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## In the Study.

### *Virginitus Puerisque.*

#### Eyes and No Eyes.<sup>1</sup>

'Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things.'—Ps 119<sup>18</sup>.

THE other day I was walking down a dingy street with nothing to see but the dust blowing along the road, and some puddles, and the bare dead walls, and a few frowsy people shouting at each other from high windows, and there was not a touch of colour or of greenness; no flowers, never a tree, nor even a glimpse of grass. And, 'What a dreadful street!' I said. 'However do they manage to live here, with nothing to see, and nothing to do, and nothing to interest one in any way?'

And just then, round the corner came a motor lorry. There was a man driving it, of course. But there was nothing in the lorry but a dog—a spaniel, which had it all to itself. And never have I seen a dog so happy and excited. It was frantic with happiness. It kept rushing from one side to the other, and turning round and round till it ought to have been giddy. And all the time it was barking in a kind of bewildered rapture.

'Isn't life just bully?' it kept saying. 'And in all your life did you ever see a street anything like as exciting as this street?' At least it tried to tell us that a hundred times. But it never got it finished. For always it caught sight of something else, and just had to run and have a look at it. Now it was at one side barking eagerly. 'A boy! a nice-looking boy! I could do with a romp with him!' And before it could say that, it was off to the other side. 'A man with a bag! Now what can he have in that? I would love to nose at it and find out all about it.' But by that time he was at the back of the lorry, all trembling and shouting his hardest, 'What's that? A cat! Two cats, no less! And if only this thing would stop, I could catch them easy!' Yet before you could think he was off again and near the front. 'A gentlemanly looking dog, that! I would enjoy a stroll with him. Isn't this street simply great? It's so full of lovely things!' And round and round he went, flopping his great ears and barking, till the lorry turned a corner, and he was gone.

And do you know, when I looked round, the dog was right. It wasn't such a bad street after all; and not nearly so empty as I had thought. There *was* a boy, a nice-looking chap; and there

<sup>1</sup> By the Reverend A. J. Gossip, M.A., Aberdeen.

was a man with a bag; and there were two cats, though I don't think the dog would have got them so easily as he made out; and there was a dog, though I hadn't noticed him. The street was really quite a good street, I saw now.

And you and I had better think about that. You haven't got everything you want—nobody has; and perhaps you are a bit sulky and peevish and cross about it, and go whining round asking 'Why? Some one else has got off Maths, why can't I? Some other fellow's father has a car, why can't we have one too? Some girl you know hasn't to go to Sunday school, why must you?'

And you feel quite ill-used and dreadfully sorry for yourself. It isn't fair that you have to live in such a dull street and have such a stupid life!

Don't you be silly! What you need is something or some one to open your eyes to see all that is there, as the dog opened mine. And if nothing else can do it, you ask God to do it for you. And He will.

Why! think of all the glorious things you have. There's Mother, that's pretty good for a start; and home, and you wouldn't have any other; and Dad, and he isn't bad, though he does growl sometimes, and puts down his paper and sends you off to bed, and there's no wheedling him as you can do with Mother. And there are your books, and your cycle, and your friends, and your school. You might have been sent to that other one! The fellows there were sent to it, poor chaps! And—— We're only at the beginning. But we'll have to stop, or else you'll be running about the church flopping your ears, and shouting, 'Don't listen to that dull man in the pulpit! Listen to me and I'll tell you what a glorious life I have.' But you can't do that, you know. I wouldn't mind, I think it would do us more good than a sermon. But the elders wouldn't like it. So you had better sit still. But, if I were you, all through the long dull sermon I would think out all the lovely things you have, and snuggle close to God, and thank Him for them, that He's given you so jolly a life; and tell Him that you're never going to be cross and peevish any more.

#### The Sin of minding One's own Business.<sup>1</sup>

'Not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others.'—Ph 2<sup>4</sup>.

What strange things many of our old proverbs and sayings are, with wisdom in them, to be sure,

<sup>1</sup> By the Reverend R. Strong, M.A., B.Litt., Norwich.

or how could they have managed to live such a long time? But so many of them are only half the truth, and some of them, which sound very imposing, as if they were all the truth, need to be watched with special care, or they may sometimes trick us, and lead us into very dangerous places. That is why we have so often had to make another proverb to supply what was lacking in the other. For the whole truth we need not only 'Fine feathers make fine birds,' but also 'Handsome is that handsome does.'

What a pompous, big-voiced fellow is this—'Mind your own business.' He seems to be saying, 'Listen to me! I am the one to be listened to. All the truth about this business of life is with me. This is the secret. Mind your own business!' Sometimes we are inclined to think that this saying is as true as it sounds. That is specially so, if somebody else has just been getting in your way, and has succeeded in making ever so much unnecessary difficulty, which is the sort of happening that does upset one's temper. If ever this has been your fate, I can hear you saying, 'Yes, that's right! I don't like those who are always getting in the way of my work, messing up my experiments in the lab., flinging about advice on the cricket or football field, when we know quite well what we want to do, and are doing it for all we are worth. Let everybody look after his own affairs.' Then, when we have said all this, there comes this very plain word of St. Paul about minding the business of other people. What can it all mean? Evidently there is something more to be said.

Have you ever noticed that all the folk who have managed to do really fine deeds in the world, deeds which stir the blood and make you glad to be alive so that you also may have your chance of heroism and fidelity, never seem to have narrowed their lives in this way, but often enough spent their time, and often, indeed, risked their lives in carrying out Paul's advice. All this talk about minding one's own business would simply be dismissed as rubbish by those who have done things in the world worth talking about. What would Shackleton have said about it? Well, one may guess that easily. Do you know the story that Wild tells about him? Wild had been down with dysentery, couldn't eat the horseflesh, and naturally was suffering from hunger. At breakfast-time each got a biscuit, which they could eat when they liked. On 31st January Wild finished his at once, and as he

was starting on the march he found Shackleton's hand slipping a biscuit into his pocket.

'What's that, Boss?' he asked.

'Your need is greater than mine.'

Shackleton was irresistible and fought in silence with his own hunger, for he knew his friend was more hardily put to it than himself. Are you much surprised that Wild put this entry in his diary: 'Shackleton privately forced on me his own break-fast-biscuit, and would have given me another to-night had I allowed him. I do not suppose that any one else in the world can thoroughly realize how much generosity and sympathy were shown by this.' Yes, the really splendid things are just like that, Shackleton caring a great deal more about Wild's business than about his own.

Especially in these days, when the interests of all the nations are getting linked together still more closely, Paul's word is a very important one. We have all to take a place in a great fellowship, and think still more seriously about that fellowship. How can anybody talk about minding his own business as if it were as easy as all that? What's the use, for example, of somebody in Lancashire thinking only about Lancashire, when his bread and butter may depend on what people are thinking and doing in America or Egypt or India? The great world, which you younger folk in particular must seek to create, is just a world in which men have learned to think in terms not of themselves, but of the fellowship.

Nobody wants merely fussy people, and Paul was not advising his friends to become like that. You will never be stupid and simply interfering if you will read on and see the splendid picture that is given here. Stirring men to humility and service, Paul tried to help them by a picture, and such a picture! 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.' That mind will crowd out selfishness and bring in humility. With that mind you can fling yourself into service for others and not be afraid.

#### Living Words.<sup>1</sup>

'The word was made flesh.'—Jn 1<sup>14</sup>.

'The Word was made Flesh.' How can a word be made 'Flesh'?

It seems a difficult thing to understand. Many people think it is a strange mystery which has to do with Jesus only, and that there is nothing like

<sup>1</sup> S. Robertson, *Balanced Burdens*, 103.

it anywhere outside the Gospels and the story of Jesus, and many don't try to understand it at all.

I want to help you to understand it, and so I want to show you that a word becoming flesh is a very common thing.

First, let us go among books.

When Hamlet was reading once he was asked, 'What are you reading?' He said, 'Words, words, words.'

Well, some books are only 'words, words, words,' but some are more: they are words that live. The spirit of the writer has breathed on the words and they have 'become Flesh,' so that we talk and think about the characters as if they were real living people.

When Dickens wants to show us brave unselfishness he paints little Nell, and in little Nell these words come to life and we love them; when, in the book, little Nell dies, Dickens wept, and thousands since then have shed tears over the brave child's death. She was only 'words' in a book. Yes! but the words were living words.

At Aberfoyle there is hanging on a tree outside the town, the coulter of the plough with which Bailie Nicol Jarvie in *Rob Roy* fought the Highlanders and singed their plaids. There never was any such person. He was only 'words,' but Sir Walter Scott's genius made the words live, so that Jeanie Deans and Bailie Nicol Jarvie and the Antiquary are our friends.

So the Bible, instead of talking about 'Faith,' shows us Abraham going out at God's command 'not knowing whither he went,' and that makes us understand better than the word would. It shows us Jesus weeping at Lazarus' grave, and that makes us understand what 'Sympathy' means better than long explanations of the word could do. It shows us Christ on the Cross, and that makes us feel what 'Sacrifice' means.

If we go out of the world of books into the world of Life, we find that words have power upon us when they take a body and 'become flesh.' They have no power while they are only words. 'Patriotism' is a word only, but when it took a beautiful body and clothed itself in heather hills, and snow-tipped mountains jewelled with lakes, and hung with silver rivers and garlanded with the sea, it had power to call thousands of Scottish lads from their homes to go out and suffer and die for Scotland in the war.

When it clothed itself with the beautiful fields of England, when it came to earth and wore on its bosom England's moors and downs and quiet

villages, it had power to call the English men to go out on the same great adventure.

It was a word made flesh.

'Love' is just four letters, two consonants and two vowels, and has no power to make our life noble and unselfish until the word has become 'somebody'; somebody that loves us, and that we love. 'Love' for you means 'Father and Mother'; 'Love' for them means 'You.'

Now the Bible tells us 'God is Love'—that He loves us; but that is not easy to understand. It isn't really true while it is only a word.

So God made that word 'Flesh' so that we couldn't help understanding and so that it should be a mighty word to us. He sent Jesus to earth, and Jesus was God's Love become a Person. It was the word become Flesh. If you want to be sure that God is Love, look at Jesus. If you want to know how God loves, look at Jesus.

A little girl was being put to bed by her mother, and, as she turned out the light to go away, the little girl asked her to stay with her. 'No,' she said, 'you've got your dolly and you've got your Teddy-bear.' 'I don't want Dolly,' she said, 'and I don't want Teddy. I want some one *with skin on their face!*'

The world was once like that little girl. It was afraid in the dark and wanted to be sure of its Father's Love. It wanted more than words. It wanted living Truth and living Love, and so God made these words Flesh. Jesus came, not to talk about Truth and Love, but to be Himself Truth and Love.

And the end of it all is, that Christ's words must become Flesh in us. What He said is not just to be listened to, it is to be lived. Faith and sacrifice, kindness and sympathy, are words that must become Flesh in the lives of Christian folk.

God's word became Flesh in Jesus: His words must become Flesh in you and me.

## The Christian Year.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Elim.

'They came to Elim.'—Ex 15<sup>7</sup>.

Elim was God's kindness to Israel, but not a whit less blessedly it is God's kindness to us, if we declare plainly that we seek a country and are travellers along the road of the pilgrims. Let that be our interpretation to-day. Let Elim represent the spiritual experience, the seasonable help, the sweet and strong consolation, by which our Father

and our Lord meets our chronic and our critical needs, as we journey towards the inheritance He has prepared for those who love Him.

1. The first thing to be said is this, that *Elim is provided for those who have been through the Exodus*. It is God's restoration of the tired; but there was a solemnity, a miracle, a gift of gifts, which preceded the restoration, and which was even more astonishing—there was His enfranchisement of the enslaved. The Israelites were bondmen in the land of Egypt, and the Lord their God redeemed them.

Behind our Elims lies a grace more extraordinary, a power more divine, an Exodus infinitely more to be desired. We were bondmen, under the yoke of sin and of death, which is sin's issue and wage. We could neither discover nor yet create an outgate for ourselves. But One who is without spot and blemish offered Himself to be our Paschal Lamb. He was both Priest and Victim. Thus it was that after hopeless slavery we rose up free. And now there is no reviving or invigorating Elim to which we may not look forward. For He who spared not His own true Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things?

It is not that God's bounties only begin after we have made acquaintance with the crowning mercy of the Exodus. He has many compassions, many thoughts of peace, many awakening and tender providences, many movements and ministries of His Spirit, for men who linger still in the house of bondage. But Elim is different. It is, plainly, the property of pilgrim souls.

2. *Elim is the compensation and the cure for Marah*. Human nature cannot sustain the intensest emotions long. They exhaust us. They provoke a reaction by and by. And when in the reaction there comes some pressure of necessity, some burden of care, some heaviness and soreness of trial, we are too apt to lose heart, to abandon hope, to sink into black despondency as the men of Israel did. Marah has had its repetitions a thousand times, and in a thousand redeemed souls. Yet it never is justifiable and right. The sin of Marah is the sin of the forgetful mind. Too soon we have grown oblivious of the transcendent love and liberation of the Exodus. Too soon we have ceased to remember Calvary. And the sin of Marah is the sin of the distrustful spirit. The trouble is a thing appointed for us. In this new emergency we shall have to face once more our own insufficiency; but, over against that, there should shine forth, calmly and convincingly, His all-sufficiency. And thus we ought to learn, better

than ever, how our need and His great fulness meet. We are much to blame that we have not done so. And the sin of Marah is the sin of the blind and unseeing eye. For when, in later days, we go back to the fountain of all that is best in our deepest life, we often find that the fountain has been a bitter one, a sorrow, a disillusionment, which God Himself had to explain and sweeten and transfigure. Here was His statute and ordinance for us. Here was the cross He would have us bear, the injunction He would have us obey. In the end we recognize it has brought us a new hold of Him, a new strengthening of character, and a new pulse of vision and power. But we should have been sure of these things from the first.

So Marah is the place of our weakness and sin. But we have to deal with a God who multiplies to forgive. He bears and forbears. He soothes and heals. Not only does He check our impatience by revealing some medicinal tree which transmutes the brackish waters into a clear and cooling draught, but He hastens us on to where the wells are all our thirsty hearts can wish for.

3. The next thing, therefore, to be remarked is that *Elim is near to the king's highway*. Elim may meet us at any moment or in any spot. For example, it is the fellowship of Sabbath worship, the familiar house of God, the Church which brings us week by week its prayers and praises, its light and quickening. If we refuse to let the Church become a mere conventional resort, if we are resolved that our Lord and we shall talk there face to face, we shall go from its gates with our cares banished, with our steps buoyant, with our courage redoubled to fight the enemies of righteousness, with our features radiant and shining. Or Elim is the loyalty of a friend. Or Elim is an opportunity of service. When we are tired ourselves, when it is dark weather with us, it sometimes cheers us mightily, it restores our brightness and our peace, to try and succour another soul in its need. Once Christ was wearied in His journey; but a woman drew near Him with a profounder and more overwhelming weariness than His Own; and He lifted away her load; and then He could tell His disciples, 'I have meat to eat that ye know not of.' Or Elim is a quiet time with God. He calls us away from other engagements and other companions, it may be by a grief that no other can share, it may be by a gladness with which a stranger and even a friend cannot intermeddle, it may be by an intensified conviction that apart from Him we can do nothing; and, as we wait in the solitude with

Him alone, our strength is enhanced as the strength of ten.

4. The last truth is this, that *Elim is not the goal, but it is an aid towards the goal.*

Elim ! Elim ! though the way be long,  
Unmurmuring I shall journey, and lift my heart  
in song ;  
And Elim ! Elim ! all my song shall tell  
Of rest beneath the palm tree, and joy beside the  
well.

Elim has furnished us with supply. The oasis has its twelve springs, one for each of the tribes of Israel, one for each of the months of the year, one for each of the dispositions and temperaments of men. It has furnished us with shadow. The trees rise straight and stately above the wells, threescore and ten of them, as many as the years of our life upon earth. And it has furnished us with rest. We encamped there by the waters. Now we can take the heartening memory of it with us to solace us when we are again in the sand and the sun. In fact, we have what is better than the memory. For, in the life of the Spirit, we surpass the men of Israel in their faring through the great wilderness. They had only one Elim, but we may have a multitude ; and God's presence, and Christ's grace, and the Holy Ghost's communion should never fail us until we are safe home at length.<sup>1</sup>

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

The Manliness of Jesus.

'Be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world.'—  
Jn 16<sup>33</sup>.

In every generation our religion has to defend itself against criticism. And we need not wonder. For it claims to be the final expression of the highest life man can find. A fashionable objection is that Christianity is a religion of the weak. What, they say, is the central command of Jesus ? It is : Resist not evil, turn the other cheek, love your enemies, pray for those who maltreat you. Well, that is the virtue of the defenceless and the down-trodden, the feeble folk who cannot battle for themselves. Science teaches that the world is a place of struggle where men are driven by the wants and desires within them and where the prizes are for those who can take them. The religion of Jesus is outside this circle of ideas : it is not in tune with Nature, which is a nursing-mother of strong men. Its note is not the re-

sounding note of battle, the clarion call which thrills the hearts of the brave and brings the joy of victory. Rather, it is the consolation of the humble, the joy of the obscure, the comfort and strength of the weak. It is a religion for slaves.

That is a criticism of Christianity that strikes at its very heart. But it is founded on a wrong sense of value : strength and self-reliance are grand qualities ; little excellence is to be gathered without them ; but they are second to love ; and they are much more easily compassed. As the modern poet of doubt has told us :

But in the world I learnt, what there  
Thou too wilt surely one day prove,  
That will, that energy, though rare,  
Are yet far far less rare than love.

But is this criticism in any way true ? Is Christianity an apotheosis of weakness ? What is our Christian faith but the adoration and imitation of Jesus ? Look at Him and declare if in all the history of the world there is the record of any braver and more courageous soul than He.

1. Take the matter of physical courage. That is the lesser form of manliness, but the world always admires most the virtue nearest its own capacity and therefore most obvious. How stands our Lord when tried by that test ? Is He who counselled non-resistance to be ranked among the timid or the brave ?

When for the first time He preached at Nazareth He stirred the townfolk against Him. The Jews were a hot, turbulent people, utterly ungovernable when their religious passions were roused. By His sermon Jesus inflamed them to the murder point. They mobbed Him as He came out of the synagogue : they led Him to the brow of the hill above the town and would have cast Him headlong to death. A brave soldier has said that the most unnerving spectacle is that of an angry mob seeking to lynch a man. It requires greater fortitude to face that than the whistling bullets and shrieking shells of war. Jesus faced it with such self-possession and dignity of bearing that the wild mob were overawed.

Look again at Him in the Garden of Olives and before the Rulers. Napoleon the Great has said that the finest courage is three-o'clock-in-the-morning courage. It was in the grey hours of the morning, after a night of mental agony that made His sweat as it were drops of blood, that the soldiers came. Jesus might well have been worn out, weak as is a breaking wave. Among all the actors in that long-drawn-out drama He is the one

<sup>1</sup> A. Smellie, *Sunset Glory*, 40.

man who kept untroubled the peace and possession of His soul. The soldiers shrank from laying hands on Him, awed like the villagers of Nazareth by His peace and dignity. Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin were the slaves of passion; Pilate was tossed between anger and contempt and pitiful weakness; Jesus alone was master of all His powers. What worshipper of courage could desire a better leader than Jesus of Nazareth?

2. Let us consider now how Jesus stands to moral courage, the far rarer and more splendid virtue.

We have seen that in the great crises, those calls which make a sudden demand upon all a man's courage, our Lord shows Himself like a man inspired. Were these exceptions in His life? Did the Teacher of love and meekness bear Himself in all else, as one of the timid or weak to whom gentleness is the only possible virtue? No, the truth rather is that courage is the foundation quality of His character; courage is the woof on which were interwoven all those strands of pity and gentleness and meekness which make up that lovely and noble soul.

Take up the Gospel of St. Mark, and read the first story of His public activity, and what do you find? You see Him offending the religious world—the party that was most powerful in the land. He healed a man in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. The apostle of the modern worship of strength accuses the Christian religion of timidity. Its chief virtue, he says, is prudence, whereas the true counsel is—throw prudence to the winds and live dangerously. The Prophet of Nazareth, when in the wilderness He planned His way, elected to live dangerously. He set forth deliberately on a road that was bound to give mortal offence to the rulers of the Church. He healed on the Sabbath: He did works of loving-kindness on that day which in their eyes was to be polluted by no manner of work. He neglected also the many fastings and prayers and ceremonial cleansings which they deemed the very mark of a true worshipper of Jehovah. He companied freely with sinners and outcasts: and He even taught that the Kingdom of God would number them as citizens sooner than those who seemed specially holy and religious. The truth demanded that He should speak and act so: sympathy and love for man demanded that He should speak and act so: and though He saw the faces of all the religious leaders set as flint against Him, yet He never looked aside. Prudence was never His loved companion or chosen ally; truth and love for men and the passionate

desire to bless them with freedom and joy in serving God were His companions. He knew the danger from the beginning. For in Nazareth those quiet eyes had read the hearts of men: they had seen the pride and worldliness of scribe and rabbi. He did not encounter them for the first time in His public life. Jesus knew well that the blessed message of God which makes all men equal and seeks only to redeem would not fall like music on the ears of proud and vainglorious men. But God the Father had called Him to this task—love for men had called Him: and, having girt up His loins for the bold enterprise and committed His soul to the Father, He went forth to the battle, never fearing, never turning aside, to win at last only by the absolute sacrifice of Himself.

The Carpenter of Nazareth had the courage to oppose the religious world of His day, the men of influence and power. But many a demagogue has done that, upborne by the cheers of the mob. What really tests a man's courage and his insight is his relation to his neighbours. The honour and love of the little world in which we dwell, the look in the faces that are round about us night and day, these are the powers that test a man's sincerity and courage. Jesus was a Man of the people, He was also a layman rather than a churchman, exposed to the public opinion of the people rather than of the religious class. How did He bear Himself in relation to this world, the world of men and women whose thoughts and opinions had been the air His spirit breathed?

We find that He opposed this world as resolutely and completely as He opposed the world of scribe and Pharisee. The people would not be so out of sympathy with His preaching and conduct as the rabbis and ecclesiastics. They lived more simply among the common thoughts and charities: religious pride was not theirs to narrow their sympathies. But they had the limitations of the people, which are the same in all ages and in all lands. They had material conceptions of life: their dreams of a Messiah and of the blessings of His time were of the earth earthy. They hoped for political freedom, and national glory and prosperity; they desired days when their corn and wine would abound and all manner of material good be spread over the land. Jesus belonged to their class, but He knew that not in better wages and dwellings was to be found the secret of happiness. He dared to cherish another dream, the dream of a new society wherein men should become sons of God whose joy is to help and bless. It showed rare courage to send His hopes along this

lonely road where neither the thought of His neighbours nor the thought of the rabbis had gone. Only let Him bend to their earthly dreams, and they will set Him on high. But not for one moment did the Carpenter of Nazareth bend. He made it clear to them as the day that His mission was not political: that He was bringing them no social or economic panacea for the world's ills, but the preaching of love as the creative spirit in our life, the delight in goodness and the joy in brotherhood as the hope for men. And then they fell away from Him with the anger of disappointed hope in their hearts.

Jesus went His own way. Deep in His heart He heard a voice which He knew to be the voice of God the Father in His heart. And with unflinching steps He followed whithersoever it led: down into the dark shadow of the world's opposition, on amid the wrath and curses of men, till at last on the Cross, Rome's gibbet of shame for slaves, it crowned Him with thorns.

In the long roll of human heroism, is there courage to be set beside His ?<sup>1</sup>

#### QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

##### The Supremacy of Love.

'But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.'—I Co 13<sup>13</sup>.

With this simple but almost fathomless sentence the Apostle brings this exquisite hymn to a finish. He ends it on the top note. In the verses immediately preceding he has been asserting the superiority of love over the gifts of tongues and prophecy and knowledge—the gifts on which the Corinthians plumed and prided themselves—on the ground that, while these gifts were transient and temporary, love was permanent. But in this verse Paul says something about love more wonderful still. Not only is love better than such transient things as prophecy and tongues and knowledge, but of the permanent and abiding things love is the greatest and the best. For love is not the only thing that abides. Faith abides, and hope abides as well.

A whole school of commentators, beginning with Chrysostom, put a rather different construction upon the verse from that which is commonly received. They treat that word 'Now' with which the verse opens as being not the 'now' of logic, but the 'now' of time. 'Now,' i.e. in this present time, in this temporal sphere, there are three abiding things—faith, hope, and love. But in the eternal world faith and hope will disappear; there

<sup>1</sup> R. Glaister, *The Beauty of the Lord*, 154.

will be no further occasion for their exercise. But love will live on through all eternity.

But though a great many scholars favour that interpretation, we are quite persuaded that the ordinary interpretation is the right one. It is impossible to think that the word 'abideth' when applied to 'faith and hope' means 'abideth for a time'; but that when applied to love it means 'abideth for ever.' This is what Paul says: 'Now abideth faith, hope, love.' So far as the 'abiding' is concerned these three graces stand on the same plane. They are permanent graces of the soul. 'Now abideth faith, hope, love—these three.' Can we understand how this should be?

Let us begin with *faith*. Does not faith in its essence mean this—trust in God, the confidence of the soul in God, the clinging of the soul to God? When we say that we walk by faith, not by sight, is not that what we mean, that we trust God though we cannot see Him? We believe that in the deepest darkness He is at work, though we cannot behold Him. We stake everything on the belief that He is love, even though events challenge and seem to deny our faith. 'Even though he slay me yet will I trust him.' Well, won't there be room for faith in that sense of trust, 'the clinging of the heart to God and to a living, personal Christ,' as Dr. Edwards puts it, in the life of heaven? Will faith as a matter of fact not flourish more vigorously than ever? What our clear vision of God, our sight of Him face to face will do, is not to do away with faith but to intensify it.

And what about *hope*? We have found reason for the permanence of faith in the fact that the relation between man and God will always be that of joyful and adoring trust. We find the reason for the permanence of hope in the nature of that heaven-life itself. We make a mistake if we think of all the denizens of heaven as being on the same level. 'One star differeth from another star in glory,' says St. Paul. 'So also,' he adds, 'is the resurrection of the dead.' There are differences in heaven, differences of attainment and glory. There are some who are scarcely saved, and there are some who have an abundant entrance into the heavenly habitations. And this fact of difference in attainment is quite compatible with the perfect blessedness of all. Each has all the blessedness he can contain. There is fulness of joy for all, though the capacity for joy may vary in each case. And just as there are differences between the inhabitants of heaven, so there are differences in the same person at different stages. There is progress even in heaven. Our condition is not fixed for ever

once we reach there. 'In my Father's house,' said Jesus, 'there are many mansions.' 'Resting-places,' the word really means, and it refers to those 'stations' on the great roads where travellers could get rest and refreshment before proceeding on their journey. The notions both of repose and progress, says Bishop Westcott, are in the word. We shall be moving on, so to speak, from one resting-place to another. And, as Dr. Edwards says, so long as progress is possible, hope has not ceased.

The progress of heaven is not that we are gradually emancipated from sin and gradually gain the vision of God's face, but that as we contemplate God's love we grow in our knowledge of God and enter upon an ever-enlarging life in Him. But the progress is sure. The perfection of to-day will merge into the larger perfection of to-morrow. There is always something richer and better to look for. There is room for hope in the life of heaven. As Mr. Percy Ainsworth puts it: 'Faith and hope will not cease to live when they no longer have to fight for their lives. They are not mere adjuncts of human life. They are the fundamental terms of our personal existence and the eternal conditions of our relationship with God, and they must abide so long as God and the soul abide.'

So faith and hope, as well as love, are permanent and abiding things. They have their place in the life of heaven. 'Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three,' and only these three. And then the Apostle adds these words: 'and the greatest of these is love.'

Now can we see why love is greater than either faith or hope?

1. *Without love, faith and hope are themselves imperfect.* St. Paul has said as much as that in plain language about faith. 'If I have all faith so as to remove mountains and have not love . . . I am nothing.' There is a kind of faith which hasn't very much love in it. It is the kind of faith which lays hold of the merits of Christ, but has nothing in it of a spontaneous and eager delight in God. And there is a kind of hope which hasn't very much love in it. The hope which animates some Christian people is like that very materialistic hope that possessed the hearts of the first disciples and which prompted Peter one day to say, 'Lo, we have left all, and followed thee, what then shall we get?' What they hope for is reward—or, at any rate, escape from punishment. But such faith and such hope are poor and imperfect things. Both need love for their perfection. Love changes faith from trust in Christ's merits into an enthusiastic

devotion to Christ Himself. Love transforms hope from hope of reward into hope of likeness to Christ, and blessed union with Him.

So far St. Paul takes us in this chapter. But it is St. John who supplies us with the final reason why love is greater than either faith or hope.

2. *Love is the Divine grace.* You cannot describe God in terms of faith or hope. 'God, the all-knowing, does not believe. God, the all-possessing, does not hope.' But you can describe God in terms of love. Indeed, those are the only terms in which you can describe Him—God is love. Power, wisdom, omnipresence—those are attributes of God. But love is His very nature. That is the truth blazoned for us in the Cross of Jesus. We might have been doubtful of it but for that final and subduing revelation. God gave His Son to death and shame for love. Faith and hope are eternal things, inasmuch as they are the abiding conditions of our relationship with God, but when we love we share God's very life.

'The greatest thing in the world,' says Henry Drummond. Of course it is that. It is the chief spring of such happiness as we enjoy down here. 'Why,' asks Drummond, 'do you want to live to-morrow? It is because there is some one who loves you and whom you want to see to-morrow and be with and love back.'

And if we only knew it, love is the healing of our world's hurt. It is not only the fountain of happiness for the individual life; it is the only possible means of quietness and peace for our world. It is not by new arrangements and changes of method we are going to bring peace and goodwill back to our disordered world, but by a change of spirit. We may make what changes of method and of organization we please, but so long as we have the same selfish spirit, strife and division, unrest and discontent will be with us still. But though our methods and our organization remained as they are—confessedly imperfect, to say the least—if only we had, filling the hearts of men, this love which envieth not, which beareth, hopeth, and believeth all things, and which never fails, love by itself as by a stroke of a magician's wand would present us with the new world.

Love is not only the best thing in life, and the healing of the world's hurt, it is the Alpha and Omega of religion. You can sum up religion in terms of love. For what is the final and ultimate source of this Christian faith of ours? What is its primal and original fount? Why, the infinite love of God. 'God so loved the world.'

When does religion begin in us? When love

for God wakens in these hearts of ours. When looking into the face of Jesus—that torn and scarred visage—we say with Peter, ‘Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.’ And how does religion show itself? What is its practical effect in life? And again we say, ‘Love.’ By this know we that we have passed out of death into life—because we love the brethren. And if we have not love; if we have not the spirit of Christ we are none of His. If we have not got it—do we desire it? How can love be got? Where can love be kindled? At the Cross of Jesus. Gaze at that Cross long enough and realize that it was for us He hung and suffered there—and love will be born.<sup>1</sup>

#### FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

##### Mary's Tribute of Devotion.

‘That which this woman hath done.’—Mk 14<sup>a</sup> (R.V.).

We need not stay to apologize for an action which received our Lord's commendation. It is to be feared that there are still people afflicted with that meanness of disposition which measures all things by a utilitarian standard. Generous hearts must lay their account with the churlishness which will never learn to estimate the significance of their services except in terms of pounds, shillings, and pence. Yet there are more things, and these things the greatest in life, than are dreamt of in the philosophy of those who regard arithmetic as the queen of sciences, in whose imaginations the only thing that glitters is gold, and who look upon the conventional standards of society as the final oracles of moral obligation. The spirit of Mary, begotten and evoked by the Spirit of Jesus Christ Himself, reproduced in the lives of martyrs and confessors, saints and benefactors, reformers and evangelists, has kept the Church alive, and caused it to be owned down the centuries by God as an instrument for the fulfilment of His purposes.

With regard to the plea on behalf of the poor, what our Lord said was, ‘Ye have the poor always with you.’ Their claims exist, and have to be met, of course. Deeds that are directly charitable we are all bound to perform. ‘But what are the poor?’ as Dr. Parker said. ‘Mere eaters and drinkers, gormandizers, people gathered around a trough to eat and drink? Have they not eyes, imaginations, sensibilities, divinity of nature, that can be touched by the appeals of beauty and music and heroism and nobleness? We misunderstand the poor when we suppose that they can only eat

and drink, and that to give to them means to give something into their hands, or something they can gnaw with their teeth. It is a base idea.’ Had Mary been dissuaded from performing her beautiful deed, and the three hundred pence been devoted to the charities of Bethany and Jerusalem, the poor as well as the rich in every age would have been grievously impoverished. Judas's censure is a slander on the poor, implying as it does that they would accept his preferring of their claims in such a case. Is it not amongst the poor that you meet with some of the most thrilling instances of lavish generosity and devotion?

Let us indicate one or two features of that action of Mary's, which will ever be spoken of ‘for a memorial of her.’

1. *She did what she could.* The Master Himself said, ‘She hath done what she could.’

It was not a deed performed on the impulse of the moment. The alabaster cruse of spikenard was not in Mary's possession by a happy chance. She had given much thought to the question of how she could best show her reverence and love for her Lord. Some declaration of her devotion she felt she must make. Speech did not come readily to her. Mary's was a deep and silent nature. She was certain she could never tell Jesus to His face all that was in her heart. But might she not try to do what that other woman had done to Him in Galilee, when He was seated in the house of Simon the Pharisee? If she, with all the shame and sorrow that clung about her heart, could bring herself to perform such a courageous and lovely action, why not Mary also? It would mean exposing herself to public gaze, she that was so timid and diffident by nature. It would mean subjecting herself to misunderstanding and cruel criticism, she that was so gentle and sensitive in disposition. Every man and woman with any sensibility will recognize that the costly part of Mary's action was the action itself, and not the fragrant spikenard which her trembling hands poured forth.

Does not her example waken new desires and purposes in our heart? Our Lord only asks us to do what we can. But what we can do is not the thing we feel able to do without any difficulty.

2. *She did more than she knew.* It was not given to Mary to anticipate the significance which her gracious action would have for the Saviour. How it gladdened and inspired Him in view of the awful ordeal that lay before Him! ‘She hath anointed my body,’ He declared, ‘aforehand for the burying.’ What a service she was privileged

<sup>1</sup> J. D. Jones, *The Greatest of These*, 231.

to render to her Lord! Our actions always perform a ministry beyond our immediate intentions. 'It is impossible,' says Mark Rutherford, 'to limit the effect which even an insignificant life may have.' You speak a kindly word, for example, to some one, and if you think at all about what you have done, you attach little importance to the episode. But the person, whom you have treated in that manner, has an inner history of his own, and you have affected him in relation to experiences that you know nothing about. The things that wear a different appearance for him in consequence, the temptations you have helped him to overcome, the difficulties you have encouraged him to face, are recorded in a book which is sealed to your eyes. And not only is such a person's own life influenced to a degree and in a variety of ways that you never anticipated, but the lives also of others, with whom he comes in contact, participate indirectly in the beneficial effects of what was to you a simple, and soon became a forgotten, incident.

3. *She let her heart have its way.* Once Mary had thought over what she might do, and felt the prompting to do this thing, and realized that

she could do it, even though it would cost her many an inward tremor, she resolved to do it, and did it. And so her deed is spoken of to-day 'for a memorial of her.'

It is not that we do not devise generous things in our hearts. Most of us, all of us surely, do that. But the passage between the heart and the lips, between the heart and the hands, is too often blocked. Strive to keep these lines of communication open and in good repair, that ideal impulses may come to their fulfilment in the actualities of life. Undertake the irksome task, say the kindly and forgiving word, write the magnanimous letter, give the generous gift. We cannot summon up the passionate feelings of devotion for Christ that inspired Mary of Bethany. But let us be true to those noble emotions that urge us from time to time, and our natures will be deepened and enriched with larger and rarer capacities. It can never be our privilege to render such a personal service to our Lord as Mary rendered. But, inasmuch as we do it unto one of the least of His brethren, our action is interpreted and accepted as done unto Him.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. B. Macaulay, *The Word of the Cross*, 177.

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## Paul's Prayer for the Ephesians.

A STUDY OF EPHESIANS i. 15-23.

BY THE REVEREND H. J. FLOWERS, B.D., CHORLEY WOOD, HERTS.

### I.

THE prayer of Paul is that God will give to his readers *the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; so that, the eyes of their heart being enlightened, they may know what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His grace, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to those that believe.* That is, the prayer is for real spiritual enlightenment, so that the people may get beneath the surface and see the great abiding truths of the Christian faith and of the nature of God. The readers have already received the Spirit. That is the permanent possession of the Christian community, and is imparted to all those joining the community in sincerity in baptism. But what is now asked for is a continual supply of spiritual grace, mainly for the purpose of enlightenment. Men and women could possess the Spirit and yet have no real understanding of the intellectual and

spiritual content of the faith. Their energy might go off into other directions, as, for example, into the direction of the Glossolalia.

One or two points must be made clear first.

(1) Paul is speaking of the Spirit as the bestower of wisdom and revelation. This has been disputed by some scholars, who have said that what is asked for is that temper in the Christians and that attitude of mind by means of which revelation and wisdom come into the human heart. But this is quite unnatural, and also tautologous. It is also dead against the general teaching of the New Testament, which regards wisdom and revelation and insight into the bigness and truth of the Christian message as granted to us, on certain conditions, of course, from the outside, through the agency of the Spirit. There are cases in which it is hard to decide whether *πνεῦμα* shall be interpreted as the Spirit of God or the spirit of man, but that does not seem to be the case here.