

A FATHER'S LETTER

H. GRATTAN GUINNESS

D.D., F.R.A.S.

With a Foreword by his daughter

MRS. HOWARD TAYLOR

London

CHINA INLAND MISSION

Newington Green, N.16



DR. GUINNESS AT THE TIME THE LETTER WAS
WRITTEN

*“Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three,
and the greatest of these is love.”*

I Cor. xiii. 13.

*Printed in Great Britain by
The Camelot Press Ltd., London and Southampton*

FOREWORD

WE lived in the heart of East London at the time the letter given in the following pages was written. We were two brothers and two sisters and home always seemed to us the happiest place on earth; Father and Mother made it so. They were our glory and joy.

Our home was a very busy one, the centre of much missionary work in the great city around us as well as in the distant parts of the earth. From quite early days we grew up to take a share in all these interests, and our hearts warmed especially toward the many friends in Whitechapel and other parts of the great thoroughfare on which we lived. Their concerns were ours, and their cares and sorrows too. I remember how at an early age we used to watch, from our schoolroom windows, hundreds of girls flocking to Bryant and May's great match factory in the early morning, and how when they returned at night we would run down to the gate and invite some of them in to have a nice time

by the cosy fire. We used to make toffee or read an interesting book, and always finished with a very simple prayer and a story from the Bible.

Gradually this childhood interest developed into something much deeper, and one found oneself engaged in a full programme of activities that brought one into contact with the spiritual needs of those around. This not unnaturally proved too much for young years, resulting in a rather serious breakdown which meant leaving home for a time, and revealed to me my dear Father's heart as never before. Occupied though he was with many claims, he took time to write to me, in Redhill where I was with kind friends, a letter which only such a father could pen. Deeply moved, I wrote on the envelope at the time, "Father—to go with me wherever I go." It has been with me ever since, in many scenes, in many lands, and I only part from it now to give it to the wider circle who need, in these days, some fresh assurance of the knowledge-surpassing love of God.

My Father had no idea when he wrote the letter that it would ever find publication, and it has been to me too sacred a treasure to share in this way. Now feel that the need of many is so great of just the

reassurance that came to me, through my Father's letter, that I can withhold it no longer. O that through it Christ may be revealed to many hearts in all His satisfying fullness!

M. GERALDINE TAYLOR.

"Live for the glory of God and the good of many."

My Father's motto from early years.

*Jesus, Thou joy of loving hearts,
Thou Fount of Life, Thou Light of men,
From the best bliss that earth imparts,
We turn unfilled to Thee again.*

*We taste Thee, O Thou Living Bread,
And long to feast upon Thee still;
We drink of Thee, the Fountain-head,
And thirst our souls from Thee to fill.*

*O Jesus, ever with us stay,
Make all our moments calm and bright;
Chase the dark night of sin away;
Shed o'er the world Thy holy light.*

A FATHER'S LETTER

EAST LONDON INSTITUTE FOR HOME AND
FOREIGN MISSIONS, HARLEY HOUSE,
BOW, E.

14 *March*, 1885.

MY DARLING GERALDINE,—I do tenderly feel for you in your present, and I trust passing, deeply trying mental exercise. I know what it means and am not in the least surprised that you should have to pass through it. I have been through it and myriads more of the Lord's servants. "No strange thing" has happened to you, my child, in this "fiery trial," for such it truly is, though mental and not physical. The Lord who has always made His people to triumph in the fires of suffering will make you to triumph yet, and your joy shall be the greater after the sorrow, even as ever according to the deep-meaning promise, "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." The deepest joys are not born in Paradise, but in Gethsemane! Fear not, my child! The Lord

shall send His angel to comfort you, and after the night of weeping the sunrise of exceeding joy.

How has this mental exercise and bitterness come about? The cause is easy to trace. You love, and you sorrow. It is always thus. You love in Jesus Christ, these outcasts, these poor prodigals, these heathen at home and abroad, this lost world. You are sensitive, first as a woman, then as a Christian. Your heart is drawn out to these people; you work for them, are blessed, your heart is filled with joy, new-found joy, the joy of love, the joy of winning souls, of conveying spiritual blessing—joy of joys!

You are laid aside, weary, for God is not going to work a miracle to support your body, or to make you an exception to the law of nature, that work wearies body and mind, brain and nerve. That law is good and right and indispensable, in this present state, and even His own Son when in the flesh “sat weary by the well.” You are like Elijah in the desert: free from the happy mental occupation which carried you along, pained and tired, the busy mind at liberty for reflection, the sweet joy of evangelising suspended—you are in the desert as it were. You have in your work been brought face to face with sorrow, poverty, want, pain, death, bereavement,

miseries of many kinds. You see the world full of them. The problem presses upon your thoughts; it is too much for weary nerves and heart seen *then* and *thus*. For how do you see it? You see it disconnected from the two elements which alone can explain it, in any degree: first, the element of sin, of moral evil; and second, the element of redemption, of moral good, triumphing over moral and physical evil.

For you do not see the sin which lies at the root of all this suffering; you only see the spectacle of the suffering, rising like a world of grief, and utterly inexplicable. You see, not the universe as it is, but the little wilderness fragment of it (earth) and it looks as if it were the whole, instead of only a grain of sand upon its starry shore! You see it filled with desolation. You do not notice the manna descending, the water flowing, the cloud leading, the Canaan waiting, the Israel advancing—only the drought, the heat, the pain, the serpent, the death. The *sin*, the moral evil, you do not see, save only by little imperfect, passing glimpses; a world full of rebellion against God, the sinfulness of sin, this makes but light impression on your mind filled with compassion for those in sorrow. For your heart has

but a faint and infinitely inadequate knowledge either of the world's sin, present and past, or of sin's desert, or of how it should be dealt with, or of how it can be cured. Physical evil is the hedge set in the path of sin's progress, a "hitherto shalt thou come but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed!" Then when you think of moral evil you leap the mystery by assuming a power for God, and a relation in His creating act to man's present fallen state, which makes Him, I will not say the author of evil—no, He is, you know and feel instinctively, Light and Love—but the sole creator of man's present state and circumstances, instead of perceiving that man has to an enormous extent made those circumstances for himself. Such is the wise law of Nature that sin shall *arrest itself*, by producing consequences of analogous evil nature in the form of suffering. This is a good law, and has the good of the creature for its end. You can see, for instance, the children of the drunken and improvident, of criminals, etc., suffer, and suffer as the criminals themselves in *consequence* of sin. God does not make these painful surroundings; man makes them for himself. God does not build crowded cities; He made a paradise, and says to man, "Take possession

of it." Man does otherwise, and then dares to blame God for it, and for the pain he suffers for his wrongdoing. What does God do in His wondrous grace? He comes down into that wilderness, which man has made such, to dwell with the poor outcast, to be homeless there ("hath not where to lay His head"), to *die* there upon a Cross that He may save these lost ones, and change that wilderness into a better paradise!

All this, for the time, you scarcely see, like the children of Israel who, when Moses told them of God's redeeming grace, "hearkened not for sorrow of heart." Were they right? Were they right in refusing to let the Comforter of Israel comfort them? ("Comfort ye, comfort ye, My people, saith your God"!) Yes, sin is here, and sin is not from God; therefore sorrow is here, and death. But He bore our sins, wondrous truth! He carried our sorrows and says, yea, cries in His infinite love, in the intensity of His redeeming pity and saving purpose, "O death, I will be thy plagues, O grave, I will be thy destruction!" He will "swallow up death in victory," and wipe away all tears! I tell you, my child, that all earth's history is all contained in one deep glad word—REDEMPTION!

For ages untold all has been *upward progress*, from the lower forms of life to the higher, and yet higher—up—up to the creation of man. But that is not the goal. *Upward still* climbs the wondrous progress, up to the incarnation of the Son of Man and His redeeming work, and *yet upwards* through all the dispensations and working of His Spirit to His Second Advent to *restore all things*.

The revolutions of the world are not in a *closed*

a closed circle



circle, thus, a mere round and round, the same thing over and over, but in an *open spiral*, thus, ever climbing higher and higher

an open spiral



—for God does not stand still—He is not a motionless centre of monotonous phenomena! He is ever advancing and carrying all things with Him. If a sun sweeps forward and a planet revolves around it, its movement is a *spiral*! What have you seen of this mighty movement? Well, you have looked into the miserable brick kilns of Egypt, and seen the sorrows of Israel

there. You have hardly heard the sweet voice which says, "I know their sorrows and am come down to deliver them." You gaze on the captives under the lash and say, "Alas! what is God doing?" My child, the place you stand on is "holy ground"! Put off your shoes; worship the "I am," the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (wondrous redeeming Name), and *see what He will do*. Shall He not bring forth His people? Shall He not "break every yoke"? Fear not. "Let not your heart be troubled." Patience! Wait! He is the Eternal. His work cannot be finished in an hour. "The night is far spent." Even now, "the day is at hand." Paradise restored! God all in all!

"Look *not* at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen" (all these earthly, moral and physical evils included) "are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Think of these things, and think of *Jesus*. In Him we see the FATHER; think what that Name means. "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father." Behold Him! God is Light and Love. Ah, my child, our best apprehension of Him is by the possession of His Spirit. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." Not intellectually, by the solution of mysteries, can we come so

near Him as by the touch of love, the sense of love. When you pitied and loved those poor wanderers and told of redeeming grace, you felt what God *is*, for He is Love. Dwell then in love, as He is love. Love Him: love all. Though we understand nothing aright, if we *love* Him we *are known* of Him, and that is better than our knowing. As He gives you strength and opportunity, do good in loving-kindness, and you shall feel the tide of joy flow sweetly and silently in the depths of your soul, for God will be there in those depths, *revealed in love*. Love only reveals itself to love. He who loves not cannot know Him who is love. Love and know!

Then also, my child, cultivate humility, for in it is wisdom and righteousness and rest. Remember Him who said, "I am meek and lowly in heart. . . . Learn of Me . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Do not imagine you can judge the Judge of all the earth and all the universe—not even in little things, much less great. "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." And what was it He did? He laid aside His glory to wash His disciples' feet!

Lie low; quiet the heart. He is better than we are—infinately—and alone is wise and alone is good.

Our faint ray of goodness is a beam from His central sun of light and warmth and glory—infinite, concentrated, eternal good! Turn, then, away from the patch of darkness close beside you to the blue breadth of azure stainlessness above, and the star-written pages of the light-filled universe, and the glow of love's summer celestial radiance! Who can speak it? What words? The whole world could fit into one of the little gaps (sun-spots) in the rim of solar splendour! We shall soon be where all this sorrow shall be swallowed up in the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." These are things impossible even for apostles to utter, to be told; you have to go *up* to hear them! Fear not, wait only a little and then!—to know as you are known, to be as He is, with Him and His redeemed in the satisfaction of the full results of His redeeming work!

Now one word more. Don't think too much about these great themes. You are not well; the body is weak and nerves tired. Change the theme. Give the brain rest, give it sleep, give it fresh subjects. Read about other things, about natural history, and whatever interests and pleases you. Go out; let the sweet influences of Nature refresh your

tired physical frame, and mental nature too. Let sunshine and breezes, singing of birds, flowers and springtime do their work. Let friendship do its work; talk with others; enter into their concerns. Forget yourself, forget these themes, and the mind shall gain energy and the body health, while the heart *rests in Him who rests in His own for evermore*. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." "Peace, be still!" Cheer up, then, and be of good courage! It is the Lord who bids you, who will clear up everything in His own good time.

May He bless and strengthen you, my child, and this sorrow work sweet fruits in days to come.

Ever your loving father,

H. GRATTAN GUINNESS.

P.S. The *reality* is not the *appearance*! God is LOVE. Remember what the earth *was* when creative power began to reduce it to order and raise it to loveliness, "without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep." Suppose you had been there gazing on that chaos. Such is *this* moral chaos. But wait: paradise shall rise!

I commend to you a sweet, precious little psalm

of three verses, Psalm ~~cxxxi~~; also the deep longings of God Himself referred to in Romans viii, "Groanings which cannot be uttered." What intensity of divine love! But above all be a little child—trust! "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too wonderful for me. Surely I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with his mother. My soul is with me like a weaned child" (Ps. ~~cxxxi~~. 1, 2, R.V.).

H. G. G.

*"All the joy we now are tasting
Is but as the dream of night;
To the Day of God we're hasting,
Looking for it with delight;
Thou art coming
And wilt satisfy our sight.*

*"As we sing our hearts grow lighter,
We are children of the day;
Sorrow makes our hope the brighter,
Faith regards not the delay;
Sure the promise,
We shall meet Thee on Thy Way."*

*“Now we see through a glass darkly; but then
face to face; now I know in part, but then shall
I know even as I also am known.”*

1 Cor. xiii. 12.