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In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

Some Dunce.[1]

'Morning by morning he awakens me to learn my lesson, and never have I disobeyed or turned away.'—Is 50[4. 5] (Moffatt).

'MORNING by morning he awakens me to learn my lesson: and never have I disobeyed or turned away.' Here is a man, you see, who says that every day he lives he learns something new. And surely we too should all be doing that in this glorious world with so many splendid things to see, and such a heap of them to ask about (Father, why this? and Mummy, why that?), and scores and scores of lovely ploys to do, and such exciting adventures always happening to one.

It is just like some of you fellows when you were off for summer holidays, who couldn't pack all that there was to do into the longest day; and wouldn't stay in bed one moment after the sun wakened you, but were up and away. There were so many things to see, the birds in their nests, and the rabbits popping out of their burrows, and the squirrels racing round and round the trees, and, oh, so many others (how were they all after the night?), you just hadn't a minute to spare, but must get to them at once. And so the very second your eyes opened, you were out of bed and off. And, says Isaiah, every morning God comes and wakens me, and says, 'You're not still lying fast asleep in bed are you? Why, there's another day come hours ago! And there are heaps and heaps of glorious things to learn and see. Up! up! and come with Me, and I will teach you something splendid.' And he says, I always leap out from under the blankets and begin the day at once, wouldn't miss a moment, for every one of them is better and more interesting and exciting than the last.

I wonder if we do that, you and I. Or if, when they waken us, we grunt sleepily and turn over; and the next time they come—'Yes, yes,' we cry, 'just getting up,' yet off we drop again! And when we do get up, we can so dawdle over dressing, can't we? Why, we can easily waste whole ten minutes in the bathroom, playing with a sponge, and watching how much water it sucks in, and lets none of it out again! And so it is all through the day. We fritter it away, and don't learn much. When in the evening we sit down to lessons, perhaps we don't really try much, don't stick in. But, because they are hard, we lose heart, and fling away the book. 'I can't,' we say. How can I ever get these horrid Latin verbs into my head; or learn in spelling all these dreadful words in 'ough,' or remember whether the 'e' or the 'i' comes first in 'piece' or in 'receive'? We don't try much. But this man says that he did try, did do his best, and did learn something every day. And so do you too, in a way, in lots of ways indeed. The teacher sent you a message the other day down to the Infant room; and it seemed so funny to you to see them sticking at quite simple things, at easy words like 'tell' and 'say' which you could read so easily. But once they were as hard for you. You're getting on; are learning something every day; can read far quicker, and can spell much better, than you used to do; can add now, and subtract, and even multiply a little, though the eight times bothers you. Oh yes, you're getting on in English and arithmetic. But God, you know, has a class where He teaches us the best of all the lessons, how not to sulk or whine, not to be selfish and grumpy, and catty, and all that kind of thing. And I wonder if you are learning much from Him. 'Come,' He says, 'and I'll teach you something every day.' But are the days and weeks and months slipping away, and leaving you as cross and as peevish as ever? Are you learning, in God's class? Some of His pupils have done splendidly, the horse for one. For all kinds of creatures are in God's class; it's a lovely class to be in, not only boys and girls, but birds and beasts, and every kind of thing. The horse has been a glorious pupil, has tried hard, and learned a lot. Long, long ago, you know, horses weren't one bit like what they are now; they were quite small, perhaps some eighteen inches high, just wee poor things. But God said to them, 'If you listen to Me, and learn day by day, I can teach you how to grow big and strong and swift and beautiful.' And they did listen, and did learn; and look at them to-day, how wonderful they are! But there were other creatures in God's class that wouldn't work at all. Long, long ago there were horrid beasts like the things you see in

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

nightmares, when you waken screaming, and just must have Mummy. They had the tiniest heads, these ugly brutes, and no real bodies, were all neck and tails. And they were huge, bigger by far than any beasts are now. And nobody like you or me, you would think, could have got away from them. For, even if you did climb up a tree, they would just shoot out their long, long necks and pick you off the topmost branches; horrid brutes! But they're all gone. Because they wouldn't learn. 'Come,' said God, 'and I'll teach you to grow wiser and better every day.' But they wouldn't. 'We don't need to learn,' they said; 'are far stronger than any other thing,' and stuck where they were. And little creatures who did learn, grew cleverer and wiser, by and by passed them, and took away from them their lordship of the earth, and killed them in the end, and a good riddance too, the ugly crawly things. And there is one creature in God's class that has been sitting in it now for millions and millions of years, and all that time it has learned not one thing. You may be pretty slow, but fancy sitting in the infant class millions of years, and still be unable to read one atom better than you could the first day you went there! The wise men have found in the rocks lingulas who lived, oh, so dreadfully long ago: and the lingulas living now are just the very same; they have learned nothing, not one thing in all that time. The horse has changed altogether: and men have grown from savage things to what they are to-day, have learned whole heaps and heaps, how to make fires, how to write, how to put on clothes, how to stand up on two feet, how to speak, how to read, always they are learning something new. To-day it is wireless, to-morrow it is flying. But the lingula has learned not one thing. It is the dunce of God's class. But is it? Are you learning any more than it? How old are you? Six, seven, ten! And though all that time God has been teaching you not to be cross, you are cross quite often even yet! Are you a dunce too, like the poor lingula? Well, here is another chance coming to us. For God is a very, very kind and a very, very patient Teacher. And so He stoops, and lifts you on His knee, and is not one bit angry, puts His arms round you, and says, 'Yes, little one, I know it is very hard. Still, we shall try again, and this time we may manage, you and I.' Wouldn't you like to learn, how to please God at last, how to be good-tempered and unselfish and the glorious things He teaches in His class?

A Good Report.[1]

'Having obtained a good report.'—He 11^{39}.

I met a schoolboy in a tram last week. He was bubbling over with gladness, and before I had time to ask him what was the reason of it all, he broke out in that stammering way we have when life seems crammed full of good things, 'We've broken up—and I've got a good report.' The grim old man who was sitting near began to smile, and I expect he began to think over the times when he went to school. I wonder what sort of report he used to get, although perhaps they didn't learn all the hard things we do, and perhaps they didn't trouble about reports. Somehow everybody seemed to share the boy's good spirits. When he reached home there was more fun still—father and mother were as jolly as he was, and indeed his father, who is a preacher, said he could understand now that story of the great Teacher about the good servants who heard the Master say, 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,' for something like that had happened in their household. Jim could do nothing wrong that day—father and mother had a blind eye—perhaps two blind eyes, which is better still—for all his faults, because in their hearts they were saying all day, 'He's got a good report.' None of the troubles of the term mattered now, although behind that report there were plenty of troubles. The report, for example, just said 'Times late—o,' which looked splendid, but oh! the rush sometimes to get that record—especially once, when he had gone to the cinema and the bed pulled so hard the next morning. He didn't find time for much breakfast that morning, but never mind, there's the report. And the Latin! Well, he always liked that, and he was first in the form. As for the Maths, that was a puzzling business, but he had gone up from tenth to fifth place, and the report said, 'He is working hard at this subject.'

Then in church he heard this lesson read about folk who, like himself, had earned a good report. Now, they were folk to be interested in. Some of the Bible folk were a long way off, but these seemed to come very near. What had they done? What did their report say? He found they had to put up a fight for it, but then who wants a good report unless it tells the truth about a bit of real work. There wouldn't be any fun in it, if it did not represent the best thing a fellow could do, and these folk had

[1] By the Reverend R. Strong, M.A., B.Litt., Norwich.

been through the storm. The writer's words came tumbling out. What mighty words they were too! 'They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword, they went about in sheepskins.' No wonder that God admired them and was not ashamed to be called their God. That's rather like the boy's father, who is so glad himself about this result that although he doesn't say much he goes about as if he were proud to be the father.

This is part of the joy of God when we plod on to the end through our disappointments and difficulties, keeping our faith alive right to the end, and so gain like these splendid ones of old 'a good report.'

On the 'Phone.[1]

'Continue in prayer.'—Col 4[2].

You all love 'listening-in,' I expect, and by this time Uncle Wex, as a little friend of mine calls him, and the other uncles at 2LO seem quite like old friends. But don't you ever feel when 'listening-in' at the Children's Hour, or when some great singer or player is delighting you with lovely music, that you would like to talk back, or at least say 'Thank you.' That is a privilege that 'wireless' cannot give you as yet.

But there is another wonderful invention—so common now that we forget how wonderful it is—that does give you that privilege. If you are 'on the 'phone,' you will know all about it. For, by the telephone, you can not only listen to people miles, hundreds of miles away, but you can talk to them as well. It is this that makes the telephone a beautiful illustration of Prayer.

Sometimes when we call up somebody on the 'phone we get no answer—the person we want is not there. In the Old Testament there is a story of some people who called on their god Baal, and though they called in desperate earnestness from morning to evening, no answer came through. But we pray to the real God, the living God, and He's always there, never too busy to listen, waiting to answer.

Sometimes when you get on the 'phone the person you want is engaged with somebody else, and as long as the line is engaged, you have no chance of speaking to him. But children in India, China, Africa, as well as in England, can all ring up upon this 'phone to Heaven, and the great Father attends to them all, attends to them each. Multitudes of prayers are going up to Him at the same time too, but He can pick out your little prayer, and has a special answer for you, and there is nothing to pay. When you use the public telephone you are not put through until the lady at the Exchange hears the pennies dropping, but the high privilege of speaking to God is without money and without price.

Sometimes the telephone wires get broken. During the War the enemy often tried to cut the wire between headquarters and the firing-line. It is a serious thing when the line is cut. The man in the firing-line may be in great need of reinforcements, but how can he let his General know if the line is broken? And sometimes the prayer-line is broken.

Sin cuts the wire. 'If I regard iniquity in my heart,' said an old Psalmist, 'the Lord will not hear me.' How could He? Indeed, if we are indulging in any evil way, we are not likely even to ask Him. Sin makes God deaf and us dumb.

Mr. Fullerton tells the story of a Bible-woman who used to visit the sick folk in Leicester Infirmary. One day as she was leaving a ward, a young doctor stopped her, and said, 'Well, Mrs. Cobley, I suppose you have been telling these people that God hears prayer?' 'Yes, sir,' she said, 'my Father always hears His people when they cry.' 'I am very glad to hear it,' said the doctor, 'for I am very hard up this morning. Do you think that if I asked your Father for a five-pound note He would give it to me?' She replied, 'Suppose you were introduced to the Prince of Wales, do you think you could put your hand in his pocket the first day you knew him, and ask him for a five-pound note?' 'No-o-o, I suppose I would have to wait until I knew him better,' was the reluctant reply. 'Yes,' she said, 'and you will need to know my Father better before you can ask Him for five-pound notes.'

Any unkindness or wrong-doing to others cuts the wire. Our Lord taught that, if our brother has anything against us, it is no use to offer God our gifts. And if we have done anything mean or wrong or shabby to any 'brother' of ours, we must first be reconciled to that brother before we can offer our gifts of prayer.

That reminds us that, though the wire be broken, it may be mended. But only One can mend it—Jesus. We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. When we are shy and

[1] G. C. Leader, *The Gate of Pearl*, 31.

awkward with God, because of our sinful thoughts and ways, it is the Lord Jesus who makes us friends again. We are 'reconciled to God through the death of his Son.' And so the connexion is restored, and if we 'abide' in Jesus, that is, if we keep on following and obeying Him, the line keeps unbroken between us and the Throne of Grace.

And it means a great deal to keep that line unbroken. Prayer makes all the difference even in the work of life—yes, even in lessons, however hard and dry they seem.

Mr. Richmond, a famous painter, once found for a whole fortnight that nothing went well with him; his hand seemed to have lost its cunning. He told William Blake, another great painter, his trouble. Blake turned to his wife suddenly, and said, 'It is just so with us, is it not—for weeks together when the visions forsake us? What do we do then, Kate?' She said, 'We kneel down and pray.'

The Christian Year.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Loving God.

'We love, because he first loved us.'—1 Jn 4^{19}.

I. *The Spring of Love.*—What have we to start with? What will send us forth to win the great prize which life holds out? There is this. The certainty of being personally loved.

The certainty of it lies in the command that is laid upon every conscience. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.' It is individual and personal, addressed to each of God's children without any distinction. And the demand it makes carries with it the assurance of love. We do not and we could not ask for the love of any one for whom we had no care. To say to our friend, 'The only thing I ask of you is your love,' is to assure him that we love him.

To every one, then, comes the great news that he is loved by the best and the highest, that the One Being whose love is most worth having is already pledged to his care, that however grim, sordid, or sad his life may be, the rainbow is always in the cloud, the light of God's countenance always upon him.

II. *The Practice of Love.*—For every man there is the great fact of God's love. But there are many, even of those who know something of its personal side, with whom it never becomes a power. The reason is that while they have recognized the gospel that lies in the command 'Thou shalt love,' they have not gone further and tried to put it into practice. They have shrunk from any serious examination of the claims of the old yet ever new command, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.'

The command runs in that way because Divine Love calls for an answer that will be akin to itself. The sacrifice of the will, the intelligence of the mind, the emotions of the soul, the practical power of the strength, are but different aspects of that reflection of the Divine Love which bears down upon us. For the Divine Love is not single, is not complete in one expression. We can trace at least four characteristics which make up its conception: Self-sacrifice, Wisdom, Beauty, and Humility.

1. The first aspect is the love with 'all the heart.' All the heart of man leaps forth to all the heart of God, and we long to place our wills in His will—the 'heart' here, according to the best lexicographers, means 'will.' 'To love him with all the will.' Is this what He asks for? This, then, we will give. With Saul on the road to Damascus, when first Eternal Love was revealed to Him, we say, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' And we expect the answer to be clear, definite, decided, so that we can move at once, and freely. And there is nothing of the sort. 'It shall be told thee,' and the telling means darkness, doubt, hesitation—many, many years of delay, here a little, there a little, and only slowly the purpose getting clearer. It is eight years after his conversion before St. Paul goes on his first missionary journey, and fourteen before the plans of his life's work as Apostle to the Gentiles really becomes plain to him in the vision of the Macedonian. We are surprised. We had thought that once the will was surrendered there would be no doubt. We did not expect to find, as the great Apostle found, that we should encounter objections and controversies, that some Peter would have to be withstood to the face, that some Barnabas would have to be left, that important people would have to be consulted to see if what we supposed to be Divine will were right. Yes, the giving up 'the will' does not mean that it is a perfect instrument because it is surrendered. It has to be shaped and pointed, to be made strong and steady.

The love of God with 'all the heart' or 'all the will' means not only patient care in discerning what

the will of the Lord is, and stern self-surrender in following it even when it is contrary to our interests, but a ceaseless willing along the path of God's will. It is in the daily exercise of prayer that we are to exercise this power. We are to discover that prayer is not a cry of despairing weakness, but a great force setting in one or in another direction great currents, scattering enemies, unloosening, as it were, and setting free 'God's will to move according to the proper law of God's will; God's will which is the crushing of evil, and the life of love and joy. By prayer we are instruments of God's will to bear with victorious omnipotence against evil—the evil which ensnares and torments—ourselves, or our dear ones, or our brethren in all the world.'

2. As the will moves in obedience to the Divine self-sacrifice, so the soul in response to Divine beauty. In the soul God has given us a wonderful instrument by which we can make the response His beauty calls for. As the will is expressed in strength, so the soul in feeling. And as the love with all the heart finds its natural channel in prayer, so the love of 'all the soul' in worship. Worshipping then becomes a joy and exhilaration, for into Psalms, Canticles, and Hymns we pour all the emotions by which we have been stirred. It may be some act of self-sacrifice of which we have read or heard, which finds a natural place when we throw it, as it were, into the Ocean of the Sacrifice of the Son of God, giving a fresh meaning to the old words, 'We give thanks to thee for thy great glory,' not only reflected in Calvary, but in the deed that has moved us. It may be some beautiful scene of hill or valley, the recollection of which gives a new meaning to the lines, 'In his hand are all the corners of the earth, and the strength of the hills is his also.' Or some teaching on the Incarnation has stirred us, and we sing with new force, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour'; or some fresh vision of God's love has quieted and calmed restless feelings, and we can sing with Simeon, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.' In this way, worship becomes a real response of the soul to the touch of God, a rekindling of the faculty of admiration and devotion.

3. We must now examine what lies under the claim made for 'all our minds.' Shortly we say, that as Love must be unselfish and warm, so it must also be intelligent. We must love with all the capacities and powers of the mind, and we must also love with all the range of the mind. It is no easy thing to arrange the complexity of our intellectual interests. What is to be done not only with the newspaper, the magazine, and the novel, but with the study of history, science, or law?

The method of our forefathers who were much troubled by the new world of romance that was opening out at the beginning of the last century was stern and unbending. 'Throw away the books, banish the newspapers and magazines, rigidly limit the claims of study and give your whole mind to the Bible.' But we can make no such sharp distinction between what is sacred and secular. All knowledge is of God. Through history, science, and philosophy we learn to know Him better, and are brought nearer to Him. We are not, then, inclined to exclude, but rather to include. And suddenly there is a cry made 'The Bridegroom cometh,' and we are brought sharply up with the rough reminder that our life is half-spent, and that our real knowledge of God is no larger or deeper than it was twenty years ago.

When we are face to face with our difficulty we remember again that Life is a response. All these yearnings that knowledge stimulates, these mental struggles that it creates, are our endeavours to give an intelligent response to Him who is asking so many questions, are the promptings that will lead to love with all the mind. He rejoices in the scholar who, laying aside all pleasure, is giving his mind to the expression of Truth. He encourages the prophet poet who is ever diving deep into the ocean of Wisdom in order to find some clue to its mystery and sing of it to the world. But He sadly wonders why so little attention has been given to the method He Himself has pointed out.

4. 'With all thy strength.' Here is Love's last demand. The body reverenced and won by countless acts of discipline is never for itself, but always 'for the Lord.' And therefore, following along the footsteps of His great example, we take it and reverence it in order that we may break it. It was no solitary experience that led the faithful Elizabeth Gilbert, who used her gift of blindness with such remarkable results, to say, when one of her friends hoped that she was not working herself to death: 'Work myself to death? I am working myself to life.'

As the love of the will becomes manifested in unselfishness, and that of the soul in spiritual beauty;

as the mind when devoted to God becomes filled with wisdom, so the love of God with all the strength brings out the special feature of the Incarnate Word which each one bears.

'What was it,' writes Mr. Brierley, 'that Charles Lamb saw on the countenance of the Quaker ladies on their way to the Bishopsgate meeting making them "as troops of shining ones"? Very much, we suppose, like the smile that people saw on the face of St. Vincent de Paul, and which transfigured features which were in themselves homely to ugliness. It was the gleam of the supernatural in man, the shining through mortal flesh of a sun behind the sun.'[1]

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Reverence.

'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.'—Ex 3^5.

Very noteworthy is the unanimity with which the gifted writers of last century gave to reverence a high place, and almost the highest place, in the holy family of the virtues and the graces. In a well-known passage in *Wilhelm Meister*, Goethe declares reverence to be the essence even of religion. This conception was taken over by Carlyle, who, with characteristic heat and iteration, insisted on 'the indispensableness of reverence,' and insisted on it the more because in the form which it assumes in hero-worship—in loyalty and obedience to the great man—he saw the only hope of making much of the stumbling hordes of our weak and foolish world. Ruskin preached it as unweariedly as Carlyle, while practising the virtue more consistently. And the philosopher Martineau describes it as 'the apex and crown of character.'

It is true that from the point of view of Scripture this strain of panegyric may seem exaggerated. In the teaching of Scripture some other things are counted more important—as repentance from sin, faith in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, obedience to the holy and righteous will of God. But, while reverence is certainly not the be-all and end-all of religion, it appears in Scripture as an indispensable symptom and accompaniment of true religion. Religion, when it is a heartfelt reality, necessarily shapes for itself a ritual eloquently expressive of dependence upon God, of penitence, adoration, and trust. In the homage of the bowed head, the closed eyes, and the shoeless feet, in the appeal of the outstretched hands, in the ritual of bodily prostration and the putting on of sackcloth and ashes, the piety of the Old Testament found expression no less picturesque than vehement. We may also recall how Jesus Christ inculcated and practised a deep reverence for God's name and His works, when He bade us to swear neither by His throne nor by His footstool; for His Word, which He warned us against making of none effect by our traditions; for His house, which He cleansed of an unholy traffic; for the image of God in man, which He discovered even in the most insignificant, degraded, and wretched of the children of Adam, and because of which He taught us to attach to the individual soul a value exceeding that of all the material wealth of a world.

1. *The modern decay of reverence.*

(1) To begin with, there has been a marked change in the relations of what the Catechism calls superiors and inferiors. We have witnessed a general uprising of the inferior. One of the most noticeable features of family life in recent times is the self-assertion of children, who at the best offer their parents affection rather than reverence. It is a common remark of middle-aged people that they would never have dared to address their parents in the way in which their children speak to them. In earlier times the common mind was much impressed by the apostolic injunction not 'to speak evil of dignities'—which was interpreted to mean that every one in a public station, from the king on the throne to the magnate of a parish, was to be protected from malicious and contemptuous criticism by the dignity of his position. To-day there is a vast number of people whose intellectual luxury is to talk the language of detraction, and perhaps of calumny, about those whom they dislike because of their superiority to themselves, or only because of their greater success in life. The change is, of course, no matter of regret so far as it means that even the greatest must now submit to moral criticism, and also that there is a decay of the spirit which Thackeray satirized in the *Book of Snobs*. But there is still a virtue which lies half-way between irreverence and servility.

(2) There is also much irreverent handling of great themes. There has been a rather noticeable change in the general tone as regards the providential order of things, and the sacred and solemn things of human life. Occurrences which were formerly spoken of with reverence as the acts of God are now treated

[1] G. H. S. Walpole, *Life's Chance*, 81.

unthinkingly and habitually as the subject of complaint or jest. Experiences of human life, with which are bound up so much of its beauty and pathos, furnish the occasion of an infinite output of frivolous thought and speech. Birth, love, marriage, death, and the domestic relationships are found to have their amusing aspects, and to provoke the witty sallies of the brighter spirits.

(3) The decay of reverence has also been increasingly apparent in the sphere of holy things, narrowly so called. As touching God's Day, it is possible to think that there was too much of the Old Testament in our traditional method of Sabbath-observance, and at the same time to hold that it is an irreparable loss when the Sunday ceases to be observed as a day dedicated to worship, to serious reading and reflection, and to works of mercy. The Word of God, when it is not treated with the utter neglect which is the extreme of irreverence, is often made use of in a way that would have shocked the piety of an earlier age. As touching God Himself, it will hardly be disputed that there has been a general weakening of the sense of the presence and rule of the Almighty which was a characteristic note of the religion of earlier days, and that few draw near to Him with the reverence and godly fear that beseems the finite and sinful creature in making the approach to an infinite and all-holy God.

The human spirit, however, is very complex, and there is another side which must in fairness be recognized, and which even shows in certain fields a growth and deepening of reverence. There has been evident in our time, apart from the temporary check of the war, a growing reverence for man as man. It was said that one of the most distinctive features of our Lord's teaching was that He emphasized the unique dignity and immeasurable value of the soul of man as a being made in the image of God, and this has entered deeply into our modern thinking. A profound reverence for human life, a high estimate of the value of all that appears in human form, underlies the extraordinary zeal and energy which have been directed in recent times to the relief of the sick, the infirm, the aged, and even of the insane and the criminal.

And, another striking fact, of similar character, is the growing reverence which is felt for childhood. It has been said that children do not seem to revere their parents as in former days, but there is an offset to this in the fact that parents now show much more reverence for their children. There is a deep realization of the immeasurable possibilities that open out before the young, an earnest desire that, avoiding our sins, they may escape the punishments which followed, and a prayer and a hope that they may be guided and used as instruments in bringing in a better and brighter day in our old sad world.

2. In what way can we cultivate the *spirit of reverence*?

(1) It is generally agreed that for the instilment of reverence much depends on the character of those with whom, in the formative period of life, a child is brought in contact. It is in reverence for parents and teachers that the culture naturally begins, and those are unfortunate indeed who did not discover in their home life the objects that draw out the instinctive capacity for reverence. This point was strikingly put by Carlyle in a reference to the influences of his own childhood, 'The highest whom I knew on earth I saw bowed down with awe unspeakable before a higher in Heaven. Such things, especially in infancy, reach inwards to the very core of your being; mysteriously does a Holy of Holies build itself into visibility in the mysterious deeps; and reverence, the divinest in man, springs undying from its mean envelopment of fear.'

(2) In the second place, it should be pointed out that for the culture of the spirit of reverence no small importance attaches to outward acts. In the book already referred to the wise Goethe taught that if children are to imbibe the spirit it ought to be expressed in attitudes, postures, and gestures which symbolize the attitude of the reverent soul towards the universe around us, and to the God who has been revealed to us in exaltation and humiliation. The reverent action, when it has become habitual, is a constant summons to reverence of soul.

(3) And lastly, let us remember that the grand object, and also the enduring spring of reverential feeling, is God. For human experience is to some extent a process of disenchantment in regard to those who were idealized and glorified by the optimism and faith of youth. The imperfections of our nearest are painfully, if unwillingly, realized. We outgrow many of our early heroes, we are disappointed in many of our friends. The great need of our minds is so to realize God—the Almighty, the All-wise, the All-good—that He supplies a permanent factor in all our serious thinking, a sacred vein in our deepest feeling, and a powerful incentive in all deliberate and weighty actions. And because

it is difficult for us to apprehend Him in His transcendence and His infinitude, He has drawn near to us in Jesus Christ—so that we can behold His glory in the face of one like to ourselves, can believe that he that hath seen Him hath seen the Father, and may be drawn by His word and His grace into the experience of the life of God.[1]

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Valley of Dry Bones.

'Son of man, can these bones live?'—Ezk 37^{3}.

The situation on which Ezekiel looked out was sombre enough. When Jerusalem was captured, the conquerors carried through a relentless sifting of the nation, and all that was brave, well-born, intelligent within it—the nobles and leaders and craftsmen—were singled out and banished, and only, as the historian allows, 'the poorest sort of the people' were left, and they, with a king to match them, went straight for the abyss. The exiles were handled with real political skill, with the deliberate purpose of extinguishing the national life. Their patriotic spirit was broken, and an ignoble contentment laid hold upon them, so that they did not desire to be other than they were. How could such men build up a nation?

Ezekiel tells us how the situation looked—like some ancient battlefield, where the dead had long been dead. There were not even groans of the stricken to suggest that something might still be done, but an unendurable silence. Beast and bird had had their will, and over all the valley floor there was strewn the indiscriminate litter of human bones. He wandered round the field, and wherever he turned death confronted him—death which had already forgotten that life had ever been; and when the outspread desolation had sunk into his spirit, the question rose within him, 'Can these bones live?'

1. There are times in the history of the Church which resemble the time of Ezekiel.

God takes the man of little faith, takes him like Ezekiel, carries him back in spirit through history to the dark ages of Europe. He sets him in the valley of the dark ages, when the Spanish Moors had more light and life than the Christians of Europe. He asks him, 'Can these bones live?' He cannot say, but God's answer is the wonderful eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries.

Or, again, God takes him onward, and sets him in another dismal valley, the church of the Borgias and the Medicis, amongst the parched bones of faith, when the former revival had shrunk to a mere renaissance, when Paganism was not in the Empire, but in the Church's own heart and head. He points him to the wicked Church of all the cultures at Rome in the valley of the fifteenth century, when the faithful had all but ceased to be. 'Can these bones live?' He sees not how. God's answer is Luther, Calvin, and the sixteenth century, the rediscovery of St. Paul, the coronation of faith, the vitalizing of Europe, Puritanism, the birth of democracy, the rise of constitutionalism, Free Churchism, and the dawn of modern times. No, the past is not dead.

And once more He plants him by the English Church of last century, with Deism outside, and drought within, but no thirst. Can they live? God's answer is Wesley and the Evangelical revival, Newman and the Oxford revival.

2. There are times in our Churches to-day parallel to that in which Ezekiel lived.

What preacher but is cast into occasional despair by the question of the text as he looks upon many spiritual skeletons about him? What preacher has not many a time to answer, with Ezekiel, that they can only live by some miracle of God; he, poor son of man, has failed, and is hopeless. He is preaching, perhaps, out of duty more than inspiration; he often prophesies in obedience rather than in hope. Well, preach hope till you have hope; then preach it because you have it. 'Prophesy over these bones; call out to the Spirit,' says the Lord.

But it is not with bones or mummies that the preacher has chiefly to do. He comes, let us say, and lifts a vital voice. He is a man of parts and force; he collects a following, he is the centre of an interesting congregation. It looks well, comfortable; it is no skeleton crowd, it has flesh and blood. What is lacking? Perhaps the things that are not revealed to flesh and blood, the unearthly lustre in the eye, and movement in the mien, the Spirit of Life.

The bones are clothed, but not quickened; they know about sacred things, but they do not know about the Holy Ghost. So prophesy once more, Son of man, saith the Lord. Prophesy to the Spirit of life; preach, but still more, pray; invoke the abiding Spirit to enter these easy forms.

Preach to them great things. Let the trivial rubbish alone that occupies too much of our Church interest. It is possible to lose the soul in the effort to

[1] W. P. Paterson, *In the Day of the Ordeal*, 147.

win souls. Dwell less upon the minor truths, dwell more upon the mighty truths which grow mightier by iteration. Take care of the spiritual pounds, and the current pence will look after themselves.[1]

3. There are individual lives where the question arises, Can these bones live?

Sometimes it looks as if a man were going to be drawn right over into the kingdom; his interest grows and deepens—and then he turns away. 'There is no breath in him,' and yet the most careful observer cannot point to any reason for the failure. In conversion one meets with instances of a sunny and beautiful ease. 'As I reached the end of the sentence,' says Augustine, 'the light of peace seemed to be shed upon my heart, and every shadow of doubt melted away.' But without any warning, you run in other cases on obstacles irremovable, which almost justify Pascal's terrible saying, 'You will understand nothing of the works of God, if you do not start with this, that He has made some blind and some to see.' 'The wind bloweth where it listeth,' said Jesus.

But is that the final word? It is good for men to feel their limitations, and to realize that this business of transforming a life passes human wit and force; that drives them back on God. But is it true that God makes men blind? And does His Spirit come on men, desultory and inconstant, like the wandering breeze? Jesus bade us do good to all, 'despairing of no man'; can it be that He Himself despairs? He told His friends that whoever had seen Him had seen the Father, for in Him they might see what God is like; and throughout His life, from first to last, there appears an unchanging patience of hope.

God's Spirit is like the sea, beating up against the shores of every human life, besetting, invading at the slenderest invitation, and then transforming. And thus the business of preaching is not to call on men to wait for exceptional outburstings of the Spirit of God, but even now to stand aside and give God His way, as He seeks to give and to do for us.

> I deem that there are powers,
> Which of themselves our minds impress,
> And we can feed this mind of ours
> In a wise passiveness.

'A wise passiveness,' that is faith; to draw back the obstructions of our pride and independence, to be content that He should be the Doer and we the receivers, that is what God desires, and this miracle of Divine renovation waits on the consent of our human will.

When Fitzgerald wished Carlyle to leave London, he says, 'I tried to persuade him to leave the accursed den; and he wished—but—but—perhaps he did not wish on the whole'; and in that mood no extrication is possible. Augustine notes in his *Confessions* how when mind commands body there is obedience at once, the hand moving so promptly that it is hard to distinguish wish from performance. But when mind commands mind there is rebellion. 'Whence and why is this anomaly? It does not will wholly, and therefore it does not command wholly. It is not the full will that commands . . . This "will and will not" is no anomaly, but a sickness of the mind, weighed down by evil habit, so that it cannot rise wholly even when it is uplifted by truth.' Ah, some of us are like these half-awakened figures of the prophet's dream, with bone and flesh and some surface look of life; we are interested and inclined to believe in truths and powers which are Christian, but we have never given that whole assent which lets God have His way. In us He can do no mighty works; and it is for an ancient reason, because of our unbelief; and the Lord Himself, as He sees us troubled by mean cares and by some instinctive dread of God, and finding nowhere any remedy for care, says from His heart, 'Oh, that my people would hearken unto me; for then would their peace be like a river, and their righteousness like the waves of the sea!'[2]

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Romance of Two Wills.

'Wilt thou be made whole?'—Jn 5^{6}.

'The Son quickeneth whom he will.'—Jn 5^{21}.

The romance of this story of Bethesda lies in the meeting of two wills—the will of the Son of Man who 'quickeneth whom he will,' and the will of the impotent man, who has only this germ of potency left within his paralysed being that he is willing to be made whole.

1. Let us look at the meeting of these two wills by the pool of Bethesda. We shall speak first of *the will of Christ the Saviour*. For in His own reflections upon this incident of Bethesda, amid the controversy which immediately followed, we find these words: 'The Son of man quickeneth whom he will.' There is a fine note of royalty about the

[1] P. T. Forsyth, in *C.W.P.* lxi. 314.

[2] W. M. Macgregor, *Some of God's Ministries*, 204.

phrase. Royalty—not arbitrariness—a glorious and defiant assertion of His own independence of human restraint in working out the works of His Father. He refuses to be trammelled in His working by the prejudices of the Jews: 'the Son of man quickeneth *whom* he will'—yes, and *when* He will. Indeed, He also refuses to be trammelled even by the likelihoods of circumstance, or the heavy fetters of human despair; He glories in an unlikely case, and triumphs over it in the fullness of Divine energy; He heals a man who has been thirty-eight years in his infirmity, and thrusts him like an emblem of hope before the eyes of despairing humanity: 'the Son of man quickeneth whom *He will*.'

Think yourself back for a moment into those shadowed porches by the pool, crowded with sick and weary folk, waiting for their chance. Christ comes into the midst of them and His will begins to work. First, it works like a searchlight. You have seen the searchlight of a warship flashing round a horizon on a dark night, revealing the ships at sea, the fortifications on shore, the people on the beach, huts, houses, palaces, with its moving, momentary gleam, so swift and so revealing. So we may see Christ's will moving round that dismal company, revealing, considering, deciding. Then His will comes to rest upon a certain man: it resolves itself from a searchlight into an electric energy: it directs itself upon him in the question, 'Wilt thou be made whole?' So the two wills meet: the man has his chance: if there is will in him to respond to redeeming will, nothing is impossible.

Is it possible to gain any insight into the principles on which the will of the Saviour wrought by the pool? It is not like Him to be arbitrary: even when He is most royal, He is not arbitrary: there is a sweet reasonableness about Him, which we expect to find here because we find it so continually. The impotent were all round Him that day: why did He choose one over against the rest? May we not say that this man was chosen because he was the neediest, because he was the most friendless, because he was the most helpless? There is a poetess who, thinking out with herself a reasonable doctrine of Election, sings:

> Need shall my witness be
> That I am loved of Thee . . .
> Nor will Thy soul reject
> Him whom Thou dost elect
> To be Thine own through weakness, search, and need.

This man might have taken these words into his lips. The Friend of the friendless found him out because he was friendless: the good Physician came straight to him because he was most in need.

The fact is that in this scene by the Pool of Bethesda we are watching the inauguration of a new era, dawning at last upon a world that has been waiting for it long. As Dr. Matheson puts it, the law hitherto has been the survival of the fittest: that law still holds in the porches of Bethesda: see how the strong hold back the weak at the critical moment, and how those who have friends to help them push aside those who have none. Here comes One into the midst, of whom you might almost say that the law of His Kingdom is the survival of the unfittest, the survival of the unlikeliest—One who allows the lame to take the prey, and who gives the Kingdom to the sinful, the weak, the poor, and the helpless. Welcome this glorious election! We may be willing to be counted among the poor and needy, if so be that, because of our poverty and need, He thinketh upon us.

But whether we can always see the principle on which it works or not, that Sovereign Will, imperious and divine, is still working among us. It may seem impossible to reconcile a world ruled by Almighty Will with a world in which there is room for finite choice. But sometimes we have to accept conflicting opposites and leave their reconciliation to the day when we have a larger light. How can we reconcile the two ideas of pressure and tension in any solid body? Physicists tell us that in any solid body such as a block of wood, every particle of matter attracts every other and yet at the same time repels it. We cannot think to ourselves the going-out of these two forces from the same atom at the same moment in the same direction—force of attraction and force of repulsion: it is unthinkable; yet though it is unthinkable it is true. And in the same way it may be impossible for us intellectually to reconcile the Sovereign Will of God with the free will of man, yet both alike may be realities. The point where the practical issue emerges is this—that however many be the points of life at which God says to us 'I will,' there are some points at least where He says 'Wilt thou?'

2. So now let us turn for a moment to *the other will*, which might seem a comparatively weak and small factor in the case, but upon which really hung the last issue of that fateful hour. '*Wilt thou?*'

The help of God had come near: the man had his chance: it lay with him to seize it and to use it.

Those who work in the slums of great cities, where the devil's castaways are found among the rubbish-heaps of life, sometimes find that their initial task with a human life is to awaken hope: if that can be done, everything is done: if that cannot be done, nothing is accomplished. Can you imagine the rekindling in this man's eyes of the light that had faded for many days? Desire this long time had been a bitter pain, because unsatisfied. Desire, as by a magician's touch, was now transformed into joy, for hope once more was mixed with it, and the man's will was caught in the grasp of Christ's Will, to find that it was a good will, full of power and promise. And his consenting will was the point at which the electric energy of that greater Will touched him and entered into his life: he arose, took up his bed and walked: the sad porches of Bethesda knew him no more.

There is a lesson here for *the threshold of the life divine*. Willingness is that threshold. There is no other. Nothing can take its place. There are ways and means by which the appeal of Christ's Sovereign Will still knocks at our door. It may be in a sermon. It may be in some sudden and silent thought when we are alone and the doors are shut upon our fellow-men. It may be in some solemn event of Providence, or in some sharp reminders of the flight of time. But it says to us 'Wilt thou?' as truly as if that message had been spoken to us in the syllables of articulate speech or written on the sky in living flame. However it comes, it is our chance.

Speaking of the modern tendency to regard crime as merely a disease, Mr. Chesterton says: 'The fallacy of the whole thing is that evil is a matter of active choice, whereas disease is not. If you say that you are going to cure a profligate as you cure an asthmatic, my cheap and obvious answer is, Produce the people who want to be asthmatics as many people want to be profligates. A man may lie still and be cured of a malady. But he must not lie still if he wants to be cured of a sin.' *He must not lie still.* He must at least be active and alert enough to answer 'I will' to the Divine 'Wilt thou?'

But the lesson of the threshold is also a lesson *of perpetual obligation*. Christ's Will is mighty: how mighty this man found when the healing poured into him. But we are not meant to make that might a temporary refuge. Our wills are weak. Our impotence returns upon us. The world and our habits are strong. We need to keep close to Christ's sovereign and conquering Will all along the way. Again and again we need to re-unite our wills with His, that His may be to us not only guidance but power.

> Renew my will from day to day:
> Blend it with Thine.

And He whose Will was energy to the impotent long ago, will answer our self-surrender by enduing us with somewhat of His own great strength. To submit to Him is not overthrow, but victory. To keep His Will enthroned over ours is not bondage, but health and liberty.[1]

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Soul's Three Tenses.

'One thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal.'—Ph 3[13] (R.V.).

That is a very remarkable summary of a life's programme, of a whole outlook and attitude of the soul, and it is none the less remarkable in that it comes from a man whose earthly race is almost run, who has lived an exceptionally full and strenuous life, and is now writing from prison, with the prospect of death hanging over him. It is a strange thing to us that a man so beset should write a letter so serene, so uncomplaining, as this Epistle of Paul's to the Philippians. Isn't it more likely, says the sceptic, that the whole thing was invented, and the letter written years after the alleged events by some scribe who merely imagined the scene and surrounding conditions? Some years ago, Mr. Chesterton, dealing with just this sceptical temper which dismisses as untrue whatever is sublime, wrote a most stimulating essay on 'The Heroic that Happened,' and gave instance after instance of events, actions, and sayings that ought to have been legendary, only they chanced to be absolutely historic.

Well, now we turn to our text 'forgetting the things which are behind, this one thing I do—I press on toward the goal.' That is the summary of a life's programme; it denotes a definite outlook, it gives us the soul's three tenses.[2]

1. *The past tense of the soul*—'forgetting the things which were behind.'

It was Bergson in recent years who startled and

[1] J. M. E. Ross, *The Christian Standpoint*, 91.
[2] J. Warchauer, *Challenge and Cheer*, 132.

illuminated our minds by telling us that the true function of the brain is not to enable us to remember things, but to enable us to forget things. That but for this power which a sound brain has of shutting off certain floods of recollection which are irrelevant to the purpose in hand, our entire past would at every moment come crowding in upon us, every separate memory claiming to have as good a right to be there as any other, the consequence being that we should be unable to deal definitely with any immediate issue.

St. Paul is saying in the well-known verse which is our text, that it is God's gracious Will about us, His gracious permission towards us, that we should forget certain things. It may have been that the Philippians were troubling themselves about the treatment which Philippi had given the Apostle. It may have been that they were ashamed of themselves and of others, and that, with St. Paul now a prisoner and perhaps never to return again, their shame and grief over themselves had become an agony.

For certainly it is the case with us as we get older, if at the same time we are getting finer, that it comes to be not enough for us to believe that God has forgiven us for what we may have done or may have been; we cannot forgive ourselves.

Now, perhaps there is no deeper question than just this: How are we to deal with ourselves in the light of things of which our conscience accuses us? This is a question which man has put to himself from the beginning, a question with which the great literature of man has laboured as in travail through all ages. It is the burden of the Bible. It is the problem of Greek tragedy. It is the almost maddening preoccupation of the great Russians—of Tolstoy and Dostoievsky.

The answers which have been given to the question fall on the whole into two classes. On the one hand, there are those who say that the proper and only sensible way is not to trouble oneself for a moment about such morbid shadows; that when a thing is done, why, that is the end of it! Now it would be quite sound to base our practice upon a saying like that, if it were true. But it is not true. When a thing is done, that is not the end of it; and for various reasons. One of those reasons is, that you or I who did the thing are still here. Another reason is, that this thing which we did, we did towards another, or towards others.

And then if this world of ours is a place which means a moral order with a Holy God behind it—why then, what we did, and our own uneasiness about what we did, are matters which we cannot for ever be satisfied to have treated as though we had done nothing more than switch off a leaf from a tree in a forest as we sauntered through it carelessly.

But there is another answer—the answer of the tender-hearted, the scrupulous, the believing. And what is that answer? Well, it is this. We also believe that in some way we must be enabled to forget the things which are behind; but it must be not by denying the reality of those unhappy feelings, but by accepting them, and by accepting ourselves in the light of them.

The deepest thing in Christianity is the offer of forgiveness, the promise given us by our blessed Lord that in a deep sense we might forget the things that are behind. But it was to be a forgetting as a means towards a holier and wiser condition, of which the basis should be this very experience of the charity of God. It was to be a new *action* of the entire man, facing himself, accepting himself, made soft by penitence, made strong by faith in God's understanding of him and acceptance of him; and all for the sake of a new life along the line of this new insight which already had made the old life henceforth insupportable.[1]

2. *The present tense of the soul*—'this one thing I do.' One thing—no limping between two opinions, no good-natured open-mindedness which leaves convictions to strenuous souls who do not understand how to say 'Yes' and 'No' in the same breath. One thing—no frittering away of life's energies on a dozen objects, all, perhaps, good in themselves, but all of them demanding the first place in the interest of those who would pursue them with success.

'One thing I do' is the principle that produces success in so preponderant a proportion of cases that we may fairly set it down as a universal rule. Yes, but what is success when it is attained? The little child achieves success when he masters the art of spinning his top. John Couch Adams achieved success when he traced to its hiding-place among the stars the distant planet Neptune. Between these two successes there lies a whole world of varying achievements, great and small, not often renowned among men, according to the true scale of greatness. The success of selfish scoundrels who pile up their millions by ruthlessly 'cornering' the livelihood of the masses—such a success may be

[1] J. A. Hutton, *Loyalty: The Approach to Faith*, 240.

as truly built on the maxim of our text as the success of the man who first brought to Europe the gospel message of God's love to men. The maxim is therefore neutral, unmoral, a mere formula which governs the accomplishment of any object, good or bad, which a man may set himself to gain. So everything turns on the object which is aimed at by this strenuous concentration of effort.

Something within a man is always telling him, until he stifles it into silence, that he was meant for immortality, for an endless sequence of ever-widening accomplishment and responsibility which will expand with the growth of powers created in the image of the Infinite God. Here is what St. Paul speaks of as the upward calling. Out of the depths of his heart one of the giants of human history is telling us of the Divine voice which he hears, and which he would fain make us hear. There was a time when his own ambitions were strangely different, though pursued with the same single-minded energy. Christ laid hold of him. And to lay hold of Christ, the prize now set before him, became his master-passion.

Yea, thro' life, death, thro' sorrow and thro' sinning
He shall suffice me, for He hath sufficed;
Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning,
Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ.

3. And so we reach *the soul's third tense—the future*—'I press on toward the goal.'

If only we knew how to make the kingdom of Christ on earth the one end of life, and everything else a means to that end! The upward calling sounds to us to-day with a voice clear as in the days when St. Paul followed it, and its watchword is still the same. If serving two masters has become more and more difficult in the spheres of ordinary life, it has not become easier when the highest ideals of man are concerned. One Lord, one faith—one ambition, one reward—everywhere that Divine number rings in the ears of him who would please God. John Wesley's rule for his helpers, 'You have nothing to do but to save souls,' is not meant for any one class of Christians alone; it belongs to all. For there is not one method only of saving souls. The aim to win human lives by the example of a life that belongs entirely to Christ is one which must be supreme in every real Christian's heart, but it will work itself out in many ways. So it falls that the voice which bids every disciple say, 'One thing I do,' calls him to do many things, because he will do them all to the glory of God. The Master bids His servants eagerly enter every field of human activity to claim it for Himself. They should be foremost in the pursuit of knowledge, for all truth is of God. They must be foremost in every systematic work for the alleviation of human suffering, for their Master ministered to the bodies as well as the souls of men. In Parliament, to see to the passing of good laws; in local government, to watch over everything which tends to the purification of life in town or country; in business, to promote justice and brotherliness between employers and employed; in all these things and many other spheres, in countless different ways, one thing they do, for every task they accomplish is done for the glory of God, which is the good of men.[1]

[1] J. H. Moulton, *A Neglected Sacrament*, 144.

Buddhism and Christianity.

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III.

While missionaries and monks can co-operate in such movements as the 'Brotherhood of Religious Friends,' described in a former article, there is much bridge-building waiting to be done by the laity.

The Japanese Government is active in organizing educational propaganda abroad; its exhibits of art are well known at international expositions; and whoever studies Japanese art is inevitably drinking in the spirit of Japanese Buddhism. The French Government has lately sent a good exhibit to America. Is it too much to hope that our Government can rise to such heights of intelligence? Why not send to Japan some of the masterpieces of Western art—the best of which are as much a