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constituent Churches are not in fact composed of men and women who have received the illumination of the Spirit.

(b) The greatest contribution of Congregationalism will lie and has lain in actual, living, local Christian Churches which without any outside authority and in reliance upon the guidance of Christ alone have organized their Church life, served their neighbourhood, and built up a Christian community having, under human limitations, all the marks of a true Church, unity, catholicity, and holiness. There is no gainsaying a real Congregational Church; such there has been and such there is still.

(c) The Congregational principle of spiritual autonomy within the sphere of the Gospel is a true principle, though the denomination should collapse (which God forbid) through the infidelity of the individual Churches. There are already signs (notably Dr. John Oman's book 'The Church and the Divine Order') that the Congregational principle is no monopoly of those called Congregationalists. The unity of the Church of the future must be not inconsistent with the liberty of the Christian man, and the liberty of the Christian group, and the spiritual authority of the whole Church as based upon that one creative experience of God in Christ which constitutes men Christians.

In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

Footsteps.¹

'My footsteps.'—Ps 17⁵.

DID you ever hear of Sir John Franklin? Some eighty years ago he set out with two ships to try to fight his way through the long terrible north-west passage up in the Arctic, and they got lost somewhere in those white wastes. For years no news of them came through, till people got anxious, and expedition after expedition went to look for them. For a long time they learned nothing at all, and then at last slowly, bit by bit, the truth came out. An old Eskimo woman was met one day somewhere up there. She couldn't speak English, but she understood they were seeking for some lost men, and she acted a little play to them—how, oh, a long time ago, a few men had trailed past, dreadfully tired and lean, footsore and limping, yet staggering along. And then she pointed the way they had gone. So they set off in that direction. And another day, still searching here and seeking there, they came upon footsteps, fresh footsteps in the snow, and thought, 'people who might know something of the missing men have passed this way quite lately,' and they pushed on. And by and by they came upon a camp—a white man's camp—and ran to it. And then they stopped short, staring hard, with something gripping at their hearts. For there, sitting in a circle, were some of Sir John Franklin's men, their clothes laid out to dry, and everything looking

as if they had just arrived. And yet they had been dead for years! And with them was a record, telling how the ships had got caught in the ice, how after some two years the food was failing, and Sir John Franklin had died; and so those that were left had broken up into small parties, and set off, hoping to find some way home. But they could go no farther; they were starved and tired out: it was over. A sad little tale! But what struck me most was those footsteps, quite fresh footsteps in the snow. And yet they were made years before. I should have thought that they would have been covered over by fresh falls, or that the sunshine of the short summer yonder would have melted them. But, no. Days, weeks, months, years after the men were dead their footsteps were still plain and clear for any one to see.

Well, you and I had better think of that. For we, too, are always making footsteps. And years and years after this some of them will still be there. 'Nonsense,' you say; 'I go down into town, and next day who can know about it? My feet left no mark on the hard pavements; or, if they did, well then the prints are already smudged and blotted out by all the others who have passed since then.' I know. Yet we are making other footprints, and they last. You know quite well we do leave footsteps. Mother comes home, and 'Tommie has been in,' she says at once. Yet you aren't there, and the house is still and quiet, no racket, never a sound or sign of you! How does she know? Why, by your footsteps left quite plain—lumps of mud off your shoes upon the

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

carpets, a litter of things on the floor, the cushions crushed into a heap. You're not there, but, like Friday on his island, you have left footsteps on the sand. People have only to go up to your room to know what kind of boy or girl you are. If there's a heap of clothes on every chair, and a huddle of things pitched anyhow on the floor and a mass of odds and ends upon the dressing-table, 'Humph!' they will say, 'a pigsty of a room like this shows what kind of a creature lives in it.' Your footsteps are left staring in the snow, though you have been away for hours.

Sometimes they last for years. If you bigger ones are cross to Mother, just you watch, and you'll see how the younger ones will start that too. They'll follow in your footsteps; yes, even after you are grown up and are far away. Or if you're slack at sticking into lessons, they'll be apt to drift along just like you too. You know how on the moors every one follows where the path has been beaten by others, and goes twisting through the heather.

Or if you can't be bothered turning out at games, don't care what happens to the School, are too lazy to do your part for it, well you are doing what you can to set up a tradition, and other fellows down the years will likely follow and be lazy and mean-spirited and selfish too; till at last, some big-hearted chap comes along, thinks of the School, and works for it, and starts a new tradition, and every one begins to follow in his footsteps, and to play the game like him. Oh, we leave footsteps all the time, and they may last so very long. And where are yours taking those who come after you? Do yours lead down, or up; on and on to a camp of death, or home?

Learning to Fly.¹

'Oh that I had wings like a dove!'—Ps 55⁶.

Many a boy wishes that he could fly like a bird. And I heard of a girl not very long ago who was standing in a field when an airman landed in his aeroplane, and took her up for a flight, and she enjoyed it very much. And not only boys and girls, but great kings have longed to do what the birds do. For instance, there was a king in Egypt who used to lie all day on his couch watching the birds and wondering how he could fly too. But I would like to tell you, boys and girls, just exactly what you would need to do if you wanted to fly an aeroplane well.

¹ By the Reverend T. Crouther Gordon, B.D., Pitlochry.

I remember the first time that I was taken up in an aeroplane. There were two of us in it—the instructor and myself. It was a very interesting aeroplane, and I was busy watching the propeller going round and the wings and the rudder and the tail, and trying to count the wires and the struts, when suddenly, above the noise of the engine, the man in front shouted, 'Strap yourself in!' And that was a very wise thing to say, for in the air the machine is very unsteady, and if you loop the loop without being strapped in, you might fall out and then nothing could save you. A chum who was a pilot along with me met me one day after he had been up in his machine, and I noticed he was very pale. He told me, 'I was just going to loop the loop when I saw that I was not strapped in.' So you see it is best to strap yourself in. But of course, boys and girls, it is just the same in life. Life is very unsteady. Sometimes we are turned upside down. Father dies and the home has to be broken up. Your little chum leaves the district and you feel lonely. Or perhaps, later on when you are working you lose your job. And the best thing for you is to strap yourself to the Church. It has stood the test for two thousand years, and you will always be safe in working for what is good inside the Church.

There was another thing I noticed just when we were going into the air. The pilot watched which way the wind was blowing, and moving to the other end of the aerodrome he turned the head of the machine into the wind, and so flew into the air. And he told me, what I want to tell you, that in flying you must always 'take off' into the wind. Now that seems a foolish thing, because the wind just keeps you back. You cannot fly so quickly if you are flying right into the teeth of the wind. And yet if you do not do that the wind will turn your machine over on its side and you will get into a 'sideslip,' your machine will crash, and you will be killed. So, you see, you must always face the wind. Now it is exactly the same with yourself. You have some things that keep you back. You have not the chance that the fellow next door has. You are away from school every winter with a cold, and so you are behind the other boys. Your father cannot give you as much pocket money as the boy next door. You are not going to get a fine education like the doctor's little boy. Well, then, do not turn your back but face your difficulties. Work all the harder, be all the more careful with your pennies, study in your spare time. Remember that no man has done so much for India as Lord Curzon, and he had to have a

special steel waistcoat to protect his body because his health was so bad. And you can do as great things if, like the pilot, you will face the things that keep you back.

But the third thing I noticed when we were flying in the air was that the pilot had many instruments in front of him. One told him what height he was. Another told him how quickly the propeller was running. Another told him where the North was. But there was one instrument his eye never left, for it told him how he was flying. It is called the 'sideslip indicator,' and acts like a spirit-level, but among ourselves we just called it the 'bubble.' And the great point to remember, if you want to fly well, is always to keep your eye on the 'bubble.' If you do not do that you lose control of the machine and it will crash to the ground. In a mist you cannot tell where you are, and your 'bubble' alone saves you. You must always keep your eye on the 'bubble.'

And it is no different, boys and girls, if you want to do well in life. But you ask me, 'What bubble have I got to keep my eye on?' And sure enough, God has been good enough to give you just the very thing. One boy calls it his soul; another his conscience. But it never fails to tell us whether we are flying right or wrong.

Do you want to be a good pilot? Then do these three things: Strap yourself in. 'Take off' into the wind. Watch the 'bubble.' And if you want to be a good man or a good woman the best plan is to do just the same.

The Christian Year.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

Was Christ the Product of His Time?

'As a root out of a dry ground.'—Is 53².

Was Christ simply the product of His time? Can we account for His spirit and character by the world into which He was born? Can we trace His teaching to any of the religions then existing in Judaism, Greece, Rome, or the East? Was the teaching of Jesus in line with the central spirit and aim of these religions?

1. It was natural that the Jews, having alone received a pure worship, should think themselves the chosen of Heaven; it would perhaps be beyond mere human nature not to regard other nations with contempt. When their Holy Books were translated into Greek, it was regarded in Jerusalem 'as a bitter day, like the day when the golden calf was made.' The later Rabbis laid on those who

gave their sons Greek learning the same curse as on possessors of swine. The evidence might be multiplied almost endlessly; but one example from the life of Jesus shows the lengths to which this hostility towards the Gentiles carried His fellow-countrymen. When in the synagogue at Nazareth He ventured to say that prophets of Israel were sent to a heathen man and a heathen widow, His neighbours, shocked at His impiety, attempted to fling Him headlong from the brow of the hill.

Had Jesus been merely the child of His time and country He must have shared this central spirit of His race. If so, how comes it that His teaching has passed from land to land with its universal appeal of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, inspiring its followers with the ambition of winning the world for Christ? When the Greeks wished to see Him, He saw in their desire the call to that lifting up on the Cross which should draw all men unto Him. Because Jesus is not the child of His time, He is the child of all times.

But let us pursue this into further detail.

(1) One would think that Christ's attitude to the *Pharisees*, and theirs to Him, would at once disprove the idea that He drew His teaching from any of their Rabbis. The Gospels are full of denunciations of their righteousness. By their oral traditions they made void the commandments of God, making the Sabbath a burden, rendering it possible for a son in the name of duty to God to allow his parents to starve, discussing trivialities such as whether it is the temple or the gold of the temple which makes an oath binding. To Him, who came not to destroy the Law but to fulfil it, such teaching 'made void' the commandments of God given through Moses. Nevertheless, while they spun the weighty matters of the Law—justice, mercy, faith—into an endless web of casuistries, He went straight to the central spirit of all law, the spirit of love. He denounced the externality of their righteousness.

(2) Turn now to the priestly and aristocratic class in Israel—the *Sadducees*. They accepted the Law, but rejected the Pharisaic comments and traditions. In Moses they found nothing about a future life, so they denied the Pharisees' doctrine of a Kingdom of God beyond the grave, a world of spirits and angels, where men receive rewards after the resurrection. To the Sadducees the Kingdom of God was on earth, in Palestine; the reward, material prosperity, long life and abundant posterity in which alone a man finds his resurrection. We can judge for ourselves whether

Christ is indebted to them for His doctrine of the future world with its rewards and punishments, and His teaching about the resurrection.

(3) We come now to the *Essenes*. They were a brotherhood of Jewish monks with a reverence for the Law so great that to speak against it was accounted worthy of death. They did not go up to the sacrifices in the Temple, because their own meals were their sacrifices. They kept the Sabbath with more than Pharisaic strictness. They considered the body as impure and evil. Wine and meat were shunned; bread and water were their food and drink; marriage was forbidden among the majority of them; money was not used; property was held in common. Separation from the world, abandonment even of Israel, was the central idea of this sect. Morally it was by far the purest section of Palestine, but it refused to mix with even its own countrymen.

Now, some say that Christ was a member of this community, and that from its teaching He drew His doctrines of love to God and love to man. Let us, then, compare His way of showing love to man with that of the *Essenes*. His first public act was to leave the wilderness, go to a marriage feast, and make wine for the guests. Again, Christ refused to allow the Sabbath to become a burden by its strictness. He discountenanced the merely ceremonial ablutions of the Pharisees. While He doubtless recognized the need for reasonable hygienic laws, He condemned over-carefulness in the matter of what it was lawful to eat and drink by declaring that a man is defiled only by the evil thoughts coming out of his own heart. He mixed freely with every class of society, even the outcasts, accepting invitations to dine with Pharisees and publicans alike. Above all, the *Essenes* retired to the desert, abandoning a world which they despaired to save. Jesus set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem to lay down His life for the salvation of all mankind.

No, Jesus Christ is not the product of His age and land, any more than He would be the product of ours if He were born here and now. The contempt of the Jew for others was so natural that we can only account for its absence in Christ by seeking for the reason in some source higher than our foolish human nature. The Pharisee made the Law a thing of letter and rule; Jesus made it a thing of life and spirit. The Sadducee denied the immortality of the human soul and made the earth all; Jesus gave to the soul hopes which demanded eternity and were themselves the earnest of its immortality. The *Essene* counted the touch

of the world pollution; Jesus walked straight into that world, mixed with its very outcasts, laid down His life to redeem it. He stands out from His surroundings as separate and original.

2. No one has suggested that Jesus drew any part of His religion from ancient *Rome*. So we turn now to *Greece*—to intellect refined to the point of beauty. The Greek worshipped the human mind, and his wisdom penetrated even Judaism, so that some think it has, in some measure, influenced the religion of Jesus. Now, let us take the opinion of one who has earned the right to judge. To the Apostle Paul the central thing in Christianity was 'Jesus Christ and him crucified.' In that broken, dying form on the Cross he saw the very image of God. But to the Greek, he says, this Cross which is the wisdom of God is foolishness. For the Greeks sought after wisdom, the wisdom of their own philosophies, and what could a crucified man be but foolishness? How could His marred form be the image of their bright and beautiful deities incapable of suffering? Socrates declares that there would be 'great impropriety' in the gods having either joy or sorrow; and Aristotle in his conception of them shuts them up in mere contemplation of themselves. Now this, perhaps the loftiest Greek wisdom concerning the Divine nature, declares that it is the very blessedness of God that He is incapable of entering into human life in love or action. Obviously this would make the very idea of an Incarnation an absurdity. When Jesus says, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,' He contradicts absolutely the whole Greek conception of God. 'God,' He says in effect, 'is not thus so absorbed in love and contemplation of Himself that He is incapable of loving His creatures; He is not so lifted like a marble statue that He cannot suffer in order to redeem, for it is written, "I have made and I will bear."'

3. We turn now to the East. *Buddha*, 'the Enlightened One,' lived nearly six centuries before Christ; and many hold that Christianity has borrowed from Buddhism its leading doctrines. There are certainly some strange resemblances. But the central spirit of Buddhism is pessimism and despair. The fundamental conviction is that existence in every form is sorrow. Salvation is to escape absolutely out of existence by killing out that desire of life which betrays us to continue living by the delusive hope that life will bring happiness. By salvation, *Buddha* meant the final extinction of life; Jesus meant 'life, and life more abundant': *Buddha* meant sinking into absolute

unselfconsciousness ; Jesus meant rising into a more and more vivid consciousness of self in God. He came in order to prove that joy is at the heart of the universe, and to give life more abundant.¹

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

Christ's Call to Rest.

'Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while.'—Mk 6³¹.

These words bring before us Jesus Christ as '*a Man of rest.*' Of Christ as a worker we have often heard. Jesus was indeed a toiler above all men. His life was a short one. Three-and-thirty years covered its brief span. Yet He put more into it than a Methuselah. As soon as boyhood was past, He went to toil at the carpenter's bench, and, when He left that, it was to crowd into three short years the work of a life that was to regenerate the world. How long did Jesus work ? The early morning found Him praying on the mountain-top—the noontide found Him tramping from city to city, and the evening found Him still at His healing work.

And yet, though Jesus was emphatically a Man of work, He was also a Man of rest. There were times when in the very midst of His activities He would suddenly leave it all, pass into the solitudes, and not return until His wonted calm of mind was restored. Such a time was this in the Saviour's life. He was now at the very height of His activities. The multitudes were thronging Him, so that He had time 'not so much as to eat.' It must have been a real joy thus to see His work going forward from triumph to triumph, yet it was just then that He stopped it all. A short message is brought Him—John the Baptist is dead, slain by the cruelty of a vindictive woman. Jesus recognizes in it a call to the solitudes, a call to rest, and meditation, and prayer. 'Come ye yourselves apart,' He says to the disciples, 'into a desert place, and rest a while.'

Now this call which Jesus addressed to His disciples is one He addresses to us. We live, too, in an age of toil and care. The noise of its machinery is clanging in our ears. Those of us who are in it are swept off our feet by a congestion of engagements and occupations so incessant that we have sometimes little time to eat ; while, if we are not in it, if, owing to some great industrial dispute, the wheels are no longer moving, the silence does not mean for us rest. Rather the reverse. It speaks of anxious care to employer and employed

¹ J. S. Carroll, *The Motherhood of God*, 53.

alike. It follows them into their hours of unemployment with a burden more heavy even than that of work. It is an age of work, or, what is worse, of want of work.

Now, what is the danger of this fever and fret of our modern life ? The danger is that in the midst of our work we are apt to forget the worker, that our inner life becomes flat and stale and unprofitable, that we develop into mere machines.

Is there not a similar danger, too, in our religious life ? Is not the lack of rest, the lack of depth, the great want in our religious life to-day ? There never was an age of such Christian activity as ours. The activities of a former day were entirely concentrated on worship ; now we have societies of all kinds, for young and old, meetings all the week through, conferences and associations of every kind. It is, no doubt, a vast improvement on the old type of Church life in many respects ; and yet is there not a danger in it too—the danger of becoming factory looms, grinding out our yard of Christian work but with no hidden life, no deep experience behind it ? The ordinary services of the Church it finds dull and lifeless. It lives on excitement. It has no restfulness, no meditation in its life. It has never gone with Jesus into the 'desert place to rest a while.'

1. Let us look at one or two of these resting-places, and let us begin with what is suggested by our text, *the rest which is produced by any outward change in our surroundings.*

'Come ye apart into a *desert* place.' It was away from the ordinary haunts of men that Jesus called His disciples, out of the current of life into some quiet place. Such a habit, we know, was familiar to Jesus. The night with its starry solitudes, the mountains with their calm peace, even the stormy waters of the lake of Galilee—these were the resting-places of Him who had nowhere else to 'rest his head.' This, then, is one of the resting-places of the tired spirit, a change in the outward environment of our life to the solitudes. Such a change, indeed, has now almost become a necessity of our existence. Summer by summer our cities empty themselves far and wide ; some to seashore and island, others to quiet countryside or mountain glen. It is a great rest, a welcome break in the monotony of life.

But, while thus our bodies are refreshed, let us not forget that our spirits need refreshment too. 'Come ye apart and rest a while' is what Christ says to our souls as well. See in the rest of Nature a call to a deeper rest than Nature alone can bestow. Surely even to the most prosaic there is a ministry

in Nature, something that appeals to our deepest longings. That wild and restless sea, does it not speak to our restless spirits of that troubled sea within, which can never be at peace till Christ says to it, 'Be still!'? And these great mountains, always peaceful, have they not a message to our souls of that 'peace which passeth all understanding'? Yes, surely God speaks to us in this resting-place, if only we have ears to hear, of that 'rest which remaineth for the people of God.'

2. Once again, *worship*, either the worship of the sanctuary, or the worship of 'the secret place' of individual prayer, is another of life's resting-places.

It is not always possible to change our outward surroundings, but there is one resting-place which is always open to the troubled soul, the resting-place of prayer. Some one has said that 'prayer is the well-spring of character.' As the river draws its streams of refreshing water from the solitude of the hills—far off from the city through which it flows—so every strong character draws its supplies from the solitudes too, the solitudes of prayer and thought. A great man once said, 'I am too busy to be in a hurry.' He meant that if he were in a hurry he would lose that quiet self-possession which is essential in doing work effectively. Worker as He was, Jesus was never in a hurry. He had always twelve hours for His day of life. And the secret of it was prayer. He did His great work as Nature does hers, quietly, without bustle or strain.

3. There is one more resting-place which comes to our thoughts, *the resting-place of Communion with God at the Holy Table*.

This is the resting-place of companionship. There are some people who dwell in the House of Quiet. No matter how jaded our spirits may be when we go to see them their presence exerts a healing influence on our whole being. To have a talk with them is to bring our souls into an atmosphere of peace. Men of all kinds and classes came to Jesus—who possessed this gift as no other—and they found rest to their souls. Here was One who knew all their weariness and their pain, One whose very look and voice and healing touch chased away all their troubles as the morning sunlight chases away the shadows of the night. It is to such a fellowship that our Lord calls us. Weary, vexed, and troubled as some of us may be, tired as we all are at times with the burden of life, this is what He says to us as we draw near to the Lord's Table: 'Come ye apart and rest a while.' It may be that some of us are like Christ also in this, that we are sitting under the shadow of a recent be-

reavement. It was the death of His beloved Forerunner that drove Him at this time into the solitudes. But whatever be our need or condition, let us hear Christ's call: 'Come ye apart into a desert place and rest a while.' Blessed the man who hears the call of Jesus to such a resting-place. The desert is no longer desert when He is there. 'The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for him, and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.'¹

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

The Call of Christ.

'He, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'—Ac 9⁸.

The conversion of Paul is one of the most remarkable things in history. Explain it as we will, it can never be explained away. Critics have dealt with the outward signs, the light and the voice and the other accompaniments, and some have tried to belittle them. These are not the important things. The thing which *is* important is the life which resulted from the experience, and that is the thing which will not dissolve in the acid of criticism. The miracle is not Paul's conversion—it is Paul's career.

One of the outstanding things in the conversion itself is the completeness of Paul's surrender to Jesus. Doubtless the ferment of Christianity had been working secretly in his unconscious mind. Down in the depth of his nature the conflict had been going on for long. The light (of unresisting love) on Stephen's dying face had struck deep into his soul and stirred a nest of uncomfortable suggestions. But, however it was, there was nothing half-hearted in his surrender to Christ. It was a case of perfect abandonment. He fell on his face, trembling and astonished, and said, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' These words, on the surface, suggest a man whose life has been brought to wreck and ruin around him, and who is at his wits' end—the condition, as the Psalmist tells us, in which a man is ready to make a beginning with God, and God is able to take charge of his life. But there was more in the cry than sheer despair, for Paul was not in the habit of using words rashly. There were two things in it to which we ought to give our minds.

1. There was the *instinct for action*, and the acknowledgment that religion demands activity. 'What wilt thou have me to do?' Like every-

¹ W. Mackintosh Mackay, *Days of the Son of Man*, 235.

thing else, Christianity must find expression in action, for genuine life produces activity. Every living thought blazes a path for itself in words or deeds. Every deep emotion must find a channel. There is very little Christianity about a man if it is not making him do something. There is very little fire in the locomotive if it is not transforming its energy into motion. When God sought to reveal His highest thought, He put it into a *life*. Real religion is not a theology to be argued about, it is a life to be lived. The trouble with many people is that they use worship as a lightning conductor for religious emotion to pass harmlessly away, instead of finding some contact with life's tasks or duties in which that emotion can become vital and dynamic.

2. Further, religious activity is the *activity of the whole life directed by Jesus*. The whole man must be in it—the praying man, the loving man, and the working man. When Paul said, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' he put his whole life at the disposal of Jesus. He gave into the hands of Christ the steering-wheel and the engine control and stood by to obey orders. He made Christ Master of the ship. He hailed Christ Lord of his whole personality. His thinking was to be guided by Christ, for in Christ he recognized the truth. His ambition was to be directed by Christ, for in Christ he had found life's glorious objective. He would take up whatever work Christ bade him do. He was ready to scrap all the old life, work and friendships, career and habits, in order that Christ might reconstruct his life from its foundations. Everything was flung into the melting-pot to be run into the moulds and reshaped by Christ. Other men since his day have done the same thing, and made a completely fresh beginning. Francis of Assisi left behind him the whole furniture of a rich man's life and went out to found a new order of Christian service. Brother Lawrence, after being a footman and a soldier, put his life at the disposal of Christ and found his sphere of labour in the kitchen of a Carmelite Monastery. However impossible such revolutionary changes of calling may seem to us in our own situation, they light up the meaning of Christianity, which is a life set at the disposal of Christ. 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'

This brings before us the whole question of the call of Christ and our daily calling. The truth faces us at once from this cry of Paul, that a man's daily calling must be part of the expression of his Christian life. There, as elsewhere, Christ must direct and control. To shut the office door or the

factory gate upon Christ is to deny the mastership of Jesus in the most essential part of our life. For a Christian man, the phrase that 'business is business' in the meaning some give to it, is a denial of Christ's right to rule. 'I mean to live,' said a man once, 'and to have no gaps of death in the middle of my life.'

We cannot close our eyes to the fact that this opens up a good many difficulties. For one thing, if our work is to be Christian, we must be sure we are doing the thing Christ wants us to do. We must be sure we have a task which can express a Christian personality. Can a Christian man possibly find a legitimate calling in providing degrading entertainments, or unworthy literature, or make a profit out of trades which are poisonous to the moral and physical well-being of those who are engaged in them? The problem for a man in such a situation is one which he will have to face for himself by the light of his own conscience. It may be his duty to go out of a calling or business which offers a perpetual rebuke to conscience, if he is unable to change the conditions.

The point is that the truth of Christ in our souls must find outlet in our calling. Every part of life must give expression to the mind which has been touched by the redeeming power of Jesus. If we are His, our work must show it. It may be the right thing for us is not to leave our post but to stay there and work steadily for changing the conditions, bringing a new conscience into a degrading business to sweep it clean of all that is unworthy of truth and love. The business of a Christian society is to create a conscience about bad conditions and unworthy occupations. But the path for each individual is the path that opens up in answer to that surrender to Christ—to that cry, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'

The world is in sore need of men and women in definite Christian service at home and abroad, but the world is dying for men and women who will find in their work a sacred call and see in it a means of expressing their loyalty to Christ. What we need to-day, as some one says, is 'the spiritual mind in the man of the world.' Our choice of a profession must not be governed by the money we can earn or the profit we can win. The money pull in industry is the root of half our troubles. When the quality of work is confused with the quantity of wages, and our service is determined by our rewards, the devil gets into the business and our life goes off the rails.

But what of those who have no choice, or have made their choice before they became alive to Christ,

and now find all other doors are shut? It may be we are in a situation where, in the light of some new experience, we should like to change our calling. Many have already drifted into their niche by compulsions not of their own making. What are we to say to them? The word for them is surely this—that the compulsions of life must be accepted as the call of God. If we are in a place from which there is no escaping, that place is for us the place of our calling.

Are there no changes we can make in the quality of our work, if not in the form of it? Would it not make a difference to the whole standard of life's comfort and the prosperity of our fellows if we took Christ into the workshop with us and made our toil a fellowship with Him? Would it not change the dingiest workshop into something like a temple if we knelt in spirit at the bench at the day's beginning, like a priest at his altar, and sought to consecrate our gifts and our tools to Christ?

Our work, whatever it be, is only a channel. The task of a Christian man is the revelation of Jesus. That is our business. Paul had to leave his early calling and scour the face of Europe with his gospel to do it. He revealed Christ with his mind, his tongue, his method, his friendship. He revealed Him in the helping hand he held out to others, in the courage and patience of his great soul liberated by faith amid a tangle of difficulties in victorious service. There is no part of our life in which the light of Christian character may not break through some chink or cranny. So far as we are Christian we are translating Christ to the world in everything we do, as Christ revealed something of Himself in every situation. And a man can translate Christ to his fellows in the language of a finished piece of work, in its limited degree, as clearly as he can in a book or a poem or a sermon.¹

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

The Group.

'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.'—Mt 18²⁰.

It is clear that if the disciple is meant to go alone, he is also meant to go in company. There is a lonecraft which the soul has to learn; but he is called at the same time to belong to a company. He is incomplete if either the solitary communion or the fellowship is wanting. The Christian disciple cannot afford either to be never alone, or to be always alone. To settle the right proportions is

¹ J. Reid, *The Victory of God*, 184.

one of the tasks upon which the beauty and perfection of the Christian life depends. The balance is hard to attain, but it is worth attaining.

We shall not think of the 'two or three' as living all their life together. Each will have his own life in God; each will have large reserves and secret dealings with his Lord; but they will move none the less in company to the City.

There will be the conversion of groups already existing into pilgrim bands. Sometimes it is the family that is remade. The old bonds are there still, only now they are raised to a new sacredness. Andrew and Simon are still brothers; so are James and John, and perhaps others in the circle of the Apostles. It is significant that among the very few names recorded in the New Testament there are so many brothers or members of the same family enrolled in the family of God. The sons of Simon of Cyrene; Rufus and his mother; Aquila and Priscilla, husband and wife; and others might be named.

But there were other, and entirely fresh, associations formed in that Apostolic Age. Some who had never known each other in the old life were drawn together in the love of Christ. They had each of them a past unshared. They were like men who have come across the sea to a new settlement, beginning life again and knowing each other only under their new sky. The Master had said that they who lost father or mother, sister or brother, should find abundant more in this world. This they proved to be true. Groups were formed everywhere after the manner of the family. St. Paul, speaking of Rufus, adds, 'and his mother and mine.' He had been adopted into that family; everywhere in his travels he had homes and peaceful family circles, where he was welcomed. His life was not all storm and tumult; there were many ports of call.

In a sermon on this text Dr. Fort Newton says: 'In the front yard of our home there stood a great old tree, under which some who are fallen asleep were wont to sit on Sabbath afternoons and talk of the things of the soul. Nearly always they had their Bibles open on their laps, and sometimes they would argue a point of doctrine. More often, however, their talk was of the inner life and its revealings and the things they had learned in the school of Christ. . . . How beautiful, yet how far away it all seems—almost as remote as my mother and her friends under the old tree five thousand miles away. Why do we not have such talk in our day? Why are we so reticent, so uncommunicative, so shy in respect of the inner

life of faith? Is it because we have nothing to talk about, because we have no "dealings" in these matters, as Silas Marner would say? Or is it due to an unsettlement of faith which makes us less certain, and therefore less talkative, than our fathers were? ¹

What we need to-day is the recovery of the idea and uses of the group.

§ 1. For the sake of *discoveries in the truth* the group is needed. There are certain phases of the truth which can be best understood by two or three; indeed, they are partly hidden from the solitary believer. It may even be said that every truth or experience has its phase which is understood and enjoyed in fellowship. It is not that the Faith changes under the pressure of the group, but it becomes more confident of itself. Doubts lose some of their terror; the soul enlarges its boundaries; it reaches heights which it had not reached alone. Where two or three meet together, what happens? Is it that there is a pooling of resources, so that each receives the faith and hope and love of the others? That in itself would be a wonderful gain; but what if they receive all this and something added! For lo! He is in the midst of them. And since the Christian gospel carries within it from the very beginning the demand for new social relationships, it must be by twos or threes this is known experimentally. 'Love of the brethren' is not a mere synonym for love; it is one of the distinctive gifts of the Christian Church to the world.

The Christian gospel comes to the world with a doctrine of the Divine life, with its own social bonds which are from eternity; but this doctrine of the Holy Blessed and Glorious Trinity involves those who believe it with all their hearts in an experiment: they must show forth their understanding in this mystery, not only in their confessions, but in the bonds that bind them together. They must live the Trinity.

2. Apart from discoveries in the truth, there is *much that pilgrims can do for each other*. Even when they cannot bear each other's burdens, and there are burdens which no soul can bear for another, they can encourage each other. There is a singular comfort from the memory that others, one with us in Christ, are saying: 'We know you are passing through deep waters; we cannot go with you, but our love is with you, and our faith; we know that you will not fail.'

Nor must we forget the power of the two or three to correct the individual soul. The very eagerness

of the pilgrim may lead him into perils; he may be guarded by the wisdom and garnered experience of his fellows. Here once more the perpetual dilemma of the Christian life is reached—the soul must live alone, and at the same time must be cheered and corrected by its fellows. The mystic must be an associate of others; the lonely soul must join with others, even while it remains alone. 'There is no heresy so lamentable as that which conceited individualism preaches; no truth so sublime as that received by the true mystic from God.' How, then, is the true mystic to be saved from the errors of the fanatic? One of the safest of all means lies in the willingness of the true seer to share with others.

The group comes between the life in solitude and the life in the great assembly, but it is neither a substitute for the one life nor the other; it comes between and has its own place. We remember the 'twos and threes' in every age who have been drawn together and moved with quickened and firmer step to the City. There were the *Joculatores Dei* who sang their way through Italy; 'The Friends of God' in Germany; the family of Nicholas Ferrar at Little Gidding; the Holy Club in Oxford; the Early Tractarians. In none of these groups was there any failure to seek for God in the individual life, nor was there any coldness to the Church of Christ; but how beautiful and gracious was that intimate life which they shared. All that was pledged to them in their dream of the Church was lent to them in advance: they tasted already the good things of the age to come.²

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

Ways and Paths.

'In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.'—Pr 3^o.

That is a great promise, one of the greatest of Scripture. Every earnest man would wish to believe that there is a Guiding Hand upon his life. Like all promises of the Bible, it is a promise with a condition, a condition not arbitrarily set, but essential in the very nature of things. A man must work with God, or God cannot work with him.

What does it mean to acknowledge God? First, that we are not to acknowledge God at times, about some things, but constantly and completely in all our ways. Is it not just at this point that many a man has to revise his religious life if it is to be thoroughgoing, if it is to be satisfying to himself

¹ J. Fort Newton, *The Sword of the Spirit*, 191.

² E. Shillito, *The Return to God*, 49.

and have the ring of reality to others? We incline, many of us, to confine God to certain parts, certain experiences of life—the critical decision, the great anxiety, the impending danger, the sickness that may mean death. But the thought that is most often with us in the intimacy of our souls, of what we would like to do, of what we would like to have, of what we would like to happen, somehow in this intensely vivid sphere of personality we do not think of God as we should. One feels at once that this was the big thing in the religion of Jesus. It concerned the whole of life, not a part of it. His Father's will, His Father's work, touched and transformed even the simplest things, the everyday contacts of life. It never seemed to enter our Lord's mind that life would be a less joyous thing for men if they acknowledged God in all their ways—the very reverse. 'Your Father knoweth' is His great word of every human experience. And Paul has the same thought of the universal concern of God with the whole of life. 'All things,' he says, 'work together (not singly) for good to those who love God.'

1. But what are these ways in all of which we are to acknowledge God? A way is a manner of living, a direction of thought and effort. A man's ways are his spiritual habits. First among these ways in which we must acknowledge God is the way of faith. We must be able to say to ourselves, not necessarily in all the detail of the historic creeds, but in their great overshadowing reality, 'I believe.' There are two things about faith which ought to be emphasized, choice and culture—the choice of faith and the culture of faith. We do not think of faith as a choice. We are apt to think that faith simply happens to some people, while it escapes others. Of course there is an environment of faith which makes it easier for a man to believe than if he were in another environment, and there are experiences which help faith as there are experiences which make it more difficult. But behind all this is choice, definite and concrete. In times when the foundations of life seem to totter, when the things that are shaken seem to be in the foreground, do I choose still to believe in God? 'For one,' Professor William James used to say to his students at Harvard, 'I choose to believe in God.' But it must be a persistent choice. We must choose over and over again. And so we need the culture of faith, definite means by which faith may be nourished and strengthened. Two such means suggest themselves—the reading every day of faith-building books, and especially the Book which is the great

faith-builder, and the companionship of faith-building men and women. The father of John Ruskin wrote of him once, 'He has just gone from a hurried dinner to the sunset, which he visits as regularly as a soldier does his evening parade.' The strange thing is not that faith dies out in many men; the strange thing is that even in an anæmic form it survives, when we think how little heed they give to it, how little care to feed it and build it up.

Another of the ways in which we are to acknowledge God is the way of Prayer—not the careless muttering of formal prayers, not occasional prayer for something that seems to us essential in a fair-dealing universe, but that habit of mind which makes us recognize that there is One with us to whom our lives are a real concern and who is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

And then we acknowledge God by the way of Love. Love is a very large word. It includes, for instance, righteousness. We cannot love God and love men and have any crookedness in our dealings, any tortuous devices of self-deceit by which we delude ourselves with the thought that a good end will ever excuse a wrong means, or any twistings of self-interest by which we seek to combine the good opinion of men with some selfish scheme for our own material good. It includes forgiveness. Is there anything that is such an acknowledgment of Him, and anything the world so needs to-day as readiness to forgive.

Hushed be every thought that springs
From out the bitterness of things?

2. And now, the promise to the man who acknowledges God in all his ways is that God will direct his paths. There is a contrast to be noticed between ways and paths. Way is the more general word. A way is a manner of life, a general direction in which one chooses to go. It hints at a goal toward which one is pressing on. But a path is more definite and specific. It is the next step, the immediate line of progress. And the promise is that here, in the tracing out of life step by step, if we acknowledge God in all our ways, He will direct us: a firmer hand than ours will be on the helm. Often the course may seem dangerous and disastrous. Often there may seem to be no course at all. But never fear: we will reach the haven. This has not simply been the sustaining faith, but the transforming experience of some of the world's great leaders in many spheres of life, the place where, as it seemed to them in many a

perplexing day, faith gripped and became experience. Often it is only in the after-view that a man recognizes the Guiding Hand. 'Now I begin to understand,' wrote Hawthorne of his years as an assistant clerk in the custom-house, when, conscious of certain gifts, every opportunity for their exercise seemed to be denied him. 'Now I begin to understand why I was imprisoned so many years in this lonely chamber, and why I could never break through these viewless bolts and bars.'

There is one thing more to be said about the

difference between a way and a path. A way may not have been trodden before: a path has. Peary found the way to the North Pole, Livingstone to the heart of Africa, but they found no path leading them there. They made the path for others. Do not let us forget that ours is a path that Christ has been over every step, that there is no experience of difficulty and darkness and antagonism which He does not know, and that He is by our side to guide us every day. In all Thy ways acknowledge Him and He will direct thy paths.¹

¹ A. MacColl, *The Sheer Folly of Preaching*, 176.

Spiritual Power in Pagan Religions and in the Old Testament.

BY THE REVEREND CAMPBELL N. MOODY, M.A., MISSIONARY IN FORMOSA.

IT is often taken for granted that religious men of all races and creeds are at one in their desire for Divine aid in the struggle to live aright. But in the worship of many deities moral conduct is a matter of indifference, as when evil-doers pray for success in gambling, robbery, and deeds of shame, and the more virtuous seek nothing beyond health and wealth in return for their offerings. In other religions the higher powers condemn and perhaps punish wickedness, and approve righteousness: yet righteousness is the worshipper's own business; it does not even occur to him to look beyond himself for moral strength. Take an illustrious example: 'No one,' says Cicero, 'has ever put down his virtues to the gods' account, or thanked heaven for his courage' (see H. R. Mackintosh, *Originality of the Christian Message*, pp. 100-101).

These words may be regarded as a motto of Paganism in many of its ancient and modern forms. We are at present concerned mainly with pre-Christian Paganism; but with regard to savage races we must speak of the present day. Farnell says: 'I have not been able to find any example of a savage prayer for moral or spiritual blessings' (*Evolution of Religion*, 183). Evidently Chapman considers this true of the natives of Central Africa (W. Chapman, *A Pathfinder in South Central Africa*, 315). Warneck bears the same witness of Indonesians (*Living Forces of the Gospel*, 34, 38, 131). But Brinton declares that

'an ethical element is present in many prayers offered by races which we classify as savage. Thus the Sioux of North America say, "O my grandfather the earth, I ask thee that thou give me a long life and strength of body. When I go to war let me capture many horses and kill many enemies; but in peace let not anger enter my heart."' 'O merciful Lord,' says an Aztec prayer, 'let this chastisement with which thou hast visited us give us freedom from evil and follies' (*The Relig. of Primitive Peoples*, 106). The moral element in these examples is not beyond dispute.

Among the Chinese there is a general belief that Heaven maintains the cause of the righteous and sends calamity on the wicked. But in Confucianism and Taoism there is, so far as I am aware, no thought of spiritual help for man. 'What chiefly strikes us in this Universistic Idolatry,' says J. J. M. de Groot (*Religion in China*, 214-215), 'is its materialistic selfishness. Promotion of the material happiness of the world, in the first place that of the reigning dynasty, is its aim and end. We do not find a trace in it of a higher religious aim.' Buddhism has not availed to alter essentially or permanently the religious aim of the people. The typical prayer is such as this: 'Make me strong in body, and grant me long life. May I have a large family of children that are vigorous and easily brought up. Grant me a good harvest (or success in business). If I go from home, lead