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In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

The White Line.¹

'I will run the way of thy commandments.'—
Ps 119³².

Down in the cities where there is a rush and jostle of traffic and such a crush, with motors flying this way, and motors flying that way, and motors rushing every way, at some dangerous corners where there is like to be a smash, they have thought out something to prevent accidents, have painted a white line in the centre of the streets; and they tell every one in cars, 'Now you mustn't come swinging round this corner any way; you must keep to your own side of this line; motors going this way to this side, and motors going that way to that side. And if you won't, if you come barging round on the wrong side, there's going to be questions asked and quite a lot of trouble. You didn't notice? Are you blind? The line is painted white so that you can't help seeing it. You meant no harm? You have driven for years and years and never had an accident? Perhaps. But some day, if you rush about like that all over the road, you'll have one, and a bad one, too. Anyhow, you've to keep to your own side.' And if the driver in the motor plays the game, and says, 'All right! I'll be careful about it after this, and keep to my own proper side of the white line,' that's what it means to run in the way of the commandments.

You and I haven't got a car—worse luck!—and yet it's difficult, isn't it, for us too to get about without running into some one, to put in a long, wet Saturday afternoon without a quarrel with somebody, to live day after day at school and not fall out with some chap or other? For he wants this, and you want that; or perhaps you both want the same thing and both can't have it. And we're in such a hurry, and keep cutting in before the others, and it's difficult not to go crashing into something as we come rushing round some corner. And God knows it is difficult. You mustn't go flying about like that, He says, or there's sure to be bad trouble some day. Look, here is a white line, plain to see, that I have had painted in the centre of the street; keep to your own side of it,

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

always run in the way of the commandments, and things will be all right.

If we do, there will be plenty of room for us on our own side. We won't be cramped or crushed one little bit. Yet isn't it funny how we always want to do the things we aren't allowed to do? Often you can see cows and horses in a great, big field of green, fresh grass; and yet, with all that to eat, they are stretching their necks over the barbed wire of the fences, straining to reach something that isn't half as good as what they have in plenty. It's the hedge being there that sets them longing for it. And you do feel an itch and longing to sit up at nights. Why? Just because you aren't allowed to do it. That's why. For we're apt to think that the things we can't do are the jolliest; that to be good is to be dull and prosy, and a bit of a muff; that it's the fellows who disobey and don't care who have all the fun and the adventure; that the other side of the white line looks far more exciting. That's all nonsense. A fine story-teller died the other year, and she said, 'If I could write my books all over again, I would correct a silly mistake that I've been making. I've written as if the selfish people were the big and brave and manly people; and they are not, but just babies who can't play the game, and stand up to their temptations and go straight. It's the good folk who have all the fun and the exciting things in life, and they are the real heroes, not the other mugs.' There's plenty room and heaps of interesting things upon the proper side of the white line. It is from the windows on that side of the train that you have by far the prettiest view.

Anyway, we've got to keep on that side, or else there'll be trouble—not to-day perhaps, and not to-morrow maybe; but some time there will be an awful spill. You may slack to-night and yet get off at school to-morrow wonderfully well; you may creep through quite a lot of times, but some day there will come a test, or an exam, or an inspector, and there'll be a hideous smash, as sure as anything. You may be greedy and grabby and it won't seem to matter very much; for it is only about little things. But some day there'll be a bigger thing, and it will tell then. Some one will be wanted to play in the big match. You? 'Oh,

no,' they'll say, 'he's no use, he's so selfish; he never passes, he wants to do everything on his own, and to have the whole credit for himself; he is no good at all.' Or, 'What's the good of playing him? He doesn't hit out for a win, thinks only of his wretched average, and won't take any risks for the side's sake.' And you will be left out—too selfish.

And some day God will want upon His side some one on whom He can depend. What about you? No, you won't do at all! I knew a Colonel at the War who was ever so chummy with his young officers; yet all the time he was taking note of them, and watching them, and he knew them better by far than they ever realized. Some one would be chosen for some big adventure. 'Why didn't you give it to So-and-so?' I would ask. 'No,' he would say, 'he wouldn't do. I saw him once get into a tight place in a game of cards, and he got flustered and lost his head. Flustered at cards means flustered in a big thing too.' Or, 'I have seen him chaffed, and he got rattled and ratty over it. Now, I need some one for this job who can keep cool and steady, very cool and very steady. No, he's a good fellow, but for this he just won't do at all.' And so if you and I in little things keep barging anywhere all over the road, are selfish and peevish and cross about just nothing at all, it doesn't seem to matter much, yet some day God will say, 'No, I've been watching them, and they won't do,' and will set us aside.

Far better keep our own side of the white line always, and in everything.

Fiddle and I.¹

'Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee.'—2 Ti 1⁶.

He is an old fiddle, richly marked and of beautiful tone. Lest he should catch cold he is always wrapped in an old shawl, and his home is a leather case, lined with green plush. But the loveliest thing about him is his voice; at times it is surpassing sweet, and its notes have won him many friends. But of late he has been silent—as mute as the harp that hung on Tara's walls. And I am sorry to say that the fault is mine. For the fiddle is mine, and he can only speak when I encourage him. I love him still, but for a long time I have had so many other

¹ By the Reverend Norman Goodall, M.A., Walthamstow.

things to do that I have left him alone. When I have occasionally spoken with him and tried to discourse sweet music, the voice has sounded so little like the old voice that I have put him away again, sad and disappointed.

But I took him out again the other day and gently caressed the strings with my fingers. The tone was still rich, but my fingers were stiff and out of practice and the notes came painfully. After a few minutes I put him down again and looked at him, and as I did so the room I was in seemed to vanish and I saw a little boy, about seven years of age, holding the fiddle for the first time. His arm was a little short and his fingers clumsy, but the teacher was very patient, and when the boy got tired and disappointed with his own efforts, the teacher took the violin and made it sing as though it was the easiest as well as the most beautiful thing in the world. After that he tried again, and though it was a long time coming, gradually he learned to make the fiddle say sweeter things. But it was a slow and painful business, especially when the teacher was not there to help, and the daily practice was the hardest thing of all. One, two, three, four; one, two, three, four—is it time to finish yet? One, two, three, four; one, two, three, four—I am sure that clock has stopped. One, two—oh dear, why do I have to practise when the sun is shining and the boys and girls are playing in the street? But time and patience work wonders. It was a great day when the 'Blue Bells of Scotland' was first tried. Then came 'The Minstrel Boy,' and after that 'Blue Bells of Scotland' with variations.

A few years later there came a great opportunity. The boy, who was still rather small, was given the chance to play in an orchestra with grown-up men and women. It is true he was hidden amongst the second fiddles, and he was told to get to practices very early so that he could put up the music-stands and save the men from getting their hands dirty. But he didn't mind that very much so long as he was allowed to play even second fiddle in some of the most wonderful music that was ever played.

Then came changes. The boy became bigger, left school, 'went to work,' lived away from home, found more and more to do. And now he stood looking at the silent fiddle and seeing pictures of what used to be.

'Fiddle,' I said, 'I am sorry about it all. Do

you think we can ever get the music back again ?'

'Why not ?' asked the fiddle. 'I still have my voice and you have your fingers. What is there to hinder us ?'

'I don't quite know what it is,' I answered. 'But you know as well as I do that there is a difference somewhere. Every time we have talked together lately we have both sounded awkward and disappointing.'

'And I think I can tell you why,' said the fiddle. 'First of all, you don't practise. And then you don't go to a teacher ; you try to manage all by yourself [and you stumble at difficulties which a master would explain. If you really want me to speak in the old tones and to make music that is lovelier than ever, you must first of all go to a master who knows more about it than you ; and then you must practise hard, and do it every day, whether you "feel like it" or not.'

The fiddle said no more, and I slowly wrapped his shawl about him and tucked him in his green plush bed. But I knew he was right, and I knew that the music would come again if I took the trouble to practise and keep in touch with a wise master.

And what is true of the fiddle is true of the lives God has given us. Our lives were made for music—music like the song of the angels bringing peace on earth and goodwill amongst men. We don't learn to make it all at once. We have to grow and learn and begin with simple efforts, until the time comes when we can take our place in the great Orchestra of Life and help to fill the world with music. But while it is sometimes hard to learn, it is always easy to forget, and most of the troubles and sorrows in the world come because people forget. They grow careless and become busy with other things, and the music of life is left behind. And there's only one way to get it back. It is the way the fiddle talked about. We must practise daily, 'whether we feel like it or not,' and we must keep in touch with the Master. For Jesus was one who never forgot the music—the music of love and goodwill and unselfishness. And to those who have learned to follow the Master and give their lives to Him there have come the secret and the power to make music which grows richer and more glorious every year.

The Christian Year.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Spiritual Growth.

'For this cause we also . . . do not cease to pray and make request for you, that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.'—Col 1⁹. 10 (R.V.).

The scriptural conception of the saintly character and career is that of an ever-increasing strength and joyfulness. So far the scriptural conception is in agreement with the general law. It was said of William Pitt, 'He never grew ; he was cast' ; yet, as a rule, the normal person grows mentally in power and resource. Occasionally a youthful saint may astonish us by his completeness of character and exceptional ripeness of experience ; but the law of the spiritual life is that we go from strength to strength.

Professor Rufus Jones in his recent book, *Finding the Trail of Life*, re-lives his boyhood in order to interpret the religion of a boy 'and to show the boy in his struggle to get through the jungle and to find the trail of life. . . . More real than the snow fort which we stormed amid a flight of snowballs until we dislodged the possessors of it, was this unseen stronghold of an enemy, who was dislodged only to come back into his fort stronger than ever, so that my assaults seemed fruitless and vain.

'When he was a boy on the frontier, going through a similar struggle, Abraham Lincoln wrote on his home-made arithmetic these verses :

Abraham Lincoln,
His book and pen :
He will be good,
But God knows when.

'I know precisely how he felt. . . . I now began to be haunted by the idea that I could never really like myself, that is, be satisfied, until I was every bit good, while all the time this attainment seemed an almost hopeless quest. The result was that I had, in this period, moments of wonderful happiness when I thought of the future life, and imagined myself an inhabitant of the heavenly city ; followed by other times of depression, when I saw myself as I really was—far from heavenly in nature, and as unangelic as boys usually are. I kept up a

vague hope, which I sometimes put into a prayer, that by some miraculous event I might be made good, and so have the struggle done with ; that, in a word, I might anticipate heaven, and find out here what it was like to be every whit good and do now the kind of things I should do when I got to be truly an angel.

‘I think that my Uncle Eli more than anybody else helped me to realize—not by what he said, but by what he did—that this goodness of character which I was after is not something miraculous that drops into a soul out of the skies, but is rather something which is formed within as one faithfully does his set tasks, and goes to work with an enthusiastic passion to help make other people good.’

Many sincere Christians, whilst conscious of much in their life that is genuinely good, are distressed to find it so faint ; they are almost as deeply abased by the sight of their virtues as pained by the evidence of their faults. Victor Hugo says of our Queen Anne, ‘No quality of hers attained to virtue, none to vice.’ Whatever we may say of ourselves concerning the latter, we have reason enough to lament the faintness of the former. We often need to pray :

Forgive our faults, forgive our virtues, too,
Those lesser faults, half-converts to the right.

But this need not always be. It is delightfully possible that the graces of to-day so sadly lacking in the glow and glory of life may become full of the bloom and sweetness of perfection. Luther Burbank, the Californian florist, has succeeded in raising out of a wild field daisy a blossom five to seven inches in diameter ; gladioli of greatly enhanced beauty he has taught to flower around the entire stem, instead of on one side only ; the poppy he has so enlarged that it measures ten inches across its brilliant bloom ; and the amaryllis has increased in diameter from two inches to nearly a foot. Are not corresponding enlargements and transfigurations possible in our moral and spiritual life ? Our present graces may be starved and meagre ; our kindness, justice, truth, patience, purity, and love, of the meanest growth, no better than the coarse grasses and dwarf blossoms of the prairie ; and yet how large their possibilities ! How delicate and splendid these traits of Christian character when seen in the Master, and in the disciples who follow Him closely ! And there is no strength, serenity, or charm that we admire in

the elect that may not be reproduced in the weakest of us.

The origin of the Christian character is a new heart and a new spirit, and all development begins with that inward renewal, a renewal in the spirit of the mind. The culture of character may be attempted on other lines, prompted by different motives, dominated by independent models ; but such culture is not Christian. Revelation teaches that character is based on a spiritual principle, a principle of life, and its growth in power and beauty implies a fuller expression of that life. It is therefore vain to seek the ennoblement of the outer life unless we are careful vigorously to maintain the interior life. ‘I am the true vine. . . . Abide in me.’ Here, then, is the vital truth, the principle of moral perfection is affiance in Christ. He is absolutely essential to the realization of all the high, far-off excellence of which we have an intuition and to which we sincerely aspire. In His presence we must dwell, His beauty contemplate, His merit trust, His love share, into His spirit drink, and in His steps we must follow.

We may borrow an illustration from another sphere to help us to understand this intimacy and oneness with our Lord. John Gibson, the famous sculptor, writes thus in his diary : ‘I renewed my visits to the Vatican. It is not to criticize that I go there, but to seek instruction in my art, which the Greeks carried to perfection. Those few masterpieces which have come down to us, though I have dwelled upon them thousands of times, still at every new visit are contemplated by me with fresh wonder and admiration, such is the influence which anything perfect, both in design and execution, has upon the mind. Those grand works of the Greeks are ever new, and always produce fresh enchantment however often they may be surveyed.’ Thus must we linger over the pages of the New Testament, contemplating closely and lovingly the living, speaking, active Jesus, whilst He grows upon us, more and more filling our imagination, mind, and heart. We can grow in strength and grace and blessedness only whilst this is our habit.

1. We must grow in the *knowledge* of Christ. To increase in the knowledge of Christ is to increase in the knowledge of God ; He is the only true, saving, vivifying source of such knowledge. How prone we are to think that we already know Christ, when indeed we only know something about Him ! There

are many degrees of knowledge, and we have not fully learned Christ until we know Him and the power of His resurrection. The tourist who, guide-book in hand, hurries through the Vatican galleries, may flatter himself that he knows the immortal masterpieces, and for the rest of his life talk as if he did; but he does not know them as Gibson did, who had 'dwelt upon them,' intently and sympathetically, 'thousands of times.' Really, only Gibson knew them at all. So, if we are to attain to the knowledge of Christ, a thousand times must He engage our thought and affection, and each time it will be with fresh wonder and admiration.

2. We must grow in the *faith* of Christ. Accepting Him as 'the way, the truth, and the life,' it is essential that we confide increasingly in Him as such. Then in the midst of trouble and mystery our souls will experience a deeper calm, being content to ask Him fewer anxious questions. But having confessed our sin with the sighings of a contrite heart, let us once for all, and with growing conviction, shelter in His merit, trust in His grace, expect His utmost salvation; and as He has given us solemn assurances for the great future, we may with unshaken faith boldly face death and the grave, resting upon His word and promise. 'That we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; but, dealing truly in love, may grow up in all things unto him, which is the head, even Christ.' In his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians St. Paul writes: 'We are bound to give thanks to God alway for you . . . for that your faith groweth exceedingly.' Ever more deeply satisfied with the hope of the gospel, let us once attain this 'full assurance,' and to us the promise shall be fulfilled: 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.'

3. Lastly, we must grow in the *love* of Christ. How continually the apostles dwell upon this! To realize in our Saviour more vividly the goodwill of God to His creatures, His unfailing kindness and faithfulness, His eternal mercy and grace, until our heart glows responsively, this is to grow in the holiest passion of Divine love; and herein is plenty of room to grow. Shakespeare affirms:

There lives within the very flame of love
A kind of wick or snuff that will abate it.

Yet most of us know even a human love in which this, happily, is not true; and as we apprehend more clearly the love and beauty of God in the face of Jesus Christ, we become conscious of an adoring affection that no kind of wick or snuff can abate, and in this white inextinguishable flame our soul and its felicity are perfected.¹

SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE ADVENT.

Fear in the Night.

'Every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.'—Ca 3^a.

What a vivid glance into the life of an Oriental monarch! Round Solomon's palanquin, decked with the luxury of the East, stand sixty chosen soldiers, fully armed, in order to ward off any nocturnal attack. The king's very sleep has to be protected against intrigues and conspiracies within the palace.

The uneasiness of the head that wears a crown has passed into a proverb, but proverbs are more often quoted than credited, and we may forget, in our envy of high rank, the well-worn story of its accompaniment. Our eyes are generally dazzled by the glitter of wealth and position when we look at those whose life seems to be one round of pleasure, apparently unvisited by any of the swarming cares that vex our lower level. It is only the sensible who stop to reflect that no success is without its penalties. The recollection of this might help to make us more considerate, for one thing. Misery does not always vaunt itself in rags and tears. There may be some secret fear in the night which haunts those who, in our vicinity, apparently have smooth and prosperous careers. And, for another thing, we might learn to be more contented with our own lot, instead of imagining that we could escape troubles by getting away to the high shores of the world where the tides of prosperity run brightly. Such positions are often won at the expense of heart's ease.

At the same time, it is not by accepting an obscure lot or by reducing our ambitions that we can escape fear in the night. That far-off Oriental scene—the palace in the night with its unsleeping bodyguard—is the counterpart of human existence. Many people who know nothing about palaces know what it is to be kept awake by the dread of the nameless, noiseless power against which they have to summon

¹ W. L. Watkinson, *The Shepherd of the Sea*, 123.

a host of good resolves and firm beliefs. Uneasiness about our health or prospects, doubts as to our usefulness in life, anxiety about our families or about our ability to hold out against temptation—these and countless other forms of evil haunt us, waking or sleeping. What are God's sentinels against such vexing thoughts? How does He strengthen life in face of the disturbing elements in its environment?

1. His first method of reinforcing us is by assuring us of *the value of the soul*. That is a conviction which brings its own peace and strength. Guards are set round what is precious, and man's first line of defence against the inroad of fear is the assurance that his life counts with his God, and counts greatly, even although he may seem to be numbered among

The mere uncounted folk
Of whose life and death is none
Report or lamentation.

This faith, which underlies all religion, is a moral stay of the inward life. When a man allows himself to doubt if his existence matters anything at all, he lays himself open to depression at every turn. As the sense of his personal destiny is lowered, his sense of security also tends to diminish. But when he finds that God has honoured him with the calling and career of faith, he realizes that life is far too precious to be left at the mercy of accident or impulse. It is not a conviction which wealth and success invariably tend to deepen. On the contrary, as our possessions accumulate, there is a danger of imagining that our life consists in these, instead of in the character of the possessor. Whatever be our lot outwardly, and sometimes the humbler it is the better, we must learn that God trusts us with life, that we are responsible to Him for this royal gift of personality, and that He in turn is responsible for us. We must recognize, in the light of Jesus, that it is not a matter of indifference what we make of ourselves. No guard of high resolves and steady faith surrounds the man who is simply living for appearances and selfish ends. But when we take life on God's high terms, faith breathes into us a new dignity and self-possession; we are steadied by the revelation that the meaning of life's discipline is the growth of our souls into the likeness and the mind of Christ. In the thought of that, guaranteed by the life which Jesus has revealed and which He lives to realize,

we can take refuge from disturbing fears about our future.

2. Another sentry stands armed before the chamber of the soul: it is *the instinct of danger*. The sense of its own value prompts life intuitively to protect itself against peril. Our moral being seems to have a mysterious shrinking from temptation, which corresponds to the instinct that makes insects avoid contact with certain plants or animals. The innocent heart recoils at a touch of coarseness. Conscience warns, or rather it forewarns, us against compromising associations, and the lurking sense of discomfort in certain pursuits or pleasures is often a wise movement of Nature, not a mere caprice of dislike. 'It is one great security against sin,' as Newman said, 'to be shocked at it.' No doubt it is an instinct of repulsion which we may easily kill. But if we do harden ourselves to compromise with moral evil or to scoff at sin, the soul is left a prey to fear, and to worse than fear. To lose the sense of being ashamed at what once made us uneasy, is not a proof of moral strength: it is no evidence of safety to become indifferent to what we are now pleased to dismiss as idle scruples and outworn prejudices. Moral purity and power are not ensured by any such hardening of conscience. It ought to be as natural for us in the spiritual as in the physical life to suspect and shrink from what would injure us. Such vague antipathies and aversions may sometimes be due to narrow training or to unenlightened prejudice, but they are often part of the defensive power granted by God to the human soul in a world where life is repeatedly surrounded by spurious and contaminating influences. We tamper with them at our peril.

3. Finally, there is a safeguard of life in *obedience to the will of God*. 'In his will is our peace,' in knowing it, in doing it, and in bearing it. Restlessness is sometimes due to the secret feeling that we are following our own bent. And there is no peace for the wilful or the wayward. As soon as we sit loose to any of the duties in which the will of God meets us, the inward life becomes unsettled; it is a breach of harmony with the ruling purpose of our world, and through the breach excitement and unsteadiness creep in. When people are constantly on the outlook for self-gratification, whether their pleasures are refined or low, when they clutch at all that comes their way and fret when they miss it, when their chief thought is about their own

rights and wishes, it is no wonder that this self-will dissipates their inward peace of mind. Restlessness is the inevitable result of depending upon external things like popularity or ambition for the interests of life. It is duty that steadies us. The surrendered will enters into the quiet strength of God's will as a will of goodness and love. 'Peace I leave with you ; my peace I give unto you,' said Jesus on His last evening. He could say that, because He could also say : 'As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.'

Be our circumstances or surroundings, therefore, what they may, here are the safeguards of the soul, within reach of the humblest, and indispensable to the strongest and most fortunate. For the threshold of fear can be crossed so easily ! Harassing care and dread can thrust their way in, no matter what is our age or income or position. And where is our defence, where but in God's faith and faithfulness, worked into the moral experience of those who keep in touch with the realities of His life ?¹

ADVENT SUNDAY.

The Incarnation and Human Life.

'The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.'—
1 Co 15⁴⁶ (R.V.).

1. *The Incarnation and Human Nature.* The Incarnation is a great revelation of God. It declares what God is in His essential being. It reveals His redeeming passion and His love. The Incarnation did not create that passion and love. They were in God all the time. Love is His nature ; Father is His everlasting name ; but His love and His Fatherhood were both hidden till Christ came. The Incarnation declared them and made them manifest. It is in it we perceive the essential dignity and greatness of human nature—it was great enough to contain the Eternal Son of God. One of the best theological treatises ever written was that by Anselm on the question, 'Why did God become a man ?' That led Anselm at once to the discussion of sin and of atonement. But there is a question just as vital and important which concerns the Incarnation itself, and it is this, 'How did God become a man ?'

The answer to that question is this, that God could incarnate Himself in man because there was an essential kinship between the human and the Divine. Augustine says, and says quite truly,

¹ J. Moffatt, *Reasons and Reasons*, 169.

that the Divine became human in order that the human might become Divine. But this also is true (and to that extent Augustine's saying needs to be supplemented and corrected), that the Divine was able to become human only because the human already partook of the nature of the Divine. For, like God, man is a moral personality. Of course there had to be a great self-emptying on the part of God to become a man. But the possibility of Incarnation was present because man was a moral personality like Himself. God could not incarnate Himself in stars and suns, vast though they are, for stars and suns are just masses of unthinking, unfeeling matter. But He could incarnate Himself in man because man was a thinking, feeling, willing, moral being. The ground of the Incarnation is the great truth that God and man are essentially akin. This is the representation of man that we get in the Bible. When God had finished the work of creation, according to the old Genesis story, He said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.'

The final proof of the greatness of human nature lies here—it is such a nature that the eternal Son of God could use it and wear it and inhabit it. It is akin to the Divine. And it was the birth at Bethlehem that made all this obvious and clear. It did not create the greatness of human nature ; it revealed it—revealed it as so intrinsically and essentially sacred and Divine a thing, that the Son of God could become a man, a real man, and yet be the eternal Son all the time. The Incarnation has ennobled and glorified human nature. It is impossible for us ever to think meanly or to speak disparagingly about it again. 'The true Shekinah of God is man,' said Carlyle. But the Apostle Paul had already said the same thing in simpler but still sublimer fashion when he said, 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you ?'

This truth about the essential greatness and sacredness of human nature is certainly no 'mere doctrine.' It has the most direct and potent influence upon life. If you think meanly of a thing, you can never do justice by it. Mean thoughts of human nature will lead directly to mean uses of it. And there are certain things that tend to make us think meanly of it.

(1) There is first our accentuated and deepened sense of the insignificance of man as compared with the vastness of the universe. Science has

given us an infinitely larger universe than our fathers ever dreamed of. It has multiplied space till it has become almost boundless ; and extended time till it has become almost infinite. And in contrast with it all the littleness of man has become emphasized, until some men become almost paralysed by a realization of their own insignificance. They argue that in such a universe they do not count, and what they do does not matter. And reasoning of that kind leads straight to useless and sometimes to very unworthy living. If we are to live nobly we must be delivered from everything that savours of self-contempt. And the way to such deliverance is to remember who and what we are. Bulk is no criterion of worth. You can balance on the tip of your finger a gem that shall out-price Snowdon. We must refuse to be terrified by this emphasis on mere mass.

(2) And if, on the one hand, the contrast between the universe and the individual makes us think poorly of human nature—so also do the things we see in man himself. For human nature as we see it in actual experience is often debased, degraded, sensual, vile. There are human beings who inspire us with nothing but aversion and disgust—they are so unspeakably base and foul. Our temptation is to despise all such and despair of them. But, if we either despise or despair of them, we shall be wholly unable to save and redeem them. We shall do with them as the Pharisees did with the publicans and sinners of their day—leave them to perish. The only way in which we shall be able to do our duty by the lapsed and the lost is to look at them in the light of the Incarnation. In spite of all their degradation and sin, those lost men and women possess the same human nature as Jesus did. They, too, are *capax Dei*, able to receive and contain God. Christ may be born again in them. Realizing that about them we shall despise none and despair of none.

2. *The Incarnation and Human Relationships.* Our Lord did not come into the world as a detached and isolated Person. He was a second Adam—a new starting-point for the race. But He was not unrelated with that portion of the race which preceded Him. In a real way He derived from it, He was intimately connected with it. He was a shoot out of the stock of Jesse. He was of the house and lineage of David. He was born the son of Mary. He entered into the various relationships of life. He began by being a little child in

the home. He was subject to His parents ; He was a pupil in the school of Nazareth ; He was an elder brother to a number of brothers and sisters ; He filled His place in the community ; He paid His taxes ; He was a loyal citizen of His State. And in all these relations—these everyday human relations—He was the Holy Son of God. By becoming Incarnate and living our life, Christ has shown how holy and sacred all these relationships can be made. Christ did not make them sacred by entering into them—but by entering into them He revealed to us how great and sacred and beautiful they are when rightly discharged. These relationships cover very much the whole of human life. What the Incarnation has taught us is that we can live as the children of God in every one of them.

We can make our family relationships sacred and Divine. They are such when rightly discharged. They are often enough the very reverse of sacred and beautiful. There is friction where there ought to be harmony ; selfishness where there ought to be loving service ; rebellion where there ought to be glad obedience. Life would be a different thing for multitudes of us if only we were wise and gracious parents, obedient children, unselfish and helpful brothers and sisters !

We can make our civic and state relationships sacred and Divine. Jesus paid His taxes, paid them scrupulously and honestly. 'Render to Cæsar,' He said, 'the things that are Cæsar's.' He made his very citizenship a Divine and sacred thing. And so may we. State life has become more complex since Christ's day. It touches us at more points. Now the State—I do not say any particular form of State—is a Divine institution. Our citizen relationship is a sacred relationship. Our obligations to the State are not to be evaded ; they are to be punctiliously and cheerfully discharged. And perhaps there is nothing we need more at such a time as this than the exaltation of our whole conception of citizenship. It is not a profane but a sacred relation. In our payment of our taxes and the discharge of our other State responsibilities we can act as children of God.

3. *The Incarnation and Daily Toil.* The Incarnation has glorified and ennobled all our human labour. For fifteen years Jesus was in the carpenter's shop and worked at the carpenter's trade. And all the time while He was mending ploughs and chairs and building the houses of the people of

Nazareth, making the doors and fitting in the windows, He was in His Father's house and about His Father's business. His labour was a sacred and holy thing. I think that was why Jesus entered a carpenter's home and Himself became a joiner. He wanted to show the glory and divineness of all labour. Amongst the Romans and Greeks especially all manual toil was despised, and was largely left to the slave. Now, if Jesus had been born as a member, say, of the professional classes, that pernicious heresy might have endured and become more and more widespread, and the countless millions who toil with their hands might have thought their labour was a profane and almost contemptible thing. But our Lord redeemed those tasks we think humble from any touch of secularity by Himself becoming a carpenter. For He did His carpenter's work as the Holy Son of God.

There is a familiar little poem which seeks to express the feelings of an old joiner at finding Jesus was a carpenter :

'Isn't this Joseph's son?'—ay, it is He ;
Joseph the carpenter—same trade as me—
I thought as I'd find it—I knew it was here—
But my sight's getting queer.

I don't know right where, as His shed must ha'
stood,

But often, as I've been a-planing my wood,
I've took off my hat, just with thinking of He
At the same work as me.

He warn't that set up that He couldn't stoop down
And work in the country for folks in the town ;
And I'll warrant He felt a bit pride, like I've done,
At a good job begun.

So I comes right away by mysen, with the book,
And I turns the old pages and has a good look
For the text as I've found, as tells me as He
Were the same trade as me.

There is a story told that an artist,—humble and unknown,—after gazing at one of the great pictures of one of the Master painters, was overheard to say in a kind of ecstasy, 'I too am an artist.' After gazing at Jesus, we too may well be moved to cry with gratitude and wonder, 'I too am a man.' For what the Incarnation has taught us is this, that every son of man may become a Son of God.¹

¹ J. D. Jones, *Watching the Cross*, 55.

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

The True and Living Way.

'Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.'—Jn 14⁶.

The confession of Thomas, 'Lord, we know not whither thou goest ; and how can we know the way ?' compels Jesus to lay aside all figurative language, through which the prosaic minds of the disciples could not pierce to the moral and spiritual truth taught, and to declare plainly that the Father is His destination, and that He Himself in His life and teachings has shown, and is, the direction in which men must move to reach that destination. The goal of man's life is the Father, and the only course which can bring men to that goal is Himself, and that for two reasons : because He, as the truth, brings God to men by His revelation, and because He, as the life, brings men to God by His redemption. The clause, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life,' is a Hebraic mode of expression, and in our English fashion of speech would be expressed, 'I am the true and the living way.'

1. *The Goal.* Language is too poor to express spiritual relations adequately and accurately. Jesus speaks of going to the Father Himself, and of men coming to the Father by Him, when He does not mean a change of place but a change of state. To come to the Father means for man to think God's truth, to do God's holy will, to feel God's joy, to live in God's love. It is the mental, moral, and spiritual ascent of the human personality to the fulness of light, life, and love in the Divine personality. Man is made by God for God, and becomes himself only as he becomes one with God, not in an impersonal absorption but in a personal union.

The fact of sin as it hinders man's realization of his sonship, so it affects God's manifestation and communication of His Fatherhood. Sin is not merely an arrest of man's development Godwards ; it is a misdirection of that development away from, and even against, God ; it is an interruption of that ever-closer fellowship with God which goes with man's growing likeness to God. Coming to the Father on the lips of Christ does not mean, as for many modern thinkers, the realization of our personality in its affinity through communion with God, but it does mean God's love seeking and saving the lost, forgiving sinners, receiving the prodigal son to the heart and home of the Father.

The coming to the Father in ever-closer fellowship and ever-growing likeness is a process not completed in this earthly life but continued in heaven, for in the Father's house are many mansions. The hope of immortality is rooted in, and withers if severed from, the faith in God's Fatherhood. Death for Christ was a going to the Father; and with all reverence for His perfect personality, His own desire to depart warrants us in affirming that even for Him death did mean a clearer vision, a closer communion, and a freer and fuller obedience. Limitations of the expression and exercise of His sonship were removed by death. Death, then, for man, as for the Son of Man, is a condition of the approach to God. The progress in truth, blessedness, holiness, love, which is here begun, is not ended by death, but even enters on a new stage. Jesus' words would suggest that death is a great advantage to the soul as the beginning of a new stage of that Fatherward development of man, and a stage which is marked by so great an advance that, for those to whom to live is Christ, death itself is gain. As the Divine Fatherhood has subdued sin to its purpose of love, making the experience of forgiveness better even than the sense of innocence, so it has also made death the minister of a greater good.

2. *The Way.* In the relation of God to man the Christian religion asserts and insists on the mediation of Jesus Christ. This is not a mistaken tribute of affection, gratitude, and adoration to Him, but a simple acceptance of the claim He makes for Himself. He is the Way; it is through Him God is revealed as Father, and man is redeemed as son.

Just as in man's body there are organs of sensation and organs of movement, and in his brain afferent and efferent nerves, so in his consciousness there is cognition and conation. While he is active in both, yet in the former he is receptive, in the latter he is initiative. In the one the world impresses itself on him, in the other he impresses himself on it. The mediation of God by Christ has also a twofold aspect. To man as cognitive He is the truth, to man as conative He is the life. As the way He reveals God to man, and redeems man to God. God seeks to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, for God Himself is true. Men who abide in the word of Christ are His disciples, and they will know the truth, and the truth will make them free. In the Fourth Gospel truth

means not only subjective sincerity and objective veracity; it means even ultimate reality. Jesus is the Truth not only because He meant to speak truly, and because in fact what He spoke was true, but because in Him man is in immediate contact and intimate communion with what is absolutely and eternally real.

That man may come to God he must know God as He is. It is not necessary that he should know everything about God. There are secrets of His wisdom and resources of His power, to say nothing of glories of His perfection, which man has not the capacity to know and understand. What he needs to know is all of God which concerns his relation to God as Father. What Jesus revealed of God was not all that the man of science may want to know or the philosopher to understand, but the one thing religion craves to be sure of, the relation in which God stands to man, the Divine Fatherhood. Here is man's contact with ultimate reality, and it is a real contact. We do not believe God is Father because the belief works for our succour, comfort, and progress. It can so work only as we are sure that our belief is true. This certainty Jesus gives us not in word and deed only, but in life itself. He not only speaks and does the truth, He is the Truth. In His sonship, His trust in, love for, and surrender to God, the Fatherhood of God becomes a present reality in the life of man. In His grace to sinners, the love of God as forgiving sin becomes a present reality for sinful mankind. The certainty about God's Fatherhood and the forgiveness of sin at last communicates itself to us, and the Truth He is becomes the truth which we can hold without doubt or question.

In describing Christ as the Truth which becomes our truth, we have already passed to the second aspect of His mediation, for He is not only before us, but in us. He is the Life. This truth—that Christ is not an external testimony about God merely, but an internal influence of God—runs throughout the Fourth Gospel. He is the Living Bread, of which if any man eat he shall live for ever. He is the Resurrection and the Life. The reality of God which as truth He reveals, He realizes in us as life.

Not only is there, but there must be, the dependence of man on God as Creator, in whom we live, and move, and have our being; for human existence depends on Divine immanence. But still more in the conscious voluntary relation of

man as son to God as Father, man has only what God gives. He thinks truly only as God's truth takes possession of him; he loves fully only as God's love makes his heart its home; he acts rightly only as he wills God's will in himself. And this fulness of God comes to man in Jesus Christ. There may be a genuine Christian experience and a sincere Christian character in which this immediate contact, intimate communion, and indispensable communication with Christ is not prominent in the consciousness—the man knows himself living rather than having Christ in his life. But in the more intense types of piety this constant indwelling and continuous inworking of Christ in the human progress in goodness and grace is ever frankly confessed.

There is an exclusiveness in the Christian faith which is found in no other religion. It makes claims for Christ which no other religion makes for its founder. The monopoly of sole Mediatorship that it asserts is not an exaggerated compliment which a fond fancy for Him inspires. It is

an echo of His voice; and if the claim made for Him is unwarranted, the blame must fall on Him. 'No man cometh unto the Father but by me.' He is, as the true and living way, the only way to the Father. It is a historical fact that religion as a filial relation to God is found only where Christ's revelation of God's Fatherhood is known. No other religion has offered the world the same gospel. This fact is the inspiration of the foreign mission enterprise. If human personality is to fulfil its promise in union with Divine Personality, if the sinner is to be changed into the son of God, Christ must be known, trusted, and obeyed as Saviour and Lord. If the claim He makes for Himself, which the history of man's religion justifies, that He alone brings men to God as Father be true and not false, it must be the constant purpose and the strenuous effort of all in whom this relation to God has been realized to secure its universal realization. The path of duty is clear.¹

¹ A. E. Garvie, *The Master's Comfort and Hope*, 85.

The Early Christian Interpretation of the Passover.

BY J. RENDEL HARRIS, LITT.D., LL.D., D.D., BIRMINGHAM.

THE modern student of the history of the Church, whether he is occupied with its antecedent Judaism, or its recrudescence and neo-Judaism, has no difficulty in assigning an origin to the Passover, or to the Easter Festival which has taken its place. He knows from the twelfth chapter of Exodus, with the assistance of the happy translator's instinct of the English Bible, that Passover means what it says, that the word is jointed in the middle and will easily come apart; some one or some thing passed over some other person or things, and the historical explanation in the Book of Exodus is that the Destroying Angel of the offended Jahweh passed over the blood-marked houses of the Israelites, and that this motion of the Destroyer is called in Hebrew *Pesach*, or, as we say, Pass-over.

But even in the English Bible there is a suspicion that the incident recorded need not be the Judgment upon the Egyptians. In the Song of Triumph by the Red Sea, which is the original Paschal Hymn,

the singers affirm that 'the enemy will be as still as a stone, until thy people pass over, thy people whom thou hast redeemed.' If the English Bible were an accurate reflex of the Hebrew, we should say at once that the real Passover was the *passage* of the Israelites *through* the Red Sea. At this point a difficulty arises: the word translated Pass Over is not the word previously used (*Pesach*), but another word (*Abar*). The same word, however, has been used previously (Ex 12²³) as an alternative to the more usual word, and the translators have given us their perception of the linguistic variation by saying:

'The Lord will pass *through* to smite the Egyptians; . . . The Lord will pass *over* the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come into your houses to smite you.'

It seems clear, then, that the word *passover* might describe either the motion of the Destroying