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revelation, and such a revelation as comes home to us as sheer miracle. It eventually turns out that what theology is opposed to is not so much reason in itself, as reason trespassing where it has no rights. Brunner observes with point that a dash of pride in a philosopher is quite in place, for he represents human intelligence at its full stride, carrying on with confidence and verve. But pride in a theologian is ludicrous; it is a contradiction in terms; a man can only theologize properly if he has learned to tremble at the Word of God.

There are some questions on which Brunner has not yet clarified his thinking, able as he is. He scarcely explains why we believe one thing to be

revelation rather than another; and when he tells us, truly enough, that faith affirms paradoxes, he offers no criterion to decide why it is only some paradoxes that are affirmed. We don't believe *every* paradox: not even Mr. Chesterton does. And further, he still leaves us uncertain what the relation is between the Word of God, on which he speaks so impressively, and Jesus Christ. Language now and then seems unequal to the strain of formulating Brunner's message. But we are debtors to a man who reminds us that theology goes bad when it begins to worship its own technique.

H. R. MACKINTOSH.

Edinburgh.

A Promise of Spring.

BY THE REVEREND A. J. GOSSIP, M.A., ABERDEEN.

'I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die. Believest thou this?'—Jn 11^{25, 26}.

THIS is a passage which our minds associate, almost instinctively, with those solemn days when there was a hush and eerie stillness in the house, a loneliness and aching in the heart, with those dread moments when even the dear dust to which we clung had to be taken from us; and to poor souls, sitting tense, and gathering themselves together to see it through with honour, there came these healing words, like a cool hand laid on a hot and throbbing forehead. And, with that, somehow the wild surge and heaving of our unquiet spirits grew greatly calmer; a splendid hope, far off but really there, sprang up into being and burned steadily even in these fierce gusts. It was not over then, and what we loved had not gone out, but somewhere was still real as ever. And one day, please God, we should find and have and keep our own once more.

Without question, that is, of course, the original setting and final meaning of it all. Only, why should we limit it to that? Christ Himself never did. He had many metaphors to bring home to us something of the difference He makes, but this was His favourite which He often used. He drew many vivid pictures of it, trying now this, and now that—that peasant on his wind-swept mountain

croft, gazing astounded at the glint and glitter of the gold he has unearthed, for ever done with poverty, he who had always been so very poor!—that foolish laddie safely home again, with more than his best dreams come really true; and ah! how good it is to be clean again from the filth round the swine-troughs yonder, no longer poor, starved, miserable, unregarded, but shut into an atmosphere of eager kindness, where love runs to meet him, delighting to heap up its best on his unworthiness, letting him see how much it means to it to have him really home—wonderful pictures. And yet, while He fingers this, and suggests that, always He turns back to this other, as being closest to the truth. Let Me have entrance into any life, He claims, the bleakest, barest, dullest, where everything looks withered and dry and wilted, and there is never a sound of running water anywhere, nothing but heat and glare and dust and deadness, and with My entrance spring has come, and everywhere there are life, greenness, colour; hopes, dead so long you had forgotten all about them, will emerge out of their deep, ancient graves; hearts, that had grown beaten and soured and cynical and worldly wise, will become young and like a child's again, with the old wonder, and the old enthusiasm, and the old daring and implicit faith. There will be life, where there is no life; and a resurrection where that seems impossible; and in yet another soul it will all have come true.

This is no promise only for a far-off sometime on the grave's farther side. But here and now it can work out. Wherever I am, so Christ says, that follows. For I am Resurrection, I am Life, and you can count upon this always. But—Christ is here. We have His solemn covenant and trust. And what if it should really happen to us, really here, and really now! You remember how, in Browning's picture of John's death, the little knot stood round and watched him sinking lower and yet lower, till the flame of life flickered, and, as it seemed, went out. With that a cold blankness filled their hearts. For the last man who had known Christ was gone; and there was no one left now who could say 'I saw,' 'I heard.' And much as these had told them, how much they had carried with them unrecorded, lost to a world greedy for any crumb of Christ. And with that they sought desperately to coax back a tiny spark to the heart not yet cold; tried this, tried that, in vain, till a lad, stung with the splendour of a sudden thought, ran for the gospel, found the place, and read, 'I am the resurrection, and the life.' Whereat the seemingly dead man sat up, hearing again his Lord's authoritative voice, and poured out all his soul in one last glorious talk. And Christ is here. If only we expect that, credit that, believe it, we should go our way, with a new enthusiasm, a new purpose, a new power within us. I promise it, says Christ. It must be so, if My touch really fall upon you. For I am Resurrection, I am Life.

He makes no exceptions; says so looking straight at you. Isn't one of the most glorious things about the Master the valiant way in which He is always willing to join issue on ground the least advantageous to Himself, makes straight for the most desperate cases, and says boldly, 'Let us take this as the test.' We are told that there was a whole multitude of ailing people in those porches of Bethesda that day Christ was there, but there was one who caught the eye as obviously the most pitiful of them all, a man with a wan, hopeless face, who had lain there for eight-and-thirty years, and was no better—rather worse—and half of life was gone, consumed there in a longing that had come to absolutely nothing. I have no chance, so He told Christ, others are not so ill as I, and they have friends to help them. But I have none, am all alone, am also in a desperate plight, and always while I am slowly scrambling to my feet and stumbling towards the water, almost

before I am started the chance is over, some one else is healed, and for me there is nothing except to crawl back again to the accustomed place, and wait all through another long interminable dreary day for the next chance, which I am sure to lose too when it comes. I have no chance. Oh! I keep trying, in a dogged kind of way, but there is never a ray of hope. Some fourteen thousand times I have attempted it, and fourteen thousand times or so have failed. There is no chance. And Christ made straight for him; not to some easy case, but to this desperate soul. We will test matters here, He said.

Or, once He came to a village, and heard much of an impossible woman, as the neighbours all described her. She is just evil incarnate, so they said. Every possible devil has its home within her heart. And who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. I can, said Christ, and dared to call, of all possible people, Mary Magdalene! And she came.

So to-day He stands among us, and looks round for the most desperate case. That is His big brave way. Some of you, no doubt, have come into God's house with thanksgiving and praise, awed to discover in your own experience how real Christ's power is, how efficient face to face with the actual problems and the practical tangles of your life. This He has taught me, so your heart acknowledges gratefully; from this He has saved me; that old sore is healed and gone. It is all gloriously true, so you have found—not simply beautiful words, but a real thing that works. Well, you will have happy communion with Him to-day. For it is the pure in heart that see God; and 'the taught already that profit by teaching.' And yet I do not know that you will get the closest to Christ. 'They that be whole need not a physician, but they that be sick.' And while He smiles at you, made happier by your happiness, His eyes keep searching here and there for some one who has even greater need of Him. Is any one tired, He asks, and beaten and disappointed and——. Yes, you cry, interrupting. Yes. What is it? What is wrong? Talk it out frankly with the Master. They tell us that St. Bernard, because of some unseemliness in his theological thinking, is condemned to all eternity to wear a black splash even on his shining garments yonder. If that be so, must not his eyes keep straying back to that uneasily. And do you feel ashamed to come again to Christ after the failures of the past, after your many promises which you have never kept, after the vows you made, meaning

them at the time, and yet so quickly forgot, after the endless disappointments you have caused Him. Can one come again? Is it fair to promise now that we know we cannot keep our vows. And so you hang back, wistful, shy, discouraged, so conscious of the black spots on your garments that you can scarcely look away from your unworthiness into your Saviour's eager face and outstretched, welcoming hands. Or is it that your story, too, corroborates that so reiterated witness of the poets, that life as it proceeds loses its glory, that ideals dim and hopes go out, that even after all that Christ can do, things seem to slip back on the whole? Or at least are you daunted that so little happens, Christ or no Christ, in your case? The Kings and Chronicles are full of marvellous breaks-in of God, and perhaps we don't question them. Only it does not seem to be so in our day, and in this modern world of ours, where things have surely grown more drab, and more unexciting. And we can see that faith is doing wonders in lives round about us; but in our own it seems more tame, more prosaic, far more commonplace. And we jog on, hoping, believing, trying in a way, yet what is there to show for it? And hearing that, our Lord makes straight in your direction, threading His way through all the others. We shall test it in you, He says. 'He that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.' If only we can coax a little faith into your heart, in you too it will happen, so He claims; and He says it confidently.

And, perhaps, you are moved and stirred a moment by that trust of His, and then you push it from you almost peevishly. If! If! No doubt! But how can that be done? That is the problem. There were once mighty cities that held the whole world in fee, and through their streets there hummed the murmur of a full, rich, busy life. And they are gone, gone utterly, so that to-day only the desert sand lies thick above them, and the desert winds moan eerily where once there were that pomp and splendour. And who can go, and stand in these lone desolations, and cry, 'Rise, ye dead,' and bring it back to life? That cannot be: it is all vanished utterly for ever. And how can faith, the old faith, come back to me now? For even the Cross seems to have lost for me its old compulsion. It does not shame me, move me, haunt me, win me, as it used to do. I have grown so accustomed to it that I hardly notice it. My heart seems dead, and can't feel any more.

But Christ looks at you unafraid, sure He can manage even for you. Once on a day the crowd burst out into open laughter in His very face. The lassie is dead, they said bluntly; hope is out, the thing is over. But Christ put them forth, and shut the door, with a set look of determination on His face. And as He looks at you too, that same look is there. Do not you be so dourly sure that all is over. For this is a wonderful Master, who accomplishes amazing things. Don't you remember how one day a merry jest went round the town; at every street corner they were laughing over it. Have you heard the latest about the new prophet? one would ask the other delightedly. He has called, whom do you think? I will give you ten guesses. No! no! far better than that! Of all possible people, Matthew! But He did! I was there, and I heard Him, and He was quite serious too, went up to the booth and asked him, and He seemed to think that he would come. Fancy old Matthew off on an adventurous crusade. No! no! he sticks to his money-bags, if anybody does! But the laugh died away, and they stood looking at each other foolishly, when it got noised abroad that Matthew had gone. And now that same Christ is making His way through the press to you, believes that it is in you also. If we can only rouse a little faith, a very little for a start, anything is still possible, He says; yes, even if your heart is dead, stone dead, you can be brought to life again. Pater declared of Michel Angelo, 'With him the very rocks seem to have life—they have but to cast away the dust and scurf that they may rise and stand on their feet.' And Christ's eyes watch you hopefully, quite certain you are going, poor dead thing though you may be, to cast away the dust and scurf, to rise and stand up on your feet a living soul, erect, and with eyes that look up toward God.

To which you answer, Yes, yes, I know! I, too, have been through that, have had experience of it often and often. And it is very wonderful, only it does not last. When the rains of God fall in the hills, even my muddy channel, far down in the tame valleys, fills with a rush of spiritual fervour. But the spate soon dies away again; and the old, ugly flats emerge once more, muddy as ever! You can't by thinking add a cubit to your stature. And I am built on mean unspiritual lines, and even Christ can't make me bigger, not permanently, not for long. But Christ challenges that. The end, He says, is not to be a broken hope, a withered dream,

a faded possibility, a soul that might have come to something but was lost. No, 'he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die.' 'Because I live, you shall live also.' As if to say, surely you know that I share everything I have with you! And do you think I can have life, and not share that; that I can be content without you? So long as I myself have life, you can count upon Me. And you will never die, if only we can get that spark of faith alight.

Well, how is that to be accomplished? Hasn't His gallant trust in you gone far towards it already? Tolstoy once, in a horrible Moscow lodging-house, let slip a word of sympathy and pity for the inmates, not realizing he was being overheard; and from behind the partitions there rose and looked over at him, with a curious, fixed intentness, face on face, till he felt they were rising from their graves, had only been waiting for this word of kindness to become alive. And has not Christ's amazing faith in you, and kindness toward you, that effect on you?

If not, then look at Martha's case. 'Even now,' she said, 'I know that whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it you.' Can you say that? Even now, if Christ asked it, even yet. Dare you deny that? But we know that Christ is praying for us. Does not the Church picture Him as the great High Priest within the veil, pleading and making intercession for His people. And surely, could we hear Him, He is now asking for you, 'O Father, Thou who givest faith, here is a poor needy soul with none; grant it at least a little, lest I lose this one of those whom Thou hast given Me.' And what Christ asks for He receives. 'Believest thou that?' Or, if your heart is still cold and unmoved, think about this. Christ has a very gracious way of proving better than His promises, of doing more, far more, even than He had covenanted, gracious though that was. As, for example, often He tells us that we must have faith, that we can count upon Him, but we must have faith, or else even He can gain no foothold in our life from

which to work. And yet I can show a case where there was no faith, and it was there He did the most astounding of His miracles. Ask, He kept saying, and it shall be given you; yet I can point you to a group who never asked, and upon them He heaped far and away the greatest of His gifts. 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me.' Yet, once the door was never opened, was kept locked. And still, breaking through His own conditions, He came even then and even there.

Don't you remember that room in Jerusalem where the disciples met after the Crucifixion? They had no faith, no hope, no glimmer of expectation. All was over, and the dream was dead. Badly scared men, they huddled there. 'Keep that door locked,' they said. Dark looks, they felt, were being cast at them out on the street. What was that they were saying, as we passed? Calvary was so near; and crucifixion was so horrible a death. Keep that door locked: we must scatter and separate; are not safe here in this unfriendly city; must bury ourselves somewhere where the ridicule of men will not hoot us through life, and shame and madden us. They had no faith: the door was locked. And yet to them Christ came, and stood in the midst, and said, 'Peace be unto you!'

There, surely, is your chance. 'O Christ, I have no faith, only a cold, hard, heedless heart, and though I hear Thee knocking, knocking, knocking, can't be bothered opening to Thee; or, even if I would, my fumbling fingers can't push back the bolts; and indeed they are stiff and ill to move, and my will won't will when I will that it should will. Cannot Thou to me also, though the door is locked, and my heart dull and dead and faithless, cannot Thou to me also find some way to come in?' Even so, come, Lord Jesus. And at your very side will He not answer, 'I am come that you may have life, and have it more abundantly'?

Entre Nous.

Individualism.

'It is morally impossible to bend in adoration and gratitude before the sacrificial Christ without coveting something of the same spiritual likeness. Is this sacrificial way indeed God's chosen way of

helping and uplifting the world? Then men who number themselves among His redeemed are in honour bound to be His helpers in the task. More and more it becomes apparent that there are no self-contained lives in human society, or rather that