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seventy years unaccounted for. The explanation is certainly ingenious, and it meets the difficulty felt by exegetes, though at the cost of interpreting Jeremiah's seventy years literally and the 'apocalyptic' seventy years as week-years.

Old Testament students who desire to steer their way intelligently through that labyrinthine literature will find exactly what they want in Professor George Beer's brief conspectus of its contents.¹ It is a lucid presentation, book by book and section by section, of the contents, literary structure and date, as these appear to the eyes of the moderate critic. The book is not an introduction to the Old Testament, but it would be a valuable adjunct to an introduction, and to those who are not technical students it would be a useful introduction to Old Testament science, furnishing as it does an easy initiation into its literary problems, and revealing the course of its literary history.

An interesting feature of the *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*² is the friendly welcome it gives, under the editorship of Professor Gressmann, to articles in English by British and American scholars. Last year, for example, Professor Welch contributed an article on a subject which he has made peculiarly his own, 'When was the Worship of Israel centralized at the Temple?' and another

¹ *Kurze Übersicht über den Inhalt der Alttestamentlichen Schriften* (Mohr, Tübingen; M.4.80).

² Zweiter Band, 1925; Dritter Band, 1926 (Töpelmann, Giessen).

on 'The Death of Josiah,' while W. L. Wardle discusses the origins of Hebrew monotheism. There is a very friendly review by the editor of Dr. Moffatt's translation of the Old Testament, and also of 'The People and the Book,' the series of essays by Old Testament scholars edited by Professor Peake. Gressmann remarks that British scholars have the peculiar gift of keeping in continual contact with the practical religious life of their time. R. H. Pfeiffer, in an interesting article on Edomitic wisdom, suggests that some parts of the Old Testament which seem to reflect a pessimistic or agnostic attitude to life (cf. Pr 30. 31¹⁻⁹) have been influenced by, or derived from, Edom, whose pessimism 'is, in a measure, the result of the depressing environment.'

The most important article in the *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* is a long and searching criticism by Sebastian Merkle of the literature connected with Bellarmine and a plea for the authoritative disclosure of original sources, on the ground that the interests not only of truth but of the Church are in the end better served by an unvarnished tale than by fulsome panegyrics or the suppression of inconvenient facts. Merkle charges not only the older biographers, but some of the more recent who claim to be working on scientific principles, with cherishing in their historical work the fanciful conceptions of holiness which characterized the writers of the more or less legendary lives of the saints.

J. E. MCFADYEN.

Glasgow.

In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

Home.¹

'I will arise, and go to my father.'—Lk 15¹⁸.

ARE you one of the children who are always asking questions? 'Mummy, why this?' and 'Daddy, how that?' If so, you must be a bit of a nuisance sometimes to grown-ups, you know, chipping in like that when they want to talk about something else. Still, to keep asking questions is the way to learn. And nowadays every one does it.

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

How? Why? What? Where? they keep on saying; and so because we ask questions, we are learning heaps of things. People wanted to know about the birds—where they go when they leave us—and so on. And so they put rings on some young ones they snared, with a request on them that, if any one happened to catch that bird, he would let it go again, and send word where it had been found. One young bird marked in Scotland was seen over in Norway a few months later; and another in Czecho-Slovakia. And a young gull from Northumberland turned up, where do you

think? In far away Newfoundland of all places. Young though it was, it had struggled against the storms over the wide Atlantic, and had reached the other side! What did it do when it was tired on the long journey? Did it poise itself on the huge rushing billows, and get rocked sound asleep by that fearsome cradle? Any way, there it was, safely over. But all birds come home again, back to the place from which they went. Swallows may fly to Africa, but next year they will rest under the same old eaves. Some gulls come every year to where I spend my holiday, as far from the sea as you can be in Scotland, and on a little islet in a little loch among the heather there, year after year, bring up their family. And then off they go; but always they come back. For something pulls them home.

And it's the same with fishes. People are marking them too, we are told. Some time ago one was caught and let off again at the mouth of the Ythan, away up in the North. And by and by they hooked it in the heart of Perthshire. It had swum all that long, long way, had passed the Don, the Dee, the Tay, and then turned up the Forth, and up the Teith. Because that was its home, it seems, and fish like to go for their honeymoon back to the place where they were born. That something pulls them also home.

And it's the same with men and women. Over all the earth they wander from this little island of ours and live away for years and years. Yet they like to come back, to see the place where they lived as boy and girl, and where their Mother used to be. That queer something pulls them too.

You know the feeling, don't you? It's lovely going for a holiday, and everything is splendid, and every one so kind. And yet sometimes you get a little bit homesick, isn't it so? When you climb into bed, and at home Mother would be tucking you in and she is not there; or when you think of what they are all doing and you aren't sharing in it. That makes you feel lonesome. And glorious though the holiday is, home's best, and you wish you were back.

Ah, but you have another Home, didn't you know? Look at the ninetieth psalm. An old scholar thought it must have been written by Moses. They say he was quite wrong. But it was a bonnie guess. Think of those people blown about the wilderness for forty years, sick of it often, wishing they had some place to call their

own, standing upon the borders of other people's lands and watching them, all with a home to go to every night. And they themselves had none. But yes, thought the old poet, yes, we have. Our Home is God. And He is your Home too. And Home is always far the nicest, isn't it?

This stupid boy thought not, was tired of home. It was so dull, he said. He was fed up with it, and off he flung to have a good time, and be his own master. But he, too, tired of that, got sick of the far country, felt that something pulling him back to his own real place, just like the fishes and the birds. I'm going Home, he said one day, and started.

And you, perhaps, have wandered a long way from God. You have been sulky and cross and crabbed and horrid and mean; have got far, far from home. And aren't you tired of it, and sorry for it all, and homesick to be back again. Ah! Home is far the nicest, and always it's where we're with God that we are happiest. If I were you, I would send Him a telegram, a little prayer, 'Father, dear, I am coming Home'; and I would set off now, out of that dull, lonely land of sulks and crabbedness.

When you came home from your holiday there was Dad at the station, and he ran to you and was so very glad to see you, wasn't he?—though you had clean forgotten to write him all the time you were away. And when this stupid boy got back, his father was so pleased to see him that he, too, ran to him, threw his arms about him, crying out happily, 'Oh! laddie, laddie, it's fine to have you home again.'

And, however horrid to God you have been, that's what He will do to you if you go Home.

Brother Juniper.¹

'And to another one talent.'—Mt 25¹⁵.

Seven hundred years ago Saint Francis died, and this month Christians all over the world will be celebrating his memory, and talking of that 'little poor man of Assisi' who by the sheer power of his goodness brought light into many dark places in the thirteenth century. Men turned from evil to goodness; they built beautiful churches and monasteries; they went singing all over Western Europe because they came under his spell, and even now there is music in his name. Indeed, it

¹ By the Reverend R. Strong, M.A., B.Litt., Norwich.

has been said of him that in very many ways he was more like our Master than any man who has ever lived. There was music in his own heart, and so he found music everywhere; he had so much of the love of God in himself that love cast out all fear, as it always does. No wonder he found the world beautiful and could always sing:

Praise be to Thee, my Lord, with all Thy creatures.

What was there in the world to fear when God loved him, and he could talk of Brother Sun, Brother Fire, Sister Sleep, Sister Owl, and all the rest. Why, he had brothers and sisters everywhere.

Just because Saint Francis was so wonderful in goodness and charm, we may sometimes do less than justice to some of the humbler men who gathered about him and helped him in his work. They also were faithful men, and we believe Saint Francis himself would have desired that their names should be remembered. One of them used to annoy as well as amuse him, but whether Francis was annoyed, or amused, he never failed to love him. His name was Brother Juniper. I am glad that when Mr. Laurence Housman wrote 'The Little Plays of Saint Francis' he made one play all about Brother Juniper. Brother Juniper was not a very wise man, and if any of you have not gained as many prizes this last term as you desired, it is quite likely you will say, 'This is the saint for me. Some of the work of the world is done by ordinary folk after all.' Not that I am going to ask you to take Brother Juniper as a model. If you made some of his mistakes, there would be trouble at home; and besides, he himself would have been horrified at the idea of anybody taking him as a model. Whatever else might be true of him, nobody ever doubted his humility. Indeed, if anybody had called him a fool, the chances are that he would have said, 'Glory be to God, that's true.' You couldn't hurt him that way. I have started with a text about the one-talent man because I believe that with all his failings he had a talent, and a very big one, but he himself wouldn't have called himself even a one-talent man. As Mr. Housman has made him say in his play:

When I weep, men laugh that I do it so ill,
and when I laugh, they are like to weep, I
do it with so ugly a face. But God loves me,
and whether I laugh or weep, He knows what
I mean.

The brothers often had to complain about him; they said he was such a special sort of fool that nobody knew what he would do next. What queer stories have come down to us about his blunders. They say that once he cooked rabbits for dinner without skinning them first: he thought the skin would just peel off easily during the cooking. Can you wonder that the monks grumbled when they missed their dinners because of his foolishness? As for generosity, there was so much brotherly love in him that any kind of sorrow was pain to him, and he would give away all he had to relieve another's suffering. His brother monks began to think it wasn't safe for him to possess anything at all, for it was more than likely that the first poor person who came along might get it all. There was a great stir once when they found that a new altar cloth with lovely silver bells on it had been spoiled because he had cut off the silver bells and given them to a poor woman whose husband was in prison for theft. When they lectured him for this, all he could say was, 'Be not distressed about these bells, for I have given them to a poor woman that had the greatest need of them, and here they were of no use at all, save only for vain, worldly pomp.'

With all his blunders, however, people at last began to see what Francis had always seen, the beauty of his soul. Once when he had become famous as a saint, he had to make a journey to Rome, and many people set out from Rome to meet him. As he got near the city he saw two children playing see-saw. What did the saint do but sit down on one end of the log, and play with the children, getting as much fun out of it as they did. The people were greatly surprised, and some of them shocked, no doubt; they didn't expect a saint like this. The charming old story says: 'And Brother Juniper paid little heed to their salutations, their reverence and their waiting for him, but took much pains with his see-sawing.' I'm afraid pictures of the saints are sometimes rather dull affairs, but there was nothing dull about our saint. He wasn't any less a saint because he enjoyed games, and surely God rejoices when His children are as happy as sandboys.

The fact about Juniper which always delighted Francis was that his blunders were always of the mind and never of the heart. It was worth while to have about him a simple-hearted man showing men the love of God in the jolliest, most

human way possible. Well might Francis say, 'Thou hast great wealth, Juniper, for thou hast charity.' I fancy that One whom Francis called Lord would say, 'Loving much, thou art both wise and rich. Enter into the joy of the Lord.'

The Christian Year.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Antagonistic Fires.

'Through faith . . . quenched the violence of fire.'—Heb II^{33, 34}.

1. The writer of these words is reviewing the exploits of faith. He looks back over the wonderful road of his nation's history, and the beacons of faith are so many and so resplendent they seem like a land of unbroken light. It is like as when one stands on the Calton Hill of Edinburgh in the darkness and looks along Princes Street; the separated street-lamps appear to run together, and the radiance is continuous and unbroken. The men and women of faith make a cheerful history. The writer sees their shining triumphs everywhere. Faith makes conquests in every sort of circumstance, mastering them all, and compelling even the most hostile to pay tribute. Yes, faith has even quenched the violence of fire. In the *fires of martyrdom* the faithful in Christ have conquered their pains. They have scarcely felt the flame. Cranmer bathed his hand in the fire as if he were bathing it in a mountain stream. He mastered it even while it destroyed him. His spirit dominated it, and stayed its violence at the frontiers of the soul. And this is the secret—we can only feel what reaches the central realm of consciousness. Look at Stephen while he was being stoned. We are permitted to look into his consciousness. 'I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man sitting on the right hand of God.' That infilling glory swallowed up the energies of his consciousness, and left no dribbling remnant to receive and entertain the pangs of death. By faith Stephen destroyed the violence of the stoning. The body-house was dissolving; the spiritual house was full of God.

2. But there are other fires whose violence can be quenched by robust and positive faith. There is the *fire of destructive passion*. Faith in God can destroy its violence and can even quench the unclean flame. And faith does it in a very simple

and effective way. The best way to put out a fire is to withdraw everything that is inflammable. And fires of a spiritual order resolve themselves into a question of fuel. 'Make no provision for the flesh to obey the lusts thereof.' That is the remedy of an empty wood-house. Think of that word of our Lord. 'The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me.' There was not a bit of fuel about on which the Evil One could light an unclean fire. Not a bit of idle thought! No loose imagination! No illicit dream!

3. And then there is the *fire of destructive temper*. It is a wonderful thing to see a fiery temper subdued by faith, and it has been done a million times. But let it be remembered that when God subdues this kind of fire it does not mean that any executive forces in life are destroyed. The energy of life is not lost; it is only transformed. It is a conversion of forces, and what used to manifest itself in a violent temper now reveals itself in passion of a nobler kind. It is one thing to have a destructive fire breaking out in the parlour; it is quite another thing to have the same fire shut up in a stove in the basement, and distributing genial and healthy heat to every part of the house. The violent is transformed into the gentle, but the gentleness is just distributed violence, and none of the original power is lost. And this transformation is wrought by faith which relates us to Him who is the great Transformer, and who can purify and distribute the force of a bad temper, and change it into a fervent servant of the soul.

4. And what about the *fire of destructive gossip*? And how much there is about! And it is difficult to escape the flame! But the very detachment which faith gives to a life endows it with wonderful security. First of all, such a life dislikes the gossip, and it is a great preservative to have a healthy dislike. A splendid repulsion is a fine defence. A mean gossip soon withdraws his flame if he encounters wet wood. And that is just what faith does. It gives a sort of wet-wood welcome to the fiery darts, and the sender finds no fun in the business. It was this wet-wood welcome which drove Satan away when he sought to allure the Lord. 'And Satan departed from him for a season, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him.'¹

¹ J. H. Jowett, *Life in the Heights*, 235.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Wedding Garment.

'Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding-garment?'—Mt 22¹³.

Communion with God has rarely been reckoned an easy thing. In primitive religion it was usually bound up with the belief that some rite must be carefully performed, or some gift duly offered, by the participant. For all its limitations and extravagances, sacrifice stamped this elementary sense of requirement upon the conscience of the human race. The ritual of the altar was not invariably favourable to spirituality, or even to morality, but it had the virtue of maintaining upon the whole a widespread conviction that kinship with God was not a matter-of-fact relation which required no special effort from men.

With the change of the centre of gravity from ritual to spirit came a new peril—or, at least, a new phase of moral peril—that of slackness and presumption. The very inwardness of the gospel was made to justify an easy-going temper. The abolition of outward sacrifices by Jesus Christ tended, in some natures, to relax the need of reverent care and thought, especially as the requirements were now shifted to the sphere of the will and conscience, where self-deception is much more easy than in the punctilious discharge of ritual or routine. Men often forget that the more inward a demand becomes the keener is its edge. It is harder to make sure of truth in the inward parts and of moral purity than to offer the requisite number of animals, or to go on a pilgrimage. We may deceive ourselves about the one class of requirements, we cannot about the other. Thus, while the first difficulty of the gospel is to be taken at all, the next is to be taken seriously, upon the terms and conditions of God Himself.

Jesus anticipated this danger. Or rather, He found it already among some of His contemporaries. He spoke this little parable to people who were prone to be cool and complacent in their new attitude towards God. 'The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son. . . . And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment.'¹

What is the garment, the absence of which is perceptible to the King alone? We are told that

¹ J. Moffatt, *Reasons and Reasons*, 141.

it is the righteousness of Christ. George Fox said, 'The righteousness of Christ is the spiritual man's own livery.' How did St. Paul define the wedding garment? 'Put off,' he says, 'the old man which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds; and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.' The wedding garment, then, is not assumed from without, it is evolved from within; its germ is implanted in all men, in man's inmost spiritual self; it is the Kingdom of Heaven within; it must be born 'from above,' from heaven, from the heaven within, quickened into life by the heaven above, fed and nourished by the heaven around, which is the Divine humanity of Jesus, accessible in prayer, sacrament, and meditation, and by whose presence the life is enfolded. Watch the peacock butterfly spreading his gorgeous wings to the sun. Whence came that resplendent wedding garment? The King gave it him from above, from within; He did not impute it, but impart it. But the butterfly was not always thus; the germ of the jewelled robe lay hid in the dingy caterpillar that once he was: he evolved it himself by simple obedience to the law of his life; all the caterpillar nature slowly ministering to the butterfly nature he lived it out, and it automatically clothed upon him. If we could imagine a caterpillar taking its place amongst butterflies with its gem-like robe unevolved, we have a parable of a child of God in the presence of the King, with his new man, his spiritual self, unevolved, and his old man with its carnal desires and deceitful lusts monopolizing him.

Now two important considerations seem to follow from this interpretation of the wedding garment.

1. The question which we have repeatedly to ask ourselves is this: Do we know that God's nature, the mystic Christ, dwells in us? Do we know that Incarnation is not an isolated fact in one perfect man, but a universal principle in all men? St. Paul, in this morning's Epistle, says 'be filled with the Spirit'; in other words, let your wedding garment evolve till it transfigures you. The Spirit, the Immanence of God, is the involved factor of the wedding garment which has to be evolved. It is the Spirit, the real man within us, that alone recognizes the Fatherhood. Why do we dare to address the unthinkable creative intensity as Abba, Father? Only because our innermost

being is, in essential nature, one with God. 'Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his son (or the Mystic Christ) into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.'

Do we know experimentally the truth of Paul's words, 'There is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all'; and if this profound interior reality has been even partially recognized by us, does it affect our lives, do we use it in our troubles?

For example, have we ever, in a time of pain or sickness or sorrow or temptation, detached the conscious mind from external circumstances and forced it into temporary oneness with this indwelling Spirit which is the Immanence of God, affirming again and again, 'Christ is in me, He is my life, my strength, my victory, my peace'?

Let us make a real effort to take this transcendent fact of the Immanence of God out of the region of intellectual acceptance, and make it a real sense-experience.

2. Granted that the Parable of the Wedding Garment implies that the great aim of every one of Abba Father's children should be to obtain the consciousness of an indwelling God, what would be the result? We would begin at once to be more useful in the world, because we will be set free from isolated individuality. It is only when we have begun to discover, in the silence of our own souls, that the Lord Jesus, whom we know objectively, and worship as Divine, is the manifestation in perfection of the mystic Christ, the Logos, in ourselves and in all men, that we enter into that state of love and disinterested helpfulness referred to by St. Paul when he said, 'No man liveth to himself.'

The moment we know our oneness with the Father, and so with all His children, we ought to realize that the Soul of the Universe realizes Himself through us, and manifests Himself through us. When Philip asked Jesus to show him the Father, the Lord said, 'Look at me, watch me, the Father in me doeth the works, the Father expresses himself through me.' And He said, 'As my Father sent me, even so send I you.'

Let us carry that thought with us as we move in our daily sphere, in family life, business life, pleasure life, ministering life. He who is quietly co-operating with the wedding garment forming with him (St. Paul calls it having 'Christ formed within us') becomes a creator of happiness, a

diffuser of love, an inspirer of nobility, a channel of grace, a stimulator of the moral life of the race, and though his name may never be heard of as prominent in any great moral reform, he will leave the world better than he found it, because as a son of man, living in conscious union with Abba Father, he has had 'power on earth to put away sin.'¹

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Last Stand of Faith.

'And they answered and said to the king, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.'—Dn 3¹⁶⁻¹⁸.

The Book of Daniel is a story with a purpose. It was written to steady the hearts of patriotic Jews who were passing through one of the severest persecutions for their faith that ever men have passed through. There is no need to dwell on the circumstances of the time when it was written, even though we knew the precise date. The stage is set for any period of time, for every trial of faith has the same elements. There is always, for instance, the golden image. Where will you find a better symbol of the material world and all its glittering appeal to the human heart? And there is always a burning fiery furnace—the threat of loss or suffering for those who will spurn the worship of the world and follow conscience. It is a picture of the eternal temptation, which comes in many different forms, to give ourselves to the things that are seen, to money and fashion and what men call the solid realities, and fling away our faith in the unseen, which in the eyes of men looks merely so much folly. That temptation is the crux of religion. The final question of our loyalty to God is not intellectual, though we may persuade ourselves it is so. God meets us, not with a problem for the mind, but with a moral challenge in actual life. The question really is, whether we shall bow down our manhood before the appeal of pleasure or sense and adopt the selfish standards of the world, or whether we shall be true to the inward voices of our souls and trust them as the whisper of God. That choice meets us all in small things as in great, and it meets us time and again. We may settle

¹ B. Wilberforce, *Steps in Spiritual Growth*, 168.

the question once for all in what we call the choice of Christ, and ever after it is easier; like a man going along a road with a fixed goal, we have settled our direction, and it is merely a matter of going on. But even so, life meets us every now and then, as it did Jesus, with some crisis where we have to reaffirm our faith and say to ourselves whether we are going on.

The message of this story and the picture of these three men give us the right position and the final answer. Their stand is the stand of faith with its back to the wall, and theirs is the one stand which cannot be shaken. There are three stages in it.

1. To begin with, they did not shrink from the choice or try to evade the issue. 'We are not careful to answer thee in this matter.' They were clever men, and if they had cared to use their eloquence they might have found a way of getting out of the trap without either publicly denying their God or doing any disrespect to the golden image. Nor were they going to do any juggling with their own consciences to bow down to the image, for instance, with some private reservation of their own. Some people might have argued that it was better in the long run to save their lives than they might serve God in Babylon, even at the cost of a seeming surrender, than to let their influence be lost for a trifling scruple. There is a Mr. Facing-both-ways in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and Mr. Facing-both-ways is a very familiar character.

Thank God if life forces upon us a choice between right and wrong or faith and no faith, which cannot be evaded. The worst thing that can happen to us is to find ourselves adrift upon an ocean so easy and calm it never brings us up against a situation where we have to grasp the helm and settle where we are going. The great thing is to face a dilemma squarely and seriously, seeing it with open eyes for what it is, without camouflage or evasion. If we see it and face it fairly, the choice is as good as made. For no one man can see evil with the naked soul and love it, and no man can see goodness with the open eye and shun it—if in the depth of his being he is ready to take God's way.

2. But now we come to the foundations of that faith on which they took their stand. First of all they took their stand trusting in what we call Providence. 'Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace.' They believed that God would see them through and would not let them down. After all, they said to

themselves, this world is in the control of God. However strongly the game may seem to run in favour of evil, there are other moves open to God by which the plans of evil may be checkmated.

Whatever we may think of this ancient view of Providence as the benevolent interference of God, it is well to keep an open mind. How the spiritual and the material are related we do not know. Wonderful forces can be set in motion, through prayer and faith, which defy explanation. In the long run the universe is on the side of the man who is on the side of God. Deep down at the base of things, love fashioned the earth in the interests of the Kingdom of God. Evil may play fast and loose with the world for a while, but only for a while. Sooner or later the men who use force to crush righteousness are met and destroyed by the very forces they have called into being. Or what is better still, as Christ has taught us, the very suffering they create sets free the love which will smite them to the heart with shafts of shame and compel them in sore contrition to lay their weapons at God's feet. The paradox of the Kingdom is that God does care for the material things of those who give up caring for them. That has often happened. Consequences are God's department. 'Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.'

3. But the faith of these men did not rest there, for that standing-ground is not deep enough to meet the facts of life in the tempting moment. We do not know what happened at this point. Perhaps they heard a titter, or saw a sneering look on the faces of those who were standing round; perhaps they heard a cynical whisper, 'We shall soon see.' And it flashed upon them—What if God did not deliver them! And just as suddenly the assurance of God's love and care shone up in their soul. Even if God did not deliver their body, His love was stronger than death or hell. 'But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.'

Deep down below all arguments the proof of religion is a vision of something which we see to be supremely good, of something for which, in fact, we discover we are willing to die. That was the position of these men. They were losing their faith or losing their lives, faced with the choice between faith and the furnace, and they suddenly

discovered that loyalty to God and purity and reverence were things for which they were willing to die, things which were far better than prosperity and riches, the favour of kings and even life itself. 'If not, if we have to die, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.' What is that thing which they had seen? F. W. Robertson has a well-known passage in which he makes the same point, 'When everything is wrapped in hideous uncertainty I know of but one way in which a man may come forth from this agony scatheless. . . . If there be no God and no future life, even then it is better to be generous than selfish, better to be chaste than licentious, better to be brave than a coward.' But what is a man doing who is staking his faith on that inner value? He is staking his life on God, or to put it in terms of Jesus, he is taking his stand for the things for which Christ stood, the precious things which grow up and bloom in the shadow of His influence—for when we stand for Christ we are standing for these things, or we are not seeing Jesus at all. That allegiance of our souls in the moral crises of life to goodness, and purity, and love is the reality of our allegiance to Jesus.

What was God's response to the faith of Daniel's companions? The response was of two kinds. On the one hand it came in the kind of men it made of them and their larger influence for God in the community. It is true the writer of the story represents them as having been miraculously saved in the furnace. The Old Testament people were always looking for this kind of marvel. But God's miraculous entry into human life, as we know in Jesus, is through the miracle of a victorious man, whom faith in Him makes more than conqueror.

But there is another response—the consciousness of a Divine fellowship. There appeared in the furnace with them, 'One like unto the Son of man.' God's great answer to our faith is the assurance of what we call His presence. We may not realize it in feeling, but we know. The sense of Christ's presence does not always come to us in the same way. But in some way it comes, the deep, sure consciousness that He and we are one. And it comes when we go out to stand for Him and with Him, out beyond the little interests of our own life to where love meets the sin and suffering of the world in the shadows of Calvary. F. W. Robertson was once talking with a lady who was taking him

to task for his views. She ended by saying she would have to inform the authorities. He replied, 'I don't care.' 'Do you know what happened to "Don't Care"?' she asked. 'Yes,' was the answer. 'He was crucified on Calvary.' There is a deep meaning in that. For all who go out to follow truth and right in their naked faith will come to a cross, but there they will find Christ and in that shadow know the brightness of His presence.¹

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Beneficent Resistances.

'The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.'—Ph 1¹².

In the passage before us, we have another illustration of the superiority of the spirit in man when he is on happy terms with his true source in God. It is a man in prison who writes these happy words, in which there is no anger, no bitterness, but the most beautiful reconciliation.

It is a thing which we cannot ponder too closely, that all the hopeful, happy, triumphant things that have ever been said about life have been said by suffering souls. It has never been from those who had to fight for their life or for their faith, that the hard things, the bitter things, have been said concerning life. All the moral light by which we live has been the legacy of hard pressed and contending souls. There have been no cynics amongst the poor. There has been no contempt for life amongst the poor. And these things bear witness to the true nature of our soul, and to the terms on which by God's appointment a man shall find and retain his highest life. A man is never so strong, so pure, so superior to circumstance, as when some shadow—be it cast by evil-fortune or bodily fear or by a thrust of moral uneasiness—closes him in with Jesus Christ, knowing that there in the presence of Christ or nowhere he must find his new motive for life. We know that it is just such things as Paul was enduring at this time—the loss of friends, the reproaches of enemies, the sense of failure and defeat, as men of the world might suppose—we know that it is such things as these that quicken and fortify all truly faithful souls.

We learn from evidence elsewhere that St. Paul

¹ J. Reid, *The Victory of God*, 283.

had a love for the Philippians above the love which he had for any of his other Churches: it was from the Philippian Church alone that he consented to receive money for his support. Now it is an evidence of true love that it wishes to spare the loved ones any wound; and so the Apostle is assuring himself and is trying to assure them that the things that have happened to him have not been bad things but good things, for they have done him good, and they have done good to others, and he is sure that the longer he lives, the more he will thank God for those very things which they and he might have deplored. 'The things which happened unto me,' he says, 'have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel,' and that in three ways:

1. In the first place, 'my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole praetorian guard, and to all the rest' (v.¹³). St. Paul was sure that there in that rough camp, he was recommending the gospel which he preached. He was sure that here and there one among them would pause and wonder as to what might be the source of his peace. There were stoics at Rome in those days—men of a rigorous and austere morality, who knew how to stand unmoved in their days of disaster; but they never were joyful, they never were thankful for such days. They were only resigned. The best of them were sad. But what would arrest the minds of those soldiers, what St. Paul tells us did arrest them, was that he was lying in bonds, not for a crime, and not for sedition, but for the sake of some loyalty and honour towards God which they could admire, even though they could not comprehend it. A proof that Christ had come was—that St. Paul was there. And, therefore, he could say: 'My bonds are manifest in Christ.'

We cannot all perform, but we may all endure. Here is a service of Christ wherein all may enrol. We may endure hardness as His good soldiers. We may give God's providences their sweetest names. We may be patient when things are contrary, and modest when things are prospering with us. We may strive to preserve at all times the manner and bearing of those whom it cost much to redeem. We may not be able to do great things for Christ, and yet we may be great in the way we obey and endure.

2. In another way, as the Apostle sees, the things which had happened to him had fallen out

unto the progress of the gospel. We have it in v.¹⁴: 'Most of the brethren in the Lord, being confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear.' Faith is contagious. One helps another in the things of the Spirit. Courage begets courage. Many a battle has been won because at the critical moment a leader appeared or some one raised a cheer. It would appear that there were Christians in Rome who were losing heart, but the faithfulness of Paul was like the sound of a trumpet in their souls. We who stand committed to Christ are under a spiritual obligation to maintain a clear and decisive loyalty—not only for our own sake, but for the sake of those whom our steadfastness will strengthen, and whom our faultiness might confuse or discourage.

3. There was one thing more which led the Apostle to say that the things which had befallen him had fallen out unto the furtherance of the gospel. We have it in v.¹⁹: 'I know that this shall turn to my salvation, through your supplication and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope.' In other words, for this is the heart of that saying, the great Apostle also confessed that harsh and baffling things may have their place in taking us further into the love of God.

It sometimes happens that we who know ourselves, and who do not wish to deceive ourselves, can say quite confidently why a certain thing had to befall us which did befall us. It was the last stroke of the eagle stirring her nest and driving out her young, not in a senseless cruelty, but only in order that her young may learn that they have wings. Just so things happen to ourselves which simply compel us to put our trust in God to a depth which otherwise we should never have attempted. Things on the other hand befall us at times about which, with all our desire to see the Hand of God, we cannot see the meaning or the value. But why concerning these things should we be in any ultimate doubt? We have still a long journey to go. We are poor judges of what we shall come to need. Why should we not believe that He, who knows what is before us, is putting us in readiness for it? Most of us can say in regard to the contrary and interrupting things that *have* befallen us, 'It was good for me that I was afflicted.' It is not a great venture of faith surely to believe that in regard to things in our experience, which may

be baffling and dark to-day, 'We shall yet praise Thee, O Lord.'¹

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 TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

ARMISTICE SUNDAY.

No more War.

'And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks : nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.'—Is 2⁴.

The bright expectation of this paragraph is found not only in the Book of Isaiah, but in Micah, and in the self-same words. It was, perhaps, common to prophetic minds in that age.

When the fulfilment was to be looked for is not quite clear : 'in the latter days,' say both Isaiah and Micah. Certain it is that the immediate future of Jerusalem offered the sharpest contrast to the prophet's picture. The city had become corrupt ; long years of security and prosperity had bred luxury, social oppression, contempt of God. It did not surprise Isaiah that in his own time there was no apparent advance towards the ideal of his vision. Had he not known from the day of his call that his testimony would be unheeded ? Whether men would bear or forbear, he must needs speak ; nay, the tragedy of his lot was this, that he must speak, knowing that men would not hear. This picture of an era of peace and brotherhood stood in sharp contrast to the realities, and even to the tendencies, of his time, but he left it as a true God-given vision to find fulfilment in God's time and way.

The paragraph from which the text is taken is among the most familiar of Biblical passages to many of us. The singular beauty of the vision has appealed to us, and its hope has stirred us. It focused the expectation of our earlier years. Then came the Great War and the shattering of our anticipations. And now again there comes a stirring of hope, and it behoves us to consider whether these hopes are in vain and our aspirations noble but impracticable. And, therefore, we raise the question : Must wars continue to the end of time ? There are three difficulties which hinder men from giving a hopeful reply.

1. There is an *erroneous use of the Scriptures*. The view is still held that it is almost impious to work for the establishment of lasting peace, because

¹ J. A. Hutton, *At Close Quarters*, 191.

the outlook of the New Testament is upon an era of war without earthly limit. The authority of Jesus is pleaded on behalf of this gloomy expectation ; special interpretations of the Apocalypse are adopted ; various passages from the Epistles are cited. To meet the position fully would demand a series of sermons. We will only say in general terms that nothing can be more hopeless than the effort to get out of the language of Jewish Apocalypse, whether in the Gospels or elsewhere, definite pictures of human history and its lines of development. The people who undertake to deal with apocalyptic references, as containing a body of predictions awaiting fulfilment, land themselves in hopeless confusion. The value of apocalyptic sayings is not that we take them as literal descriptions, but that we get back to the thought that is at the heart of the Jewish eschatological notions, that only with God are all things possible, that not by human power alone can great deliverances be achieved, but always by the real presence and activity of the Supernatural—of God.

2. The second difficulty is found in a *pagan view of the State*. The traditional view of the State held by statesmen and diplomatists is appalling when viewed from the Christian standpoint. A State is regarded as possessing an absolute sovereignty ; in effect it owes nothing either to God or man. Propositions which when laid down for an individual would be branded as unsound and morally detestable are laid down as a matter of course for the State.

If States were in their nature such as the political theory of to-day assumes, they would be inhuman monstrosities, and the duty of every lover of his kind would be to end their useless and dangerous existence. There is no place in an ordered society for an Ishmael ; and no ordered and stable civilization is ever possible in a world consisting of States, each of which avows itself a corporate Ishmael.

Closely related to this view of the State as an absolute end is the common mode of speech held by statesmen. The State is a 'Power'—not a brotherhood, not an association for promoting the knowledge or happiness or well-being of its people or of the race, but something that possesses and exercises force. Put in what will seem a brutal form, but which is only too accurate, the respect which a State claims and receives is in proportion to its capacity to kill and destroy. Our thinking has got on false lines ; we are the slaves of unexamined words—'State sovereignty,' 'Power,' and

so forth. Bring those words to the test of reason and of Christianity, and they will be seen to stand for intolerable ideas; and when once the false doctrine is discerned in its pagan simplicity, we shall be on the track of true thought. At present we are the slaves of inherited superstitions.

3. We come to the third point—the enormous *practical difficulties in ridding the world of war*. There are, as we have seen, false notions to be replaced by true; there are deep suspicions having their roots in long-standing historical relations; there are sinister interests that thrive on human strife; in a word, there is the terrible fact of human sin. They who labour for world peace, and hope that it will some day be attained, are frequently told that they take too lightly the fact of sin.

But we must refuse to be frightened by talk concerning the vast power of sin. 'Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith?' Are we to conclude that in very truth goodness is feebler than wickedness, and that, because the hindrances to be overcome are enormous, we are justified in abandoning an ideal which commends itself most clearly when we are conscious of being nearest to our Master? Faith dares not reason so; it is still called on to remove mountains. It is true, as Lecky has said, that Christianity has been more successful in

dealing with individuals than with communities, but though 'the mills of God grind slowly, they grind exceeding small.'¹

What practical steps can we take? Let us turn to the League of Nations, for it implies a dethronement of the ideal of war. But the League of Nations requires the power of public opinion behind it. Now when the suffering of the Great War is still upon our hearts, now when the memory of the brave dead who gave their lives, not to win territory or fame, but to secure to future generations deliverance from the curse and horror of war, is still green in the loving and grateful appreciation of those for whom they died, we have the power that the League of Nations needs.

We thank Thee, Heavenly Father, for the great prophecies and dreams of the inspired men of Holy Scripture, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. May we believe in their visions as in Thine own decrees, and labour with all diligence to bring their realization nearer. Increase our faith, we beseech Thee, and take out of our hearts all malice and revenge, that we may believe in and work for the coming of the reign of the Prince of Peace. *Amen.*

¹ J. H. Rushbrooke, in *Christ: and the World at War*, 151.

Francis of Assisi.

BY THE REVEREND J. P. LILLEY, D.D., EDINBURGH.

WHATEVER shortcomings may be found in the Italy of to-day, it cannot be said that the people forget to honour the memory of the great souls that have made her name famous amongst the nations of the world. This devotion was seen on a great scale in the month of September 1921, the six-centenary of Dante's death. Then every municipality of the country, aided by the services of the Church and the publications of the press, joined in paying tribute to the poet of the *Divina Commedia*. In the latter half of the present year, a similar recognition is being made of the life and service of Francis of Assisi.

There is a link between these two names that is not always noted. It is clear that Francis' *Song of the Creatures* and other hymns encouraged Dante

to choose the vernacular as the medium of his own work. It is plain also that the poet's sensitive heart was filled with admiration of the stand that Francis made against the worldliness and pagan corruption of the Church in the age in which he was born. To discern this, we have only to turn to the eleventh canto of the *Paradiso* and read the glowing eulogium of the saint which Dante puts into the mouth of Thomas of Aquino. There were two princes, says Aquinas, whom God in His mercy raised up to guide His cause amidst the troubles that beset it. One was the seraphic saint of Assisi; the other, Dominic, the cherubic light of Spain. Confining his own words to Francis, the speaker likens him to a sun, that, rising through a darkening sky, brought with his beams an orienta-