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made the plunge of faith, and have used *Tao* to translate *Logos*. Let us say boldly to our Buddhist friends :

The Dharma became flesh and dwelt in our midst ;
 full of loving-kindness, Reality Itself :
 Of his abundance we have all received, gift upon
 gift of Love.

And as the early Church backed up its immense claims by living a better and more loving daily life—incarnating the *Logos* anew—so only can we convince the Buddhist world that our Christ is indeed Reality, and that even Sākya-muni must yield to Him as in the *Lotus* we find a former Buddha acknowledging the New Evangel of universal salvation.

In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

Borrowed Lights.¹

'Ye are the light of the world.'—Mt 5¹⁴.

NOT long ago I spoke to you about the sunshine, and how we must let in the ultra-violet rays to keep us fit and well, and how Jesus is the Light of the World, and you and I must keep near Him if we want to keep those horrid germs of sulks and crabbedness and all the rest of them from getting us. But to-day there is something else I want to say about it. It's the sun that heals, but it's not always sunny. And that, not only because we keep making dirty smoke to shut it out, but because there are clouds and dull days and grey weather. And whatever can we do in times like that? Well, in a hospital in London they have found what to do, and they are doing it too. They have made a kind of lamp. I am not clever about these things, and don't quite understand. I think it has something to do with mercury, if I remember. But it may have got all mixed up in my head, as things will do in yours. Anyway, they have a lamp that gives a light almost the same as sunshine. Now you see! You can't sit in the sunshine if the sun isn't shining! No! But on the greyest, coldest, horriddest day you can sit in the light of your lamp. And it does just as well. They have tried it, that lamp of theirs, on poor wee folk in the wards yonder, all ailing and sickly and tired; and it's just grand, they say, to see how quickly they get strong and fit. They carry them into the room where the lamp is, and leave them there. But now they are going one better, and are thinking of fitting up a lamp beside every bed all over the hospital, so that all of them in all the wards can lie there in the sunshine in all kinds of weather,

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

even if the snow is falling. For the lamp gives light that is almost the same.

Well, here is Jesus saying, 'You are the light of the world,' just what He said about Himself. Whatever can He mean by that? That you can be a wee lamp giving out the very same kind of light that He does. Mother knows what He means. When you girls and boys go off to school again she gets quite dull and dowie, the house seems empty and too quiet, she misses you dreadfully. It is just as if the sun had gone down, and the day grown cold and grey. But when it gets near the time for you to come home for the next holidays, she begins to sing about the house again, and when you really come at last, it is like when winter goes and the flowers come rushing out. For mother's sun is you. And Christ says (isn't it wonderful?), just as that little lamp there can give out light that is real sunshine, can do the work of the huge sun, so in a little way you can, if you like, do what Jesus Himself would do if He were in your house—can help those around you as He would, can make things easier and happier and brighter for them, can be a little light of the world like the great Sun Himself. How? Well, what did Jesus do when He was a small boy like you? Just little bits of things. But they made a huge difference, and His mother was not nearly so tired, and Joseph hadn't to work on so late, and the little ones were far, far happier, and the whole home was a jollier and better place, because He was going about doing these little bits of things that helped them all far more than they knew. He didn't preach as He did later, and He didn't heal folk as He could by and by. No. He was just kind and thoughtful and unselfish and generous and happy-hearted and good-natured about this little thing and that. And they all felt far better because He was there. There He was

in the house like a little lamp giving out the same sunshine that comes from God Himself, keeping them all well and happy. And you could do that too. He was kind; and you could be kind; you have heaps and heaps of chances every day. There's that new fellow in the class, you might be decent to him. No doubt he is feeling strange and a bit shy. Don't you just leave him alone because you have heaps of friends already; but take him into things, and make him feel at home. And He was unselfish. And you could be that also, could go off to bath first now and then, even though you are older, and not always stand upon your rights, and boss the younger ones. And He was happy-hearted. And you could be merry too, a good-natured little soul that doesn't get cross and spoil the game, nor fly into a passion about nothing at all, but is sunny and bright, win or lose, and keeps the others cheery. Just as I am the Light of the World, the great Sun shining down on all the earth, so, says Christ, and He is saying it to you, you could be a little lamp sending out the same sunshine, giving light to all the house, making them far happier and better because you are there.

Doesn't that make you take a great deep breath? You imitate Mother or Father because you are so proud of them, think them just splendid, would like to be what they are, and to do what they do. But did you ever think of this? You can imitate Jesus Christ, can in a little way be what He was, and do just what He would do. That settles it, doesn't it? You have often wondered what you would best like to be. A nurse? Yes. A soldier? Fine. A doctor? There are so many you would like to be. Whichever will you choose? But if you can be like Jesus Christ, and do His work, that settles it.

The Reward of those who tarry by the Stuff.¹

'As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike.'—I S 30²⁴.

I suppose that David's soldiers thought their commander was really treating them very unfairly. You can almost hear them grumbling: 'Why should So-and-so get the same reward as we get? He did nothing. He had a nice comfortable job looking after the baggage-wagons and keeping an eye on the horses, while we had to go out into the very front of the battle and risk our

¹ By the Reverend J. Hutcheson Bolton, Hastings.

lives. Yet we each get exactly the same reward. It isn't a bit fair!' Yet they were wrong, and David was entirely in the right. He took the view that they must, every one of them, receive the same reward. 'He that goeth down to the battle, and he that tarrieth by the stuff, they shall part the spoil alike.'

I wonder if any of you children have read a very beautiful poem by John Milton, the great blind poet. I am sure some of the older children amongst you have. In that poem, Milton tells how he worried about his blindness. He wondered if God still expected him to work for Him in the world and yet refused to let him see to do it. And he tells us how he came to understand that there are many different ways of helping God and of serving Him. He realized that

they also serve, who only stand and wait.

That was the lesson which David's soldiers had to learn. That those whose duty it was to stay and guard the stuff were serving their king just as much as those warriors who went down to the battle and fought in the very front rank, in what the Bible calls 'the high places of the field.'

I remember once walking through one of the biggest training camps during the war. At the door of a hut sat a Tommy polishing his buttons. I laughed at him, and said, 'Well, what do you think you are doing?' 'Doing?' he said. 'I'm helping to win the war!' Yes, children, there are lots of different ways of helping to win the war. We all want to go out into the battle where the battle is thickest and the fighting is most fierce, and some of us are inclined to think that just because we are not in the big job or in the important office, or at the post of great responsibility, that we are not doing much, and that therefore we can slacken off and let things slide. That sarcastic retort of the soldier was truer than he thought. Although his job was tedious and unimportant, yet, nevertheless, he was helping to win the war. Do you remember the old story of the great castle which was so well fortified and so nobly guarded and yet it was lost, because the boy whose duty it was to fasten a certain door each night, got tired of his job and grew careless about it? And the enemy was quick to seize the chance, and the castle was taken. The castle was lost just because of one unturned key.

You sometimes say, 'Oh! I'm far too young to

do anything for our Lord Jesus Christ. If I were grown up, it would be different. If I were in an office with a lot of clerks, I would soon witness for Christ. If I were a great general, I would tell all my soldiers about Him, and I would fight against sin and evil. But I'm only a child. I'm so unimportant in this matter ; I'm left behind like those soldiers to tarry by the stuff. I won't worry about it at present.'

Well, children, that's a wrong view, absolutely wrong. It doesn't matter what your importance is, Christ does ask you most seriously to serve Him and to do something for Him even in the smallest possible way. Only do something. Only love Him and pray to Him, and remember to carry out His commandments, and to hate wrong-doing. Then you too will be serving Him, just as much as those great men and women are serving Him, those who have gone down into the front of the battle. You will be tarrying by the stuff, and you will receive the reward of knowing that you are serving Christ in your own way, and that He sees *all* service, and loves and rewards all alike. Remember, when you are discouraged and inclined to think that you have an unimportant job in life, that your work for Christ and His kingdom cannot matter *very* much, this warning text which David gave to his soldiers long ago : 'As is his part that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff : they shall part alike.'

The Christian Year.

ARMISTICE.

The Restoring of Lost Days.

'And I will restore to you the years which the locust has eaten.'—Jl 2²⁵.

This short book which bears the name of the prophet Joel is not one of the familiar parts of the Bible. We remember only a few of the most striking passages contained in it, and particularly the passage quoted by Peter at the Day of Pentecost.

Yet a book like this deserves both to be re-read and re-studied to-day. It contains spiritual truth which the present age is sorely needing. There are books in the Bible which are being given back to us in that way. We had almost begun to think we needed them no longer until circumstances came round which find a point of contact with the atmosphere in which they were written. That is, perhaps, especially true of the works of the Hebrew

prophets. We find ourselves thinking in the terms of their thought, and almost speaking in identical words.

But before we come to the teaching of this book let us note that, while it is among the less familiar to the ordinary reader, it presents certain peculiar problems to the student. For example, this problem : We have practically no clue to the age in which it was written. At best we can indulge in guesswork. Nor do we know anything of the personality or life of the writer. With the barest of prefaces he plunges at once into the heart of his message, and leaves us in the dark as to his own life's story. To some extent that makes the book more interesting rather than less. There is a certain fascination about this vivid message leaping out of the darkness of the unknown ; the time and the man both hidden, both in a sense lost, the message alone remaining as a relic of the age and its teacher.

But there is another thought which must be set alongside this one. If the age and the writer are veiled in obscurity, the circumstances in which the book was written are as clear as the noon-day. It is filled with references to a great and destructive plague which had come upon the land. It had evidently been a plague of locusts, though these pests had been accompanied by others who between them had laid waste the whole countryside. It must have been a stupendous calamity. There is no doubt, at all events, that the situation was felt so acutely as to call for some interpreting light, and it was in response to that need that the prophet Joel found his work.

What, then, was the message which this far-off teacher proclaimed in the day of his nation's distress ? First of all, he interpreted the plague as a visitation of God, a punishment for heedless ways of living, a clarion call for repentance. To him this visitation was like a trumpet ringing from the heavens calling a disorderly multitude to the salute. It was God speaking to His people, summoning them back to Himself.

It is a noteworthy fact that God's spokesmen in all ages have discovered a relationship between national calamity and national sin. Men have always felt that God speaks in the day of darkness, that the travail and pain of life have at the heart of them a chastening message, that they are a word of arrest and summons. We feel it in a dim and uncertain way to-day. We are painfully conscious that as a people we have been drifting into ways

of slackness and disorder, neglecting God's worship, compromising with His laws, fast becoming too easy-going and pleasure-seeking, with the subtle influences of moral decadence creeping over us. We have been reminded again of late by those who are best qualified to read the inwardness of events that a time of great hardship lies in front of us.

Without doubt there do lie ahead of us years in which there will be leanness and bitter struggle. That means chastening. There is no other word for it. But it is not for us merely to bow our-neck to the travail which is laid upon us. There is the dawning of a spiritual opportunity in the world's night. It is for our eyes to discern it and be cheered by it.

Here, then, is the first point of contact between the prophet's message and the needs of our own day. Calamity is not a punishment to be borne passively, but an active summons; it is not merely a door closed in the face of the past, it is a door opened to greater possibilities in the future. It is a visitation of God, and God never visits His people to destroy their hopes. His hand touches human affairs to uplift, not to burden.

We are summoned, then, to lift up our eyes to glorious possibilities if we use the lesson of events aright. And, as if in answer to a people's cry of need, there is given this Divine promise: 'I will restore to you the years which the locust hath eaten,' a promise which reveals the very heart and spirit of God in His wonderful dealings with His children.

How can God restore the years which the locust has eaten? How can He give back to us that which privation and want and sorrow have snatched from our hands? We must not miss the fulness of this promise. It must not be read in a niggardly way. It is not enough to say that God will not continue to afflict, that He will give back again in due season the days which seemed to be lost for ever. The promise is even greater than that.

It tells that because of the day of want and need which seemed so harsh and forbidding, God will make life fuller and richer. It assures me that God will take the time which I had counted as loss, and will make that time gain to me. He will not only continue His faithfulness from year to year, but He will restore to me in a new way the season which I had marked in black in the great diary of memory. He will give me that year back again. And you will note the underlying suggestion of

the words—that I never really lived while that year was present. The calamity overwhelmed me. I did not understand it. My heart was closed up in remorse or rebellion or self-pity. I did not live. But the day will come when God will open the book, and turn back over the pages until He comes to one page inscribed in dark letters, stained with tears, and at that page He will pause, and wiping out that which I myself wrote down, He will write what that day really meant in the life of my soul. 'He will restore to me the year which the locust hath eaten.'

This is speaking vaguely perhaps, but we are on the firm ground of experienced truth nevertheless.

How many of us can remember years which the locust hath eaten. For some action of our own, or some neglect of action, it seems to us that life will never be the same again. A wrong choice closed the door of opportunity for ever. An unholy desire captured us and we fell, and there in the heart is still the sign of the ruin. Perhaps we have thought darkly of the punishment, and murmured that the penalty has been out of all proportion to the offence. But God's punishments are the hand of love beckoning us to rise, not a burden to make us sink.

And so it is with sorrows and troubles which have come not as punishments, for they were beyond our control altogether. They came unbidden, perhaps we think undeserved, and at one stroke life was shadowed for us. What it meant we did not know at the time; we may not know to-day, but we shall know. And those years God will restore. He will take the year of the aching and wounded heart, and in His light we shall see that it was the travail in which some greater and diviner thing was born than what was taken away. And then we shall begin to reap, as Tennyson so beautifully said, 'The far-off interest of tears.'¹

SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE ADVENT.

The Comfort of Dependence.

'Behold, as the clay in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.'—Jer 18⁶.

We all shrink from the passages in Scripture which suggest the uncontrolled Sovereignty of God, for they, some of them, seem so far away from the Fatherhood of God. The emphasis is solely upon the untrammelledness of the Creator's will, in

¹ S. M. Berry, *The Crucible of Experience*, 224.

respect of His acts towards the creature. 'Nay; but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, why hast Thou made me thus?' Can we imagine any statement more absolute, and more chillily stern, than that? As far as it goes, there is not merely no Fatherhood in it, but no statement of a moral principle of Sovereignty. It conveys solely the thought of a mighty Ruler, absolute and unconfined, doing that which seemeth Him good, fashioning this one to honour and that to dishonour, according to His mere good pleasure.

We shrink from such a conception of God. In circumstances such as those in which we are placed, circumstances of no special stress, freed from any thought of persecution, which flings men back on the world-control of God as their only safety, such a thought as this is paralysing. What we need is the call to effort. Moreover, at a time when the social conscience is aroused, and men are gazing with new eyes on what seem to be the waste-products of the Potter's wheel—gazing curiously at those born (as it would seem) for pain and death, and even sin—a thought of God, which tends, rightly or wrongly, to remove responsibility for the world's miseries from the shoulders of men themselves on to the Will behind the world, is a thought which we shrink from as unsupportable by our faith.

At the same time, it is not a thought to be forgotten, for it manifestly contains that which is true; and, moreover, contains that which is inspiring. It is not, when examined, so drear a thought as, at first, it seems. For within it there is not only the fact of formation, but the hope of *re-formation*.

1. But the simplest lesson contained in the image of the Potter's wheel is the old, direct one, that, in the last instance, in regard to life and sustenance and service and destiny, *we are in God's hands*. 'There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will.' 'As the clay in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, saith the Lord.' That is manifest on the surface in Nature, Providence, and Spiritual growth.

(1) In Nature, one planteth and another watereth; but God giveth the increase. We plough the field and scatter the good seed on the land; but it is the power of life, inherent in Nature herself—the life in the seed, brought to new being by the 'burial and death of the grain'—that brings 'the green blade waxing mature.' That life we attribute, in

the last instance, to the self-living One. In the beginning, He created the heavens and the earth; and, constantly, since then the physical world is sustained by continuous influxes of His power; through it, continually, the Divine Energy is passing. But of that energy we have not the secret. We have not even power over the servants of growth, to more than a limited degree. We cannot control the winds; the rain ceaseth not at our bidding; we are no Joshuas to bid the sun stand still on Ajalon. The control of Nature is with her Maker. Here we are in God's hands.

(2) Still more vividly it comes to our minds in Providence, that it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. Let the older men bear witness within them. Remember the queer chain of accidents that settled you in this place and in your present work. As you look back, it seems as if you had neither art nor part in it. It just came so. Look on your own life; on the friendships that have given it meaning, on the work which dignifies it, on the successes which exhilarate, on the failures which develop your manhood; and see if this be not the exclamation on your lips, 'We are in God's hands!'

(3) But some will recognize the control of God over them most clearly in the spiritual realm. There is a point when nothing more can be done. God must be left alone. Indeed, religious work is just to endeavour to bring souls into touch with God, and to leave them there. For it is God that giveth the increase. Some men know that well. For they have been suddenly gripped by the great Artificer. They remember that moment, when, in a flash, it dawned on them that Christ's word was true, and the power of the truth held them mightily, and the unseen world momentarily became real. These tell you, that, of a verity, we are in God's hands.

2. That, then, is the first and most obvious consideration, arising from the metaphor of the Potter. The second arises out of the thought of *that which the Potter makes*. He makes *vessels*; that is, He makes something for *use*. In the making, He determines the uses. Some are vessels of honour and some of dishonour.

Now, let this be our doctrine of election. God has imposed upon each one of us a service. He has strictly imposed it, by reason of the endowments which He has given us. And these services are very different. Some are more honourable than others, for the moment. They are dependent,

so far, upon that with which we cannot in the least interfere; upon our original physical, social, mental, and spiritual complexions. In this sense, assent to the will of God is absolute for all.

Ah! but there is a darker suggestion here. A man may be a vessel in God's hands, used of Him and doing His work; and yet the man himself may not be God's. The Divine Power many a time gets service from evil men; sometimes indirectly, but sometimes directly. Those that are not God's may be great in God's service. Wherefore, never be content with being useful in God's work. Never be content until He comes to dwell in the inmost, secret recesses of the heart.

3. The last consideration is one of pure gladness. Do not forget that Jeremiah uses this Potter's metaphor as a source of comfort, to teach us that *He who formed can re-form*.

It is curious that this metaphor of the potter has almost always been used to convey to us a thought of our hopelessness and of our reasonable resentment against the God who made life so hard. We remember the oft-quoted lines:

Ah love! could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would we not shatter it to bits—and then
Remould it nearer to the Heart's Desire?

At least we can say of this bitter-sweet outburst of the pagan poet, that it precisely reverses the teaching of God's prophet, and the unveiling of His purpose given in His Son. In Him, One is given to us, who has proved unto death His willingness to conspire with us that this sorry scheme of things, which our own sick hearts have fashioned, may be remoulded nearer to His heart's desire. But here the Sovereignty of God sets its own limit. We must first assent to His work upon us. He will not compel. Are we to refuse that one condition? Nay, rather, assenting, we shall by Him be made like unto Himself.¹

ADVENT SUNDAY.

The Reasonable View of Sin and Forgiveness.

'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'—Is 1¹⁸.

This passage brings the facts of sin and its removal into the light of reason. It is a point of

¹ J. R. P. Sclater, *The Enterprise of Life*, 335.

view more familiar to the Greek than to the Hebrew thought, and when the Hebrew prophet describes God as reasoning with men concerning sin we may expect some startling truths.

1. *Views of sin.* (1) *Unreasonable views.*—The people had thought of sin as a light matter that could be easily compounded for with sacrifices and prayers—that was their great irrationality. It is repeated by clever modern people in many variants, each of them some device for getting rid of the old spectres of conscience which once terrified mankind. They have discovered that vice is but virtue run to seed, part of the evolution of character, an unpleasant necessity involved in human nature. Above all, they insist that the whole subject is in bad taste, and that the proper course is to call it by some respectable name and say no more about it.

That view would be reasonable but for the facts of the case. But what means this indestructible conscience, this blood-red spectre that cannot be laid? That is fact, and there are those who would give all they have to persuade themselves that it is mere imagination. We are told to cultivate the power of living in the present. Laugh and forget; and 'let the dead past bury its dead.' Yes, if the sinful past *were* dead! but it is alive, and it will not stay underground.

(2) *The reasonable view*—'Scarlet and crimson.'—That is the fact of sin—glaring, blazing, unconcealable. Nay more, these are the colours of newly shed blood. The reference is to v.¹⁵, where the people are accused of violence and murder. Like Lady Macbeth they have the stain of blood on their hand, and the 'damned spot' will not wash out.

Such language offends our ears. What have we to do with this? We are no murderers. Are we not? What of the slain innocence, the aspirations and pure hopes and desires that once were ours? What of the strength of will, the tenderness of conscience? What of the happiness of friends, their trust and love? Habits of evil have murdered our freedom; desires of evil have murdered our moral sanity and balance; temptations we have welcomed have murdered the chances of to-morrow. We have stricken our own souls, wounding them to death.

2. *Views of the issue.* (1) *Unreasonable.*—If this be the true view of sin, the true view of its issue would appear to be ghastly enough. It must be suffering, hopeless and unrelieved. The context

shows the people of Israel battered by punishment, one mass of disease and pain. Yet all that had failed. 'Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more.' They had been punished in vain. The blows had been unexplained, for there was no knowing in them. As blow fell after blow, they simply took what was given, sullenness sinking to a fatal despair.

The counterpart of that despair is to be found in our modern pessimism. It professes to be reasonable. It founds upon philosophy and science. It knows the hereditary taint in the blood, the imprisoning environment and the tremendous odds against virtue. It knows also that man's sin is sure to find him out. It is not 'done when 'tis done,' but it is only beginning then. It will work out its course through vain remorse and tightening bonds of habit, and deepening gloom. The wages of sin is death—'wages,' nay, the prize, the best thing sin has to give. The only relief that pessimism has to offer is that this cannot go on indefinitely. The increasing horror of the rapids is so great that the swift plunge will come as a relief at last. This is widely held to be the rational view of the situation, and it would be so, but for one fact that it has left out.

(2) *The reasonable view of the issue.*—'They shall be white as snow . . . they shall be as wool.'—The words maintain the vivid sense of colour, and contrast with the gleaming blood, the snows of Hermon and the fleece of young lambs. They bring us back to the austere cleanness of nature which formerly had seemed to judge the murderer by her cold and inexorable contrast.

This is very startling; if we could believe it, it would be very comforting; but by what straining of language can it possibly be called reasonable? It contradicts the whole record of history and goes in the teeth of science. It is altogether too good to be true in face of the facts. Why mock us further by speaking of reason here?

Because of the omitted fact. Pain is no match for sin, but love is more than a match for it. The omitted fact is the fact of God.

So the whole argument runs back at last to the love of God. He, who knows the depth of sin, knows also the height of His own forgiveness and the power of redemption. All the reason is on His side, for if God indeed is offering to take sin away, the only reasonable course must be to accept the offer and let Him do it. This reasoning of love is

indeed the greatest mystery in the universe. It does not explain the tremendous paradox of life, but it explains all we need to know. It leaves us on the one hand with the dread reality of sin, and on the other with the equal reality of pardon and deliverance. It faces all the facts of perverse will and the destruction that it leads to, but it brings in the greater fact of the irresistible power of love that masters all.¹

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

'Lift up your Hearts.'

'For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.'—Ro 15⁴.

The second Sunday in Advent is the day on which we are called upon to think of the treasure that God has given us in the Scriptures. That is the thought which is put before us in the Collect; and here it is again in the Epistle.

In this text St. Paul is not speaking so much of the *duty* of studying Holy Scripture as of the *advantages* to be obtained by so doing; and it will be worth our while to consider attentively what these are. The Scriptures were written, he says, for our instruction, 'that we, through patience and the comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.' The word *παράκλησις*, which is here rendered *comfort*, really means a good deal more: it means help when needed, assistance ready to hand; and the idea is that the Scriptures are to be our handbook, our *vade-mecum*, as people used to call the little book which contained the things which they wanted to remember, the book that they carried about with them for constant everyday reference. Such a book is not supposed to tell us everything that we ought to know, but it contains the great central facts which we have to keep in mind constantly; it gives us the right point of view, and shows us how to see things in their proper proportions. And the great lessons which we are to learn from our constant recourse to and diligent study of our *vade-mecum* is hope: that we through the guidance of the Scriptures might have *hope*.

1. Now, it may seem to us that hope is a thing that 'comes natural' to human beings, that it 'springs eternal in the human breast,' as the poet sings. There is a sense in which that is true, but

¹ J. Kelman, *Ephemeræ Eternitatis*, 313.

it would be a great deal truer to say that hope is ever dying in the human breast. Children are always hopeful. To them, the unknown is always a thing to be welcomed; they look forward to change with pleasure, and every day, they hope, will bring forth something more delightful than the day before. So, in the same way, some people are hopeful by temperament, and manage by dint of looking only on the bright side of things to live in a palace of hope, which is, after all, however, only one door removed from a fool's paradise. But as life goes on, this merely natural hopefulness, this hopefulness based upon the theory that this is the best of all possible worlds, rapidly dies away. As we grow older, we are apt to grow less hopeful; our most joyous experiences, we feel, are behind us, and no longer in front.

And if this is the case with individuals, it is not less so with nations. We are so used to the thought of progress that it fills us with surprise to hear that the very idea is one which had sprung out of Christianity and grows only where Christian civilization has prevailed, yet such is the case. Mankind does not naturally believe in progress; if we think of it, all the old myths of the peoples of the earth spoke of a golden age in the far distant past; and the world, so they would have us believe, has been gradually deteriorating since then. People who do not know much about them are apt to refer to 'the good old times,' when a little more knowledge or consideration would greatly alter their tone. Devout folk who cannot fit the spirit of this age into their own somewhat narrow little frame are apt to look back yearningly to the 'ages of faith,' ages which those who know more about them could never wish back, for they know how much there was that was hideous and base in them.

And yet there is an opposite error against which we have to be on our guard. If it does not follow that things are going to the bad, so neither does it follow that things are improving; and there is certainly no justification for the idea of some rather shallow optimists that this world is getting better by a kind of automatic evolution. 'The theory of evolution,' says Huxley, 'encourages no millennial anticipations. If for millions of years our globe has taken the upward road, yet some time the summit will be reached and the downward road will be commenced.' The 'survival of the fittest' does not mean the survival of the best, but only

of those who are best suited to their environment; and if we are gradually shaping a society in which real goodness goes for less than mere good nature, and flashy accomplishments count for more than solid wisdom, those will be the things which will prevail in it, and the world will suffer accordingly. No, the world in itself certainly cannot give us a solid basis for our hope.

2. We may safely maintain that the true basis of our hope is to be found in the revelation of our God made to us in the Christian Scriptures, and that there is nowhere else any adequate basis for it.

(1) For, first, the Bible has put an end to all attempts to bring God near by bringing Him down to the level of His creatures. The Semitic world out of which the Hebrews came, and the Egyptian world which overshadowed them, had always felt the Divine to be very close to them, and nowhere can you find conceptions of a closer and more loving relation between God and man, except in Christianity. But they had realized His nearness to them at the expense of His holiness; for the Semitic peoples had made gods many and lords many after their own likeness, whilst the Egyptians thought of Him as the Spirit inhabiting all His creatures and sharing their nature. In the Bible, on the other hand, God reveals Himself to us, from the first page to the last, as the All-holy One; the High and Holy One that inhabiteth eternity; the God who is Light, and in whom is no darkness at all. From the first page to the last we have the record of His nearness to men, but it is never at the expense of His transcendent holiness. If man is to come near to God, it must be by His giving holiness to man, not by man's taking away holiness from God. There is one great lesson.

(2) But, secondly, there was a large section of the ancient world which was quite willing to accept this teaching that God transcends His universe if they might put their own valuation on it. 'Yes,' said the Greek philosopher, 'God is high and holy and inaccessible; to be troubled about such creatures as we are would be beneath His perfection; He is unmoved and passionless, and the world is nothing unto Him.' As Socrates was wont to say, 'The gods need nothing, and they are most happy and nearest the gods who likewise need nothing.' So said the philosophers; and once more the Bible 'reared its head in the front of a lie.' No, it is false to say that God does not care; He *does* care; there is not a single fact in our lives for which He

does not care. The Bible is the revelation of God's care: it proclaims on every page His hatred of sin and meanness, His indignation at injustice, His sympathy with the poor and the oppressed; His love for the souls of men. There, then, is a second great lesson.

(3) But if this were all, if the Bible only told us that God is infinitely holy and yet that He cares absolutely for us, it would leave us in confusion still. The Bible goes on to tell us, and it is the crowning revelation, *why* it is that He cares. He cares because He loves. He cares for us because we are His children and the sheep of His pasture. He cares for us because He made us to enjoy His love, and made us that we might love Him. He cares for our sins because all defilement is clean contrary to His nature; He cares for us sinners because He made us free, and capable of growing in holiness, and it pitieth Him to see us in the dust. He cared so much that He vouchsafed to suffer on our behalf: 'for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

Here, then, is the sure and solid basis of our hope. Come what may, the right will assuredly

prosper in the long-run. Wickedness may seem to prosper, but it cannot do so long: 'I went by, and lo, he was gone.' Worldliness will always succeed in this world, but it has no staying power; the fashion of this world changeth, and the way of the world which succeeds to-day will fail to-morrow. God, and the cause of God, must prevail; the Golden Age of Christianity is before us, not behind.

Have we any right to be down-hearted? Should we be if we really trusted our Lord? It is the old taunt that a heathen writer of over 1400 years ago brings against us Christians. 'The miserable people,' says Ammianus, 'they have gone and chosen a new God, and now they will not trust Him.' We do indeed trust Him, but do we act as if we did? Do we habitually try to live in the spirit of hope?

Frederick Denison Maurice used to say that he was so despondent by nature that he *had* to throw himself back upon his Christian hope. If our hearts are naturally uplifted, well and good, let us rejoice and be glad in it. But if not, it does not follow that we are to remain in gloom: it is just then that we are bidden to 'lift up our hearts.'¹

¹ W. Collins, *Hours of Insight*, 163.

Christ in Paradox.

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'TRUTH may be—perhaps in the end must be—paradoxical.'¹ If this be true of ordinary life, pre-eminently is it true of Christ. How can we vitally express Him in any sense of reality, however minute it may be, unless paradox be freely used? He combines within His Person many seeming contradictories that only yield up their meaning and resolve their differences into unity as we view them in the light of each other. The 'Yea' ever lies through a 'Nay,' and the one is the illumination of the other. In a measure beyond our own, He is diversity in profound unity. It is failure to perceive this that has so often led to division within His Church. Men are enamoured, at times obsessed, by one dominant trait of His Person or work—and this twain let no man put asunder!—invading their experience that they stress it until it is thrown out

¹ *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, ix. 632.

of all real perspective, to the infinite loss of mutual faith and love. In a word, Jesus is the poised fulfilment of all life, whether human or Divine, and only as we strive to see Him from all possible angles of perception shall we truly enter into a growing sense of the unexplorable riches of His character and achievement. From this standpoint there spring up paradoxes innumerable, one or two of which we may well touch upon.

1. He had His dwelling upon earth, yet, as none other, He abode in the heavenlies. Intensely human, He was discovered to be unquestionably Divine. He became paradox itself even in His simplest hours. His consciousness of Himself, even as we note it at this distance of time, was an amazingly new thing in man's complex experience—a direct and *unbroken* consciousness of God. Ours at the best is of an intermittent nature, but not so