

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

Memphis for Phtah. Amon or Phtah are *nouti*, 'gods,' but *nouti* is not only Amon, it may stand for many other gods. It is the same with *Elohim* and *Yahveh*. The two words are not synonymous. *Yahveh* may be called *Elohim*, but *Elohim* is not necessarily *Yahveh*. It may stand for Baal, or Moloch, or the gods of the Egyptians or the Syrians, or others. Therefore one cannot always use the two names *ad libitum*. There are cases in which one or the other is necessary, or both have to be used together.

This is the case in the chapter we are studying. Abram knows *Yahveh*, since he has already heard these words: 'I am *Yahveh* that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees.' To which Abram has answered, 'O *Yahveh Elohim*, whereby shall I know.' . . . Now *Yahveh* is going to make a covenant 'to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee.' Here it is obvious that the two names *Yahveh* and *Elohim* must be used. It is an alliance between *Yahveh* and Abram, in which *Yahveh* settles that He will be Abram's *Elohim*. It is clear that in the description of a contract, both contracting parties must be named. The writer of the chapter could not do otherwise.

Nevertheless we are told that we have to bow before the critical theory which has a ruling voice. There are an Elohist and a Yahvist writer; and, since the name *Elohim* is predominant, the chapter must be by the chief Elohist writer, the Priestly Code, a post-exilic document which never uses the name *Yahveh* before the Exodus. Therefore the name *Yahveh* cannot be admitted in this chapter, it must be an interpolation due to a late redactor, and instead of *Yahveh* we must read *Elohim*.

An *Elohim* says to Abram, 'I am thy *Elohim*; I

make an everlasting covenant to be an *Elohim* unto thee and unto thy seed after thee.' This *Elohim* who will be Abram's god, who is he? Is he Dagon, Moloch, or a god Abram brought from Egypt? Every man has an *Elohim*, and this covenant might have been made in the same terms with Abimelech or any one of Abram's neighbours. A god says to Abram, 'I am thy God'; that is a formula which may be applied to any one. It is evident that here there must be a name. The critical theory makes of this sentence and of the whole chapter a composition which has no sense. This chapter is certainly the most positive condemnation of the theory of the Elohist and Yahvist, and also of Kuenen's idea, which has been adopted by many critics, that the name *Yahveh* was not known to the Hebrews before the Exodus.

I shall not dwell on what I said in my former article. Expunge *Yahveh*'s name from Abraham's life, and you destroy entirely the history of this patriarch, which unfolds itself in the most simple and logical way. He leaves Haran to be faithful to *Yahveh*, who promises to him that his posterity will be a great nation in the land where he is going to settle. This promise is confirmed by an alliance. A more solemn covenant is that in which *Yahveh* declared to Abram that he will be his God and the God of his seed after him; and the guarantee of that covenant is circumcision, which, being practised through all generations, will remind them of it. The whole biography of Abraham is the narrative of the dealings of *Yahveh* with the patriarch, the man elected to be the father of a nation worshipping *Yahveh*. Strike out the name *Yahveh*, and what remains of Abraham's life?

In the Study.

Virginitus Puerisque.

Keep Step.¹

'All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel.'—I Ch 12³⁸.

WHAT an impressive thing it is to see a great body of men in ordered ranks, marching along with perfect

step. Their mighty tramp thrills you. You march with them, and if you are tired you feel less tired, you catch some of their strength. It's easier to march in a great company than to walk alone; and it is easier to march in rank and in step than when every one takes his own pace. Then the step goes and the ranks sag, tiredness soon shows itself; but a drum tap or a voice to give the time pulls every one together. With the rhythm of the one

¹ By the Reverend Stuart Robertson, M.A., Glasgow.

step and the contact of ranks, strength is shared and increased. It is so purposelike, so strong, when men 'keep rank with a perfect heart.'

Most of life is just learning to do this. At school, in the arithmetic class you are learning to keep step with the law of figures. You simply must do it. In the singing class you are learning to keep step with the law of music. The choir has to practise keeping rank; or it isn't a choir. It is not a lot of people all singing solos on their own. It is only a choir when each takes his part in a common effort. You can't take your own time. Each must take the time of all, sing with the conductor's beat, keep rank with the music.

To be healthy we must keep step with the law of nature. We can't go as we please. We are not allowed to. Health is everybody's business, and if we get fever we have to fall out and get away by ourselves and not come back till we are in step and rank with the law of health. Conduct is keeping step with the law of God. We must walk in His statutes, keep in line with His commandments.

Some people think they need not. They go their own way, choose their own step. They are full of their own conceit and as pleased with themselves as the fond mother who came home from the review and said proudly, 'A' the troops were oot o' step but my Jock!' They call goodness 'slow.' God's pace is not quick enough for them. They like to be called 'fast' and 'advanced.' They think all the world is out of step with them. They make a sad mess of it, and are worn out and tired and disappointed long before the long day's march is done.

It is wise to keep rank with those who march with God, who dress 'by the right'; and wise to remember that there is One who leads our march and sets our pace and step, Jesus Christ. He will not set a step that is too long for little children. Sometimes one sees a father taking a little child a walk. He forgets the legs are little and the child tires itself trying to keep step, and has to trot often to keep up. I never was allowed to set the marching pace in France because I walked too fast, forgetting how far we had to go and what burdens the men had to carry. But our Captain doesn't forget, and He knows our burdens. We will never fall out by the way if we walk with Jesus.

The real secret of keeping rank and step is that we have all a great purpose. Those men in the Book of Chronicles kept rank with a perfect heart

because they all came determined to make David king over Israel. Their feet were right because their march was right.

Now we have a purpose greater than that; it is to make Jesus King over the whole world. We must get together for that, pray together, pull together, march in step. You can't be a Christian in your own corner, you must 'fall in,' so that it shall be true what we sing:

Like a mighty army, moves the Church of God.

Why is Jesus not yet King over all the world? It is because Christians have not yet learned to 'keep rank with a perfect heart.' The Churches are all at sixes and sevens. They are a shuffling mob, when they should be a mighty marching army, tramping with magnificent unison and ordered ranks to a great end.

Therefore, boys and girls, get into step with Jesus and 'fall in' in the ranks of those who would crown Him King over all, forgetting yourself and keeping rank with a perfect heart.

A Bad Spill.¹

'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.'—1 Co 10¹².

The other day I read a horrible thing, as bad as a nightmare when you waken up screaming, and mother comes running upstairs, and you can't tell her what is wrong, only that you have had an ugly dream, and are afraid of something. In some places in the Balkans, so it seems, there are packs of wolves prowling about and hunting where no wolves have been seen for long enough. There are so many of them, that in certain districts the people daren't stay on the farms, for it's not safe; they are flying into the towns, and they are not always reaching them. For sometimes these swift awful beasts come nearer and nearer and at last pull them down, and they have a fearful end there in the centre of that snapping and flashing of white teeth! But the most shocking thing of all is that the dogs have turned against their masters! Not all of them of course. Many, when that grim avalanche of hungry brutes bursts in, go down fighting bravely to the last. But quite a lot of dogs have become wild again, have gone back to the wolf packs, do what they do, go where they go, hunt what they hunt, yes, sometimes men and women. For always it is the wolves that lead,

¹ By the Reverend A. J. Gossip, M.A., Aberdeen.

never the dogs that teach these savage creatures their own better ways. Isn't there something dreadful about that? For dogs and men have been close chums so very long. It must be thousands and thousands of years! They are so loyal, these old friends of ours, that you and I would think that they couldn't be anything else now, that it's grown to be an instinct, a bit of themselves; that just as, so long as the eye is there, we'll see, because that is what an eye is for, so, as long as a dog is a dog, it will be loyal, for that is its way: and yet yonder they've gone wild again, and turned against their masters! Why, it's only a year or two since some of them were soft round fluffy balls of puppies, and were being fed and fondled and played with by the children of the house! And now they're hunting with the wolves; and when men and women and little ones are overtaken and pulled down, there are the dogs too at the heart of it, grown wild and savage again after all these thousands and thousands and thousands of years! So you and I must be very careful even where we look quite safe. Though we have done well for a long long time, still we must be upon our guard; though we haven't much of a temper, are good-humoured and cheery enough, can take knocks and not get angry, and lose the game without being grumpy, still let us take care, for ugly things that no one knew were there may blaze out any moment and quite suddenly. Look at the Balkan dogs turned, almost in a minute, into murderous dreadful beasts, the very dogs that were petted and loved, were faithful and affectionate, whom everybody trusted! Life is like a game of golf. Do you play golf? You may be doing splendidly, may be at the top of your form; everything may be coming off, and every time; your long putts are going down, and your drives are clean and straight; and those watching you win hole on hole think the game is over and settled. And yet quite suddenly something may go wrong. You seemed steady and set, and yet all in a moment you go to pieces; can do nothing right; you find every bunker, you keep pulling into the rough, and once and again and yet again your ball lies on the edge of the hole, another inch would have made all the difference; the match was won, and then you throw it away. So it is with other things. You begin the new session splendidly, work hard, do well, sit up near the top, and then somehow you tire, and grow careless, can't be bothered, go tumbling

down the benches, end up quite near the bottom, you who began so well go wild like the Balkan dogs.

One of the bravest men I ever knew, who had been out at the front for four years, and done marvellous things time and again, was court-martialled in the end. Quite suddenly one day his nerves gave. He himself didn't know how; and no one else supposed that he had any nerves, so brave and bold was he. And yet, after his glorious record, one day he broke down. And you're a fine wee chap, you come of a good stock, and you are clean and true, would never stoop to soil yourself with anything nasty and ugly. That's fine; and yet you take care! The straightest and manliest and whitest boy in my class hadn't left school three years when he was fleeing the country with the police after him for a grave crime, the very boy who had been a conscience to us all, and before whom we would have been ashamed not to have played the game! Dogs can go wild, you see, can take to hunting with the wolves. Edinburgh Castle was captured, not where the road slopes to it, but by clambering up the high jagged rocks that are so steep that the men holding it were sure that nobody could come that way, so sure that, as the little band were crawling up, clinging with hands and feet and the curves of their bodies, a soldier on the battlements cried out in his English voice, 'I see you!' and sent a great rock leaping down, that just missed them, skipping an inch or two above their heads. And they thought, holding their breath, we are discovered! But no! A moment or two, and then there came his laugh as he chaffed his fellows, who had come running out at the alarm, 'I got you that time, silly fools, for who could come up rocks like these?' Yet in ten minutes it was done, and the great castle fell, fell where it was safest. And in the big war Germany was beaten just where she was strongest. It was the British who were set against the Hindenburg Line, with its masses of barbed wire, and trenches, and guns, and fortifications of all kinds, and it was freely said that they couldn't get through, that the best that they could do was to hold up as many Germans as possible, in order that the French in the south might move a bit, and that the Americans with a much softer job might break right in. And yet it was the British who burst through. The Germans fell where they were strongest, where they were quite sure they couldn't fall. And so

we must be careful, you and I, even when we are doing well. Not that we need get scared ; there is never any sense in that. Only we must be on our guard even where things look safe, and must keep always close to Jesus Christ, and not begin to think that we don't need Him and can do without Him, that there is no real fear for us. Think of the dogs ! Beside Him nobody need ever be afraid of anything at all. I knew a captain at the front, who came home without any medals, yet who was so very brave that dozens of men told me that when things were very hot if he were there they never felt uneasy, would have been ashamed to be nervy and frightened beside one so cool and calm and big of heart ; that often and often the sight of him rallied them and kept them going. That's what Christ does for us. Keep near Him, and you'll never feel afraid, will pull yourselves together every time, and keep going straight.

The Christian Year.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Centrality of Jesus Christ.

BY THE REVEREND FREDERIC C. SPURR.¹

' And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth.'—Rev 5⁶.

The book of the Apocalypse, for many religious people, is under a cloud to-day. By a certain few it is almost despised, as if it were a jumble of incoherent images—the product of a strange and disordered fancy. By far more it is avoided, as if it were an intricate set of symbols, the explanation of which is for ever beyond us. Whatever be the cause or causes of this indifference or suspicion, the fact itself is deeply to be regretted. For there is no book in the whole Bible which is richer in spiritual meanings, and fuller of practical significance for our own time than this book. Let us admit freely that some of its fine details are still enveloped in a concealing mist, that certain of its symbols do not easily yield their meaning, and that it is necessary to leave a wide margin for secondary interpretations ; but after all this, there yet remains, in clear and splendid relief, the one great central truth of the book to which all the symbols are bound, and of which they are the

¹ C.W.P. ciii. 282.

expression. This truth is fundamental for Christianity. It is the truth of the centrality of our Lord Jesus Christ in the whole scheme of things, and of His absolute Lordship over the life of man and of the world.

The problem of the book of the Apocalypse is a very simple one. It is this : shall the Lamb—that is the Divine Lord who gave Himself in sacrifice for the redemption of the world, or the beast—the world-power of the day, materialistic and often devilish—rule over the life of man ? The Lamb and the Beast ! these are the two central figures of the book. The gentle and Divine power of the One and the brutal and the demoniac power of the other are set in vivid contrast in a series of symbolic images. The war between the two is depicted, and at the end the beast is seen for ever vanquished—his flesh given to the vultures—while the Lamb is upon the throne, King of kings and Lord of lords. There was no doubt in the mind of St. John as to who should and who shall finally rule the world. The problem of the book of the Apocalypse is our problem too.

The methods of the beast have been modified by the power of civilization, but the aim of the beast remains the same. What is to be the issue of the conflict ? Why is it that to-day the Church in place of overcoming the world, has been largely overcome by it ; overcome by its speculations, its spirit, its rationalism, its cynicism, its agnosticism, its materialism ?

1. Human *pride* to-day bitterly opposes the central faith by which the Church lives. It has no place for the idea of a Divine sacrifice on behalf of human redemption.

From the beginning the cross has been an offence to the proud man. It offends his dignity, and he professes that it outrages his ethical sense. But what if his dignity be false and his ethical sense be deflected ?

Whenever pride has run high in any given epoch, there men have made a mock of sin and have treated with lightness or contempt the Divine sacrifice offered on behalf of human salvation. But where pride has been abased, and the stark realities of human life have compelled repentance, then men have returned, humbly and with beating of the breast, to the cross. This is the inner story of every great religious awakening, and the persistence of the phenomenon throughout the ages is a proof that here we are in the presence of a law of life.

If history has anything to teach us it is this, that when the sense of sin has disappeared or become weakened in any community, then the cross of Christ has vanished into the mist. Men having no consciousness of sickness think nothing of the physician. But, on the contrary, when the sense of sin is real, then men recognize that in the cross lies their one hope. And is there anything more calculated to awaken the sense of sin than the true preaching of the cross? The sense of sin and the cross act and react upon each other. The one calls for the other. The penitent sinner cries for the Redeemer. The Redeemer, shown upon the cross, creates penitence in the sinner.

Pride, I have said, opposes the faith by which the Church lives. But where should pride be to-day?

In the easy days before the war there was widespread revolt against the idea of a Divine man immolated for the sins of the world. The atonement was even said to be immoral. And the very epoch which turned from the cross and expressed its disgust with the thought of blood shed for human redemption has been compelled to watch the soil soaked to repletion with the blood of martyred youth, which now it glorifies, and to the memory of which it raises cenotaphs and monuments. The world has had enough to abase its pride, yet still it refuses to admit its sin and to cry to God for mercy. Until it abases itself and kneels, in humble penitence, before Him whom it has re-crucified, there can be no healing of its wound, nor prosperity for its soul, nor progress for its feet.

2. In our time, too, faith in material *force* has become a religion. The force of money by which alone pure pleasure is supposed to be procured, true place guaranteed, and overwhelming success achieved. The force of spectacle through which man, victimized by the passing show, is prevented from reflecting upon the things which pertain unto his peace. The force of institutions, the imposing splendour of which silences the conscience and creates moral cowardice. The force of arms by which peoples are held in subjection and when misunderstandings arise are subjected to the hellish cruelties of war.

Men may disguise it as they will, and seek for the causes of the late war in immoral diplomacy, commercial envy, unprincipled journalism, and unnatural greed; the fact remains that the radical cause of the disaster which in 1914 overtook the

world is to be found in the deliberate repudiation by mankind of the Lamb of God as its only true ruler, and the enthronement in His place of the beast. Does the world now believe this? Does it see its colossal error and sin? Is it cured of its fatal trust in force? Let the present state of Europe and the increase in armaments in nearly all civilized countries supply the answer. In every place, God be thanked, there are deep stirrings of conscience and a growing uneasiness concerning the whole matter. The Churches are speaking with no uncertain sound. But the world as a whole has learned little from its bitter experience. The beast is still the popular idol. Must there be another hell let loose before mankind will return to its senses, and offer its sole worship to the Lamb of God?

3. What is the great business of the Church of God in this critical hour of human life? The Church is Christ's body, the medium through which the Living Head expresses Himself in the world. The Church is meant to be vocal for Him, and active for Him. It is His witness to mankind. It has no other *raison d'être* than this. When it degenerates into a club, or an entertainment society, or a company of religious formalists, it suffers degradation and eclipse and justly earns the contempt of men. Our business is not primarily to formulate a philosophy or a theology—although we are bound to do both—but to bear unceasing witness by lip and in life to the Lamb of God as the Redeemer and the Lord of the world. It is to a Person that we bear witness; One who has appeared in history and to whom historical documents and institutions testify; One who is at work in personal human lives, delivering them from the grip of sin and empowering them for all holy service—the Christ of history and the Christ of experience. The heart of this witness lies in the cross and in the throne; the Christ yielding His life in sacrifice for the sins of the world, and the Christ reigning as the Lamb, by the power of gentleness, love, and holiness; winning by His wounds and not by the sword.

Christians must one and all recover the faded vision of the Seer of Patmos, and behold the Lamb of God as central in sacrifice and central in rulership.

A new and fuller experience of Christ would wipe away all our tears, dismiss all our doubts, and give to us the invincible certitude of the final

victory. There is no hope for the world save in the ancient Gospel as preached and practised by the Church in a new and living way. To this immense task Christ calls us. To His call let us make answer, 'Here am I, send me.'

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Covetousness.

'Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness.'—Lk 12¹⁸.

'What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose or forfeit his own self?' That is the way Jesus sums up the whole argument between covetousness and love. As always, He is thinking of the great future—or the endless present—of one whom God has made for Himself. What conceivable abundance of things could one gather about himself here for a few years, that would counterbalance in its satisfactions the blank loss of himself and his very capacity for joy? Of course, when it is put as Jesus put it, the question is unanswerable. Life is what we all want, and not a pile of heavy baggage that we can carry only half-way on our journey. As Jesus said unanswerably, 'A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.'

1. And yet, while Jesus' argument is for most of us thoroughly unanswerable, how few it has convinced in practice from that far-off day to this! Probably more people are yielding assent to it to-day than ever in the world before, because so many have ceased to be satisfied with conventional religion and are seeking earnestly to know what Jesus Himself really wanted men to do. The traditional religion of the creeds yields at best a rather dubious sociological programme; but the religion of Jesus goes straight as an arrow to its mark in fundamental social questions. He lived a life, and taught a life, that gives covetousness hardly a foothold in human character. His scale of values is such that one who honestly follows after Him is looking in quite a different direction from that of money-making. To be sure, he will have to make money if he is to live; he will have to put energy into his work also; and if he does this he is likely to get ahead in the race. He may even have as his special aim the winning of wealth for the unselfish uses of the Kingdom. But he cannot breathe the same spiritual air as Jesus, or

look out on the same horizons, and yet live for the sake of piling up possessions, especially at the expense of others. The spirit of his Master and of his Father is in him, and what that spirit is, the life and death of Jesus clearly show.

2. Now the world of to-day is groping in almost an agony of desire for anything that can really overthrow the power of greed and envy and suspicion. There is no hope in autocratic militarism; there is just as little hope at the opposite end of the scale in anarchistic socialism. Both lead to chaos and death. The people of China, as much as those of Russia or Austria, are just now in the acutest need of some power that can make justice and benevolence actually triumphant in the State, and France and America and Italy also can find their ultimate social salvation only in deliverance from the cruel covetousness of men, whether bourgeois or proletarian.

3. Jesus alone opens this door of hope to mankind, not only because He gave Himself unreservedly to the glorious ministry of love, but because He dedicates all His followers—all the men and women and children who should ever hear His words and do them—to the same life of obedience to their Father's will. He does not suddenly make them all saints, because we are what we are, intractable stuff at best for Divine uses, but He opens their eyes at once to a new range of values and a new standard of ambitions.¹

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Light of the World.

'I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'—Jn 8¹².

It was the time of the feast of Tabernacles when the Jews erected tents or tabernacles along the sides of the Mount of Olives, and lived in them during the whole week of the feast, in memory of their fathers' way of living during the wilderness journey. Every night the Jews assembled in great numbers in the Temple Courts, and as it grew dark the priests were accustomed to light a great lamp that stood there. They say that its light could be seen all over Jerusalem. This lamp was intended to remind them of the pillar of fire that led their

¹ H. Kingman, *Building on Rock*, 122.

fathers through the wilderness. But on the last night of the feast the priests did not light the lamp, for they wished to remind the people that their great Messiah, the promised light of the world, had not yet come. So now it was the last night of the feast; the people were assembled in the Temple Courts; darkness began to fall; but the priests did not light the lamp. Then Jesus rose in the midst of them, and as they turned to look at Him, He lifted up His hand, and cried, 'I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'

1. This is one of the sayings of our Lord which prove that 'never man spake as this man'. There are only two ways you can receive it. You can either regard it as the wildest words of audacity and self-deluded egotism that human lips ever uttered, or you must bow your knees in worship before the very utterance of God Himself. There is no middle course possible. When Christ was upon the earth people frequently put the question, 'Who then is this?' They asked it when He stilled the storm on the lake. And sometimes they answered the question themselves, 'Is not this the carpenter's son, Jesus of Nazareth?' And this is always one way of answering the question. He is a man like ourselves. He is a great ethical teacher of exceptional ability and uprightness of life. It is such an easy answer. It demands so little from us, except our admiration. But it is no use for a text such as ours.

Of course we need the humanity of Christ as well as His Divinity. We love to think that He understood our difficulties and shared our sorrows.

I love to think upon Thy dust-stained feet
That ached and hardened with the stony road
And craved relief from parch of noon-day heat
In each cool stream that by the wayside flowed.

I love to think upon Thy humanness
That welcomed sundown and the close of day,
Which left Thee free for just a little space
To climb the hill and sit and think and pray.

Sympathy we need, and the sympathy of the Son of Man is a thing we cannot do without. But of what value is it to us without His saving power? The carpenter of Nazareth who is simply one of ourselves cannot help those who are tempted, neither can He give the weary rest. But the Son of God can. There is no middle course then, God or man.

2. He called Himself the light of the world. What exactly did He mean by that?

Well, what is it that light does? Obviously the first thing that it does is *to let us see*. When we go into a dark room we see nothing at all, but when we turn on the light we see whatever the room contains. This world contains God. But no man hath seen God at any time. No! but Jesus Christ came into the world to show us God.

He lets us see God first of all by simply letting us see Himself. 'I and the Father are one,' He says, and therefore when we see Him we see God. We see that He is a God of holiness to whom sin, evil, is the one hateful thing; but we see also that he is a God of Love. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. The Hebrew prophets saw most clearly the holiness of God—a jealous God visiting the iniquity of the Fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. In Isaiah's great vision he saw the seraphim surrounding the throne of God, and crying, Holy, Holy, Holy, and the effect was to make him feel his own sinfulness. But when we turn to Christ we see this same God of the majesty of holiness taking the little children in His arms and blessing them. 'He is of purer eyes than to behold evil,' and yet at the same time, 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.'

But light serves another purpose besides letting us see. It *guides us*. The lights at the mouth of a harbour are not intended to drive away the darkness round them. They are meant to guide the ships into the harbour.

Now when Jesus spoke of Himself as the light of the world He meant most of all that He was a guiding light, for He adds, 'He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness.'

In what sense is Christ a guiding light to men and women in this world? He is a guiding light because He is our example. He lived a human life on earth; He went about continually doing good, and He left us an example, as the apostles say, that we should follow in His steps. Now notice that He is a *living* example. In the Old Testament times the prophets came with their precepts, and no doubt they taught the people how to avoid evil and do good: but after the prophets came the Son.

The Word had flesh and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds
In loveliness of perfect deeds.

And how much better the living example is than the spoken word.

But Christ speaks as if He were a guide in the present, a guide to every one who comes into the world, at whatever time He comes. 'I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness.'

What a sinister sound there is about the phrase 'the powers of darkness.' There is something about the darkness that binds the reason, as it were, and lets loose the imagination. The child mind and the savage mind, which are so closely related, are re-awakened in us, and we are not quite the same person at midnight as at midday.

But the real powers of darkness lurk in the world of the spirit. There is a darkness of ignorance, a darkness of impurity, a darkness of sorrow, and a darkness of death. It is this darkness that Christ comes as the light of the world to dispel. And He does it not merely by acting as an outward example to us, but by entering within our life itself as an inward guide. He is our guide as an inner impulse, an inward presence. There is nothing about which the Apostle Paul is more emphatic than this, that he has received the gift of the Holy Spirit, and he explains quite clearly that by the Holy Spirit he means Christ Himself as a spiritual presence within us. 'I live,' he says, 'yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' 'He that followeth me shall have the light of life.' It is the presence of Christ Himself, a spiritual presence, and He goes with us all the way, even unto death. Is it unnecessary to touch upon death? He claims that to those who are in Him the night shineth even as the day. He lights up the darkness by the gracious light of His companionship. 'I will be with thee.' When we are in good company how the time flies! The hours slip away and we are surprised when the time of separation comes. And so it is to the Christian in death. The company and the fellowship are so good that the season is past before we know it.

'I think,' says Dr. Jowett in one of his books, 'I think the Christian's first wondering question on the other side will be, "Am I really through?"' Really? 'Even the night shall be light about thee.' It matters not how stormy the night may be, the Light of Life shall never be blown out. 'At eventide it shall be light.'

What about the morrow? When the river is crossed, is there any light upon the regions beyond?

We have Christ's promise that the same light which has been with us along the whole way will shine upon us in our new country. 'The Lord God is the light thereof.'

On the banks of the river Ganges in India crowds of people are to be seen at certain seasons of the year launching little boats on the stream with a light in every one of them. When you ask what is the meaning of it, they tell you that those who have gone before into the other world are in darkness and they are sending down these lights to them to lighten their darkness. But they who have gone to be with Christ need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and the Lamb is the Light thereof.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Cæsar and God.

'Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's.'—Mt 22²¹.

Few texts have been more misused than this one. Mr. Phillips Oppenheim in a recent novel makes one of his characters say, 'There was just one chapter of the Bible which Uncle Benjamin used to shove down our throats, which seemed to me to have some common sense in it. "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's" came in it. I call that sound philosophy. Sooner or later you'll find out that so long as you are of this world you must live as though you are.' He leaves the second part of the text out of sight, and this is by no means uncommon.

But there are less obvious ways of misusing the text. As an isolated motto this verse has been used to sanction a false spirituality utterly obnoxious to the spirit of Jesus. It has been used to support that point of view which shuts human life up into water-tight compartments, having no relations one with another, which says this is secular, that is sacred; this is politics, that is religion; this is business, that is morality; and which is prepared to use two differing codes of conduct for those respective activities. 'Nothing was further,' said Loisy, 'from Jesus' thoughts than to establish a principle in accordance with which the boundaries of the domains of God and those of Cæsar might be rigidly defined.'

If Jesus did not mean that a separation of the

things of Cæsar from those of God is permitted, what did He mean?

A careful inquiry into the context of this saying will show that the generally accepted idea, that Jesus here permits a separation of the things of Cæsar from those of God, is actually the reverse of the truth. The Pharisees and Herodians each took opposite views of what the relation of the Jews should be to the Roman power. The Herodians were prepared to accept the compromise of Roman rule through some representative of the house of Herod. They indulged a veiled opposition both to the Roman procuratorship and to the more distinctive Jewish ideal of a pure theocracy. They were willing to compromise their national ideal for political aims. The Pharisees, on the other hand, professed to believe in theocracy. Israel's only King was Jehovah, Cæsar was a usurper. They paid much lip-homage to this idea, yet they did not openly raise the standard of revolt, but bore themselves submissively to their oppressors, and were nothing loath to use Cæsar's coinage and benefit by other advantages of Roman rule. Neither party occupied a frank, honest position. Their position, already dishonest, was doubly false as they approached Jesus. They sought no genuine solution of their national difficulty; they did not mind being left to their own opinions so long as they could induce Jesus to commit Himself.

What precisely did Jesus mean, then, when He said, 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.' The word translated 'render' is a word meaning simply 'give back,' 'restore,' and, as such, is applicable to the idea of paying tribute. If, however, it was clear that Jesus meant 'pay tribute' by the words, it is highly singular that the Pharisees did not seize upon His sanction and hold Him up to the displeasure of the multitude. Instead, we find the Pharisees silent and the people delighted. Why? Because the Pharisees could not tell what He meant, whereas the people seized on the simplest significance of the words and understood Jesus to mean—'Give back to Cæsar all that is Cæsar's!' 'Give it back to him! Refuse to have anything to do with Cæsar! Don't soil your hands and honesty by using his coinage at all! Refuse to touch it! Give back to Cæsar whatever is Cæsar's!' They had just confessed that it was Cæsar's coinage. Bearing his image it was the symbol of their subjection. Yet they were secretly his foes. Christ's reply, whilst its form was one with which they

could find no fault, might just as well have meant 'Fling back to Cæsar these symbols of his oppression and of your dependence.'

'And unto God, the things that are God's.' Probably the Pharisees and Herodians might have stopped to ask Jesus what precisely He meant by 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's' if it had not been for this second sentence, which must have fallen from the lips of Jesus at a white-heat of moral indignation. One can see the form of Jesus dilating terribly in moral passion whilst He spoke these words, as when He hurled out of the Temple them that sold therein.

There is no doubt here, either for Pharisees or people, as to His meaning. Nor for us. He means that if only they had been right with God there would never have been any doubt in their minds regarding their duty to Cæsar. Their difficulty arises solely from their falsity to God and His moral law. Their duty is to be simply genuine and honest whether they pay tribute or do not. If they render unto God His dues they will not fail in their duty to Cæsar, whether that duty be to oppose him or to serve him. As Paul put it at a later time, 'Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.' So that we see emerging from the story, not the lesson of the separateness of the things of Cæsar and the things of God, but the lesson of their solemn and close relation.

By the phrase 'things of Cæsar' more, of course, can be meant than simply the coinage that bears Cæsar's superscription. All affairs of State, of commerce, of the home, of international politics; all those interests that we so commonly and yet mistakenly speak of as secular and temporal. These things can never be rightly adjusted to the soul, until the soul is right with God.

There is nothing more obvious about the teaching of our Lord than that He saw life as a grand whole—all of a piece, a delicate mosaic of inter-relations, a closely woven network of mutual dependencies. For Him there were no things that were not God's. He denied most strenuously the possibility of our being able to serve God and Mammon, or of being able to pursue one code of morality in dealing with men and another in dealing with God. On the contrary, He taught that the soul's divine opportunity of serving God was to be found in the right use of the daily and commonplace things of life.

The final judgment of God upon our conduct will not fall upon our observance of the Lord's day, or of the forms of worship, but upon such things 'of Cæsar' as the distribution of our food to the hungry, our clothes to the ill-clad, our practical sympathy to the outcast and the criminal. What could be more common than water? Turned on from a tap, so many shillings a quarter! How prosaic!

Yet the giving of a cup of water may bring a soul into the holy service of God.

Jesus is insistent that we cannot sustain right relations with our earthly environment unless we seek God first. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these other things shall be added unto you.'¹

¹ A. D. Belden, *Does God Really Care?*, 22.

Jeremiah and Jesus—in Comparison and Contrast.

BY THE REVEREND H. A. WILLIAMSON, B.D., LOCHEE.

II.

WHILE we are impressed by Jeremiah's anticipations of Christianity in his handling of the Law, we are conscious of yet greater differences, when we look at the subject from another angle. A candid student of the Jeremianic oracles must confess to a feeling of relief, when he turns from them to the Gospels. Jeremiah's world is a very unhappy, unsettled world. Convulsions shake the nations; there is 'terror on every side.' The people mock at Jeremiah's stock-phrase—*מְנוּרָה מְסֻבִּים*. There are plottings and counter-plottings among the Powers. It was in fact a kind of situation resembling the condition of Europe prior to the Great War. Apparently the little State of Judah is in a ferment; its political leaders fail to read the signs of the times. Jeremiah presents us with a dark picture of social corruption. Unheeding of every danger, the king Jehoiakim is building a spacious palace (Jer 22^{13ff.}). Jeremiah brings a scathing charge against him of employing forced labour without any remuneration. This glimpse into court-life explains the social tyranny of the times, and the utter disregard for the rights of the poor. Jehoiakim's panelled and painted palace, founded on injustice, reveals the corruption of Judah, and justifies the prophet's diatribes against the 'shepherds' of his country. While the king was indulging in selfish luxury and vulgar ostentation, the enemy from the North was polishing his spear.

The people themselves had grown sceptical. Josiah's reformation had not effectively cured their idolatrous tendencies. Yahweh might be worshipped in name, but the cult was really that of

Baal. The names had been changed; that was all. Foreign influences had made it possible to pay tribute to foreign gods. The protest of the exiles in Egypt against Jeremiah's Puritanism throws a light on their spiritual condition. They still profess to recognize Yahweh, and at the same time affirm their decision to sacrifice to other gods. In defence of their conduct they appeal to the old practices in Judah, stating in defiance of Jeremiah's exhortations that they had then enjoyed plenty of food and saw no evil (Jer 44). This incident is sufficient proof of the religious temper of the nation before its downfall. Yahweh had come to be merely the greatest god in their pantheon. In consequence of this was the 'induration of heart,' so bitterly complained of by the prophet. The preacher of a stern self-discipline and lofty spirituality had a well-nigh hopeless task. The fruitlessness of his preaching left him the prey of despondency. Now he sides with God in exacting penitence or doom; now he ranges himself on the side of his people in sorrow at their fate. He is driven to and fro between his moral convictions and his human love. He never manages quite to reconcile the two. The resultant is a *sense of strain in his piety*. He is not an easy-going optimist, singing, 'All's well with the world.' He never indeed loses hope of ultimate issues, because he believes in the power of God. It might be nearer the mark to say that he almost despairs of man. In estimating either his optimism or pessimism, we have to bear in mind the nature of his age and work. We must also think of a highly sensitive, shrinking disposition, faced with a hard task, a task so disagreeable and thankless that 'melancholy marked him for its own.'