

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expository-times\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php)

pdfs are named: [Volume]\_[Issue]\_[1<sup>st</sup> page of article].pdf

## In the Study.

### Virginibus Puerisque.

#### Creepy, Crawly Things.<sup>1</sup>

'The serpent.'—Gn 3<sup>1</sup>.

ARE YOU a dreamy little chap who, when he's walking down the road, isn't really there at all, but far away in some South Sea Island, where the white waves, rolling in from a blue, blue sea, are crashing on the yellow sands ; or in the East somewhere, in the golden sunshine, among people all dressed in their bright colours as gaily as our gardens are in June ? It must be fine to be out there ; and when we tumble out of bed on a raw, shivery morning, it does seem rather horrid to be only here. But there's another side to it. I was reading lately a lady's story of that other side. Yes, she said, it's all very wonderful, but it isn't much fun really to open a packet of flour and find it alive with cockroaches, and just have to pick them out, and use the rest ; or to sit down on a chair, and the leg gives, eaten by white ants ; or to open the bathroom door, and hear a hissing, and say, 'That stupid boy has left the taps running,' and find it's no tap but a cobra ready to strike. I think the snakes would finish me ; to see them, as sometimes happens in the lonelier places, creeping about on the rafters and now and then dropping with a soft thud on the floor. Ah, no ! I couldn't stand that ; they're so creepy and crawly and slithery and wriggly and horrid. I know lots of them are quite harmless, and that most of them don't want to hurt any one, but just to get away, poor things. But they're not all like that. There's one kind that put their tails tight round a tree, and wait beside a path, and then dart out straight at your eyes ! And there's another that comes at you like an arrow. No, I would hate the snakes. I think we're better here. Ah, but we have snakes, too. In this old story, when they want to tell us how horrid evil is—the sulks and passion and meanness we have in our hearts—they say it's like, it's like—it's like a snake, as cruel and cold and dreadful as that. And in your heart and mine there are such horrible things ; and however are we to get away from them ? For a snake can move as swiftly as a horse, and swim quicker than a fish, and climb faster than a monkey. And there they are, writhing and twisting and hissing, and we in the midst of them. Ah ! it's horrid, isn't it ?

I know that people from the East always laugh

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

when we talk to them about snakes. Snakes ! they say. Oh, we never think of them. In the towns we never see them ; and elsewhere—oh, they don't do much harm, really. Nobody worries about them, nobody remembers them, indeed, at all.

Yes ; and just because nobody remembers or worries, twenty thousand people in India die every year from snake-bite. They, too, said, 'Snakes ! oh, we don't bother about them.' And then one day, just like any other day, all in a moment they got bitten and they died.

We, too, don't bother about these ugly things that dart out of our minds at times ; we think it's rather fun to be rough or greedy or selfish, for we get our own way ; and in any case, who cares about things like that ? They do no harm, we say, not really, and we, too, forget about them. And, then, some day something bites us too. And though we don't see them or remember them, they are always there. I once heard of a man who had a wonderful collection of snakes, and a visitor said, 'But where do you find them ? I never see any.' And the other answered, 'I caught forty of them in the room where you are sleeping.' In the day, I suppose, they were in their holes. But think of sleeping there at night, when they come gliding out, and one night find them, all cold in the darkness on one's very bed. And they are in your heart and mine. You mayn't see them ; they may be hidden away ; but they are there ; and when we lose a game, don't you hear them hissing ? Or, when we don't get our way and have to come in earlier than we want, ah, then they glide out and lift up their heads and dart and sting, how suddenly and sorely. And if we do get stung, what are we to do ? Well, if it's in your finger, you'd better cut it off, and quickly, too, before the poison spreads. Sometimes we can do that ; we can leave the thing alone, and be done with it. If it's a nasty book, stop reading it. Cut it off. Be quick, or the poison will spread into your mind. Or if there's a boy who has ugly ways and is soiling yours, leave him alone. Cut off the poisoned bit. Quick ! quick !

But sometimes we can't cut it off. The danger lies in some place where we have to go, in something we must do. And what then ? Well, long ago, they say, Ireland was full of snakes. But there's none there now. And why ? Because St. Patrick chased them all away. He went before, and all these horrid, creepy things came writhing and twisting

and gliding and sliding after him, and away out to the sea, never to come back any more. And Jesus can do that for you and me. You remember how He sent a whole herd of dreadful things rushing into the lake where they were choked; and a good riddance too. If I were you, I would say to Him, 'Here is a little lad, whose heart is full of temper and passion and all kinds of creepy, crawly, loathsome things. Please take them all away, and keep them all away.' And, do you know, He will.

#### The Persian Woodcarver.<sup>1</sup>

'And the two doors were of fir-tree: . . . And he carved thereon cherubims, and palm trees, and open flowers.'—I K 6<sup>34, 35</sup>.

There is a story told of a poor woodcarver, who lived in the city of Teheran, in the heart of Persia. In this beautiful city he would walk abroad to admire the lovely sights around him. There were the many coloured carpets in the bazaar, the gardens also with their red clusters of roses and the caravans crossing the desert like ships at sea. Yet, crowning all in beauty, were the gates of the city temple. Massive in their strength they stood, wrought by cunning artists, with flowers so delicately carved upon them that it seemed as though the wind must blow away the petals. When they opened in the morning it was like angels arising. When they closed at night it was like the seraphim folding their wings. The woodcarver feasted his eyes upon them again and again. His heart longed to possess gates like these. But they were sacred. To copy them was forbidden. The penalty for doing so was death. Then the woodcarver thought of a plan. Every day he went out for a walk, and had a good look at the gates. When he came home, he would remember what he had seen and carve it in wood. This he did each day, always looking at the gates and treasuring up a bit of beauty, till at length, when many months had passed, he had carved a pair of his own. There they stood in his workshop, majestic in their loveliness, a joy to all his friends. But an enemy was jealous of the woodcarver and his treasure. With a heart filled with envy he went and told the priests. They were furious at what had been done. The carver was seized and put to death, and the gates were taken away. For a long time they were lost sight of. Then, just recently, they were discovered in a curio shop in London. They were taken out and set up in the Palace of Beauty in the great Exhibition at Wembley.

<sup>1</sup> By the Reverend J. Kennedy, B.D., Forfar.

That is the story of the woodcarver. What a lover of beauty he was to go and copy those great gates bit by bit! What a splendid time he must have had walking home through the streets of Teheran when the mantle of night was falling, carrying in his mind a little gleam of loveliness to light him on his way! And all the while those beautiful things he had to remember would be making him a better man. Bad thoughts would fade away when he was thinking of the beauty of a rose. A mean action would be hard to do when his mind was treasuring a luscious cluster of grapes. Beautiful thoughts make beautiful deeds, and the carver would grow in beauty day by day.

Would you like to do what he did? Well, here is a way! You have read about Jesus Christ, the finest man who ever lived. Why not try to copy Him? Just come day by day and take a peep at Him. When you have looked at Him steadily, try to be like Him. Remember one day how kind He was, another day how forgiving He was, and still another how unselfish He was, until you have copied Him bit by bit. Of course, it is difficult and it will take a long, long time. But it is worth trying. For gradually, as you work away, a change will steal over you. Your heart will become kinder, your mind more true, and men will see Christ's beauty in your eyes.

#### The Christian Year.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

##### Wanted—A Man!

'Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it.'—Jer 5<sup>1</sup>.

'Wanted!—a man!'—such is this prophet's message to his age. It may remind some of that well-known incident of the Greek philosopher Diogenes searching with a candle at midday in the market-place of Athens. Being asked what he was looking for, he replied, bitterly and abruptly, 'A man.' In a like mood of despairing irony the writer of these words of our text represents Jehovah as bidding him (to quote Moffatt's translation), 'scour the streets of Jerusalem, search the squares, and see if you can find a man of honest mind and of integrity.' God once promised to spare Sodom, if ten righteous men were found in it. Here He declares His willingness to save Jerusalem from destruction, if even one single lover of truth and

justice is discovered within its walls. The saving power of simple men who have the spirit of God in their hearts—that is the lesson we are here taught.

1. 'Wanted, a man!'—it is the world's cry of perplexity and need. And when it says so, it is not necessarily thinking of Mr. Bernard Shaw's 'Superman,' but rather of somebody who knows and sympathizes with our weakness and need, and yet can lead us out of our dark perplexities. Such were the men who fought and fell in the Great War, filling the crowded stage of those tremendous times. They were so very human, with all their faults and shortcomings, and yet so lovable, so patient and brave and unassuming!

The modern quest for individuality is a reaction, a revolt from the one dull pattern into which modern civilization seeks to mould our men and women just as it moulds the houses turned out by identical hundreds, like children's blocks whose unending rows we see in our towns and cities. But Man has no 'standard parts.' We are each unique: and in that uniqueness lies most of our value to society. Man's ever-pressing need is to realize himself.

Thomas Carlyle has expressed this thought in his own forceful way. 'The essence of our being, the mystery in us that calls itself "I" (ah, what words have we for such things?), is a breath from heaven: the Highest Being manifests itself in man. This body, these faculties, this life of ours—is it not all as a vesture for the Unnamed? . . . We are the miracle of miracles, the great, inscrutable mystery of God.'

2. But it is not simply a man that is wanted—a virile, magnetic personality, however unscrupulous or capricious in the use of his power. A qualification is added, 'that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth.' To be good is far more important than to be great. God bids Jeremiah seek in the streets of Jerusalem, not for a brilliant statesman or a proud king or a learned scribe, but for one who is faithful to the highest that is in him.

The Church is an institution for patterning men after the likeness of God, for expressing human individuality in terms of the Divine completeness. Goethe says somewhere: 'No greater good can happen to a town, than for several educated men, thinking in the same way about what is good and true, to be living in it.' That is why the members of this Church are called by Christ the salt and light of mankind. But they are not always the great ones in the world's estimation. You remember the New Testament description of Barnabas as 'a good man, full of the Holy Ghost.' The unthinking

may hastily vote lives of this type commonplace. But it is sin which is really dull and stupid, and virtue which is interesting and exciting and romantic. The words of the psalmist are profoundly true to the real facts of life. 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful' (the superior person!), 'but his delight is in the law of the Lord.'

3. 'Wanted—a man!' As our text reminds us, it is God's need even more than ours. In all reverence let us say that He cannot do without us. For it is through us, imperfect instruments as we often are, that He realizes His purposes for this world of His creation and His love. We must strive to show ourselves worthy of so high an honour and so great a trust. In the fourth chapter of Ephesians, St. Paul expounds his theology of 'the perfect man' or 'the new man.' Unlike some religious teachers, he never disparages humanity, but sets it at the apex of creation, crowned with honour and glory. He constantly exhorts his readers to 'quit them like men,' to 'show themselves men,' to rise to the status and grandeur of true manhood, God's ideal, 'unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.'

Christianity, indeed, has well been described as 'the Divine art of making men.' We are to be all-round men; 'I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved entire'—there is the threefold development, spiritual, intellectual, physical. They are put in the descending order of their importance, but all are essential.

We Christians, then, are pledged to be physically full men, honouring our bodies as the temples of the Holy Ghost, bringing them into subjection, ruling them by temperance, making them fit and strong and beautiful to do God's errands in the world in which we live. And we are to be intellectually full men. 'Reading,' says Bacon, 'makes a full man'; and St. Paul bids young Timothy 'give attention to reading, to exhortation, to teaching.' Intellectual pursuits of every kind lift our thoughts out of narrow vocational ruts, and place them in the midstream of the wide circling currents of human mental activity. And supremely are we to aim at becoming spiritually full and well-developed men. Fellowship with God is the heart and essence of all true religion; and we obtain it through the One perfect and complete and representative Man, Christ Jesus.

'Wanted—a man!' That cry is sounding in our ears. God is still scouring the streets to see if He can find a man of honest mind and of integrity.

Christ wants men to-day : men full of strength and vigour and self-sacrifice, to fight in the ranks of those who wage the never-ending crusade against the powers of darkness. Let us trust in Him, lean on Him, go to Him in all our moments of temptation, and we will find His grace sufficient, His goodness supplying our every need, His power and blessing making us whole.<sup>1</sup>

More than half beaten, but fearless,  
Facing the storm and the night,  
Breathless and reeling, but tearless,  
Here in the lull of the fight,  
I who bow not but before Thee,  
God of the fighting clan,  
Lifting my fists I implore Thee,  
Give me the heart of a man !<sup>2</sup>

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

#### The Redeemer and Property.

'When they had brought their boats to land, they left all.'—Lk 5<sup>11</sup> (R.V.).

Friendship with Jesus has opened up for Simon and his partners new trade possibilities. Here is one possessed of a secret which enables Him to detect the haunts and habits of fish. All the experience of the craft is superseded by what is equivalent to the discovery of a new method. If Jesus is in the boat, its owners will no longer be dependent upon the weary night-fishing. But no sooner have they succeeded in bringing their nets to land, than one and all abandon the catch upon the beach, and follow Jesus as He leads them away from the familiar strand. Does not such conduct strike us as most extraordinary ?

1. Most of us can recall those wonderful stories with which the gorgeous East thrilled our childish imagination in the Arabian Night's Entertainments. Ali Baba becomes possessed of the secret password, 'Open, Sesame !' which admits him to the riches laid up in the recesses of the robbers' secret cave. Or a child of the people is suddenly introduced to the Slaves of the Lamp and of the Ring, who pour into his lap the wealth of Ormuz and of Ind, turning the beggar into a prince and conferring upon him a state beyond the wildest dreams of avarice. How we longed for magic carpets and fairy palaces, and wondered what unimagined jewels the genies of fortune might have in store for ourselves !

That represents the attitude of the world towards

<sup>1</sup> T. B. Stewart Thomson, *The Quest of Youth*, 138.

<sup>2</sup> J. G. Neihardt.

those who can show them how to get wealth. 'Depart from me' is the last request which we would willingly address to any one of them. On the contrary, we offer them money, saying, 'Give me also this power.' A new process is discovered. A new industry is opened up. At once there is a rush for shares, and those who are first in the field burn incense to their luck. When riches increase men set their hearts upon them. And there is no prayer which we have more need to pray with bated breath and whispering humbleness than the noble suffrage of our ancient Litany—'In all time of our wealth, good Lord, deliver us.'

2. There is only one explanation of the strange and unexpected result of the miraculous draught of fishes. Peter was somehow made aware that in that sinking boat he stood in the presence of God. Nothing short of this could have filled him with the tremendous sense of his own sinfulness, which became the source and spring of a life of devotion and service. Nothing can so empty a man of the fatal egotism which kills sacrifice as the recognition of sin. And no man ever attains to that hard and humiliating conviction until he has seen God. That is what the golden-mouthed Isaiah has to tell : 'Woe is me—I am a man of unclean lips—I have seen the King.' Job, sitting in dust and ashes, has the same experience. 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee ; wherefore I abhor myself.' And now it is the turn of Simon Peter to cry in the anguish of his heart, 'I am a sinful man.'

In the anguish of his heart ! Yes, there is no doubt about the ring of that exceeding bitter cry. But what was there in the circumstances of that successful fishing to suggest an infinite sorrow ? We have all heard of the bitter cry of outcast London. We are not so familiar with the burden of Belgravia or the miseries of Mayfair. It is when earthly helpers fail and comforts flee that men are supposed to recognize their need of God, and to be peculiarly alive to the reality of His Presence. But it is the very climax of the miraculous power of God to produce that same overmastering sense of personal unworthiness, when the omens are propitious, and the sun of prosperity begins to shine. And that is the situation which confronts us in this beautiful gospel story.

What wakened the chords of his innermost being, and set them vibrating in response to the Master's touch was the fact that he had been grasped by the hand of the living God and confronted with his Maker and his Judge. And what a blessed experience it was ! When such a crisis comes in a

man's life, he passes the Rubicon. The moment becomes eternity, and the vision of an instant the inspiration of a life. Happy are they to whom Christ thus reveals Himself. Happiest of all are they who, when riches have not yet taken to themselves wings, when the hour of death has not yet struck, and men have not yet begun to ask where they shall dig your grave, have been brought down into what Bunyan calls 'that empty and solitary place,' the Valley of Humiliation.

3. 'Hark! said Mr. Greatheart, to what the shepherd's boy saith; so they hearkened, and he said:

He that is down needs fear no fall;  
 He that is low, no pride;  
 He that is humble ever shall  
 Have God to be his guide.

I am content with what I have,  
 Little be it or much;  
 And, Lord, contentment still I crave,  
 Because thou savest such.

Fullness to such a burden is,  
 That go on pilgrimage;  
 Here little, and hereafter bliss,  
 Is best from age to age.'

That is the spirit of the Christian, and by it all the values of life are changed. The disciple learns to forsake all, not because he has acquired the ascetic habit of monastic discipline, but because he sees life steadily and sees it whole. In the vision of existence we have no longer to allow for the personal equation of incurable egotism. As the man rises from his colloquy with the Redeemer, the voice of reassurance and hope rings in his ears: 'Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men.'

'Men, not markets!' Wealth can only be interpreted in terms of human lives. The earth is not God's farm, nor the sons of men but His herdsmen and His vine-dressers. It is not the beasts of the forest or the cattle upon a thousand hills that are the object of His intervention in the world's affairs. He has but one aim, one purpose, one end. God's great enterprise is to catch men. All that is meant by property is precisely what has no meaning for God, who for our sake became poor. What a wonderful reading of the problem of the universe is disclosed to the eager hearts of men when the world and all that is therein is seen no longer as property, out of which they may suck no small advantage, and wealth is nothing but unbounded opportunities of service!

This great passion for the lives of men is the leading principle of the social ethics of a Christian. We are freely told that the foundations of civilization are in peril of being cast down, and those who have almost a superstitious reverence for the rights of private property are calling upon the righteous to do something to bear up the pillars of the existing order of society.

There are many questions which we might ask. Is there such a thing as a social order? Does not society, like all else under the sun, move in a perpetual flux? When we speak of the Ten Commandments are we certain that we mean the changeless principles of the Divine Law and not the limitations with which it has been encumbered by the Scribes and Pharisees? How much depends upon the attitude towards a swiftly developing situation of those who, by education and opportunity, though not of right, ought to be the leaders of the people? Will they be the blind critics of democracy? Or will they be content to be less wealthy, less powerful, less secluded, if only they can give more health, greater freedom, larger opportunity to the whole body of the people? We are told that we are heading towards revolution. Our destiny depends on the answer which is returned to these questions.

And for those who, at least, claim Christian discipleship the issue is graver still. The age in which we live has been one of unexampled commercial prosperity and vast accumulation of wealth. The net has indeed been cast upon the right side of the ship. But has the operation brought with it the vision of God? Has there been any disposition on the part of those who own the name of Christ to fall down at Jesus' feet in the spirit of the fisherman of Galilee? If so, then we too have heard that Voice of victorious hope which calls us to share in the redeeming purpose and which bids us fear nothing, for henceforth we shall catch men. The wealth of the world is henceforth valuable only so far as it may be produced, distributed, and used for the salvation of the lives of men.<sup>1</sup>

#### NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

##### Between Two Worlds.

'Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.'—Ex 40<sup>32</sup>.

The position in which Moses found himself was one which is common to most living and thinking

<sup>1</sup> J. G. Simpson, *Great Ideas of Religion*, 197.

men and women at some stage or at successive stages in their career. He found himself cut off from the tent of the people, and shut out from the tabernacle of the Lord.

It is at the moment when Moses has completed his inestimable social and spiritual service for his people that we are told of the strange plight which befell his own soul. There is a certain reserve about the statement, as there must always of necessity be about those deep things of the spirit which can never be fully expressed in words; but there is a world of suggestion in them. 'So Moses finished the work,' we are told. 'Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.' He had done the work. Was this to be the reward—denied both human fellowship and Divine worship?

Loneliness is one of the penalties of greatness, whether it takes the form of the rank which raises a man above his fellows, or the demands of scholarship which cut him off from social amusements and intercourse, or the nature of the task which he cannot share with others, or the rigours of sainthood which erect an impassable barrier. But it seems as if the experience of Moses shadowed forth here was something different from that, something which is shared with him by those of us less richly endowed. Is there any one who has not felt something like disappointment at the finishing of what seemed in the doing of it to be a good and a beneficent piece of work? Instead of that elation of spirit which we promised ourselves as the result of our effort and toil, there settles down a cloud of depression. The result of all our striving seems to have earned neither the gratitude of men nor the blessing of God. At the end of it all we feel disappointed and disillusioned, shut out alike from the easy-going fellowship of others, and, owing to a certain soiling of the spirit contracted through necessary walking in the muddy ways of controversy, farther away than ever from intimate communion with God.

Let us consider two aspects of this experience which are common enough to the majority of us, and then try to discover, if we can, some explanation of it.

1. Many thinking people reach, some time or other, a stage when something like a cloud rests for them on the tent of the congregation. Organized religion seems to be well enough for the generality of mankind; but for them, with their young wits sharpened by contact with the philosophies and sciences of school and college and education generally, the place where others are wont to worship has

no attraction. There is a hazy cloud of nebulous unrealities resting on it; and they do not find that it helps to call the dimness God, or its endurance faith. Such cannot enter into the worship of the congregation. Yet neither have they, with all their study, been able to penetrate into that place where the clear white light of absolute truth prevails.

Or, it may be you have done your best, or at any rate not a negligible nothing, for the social and moral welfare of your fellow-men. And your experience of the years of war, or your application to social problems, or your efforts to win the way out to the land of promise, have but resulted in this—that you cannot find the old content and satisfaction in the tent of the congregation. And on the other hand, whilst you have a place for the tabernacle among the ideals of mankind, it seems to have no place for you.

2. But there is another phase of Moses' experience which is perhaps even commoner and more pertinent to the condition of some of us. Moses had done his best for God and man; not; it is true, without errors of judgment and faults of temper. but yet in a noble and self-denying spirit akin to that in which St. Paul and Danton expressed their readiness to be accursed if only blessing might come to their nations. And the result of all his labour and his thought was that he seemed to have fallen between two stools as we say. He had parted with the easy-going content of the majority, without gaining access to the inner shrine where the glory of God was manifest.

And sometimes that sense of frustration overwhelms one who has tried to live the higher life. Once Christ has had His hand on a man He spoils him for lower satisfactions. Such an one has made all through life an honest and earnest attempt to stand for something higher than the things that are seen, and to be a champion of God in the midst of the world's defections; and yet he has sorrowfully to admit that he does not possess that unruffled and inalienable assurance of God for which his soul craves.

Who has been exempt from this sense of failure? Who does not feel it sooner or later—perhaps, like Moses, in the moment when he has finished off some special effort, and pauses for a time and looks round to estimate his real and actual gain? When we think of what life might be, and the poor thing we have made of it; when we recall the splendid visions which once allured us of what might be accomplished by earnest effort, and then consider the meagre result and dissatisfied state in which

we now find ourselves, we feel as if there were no guiding hand or God in life, no logical outcome of things. If life had been lived selfishly, with no other thought than that of personal satisfaction and material gain, we think that we would not have wondered at the plight in which we find ourselves. But so often it is those who have lived for others and sought to mould their life to high ends who feel shut out from both tent and tabernacle. They have espoused some cause, of the excellence of which they were thoroughly convinced, but its chariot-wheels drag heavily or roll backwards. They have set their hearts on reclaiming or helping some fellow-creature, and, notwithstanding all their self-denying efforts, they have a sickening sense of defeat. Their sacrifice of time and means seems often to have been misapplied, and their kindness shamefully abused. It was not for gratitude that Moses worked, much less for reward, but his confidence for the moment in human nature and even in Divine truth must have been shaken. He must have felt that there was little use in serving either God or man, when he could enter neither tabernacle nor tent.

Is there any explanation of this seeming failure? Well, the higher a man's idea of what the world should be, the more likely is he to be depressed at times by the appearance of things around him, and by the painfully slow rate of progress which the cause of righteousness and truth seems to make. All who have tried to do any kind of good work must have had this experience, especially if they set out with high enthusiasm and great hopes. They cannot go back to the old content and indifference, let their hands hang down, and say, 'Well, what does it matter, anyway?' And they have not yet seen the glory of God or felt His presence in the degree for which they had hoped.

Moses may have been qualified to do the work he did, and to be the inspiration to the world he has been, just because of the plight in which he found his own soul. He could not stay in the tent and he could not settle down in the tabernacle, just because he was fully conscious of both. He was neither so dazzled by the glory that he was insensible of the gloom, nor so wrapt in the fog that he saw nothing of the sun. He was a mediator. When men looked on him they saw something of the eternal light irradiating him; when God looked on him he was backgrounded by the grey cloud of human sorrow and sin. Consider how clouds are formed. They are due to the action of sun and moisture, not the one alone, and never the other

alone. And the mist and the mystery that enwrap us in the spiritual atmosphere are likewise due to a double cause—not the tears of earth alone, but the play and interaction upon those of the drawing power of 'something afar from the sphere of our sorrow.'

And may it not be that our very despondency arises from our looking too much to success and too little to duty? 'We are poor soldiers,' said Dr. John Ker, 'if we make our fealty to our banner depend so much upon its glittering in the sunshine of victory. God must have standard-bearers who are ready to make a shroud of their colours, and how can they be known but in hours of defeat?' Have you ever noticed the suggestive distinction that we make in two common and similar phrases, when we speak of 'the eyes of the world,' but, on the other hand, of 'the sight of God'? Eyes do not always see; and what has been overlooked by the eyes of the world may be precious in the sight of God. Consider the plight of soul of a greater than Moses. In that same hour when He said of His redeeming work, 'It is finished,' the dark cloud came down upon Him and He tasted the full bitterness of the awful loneliness which feels itself shut out at once from tent and tabernacle, unable alike to penetrate the gloom or to behold the glory. But it was not a permanent plight. It behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren. But out of the battle, in the act and article of death, Jesus proclaimed aloud His victory, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' Mankind was saved to God. The glory of the Father was at length unveiled: the cloud had lifted for evermore.<sup>1</sup>

#### TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

##### Hallowed be Thy Name!

'Hallowed be thy name.'—Mt 6<sup>9</sup>.

The Lord's Prayer consists of two parts, the first concerning the rights of God, the second concerning the needs of men. And in this order. This is, in truth, the proper order of things. The Son of God, speaking to sons of God, could only teach us to pray 'after this manner,' in this order of petition. 'Seek ye first,' said Jesus, 'the kingdom of God and his righteousness,' everything else is a mere appendage to that. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart and strength,' that is, 'the first and great commandment; the second is like unto it.' You are a son, and you have a father

<sup>1</sup> H. L. Simpson, *Put Forth by the Moon*, 39.

whom you revere and love. Let any man rob or insult your father, or meddle with his good name, and you are all aflame; you can hardly keep your hands off that man! So we can understand, in our little, passionate, human way, something of what Jesus felt in His grand, Divine, and perfect way about the honour and good name and just rights of the heavenly Father in this world of ours; you can understand something of the feelings in the breast of Jesus which lay behind the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer. 'Father, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done': it is a supplication that God may have the loving reverence, the loyal obedience which are His due from the children of men, and that are so dear to Him.

Now the second part of the Lord's Prayer is built upon the first. Let God have His rights; He will see to it that men have their needs met. Let the children honour and obey their Father; He will take care to cherish and protect them. A true worship is the best guarantee for a just social order; the Brotherhood of men rests upon the Fatherhood of God. Let the spirit of man be set right, right at the centre and spring, in those deep roots and fibres by which, half unconsciously to ourselves, the soul reaches out to the unseen, right in its fundamental relations to God, and other things, sooner or later, will right themselves.

Understanding therefore the supreme importance, the rightful primacy, of this first prayer that Jesus puts into our lips, let us ask ourselves two questions about it: first, what do we suppose it to mean? secondly, how do we expect it to be fulfilled?

1. In the first place, *what then do we really mean*, what do we wish God to do, when we ask Him to see to it that His name is hallowed by all men?

It is well that we should check ourselves sometimes when these sacred and familiar words pass our lips, lest we be found using 'vain repetitions as the heathen do,' the very thing against which our Lord warned us in dictating the prayer.

What do we mean, what should we mean, when we breathe out to the great listening Father the entreaty, 'Hallowed be thy name'? What is it that in our minds we wish and ask for? The bare etymological sense of the word is doubtless familiar: to 'hallow' is to 'make holy,' to 'consecrate' or 'sanctify.' But then, one thinks God's name is holy; His name is the expression of His being, and that is holiness itself. We add nothing to, we can detract nothing from, His pure and eternal perfection. The great God is infinitely above our disrespect, our petty insolence. Yes, so He is in

His own absolute being. But see how He has humbled Himself, how He has bowed His heavens and come down. By the very fact of revelation, most of all by the Incarnation, the Eternal has put Himself within our reach. Just because God has come so near to us, we have the power to commit outrage upon His name. And many do. There is no profanity like Christian profanity. There are those to whom the holy names of God and Christ serve no other purpose than that of a vile expletive.

There are others, in His sight it may be more guilty, for profanity is often ignorant and unthinking, who pay to His name the conventional tribute, the mock reverence of the bended knee and the feigned lips, with hearts cold to His love and persistently disobedient to His known will. Now we pray that all this may cease—profanity, hypocrisy, unbelief,—that men may think of God and speak of God, and speak to God, everywhere with filial love and awe.

We can in some degree enter into our Lord's thoughts and purpose when He taught His disciples thus to pray. The thing that distressed and hurt Him most, that He saw to be at the bottom of the misery and mischief of the world, was human ignorance of God. 'O righteous Father,' He cried in sorrow, 'the world hath not known thee.' He turned round sharply once on the Jews, His own people, to whom God had revealed Himself above all others, and He said to them terrible words: 'You say that he is your God, and you have not known him!' So it was within the pale of Israel, while beyond its borders were the great masses of the heathen, of whom He was often thinking—He refers to them in the context of this prayer—possessed, as He knew, by all sorts of base and shameful ideas of the Divine nature. This ignorance of God, this estrangement from God, was the unspeakable grief of the heart of Jesus. His mission was to remove it, to 'shew us the Father,' and restore us to the Father's love. He unites us with Himself in this mission when He puts this prayer within our lips.

2. There were two things most adverse to the petition in the mind of our Lord, two things that He meant His disciples to pray against in using it: these were Jewish unbelief and heathen idolatry; and the two chief obstacles are to-day, *Christian unbelief* and *Heathen idolatry*. These are the things that meet the eyes of our Heavenly Father, as He looks down on the earth seeking His true worshippers.

Let us think of the latter of these two contra-

dictions to our Lord's Prayer. Most of us take some interest in missions to the heathen and make some effort for their maintenance. But I am not sure that our zeal springs always from the deepest motives, from the spirit that breathed in the Lord's Prayer. There is a sentimental and romantic interest in foreign missions, fed by thrilling narratives and lively descriptions of strange lands and peoples. There is a philanthropic interest, awakened by pity for the misery and degradation of our fellow-men, a longing to convey to the pagan world the blessings of Christian enlightenment and freedom: such motives cannot be too strong and active in our lives. But this is not the deepest motive.

As I stood in Benares, at the centre of Hinduism, where, I suppose, idol-worship is concentrated as nowhere else in the world, the horror and shame of it all came upon me; the sense of the infamy, the disgrace and ruin brought upon humanity by the perversion of the religious instincts, was brought home to me in a way that I can but feebly convey. We know how the Old Testament saints felt about idolatry, the grief and indignation with which the scenes of heathen worship filled them, as they saw the Most High dishonoured, dishallowed in His own world by the setting up of heathen altars. Now, we know much more of God than they; we have a far more tender and intimate revelation of the Divine character than was conveyed to them; and we know, or at least we may know if we care about the matter, more than they did about the extent and the effects of heathenism amongst mankind: our distress and indignation should be correspondingly more intense and more passionate than theirs. But how cold and unconcerned our hearts often are in regard to the glory of God and the hallowing of His name! Yet we are His sons and daughters, and call Him daily 'Our Father'!

The time will come for this apathy to be shaken off. The time must come when we shall no longer play at foreign missions, but the Church will be ready to pour out blood and treasure for the winning of God's Kingdom, and to send out her sons by whole regiments, as a great nation does when empire and honour are at stake.

'Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.' We are asking, when we thus pray, that all profanity, that all unbelief, that all idolatry shall cease amongst men, that mankind shall everywhere bear themselves towards God with filial reverence and awe.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> G. G. Findlay, *God's Message*, 71.

## TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

### Faith and Character.

'This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.'—Tit 3<sup>9</sup>.

The Apostle has been rehearsing the great evangelical facts, and he adds what, in experience, he had found true, that right conduct follows upon Christian teaching when that is seriously given. This is by no means a universal impression, and it may be useful to examine it for ourselves.

As soon as the assertion is made, a region of exception suggests itself which extends so far as to seem to cover most of the facts. Mr. Disraeli, in one place, says: 'A man's conduct depends on his temperament, and not on a bundle of fusty maxims.' We cannot but see that a man's conduct depends on his upbringing and his temperament, at least as much as on his opinions. Honest and clean-hearted people are found in all the churches and outside of them all, so that we cannot help questioning if belief and character have any close connexion with each other. A good man is not good because of some reason he can set down on paper, certainly not in order to win heaven or to escape hell; if that were his only reason he would not be good. When Burns says:

The fear o' hell's a hangman's whip  
To haud the wretch in order,

he is using words carefully as he always did, for it is only 'the wretch,' the poorest kind of creature, who can be frightened into a show of virtue. A man who is honest because that is the best policy is a very indifferently honest man; and his neighbour is incalculably more worthy of respect whose integrity is due not to calculation, nor even because it will please God, but because of a positive bent in his nature.

What is the use then, of saying, as Paul does, that by laying stress on a particular type of doctrine you will lead men to be careful about their honesty? The region of exception extends so far as to seem to cover all the facts, but it does not cover quite them all.

1. For there is a prior question of the *creating of character*, of how these better impulses first came to be formed. Suppose there is no instinct of goodness to start from, are we to conclude that 'he that is filthy must be filthy still' (Rev 22<sup>11</sup>), bound to travel to the end on whatever road he blundered

into at the first? That would be for many a doctrine of despair; but in the kindness of God, there are forces visibly at work which arrest and uplift and transform, so that men who began with every disadvantage have passed beyond their more fortunate neighbours, and are found at the last with the heroes and the saints. For with Christ 'there is strength to create goodness in the worst and to make the weakest strong.'

Paul could speak with knowledge of such forces, for his task was everywhere to create the very beginnings of character. His audiences were composed largely of slaves and labourers of the rougher class, in whom no purity or elevation of habit could be taken for granted. He cautions his readers not to use foul language and not to steal; in a bad case of immorality he was hampered by the fact that the offender was not conscious of doing wrong.

To our shame, it has to be confessed that in every city there are districts in which this work is also waiting to be done. Human nature has touches of an almost ineradicable nobility, and the long ministry of Christian education and example has not gone for nothing, so that ideals of kindness, and loyalty, and chastity are discovered in the most unlikely quarters. But brutalizing influences are at work: boys and girls are growing up without a chance, since all the holy things—love, obedience, reverence, piety—have been polluted for them from the outset.

If this be true, if consciences have to be made quick, and new instincts and habits created, how is the work to be attempted without a gospel?

Paul was never afraid of direct moral instruction, but he also knew that instruction by itself is vain. If you are to persuade a man to make an effort, you may first need to change his atmosphere, and create in him some kind of self-respect. You find him, to all appearance, a coarse creature, with his nature possessed by the clamour of the senses—impatient, hungry, unclean. He scarcely thinks, and the only delights he knows are base. What is the use of telling him not to utter foul language, unless you give him something else to talk of? He speaks, as you and I do, 'out of the abundance of his heart,' so your first task must be to give him a new sort of abundance, a better furnished inner world.

George Whitefield tells of the brutalized colliers at Kingswood, who crowded to listen to him as they came out of the pits. 'The first evidence of their being affected was to see the white gutters made by their tears, which plentifully fell down their black cheeks. Having no righteousness of their own to

renounce, they were glad to hear of a Jesus who was a friend to publicans, and who came to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance.' Into their sordid existence, without dignity and without self-restraint, without thought or books or prayer, there entered this ever wonderful message of the coming of Jesus Christ, and the whole world was transformed by that.

In the verses which immediately precede the text Paul has spoken of the bankruptcy of human nature: 'We ourselves were once senseless, disobedient, astray, enslaved to all manner of passions and pleasures; we spent our days in malice and envy, we were hateful and we hated one another.' The evidence of a catastrophe of misdirection and revolt stared him in the face; but as he believed in God he was sure that this catastrophe was within the sphere of God's working, and he was prepared, above the loss and tragedy, to see a purpose of Divine restoration. Thus rejoicingly he proclaims (v. 4) that 'the kindness and *philanthropy* of God appeared.' That unexpected word occurs only once besides in the New Testament, where Luke records of the rude folk at Malta that they 'shewed us no common philanthropy.'

Even in people outwardly correct, real wonders of renewal are accomplished. Paul himself was not ashamed to protest that before he met with Christ he had 'lived in all good conscience'; and yet, when God's mercy was disclosed to him, he felt as if he were looking out on another world. His own account of it is, 'God, who at the first bade light to shine out of darkness, has shined in my heart,' as if a fresh creation were beginning.

2. But the gospel serves not merely for the creating, but for the *refreshing and enriching of character*. Even if, without reserve, it could be granted that 'conduct depends upon temperament, and not on a bundle of fusty maxims,' the fact remains that temperament itself is not a fixed quantity. Certain possibilities of character may become prominent whilst others are overshadowed. Hosea confesses of his nation that 'grey hairs are here and there upon him, and he knoweth it not,' for unconsciously men become more selfish and timorous and narrow. Beliefs which used to move them pass to what Coleridge calls 'the dormitory of the soul,' where they are not extinct, but only sleeping; and some force is needed to make men feel with vividness and reality the glory of these half-forgotten things.

'Ye were redeemed,' says Peter, 'from your heartless way of living, not with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ'; so if, at any time, the meaner fashions are coming back

upon us, and we grow selfish and worldly, and live without rebuke on the surface of life, Peter would have us look at the cost of our redemption.

What do you imagine would happen if all of us realized as in a flash the greatness of God's estimate of our life, and in the way in which it was redeemed by a life laid down? What self-searching and dis-

may there would be, what sorrow for the time that is gone, and what resolving for the days which remain! No one of us would take up existence to-morrow where he left it yesterday, and it would be his moral standards and activities which would bear the trace of that rediscovery of a doctrine.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W. M. Macgregor, *Repentance unto Life*, 211.

---

## The Mustard 'Tree.'

BY THE REVEREND ALBERT J. MATTHEWS, GRIMSBY.

'Unto what is the kingdom of God like? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his own garden; and it grew, and became a tree; and the birds of the heaven lodged in the branches thereof.'—Lk 13<sup>18, 19</sup>.

THE expositors of the New Testament have always found a difficulty in this Parable—the difficulty of finding a mustard tree big enough to meet its requirements. It is a mustard plant that must be big enough to merit the term 'tree,' and it must be a tree big enough for the birds of heaven to lodge in the branches of it. No such mustard 'tree' is known. Thomson, in *The Land and the Book*, struggles to identify it, without carrying conviction to the critical reader, and in *Hastings' Bible Dictionary*, the article 'Mustard,' by Dr. Post, while it is fairly satisfactory in respect of St. Matthew's phraseology, fails to explain what the writer terms 'the more exaggerated language of Luke.' Finally, Professor A. B. Bruce says: 'The plant at its best is only a great herb, and it can be called a tree only by a latitude in the use of words.' The question therefore emerges, was Jesus speaking of a real tree? Does the Parable demand a real tree? Is not the point of it, the abnormal nature of the growth as compared with the smallness of the seed? *A mustard seed becomes a tree*; that is the arresting thing. Jesus was always saying arresting things. For instance, He said, 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.' There have been many attempts to enlarge the eye of that needle or to reduce the size of the camel, but without much success. The words still stand as an example of the startling thought of Jesus, and the saying is considered by many to be a hard saying. Jesus also said, 'If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his father and mother, and wife and

children. . . . Yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' Such words are calculated to shock the dullest mind into activity. They are arresting words. And here for the purpose of His teaching, Jesus assumes an arresting event—a mustard seed endowed with more than ordinary potencies, which in its amazing growth transcends the limitations of its own order and becomes 'a tree.' This particular grain which Jesus imagines for the sake of His argument, when it reaches the fully developed plant stage, does not stay there like other mustard plants, but bursts through the bounds assigned it, and continues further to grow until it becomes 'a tree' big enough, and strong enough, for the birds of the air to lodge in its branches.

In reality Jesus is not talking of mustard seeds and trees at all, but of the Kingdom of God, and there are no exact analogies on earth to that Kingdom. Jesus had to enhance the facts of His illustrations and analogies, which have to do with things earthly, to show the transcendent realities of the Spiritual Realm He had come to unfold. His mustard seed must become a tree in order to show the miraculous potencies of His Kingdom. His hearers must be made to see that the vitalities of the Kingdom of God make a man greater—greater than society can make him, greater than politics can make him, greater than education can make him. The new potencies of the Kingdom break down accepted boundaries, scatter accepted categories, transcend accepted limitations, and give birth to things bigger, better, and more wonderful.

We are contented if our mustard seed becomes a plant, the mustard seed of Jesus must become a tree. In other words, everything must be bigger and better for His coming. Everything in His Kingdom must show the miracle of His transcendent