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In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

Where will it land?[1]

'Behold a flying roll.'—Zec 5[1].

DID you see that odd thing that was in the papers some time ago, about a little chap up in the north of Ireland who got a balloon among his Christmas presents? What kind of balloon? Oh, I think just the same as you sometimes get at parties. What size was it? A biggish one. What colour? Well, what colour do you like best? Blue. Now that's funny, for I half think that this one happened to be blue. Oh, on the whole you would prefer a yellow one. Well, now I come to think of it, I would not be a bit surprised if this balloon was yellow. Anyway, he got a balloon, and he started playing with it. Where? In the dining-room, I suppose. And the din got so awful that they sent him out into the hall. Why? Because, you see, his Dad was reading the paper. 'But there isn't a paper on Christmas Day.' No, there is not. But his Dad had brought home an evening one the night before, and had forgotten to look at it till then. Well, anyhow, to be getting on, he was playing—no, no, not the Dad, the boy with the balloon was playing—in the hall, and the din there got much too bad, so his Mother sent him outside. Yes, quite a large garden. Fairly big trees, I think. And as soon as he let go his balloon there, the wind caught it, and nearly sent it over into the next garden. And that gave him an idea. Why not send it really away, and see where it would go? So in he went, got a stout label, wrote his name and address on it, and put this: 'If you find this balloon, please send it back to me, and tell me where it landed.' And out he went, and tossed it up into the air. It was a windy day, and a gust got it, and carried it up and up. Against the trees? No, it went right above them, and up and up, over the houses, till it grew just a tiny yellow speck (I'm nearly sure it was yellow), and then it faded out. It was away. And where would it land? Next day the boy was very keen, no doubt, about the posts. Always he was running to the door, always he was asking, 'Is there anything for me?' And no doubt his Mother chaffed him, and said Christmas was over, and there would be no more presents, and no more cards for any one for a whole year. But still he kept asking, 'Anything for me?' And in a very few days there did come a package with his name upon it, and with a foreign stamp. No, I don't think he had a very big collection. And when he opened it, what do you think he found? His wee balloon. (Yes, I did say it was a biggish one; still, it was pretty wee to go so far.) It had sailed and sailed and sailed, across the land, and across the seas, and over France, and into Germany, away down to Bavaria! And the letter said that a man away yonder had seen something yellow sticking in a tree in his garden (so it *was* yellow, you see), and had climbed up, and there was the balloon, and the label, and he had sent them to let the boy know where they had landed. Wasn't that a long, long journey for a yellow toy balloon?

Yet do you know we are all sending up balloons high into the air, and some of them go very far. Our words are balloons. Didn't you know that? And who can know where they will land? Some of them strike against a tree at once and burst, but some go sailing away who can tell where. And so, you see, we must be very careful what we say. If you pass on something about that new fellow that's not very kind, if you tell it to a wise boy, he will say, 'Oh, dry up! I don't believe a word of that,' and that silly balloon of yours, not a yellow one that, but a horrid black one, will get pricked and collapse. But say it to a silly fellow, and he may pass it on to the next chap he meets, and that chap to the next boy he sees, and that boy to the next one of the class he runs against, and who can tell how far it may be carried? And what if it's not true? And what if it's not kind? We must take care how we allow these words of ours to float about the world. Words are like thistledown. Throw them into the air, and give them an hour's start, and you can't make up on them and call them back. Don't you remember the man who saw, beneath the king's long hair, that he had asses' ears, and how, afraid to tell any one, he lay down at full length, whispered it to the rushes, and how ever since the rushes have been handing it on. Listen when it's windy and you'll hear them whispering to one another, running it all together, '*Midashasassesears*.' Take care.

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

And all the things we do, too, are balloons that can fly very far. I think that they are like the seeds that the winds carry to and fro. Some of them are like dandelion seeds, those light feathery things that come floating through the air, and light where no one sees them and take root, and there too dandelions spring up, where nobody wants them, and where there was none before. You know very well how, when you get cross or ratty, others somehow grow cross and ratty too. The seeds have blown from your heart away into theirs, and you have spoiled their garden. There were no horrid weeds like sulks and temper yonder, till you let the seeds blow over out of yours.

And some of them are like the seeds of lovely flowers, for no one can be brave without helping others to be brave, and no one can be good without helping others to be good, and no one can be kind without helping others to be kind. Why, there was once a little lad in a little town in Galilee, who was the bravest and the kindest and best that ever lived. His house was hidden away in a back street, and He was poor, and no one noticed Him much, and it did not seem to matter to any one what He did. And yet the seeds from His life yonder have blown all about the world. And to-day, here, far away in Britain, and in America, and all over Europe—yes, all over the world—millions of people are kinder, and braver, and better, because the seeds out of that laddie's wee, wee garden there in that back street have blown into their hearts. How splendid if the balloons that you are sending up, if the words you say and the things you do, if the seeds that are carrying from you and that are blowing far and far away, are not those of temper and all those other horrid things that other people will with pain have to weed up again, but those of lovely flowers that will make their lives much more beautiful and far more lovely, because they fell there.

'Do your best.'[1]

'Thou shalt love thy neighbour.'—Mt 5^{43}.

The Boy Scouts have a division for younger boys. In the way of becoming Scouts, they are known for the time being as Cubs. My dictionary says that word, which is of course the term used for the young of animals like the wolf, the fox, the bear, is only used of young boys as a term of contempt. My dictionary is evidently out of date. It was printed before the Scout movement started. Certainly there have been days when it was no very complimentary thing to say of any boy that he was a 'young cub.' Now, the word has been redeemed and is worn like a decoration. Scout Cubs are very proud of being Cubs.

Scouts have a motto, so Cubs must needs have one. They were fortunate in getting a good one in simple, easy-to-be-understood English. It is supposed to be the thing to have mottoes in Latin, for Latin is in some quarters still regarded as a sacred language, compared with which English is a sort of upstart. Baden-Powell was sane enough to choose English for Scouts' and Cubs' mottoes.

'Do your best' is the Cubs' motto. 'Every Cub is expected to do his best.' There could hardly be a finer expectation. It is a great challenging ideal to set over a boy's beginnings. Nothing finer or more promising could happen to a nation than for its boys and girls to be forming that into a life habit. The temptation to slipshod work is never far away. We so easily slip into the habit of thinking that anything will do, or of doing just that minimum that will pull us through. Things are postponed until the last minute, tasks are rushed through, and though we may escape without actual failure or disgrace, we know that we did less than our best. We must not forget that 'we are members one of another.' The welfare of the whole depends on the loyal and utmost service of each. The refusal to do his best was the sin of the man with the one talent. The disgruntled fellow didn't try. He thought he had a grievance and threw away the one chance of making something worth while of life. And so he exiled himself in the darkness of lost opportunity.

Our loyalty to the whole of which we form a part should make us refuse to contribute less than our best. Others will somewhere suffer for any refusal of our best. That is as certain as that others will benefit by our best work. Dr. Laws of Livingstonia, that great missionary, says that his life was once saved from a lion because the canvas of his tent was well sewn. He found afterwards that it had been sewn by a girl in Greenock. That girl sewing canvas tents in Scotland little knew that away in Africa a great man's life depended on the character of her stitches. It is impossible to know what part of our work will be most vital. The great

[1] By the Reverend F. C. Hoggarth, Morecambe.

thing is to do it all thoroughly, down to the last detail.

There is an old French story of a blacksmith who, one bitter winter's eve near Christmas time, was at work on a bridge over a river that divided French from German territory. He was cold and tired, and was eager to be at home with his wife and children to join them in Christmas fare and Christmas joys. He came to his last bit of work —a rivet which was difficult to finish, being of peculiar shape. He felt like scamping the work which was proving so troublesome. A rivet more or less would make no difference, and no one would be any the wiser, one voice seemed to say. But another voice bade him do the work thoroughly. That rivet might make all the difference to the safety of the bridge, for anything he knew. Besides, scamped work never brings the worker any satisfaction, and a true man wants to feel satisfaction in the work he has done. So he turned to his forge again, and worked on until that last rivet had been made as perfect as skill could make it. Then he turned his face homewards, glad that he had done his best. A year or two later war broke out. A squadron of the blacksmith's countrymen were driven over the bridge in headlong flight. It was the bridge's hour of testing. It strained under the weight of men and horses and guns. But it stood, and the squadron got safely over. So great was the strain that, had there been a flaw in construction, the bridge must have given way. For a time everything depended on that rivet.

It has been suggested that 'My yokes are easy' was the sign over the Carpenter's shop at Nazareth. The yokes for oxen made there were good to use; they were kindly. There was no irritation with them. They fitted. Those who bought them could absolutely rely on the workmanship. In the book called 'By an Unknown Disciple' there is an imaginative picture of Jesus at work. This disciple says he marvelled when he saw the care with which Jesus worked when He fitted the yoke pegs. 'The oxen,' said the Carpenter, 'are working to make our bread. If the yoke does not fit they will suffer, and their owner will always be adjusting it. If you love your neighbour, you want them to work without irk. Therefore I take pains.'

To take pains to do good work, whatever our task, is thus one way of 'loving our neighbour.'

The Christian Year.

Fourth Sunday in Lent.

Who is my Neighbour?

'He, desiring to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?'—Lk 10[29].

Question followed question with rapid directness in this remarkable conversation. The lawyer asked Jesus: 'What shall I do to inherit eternal life?' He asked, tempting Him, desiring to see whether He would give an answer that might be construed as contrary to the Law. Jesus replied by affirming its authority as amply sufficient to decide this question. 'What is written in the Law? How readest thou?' The lawyer's answer showed that he at least understood the spirit of the Law. He quoted its great summary—duty towards God and duty towards one's neighbour. The reply of Jesus pressed home the point which the lawyer had wished to raise: 'This do, and thou shalt live.' But the lawyer had opened an intellectual discussion; he would not have it closed by a simple appeal to moral or religious truth. He made a desperate effort to keep it still on an intellectual ground. Desiring to justify himself, he asked: 'And who is my neighbour?' The lawyer's question was only a particular instance of a general tendency of the mind of man, a tendency which is as strong now as it was in the days of Jesus. Living in a world where limitations meet us at every turn, we carry into the concerns of our spiritual life the measuring rod wherewith we mete out the business of our natural life.

1. *The Difficulties.*

(1) A man may say, with some appearance of reason: 'Life is varied, and the world is large. Our relationships are manifold, and it is impossible to regulate them all by the same considerations. I am a busy man; think how many different classes of people I meet in the course of the day, and in what different degrees I have to do with them. There is my family circle; there are my friends and acquaintances; there are those with whom I do business; there are those whom I employ; there is the great multitude with whom I am brought into no actual connexion, but on whom my eye falls as I go on my daily course. Surely I do not stand towards all these in the same way?' The considerate father may be a harsh taskmaster, the professing Christian on Sundays may be a tricky man of business during the week. He has asked

himself the question: '*Who* is my neighbour?' and has answered it by taking a part of life as the sphere of duty, and leaving the rest of life to his capricious good nature.

(2) Take another case. There is the man who is sure that his view of life is the true one. Others wander in a region of shadows; he and perhaps a few kindred souls have seen the reality. The failures of others do not touch him, for they are not illuminated like himself. He is willing to do his duty to his neighbour. Yes, but what neighbour? How is he to approach those who are so different from himself? He cannot communicate what is most essentially his own.

Such are two of the forms which the lawyer's question, 'Who is my neighbour?' might assume amongst ourselves. How did Jesus answer it? How did He lead His questioner to larger knowledge, and free him from the trivialities amongst which he was lost? He told him the story of the Good Samaritan. He told him a simple tale of a kindly deed, nobly conceived and carefully executed. Perhaps the story was a true story, or at least founded on fact. Very likely something of the kind had recently taken place, and men had been talking of it and were fast forgetting it. Jesus took the facts and set them in their true light, and gave them their eternal value.

Several years ago a Barnsley doctor had amongst his patients a lad in a poverty-stricken home, who was so ill that it was necessary to pay a special visit every morning at the early hour of 7.30 a.m. One morning the doctor encountered the then Rector of Barnsley (Dr. Foxley Norris, the new Dean of Westminster), already a man of crowded life, on his way to catch the early train. After the usual courtesies the rector learnt the reason of the doctor's early visit, and then continued his way to the station.

Next morning the doctor paid his usual early call and found the lad grasping a postcard which was grubby with the marks of his hot fingers. The post card bore a sketch of two mad dogs engaged in a terrible conflict. Excitedly the boy showed it to the doctor, with the remark, 'My neighbour drew this for me.' The next morning there was another drawing of a man on a runaway bicycle, and every morning the doctor had to inspect a new sketch. As the boy lingered, there slowly grew a picture gallery round the bedroom wall, each card bearing some scene of quick, humorous action. When the boy died, his mother gathered them and placed them amongst her most treasured possessions.

Then the doctor heard the story. Every morning since his meeting with the rector there had been another caller at that poor home, and the rector had sat at the lad's bedside drawing with wonderful skill some living picture on a simple plain post card. When the boy had looked up at him and asked, 'Who are you?' the gaitered, black-coated rector had replied every time, 'I am your neighbour.' So it happened that as the lad lingered in pain and restlessness he was ever comforted by the thought that morning would bring another visit from 'his neighbour.'[1]

2. *The Answer.*

Notice how the method employed by Jesus answered the lawyer's difficulties, and answers all such-like questions. He did not reason, nor discuss, nor lay down principles. He led the mind of the inquirer to recognize its own mistake. And he did this, not so much by any exposure of the error as by pointing out a more excellent way. He bade the lawyer look at the example of one who did not seem to be perplexed with difficulties like his own. He touched his imagination and fired his enthusiasm by setting before him the simple picture of a kindly deed.

Wherein did its rightness consist? To what was its charm due? Surely to its simplicity, to its spontaneity, to the fact that it sprang from a spirit which was not impeded by any thought of the limitations which he had been so anxious to discuss. He felt in a moment that these limitations were needless, that their discussion was superfluous, that they were a hindrance and not a help. His quickened emotion raised him to a higher level, from which he could look down upon his former self.

This answer applies equally to the difficulties which we have been considering.

(1) Is life so large that you are tempted to divide it into two parts—one for duty and one for convenience? Look away from yourself, look away from the details of your daily life, look to an actual deed done in the faith of righteousness, and you will feel the reproof. If you recognize your duties only within the sphere of your own surroundings—what thanks have ye? Do not publicans and sinners the same? Those who lie wounded and

[1] *The British Weekly*, December 31, 1925.

stricken by the side of your path through life—they, all of them, are your neighbours. No connexion with yourself, no bond of your own inventing, but the mighty bond of the brotherhood of all mankind as children of a common Father.

(2) Are you so sensitive that you shrink from action because you doubt your own power of influencing others, because you cannot find who it is to whom you have a mission, because you think your message does not concern mere outward matters, but concerns the very heart of things? Again, look away from self for a moment and feel the rebuke. Act, and you will find in any line of action room enough to express all that is in you. By broadening your sympathies you will grow a larger being. The closer you come to others—to the simplest, the lowest—the more you will find they have in common with you. You will find that your originality is a common possession, that your problems are felt in some shape or other by almost all, that you are very much as other men are, and that men differ from one another in one point only—the habit of communing with God.[1]

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

The Commendation of God's Love.

'God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.'—Ro 5^8.

In our text we are brought face to face with the Cross of Calvary, and we see that Cross standing in a light that glorifies it. That great transaction on Calvary may be viewed in many aspects, but perhaps the aspect in our text is the most sublime of all. Just as the Cross itself, which stood upon the hill, was touched with new and ever-varying glories, as the lights and shadows of the setting sun lingered for a moment on its bars, so to the eye of faith new glories fall upon the Crucifixion, under the light of a Sun that never sets. When God sends forth His light we see the Cross as the master work of grace. We see the Cross as the gateway into peace. We see the Cross as the type of self-denial. Over and above all that we see the Cross as the one triumphant argument for the love of God.

What is it to commend? It is far more than to recommend. It is to exhibit, to demonstrate, to prove. We shall look then at the Cross of Calvary as the unanswerable proof of the love of God.

Firstly—the need that the love of God should be commended thus. There are some attributes of God that need no proof. Think, for example, of God's *power*. If we believe in God at all, we need no argument to convince us of His power. The mighty forces that engirdle us all cry aloud of that. The chambers of the deep, the chariot of the sun, are stamped with it. The devastating march of winter's storm, and, none the less, the timely calling of all the summer's beauty out of the bare earth—these things, and a thousand other things like these, teach us the power of God. Or take the *wisdom* of God. Is any argument needed to assure us in general of that? None. Our bodies, so fearfully and so wonderfully made; our senses, linking us so strangely to the world without; our thought, so swift, so incomprehensible; and all the constancy of Nature, and all the harmony of part with part—these things, and a multitude of things like these, speak to the thinking mind of the wisdom of the God with whom we have to do.

The *love* of God is not self-evident. It is not stamped upon creation like His power. It is not written on the nightly heavens like His wisdom. Nay, on the contrary, if it be a fact, it is a fact against which a thousand other facts are fighting. One is the tremendous struggle for existence that is ceaselessly waged among all living things. Man fights with man, and beast with beast; bird fights with bird, and fish with fish. To the seeing eye the world is all a battlefield, and every living creature in it is in arms, and fighting for its life. The watchword of Nature is not peace, but war.

Or think again. There are the problems of human pain and sorrow and bereavement. Is it not very hard to reconcile these darker shadows with the light of heavenly love? What is the meaning of that suffering that seemed to fall so causelessly on those you loved? It is such facts as these that make it so hard for many to credit the love of God. It is the experiences of which these are but a sample that call for some unanswerable proof if we are to believe that God is love. And it is that proof which is afforded us in the Crucifixion of Christ Jesus. The proof is not words, not protestations. It is a deed tremendous, matchless, irresistible, and every opposing argument is silenced.

And this proof is one of perpetual validity. The Bible does not say, God commended; it does not say, God has commended; it uses the perpetual present

[1] M. Creighton, *The Mind of St. Peter*, 38.

and says, God commendeth. There are some proofs for the being and attributes of God that serve their purpose, and then pass away. There are arguments that appeal to us in childhood, but lose their power in our maturer years. And there are proofs that may convince one generation, and yet be of little value to the next. But there is one argument that stands unshaken through every age and every generation. It is the triumphant argument of the Cross of Christ.

Secondly—what is the nature of the love that is commended thus?

First—splendidly visible is this—it is a love that thought no sacrifice too great. The surest test of love is sacrifice. We measure love, as we should measure her twin-brother life, 'by loss and not by gain, not by the wine drunk, but by the wine poured forth.' Turn to Calvary, turn to the Cross, and by the sight of the crucified Redeemer there, begin to learn the greatness of God's love. Come, who is this that hangs between two thieves with pierced hands and feet? Did ever mother, did ever patriot, did ever human lover in the zeal of love make any sacrifice to be compared with that of God, when He gave His only begotten Son to shame and death that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish?

Again, this is a love that never sprang from the sight of anything lovable in us. Why do we love? Is it not some excellence, or worth, or beauty, some charm that made an indefinable appeal, that caught and held the tendrils of our heart? We loved because we found something worthy to be loved. And it is just here that, wide as the poles, God's love stands separated from all the love of men. 'God commendeth his love, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.' God longs to love us into something lovable. But not for anything lovable in us did He love us first.

Again, this love of God is a love splendid in its righteousness. Some of the saddest tragedies in human life spring from the moral weakness of the deepest love. Love is the mother of all tenderness, and tenderness shrinks instinctively from what is stern or rigorous. So love, from the excess of her fairest grace, often becomes the minister of ruin.

If out of the page of history the atoning death on Calvary is wiped, that tragedy of weakness is carried into the very heavens. The awful sight of that atoning death assures us of the perfect righteousness of God in the very moment that it assures us of His love. We see the Divine hatred of iniquity; we see the Divine need that sin be punished; we see the Divine sanction of everlasting law in the very glance that commends to us the everlasting love. And now with renewed trust we cast ourselves into the arms of that heavenly love. With heart and soul and strength and mind we accept it as it is commended to us upon the Cross.[1]

SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE EASTER.

The Dilemma of Silence.

'And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.'—Mt 27^{12}.

To speak or not to speak?

That last crowded day, with its swarming audiences, seemed to offer Jesus a unique chance. He had already done some arresting acts in Jerusalem; and now His capture had raised interest in Him to the highest pitch. The Halls of Judgment and the open Forum were alike packed with greedy listeners, keen to know the charges brought against Him, and as keen to hear His defence.

This was a great final chance. Would He take it?

They brought Him first, before dawn, to Annas. They took Him afterwards to Caiaphas, and next to Pilate, and then lastly to Herod. But in every case we have a stern, stony silence, a mute Christ.

1. *Why was He silent?*

(1) *Was His heart broken?* Those who say this forget that He was not wholly silent. He answered some questions before His varied judges, and, indeed, He was never more conscious of power and His own strength than at this moment. 'Thou couldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above.' That is not the speech of a broken heart, but of one that is perfectly sure of itself and its own grounds of confidence.

(2) *Was He afraid to commit Himself?* As little afraid as ever. 'Art thou the Christ, the son of the blessed?' And Jesus said, 'I am.' That is as plain a statement and answer as any man could either give or expect. No one, then or now, has had cause to misunderstand Christ's view of Himself and His own vocation. He came to tell the world who and what He was. He told it.

(3) *Disappointed at events? This unexpected turn?* Unless the whole record of His life is sheer

[1] G. H. Morrison, in *United Free Church Sermons*, 155.

invention, He not only foresaw the end but walked towards it. Death did not *overtake* Him in any sense: He met it. He spoke to His disciples in repeated warnings, foretelling His end, lest they might be too astounded when the great blow fell. 'The Son of man must die.' He knew that, and openly faced it.

(4) *Afraid that God had forsaken Him?* Listen to this quiet word which reveals, more than anything, His perfect trust in God. 'Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God.' This is assurance of a supreme order. You may discredit His claim, if you care. But, at least, it is assurance.

(5) He was silent because of the *type of men* who put the question and the type of question they put. Annas was a man of singular power and as singular ruthlessness. For a discreditable act, as haughty as it was cruel, he had been deposed. But though thus deposed and discredited, he had remained, by intrigue and wire-pulling, the secret power behind the throne. When Jesus met Annas, the two eternal principles of honour and cunning stood face to face. This is not really the meeting of two men, but of two systems, two ideas of life, and two views of God. Christ or Annas? That is the eternal and elemental conflict in this world, the spirit of worldliness and the spirit of other-worldliness. Caiaphas is the man who lives for ever in history as the father of an immortal epigram. That epigram is one of the coldest pieces of cynicism that a callous mind ever coined. 'It is expedient,' he remarked, 'that one man should die for the people.' Here is the true apostle of expediency. What had one like Jesus to say to one like that? Then Pilate. He had been reared and trained in the honoured Roman traditions of justice and law. Great traditions! Great law, the foundation-stone of all modern law! Yet he twisted that iron system like a piece of putty in his supple fingers. Thou art no friend of Cæsar, Pilate, if thou let this man go free. That settled the matter. The threat of complaint! So he delivered Jesus into their hands. Herod. . . . The king who was a Greek *poseur*: who in a drunken riot for a drunken vow gave John the Baptist's head to a dancing-girl: the libertine who, at that moment, was living in married shame: the affected trifler who wanted to see Jesus perform a few conjuring tricks, miracles by order! What had one like Jesus to say to one like that?

2. It is good for us to see this austere Jesus. If we look at these occasions when Jesus was silent and at the questions which He refused to answer, we shall discover principles that will be an encouragement and warning to ourselves.

Jesus always refused to answer any one who tried to trap Him. We see this in many striking instances. Pharisees, scribes, and lawyers came frequently with cunning questions that they might 'catch' Him. They dug awkward holes, hoping that He might trip headlong into one of them. But on every occasion, 'perceiving their wickedness,' He turned their questions adroitly aside. No one thinks for a moment that a man like Annas was in any deep spiritual anxiety about Christ's 'doctrine.' His only purpose was to entice Jesus to speak that he might pounce on any incautious declaration. Like this man, Nicodemus once spoke to Jesus about His 'doctrine.' How gladly, how patiently, how graciously, our Lord answered the blundering scholar! There was no puzzling detail that He was not ready to explain. Annas spoke to Jesus about His 'doctrine'; but to him Jesus refused any exposition. Why? *He will never answer patent insincerity.*

Caiaphas already knew what he was going to do with Jesus. There was no room in his mental outlook for such a prophet with such a view of God. When Christ looked at him, He was looking at a shut gate, locked and barred. In any question which Caiaphas might ask, there was no real desire for information or enlightenment. Jesus had been 'judged' already, judged before He appeared at the bar; and His judge was now only angling around for a pretext of getting Him condemned before Pilate. This 'trial' before Caiaphas was a mockery of the name. John the Baptist once judged Jesus hardly. From behind his prison bars he wondered if this type of preacher could possibly be the Messiah. Jesus answered the disciples of the Baptist in gracious ways—'Go and tell John.' Caiaphas judged Jesus. Jesus was silent. Why? *He will not answer those who condemn Him before He is heard.*

Jesus has no answer for a *poseur*. That pseudo-Greek with his affected Hellenism would like now to see the great Prophet and ask Him some questions. One day a disciple came to Jesus, and said: 'Master, there are Greeks at the edge of the crowd who would like to speak with you.' We read that Jesus was deeply moved and praised God! Herod,

the pseudo-Greek, questioned Him in many ways. He was silent! Why? *We can never see God through a mask.* When the woman at the well spoke to Him about the Messiah, Jesus answered simply, 'I that speak unto thee am he.' She had practically asked Him Pilate's question, 'Whence comest thou?' With a magnificent respect for her groping mind, He answered her beyond her asking. 'Whence comest thou?' asked Pilate. Jesus was silent. Why? *He deals with doubt, but not with dishonest doubt.* That woman who was a sinner crept to His feet and washed them with her tears. Jesus gave her the benediction of His forgiveness. Herod, the sinner, asked Him many questions. Jesus looked at him in stony silence. Why? *He loves sinners, but not sinners in love with their sin.*

Christ had refused all dramatic and startling methods at the outset of His ministry. Could He begin them at the end? He wished no message delivered on the crest of passion and amid turgid emotion. Amid all this fever and passion, He Himself is now the quietest and most restrained person in all Jerusalem. For after Gethsemane, the strong, serene composure lasts unbroken to the end. The day of speech is past. It is now the day of action. His words had not won them. *Perhaps the Great Act would?*[1]

Easter Day.

The Overcoming of Death.

'Jesus Christ hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.'—2 Ti 1[10].

The Easter message is like a diamond with many facets. It flashes its glory into our life in all directions. The more we look into it the deeper we see; the more it scatters the darkness which gathers upon our perplexing way. But the central light and heart of glory is its message about death, and its message about death is the message of all light about darkness—the discovery that it is not there.

The statement in the text was more than faith; it was experience. For three days Christ had been lost to His disciples in a grave, but Easter had brought Him back stronger and more radiant than ever. So far as their friendship with Christ was concerned, death had ceased to count. The world in which they walked with Him was a world from which death had disappeared. For the future, it did not enter into their calculations. This world of ours is pagan in many respects, but it is lit with the after-shine of the Resurrection. The Easter fact is in our blood, part of our Christian inheritance. It is part of Christ's great contribution to life. He hath abolished death. How is it done? Paul goes on to tell us. It is done in the only way in which death can be abolished—by the revelation of life. He hath brought life and immortality to light.

Stevenson tells of a lad who was shipwrecked on an island in the West of Scotland. He was not very far from the mainland, which lay mocking him with its little homesteads and its look of smiling comfort, while he wandered on the islet—a prisoner—with the great deep closing him in. One day, when near the very depths of despair, he hailed a passing boat, expecting to be taken off. In reply the fishermen only smiled, and shouted some message which he found it difficult to catch, but at last the truth flashed into his mind. He ran to where the shore came nearest to the mainland, and found that the sea, which had looked so deep, was now sunk at low tide to a mere trickle of water, across which he waded with ease. In a moment the sea's ugly threat of separation was abolished. The terror was only make-believe. What looked an impassable sea was really a ford. In the same way death is a small thing when you have seen Christ's vision of life. It is only a gateway to a larger world—a passage where our feet

> Fall on the seeming void
> And find the rock beneath.

'This is not the end of me,' said Campbell-Bannerman on his death-bed, when his colleague rose to go; 'we shall meet again, Asquith.'

Now let us go deeper. How does Christ bring immortality to light? It is the same process as occurs in the making of any great discovery, of such a physical fact, for instance, as electricity or wireless telegraphy. *The first thing that happens is the quickening of a desire.* The heart must be awakened to need it and to demand it. The first thoughts of wireless telegraphy came to man's mind a century ago, but the demand for it did not arise till ordinary telegraphy had advanced some distance and the world had come to depend upon it. A break took place in a cable and business was thrown out of gear. In desperation

[1] J. Black, *The Dilemmas of Jesus*, 161.

they sought to send messages, which they found reached spasmodically from one broken end of the cable to the other and made a continuous current; and the minds of the scientists were sent exploring in a new world waiting to be conquered.

That is what Christ does for us with regard to immortality. The instinct is in our blood, and Christ awakens it. We were made for a higher sphere than this death-girt island we call earth. Christ awakens the dormant instinct for the infinite. How does He do it? For one thing, He quickens our sense of the value of our own personality. When Christ comes in, we begin to count for something. We begin to count 'one.' We become a soul, a self, with a value which is infinite. It becomes unthinkable that we should pass down into the dust of decay and extinction. He awakens the same instinct by increasing the value of the great things of life—our love, for instance, to one another. He enriches the vital human affections which are the very salt of life. And He awakens the instinct of immortality by setting us tasks which we cannot half see finished, which, in fact, with only one life before us, it seems hardly worth beginning. Cecil Rhodes was no orthodox believer, but life had touched his soul with the glory of a great task, and his last words were these: 'So little done, so much to do.' That is the protest which Christ awakens in us. When He comes into a man's life, however dull and dispirited, the first thing that happens to that man is that he becomes aware of a motive for living which earth itself cannot supply.

The second thing which needs to be done in making a great discovery is *to open the mind to believe in it.* In the case of immortality Christ comes to our aid by the fact of the Resurrection. Doubts have been cast upon the story by many people in the last 1900 years, but the fact has persisted—and why? We may dispute the empty grave and certain details in the story; one thing we cannot dispute—the fact that the disciples were changed by something which was big enough to make them utterly different men. What spiritual power was behind their new-made lives? The explanation is that life was brought to light, and death was shattered. If there is one who finds it difficult to believe in the future life because of his view of the universe, here is a plain fact challenging the mind. What are we going to make of it? If our scheme of things is one that will not hold Jesus—risen and living—it is time our mental world were smashed in pieces and rebuilt. There is only one outlook on the world which is valid to-day, or worthy of a thinking man facing the facts of life. This little world of physical force is but a fragment of a great spiritual universe where Christ is Lord, and death a door that leads to a larger room in the great mansion of life. We need to revise our ideas and find an outlook that is big enough to take in the risen Jesus. The more we look at Him, the closer we come to Him, the more He will make a place for Himself which is all His own. By the fact of His rising Christ brings immortality to light.

But lastly, there is the possession of the final secret, the assurance of the man who is brought to say, 'I know.' *How does Christ make us sure of immortality? It is a spiritual secret.* The final assurance of immortality is not an argument of the mind; it is a conviction of the heart—the experience of a life already victorious over the tyranny of earth. It is reached through faith by those who will trust Christ and let that experience bring its own conclusions. The scientist has to make experiments before he can be sure of his discovery, and not only once but again and again, till bit by bit the results pile up and the thing can be put upon the market. Even he has to use faith, to take a certain risk of wasting his time and his money. There is no other way to final certainty of any great truth but the way of practical experiment. The man who takes no risks discovers no certainties. The assurance of immortality is a product of experience of the love of God which comes through trusting Christ; and trusting that love means committing our life to its promises and its challenges and its rebukes. What happens, then? Our souls break into life as a tree into leaf in every bough with the coming of the spring sunlight. And the life which is eternal is born in our souls.

This life brings its own assurance. It stirs the conviction that in the love of God revealed in Jesus we are in contact with a love and care which is eternal. That is the only final guarantee. Immortality is a spiritual fact, and you cannot prove a spiritual fact except by spiritual perceptions. The real assurance of the future life lies not in deeper explorations of psychic marvels, impressive though these may be. It lies in exploring, in daily fellowship with Jesus, the marvel of the love of God.

No man can interpret for another in what ways this assurance will come to him. There are certain well-defined ways—the sense of peace, the assurance of forgiveness, bubbling up sometimes like a fountain in tears of thankfulness. Varied experiences of God come through the changing weather of life.

There is no other way of certainty except what comes through faith. We 'could wish for more,' like Dr. Johnson. But no more comes, except what faith brings. If more were given us, we would lose that struggle of faith which keeps us alive. All living faith is something for which we have to do battle with what we call the facts of life. And the certainty of immortality is one we have to live for and may have to fight for. It is a living certainty which grows bit by bit and changes its face and sometimes dies, only to be reborn if we keep on fighting for it, trusting it; for 'faith,' says Chesterton, 'is the perpetually defeated thing that survives all its conquerors.'[1]

[1] J. Reid, *The Victory of God*, 86.

Recent Foreign Theology.

PROFESSOR WOBBERMIN advances steadily on his way; this is vol. iii. of his solid and most readable Systematic Theology.[1] It is devoted, as its title indicates, to two great problems: first, What *is* Christianity? and second, Is Christianity so conceived true and valid? In the discussion of these vast issues the writer sweeps over a wide range and conducts us with expert skill through most of the living questions of present-day divinity.

In accordance with his religio-psychological method, Wobbermin is at every point keen to press back behind the varied forms which a religious idea may take, to the fundamental conviction from which it springs. He would rightly have us peel off the temporally conditioned vestures an idea may assume, as a result of quasi-scientific interest or particular historical situations, so as to reach the deepest motives of living piety. True thinking about religion is that which begins with personal experience, launches out into the fruitful deeps of fact, and returns to shore again, there to enrich the original datum with the new gains of the voyage. He has much that is suggestive to say, at many points, of this 'religio-psychological circle.'

Wobbermin's own interpretation is usually set out against the foil of some recent notable theory. Thus his contention that primitive Christianity was uncompromisingly monotheistic is evolved in face of Bousset's hypothesis that the worship of Jesus as Lord first began in Gentile communities; he points out in effect that Jesus is Lord for the simple reason that He is Mediator, and that it is not worship that creates a conviction, but rather conviction that creates worship. Bousset has been too much preoccupied with the imaginative forms of cultus, and not enough with the basal attitude that inspires them. His position could only be defended if there were any trace in the New Testament of an estimate of Jesus which made Him either a substitute for, or a rival of, God.

The work before us also contains much sound thinking on the Trinitarian monotheism which Wobbermin finds to be native to apostolic religion. 'Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things'—this unchanging persuasion we meet at every turn. The traditional doctrine of the Trinity is criticised, though with a sound appreciation of its ontological quality. The realities given to faith in Jesus and in the new life generated by the Spirit are rooted in God's eternal being.

In chapter five Wobbermin recurs to a subject he had previously handled, and strives to work out the common faith or creed shared in by Catholicism and Protestantism. Here he takes the Nicene Creed (in its later form) as text, and comments on its details, laying them alongside of the Apostles' Creed. He concludes *inter alia* that the empty grave is not of ecumenical status, though a true Resurrection is; Wobbermin holds to the theory of 'objective visions,' although he dislikes the phrase. The question might be raised whether 'ecumenical' in such a context does not mean simply what this or that individual author accepts, and whether the whole problem is really not one for which it is impossible to find standards of judgment which are sufficiently objective.

[1] *Wesen und Wahrheit des Christentums.* Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1925. M.16.20.