so sorrowful and lowly, and so glad that he had repented, that he would wish to live ever that he might ever repent and ever worship the glory he now beheld.

When a man gives up self, his past sins will no longer oppress him. It is enough for the good of life that God lives, that the All-perfect exists, and that we can behold him.

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," said the Divine, making excuse for his murderers,

- not after it was all over, but at the very moment when he was dying by their hands.

Then Jesus had forgiven them already.

- His prayer the Father must have heard, for he and the Son are one.
 - o When the Father succeeded in answering his prayer, then his forgiveness in the hearts of the murderers broke out in sorrow, repentance, and faith.
- Here was a sin dreadful enough surely-but easy for our Lord to forgive.
- All that excuse for the misled populace!
 - o Lord Christ be thanked for that! That was like thee!

But must we believe that Judas, who repented even to agony,

- who repented so that his high-prized life, self, soul, became worthless in his eyes and met with no mercy at his own hand,-must we believe that he could find no mercy in such a God?

I think, when Judas fled from his hanged and fallen body, he fled to the tender help of Jesus, and found it-I say not how.

- He was in a more hopeful condition now than during any moment of his past life, for he had never repented before.
- But I believe that Jesus loved Judas even when he was kissing him with the traitor's kiss; and I believe that he was his Saviour still.
- And if any man remind me of his words, "It had been good for that man if he had not been born," I had not forgotten them, though I know that I now offer nothing beyond a conjectural explanation of them when I say: Judas had got none of the good of the world into which he had been born.

- He had not inherited the earth.
 - He had lived an evil life, out of harmony with the world and its God.
 - Its love had been lost upon him.
 - He had been brought to the very Son of God, and had lived with him as his own familiar friend;
 - and he had not loved him more, but less than himself.
- Therefore it had been all useless.
 - "It had been good for that man if he had not been born;"
 - for it was all to try over again,
 - in some other way
 - -inferior perhaps,
 - in some other world,
 - in a lower school.
 - He had to be sent down the scale of creation which is ever ascending towards its Maker.
- But I will not, cannot believe, O my Lord, that thou wouldst not forgive thy enemy, even when he repented, and did thee right.
- Nor will I believe that thy holy death was powerless to save thy foe-that it could not reach to Judas.
 - Have we not heard of those, thine own, taught of thee, who could easily forgive their betrayers in thy name?
 - And if thou forgivest, will not thy forgiveness find its way at last in redemption and purification?

Look for a moment at the clause preceding my text: "He that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God."

- What does it mean? Does it mean-"Ah! you are mine, but not of my sort. You denied me. Away to the outer darkness"? Not so.
 - "It shall be forgiven to him that speaketh against the Son of man;" for He may be but the truth revealed without him. Only he must have shame before the universe of the loving God, and may need the fire that burneth and consumeth not.

But for him that speaketh against the Spirit of Truth, against the Son of God revealed within him, he is beyond the teaching of that Spirit now.

- For how shall he be forgiven?
 - The forgiveness would touch him no more than a wall of stone.
 - Let him know what it is to be without the God he hath denied.
 - Away with him to the Outer Darkness!
 - Perhaps that will make him repent.

My friends, I offer this as only a contribution towards the understanding of our Lord's words.

- But if we ask him, he will lead us into all truth.
- **And let us not be afraid to think, for he will not take it ill.**

But what I have said must be at least a part of the truth.

No amount of discovery in his words can tell us more than we have discovered, more than we have seen and known to be true.

- For all the help the best of his disciples can give us is only to discover, to see for ourselves.

And beyond all our discoveries in his words and being, there lie depths within depths of truth that we cannot understand, and yet shall be ever going on to understand.

- Yea, even now sometimes we seem to have dim glimpses into regions from which we receive no word to bring away.

The fact that some things have become to us so much more simple than they were, and that great truths have come out of what once looked common, is ground enough for hope that such will go on to be our experience through the ages to come.

- Our advance from our former ignorance can measure but a small portion of the distance that lies, and must ever lie, between
 - o our childishness and his manhood,
 - o between our love and his love,
 - o between our dimness and his mighty vision.

To him ere long may we all come, all children, still children, more children than ever, to receive from his hand the white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

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