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of bringing opinions to the bar of a sturdy common sense, of proving all things and holding fast that which is good. The men trained in these congregations have learnt to think reverently, but to trust their own reason and stand on their own feet.

The consciousness of all this points to the reason why Unitarians, to a greater extent apparently than some larger bodies of Christians, are keenly sensitive to the manifold influences of modern science, psychology, and sociology, and have been able to welcome every real and assured advance in historical and scientific knowledge. In the great days of the Early Church (say in the fourth century) Christian thought was in harmony with what was then the best science of the time. Is the Christian thought of to-day in harmony with the best science of the time ?

On the other hand, the ethical side of religion, problems of life and conduct, the growth of character and responsibility, arouse more interest than ever in the minds of the younger generation, because they have a greater freedom of choice. True, we find much thoughtless eagerness for amusement, along with little idea of what real recreation is ; we see signs showing that the edge of the sense of personal responsibility has been

blunted, and the windows of the soul dulled with the dust and turmoil of life ; but the windows of the soul are there. Untouched by the controversies of ecclesiastics and theologians, there are masses of people who, in their own dim, uncertain ways, are seeking under the name of social justice a larger and fuller life—some kingdom of heaven on earth to which they may belong.

Our faith is therefore in the rising vision of another Church, in whose upbuilding Unitarians believe they have their appointed part, though its life will be too vast and rich to be called by any of the names which now are familiar to our ears ; a Church that will not discard the objective help of historic religion, embodied in the supreme Personality of Christ, realizing in its highest historic form the relation between God and man ; a Church thus wise to gather to herself all the best truth that old times have won, but never seeking to build religion on a dogmatic theological idea, and for ever strong to watch, with forward look, for the light that is still to rise from the unspent deep things of God ; a Church whose one demand of all her children is, that they shall be pure in heart, and whose worship is built on one great motive of thought and action, ' Glory to God alone ! '

In the Study.

Virginitus Puerisque. On Using What We Have.¹

' Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them.'
—Neh 9²⁰.

Do you still listen to the Wireless, or have you grown tired of it ? Some weeks ago Mr. Baldwin was telling us some glorious sea stories, lovely yarns all about ships and fights and flashing guns. And it didn't all happen long ago in Drake's day, or when Nelson was alive. It was about men still living, who sailed out to their adventures a few years ago from Glasgow and Dundee. One captain—he was the Glasgow man, I think—had been given one gun to guard his vessel—only one, and a little thing at that. And so they sent him out upon the seas with all their perils to do the best he could. And away over among the West Indies one fine day what did he do but run slap into a German cruiser or something of that kind, with rows and

rows of guns, and big ones too. He had no chance at all. So they signalled to him to surrender. ' Surrender ? ' said he ; ' what does that queer word mean ? We don't use it in Glasgow.' And he popped off his poor toy gun. And that did it. For the German opened fire, and big shells came crashing in till the deck was all ragged and in splinters, and the poor little bit of a gun was knocked out, and things had to come to an end. And when the German captain met our man, he was half furious and yet half full of admiration. ' What did you do it for, you silly idiot ? ' he said. ' What earthly chance had you with that peashooter of yours, you gallant lunatic ? ' ' Well,' said our sea-dog rubbing his head, ' they gave me a gun of sorts, and so I supposed they meant me to use it, and I did.'

You and I have been given heaps of things, for God hasn't sent us out with never a chance, but rigged out properly and all ship-shape with everything we need. He has given us all kinds of things ;

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

and we are meant to use them. Yet, do we? You have got eyes, but do you use them; or are you one of those who never notice things? You're sprawling in a chair, reading perhaps, and some one older by far than you comes into the room, and you have to be told to get up. And that makes you feel horrid, and you blush, and grow uncomfy. For you're not really rude inside. You don't notice things in time, that's all. Or Mother is tired, and there are any number of ways that you could help her. But you never see them till you are sent. And that spoils it all. And sometimes you wish and wish you were like other boys and girls you know, who always see the thing to do and do it just as easily as a watch's hands move round. 'I never think,' you pout; 'I never see; I never notice.' Yet you were given eyes like anybody else. Why don't you use them?

Or, are you one of those restless little souls who are always in trouble? There are rows at school, and rows at home, and rows wherever you are. And you are getting a bit soured and sulky over it. For you can't help it. 'Everything always goes wrong with me,' you say. 'However well I mean, I'm sure to make a mess of it. I was only trying to be funny when I stuck a pin into Jones' leg: I didn't mean to hurt him, really; I just thought the class looked bored and dull, and that that would cheer them up a bit. And Jones! Oh, he's an old stupid. He didn't matter.' Or, 'I wasn't thinking much about it, and did say what was a little off the line. But I never meant to tell a whopper, never. I never know what's the right thing to do.' Well, but, as Nehemiah says, God has given you His good Spirit to instruct you just as surely as to anybody else. Inside you He has put that queer thing we call conscience, that keeps saying out quite clearly, 'Do it,' or, 'Don't do it.' And since God has given it to you, why don't you use it? I know a boy who was going down to Edinburgh to the Rucker International against England. He had bought his railway ticket, he had got his place in the stand, he had booked a place for lunch, he had done everything. But when the morning came, he didn't hear the alarm clock when it went off, and woke up long after the train had left. And so there was no International for him. God has given you and me an alarm clock that keeps birring, and birring, and birring. Why don't you use it?

Or again, Christ says that some people will be much surprised when He tells them that they have done very poorly with their lives. 'But,' they will stammer out, 'I was quite straight and

clean and honest, and never did any one any harm.' 'But what good did you do them?' Christ will ask. 'Who was made any better or any happier by you?' 'I never had a chance of that,' they will answer. 'No chance!' Christ will reply. 'Why, you had dozens of them every day.' 'I never saw them,' they will say, 'really, I didn't.' 'Well, but,' Jesus will say, 'you were given a heart to show them to you, and it did it too. You knew what you would like others to do to you. Why didn't you do that to others, then?' There's that new fellow in school. What would you like to be done to you if you were at a strange place knowing no one? Do that to him, then, who is in a strange place and knows no one. Or, there's that girl in your street who isn't liked. What would you want others to do to you, if you were lonely and unpopular? Well, then, there is your chance. Or, there are the wee ones. If you were all tied up in your lessons, what would you want a big brother to do for you? There's your heart telling you quite clearly all about it all the time. But you won't listen. And yet God gave it to us just that we might use it. And we must.

Lines and Squares.¹

'The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.'
—Pr II³.

I suppose most people have played the game of lines and squares when they were very young. Some of them find themselves doing it yet. The great Dr. Johnson always did it.

Does any one not know what it is? Why, it is this: when you go for a walk and find yourself walking on a pavement you must be ever so careful to walk in the squares and not on the lines between the stones. Because if you walk in the squares you have nothing to be afraid of, but if you step on the lines—well, you had better get off them, quick!

There is some difference as to what will happen to you if you will recklessly walk on the lines. I have consulted a number of authorities, people who know. Some were as old as ten, and none was less than five. One said, 'Goblins'll get you,' but that is out of a recitation. Another said in a very solemn voice that 'If you step on the lines you'll go through and fall down and keep on falling down and down and down for ever and ever and ever and ever.' And then she added, 'Amen.' But most agreed, and it seems settled, that 'Bears'll eat you.'

If you have read a delightful book called 'When

¹ By the Reverend Stuart Robertson, M.A., Glasgow.

We Were Very Young,' you'll remember a song about this :

Whenever I walk in a London street,
I'm ever so careful to watch my feet ;
And I keep in the squares,
And the masses of bears,
Who wait at the corners all ready to eat
The sillies who tread on the lines of the street,
Go back to their lairs,
And I say to them, ' Bears,
Just look how I'm walking in all of the squares !'

I don't know whether it was some wise old nurse who hit on this idea to make the children take good big steps and watch their feet ; or whether children themselves invented it to make their walks like fairy tales, for in fairy tales you are all right and can do anything if you don't do one certain forbidden thing.

But if it was a nurse, she was very wise, and if it was children, they were very sensible : for there is something in it.

There are lines in the Road of Life that we must not trample upon. In the Bible God says, ' Walk *in* my statutes,' not '*on* my statutes,' and the word for statutes means 'a line.' God, in His Commandments has drawn certain lines, and we must keep inside them. In the Book of Proverbs we read, 'The integrity of the upright shall guide them : but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.' Now the word which means 'integrity' comes from a root which means 'complete' or 'whole' ; and the word which means 'perverseness' comes from a root which means 'to join together.' So here is something like the game of lines and squares in the Bible itself. In all things we are to be 'on the square,' as we say. If we are not, if we set our feet on the lines which God and man have set, there will be trouble for us.

But is this true ? Of course it is. There is a line called 'reverence for old age.' Nobody admires a child who steps on that : in fact, in the Bible there were some children who called impudent names at the prophet Elisha, and bears got them, she-bears, too !

There are lines called 'courtesy' and 'patience,' and Dr. Johnson, though he wouldn't step on the lines on the pavement, stepped so often on these lines that people said he was an old bear, and to be a bear is worse than being eaten by bears.

There is a line which is written, 'Thou shalt not covet.' Judas stepped on that, and a horrible black monstrous thing called Treachery came into his heart so that he betrayed his Lord, and killed

himself. Always if we trample on the Commandments of God there is some ugly result ; beastly habits, brutal passions, savage tempers, animal desires, get hold of us.

So long as the lines and squares are only on the street, it is a fine game ; but when the lines are on the Road of Life, the Commandments of God, and the rules He has given to guide our feet in the way of life, then it is deadly earnest. 'Ponder the path of thy feet,' says the wise man in Proverbs. 'Walk in the way of my statutes,' says God.

If we so walk, we can walk without fear. Always and at any cost be 'on the square.'

The Christian Bear.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

The Lord's Servant shall not strive.

'He shall not strive, nor cry ; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.'—Mt 12^{19, 20}.

These words form part of the prophecy of Isaiah regarding the Servant of the Lord ; and whatever may have been their original application, they have certainly found fit fulfilment in the life and character of Jesus Christ. They are quoted by the Evangelist Matthew, however, almost apologetically, and as an excuse for some unexpected conduct on the part of the Master. The occasion was the healing of a man on the Sabbath day.

But there is much more in these words than an occasional excuse for occasional conduct on the part of Jesus. They represent a deep-rooted principle of His life—a policy which regulated His whole earthly career. The mission of Jesus was to save rather than to destroy, to build up rather than to pull down.

1. 'He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.' Such is the Revised Version rendering of the passage in Isaiah, and the words are very vivid and emphatic. A rough and idiomatic English translation would be something like this : 'He shall not scream, nor make a noise, nor advertise himself.' There is nothing loud, hysterical, or self-assertive about the method of Jesus. He is too wise and strong to descend to such devices, and the Spirit of God that is in Him will not suffer Him to use the means loved of men. There is nothing in Him of the demagogue or the agitator ; the Kingdom of God cometh not with observation. The Pharisees, with their scrupulous piety and their hedge round the Law, were an

abomination to Him, and yet it was not until the very end of His career that He came into open opposition with them, and denounced them. He preferred to construct before He pulled down. He knew when to be silent and when to speak. He felt that it was better not to testify at all than to testify at the wrong time and in the wrong place. His real triumphs were not won in the streets or before the eyes of men, but in the wilderness, on the lonely mountain-side, in the little house at Bethany, or in the Garden of Gethsemane.

When His adversaries raged and plotted He was calm ; when His judge bullied Him He was gentle and courteous ; He turned His cheek to the smiter ; and when they mocked His dying throes He prayed, ' Father, forgive them ; they know not what they do.' From first to last He showed the same spirit ; His strength was in gentleness and His greatness in humility.

But what exactly does this example mean for us ? The very fact that the result of this policy for Jesus was the scourge and the Cross and the malefactor's grave shows that it is far removed from some of our pusillanimous imitations of it. As a matter of fact, the example here for us is not so much one of policy as of temper. We have to testify to the truth as it is in Jesus, and we have to oppose the spirit and the works of this world. But everything depends on how we do it. Our witness has to be to truth, not to ourselves, and our strife with evil has to be effective rather than loud.

There is no room in religious work for excitement, though there may be ample scope for earnestness and enthusiasm. Self is the first demon that needs to be exorcised, and meekness is the first necessity. If a man is forced to the front let him stand there and hold his ground in God's name, but let him never lift a finger to obtain the place for himself. In quietness and confidence is our strength. Our work may never be heard of on the lips of men ; it may be carried on in poverty and disappointment and tears ; it may show all the features which the world counts as those of failure ; and yet for that very reason it may meet with the approval of the Master who did not strive nor cry. And on the other hand, our work may show very large in statistics ; we may command the ear of a crowd and the praise of men ; but if it be known as our work, and if we are exalted by it, then it will scarcely win the approval of the Christ who humbled Himself, and would not lift up His voice in the streets. This does not mean that all our modern methods are vitiated with this taint, but the danger in them is great.

2. ' A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench.' These beautiful words imply that the same gentle and patient spirit which regulated the public policy of Jesus regulates also His more personal dealings with men. Even the crushed reed of a broken and ruined life, which most men would throw away as worth nothing, He will try to straighten and set up again ; and the smouldering wick of a half-formed purpose of good He will not deaden, but fan and cherish into new warmth and brightness. The metaphor is a very fine one, and admits of a wide application. It is often regarded as referring in the first instance to the attitude of Christ to the heathen world around Him, and has been explained thus : ' This is the singularly humane and compassionate view the prophecy takes of the Gentiles ; they are bruised reeds and expiring flames. . . . What the prophecy may refer to is the human virtues, expiring among the nations but not yet dead ; the sense of God debased by idolatries but not extinct ; the consciousness in the individual soul of its own worth and its incapacities, and the glimmering ideal of a true life and a worthy activity almost crushed out. . . . This flickering light the Servant shall feed and blow into a flame.' So in all our dealings with the heathen world, and in seeking to convert men to the gospel of the Prince of Peace, we shall do well not to ignore the good in them if we would replace it by a better.

But this missionary application of the words of the prophet is by no means the only one or the best. A further thought here is that Christ looks upon men with other eyes than ours ; that He sees good in them, and cherishes hope for them where we fail to do so ; and that all the good He finds in them He will use for His own ends. There is something truly Divine and very consoling to our weak humanity in the invincible belief of Jesus that men are capable of being saved. In that belief He came into the world, and for it He suffered and died. The sin that you do may cut you off from men, may drive you out of respectable houses, may make you an outlaw and a vagabond in this world, but it can never cut you off from the pity of Christ.

And the same is true of those who are hard-pressed in the battle of life, of those who labour and are heavy-laden. Trouble can scotch but it cannot kill, and Christ is stronger than all the forces of this world. He will not add by the weight of a hair to the heavy burdens that men carry. His yoke is easy and His burden light. When fortune has vanished, and health is impaired, and the spirit is broken, and the world frowns—then He can do

His work, and bind up our bruises, and pour oil into our wounds, and give a new foundation to faith and kindle hope afresh. The Good Shepherd gathers the lambs in His bosom, and gently leads those that are with young. 'Come unto me,' He says, 'all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

And if it be but a faithless spirit from which we suffer, He shows the same tireless patience and the same restoring grace. When the flame of Divine life in us is faint and flickering, He will fan and cherish it till it grows bright and strong. 'The bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench.'¹

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

The Laws of Prayer.

'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'—Mt 7^t.

If God is absolutely good and absolutely wise, if He knows all with absolute knowledge and does all with absolute power, where is there place in His government for the interference of ignorant, erring, foolish mortals? God deals with us as with children, and the law which is above every law is the law of love. But must not love itself refuse to accommodate its wise purposes to our unwise desires? If God's rule is already the wisest and the best, must not love, even for our sakes, guard it from our foolish interference? Yet, if God really deals with us as with children, might not a law of prayer itself prove to be part of this wisest and best rule?

This law our Lord here enunciates. It is no sanction of wandering desires or worship of our own wills, but just the highest example of the great law of sowing and reaping. It sets forth three methods of God and three stages of our own prayers; and by considering them, we may see, not only how God answers prayer, but how no prayer goes unanswered.

1. Prayer is spoken of as an asking in order to receive. If we ask, we receive without condition made or exception admitted. This is the first law—*the Law of Receiving*.

There are doubtless definite and direct answers to prayer; and, if we asked more simply and with greater faith, we might all be surer of God's hand in the events of our lives. But we have also the highest examples to warn us not to expect, in any uniform, immediate, or visible way, the thing we ask. Paul thrice besought the Lord in vain that the

messenger of Satan to buffet him should depart. A still greater than Paul, even He who uttered this saying, cried, 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from me': and it did not pass. The Cross was the only answer to His prayer. It is the answer to many prayers. Perhaps no one rightly prays in Christ's name without realizing that it may be the answer to any prayer.

Yet we may not say that either asked and was denied. Paul's desire to profit by all experiences was greater than his desire to choose what any experience might be. The Master's wish that God's will should be done was far above any wish to be spared the agony necessary for the doing of it. When God's will was done, for His glory and the good of man, Jesus had nothing in His heart but utter submission. This distinction between the wish of the moment and the unwavering purpose of the life must ever be kept in mind.

Prayer, as the hymn says, is 'the soul's sincere desire.' Nay, 'sincere' is superfluous. All desire is sincere. Only the utterance of it can be insincere. Every longing is a prayer; and our most effectual, fervent prayer is our strongest longing. But, if that is so, for what have we prayed? For everything, base as well as noble, we ever set our hearts on. If this be the meaning of asking, is our Lord's assertion so certainly contradicted by experience? Do we not all, in a quite amazing way, receive in the line of our desires? And beyond this life is eternity, with the answers which still await our longing. Our highest aspirations alone may be its promise, but none of our desires may be wholly unanswered.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist.

And though the good only may be everlasting, may not the evil also have a kind of immortality? 'As the fins of a fish foreshadow that water exists, or the wings of an eagle in the egg presuppose air,' so every longing of the heart foreshadows some kind of realization. That is a universal law; and it is the laws of the spirit, and not of the body, which endure.

Strange mystery of the soul of man made in the image of God, strange power of his asking, strange intimacy with the working of the Eternal! To whatsoever we ask the answer is so sure that for it we need have no concern. Our one need is to be taught to ask truly in Christ's name, so that all our desires may be wholly according to the Father's love and the Father's wisdom.

2. But, if we receive what we ask, we do not receive it at our own time and in our own way.

¹ W. B. Selbie, *The Servant of God*, 223.

Yet it is not the whole truth when we say it is at God's time and in His way. That is not adequate, because it is not His mere pleasure which determines either His giving or His withholding. The law of receiving is suspended only by a higher law—the *Law of Finding*.

God, we too readily assume, must speak, and man simply receive. But it is not so now, and never has been. God is wiser, more patient, and, above all, more magnanimous. 'It is,' one of the Proverbs says, 'the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.' To give this regal glory, God conceals. He would lift us up and crown us, in the glory of His own discernment, over all His works.

Nor is the supreme revelation, the Word of God Himself, an exception. Even His sayings and doings are valueless till, by seeking, we find them for ourselves anew. His truth may be the most familiar thing in life yet have no real existence for us, even as a man might plough all his days with the gold shining in the furrow, yet die in poverty. Christ's demand still is, 'Seek, and ye shall find'; and those He never fails are the seekers after God.

Only what we seek shows what in our own hearts we are, and prophesies what, in the end, we shall be. Wherefore, even more than in what we ask, it is the wings of the eagle in the egg. Even in time, the best of life is finding what we seek; and, in the day when our real spiritual world disentangles itself from the fashions and shadows of time, we shall find the rest. There need be no uncertainty about finding. The one fear is that the thing we have been seeking may prove ashes for bread, corruption for life, darkness for light.

3. This law of finding, however, is limited by a still higher law, which is *the Law of Discovering*—'Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'

This is the law which requires the long delays to which we are all subjected and by which so many are discouraged. For many weary years we may stand faced by doors which never open to our knocking. If we have accepted no denial, if delay has only enlarged our measure of blessings beyond our present knowing and increased our urgency, then we have most truly waited upon God. Such persistent knocking at the door of life's mystery is the deepest, the best attested, the most efficacious utterance of the heart, the only form of prayer wholly adequate to God's infinite and eternal purpose with the souls of men.

To knock that it may be opened unto us is more than to receive what we know we desire, and more than to find what we know we are seeking. It is

the awaiting of a discovery of truth and beauty and goodness beyond all our knowing. Yet it is not a mere expectation of lighting upon, by accident, something wholly unanticipated and strange. Like all discovery, it is at once beyond our asking or our seeking, yet the receiving of our heart's desire, the finding of what we have ever pursued. It is the unexpected, yet the realization of our expectation; the strange, yet with nothing stranger in it than its familiarity.

When Kepler, after years of study, discovered the true orbit of the planets, it was a new revelation to lift up his heart in wonder and adoration, but, while it had the marvel of the unexpected, had it the strangeness of the unanticipated? Rather would it appear merely simple and beautiful and right, the natural order of his disordered ideas, the perfection he had ever followed, so fitting as to leave him amazed at ever having thought that God's way of working was different.

All our days God is opening doors for those of us who continue knocking, but the blankest one at the end is also the widest. When it opens, it will be in the largest sense upon what it has not entered into our heart to conceive. Yet may there not be, in a still deeper sense, nothing new? Shall we not find ourselves still on the old road, with nothing altered except the opening of the gates which obstructed our vision? Life will stretch before us with a vast and hitherto unrealized meaning, but will it not also be just the old life, with its meaning the fulfilment of life's foreshadowings and its blessings the natural satisfaction of our gropings?

We shall then know that our greatest, truest, most efficacious prayers were neither our petitions for what we thought we needed, nor our reaching out after what we thought our goal, but what the Apostle calls the groanings that cannot be uttered, the ceaseless unrest for what was, in this world, ever beyond our knowing.

God keeps us waiting and dissatisfied and unblest, not because He would not gladly satisfy our desire and reward our seeking, but because His is a larger love which would give us a still higher possession on the better title of our own discovery. In that confidence let us pray—asking, seeking, knocking—knowing the blankest door of His seeming denial to be only the barrier that will open upon His fullest manifestation. So shall we pray, not only when we worship together in the sanctuary or kneel at our private devotions, but by a whole life of trust, of dependence, of thanksgiving, and, above all, of waiting at the door of life's mystery, which is life's prophecy and hope.¹

¹ J. Oman, *The Paradox of the World*, 280.

SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION DAY.

Enlarging Knowledge.

'Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.'—Hos 6³.

There are certain definite stages in this enlarging knowledge of the Lord which can be clearly marked. They are set down for us in the New Testament. Let us consider them, then, in their order.

1. The first stage is *the knowledge of the risen Lord*. It is a great gift of God's grace to believe in Christ who lived and died. It is a transforming experience to know Christ who not only died but rose again. The closing pages of the Gospels show us men whose religion was but a tender memory. Its most sacred spot was a grave with a stone set upon it. Their hopes were only the wreck of vanished dreams. Suddenly there rings in the ears of this little band of dispirited men and women the cry, 'The Lord is risen!' From that time they rose up to a new plane of knowledge whose sublime significances filled them with awe and aroused them to rapture. The glory of the risen Lord and the solemn certainty of His haunting presence paled the words and deeds of Galilee and Samaria.

The power of this knowledge of the risen Christ works like a spell. Literature with its prophetic instinct has divined its significance. Even Goethe, tinged though he was by pagan ideals, makes the bells of Easter Sunday morning ring in new hope to the heart of Faust awaiting his doom. Goethe realized that the Lord who rose again victorious over sin and death could bring back the most desperate wrong-doer from the gates of hell. A nobler poet than Goethe has set this truth in a still clearer light. In the poem he calls 'Christmas Eve and Easter Day' Browning declares that the risen Lord is the fundamental fact of his faith. A doubt which was almost despair had seized upon him. The evidences of the faith no longer held him, and all the offices of its worship provoked distaste. He traces his ascent from that experience of a night of storm on the moor when he saw

the sight

Of a sweepy garment, vast and white,
With a hem that I could recognize,

up to that more splendid certainty when

The whole face turned upon me full.

Browning had become conscious of the risen Lord, and his words rise to a height of self-forgetting passion that even he seldom attains.

More convincing and more illuminating, perhaps, is the witness of humbler believers—simple men and women who began by seeing only the gentle Jesus of the children's hymn, or dwelling upon the deeds of Him who went about doing good, or rising no higher than to revere the mystic of the Mount of the Beatitudes. In some hour of quiet brooding or on some day of overwhelming sorrow they realized that Christ was risen, and was near, tender, waiting for a word, watching for a look, swift to strengthen and to help. They had followed on to know the risen Lord.

2. The second stage is *the knowledge of the ascended Lord*. We enter a rarer atmosphere here, and we touch a more difficult truth. We are lifting up our eyes to the cloud which received Him out of their sight, and seeing the throne above it. Seldom does any young believer, even although assured that Christ is risen, attain with confidence to a sense of the ascended Lord. The early believers grew slowly into that certainty and still more slowly into its power. As it became the sure possession of their hearts, they were almost intoxicated by the thought that Christ is Lord of all. We see Stephen, as he dies in the field of the outcast, lifting his eyes to behold Jesus on the right hand of God. We see Paul in his prison strengthening his soul with the assurance that Christ must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. All the great believers have seen this sight, and all the most splendid services have been done under its inspiration. Every great preacher has a constant vision of an exalted Christ. His victorious optimism ebbs and flows as the certainty of the ascended Lord becomes dim or shines out in transforming power.

There are times when the one assurance the Church needs is to see Jesus on the right hand of God. There is so much amiss in the world, so much sorrow and pain, and the tears are not wiped away. The victory of righteousness is so costly, so broken, and so slow. Yet even in our dullest hours the vision of our Lord on the throne sends a flood of buoyant energy through our veins. There is a poem by Walt Whitman which illustrates this power of an assurance of an ascended Lord. He is recalling the famous march of Sherman through Georgia to the sea. He remembers that, when a soldier in the ranks, he passed an old, half-blind negro woman sitting by the roadside. Never did she expect to see freedom given to her race. But as the soldiers passed on in their victorious march she realized in her own poor, wondering way that a new power was ruling in the land, and that.

however long and blood-stained the struggle might yet be, the end of it was liberty to the slave.

Who are you, dusky woman, so ancient hardly human,

With your woolly-white and turban'd head, and bare bony feet ?

Why rising by the roadside here, do you the colours greet ?

Me master years a hundred since from my parents sunder'd,

A little child, they caught me as the savage beast is caught,

Then hither me across the sea the cruel slaver brought.

No further does she say, but lingering all the day,
Her high-borne turban'd head she wags, and rolls
her darkling eye,

And courtesies to the regiments, the guidons moving by.

3. The third stage is *the knowledge of the indwelling Lord*. There is a sense in which the knowledge of the ascended Lord seems to remove Him far from us and to make Him a distant and almost absent personality. But we follow on to a knowledge which brings Him nearer than before. We no longer know Christ 'after the flesh.' As Paul says, 'The Lord is that Spirit.' Spirit can touch spirit, spirit can dwell with spirit, spirit can interpenetrate spirit, with the swiftness and instancy and power of thought and desire and passion. The writers of the Epistles, therefore, speak of Christ not only as risen, and ascended, but as formed within them, pulsing within their wills, becoming the energy of their lives, enshrined in their hearts, indwelling within the temple of their spirits.

When the longing for God and a sense of His love is a spring of desire in our hearts, when the beauty of holiness in Christ has risen upon us with the rapture of a new dawn, we know that Christ dwells within. While we worship, while we serve, while we suffer, or while we pray, we find that the Lord is within, and we enter into the knowledge of the indwelling Christ. Myers has engrossed that experience in an impassioned verse when he makes St. Paul cry :

Then thro' the mid complaint of my confession,

Then thro' the pang and passion of my prayer,

Leaps with a start the shock of his possession,

Thrills me and touches, and the Lord is there.

After a brilliant course at Yale, Horace Bushnell turned aside from a career of the highest promise to

preach the gospel to a little congregation of believing men. He turned aside because he had entered into 'the secret of the Lord.' Some fifteen years later he followed on to know the Lord. He lost his only son, and in that hour of keenly felt trial his holden eyes were opened and he saw the risen Lord. In succeeding years he passed on, as all men do who are sure that Christ is risen, to the conception of the ascended Christ. But five years later, as he expresses it, he 'passed a boundary.' Christ has been pressing in upon him with a gentle and insistent sense of His nearness. He came down one February morning, after a night of quiet wakefulness, with a new light on his face. When one asked him, 'What have you seen ?' this preacher of Christ for over twenty years replied, 'The gospel !' He sat down to pour the treasures of his new experience into a meditation on the words, 'Until Christ be formed in you.' He proclaimed as a revelation from the Spirit of God his new knowledge of Christ as the indwelling, energizing, and sanctifying life of the soul. A new serenity of spirit and a wondrously sweet sanctity marked his after-years.

The secret of the Lord is not consummated even when we know His indwelling. We do not yet know as we are known. Yet no higher knowledge shall be given to us here. 'Now we know in part,' writes Paul, 'but then shall we know even as we are known.'¹

WHITSUNDAY.

The Pledge of God's Honour.

'God, who hath . . . given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.'—2 Co 1²².

The thought underlying these words was a familiar one to the Apostle Paul. He uses these very words on several occasions, and where he does not use these very words, the thought which underlies them is present to his mind. Thus he speaks in a certain place of 'the testimony of our conscience,' and once again of 'the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.' You will find that there is one tone, one note in all these passages. You will find that as this thought comes over the Apostle's mind, every other feeling leaves him suddenly, and he becomes confident, hopeful, happy. The pressure of things becomes easier, things begin to look different—it is as though some Holy Presence at that moment came into a room, and by its own invincible goodness subdued all things to its own quietness and dignity.

¹ W. M. Clow, *The Secret of the Lord*, 342.

Now what is this thought which could so soothe and fortify the Apostle's soul? Is it not just this—that in all circumstances he has it in his power to fall back upon God? 'We have the earnest of the Spirit.' We have God working within ourselves. We have the living God in our hearts, God living in our hearts; and that removes the terrible fear to which we are tempted in our discouraged hours. The Apostle was sure of God, and to be sure of God is to be sure that all God's will shall yet be done. What if this happens only at length, only at the end of the days! If it happens so it must be that that and no other was the will of God. And so his spirit leaned back upon God; he felt for God's hand, and found it near, and the anxiety about himself and about the future passed clean out of his mind. He was anointed for the battle; he was prepared to wait. Now this is a way of looking at our life which we also shall have, sooner or later, to take up. We, too, must be able to fall back upon some inward and personal confidence, and there to stand as it were upon a rock. We, too, shall have to learn to trust to the earnest of the Spirit. This, indeed, is just the life of faith or the spiritual mind. Without it we are not religious at all.

'The earnest of the Spirit.' The word translated 'earnest' was a word used only in business transactions. It was a Phœnician word coined by the Phœnicians, the founders of trade in our modern sense. It meant a portion of the purchase money—the pledge on the one hand that the transaction was settled once for all, and, on the other, that the remainder of the money would be paid in course of time. If the man who gave you the earnest (*arrhabo*), the pledge, was trustworthy, then you were in as good a position as you would be if you had received the entire amount in your hand.

Let us take three matters, concerning which it is of the utmost necessity that we have, each one of us, trustworthy and abiding convictions; and these convictions take root only in lives which are within the daily illumination and control of God.

Take these three great matters, then, concerning which we must each have a private faith and confidence—the *being of God*; the *salvation of our soul*; and *our personal existence after death*. Those three matters are, indeed, not to be separated. Yet we can separate them in our thoughts, and a man is not really alive who has not arrived at some doctrine or belief concerning these great matters, by which belief he is shaping his present life and anticipating his destiny. With regard to these, how true it is that we have only the earnest of the Spirit.

Take the supreme matter, *the being of God*. What do we know of God? How are we to know what He is? How, indeed, are we to know that He is? We may ask men, as Isaiah did, 'to lift up their eyes on high and see who hath erected these things, that bringeth out their host by number.' We may bid men open their eyes to the majesty of the night-sky, to the beauty and order of the created world. We may bid a man consider what a piece of work he himself is. We may ask men, in short, to think, knowing that if they think on and on they will arrive at some notion about God, by whom all things stand fast. But the Apostle takes another way—a way, too, that is more likely to bring conviction in these very days of ours. He bids us trace the outlines of God's character in His dealings with us privately. Has God come near to us? Has He interrupted us, showing us that we do not belong to ourselves, but are here to obey Him, here to do or to bear what He decrees? Does night fall upon our spirits the moment we have done some wrong? And does not night stay with us until we bend our stiff heart before God and ask Him to pardon us and give us peace? When we pray, when we ask for strength to go on beneath some load, it may be, which we know we must bear, do we really find strength? If we had any experience of such visitations, we have the earnest of the Spirit—the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are the sons of God. God has in these things given us His pledge; the rest will come.

There are times when, as we consider the world in which we live, and how it seems to give the lie to all our deepest hopes for it, the cry breaks from us, 'O Lord, how long?' But be still, my soul, it is not for thee to know the times and the seasons. Has not God given thee the earnest of the Spirit? To have faith is to be faithful to that.

What ground of confidence have we that *our soul shall be finally saved*, that it shall rise steadily through all its experiences to God? Who is there—among those who are really seeking to please God—who has not been humbled and ashamed to find that unworthy things were still alive within him, ready at a moment to master him? Our inward life is so complicated, so subtle, that it is often difficult for us to say that we have made progress, that we are more steadily and habitually Christian in our disposition. One day our feet are on a rock; we feel sure of ourselves, of our outward behaviour, and of the very temper of our mind: next day our feet are on miry clay; we struggle and lose ground, and are full of unhappiness. Where, in such a case, is our confidence that some abiding

good is surely coming in spite of many a disheartening sign? We fall back upon God, who is working within us. Whatever we have felt of His influence, we hold as an earnest, as a pledge from Him of our eventual deliverance. And so, in days when we are troubled, as indeed we should be troubled, by our personal failures, by our low aims and unsteady obedience, let us remember that our confidence is in God; in God, who was behind such improvement as we could ever claim. A man gets back his confidence when he reminds himself that his salvation does not depend upon his grasp of God, but upon God's grasp of him.

The profoundest question which can engage us is the question of *our personal immortality*—the question which Job raised when he said, 'A man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?' The truth about this great matter is hidden from us in many of its aspects. We cannot see into the world of spirits; we cannot hold fellowship except by faith with those whom we have loved and lost. Where, then, shall we rest our confidence that we shall survive the disaster of death and shall go forward into a closer life with God? There are reasons and reasons which may be given to strengthen our

instinctive belief in our personal existence after death. But these are not what the Apostle means when he speaks of 'the earnest of the Spirit.'

The belief in our own immortality can never be a real conviction—it will be at best a kind of hearsay—until we base it upon the earnest of the Spirit; until we feel the soul growing within us, aspiring towards God, protesting against the dominion of the carnal mind; until we feel that we have that within us which this present world cannot satisfy, we are not using real words when we speak of immortality.

Only they who have the earnest of the Spirit are quite sure of immortality. And this they know, because even now they feel that they are living unto God. They feel that God is moulding, making, unmaking, remaking, casting down, and building up their life in its secret and immortal parts. 'If God lives, I shall live,' they say, 'and live with Him. If Christ lives, then when my soul is set free by death to choose its own place, it will hie away to Christ like a bird to its nest. He will call, and I will answer Him. He will have a desire to the work of His hands.' We know that another life awaits us, because even now we hold communications with it.¹

¹ J. A. Hutton, *The Fear of Things*, 157.

Recent Foreign Theology.

German Theology.

FROM the pen of Professor Traub we expect vigorous and lucid argument, and this brief treatise¹ satisfies our anticipations. The subject is old but ever new. Opening with some most relevant pages on the paradox or perversity of Barth's theological estimate of history as the medium of revelation, Traub proceeds to a scrutiny of the positions of Troeltsch and Schweitzer. The obscurities of both are faithfully dealt with. The conclusion reached is that rationalistic, speculative, mystical theologies, as well as that affiliated to the Comparative Science of Religions, can view historical criticism of the Gospels with comparative equanimity; for none of them needs the historical Christ as the foundation of faith, so that to them it matters nothing whether He be proved quite unhistorical, or, at the other extreme, be made the mere prisoner of His age. On this there follows a sympathetic review of the

¹ *Glaube und Geschichte*, by Friedrich Traub (L. Klotz Verlag, Gotha, 1926. Pp. 61. M.2.50).

Ritschlian leaders and, in addition, Kähler and Heim, which lays stress on their common conviction that historical research cannot form the basis of faith, first because it yields nothing more than probabilities (however high), and secondly because the saints would thereby be brought into an intolerable dependence on the scholars. This result Traub confirms by a short but telling criticism of the *formgeschichtliche* method, as practised by Bultmann.

Traub next sets forth in positive fashion his own belief that the Christ of history is the foundation-stone of faith. We can know Him directly as one with God, as filled with moral majesty, as the Lover of the sinful. The impression made on earnest minds by that picture of the Saviour which lives and works on in the Church is such as to authenticate itself. Seen as He is, He becomes a present reality to conscience and heart. This signifies that while our certainty of the historical revelation is not gained through research, it is not unrelated to it. If the non-existence of Jesus