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A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

scheme which has on the whole predominated—Heaven, Hell, Purgatory—has descended from the prophetic element, while the Millenarian expectation and the Last Judgment derive from apocalyptic sources. The latter series of beliefs is ‘more clearly rooted in Jesus’ actual eschatological utterances’ and is more in harmony with the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. In the second essay Baron von Hügel defends the conception of eternal punishment and hell. The essential point of his argument is that the alternative of Heaven or Hell is only presented to those souls who are ‘supernaturally awakened.’ Others, who form, we gather, a large proportion of the human race, are destined for Limbo, where they enjoy ‘natural felicity.’ ‘The lost spirits will persist, according to the degree of their permanent defection, in their claimfulness and envious self-isolation, in their niggardly pain at the sight or thought of the unmatched greatness and goodness of other souls. But now the disharmony of all this with their own past bitter experiences, and their own still present sense of the supernatural call, becomes more fully and more unintermittently conscious within them than it was wont to be on earth.’ This is an essay which should be carefully considered, though probably many readers will find themselves in violent disagreement. In particular the idea that there can be spirits ‘conscious of the supernatural call,’ yet totally unable to respond, raises great perplexities. Christian

thought appears to be moving in the direction of questioning whether the soul is naturally immortal, and several writers have pointed out that the N.T. as a whole is more in accordance with the view that ‘the gift of God is eternal life to them that believe.’ We may mention in particular Dr. Gore’s work, *The Holy Spirit and the Church*, which cautiously suggests a doctrine of conditional immortality, and Dr. A. H. McNeile’s useful though badly-arranged book, *The Problem of the Future Life*. The last-named work contains a good tabular statement of the cases for Eternal Punishment, Universalism, and Conditional Immortality.

It would be a hopeless task to review here the literature relating to psychical research. The mass of material is so great and its quality so various that it would require an article to itself. A general impression may be recorded—that the accumulating evidence, when sifted, is slowly making an impression on the minds of many who were inclined to be sceptical. Perhaps its greatest triumph is that it has affected one of the most critical minds in England—that of Dr. C. D. Broad, who, in his *Mind and its Place in Nature*, is constrained to admit on empirical evidence the probability of some survival of death. His scepticism has, however, not been so far overcome as to lead him to contemplate a personal survival. He prefers to speak of the persistence of a ‘psychic factor’; a conception which is to the mind at least of the present writer neither very inspiring nor very intelligible.

Literature.

SHARING IN CREATION.

THE Bohlen Lectures for 1925 were delivered by the Rev. W. Cosby Bell, D.D., Professor of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion in Virginia Theological Seminary. The somewhat vague title he chose for his book, *Sharing in Creation*, is explained in the sub-title as ‘Studies in the Christian View of the World’ (Allen & Unwin; 7s. 6d. net), so that the book challenges comparison with the important volume which brought the late Professor Orr into prominence. It is not written on the massive scale of Dr. Orr’s book, but within its own narrower limits it displays much competence. In

his power to make systematic theology not only intelligible to the plain man but interesting, Dr. Bell reminds us a little of the late Professor William Newton Clarke.

We were attracted to the book by the modest and sensible words in which it is introduced to us by the notice on the cover: ‘This book attempts to show that no problem of life is completely soluble, because life is incomplete and the world unfinished. We are in the midst of a great working out of things, and our Christianity is neither a static philosophy nor a dynamic life, but both.’ A theologian who makes no pretence to omniscience inspires confidence, and the sanity of the whole

discussion shows that that confidence has not been misplaced. Dr. Bell's criticism, for example, of the distinction commonly drawn between providence and grace is quite refreshing. He says: 'It is doubtful whether these discriminations serve any other purpose than to create confusion in our minds. . . . To establish two contrasted types of divine action is to attempt an analysis into which it is hard to put any clear meaning.' This will be good news to those who have long been puzzled by theological distinctions to which they could discover no corresponding reality.

This down-rightness characterizes the entire discussion—alike the chapters on the Method of Creation, the Purpose of Creation, and the Providence of God. Creation is regarded as a continuing activity of God in the world, and man's task is to co-operate intelligently with Him, and by means of this co-operation, in which he is both dependent and independent, to develop increasingly that fullness of life for which he is destined. The spirit of the book is expressed in a phrase that occurs in a paragraph which the writer quotes from Professor N. S. Shaler on 'The Individual,' that behind the process of the universe 'a mighty Kinsman of man is at work.' It is a hopeful and heartening book Dr. Bell has given us, and laymen, to whom theology has hitherto been a terror, will here learn that she can wear a very friendly face.

WESLEY AS A PHILOSOPHER.

Dr. George Eayrs, who has already published half a dozen books on Wesley and Wesleyanism, has just issued a volume in which he presents the great man in a somewhat novel light: *John Wesley, Christian Philosopher and Church Founder* (Epworth Press; 7s. 6d. net). The book has as its main aim the thesis that Wesley was a great thinker as well as a great revivalist, and that his church policy and polity were a result of his constructive thinking. It does not seem probable that this thesis will find any wide acceptance. The language of the book in speaking of Wesley's purely intellectual and philosophical gifts is exaggerated. It is true that Wesley was a great personality. He is, it may be admitted, one of the really great creative personalities of religious history. He was also a great saint. He had statesmanlike vision, a strategic mind, and a mind of very considerable strength. These are big enough qualities, but Dr. Eayrs wants

more for him. This book makes large claims for his intellect on the purely philosophical side. We are told that he had the philosophical temper, that he read widely (including Plato, Augustine, Aquinas, Bacon, Grotius, and Malebranche, not to speak of John Smith, the Cambridge Platonist), and that his analysis of Christian experience was epoch-making. All this is true enough, and one interest of Dr. Eayrs' book is that he reveals so many facts of this nature. But they will not sustain the contention that Wesley was in any influential sense a philosophical magnitude. The book before us, however, is of very great value just because it emphasizes Wesley's intellectual interests and pursuits. The ordinary person thinks of Wesley as a revivalist *in excelsis* who appeared providentially just when England needed him, and who more by his piety and character than his intellect started a great movement which, in the hands of God, was used to great ends. It is a service of value to point out, and to prove, as Dr. Eayrs does, that Wesley was a big man, not only religiously and morally, but mentally as well. And if he is not accepted as having a place among the forces that have directed the philosophical stream, at least the greater forces, his greatness remains and will remain unaffected, and this book, by its research, its devotion, its competence, and its engrossing interest will still further enhance the admiration and love which are cherished for Wesley in all the churches.

ETHICS OF BUDDHISM.

All books on Buddhism deal more or less with ethics. Yet here is a competent authority who tells us that he knows only two that are devoted primarily to that subject. Accordingly, Professor S. Tachibana of Tokyo has published the treatise which won him his doctorate of philosophy at Oxford, though he has changed the title from the 'Ethics of Pāli Buddhism' to *The Ethics of Buddhism* (Milford; 15s. net), not without an uneasy feeling in his mind that the newer name is perhaps somewhat too large for the contents.

This is a full and discriminating study of one of the most beautiful products of human thought by one with every right to speak upon a theme that he has made his own.

There are two views on Buddhist (Pāli) ethics. To some the whole delicate structure, so exquisite in its hardy self-government, its heroic purity,

its abundant kindness and forgiveness, is a mere mirage, is after all only a subtler form of selfishness ; since, so they say, the end even of its unselfishness is still self-seeking. The good is done, not for the sake of doing good, but to further one's own interests. Our author will have none of that, and, indeed, with the glorious and drastic precepts in one's hands it is a hard saying. Yet the fact is that for centuries multitudes of Buddhists, perhaps the majority of them, at least feel the sting of that criticism, and have evolved or stressed another and a higher motive.

Be that as it may, let any one study this book, and he can hardly fail to rise up from it, on the one hand ashamed of his own life grown very shabby in the fierce light of these brave ideals which this fellow-man of ours thought out, not always it may be as high and sane as those of the New Testament, and yet always how impressive ; and, on the other hand, thankful that, if this is what life ought to be, we are not left to climb toward it alone, but can clutch at the steady hand of Christ.

THE ABBEY OF ST. GALL.

Dr. J. M. Clark, Lecturer in the University of Glasgow, is to be heartily congratulated on a learned and scholarly work, the fruits of extensive reading and diligent research, on *The Abbey of St. Gall* (Cambridge University Press ; 18s. net). For several centuries the Abbey of St. Gall, founded about A.D. 613 by the disciple of the Celtic St. Columban bearing this name, was the chief seat of German literature, art, and music ; and the theme of the volume before us is the contribution which it thus made to European civilization. This is the first systematic or comprehensive treatment of the theme, according to the author's claim. Moreover, it is 'a history, not a panegyric,' that the author seeks to present, and his aim is well reflected in the sobriety, exactness, and lucidity of his style. His judgments impress one as at once careful and competent. A special point he would make as against certain Irish writers is that after the middle of the eighth century the Irish or Celtic influence ceased to predominate in the Abbey founded in the valley of the Steinach. 'If the Irish sowed the seed, it was the Swabians who gathered in the harvest.'

In the chapter on 'St. Gall in Romance' the general reader will perhaps find most to interest

him. While the story of the Abbey furnishes Gottfried Keller and C. F. Meyer with motives, yet, curiously enough, it is in German and not Swiss writers that the story has played the most important part. In his 'Bilder aus der deutschen Vergangenheit' Gustav Freytag draws upon the *Gesta Caroli Magni* of Notker Balbulus, a scholar, poet, and musician, and one of the most illustrious of the monks of St. Gall ; and in choosing St. Gall as a typical centre of Benedictine monachism he derives no small part of his material from the *Casus S. Galli* of Ekkehard iv., another famous monk of St. Gall, and a graphic chronicler. But it is in the pages of J. F. von Scheffel's signally popular romance of 'Ekkehard' that St. Gall and its monks received the most notable literary embodiment. The tragic love of Ekkehard and Hadwig is Scheffel's own invention, but in his description of life in Swabia in the tenth century the novelist makes, in general, faithful as well as effective use of the chronicle afore-mentioned.

But in Dr. Clark's pages all this is but incidental. His chief purpose, as already hinted, is to record the contribution of St. Gall to human progress in the spheres of literature, art, and music. It was in the first-named sphere that St. Gall made its outstanding contribution ; nor should it be forgotten in this connexion that 'there is scarcely a single phase in the history of the theatre, from the first rudimentary beginnings of liturgical drama down to Ibsen, that has not been witnessed in St. Gall.' But St. Gall was also justly famous for its book illumination, and for its achievements in the sphere of music. Dr. Clark discusses these things with meticulous care, and he also provides interesting and informative chapters on the Plan of the Abbey, the School of St. Gall, and the Abbey Library and its Manuscripts. One of the most enduring services of the St. Gall monks to European culture was their transcription of classical and sacred manuscripts ; and in the Abbey Library, as it is to-day, as our author remarks, the philologist and the palæographer, the historian and the liturgiologist all find an almost inexhaustible field for research.

RAMBLES IN VEDANTA.

Rambles in Vedanta, by R. R. Rajam Aiyar (Allen & Unwin ; 12s. 6d. net), is a large book of well-nigh a thousand pages ; and all kinds of

things are heaped together in its full and often eloquent pages.

Some of it, perhaps, may not be altogether up to date. For it is nearly thirty years since its young and eager author died. Yet all of it is interesting in a high degree, is indeed a window through which one can see far into the mind of modern educated religious India, or at least that section of it that has been touched by Western thought. We question if there is any book that lets one see farther or more clearly.

Rajam Aiyar was a student in the Madras Christian College. But, though he speaks with grave respect of 'the blessed Lord Jesus,' he was no Christian—thought indeed that 'India had grown too big for that coat.'

Devoted to philosophy and especially to poetry, both English and Tamil—his knowledge of modern English literature was wide—he found at last a permanent resting-place for his soul in the Vedanta, the ancient religious philosophy of his own country; and gave his few remaining years in a passion of enthusiasm to popularizing it in his 'Awakened India,' which till his death was the most widely read of Indian monthlies. He died at twenty-six.

The present work consists of a medley of his articles, very varied in their subjects and styles—masses of stories, some from the old classics, others original; vivid lives of the Indian saints; short challenging essays upon central themes like Bhakti, Avatar, Atman, the aim of the Vedanta, and the like—all written to the end that he may convince us that 'all tolerant all absorbing' Hinduism, or rather his own unusual conception of it, is the final religion. He believes that in some ways he is a better Christian than the Christians. But he has a horror of the crude materialism of our Western civilization, and what he feels to be the selfishness of our type of education and life. An arresting, informing, pathetic book.

In his work, *The Aim of Jesus Christ* (Allen & Unwin; 7s. 6d. net), Dr. W. Forbes Cooley, Instructor in Philosophy in Columbia University, offers a critical inquiry for the non-technical reader. He has been successful in gathering within the compass of his pages the chief results of recent New Testament scholarship, or at least the chief results of the 'modernist' interpretation. The

ethical aim of the book, beyond the critical and the historical, is not carried out so fully as the writer himself appears to have intended; on the other hand, the book contains more than the title indicates. Not only does it discuss the life and teaching of Jesus, as these are discoverable in 'the palimpsest of the New Testament,' treating of the prophetic ideal of the Kingdom of God as the central conception of the teaching; it also attempts to trace the steps whereby the gospel became a Hellenistic rather than a Jewish message, and the Church 'a brotherhood of hero-worshippers.' Of the Church the author says, and the remark may serve to throw light upon his standpoint, 'It would be the height of doctrinaire folly to scrap this deeply rooted and evolutionary product of the centuries in favour of some untried new and artificial device' (such as an Ethical Society). The work shows wide reading and reflective power and is marked by clearness of utterance, and it may be taken as a reasonable presentation of its subject from a 'modernist' standpoint. It is so packed full of references to New Testament passages that an index of such would have added to its usefulness.

One of the most acute and difficult problems in apologetics is the relation of mind and body. Professor Laird dealt with it recently in an excellent little book. Herr Paul Süner handles one aspect of the problem in another little book—*The Brain and the Mind* (Allen & Unwin; 3s. 6d. net). The treatment is historical and the commentary is acute and interesting. But the book does not make very much contribution to the solution of the problem. It does indeed show that the materialistic view is now almost wholly abandoned by educated minds, and that is itself a contribution of some value. But even though the positive suggestions may be few, the statement of the various views is helpful, and we can see with little trouble the situation as it is to-day. The book is well translated by Mr. C. Harry Brooks.

We have received several books from Mr. H. R. Allenson, and as we turn them over we are struck afresh by the clever use which this publisher makes of the paper wrapper. Not only are these wrappers attractive, but they are attractive in a quiet way which suggests that this is a book which is meant to be handled freely. And Mr. Allenson uses his cover also to give such an indication of what the book

contains that we are irresistibly drawn on from the reading of it to the reading of the book itself.

The three volumes before us are very different but are well worth reading. First there is *Vision and Strength*, a volume of essays selected and arranged by Sir James Marchant, LL.D. (5s. net). This is the third series of essays that have appeared in 'The Times' in the first instance, and then have been reprinted later in volume form. A number of newspapers now give space to articles dealing directly with ethical or religious topics, for it has become the fashion to-day to discuss these in the course of ordinary conversation as it certainly was not ten or fifteen years ago. But it was 'The Times' that led the way and that has given a column, week by week, to the religious essay. That was excellent, and it is excellent also that these essays are now preserved in more permanent form.

The second volume is by the late Rev. Thomas E. Miller, M.A.—known as the author of 'Portraits of Women of the Bible,' 'Portraits of Women of the New Testament,' and 'Portraits of Men of the Old Testament.' When Mr. Miller died a short time ago he left behind him the MS. of *Portraits of Men of the New Testament*, and the lectures have now been prepared for press by Mr. Robertson Christie, K.C. (5s. net). These simple and direct studies, full of evangelical feeling, must have been good to hear.

Must we tell a child about Death? Let us rather give her *Ever: A Child's Book of Joy*, by Miss Alice M. Pullen (2s. 6d. net). It is the story of Rosemary Anne, and of how she found out that all ends are really beginnings, and of how 'frocks aren't as important as Always, are they? and I've got their Always, haven't I?'

The career of St. Francis is always an engrossing theme, and many books have been written on the Poor Man of Assisi. We question, however, whether any more sympathetic account has been given of the saint's life than is to be found in the *Life of St. Francis of Assisi*, by the Rev. William H. Leatham, M.A. (James Clarke; 3s. 6d. net). It is a beautiful book, beautifully written. Something of the spirit of his hero has passed into the writer and touches his pen with what might be called eloquence, were that word not so suspect. The book is powerfully attractive not only by reason of its subject but because of the simplicity

and elevation of the writing. The main facts of the story are all here, but what grips the reader is the impression that this saintly and mediæval figure has a message for our own day. That is what Mr. Leatham set out to say, and he says it in a fashion worthy of his theme.

Books on world-peace are apt to be a little tiresome. Platitude abounds in their pages. But there are exceptions, and *Christianity and Universal Peace*, by the Rev. A. W. Harrison, M.C., B.Sc., D.D. (Epworth Press; 2s. 6d. net), is one. It is sane, level-headed, and (*mirabile dictu*) interesting. There are penetrating chapters on the teaching of the New Testament and on the development of Christian opinion about war. And in his closing chapter Dr. Harrison sums up the situation in wise and helpful words. His sensible conclusion seems to be that, just as slavery was abolished inevitably by the slow growth of Christian conviction, so war will be. That seems to be the last word on the subject.

The Art of Preaching, by the Rev. Harold Ford, LL.D., D.C.L. (Jenkins; 2s. 6d. net), has proved so popular that a fifth edition—revised and enlarged—has been required.

No book divides commentators more sharply than the Song of Songs. Students who believe in the historical approach to the Bible regard the mystical interpretation as a sheer irrelevance; yet it cannot be denied that the book, so interpreted, has fascinated some of the greatest saints and even preachers, like St. Bernard, of the Christian Church. Certainly, if the mystical interpretation of the book is ever in order, it could not be more persuasively presented than by S. L. Christian in *The Song of Mystery*, published at 6s. net by Messrs. Longmans, Green & Co., and commended in a Preface by the Rev. B. W. Randolph, M.A., Canon of Ely. Those who can concede the principle that there is adumbrated in the Song 'the sweet and holy mystery of His Love,' cannot fail to regard the exposition with gratitude; though it is rather an exposition, at once beautiful and searching, of the Christian's relation to his Lord, than an interpretation of the Song. But as it is written by one who well understands the life of devotion, it will be welcomed by those who desire to lead that life.

A well-informed book on the sources and history of the English Prayer Book has been written by the Rev. Dyson Hague, D.D., of Toronto, *The Story of the English Prayer Book* (Longmans ; 5s. net). The story is told in detail, with much learning and even more enthusiasm. Those who love their Prayer Book will learn all about it from Dr. Hague, and will not love it the less under his guidance. The main contention of the book, apart from its rich store of mere historical lore, is that the Prayer Book is the product of an age, that of Reformation. It goes back to many roots, it contains contributions from many sources (and these are indicated here), but it is the embodiment of the Reformation spirit and faith. This is a contention that will be hotly disputed, but those who dispute it will have to reckon with the facts which Dr. Hague presents with great skill.

Every minister of the gospel, if he is to do his work well, must be accessible to the young men and women of his congregation, and must be ready to listen to their difficulties and to help them in them. The Rev. A. D. Belden, B.D., has just published a volume of essays with the title *The Religious Difficulties of Youth* (Sampson Low ; 3s. 6d. net), which deals with the actual difficulties that have been brought to him. 'Not long ago the writer was asked by a young man, "Is it not enough to regard Jesus as a great human hero, practically the greatest?" The question is typical of a difficulty that confronts most thinking minds as they begin to investigate for themselves the main positions of their religion. The answer given in the present case was "Enter into real association with that hero and permit that association to lead you to whatever he has to offer."' This is how Mr. Belden deals with the difficulty about the supremacy of Jesus. He has chapters also on the difficulty of being spiritually-minded in a material environment, on religion and sex, on the question, Is Jesus an Impossible? and on a number of other difficulties on which light is sought from every minister. Mr. Belden states them frankly and evades nothing. There is a short introduction to the volume by the Rev. Sidney M. Berry, D.D. Mr. Belden, he says, has the courage which is needed in a difficult enterprise of this kind. 'For let there be no mistake about it, courage is needed. There are always those who are ready to plead that the elders should not be disturbed. The Church

which moves under that motto may earn the reward of placidity at the cost of forfeiting inspiration, for the Church which leaves one class undisturbed, will leave the other unmoved.'

In his work, *The Gospel of John* (Macmillan ; 10s. net), Professor B. W. Robinson of Chicago Theological Seminary provides us with a brief, pointed, and untechnical handbook on the Fourth Gospel. It is designed for 'Christian leaders,' and it embodies the results of recent scholarly work on the Fourth Gospel and the early Christian history of which it is a part. Its aim is to show under successive chapter and verse headings how the newer knowledge accentuates 'the marvellously vital and far-reaching popular power of this Gospel.' The commentary proper is prefaced by general chapters on the authorship, characteristics, and popular quality of the Gospel. The author, in Professor Robinson's view, was a Greek-speaking Christian leader of Ephesus, who may not improbably be identified with the disciple whom Jesus 'loved'; as also with the presbyter John, mentioned by Papias and Eusebius. The work is generally characterized in the statement that it links up Christianity more closely with the career of its founder than any other religion has been so linked up, and sets forth the life of Jesus in terms of lasting significance. For example, the Son of God takes the place of the Messiah, and a present spiritual brotherhood of the Messianic Kingdom. Professor Robinson congratulates himself on having avoided the term 'hypostatization' in his exposition of the Prologue to the Gospel, but on the other hand he betrays in the course of his book a certain fondness for the term 'paratactic'!

There is a body of Christians which calls itself 'The Church of Christ,' and most people have the impression that it is one of the little 'fancy religions' which abound in this world of freedom. They are wrong. How wrong we are astonished to discover from a book which gives an account of the origin and tenets of the body: *What Churches of Christ Stand For*, by William Robinson, M.A., B.Sc., Principal of Overdale College (Publishing Committee: Churches of Christ ; 6d. net). According to Mr. Robinson this body is distinguished by its broad-minded attitude to knowledge, criticism, and nearly everything else. It stands apart from creeds and, above all, it stands for the simplicity

of the original New Testament Christianity. The exposition in this little book is encouraging, but one asks with some surprise why the Churches of Christ stand outside the regular organized religious community.

The Religious Tract Society has just issued cheap editions of Dr. Edersheim's *The Temple* and *Sketches of Jewish Social Life in the Days of Christ*. The volumes are well printed and bound, and they are produced at 6s. net each.

The Student Christian Movement has done a real service to the cause of temperance reform by publishing *A Handbook to the Drink Problem*, by Mr. Will Reason, M.A. (1s. 6d. net), with a preface by Viscount Astor. Lord Astor has spent great pains on this preface of ten pages. He hits the nail on the head on every page. In form and

matter it is admirably written. The whole Handbook also is worthy both of the subject and of the preface. It is written in the form of question and answer. The questions are always pertinent, and the answers are always full and to the point. The book contains separate chapters on Local Option, Prohibition, the Carlisle experiment, very carefully examined; and finally suggests proposals for uniting temperance reformers. These include Local Option for England and Wales, Sunday Closing, applicable also to clubs in respect to the sale of intoxicants, and Magisterial Control of clubs. It is notorious that the number of bogus 'clubs' has greatly increased and is increasing. In fact, no sooner have the magistrates closed a public-house by buying out the licence-holder than it is converted into a 'club' and thus becomes a greater evil than before. More drastic legislation is needed to make this kind of evasion of the Law impossible.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt. xxv. 1-13).

BY THE REVEREND JAMES REID, M.A., EASTBOURNE.

OF all the parables, none has suffered more than this from the habit of misplaced emphasis. This story abounds in such picturesque symbolism, that many interpreters have been swept off their feet and out of their depth in the effort to follow their fancies. Like all the parables it is meant to drive home one point, and when that is caught the other details fall into their places. And the point which Christ is surely making is the demand which Christianity makes for a faith which is prepared to wait. He makes that clear in His final word, 'Watch, for ye know not the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh.'

The story gets its meaning from the marriage customs of the East. It was the bride's duty to wait, accompanied by her bridesmaids, till the bridegroom came to take his place in the marriage party. To welcome him, these maidens carried lamps to cheer the darkness, and without these none of them might take her place in the marriage procession. Five maidens, in the story, carried oil in their vessels with their lamps, a spare supply in case the bridegroom were delayed on his way. But

five were happy-go-lucky, taking the risk that everything would be all right. Thus equipped they took their places. The long hours wore on, and they all fell asleep. At last, in the darkest hour, the cry went up that the bridegroom was at hand. Meanwhile, the lamps of the five foolish ones had gone out; the short supply of oil was done. In a panic they begged of the others a share of their reserve, but that could not be; so they ran off to buy for themselves. 'And when they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.' That is the dramatic story. What does it mean? Surely this, that if we are going to be ready for the triumphant hour and opportunity of faith, we must have a faith that can hold out—a faith that is prepared to wait.

What Jesus means by the coming of the bridegroom is not very clear. That very ground is the debatable land of modern scholarship. The precise meaning of what is called 'the second coming' is hidden in mist, and perhaps Christ meant it so; for does not He come in various ways