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cept a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth with itself alone: but if it die, it beareth much fruit!' The glory which He had with His Father 'before the world was' is this glory of Uttermost Love, this spirit of endless Self-Giving. No wonder, then, that when His Spirit truly possesses the soul, all beauty comes forth to greet it!

Heaven above is softer blue,
Earth around is sweeter green,
Something lives in every hue,
Christless eyes have never seen.

According to Browning, it is just this revelation of the deep identity of beauty with Perfect Love that man needs if he is to understand Nature and receive her ministry. Looking at Nature he cries:

Wanting is—what?
Summer redundant,
Blueness abundant,
—Where is the blot?

Beamy the world, yet a blank all the same,
—Framework which waits for a picture to frame:
What of the leafage, what of the flower?
Roses embowering with nought they embower!

That is Nature as he sees it without the revelation of the Presence of Divine Love—all its beauty lacking in crucial effect, its meaning held in suspense. Then his deep human need bursts forth in loud appeal:

Come then, complete incompletion, O comer,
Pant through the blueness, perfect the summer!
Breathe but one breath
Rose-beauty above,
And all that was death
Grows life, grows love,
Grows love!

What shall be our response to this Sacrament of Beauty? Can we meet it with less than the most conscientious devotion to the beautiful in every part of our life—in our worship, in personal appearance, in our homes and places of business, our villages, towns, and cities? If we would discover the secret of personal power and of corporate witness, we must pray the prayer of the psalmist: 'Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.' Shall all His works be beautiful and *His children* fail of that deep moral loveliness which is the Father's image reflected in them? God forbid.

We thank Thee, Lord, for this fair earth,
The glittering sky, the silver sea;
For all their beauty, all their worth,
Their light and glory, come from Thee.

Yet teach us still how far more fair,
More glorious, Father, in Thy sight,
Is one pure deed, one holy prayer,
One heart that owns Thy Spirit's might.

Let us keep the Sacrament of Beauty.

In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

Tell me a Story.[1]

'Our fathers have told us the tale.'—Ps 44[1] (Moffatt).

Long, long ago, about two hundred and thirty years ago, there was a little lad in France to whom all you wee people owe a huge debt you can never pay. And yet, perhaps, you never heard of him! Who was he? Well, his last name was Pirault. And his first? I am not sure: but I think it was Charles. Why? Because his father was called that. The father was a fairly old man when the boy was born, too old to be much good at games and romping and the like. Yet he loved his little lad with all his heart, and used to think all day long of the glorious evening they were going to have together. For there was one thing he could do for the little man just splendidly—he could tell him the most marvellous, exciting, creepy stories. He didn't just read them, and he didn't only tell them, but he made them up, brand-new, lovely stories, and his laddie heard them all, the very first of anybody in the world. There he would sit as still as still, as quiet as a mouse (though a mouse isn't really quiet, try to go to sleep with one scurrying up and down the wall), hardly breathing, with great round eyes and listening with all his ears (though really he had only two, just like you, no more). And he heard—what do you think? Cinderella! and Tom Thumb! and Blue Beard! all made up for him! Now, you know how much

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

you owe him. For, had there been no little Charles, you would not have had any of these.

Yet you don't need to be envious. For you have a Father, that wonderful Lord and Father we call God; and you are His own little lass or lad. And He has told you the best story in the whole world. And His isn't only pretending and just making up. It is all really real, and truly true, the glorious story of Jesus Christ. You know about the Baby in the manger; and the Boy who grew up in the little town. If you had asked where His home was, they would have pointed up a little back street. 'Go along there, till you come to a carpenter's shed, it is next door to that.' And then, the Lad in the Temple, when they lost Him that exciting day, and He wasn't one bit afraid. And the wonderful Friend who went about doing kind things. Never a woman had a sick lassie, but she ran to Him for help. And always He did everything He could for any one. It is far the best story in the world. And it was your Father who thought it out, and your Father who made it up, and your Father who gave it us. He told it to you. Wasn't it a lovely thing to think of Jesus Christ? And wasn't it kind of God to give you such a splendid tale all as your very own. Didn't you know that? Oh, but that is true. If there had been no Charlie Pirault, there would have been no Cinderella and the rest of them. And if there had been no you and me, we shouldn't have had the beautiful tale of Jesus Christ.

How? This way. I don't know if Charles Pirault was often ill. But, you know Stevenson's books? They are fine, aren't they, all thrilly and exciting, and make you feel something fizzy inside, rather like when you are drinking ginger beer. Well, one of the best of them was written because a stepson of his was ill, and bored with lying in bed, and tired of all his books and games and toys and pictures, sick of everything, and getting cross and tempery. And so Stevenson wrote the story to keep him interested, and to help to pass the time, and to make him forget about the pain, and be able to do far better. And you and I are ill, ill of sulks, and ill of peevishness, and ill of temper, and whole heaps of horrid things. And our Father told us the story of Jesus to help us to forget about these ugly things, and to give us something better to think about, and to make us feel ashamed of being grumpy and cry-baby, and to let us see how manly and unselfish and happy and brave we can be if we like. Wasn't it kind of Him?

But are we listening to the story, you and I? Do we like it, are we really paying attention? I once knew a man who wrote a book for boys. He was called Ian Maclaren. And one day in his house I met him coming downstairs, carrying a lot of papers. 'I may as well burn this,' he said, 'it's my boys' story, and it's not a bit of use. My boy is in bed ill, and I've been reading it to him and he doesn't like it.' 'Nonsense,' I said, 'what makes you think that?' 'I know,' he answered, 'I know, because, while I was reading it, he fell asleep.' He was a little disappointed. And no wonder. And I wonder if we are disappointing our Father too. Are you asleep when He tells you this splendid story that He has thought out for you? Are you attending? Do you really like it? There isn't another half so good. So let us read it, and think about it, and love it, and it will make real men and women of us by and by, and boys and girls worth knowing now.

The Monkeys in the Angel Choir.[1]

'The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.'—Pr 15^{3}.

The 'Angel Choir' is in Lincoln Cathedral. I hope you will all see it some day. It is called the Angel Choir not because angels come down to sing in it, but because in it there are carvings of angels. There are also carvings of other things. I was very glad to find an imp amongst the angels. The people who carved that, thought the imps should have a chance. So do I. The imp is not the only thing. There are three monkeys in the Angel Choir. They are carved in wood on the end of a choir seat. There are three carvings, and they are like three chapters of a story.

The first carving shows two monkeys working a churn. It is not a modern churn, such as we see at a show, where a neat dairymaid turns a handle and the whole thing goes round. It is more like a tub on the floor. In it there is something at the end of a long handle, which the monkeys work up and down like a patent washer. There they are, two of them working away making butter. Beside them, on a dish, are some pats of butter that they have made. But where is the third monkey, and

[1] By the Reverend Cecil Nicholson, Orroland, Darwen.

what is he doing? He is behind some bushes. You can see his face through the foliage. You can also see his arm and his hand, and he is reaching out his hand, the sly and wicked monkey that he is, to steal a pat of butter. The other two are working to make butter, and he is stealing it.

The second carving shows us the three monkeys again. This time the thief has been caught, and what do you think? They are going to hang him, and the two monkeys who were working the churn have hold of the rope, and the poor little thief is looking very sad, and seems to be wishing very hard that he had never stolen that pat of butter. But, you know, it is no use, after you have done a thing, wishing you had not. Even if you say you are sorry, you can't undo it. I feel sure that little monkey said he was sorry, but he had to be punished, and the other two had to do their duty, and hang him by the neck until he was dead. Poor little monkey!

The third carving is about the funeral. There are the three monkeys again, but one of them is dead, and the others are giving him Christian burial. They are not just throwing him into a hole, saying:

Rattle his bones
Over the stones,
He's only a monkey
Whom nobody owns.

They are the mourners at the funeral, and they have to bury their companion, and they look as if they were sorry. They seem to be saying: 'Poor little chap! he will never play with us any more. What a pity that he hadn't more sense. Why couldn't he be content to work for his pats of butter? Why should he want to steal them? He won't steal any more. He's got to suffer for it now. May God have mercy on his soul.'

Why did those woodcarvers, so many hundreds of years ago, put those monkeys in the Choir? The story is that in the early days of the Cathedral, a certain man was appointed to the office of Precentor. He took the office. He drew the salary, but he never did the work. The precentor of a cathedral is the leading singer, usually a minor canon. This canon was always going off somewhere instead of being in his place. He was never seen in the Choir, but he always took his money.

The men who were carving in the Choir talked about it. They said it was a shame. They had to work for their wages, and he ought to be hanged for drawing his money without doing anything for it. They could not hang him, but they did what they could. They carved him as the monkey who stole the pat of butter, and the carving is to this day on a choir seat in the Angel Choir at Lincoln.

There are four things to learn from this story. The first is that we all ought to try our best and keep on doing our work. The second is that if we neglect our work, we have no right to draw our wages. The third is that if we draw our wages without doing our work, somebody may see us and make an example of us. The fourth is that, if no one else sees us, God will. 'The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.'

The monkeys in Lincoln Cathedral are in the Angel Choir, but God doesn't want any thievish monkeys amongst the angels in His heavenly choir.

The Christian Year.

QUINQUAGESIMA.

Love, the Mirror of Immortality.

'Now we see through a glass darkly.'—1 Co 13^{12}.

'Through a glass darkly.' The phrase has almost passed into a proverb. What was the thought in St. Paul's mind when he wrote the words? Literally what he said was this: 'Now we see by means of a mirror in a riddle.' The Apostle imagines himself to be looking into a mirror—such as was in use in those days—made of burnished metal and not nearly as bright as our looking-glasses are now. Dimly in the mirror St. Paul sees a reflection, which he cannot fully discern. The reflected image is so shadowy and mysterious that it suggests to him the idea of a riddle or puzzle, which must be carefully studied before it can be made out. Such (he says) is the vision of the spiritual world and of the future life which is vouchsafed to our human faculties now. It stands in sharp contrast to the direct vision, the face-to-face vision, which will be vouchsafed to us hereafter. It is dim, puzzling, uncertain in detail.

So far the point of St. Paul's illustration is clear.

But what does he mean by the mirror itself? We might answer this question in more than one way: we might say that revelation is the mirror, or that faith is the mirror: we know from other passages in St. Paul's writings that he could have

accepted either of these interpretations. But here, if we could reach his inmost thought, we should probably find that his point of view was slightly different, and that by the mirror he meant human love. His mind at the moment is full of the beauty and pre-eminence of human love.

The idea that human love, and especially bereaved human love, may be regarded as a mirror which reflects the image of immortality is still full of suggestiveness. Love, it may be said, is no argument: a feeling is not the same thing as a process of reasoning: our affection for those who have gone from us is not enough, taken by itself, to prove their immortality. Yet is not love, after all, one of the links which finds a place in the chain of evidence for a future life? The evidence for immortality is cumulative. Our reasoned convictions, our instinctive beliefs, the testimony of conscience, and the voice of revelation all tell in one and the same direction, and the total value of these converging lines of evidence is far weightier than the mere sum of the separate arguments. Love supplies a witness of its own. Love gives us insight.

If we look into the mirror, what do we see?

1. Think of all the love and yearning which, generation after generation, have been felt by human hearts for dear ones lost. Can all this passionate feeling, we ask, have been poured out in vain? Is the loan, when God has reclaimed it from us here, never again to be restored in the world to come? The Christian admits that there is much of which he is absolutely ignorant about the state of the departed. He is content to be ignorant, provided that he can cling to the one all-important truth that they are alive, that they exist somewhere in the universe, and that, wherever they are, they are in God's keeping.

God of the living, in Whose eyes
Unveiled Thy whole creation lies,
All souls are Thine; we must not say
That those are dead who pass away:
From this our world of flesh set free,
We know them living unto Thee.

Not spilt like water on the ground,
Not wrapped in dreamless sleep profound,
Not wandering in unknown despair
Beyond Thy voice, Thine arm, Thy care;
Not left to lie like fallen tree;
Not dead, but living unto Thee.

2. As we look a second time at the image of the future life reflected in the mirror of love, we discern something else. Love refuses to be content with an impersonal immortality. It not merely rejects the thought of annihilation; it also rejects the thought of the absorption of the individual soul, whether into the Being of Nature or into the Being of God. It cries out for the continuance of personality. It yearns for the future recognition of the loved departed. Our Lord Himself after His resurrection invited the Apostles to recognize the persistence of His personal identity after death: 'Behold and see, it is I myself.' Love ponders over this saying, and asks whether our Lord will not permit us also to recognize hereafter those for whose company we long most keenly—those, *e.g.*, whom we have personally known and loved, or those great spirits of all time whose thoughts have influenced our lives, or those blessed saints, whether they lived long ago or recently, whose example we have reverenced and tried to follow. How this recognition will take place we do not know.

3. Look once more into the mirror. Bereaved love has a final and supreme test of its trustfulness to show us. To some people there comes the experience of a moment which is among the most poignant memories of their lives. Love stands sometimes by the grave of one to whose future it cannot for all its breadth of charity, for all its keenness of sympathy, look forward without some foreboding. Is it a mockery, an unreality, to speak of hope in such cases? Surely that is not so. Hope is exactly the thing which love then specially needs. Hope, however sure and certain, cannot amount to actual knowledge without ceasing to be hope; yet at the same time hope must be strong, if it is to be worth anything in the way of comfort. Love believed everything that was possible of the unrepentant, grace-resisting sinner while he was yet on earth; and after his death, love, if it cannot believe all things, still hopeth all things.

'Through a glass darkly.' In the light of the revelation of Jesus Christ we see with clearness and certainty the general outlines of the great truth of immortality. But the details are beyond our powers of vision: they are 'in a riddle.' Love yearns in vain for some direct communication from the dead, for some definite knowledge of their state. It broods over Dante's great poem, it listens to the *Dream of Gerontius* as interpreted by music, it scrutinizes the reports of the Society for

Psychical Research, it reads devotional books which profess to disclose the great secret. But in its heart of hearts love knows that all its efforts are vain.

'If you ask (said Ward Beecher) why God did not reveal more to us respecting the hereafter, I reply by asking why do not you explain something about the higher side of life to your dog? It could not understand you if you did, and we could not understand what relates to the future if God should explain it to us.' To the fantastic questions which people sometimes ask about heaven it is sufficient to reply, God knows. If we know that God knows, we know all that we need to know. We know, at any rate, enough about heaven for all practical purposes: we know that to attain it we need a spiritual preparation. We know that if we are to see God as He is, we must purify ourselves even as Christ is pure.

My knowledge of that life is small,
The eye of faith is dim;
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
And I shall be with Him.[1]

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

The Power of Words.

'Take with you words.'—Hos 14[2].

This text at first sight appears startlingly defective as a guide to men who would approach their God. Micah speaks otherwise—'What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?' In the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah we have a still more elaborate demand for various services toward the unfortunate, as the only terms on which God will consent to man's approach. But here we read, 'Take with you—words'!

Words are often supposed to be futile things, and contrasted with deeds. It was Carlyle who identified the two, 'Cast forth thy Act, thy Word, into the ever-living, ever-working universe'; and, indeed, if they be the genuine expressions of the truth, they are never futile, but always charged with vital energy. Dr. Denney has said, regarding St. Paul's exhortation, 'comfort one another with these words,' that here the Apostle is balancing the greatest sorrow of life against words, but then they are words of eternal life. Such words are not the alternative to character, but the expression of character; nay, they are part of what forms character and fixes it.

Three things are manifest as to the power of words in our religious experience.

1. *What they imply—a view of intercourse with God.*—Hosea has idolatry in mind as he writes this chapter, and the superstitious ritual of Israel's temple-worship. The two had this in common that they were founded on a non-rational conception of worship. The worshipper had in neither case any clear idea of the meaning of the service he performed. Indeed, it was characteristic of Semitic thought that such ideas were not necessary in the least. What was required was the performance of certain acts and the giving of certain offerings. The god who could prescribe and accept such worship was, so far as his intercourse with men went, essentially irrational. Either he was incapable of rational intercourse, a mere mass of prejudices backed by supernatural powers; or he was unwilling for it, holding himself apart from his creatures in a haughty superiority which demanded homage, but despised them too thoroughly to be further interested in their affairs.

But here was a new conception of God. He cared not for mysteries, but for meanings. He called them back from formalities to the simplicity and reality of speech. When men worship God, rational beings are in communion, and worship is the converse of mind with mind. This is a God who can be spoken with, and from whom men may count on an intelligent and patient hearing. With such a God simplicity and sincerity are easy, for we are sure of being understood. Therefore awe must not rob us of trust and of directness. For our worship we should indeed prepare ourselves by selecting our choicest thoughts; but we should bring to God also our worst and most deplorable, nay, even our most casual and unimportant. For this is not a recitation, it is an intercourse.

2. *What words reveal—the truth about oneself.*—It is for want of bringing our secret life to expression that we are so often self-deceived. All idol-worshippers and mere performers of a religious office come back from their devotions with their illusions undispelled. Those who would leave their illusions behind them must take with them words. For it is our own words that we have to bring, the words that have first been 'spoken in the inner man.'

[1] H. G. Woods, *At the Temple Church*, 176.

Speak what words are natural and true, and no others. Say that you are glad, and life is good and full of love; or say, 'Thy ways seem cruel to me, and the pressure of Thy hand too hard.' Say, 'O Lord, I love Thee, yet I love Thee not'; 'Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief.' Say, if you must, 'Except I see in His hands the print of the nails, I will not believe.'

Thus speech is an ordeal, and the command of the text implies self-examination. What words have we to bring? The answer will reveal what words are natural to us, and so will be a test of our growth or declension in the life of the spirit. When we try to state to ourselves what we are and what we desire most, we shall find startling revelations. Many states of mind are tolerable only until they are plainly and definitely expressed. The expression will reveal the wealth or poverty of what our hearts want to say, and so will reveal what has been happening in us. Some will find themselves utter strangers in the spiritual region; others will move in it as men walking in their home fields. When you come to words, you will at least know where you are.

3. *What they effect—a transformation of character.*—For this act of worship has the power not only of revealing, but of forming character. Words mark the point of change from the unpractical to the practical.

In our inner life much is necessarily vague, consisting of confused masses of feeling, embryonic forms of thoughts, broken ends of ideas hanging loose. Some of these must, of course, be left vague. Yet some are waiting for expression to render them immediately effective. To say a thing which we have hitherto only thought or half-thought, is to give it the force of a part of our active life, to put it in a position to tell definitely upon conduct. When the images of the imagination are focused, and our estimate of self, our sense of sin, and our feeling of need are clearly perceived, action is sure to follow. There is more in the idea of 'making phrases like swords' than a fine figure of speech. In literal truth 'Bright is the ring of words,' and a spirit that has found its true utterance will be irresistibly urged forward towards conduct. The prodigal in the story had spent many days and nights in general ideas of repentance, desire, and intention that came to nothing. At last he found the words 'I will arise and go,' and the words brought immediate action—he arose and went.

Thus religious utterance is one of the great forces that lead to right action. It is in the dreamy brooding silence, when we know not what we do, that we idle and sin. When we begin to stir our minds, to think clear-edged thoughts and pass definite judgments of right and wrong and to pronounce these judgments in speech, our will leaps forward at the sound of the word, and makes for righteousness.[1]

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

Meditation.

'And Jacob was left alone.'—Gn 32^{24}.

Out in the bustle and confusion of affairs, it often seems incongruous to be asking questions about the deepest things of the soul; but in the hours of quiet separation from outward contacts and activities, the most thoroughgoing and penetrating questions almost ask themselves. 'And Jacob was left alone.' He was alone when in his dream he saw the angels of God ascending and descending. He was alone when he wrestled until the breaking of the day for the Divine blessing. When 'he went on his way,' from the vision of the ladder onward to the end, it was in the strength of great experiences.

What are some of the things which are involved in meditation, and what is its outcome?

1. First, meditation means *times of retreat* into the privacy of our own souls. William Alger said: 'Our times want the brooding spirit. . . . It is all come-and-go, and no stay. The dischargers of power are multiplied out of all proportion to the generators of power. To overcome the world it is indispensable first to overlook the world from some private vantage-ground quietly aloof. Solitude is the foster-mother of sublime resolves.'

2. Meditation is a state in which *the mind is vigorously active*—alert to needs and responsibilities, and awake to the demands of truth. To meditate is to think—to think down into things, to think out through things, and to think to some rational purpose and conclusion. The same faculties which are employed in study, in reasoning, in deliberation, and in self-scrutiny, are in use, and no whit less in use, in the act of meditation. Only in meditating there is an implication of withdrawal from the noise and distraction of the world, that one may be alone with himself and free to

[1] J. Kelman, *Ephemera Eternitatis*, 61.

follow where his reflections may lead. There is the further implication that in meditating the topic is usually a religious one.

Dr. James Martineau takes a different view. 'Meditation,' he says, 'does not find for us our place in the known world, but loses it for us in the unknown. It puts nothing clearly beneath our feet, but a vault of awful beauty over our heads. It furnishes immediate perception of things Divine, eye to eye with the saints, spirit to spirit with God, peace to peace with heaven. In thus being alone with the truth of things, and passing from show and shadow into communion with the everlasting One, there is nothing at all impossible and out of reach.' Now there can be no doubt of the rare blessings which may come to one, or rather which surely will come to one, in the way of inward peace, of exalted and satisfying emotions, and of fresh insight and broadened views, through just opening the mind and heart to God, and lying still in His arms as a child falls back in a mother's arms, and letting Him calm the agitations of the mind and whisper His sweet secrets into the soul. But this is not the whole of meditation.

3. There are *two factors in all meditation*—God and the soul. The thinking which has to do with spiritual culture, and through spiritual culture with moving forward into partakership in the Divine nature, has always these two factors.

Involved in these two factors, and playing back and forth between them, there are any number of questions of vital import and pressing urgency. But the all-embracing and dominant factors are God and the soul. It is on these—their meaning and their relations—that we are to meditate, and by meditating to find the spiritual profit and comfort which we seek.

Consider some of the questions which will be sure to leap to the lips in a mood of deep, sincere, and earnest meditation. Who is God, and what does He mean to me? Who am I, and what does my life here on earth signify? Is the soul a fancy, or is it a reality? Is this life all, or is there another life out beyond? Has God manifested Himself in Jesus Christ, and has Jesus Christ through an experience of His loving grace demonstrated to my inner consciousness that He is the way, the truth, and the life? Is there something better and higher for me than I have yet attained? Are my faults and failings, my shortcomings and my easily besetting sins, as offensive to me as they ought to be? Are love and truth the open highways of duty and service, as alluring to me as they might be expected to be to a disciple of the great Teacher and an heir of the everlasting inheritance? Am I measuring up to any worthy standards of character, and illustrating loyalty to the most commanding ideals and ends of life? Are my aspirations in line with the will of the Eternal Righteousness, and am I pursuing objects which have on them now and for evermore the Divine benediction?

There is no difference in kind between the deep religious experiences of mystics and the deep religious experiences of other Spirit-filled believers. The mystic comes into his peace, his submissive trust, his clarified vision, his exalted fellowship with God, his hold on things invisible to mortal sight, largely through his habit of meditation and the wise use of quiet hours. He knows the advantage of 'sequestration from the world.' This is largely the secret of a Thomas à Kempis and of a Francis de Sales; and it is also largely the secret of a David Brainerd and an Edward Payson.

In a passage in his *New England Tragedies*, Longfellow has put thoughts into the mouth of Wharton, the Quaker, which have not only a fitness to him, but a special bearing on the point here urged. This is what he makes him say:

Let us, then, labour for an inward stillness,
An inward stillness and an inward healing:
That perfect silence where the lips and heart
Are still, and we no longer entertain
Our own imperfect thoughts and vain opinions,
But God alone speaks in us, and we wait
In singleness of heart, that we may know
His will, and in the silence of our spirits
That we may do His will, and do that only.

He presses this on the strength of what has been said before:

And as the flowing of the ocean fills
Each creek and branch thereof, and then retires,
Leaving behind a sweet and wholesome savour;
So doth the virtue and the life of God
Flow evermore into the hearts of those
Whom He hath made partakers of His nature.

In the first of these selections we have the ideal of open-mindedness toward God. It is the Mystic

or Quietist conception of the proper attitude to take, if we would have the peace that passeth understanding, the guidance we need from on high, and the blessed assurance that makes one brave and true in all the exigencies of life. It is the mood of 'inward stillness' in which it is easy for the child to receive what the Father has to give. In the second selection we have the explanation of it all. Those who exemplify this 'perfect silence,' this 'singleness of heart,' and 'do His will,' have had their lives made channels through which the life of God could flow. They were not born—they were new-born—into this state. They opened their minds to God, they surrendered their wills to His will, and they co-worked with Him in His making them partakers of the Divine nature. Notice how Wharton puts it:

> Let us, then, *labour* for an inward stillness.

This 'inward stillness' will not come of itself. There must be an intellectual and spiritual outreach for it, an opening of the mind to receive it; or a distinct effort to realize this attainment of acquiescence and joy in the Divine will.

So we come back to the proposition in hand, that meditation—meditation on God and the soul—habitual, severe, and often prolonged, is not alone a method, but an essential condition of progress and joy in spirituality. We must think on these things.[1]

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

The House without a Tenant.

'When he is come he findeth the house empty, swept and made ready.'—Mt 12^{44}.

There are some people, and very charming people they are to listen to, who never see things dryly or abstractly, but always in pictures. That was Luther's fashion; sitting over the supper table with a friend or two, he would discuss the gravest matters of faith, and the ways of God, and the fortunes of the Church, but he never left these hanging in the air; he brought them close to life by some story about his children, or his servants, or his garden—something homely, and tender, and intelligible. That was Bunyan's way, and the whole world is in his debt because of it. He did not deliberately sit down to make an allegory, it came of itself, for it was so his mind worked. He confesses that the *Pilgrim's Progress* was not the kind of book he had meant to produce:

> For thus it was: I, writing of the way
> And race of saints in this our gospel day,
> Fell suddenly into an allegory
> About their journey and the way to glory,
> In more than twenty things that I set down;
> This done, I twenty more had in my crown,
> And they again began to multiply
> Like sparks that from the coals of fire do fly.

No gift could be more enviable for a popular teacher, since it arrests attention and secures that even the plainest folk can understand; and in our Lord Jesus we find this gift supremely. He did not need to manufacture parables, but found them coming as naturally as flowers burst from the stem at the pushing of life within. Whatever He was speaking of—virtues, temptations, mysteries, powers—He would always, before He was done, put the essential meaning of it in a phrase or story which would stick. Besides the completed parables there were images and metaphors in His talk, which might have been elaborated if He had cared; and it is with one of these we wish to deal.

There was a house, said Jesus, which, by misadventure, had fallen into evil hands, and had grown disreputable and foul. The owner, moved with shame, turned the tenant out, and set about the task of reclamation. He swept and scraped it, floor and wall and ceiling; he restored the roof, and mended the windows, and put locks on the doors, grudging nothing of trouble and expense. But then he ceased; and chiefly, he took no steps to find a tenant. The scandal was at an end, and that was enough. The owner, who had considered everything else, had given no thought to the finding of an occupant, and thus his trouble went for nothing. That is Christ's serious hint about the management of life.

1. We must not think that Jesus in any way disparaged the achievement of getting the house clean. On that His mind was set, only He aimed at it in a particular order: He first helped men to admit the thought of God's love into their hearts, as He believed that that would of itself expel the older mischiefs. He warned them not to wait until they felt themselves fit for God's arrival, and told them that His coming in itself is the beginning of fitness. In all His preaching,

[1] F. A. Noble, *Spiritual Culture*, 197.

gospel came before law; but He did not therefore reckon the banishing of a degrading habit as without importance. He calls it here the going out of an unclean spirit, a task for which only the power of God could be sufficient.

The people He addressed were Pharisees, whose temper and practice in religion were marked by ugly faults, but in justice we must remember that the alternative had been uglier still. The nation had been settling down into the slough of paganism. Greek fashions in language, in dress, in amusements, in morals, had been spreading, and a lazy kind of toleration, which took a pride in being shocked at nothing, was infecting priest and people. If the nation were to be saved, it must be by some drastic remedy, and that was found in Pharisaism, which drew the Hebrews out of their tainted associations, and set them as a people dwelling alone. Jesus often spoke with indignation of what it had become; but here He admits that, in its beginning, there had been the casting out of a devil, a movement in the direction of righteousness for which any nation might give thanks.

In Christian history this has many parallels—impulses which, at the outset, were laudable, though they were too soon exhausted. In Greek Christianity, for example, the message of the Incarnation broke in, with a kind of holy violence, upon minds possessed with unworthy thoughts of what God is like. Egyptian Isis, and Syrian Astarte, and Aphrodite the delight of gods and men, and Dionysus with his crew of revellers—these and others like them had borne the name of God, until Jesus Christ came with His Cross, the Lord of the burning heart; and the evil spirits slunk ashamed away. Greek Christians lost themselves in endless speculation and debate; they gave more time to discussion of the mystery of Christ's nature than to the humble imitation of His temper. But none the less, that breaking of the idols was a true work of God; it was a cleansing of the house which had been urgently required.

Some of ourselves have achieved no great thing in our lives, and yet there was a real Divine beginning. A penetrating phrase served to prick the bladder of our conceit so that we knew our size; some vision of holiness made us ashamed of what we were, so that we started forth on a fresh plan of existence; there was a new seriousness and openness of mind, the dislodging of old habits and an honest desire for clear beginnings. Such an experience may have remained as a prophecy unfulfilled, and yet we must not despise it; for it was reformations of this kind, precarious and ill-secured, which Jesus had in view when He spoke of the unclean spirit going out of a man. They are works of God, He would have said.

2. But they are precarious. A clean house is good, but if it is to continue clean a right tenant must be found. So long as the best you can say of a man is that he is not bad, you can never be confident about him; he needs beyond that to become frankly and energetically good. 'Tranquillity is a good thing,' says Bengel, 'but it is not far removed from danger.' In the moral world there cannot be any mere neutrality, since positive forces are always pushing to the one side or the other.

Jesus, as His manner was, conceived of the forces which threaten every life as if they were real persons. Look, He says, at that outcast figure, which is a passion dethroned; he is moving restlessly over the earth, seeking a place to settle down in, and not finding it. He never can find it, for there is no enduring rest except in God, and he is against God. But uneasily he wanders night and day, he and legions of others like him, peering in at unblinded windows, rattling at every door. That is in the world you inhabit, says Jesus, that restlessness of exiled powers; and it threatens your life if that still is unpossessed.

For our comfort it may be said that there are other forces seeking also entrance: 'the Spirit which God made to dwell in men yearns for them jealously,' says James. He seeks to occupy every heart, and to create within it desires and purposes which are holy. Every life on earth is beset by these competing powers; but just because they are competing, there is no stability for the man who is willing to yield himself up to neither.

It may be that some former evil returns upon him, a habit reasserting itself, or a passion flaring up once more. Very often, as in the Pharisees, it is not familiar mischiefs which appear, but, in their stead, faults unthought of and thus unresisted. Censoriousness came in to lodge in their minds, and harshness toward the erring, and a display of piety in tone and phrase found shelter in that empty house where love had not been installed. But before the end, uglier spirits than these appeared—conspiracy and false swearing first,

and then murder slipped in for a night. For there is no checking the stream of sinister guests who may find their way into a vacant heart.

Ah, says Jesus to all of us who hear Him, your life will not be safe until it is occupied by One strong enough to hold these enemies at bay; and to Him you must give up your heart without reserve. There is no help in a vague interest in religion, in what Coleridge calls 'our slothful loves and dainty sympathies'; that is not the stuff of which good men are made. 'No virtue is pure,' says Sir John Seeley, 'which is not passionate; no character is safe which is not enthusiastic.'

There is no possibility of a middle course; and he who chooses for God must choose with undivided heart.

This is the claim the Master makes, when He seeks admission to our lives. 'Behold, I stand at the door,' He says, 'and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in.' After He has once entered there is much to learn and to unlearn, much to amend and to purify, and some of us are constantly interfering with His control; but, in a true sense, safety comes with His arrival, and the peril of the empty house is past. As John says, 'He that was begotten of God, even Jesus Christ, keeps that man, and the evil one touches him not.' 'The first and great commandment is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and strength, and mind.' So the best of all preparations for duty or for privilege is in sincerity to say:

Oh, come to my heart, Lord Jesus,
There is room in my heart for Thee![1]

[1] W. M. Macgregor, *Repentance unto Life*, 82.

New Testament Criticism in Relation to the Christian Religion.

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II.

As regards St. Paul, it will readily be admitted that, in the peculiar working out of his system of theology, auxiliary ideas both of Jewish and of Hellenistic-Oriental provenance played an important part. The Jewish conception of the Divine righteousness gave Paul a language by which to think out the Christian principle that 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.' The language of Hellenistic-Oriental mysticism gave him a form in which to present the relation of the redeemed soul to the Redeemer-Lord. Yet these elaborations affect only the superstructure which Paul built on the Christian foundations: neither Jewish legalism nor pagan mysticism created the Christian experience itself. Let us, if you will, regard the equations which can be made out between Paul and Judaism or between Paul and the mysteries as a time-element, the silt which a developing process has brought with it. We can, I think, clear away this silt, and show what solid foundations exist underneath. Not to speak of the extent to which St. Paul's 'Judaistic' presuppositions can claim the support of universal and ever-renewable experiences in the domain of the soul's relation to God, or of the extent to which the language of mysticism is unavoidable in any inward statement of the Christian relation to Christ, St. Paul's own statements, carrying back the initial truths of his theology to the apostles or to the Lord, are convincing and sufficient evidence of the real sources of his inspiration. On his own showing, the faith which he preached from his conversion onwards was the same faith which once he destroyed: the principle, so central to his system, that 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures' was one which he had 'received': the doctrine that Christian men are made right with God not by legal works, but by faith, is appealed to as common-ground between him and Peter, as Christian matter of fact which needs only to be mentioned in order to be conceded. In the light of these personal pronouncements of Paul, and with all due respect to the individuality and thoroughness of mind with which he wrought the