

LIVING IN
THE HOPE
OF *Glory*

A NEW TRANSLATION
OF A SPIRITUAL CLASSIC

ADOLPHE MONOD

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FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT



(February 10, 1856)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2

My beloved friends, who demonstrate your brotherly love to me by once again joining me to share in the Lord's love feast, there are things that would trouble the soul of a man facing death if that soul were not reassured about them—as about all things—by the totally free grace of God

in Jesus Christ. One of those things is the memory of that part of his life that was lost, or more than lost, on minor matters rather than being spent on the great matters that alone should be constantly before the eyes of a Christian. That is why I would like to take a moment to call your attention to the great harm that is done when a Christian is preoccupied with minor matters.¹

WHAT MAKES THINGS IMPORTANT?

Let us be clear right at the beginning that preoccupation with minor matters is not to be confused with attention given to little things. We are called by God to be involved with a whole host of little things, and indeed they make up much of life. The way in which we fulfill the small duties is just as true a measure of our piety as the way in which we fulfill our great duties. Often it is an even truer measure, because in the small things we have only God, ourselves, and our family as witnesses, while in accomplishing the great ones we are placed in a sort of theater where our pride sometimes finds itself only too willing to be set up.

Besides, nothing is small or great in itself. It becomes so only by the spirit we bring to it. Before God, since he is infinite and eternal, what we call small is just as great as what we call the greatest of all, and that which we call great is just as small as what we call the smallest of all. A faithful maid-servant who, for the love of God, takes affectionate care of a

¹ The word translated “minor” is the common French word *petit* which normally means “small” but also can signify “petty” or “of little importance”. The same word is translated “little” in the next paragraph, where Monod is contrasting *petits intérêts* (“minor matters”) with *petites choses* (“little things” or “details”).

child confided to her by her masters does a great thing before God, and she shall have her reward. But a statesman who, through self-love, aspires to the highest honors for wisdom or eloquence does a very small thing before God and may draw more shame upon himself in heaven than glory on earth.

What is important, then, is to approach everything we do with a great, exalted spirit that always looks toward God and does all things in light of him and of eternity. Thus, by carrying God everywhere in our hearts, we would also carry him everywhere in our words and in our work, so that there might be nothing petty or earthly or transitory in our entire lives.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO GOD?

The example of God himself will suffice to clarify for us what I have just said. God makes no difference in the care he brings to the little things as opposed to the big ones. He constructs a blade of grass or a snow-flake with as much care as he determines the proportions, the relations, and the movements of the stars. Whether he builds a grain of sand or establishes a Mont Blanc, he does everything he does as God—that is, with perfect care. But this God who sees nothing as too small to merit his attention always has, in his small works as well as in his large ones, eternity, his reign, and his glory before his eyes, just as he has said: “The LORD does all things for his glory” (apparently a reference to Prov. 16:4). There is absolutely nothing in all of God’s works, whether moral or physical, to which he has not brought the immense weight of an infinite care and an eternal interest.

It is the same with Jesus, God made visible. Certainly he

doesn't neglect the poor little children who are brought to him and whom the apostles thought it beneath him to bless. Beyond that, he doesn't even neglect the leftover fragments of bread and fish. He wants nothing to be lost, even at a time when he has just demonstrated that with (or even without) a word he can multiply the bread and fishes at will. And this same Jesus is the one who accomplishes the greatest works in his incarnation, his redemption, his passion, his resurrection, and his glorious ascension.

But he does all these things in the same spirit. Whether he is being made incarnate, redeeming us, suffering for us, rising from the dead, or ascending to the heavens; whether he is stopping to bless the little children, gathering the bits of bread and fish, speaking the smallest word of comfort to someone in affliction, or offering a cup of cold water to someone who is thirsty; always in each of these actions, he has God, eternity, and his Father's glory in view. Thus, in all of his works, Jesus Christ appears to us as having his head always in heaven while his feet are on the earth. He appears to us saying "the one who is in heaven" while speaking of himself. As everything is great within his soul, so too everything is great in all his works and in all his thoughts.

WHAT IS OUR FOCUS?

Very well, my dear friends. There is the example that is offered to us, and thus we must walk. We must not be preoccupied with the minor matters of earth, and still less with its lusts and sins. Rather we must always be preoccupied with God, with his glory, with his love, and with the work of Jesus Christ for the honor of God and the salvation of

mankind, including our own. Made in the image and likeness of God, we must be his imitators. In the smallest cares as well as in the greatest, we must carry thoughts of God and of eternity always as our mindset. The Christian, whatever he says, whatever he does, must always be great before God, who weighs true greatness.

Painters have depicted the saints with a halo. Scripture does nothing of the sort except for one Old Testament saint.² Rather, it depicts them in a most exceptional way: the saints carry their halos inside of them and radiate the glow wherever they pass by.

It is necessary for the Christian to give such an impression of himself that no matter where one meets him—whether in the street, in the drawing room, at the dining table, in prison, or at the height of greatness—one should always have the feeling that this is a man who seeks God, who dreams of furthering the great interests of humanity, and who finds that it is not worth living for anything except to glorify God. He should always appear as one who makes all of his advantages and all of his misfortunes work together to that end, who is ready to leave this earth as soon as that work is accomplished, and who, like his Master, goes about from place to place doing good.

Oh, how holy and how happy this Christian would be, free from covetousness, envy, worry, and all that troubles the soul! By walking always with God, how he would bring honor to the gospel, how he would victoriously shut the mouth of scoffers, how many souls he would lead to his Savior, and all through the humble glow of a completely holy life even more than by his most powerful words!

² Moses, whose face glowed when he had been talking with God.

AVOIDING DISTRACTIONS

But where are these Christians, my God? Where are they? How much easier it would be to find Christians, real Christians, who are sincere, who on dying would give their souls back into the Lord's hands, who deep down are longing for him, but who allow themselves to be turned aside and become preoccupied with the minor matters of life. They are absorbed by the love of money, by the thirst for the glory of man, by jealousy of a competitor's success, by an ardent desire for personal success, by an ambition outside of the paths God has marked out for them, by impatience with sickness, by an aversion to humiliations and crosses, by the lively annoyance they can experience over a word—perhaps a misunderstood word—or an insignificant mishap that will leave no trace of its presence at death or perhaps even in an hour!

Oh, my God, how few in number are the consistent Christians! That is why, my friends, the gospel is compromised by those who profess it. That is why one so often says of them that in the end they seek after just what everyone else seeks after and that the things that trouble others trouble them just as much. Thus the gospel is wounded even by those who seek their peace and salvation in it, those who should be using all of their strength and all of their life to glorify it. They should be walking with their heads high and in heaven, as Jesus did. They should be moving forward with their feet on the ground but breathing in the atmosphere of heaven, drawing from it the basis for all their actions and the strength for their entire life.

If only you knew, my friends, the extent to which all these illusions disappear when one looks death in the face.

How small these minor matters seem and how much only that which is great before God really appears great. How much one regrets not having lived more for God the way Jesus lived. How much, if one could begin life over again, one would like to lead it in a more serious way, more filled with Jesus Christ, with his Word and with his example.

If only you knew, you would put your hand to this work even this very moment! You would beseech God to put your conduct into harmony with your feelings and your faith. And you would succeed in this as many others have, after all, succeeded, because they cried out to God and because they *desired* it wholeheartedly before him. There is only a small handful of God's children gathered in this room around this bed of sickness and, most likely, death. Yet these Christians, with all their infirmities and weaknesses, would do more to advance God's rule and more for the good of humanity than a dense crowd armed with all possible gifts. They would do things that were that much greater because all thought of vain glory would ever more be banished far from their hearts.

This is my desire for you, my ardent prayer, and also the prayer I beg you to offer to God on my behalf, so that during my remaining time, whatever it might be, I would no longer dream of anything but to live for God's glory and the good of my fellows. This, of course, would also be to live for my own eternal joy! Amen.

To read the talks in original
chronological order, go to
chapt. 3 on p. 18.