

~Other Speakers M-R: H.C.G. Moule:

He is as much alive in human life as the worldling is, and more. He cordially loves his dear ones; he is the open-hearted friend, the helpful neighbor, the loving and loyal citizen and subject, the unattentive and intelligent worker in his daily path of duty. Time with its contents is full of reality and value to him. He does not hold that the earth is God-forsaken. . . But on the other hand, he does not banish from his thoughts as if it were unpractical the dear prospect of another world. He is not foolish enough to talk of "otherworldliness," as if it were a selfish thing to "lay up treasure in heaven," and so to have "his heart there also." For him the present could not possibly be what it is in its interests, affections, and purposes, if it were not for the revealed certainties of an everlasting future in the presence of the King. . . .

What is the secret of the equilibrium? It was the Lord Jesus Christ. And the secret of the far more than peace with which here he meets the alternative of the life and death is precisely the same; it is the Lord Jesus Christ. He had no philosophy of happiness; he has something infinitely better; he has the Lord. What gives life its zest and charm for him? It is, that life "is Christ." What makes death an object of positive personal "desire" for him, matched, let us remember, against a "life" with which he is so deeply contented? It is, that "to depart" is to be with Christ, which is "far, far better." On either side of the veil, Jesus Christ is all things to him. So both sides are divinely good; only, the conditions of the other side are such that the longed-for companionship of his Master will be more perfectly realized there.

This passage . . . is a clear witness to the conscious and immediate blessedness in death of the servants of God. . . . it is "far, far better" means "better" not than our present life at its worst but than our present life at its holiest and best; for, as we have observed already, it is "far, far better" than a life here which "is Christ." Whatever mysteries attend the thought of the Intermediate State . . . the believer's happy spirit, "departing" from "this tabernacle," finds itself not in the void, not in the dark, not under penal or disciplinary pain, but in a state "far, far better" than its very best yet. It is, in a sense so much better in degree as to be new in kind, "with Christ."

Yes, think of all things at the best; in one rich thought unite
All purest joy of sense and soul, all present love and light;
Yet bind this truth upon thy brow and clap it to thy heart,
And then nor grief nor gladness here shall claim too great a part--
All radiance of this lower sky is to that glory dim;
Far better to depart it is, for we shall be WITH HIM.

. . . . We have to remember that the main incidence of the apostle's thought here is not upon the blessedness of death but upon the joy of duty, the "fruit of labor," in continued life. He looks into the gate, not to sigh because he may not enter yet, but "to run with all his might," in the path of unselfish service, "because he is close to the goal"--the goal of being with Christ, to whom he will belong for ever, and whom he will serve for ever, "day and night in His temple." His "meat is to do the will of Him that sent him, and to finish His work."

. . . . Death opens up, as nothing else can do, the fellowship of the faithful, and the heart of JESUS (Philippians Studies, pp. 77-83).