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## In the Study.

### *Virginibus Puerisque.*

#### Recharging the Accumulator.

BY THE REVEREND STUART ROBERTSON, M.A.,  
GLASGOW.

'He restoreth my soul.'—Ps 23<sup>d</sup>.

I WAS listening-in one night with an excellent valve set and everything was going well. The valves glowed and the invisible waves of ether brought me beautiful voices and choice music. I settled down to enjoy myself for the evening. Suddenly the brightness of the valves faded and the music sank to a whisper, and then died into silence, and my programme had come to an untimely end ! What had happened ?

Of course, all you wireless experts know at once. You can talk about grid-leaks and wave-traps and variable condensers as if you had known them all your life. A whole heap of mysterious things your fathers never knew and still regard with 'respect and awful veneration' are plain-sailing to you. You know and you have already said long before I got this length, 'accumulator run down.'

Yes ! that was it. What is an accumulator ? Well, it's a thing that accumulates. It accumulates electric current. It makes the valves glow and do their work, choosing and encouraging the right sort of electrons and rejecting the wrong sort, and making the messages that the waves bring such that we can hear and enjoy them.

Now there are two things about an accumulator. One is that it dries up. Evaporation steals from it and brings down the level, and it must be filled up with pure distilled water, not just water from any tap, but distilled water, which is perfectly pure. The other thing is that it runs down. It loses its strength. And then it must be linked up with the power that is the light of our city, and recharged. When it is recharging you don't see anything happening at all ; but you know when it is fully recharged because then it begins to fizz.

I think our souls are a kind of accumulators. They, too, dry up. The air of the world sucks the sweetness out of them, and the level of our thoughts and affections begins to sink lower and lower. Patience gets shattered and tempers snappy. We must keep up the level with the pure water of the Word of God. Any tap won't do for the accumulator ; any book won't restore your soul. There are books that amuse, books that pass the time, but there is only one book which gives us the pure

distilled truth that our souls need, and that is the Bible. That will restore the level, lift up our thoughts to the high level they ought to live at and never allow them to sink to levels that are low and unworthy and 'beneath us,' and that make it impossible for our souls to hear God speaking to us, and for our lives to help others to hear Him.

Our souls, too, get run down. We talk of our bodies being 'run down' ; not by motor-buses, but run down like clocks, which are always running down, and which need to be regularly wound up. We forget that the same thing happens to our souls. Life every day makes big demands on our love, our patience, our sympathy, our faithfulness. Our souls get exhausted, 'run down' ; and they would come to the helpless standstill of utter emptiness, if we couldn't get them recharged.

This is what we are doing when we pray. We may not get what we ask for ; for God knows best, and it is for Him to give or not to give. But we get this : that we are touching the source of power and life, and our soul is being restored.

This is what we are doing when we go to church and worship God. The church is a power-house and we are recharging the accumulator. The twenty-third Psalm says, 'He restoreth my soul.' It is the same thing ; we are touching the power of the Spirit of God and giving Him the chance to restore our souls and fill us with His Spirit.

It seems as if nothing is happening ; just a lot of people quiet with bowed heads, or sitting at the Lord's Table, as Mary sat at Jesus' feet and listened to His words, but a great thing is happening—God is restoring their souls.

And here again it is just the same as with the accumulator. We know it is recharged when it begins to fizz, and we know a Christian is filled with the Spirit of God when he begins to fizz. The Bible doesn't say 'fizz,' but it says 'fervent,' which means 'boiling,' and it's the same thing.

I know a great many people who are far more careful about recharging their accumulators and winding up their clocks than they are about restoring their souls. I know, because, if it was not so, there would be more Christians that 'fizz,' more fervour in worship, people singing praise to God plainly because they can't help it—their hearts are so fully charged with thankfulness, more power to work, more will to give and give gladly, more religion at boiling-point ready to become steam and strength in God's service.

Girls and boys, I don't need to tell you to watch your accumulators. You have been well warned ; you know that if allowed to go quite down they perish. Probably you had to pay for yours out of your own slowly saved-up pocket money. So you take care.

But I do need to tell you to watch your souls, for they too can perish, and it was Jesus Christ who paid for them on the Cross.

So when next you trudge off to get your accumulator recharged, be thinking about this other thing too: that you need to have the level of your thoughts kept up to the level of Jesus Christ ; that you need to have heart and soul regularly restored and recharged, and filled with the Spirit of God, so that they will never fail.

Be constant and regular in prayer and in public worship, and your soul will be equal to all life can ask, wise to choose the voice of God from among the many voices of the world, and your hearts will glow to hear it.

#### Alphonse Spitfire.

BY THE REVEREND R. A. BURROWS, M.A., B.D.,  
DUFFIELD, DERBYSHIRE.

'And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you.'—1 Th 3<sup>12</sup>.

A trip to London is not for boys and girls to-day what it was when I was a boy, and I suppose there are plenty of boys and girls here who have been to London. This morning I want you to go with me in your minds through Regent's Park and visit the Zoo. There you will see all sorts of animals living very much in their natural state. But when you have seen the polar bears feed, have had a ride on the elephant, seen the giraffe stretch his long neck, and heard the lions and the tigers growl, I want you to go to a very plain building called 'The Small Cat House.' Here you will see real wild cats, some very beautiful, with tails as long as their bodies, cats that can climb up their tails. When I was last there I saw an empty cage, once the abode of a very famous cat which came to the Zoo in 1913. He was beautifully striped like a leopard, but oh, such a fierce little creature, who would spit and hiss and snap and snarl and bite worse than any dog you ever saw! Of course nobody wanted anything to do with him, and he was left quite alone. Everybody knew him as Alphonse Spitfire. One day there came to the Zoo a girl who took a fancy to Alphonse and determined to make friends with him. She little realized what a tremendous task she had under-

taken, but she stuck to her task and for two years she came nearly every day to see Alphonse. Although she always brought him some little dainties, it was a very long time before she could win the confidence of Alphonse. It really came about in this way. She arrived at the Zoo one day when there was a storm raging. The wind was blowing the rain about and occasionally there would come a flash of lightning and a peal of thunder. She prevailed upon the keeper to let her enter his cage, and she was surprised at the welcome she got. Alphonse sat on her lap and remained there till the storm was over, while the girl talked to him and calmed his fears. Ever afterwards Alphonse looked forward to her coming and grew most friendly. Gradually he got to like human beings and would play with any one. Alphonse Spitfire had become Alphonse the Gentle. He now behaved himself so well that he was allowed to come out of his cage and play about the Cat House. He would sit on your arm, dive into your bag, play with you ; and Alphonse, who had bitten rats in two, was allowed to get into the prams and play with the babies, and he never thought of biting them. Now you see what made all the difference. His whole character and nature had been changed by love and kindness.

Now when I heard that story I began to think of one or two little incidents where the same changes had been made in men by love and kindness, and I first thought of two men who were sent into a little village by their Master to get some food. When the people of that village knew that they were bound for Jerusalem they refused to serve them. So the two men returned to their Master and asked Him to call down fire from heaven to destroy those rude villagers. No wonder those two brothers were called 'Sons of Thunder.' Yes, but the love and kindness of their Master began to have its effect on their lives. Later, we know that one of them gave up his life because he loved his fellow-men, and the other, living to a good old age, wrote a book that the world has known ever since as the Gospel of Love. The two brothers were—who? That's right, James and John. And their Master? Yes, Jesus. And I remembered too that story of a famous Pharisee going the length and breadth of Palestine putting men and women to death and casting those whom he did not put to death into prison. Then he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, and Saul of Tarsus, Saul the Spitfire, became Paul the Gentle, the Great Apostle of the Gentiles, who gave his whole life to be spent in the service of his Master and his fellow-men.

Now there is just a little bit of Alphonse Spitfire in all of us, and we want to get rid of it. Well, we can do so. Just as we let the love of Jesus into our hearts, so can the great change be made in us. We shall become loving, gentle, and kind.

Would you like to hear, in closing, the end of the story of Alphonse? Some time ago, he caught a cold. But now he had lots of friends, and scores of them went to cheer him up. However, he grew weaker and weaker, and his oldest friend, now a young lady, went twice one day to see him. The second time she went he was lying just as he was in that storm. Quietly she crept into his cage and tenderly called 'Alphonse.' There was no answer, and again she called. She went over into his corner to stroke him, but she was too late, for the friendly little heart of Alphonse had ceased to beat. He had passed away. But what a different Alphonse from the one who twelve years before had not a friend in the whole world!

### **The Christian Year.**

#### **FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.**

##### **Vision and Feast.**

'Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: and they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness . . . also they saw God, and did eat and drink.'—Ex 24<sup>9-11</sup>.

'They saw the God of Israel.' The tribes had reached Mount Sinai under the leadership of Moses, their captain, their prophet. Everything was in the rudimentary stage; a nation of Israel did not yet exist; a land of Israel was still a dream. The future, destined to be so famous, lay hidden; the present was taken up with a venture, heroic indeed, but all uncertain in its issues. At this rudimentary stage, however, one thing was gloriously certain; while all else was dim, this shone clearly; no doubt remained on the one point that really mattered. The leaders of the tribes, the best minds among them—'they saw the God of Israel.'

Elsewhere in the account of what happened at Sinai we are told that the majesty of Jehovah was veiled in cloud and darkness; there was earthquake and fire and the awful tones of a trumpet; none dare approach; Moses alone went up, and he into the cloud. But here it is entirely different. Moses and the elders stand in the holy calm of the house not made with hands; and there, enthroned in glory, they saw the God of Israel.

We may take this to mean that they personally came to know God as their living Lord and King; and God vouchsafed to reveal Himself not in His overwhelming majesty, but in such a way as man could see and understand, with a Divine condescension to man's capacity. There can be no doubt that Moses had taught his tribes a new truth about God; he had impressed upon them his own high faith; and Aaron and Nadab and Abihu and the elders had responded; they had given in their assent; they had resolved to take Jehovah to be their God. But now they advance a step further in religious experience; from assent they advance to apprehension. In our own hearts we know well what this means. We say the Creed, we assent to the truths of faith with our minds as founded upon authority which we believe to be reasonable and sufficient; but we must advance beyond this if the truths of faith are to have a permanent effect upon our lives; we must advance to vital knowledge of perception.

1. 'They beheld God.' The Bible is a record of those, both men and women, who have encountered the vision of God. Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up; St. John saw the First and the Last and the Living One; the Incarnate Son said to His disciples, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father also.' The Bible also declares that 'no man hath seen God at any time,' that is, God in the fulness of Godhead; 'Oh that I knew where I might find him,' cries suffering Job, 'that I might come even to his seat!' The vision of God is one of those truths which the Bible expresses by opposites; we can and we cannot see God; meanwhile we are told to endure 'as seeing him who is invisible.' He reveals Himself, and yet we know how much more there is to be revealed. This ancient narrative in Exodus is prophetic; it seems to record the first experience of that vision which is in store for all God's faithful; it carries us beyond the past and the present to that day when 'his servants shall do him service, and they shall see his face.'

2. But there is something more. 'They beheld God, and did eat and drink.' How mysterious, how significant! The vision of God is followed by the meal in His presence. We cannot help thinking of that mysterious meal in the Gospel, when the disciples saw the Risen Lord on the shore of the lake in the early morning, and He bade them 'Come, break your fast.' This meal on the mountain was a sacrament of fellowship. According to early custom, men ate and drank together as a sign that they had made a covenant. But here the covenant is made between God and man,

Moses and the elders celebrated a solemn meal of communion; and however crudely primitive their idea may have been, we may be sure that as they ate and drank in God's presence they realized God's fellowship with them in a new way; they entered into a new relation with Him; henceforth He was their God and they His servants. Again we feel that there is something prophetic in the narrative; it points on to the blessing in store for those who are 'bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'

3. It is to be noticed that the Vision and the Feast are brought into connexion with the giving of the Law. The personal apprehension of a personal God realized by heart and conscience involves a new relation with God, and this again carries with it practical consequences in life and conduct. Nothing can be more practical than a right knowledge of God. The Vision and the Covenant issue in laws of worship and moral duty; that is why the religion of Israel became a new force in the world. A religion which combined high thoughts of God with a binding moral sense, whose God exacted the homage of moral service, contained, even in its rude beginnings, an element of permanence and growth. Hence it came about that the wandering tribes, led and taught by Moses, won their way at last to a settled home, and by degrees imposed themselves upon a superior civilization, and in spite of frequent failures still held their own, and even out of disaster sprang into new vigour, and tightened their grasp of the truth and handed it on, until the ancient faith was taken up into a fuller revelation.

For us an imperishable significance dwells in the old prophetic story. True religion is the personal apprehension of God, known and perceived as our living Father, Saviour, Lord: 'they saw the God of Israel.' And to know God in this vital sense is to enter into a new relation of fellowship with Him: 'they beheld God, and did eat and drink.' And thus united with Him and with one another, we come down to face the tasks and duties of life strengthened to obey the Law of Him whose service is perfect freedom.<sup>1</sup>

## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

### Faith and the Social Problem.

'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'—Mt 4<sup>17</sup>.

Every age and country have their own particular perplexities. It is not difficult to indicate some of the causes of the problems which confront us in our land to-day. They are the increase of popula-

tion during the last century; the conditions of land tenure; the emergence of the industrial State, its antagonism of interests, its severing of the personal link between employer and employed, its enslavement of mind by matter, its conditions of life and labour and its irregularity of employment. These are the facts and factors to which we must turn our attention if we would discharge our duty to society.

1. *We must face the facts and try to bring them home to others.*—Social problems are very intricate and complex, and uninstructed enthusiasm may do more harm than good. We are to love God and our neighbour with all our mind as well as with all our heart. Enthusiasm must be informed and directed by knowledge. Then, having grasped the facts and their significance, we must become apostles, charged with the mission not merely of illuminating the minds but of awaking the consciences of others. Part of the prevailing indifference to social evils springs from ignorance, part from a feeling that the possibilities of improvement are strictly limited. There are many who have little hope of the regeneration of the multitude, and who regard destitution and slums as inevitable elements in the social order. It is our privilege and responsibility to kindle faith where there is little or none, and to burn the facts into the consciences of men.

Moreover, the study of social problems needs to be humanized. We must remember that we are dealing, not with abstract principles and relations, but with men, women, and little children, and the conditions under which they live and work. Behind the tables and curves and charts of the sociologist is the throbbing mass of humanity—tempted, sinning, sorrowing, suffering, struggling, and striving. In the last analysis we are dealing not with things but with men. And we cannot play with men as we play with pawns. They have minds and hearts and wills and consciences. They think and feel and aspire as we do. The social problem is not merely an intellectual but a human problem.

The corollary to this is that to knowledge and sympathy we must add service. It is the peculiar peril of those who are engaged in intellectual pursuits that they are apt to imagine that their cause is won when they have proved its reasonableness, and to forget that the forces of inertia, prejudice, and selfishness can be broken down only by persistent and self-sacrificing personal service. It is not enough to cherish great ideas and ideals. If they are to achieve anything, we must embody them in action in our varied spheres of life. The en-

<sup>1</sup> G. A. Cooke, *The Progress of Revelation*, 15.

thusiasm for humanity is one thing ; the enthusiasm for the individual man is quite another. It is fatally easy to cry out for the uplifting of humanity, and at the same time to shrink from contact with the individual man who needs uplifting. The world asks of scholars two things : a service that is reasonable, and a reason that is serviceable ; work made intelligent, and intelligence set to work.

2. *We must moralize social relations.*—During the last hundred years intellectual progress has outstripped moral progress. There has doubtless been an advance of moral enlightenment, but an increase of moral energy and power is not so obvious. The nineteenth century was an era in which Natural Science progressed by leaps and bounds. Some of Nature's most closely guarded secrets were wrested from her, and almost every year brought new discoveries, inventions, and machines. Science has bestowed on us many great and precious gifts. But there is another side to the account. Science has given us the industrial era, and there are many accompaniments of industrialism of which none of us is proud. It is a good thing that men have invented machinery, but it is a bad thing that it has been used not to lighten toil, but to add to it—not to liberate the powers of man's personality, but to degrade men into living machines. It is a good thing that industry has been organized and that the prosperity of the country has been built on sound foundations, but industrialism has brought with it certain attendant evils which are not necessary—slums, sweating, extremes of wealth and poverty, class strife, the ethics of the Manchester School, the deification of wealth and the materialization of the standards of life. If we are not careful, machinery will drive us instead of our driving it. Our intellectual achievements outstrip our moral achievements.

That is where the unmoralized intellect leads us. We cannot build up a new society on scientific categories alone. The intellect must be moralized. We need a strength which is not our own if the spirit of man is to triumph over the blind forces which the intellect has liberated. We must bring 'every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.'

3. *We must emphasize the fact that the ideal social order can only be built on spiritual foundations.*—In the last analysis, all our problems, social and international, are problems of the mind and heart and will. We cannot solve them unless we can produce a fundamental change in human nature. If Capital and Labour would both act on the Golden Rule they would find a straight path out of their difficulties. But the change of heart is

the most difficult change to accomplish. All history proves that it can only be achieved by spiritual forces. There is no hope for society apart from the redemptive and transforming power of the gospel of Christ. This does not mean that we must fall back on the argument, 'Get individuals converted, and things will right themselves.' Thousands of individuals have been converted, and things have not righted themselves. What it means is that the regenerating forces of the gospel must be more fully organized for social ends, and that we must give ourselves more intelligently and earnestly to the pursuit of Christ's ideal of the Kingdom of God on earth.

But why is it that we care at all about social reform? Why should we disturb ourselves? Are pity and a love of justice motives with sufficient constraint to impel us to set our hands perseveringly to this task? The history of the world would seem to indicate that they are not. Our zeal for social reform springs from our recognition that all men have a spiritual nature. Because we all have immortal souls, we all have a right to a share in shaping the environment in which our souls have to live and grow.

When democracy appeals to the soul, it is building on sure foundations for just dealing and mutual respect between all classes of the people. The clever may despise the stupid and the learned the ignorant, but not when they realize that those whom they scorn have immortal souls. The rich man may grind the faces of the poor. He may exploit their labour, call them 'hands,' and treat them as cogs in a soulless machine. But he is bound to change his attitude when he awakens to this fact. A man's moral sense is utterly dead if he can treat men as machines, when he knows them to be souls.

We speak of our rights and our liberties—rights and liberties which are ours by nature. But we have no rights or liberties except those which we can win and hold with our strong right arm, unless we have souls. Why should not the strong oppress the weak? Why should not those who know exploit those who do not know? The only conclusive answer is, because, in the sight of God, rich and poor, strong and weak, learned and ignorant, are of equal potential value, and equally capable of eternal fellowship with God and of growth into His likeness.

Wordsworth, writing of the early days of the French Revolution, said :

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,  
But to be young was very Heaven !

The same may be said to-day in spite of the thick clouds that encompass us. We are living in days of great opportunity. There are epochs in human history when ideas and institutions are fluid. The way is open to remould them. If men let the occasion slip ideas become stereotyped again, and the opportunity may not soon recur. We are living in such an era. Social ideas and institutions are in the melting-pot, and the world 'reconstruction' is on every one's lips. Once more we have a supreme opportunity of refashioning society. Let no one imagine that the task is easy. The forces of selfishness and reaction will rally and organize and fight a desperate battle for old theories and systems. It is for us to take up the challenge, to throw ourselves whole-heartedly into the fray, and to seize this opportunity of branding on the fabric of the social order the marks of the Lord Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

### THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

#### The Dilemma at Jordan.

'Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.'—Mt 3<sup>13-15</sup>.

The time was now ripe. After the long years of quiet preparation—a gracious boyhood and a clean stretch of working manhood, with many long thoughts and wonderings that must remain a sealed book to us—the soul of the Redeemer was stirring in the life of the Man. The mysterious bidding of God was working in Jesus to a clear issue and a great adventure. And so our Lord steps clear on to the stage of His ministry, as if He had just come straight from the presence of God. It is a spiritual gain to us that He has no past. Let us leave those thirty years to Himself, for they belong only to Him and to God. Surely the world has more than it can ever grasp or understand in the three rich years of His active ministry.

At this moment He feels the thrill of His new-found gifts. God's whisper has roused Him to a knowledge of two things—His work and Himself. Of the two it may well be that the discovery of Himself is the greater, for by it the other was conditioned. We cannot know how or when it came, though we may well hazard the suggestion that John's clear message of the Kingdom served as one of the prongs of awakening. But we do know that the call has come—at last. A sense of

<sup>1</sup> H. M. Hughes, *Faith and Progress*, 222.

His own greatness stirs in Him—a unique conception of His mission based on a unique conception of Himself. It is Christ's uniqueness, majestically felt in His own heart, which creates this dilemma at Jordan.

If the crusade of John was purely a Baptism of Repentance, Jesus, whom no person could convict, could not accept. He acknowledged sin to no man. This is a clear note of His own consciousness. He is the only man in history who never acknowledged sin without being called a hypocrite or a self-deceiver. How, then, would a pure soul like Jesus treat the Baptism of John? There were one or two courses open to Him which might have agreed with His uniqueness, and in human eyes might even have seemed to enhance it.

(1) So far as He Himself was concerned, He might have said, 'This ministry of repentance is salvation for these needy people, but, of course, it cannot in any way apply to Me. By God's love, I come to My great work with a stainless heart. Having nothing to confess, I need no cleansing tears.'

(2) Or, He might have advanced further and argued, on the positive side, that though John's ministry had served its own day superbly, yet since He Himself had now appeared, its day was done. John's preaching was a beautiful relic of the past—the past that was now swallowed up for ever in the glorious present. The Baptist had only foretold that the Kingdom was coming: Jesus announced that at last the Kingdom had come. Thus in a quiet but assured way, He might have brushed John's baptism aside, as an obsolete thing, good in itself no doubt, but now finally superseded. The Prince's herald retires when the Prince appears.

(3) Or again, with His own soul hot with God's full vision, He might not only have neglected John's Baptism, but might easily have opposed and decried it. In His eyes, admittedly, that ministry of John was an imperfect thing. It was a great half-truth. It proclaimed only aspects of God and aspects of sin. Is it not our duty to smash imperfect things, lest they lure simple souls from the biggest and the best?

#### *What did He do?*

Bidding His mother and brethren farewell, He walked out of Nazareth one summer morning along the dusty ways and through the scrubby hills, making for the pools of Jordan. He joined the throng of troubled seekers whose anxious feet had beaten paths like sheep-tracks through the rough country. He mingled with this pilgrim mob until they brought Him to the motley concourse at the river. There He stayed all day, watching with

His loving eyes this great sacrament of a people's awakening and cleansing. Then, as twilight gathered and the weary people trudged homewards—some, praise God, with lighter hearts—Jesus, 'when all the people were baptized,' went up to John.

Quietly, and yet with a note of authority, He asked to be baptized. There, alone with the silent stars, He faced the weary preacher. 'Sir, I would be baptized of thee.' To John's shamed protest that he should presume to baptize Jesus, our Lord made a reply that is now one of the great sentences of literature. 'It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.'

*Why did He do it ?*

(1) At the outset, with serious purpose, He thereby aligned Himself with everything He knew to be good. He greeted God whenever He saw His shadow. For Him, without doubt, this Baptism of John had serious faults: it was far from perfect. But on the other hand, it was the one thing in that age that stood out unmistakably for God and good. So He quietly overlooked the defects in it that were personal to Him, and publicly identified Himself with this crusade for righteousness. We find in this gracious guidance.

Take, for instance, the modern Church. It is a broken thing, so broken that many a passer-by reviles it openly. It may have gold in it—no doubt it has—but sometimes we see only a mighty mass of dross. The shortcomings, the failures, the open contradictions, the meagreness of our love and life, the wretched contrast between profession and practice—sometimes, as we look at the Church, we see only its ghastly shortcomings. What shall we do with it, then? Stand outside and shake its dust from our feet? Or shall we line up like Jesus, knowing all its imperfections, but knowing also that it is the one clear thing in this bleak world of ours that stands for God and goodness? Like Him, shall we take our part in it even though we could criticise it? But may it not be the big thing, and the Christian thing, simply to enter in and take our saving share in its work?

(2) He aligned Himself with everything that was evil and worthless. The evil of the world—especially in that thing we call *sin*—is gathered up in us. When Jesus stepped into Jordan, He ranged Himself by our side; for He joined Himself to the great company of the afflicted people of His day. He entered into a glorious community, a solidarity, with such broken and defeated souls as we are.

This is one aspect of the Baptism which no wise man will dare forget. It shows us in a wonderful

symbolism the quality of the Lord we serve. What shall we call this gracious act? It is the *identity of sympathy*. The genius of true sympathy is that it stands, humbly and fully, where its object stands. Our Lord did this. Do we? A sense of uniqueness always separates. We stand apart in our lordly greatness. But Christ's greatness only led Him to identify Himself with us. It is true that He entered into our experiences in all ways; but this deed at the river is His greatest act of identity.

(3) Again, in this act Jesus linked Himself definitely with all the honourable past. John was the last of the prophets. He was of the order of Elijah and Amos, and, in message and methods alike, he was of their caste.

With new light in our hearts, it is so easy, so tempting, sometimes so cheap, to condemn the past. In our modern literature, every young callow Georgian discourses with a sneer of the age of Queen Victoria. In fact, we all speak patronizingly of the past, until it is sufficiently past. Then when it becomes decrepitly ancient, we fall on our knees and worship it!

Jesus had a better right than any to say, 'The best things in the past are now swept out. I begin a new era. In order to show how new and searching My message is, I should treat John as if he were an anachronism.' He might have said that. Instead, He linked Himself publicly with this last of the prophets. In asking for the benediction of John's Baptism, He linked Himself with every good thing that men had struggled for through days of sorrow and blunder. We would learn from the Master this beautiful secret.

(4) Still further, our Lord's act is a gracious benediction on every good convention, and a recognition of all customs or rites that exhibit a bit of God. We think that the more original a man is, the more should he be expected to despise ordinary ways and strike out on lines of his own. Indeed, we regard it as a mark of 'bigness' that a man should be unconventional. It may be equal to a revelation sometimes to shake ourselves out of ancient and accepted modes, otherwise life would be dominated, and cursed, by convention. Yet we cannot but think that every good man should seriously consider his relation to all established practices and canons of conduct. It is so easy, and so foolish, to despise them. But it may be a bigger and finer thing to honour good observances than to imagine ourselves beyond them. It was a mark of greatness even for such an original soul as Jesus to say, 'It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.' We soon learn that life runs, and

must run, in conventions; and if a convention lives at all, it is because it has some real contribution of goodness hidden in its heart. In mock superiority shall we kick these things aside? We do not need them perhaps—but do others? All strong men show the quality of their strength by remembering those who are lame.<sup>1</sup>

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Charity.

'Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. . . . Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.'—I Jn 4<sup>7-11</sup>.

If we set ourselves steadily to consider the Christian way—the principles of Christian living—two virtues or qualities present themselves as fundamental, pre-eminent, and essential. Humility is the first, and the second is charity or love—the two words being but the different translations in our familiar English Bible of the one Greek word 'agape,' which was a word, one may almost say, coined or minted in the Christian Church—the most distinctively Christian word.

There have been days when men found it possible to talk about the principle that God is love, and the consequent duty of loving all men, as a sort of commonplace. But those days have gone by. Intellectually we recognize to-day how difficult it is to believe that the Force which lies behind, and works throughout, the development of the universe is pure and unqualified love. And when we talk to sincere people about the consequent duty of loving all men, we find that to most it presents itself as something that is impracticable. They know—or think they know—what love is. They love some people and not others; that is, they like some, and they dislike others. But the root of their mistake is that they think of love as a matter of emotion or feeling.

Christian love is deliberate correspondence with the declared purpose and mind of God. The root Christian principle, incomparably the most difficult, and also the most attractive, of Christian dogmas or doctrines, is the doctrine that God is love; which is not an obvious truth by any means, but is the central point of that positive self-disclosure of God which the Bible conveys to us, and the central

<sup>1</sup> J. Black, *The Dilemmas of Jesus*, 9.

meaning of the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. The meaning of the Incarnation is that the real character of the being who made and rules the world has been for us translated out of that difficult and unintelligible region of abstract things beyond our sight into the intelligible lineaments of a human character which all can understand, the character of Jesus of Nazareth.

'No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him.' We cannot fail to note that He continually emphasizes one thing as the supreme and all-essential truth, and it is that God is the Father of all alike, which is what St. John expresses in the phrase 'God is love.'

If the ultimate law of the universe, the law of the very being of God who made the world, is love—if that is creation's final law—then every reasonable person must perceive that he has one summary duty, which is to correspond with the purpose of the world or the summary law of Nature. For the ultimate folly is to be out of harmony with the fundamental law of being. Every one knows that. And just as lust or pride puts us out of harmony with the purpose of the world, so exactly in the same sense selfishness, class narrowness, jealousy, malevolence, indifference—these things allowed to become characteristic of our lives—put us utterly out of harmony with God and with His purposes for us.

1. The first beginning of real deliberate Christian living is steadily to contemplate what God is; and to resolve that our lives are going to be deliberately so lived as to be in harmony with God. Is our thought of heaven and hell? Well, heaven is communion with God; and hell is to be out of fellowship with God; and there is no possibility of evading the conclusion that to suffer a character of selfishness to be built up within us, or in that most expressive phrase of Isaiah, to 'hide myself from mine own flesh'—to let the natural advantages of wealth or position screen us from the sufferings of the average man—that is deliberately to build up a character out of harmony with God. Selfishness or indifference is hell self-made within us. And on the other hand, the acceptance of the Christian law of love is the realization that we must be in harmony with the law of the universe or the being of God, and the being of God is love.

2. Let us go on to emphasize the breadth and universality of this quality of Divine love; because in a sense we all love. We love our friends, our relations, our families; we all have a natural sympathy with our class; there is a sphere within which we respond easily to the demand of those who are

about us. But the point is that this sort of natural predilection, natural love, is exclusive, it is narrow; it has natural sympathies, and it has natural antipathies, and it has almost indomitable prejudices. There is nothing to choose between class and class in this respect, or between nation and nation; they all have their loves, and they have their hatreds, their sympathies, and their suspicions.

The question whether the structure of our civilization is to totter and fall seems to be at bottom the question whether men will return to recognize and seek to obey the law of God, or how many men in our society which calls itself Christian will seriously do this. If not, as the prophets and our Lord tell us, we must fall under judgment.

But, of course, it is not merely a public question; it is a private question also. St. John would have us test ourselves rigidly in the matter; and our sincerity is to be tested not by our abstract assertion of principles, but by our manner of dealing with individuals in want or those whom we do not like, or those who have done us some serious wrong. For observe, it is a matter of act or will and not of feeling. Some one has done us a wrong. But do we take pains to understand what God's thought and intention are for him, and what God would have him be? If so, we may have to be severe, but the severity will be utterly purged from the motive of revenge, or the desire to see him suffer. It will become simply an expression of the pure good-will of God.

3. And then, lastly, we are to see the principle of love as it is set before us in Jesus Christ. We see in His life and teaching that love means active service according to our opportunities; that we must

eradicate out of the very foundations of our being the idea that we are justified in living to enjoy ourselves. We live for service. He does not guarantee us against suffering, even the extremest suffering. By this we are to mark the reality of our service, that we are ready to suffer. But we think wrongly if we allow ourselves in any way to be tinged with what is a purely pessimistic and not a Christian doctrine, that there is any value in pain for its own sake. If we look at the life of Jesus Christ we shall notice the fact that out of the thirty-three years of His mortal life, thirty years were passed in what was human happiness.

The pain of Jesus deepening into anguish, deepening into the Cross, came solely out of the double root of obedient service and sympathy. Granted the resolute will of obedience, the resolute self-equipment for service, granted a large-heartedness of sympathy which refuses to be bound by the limits of family or class, there will be abundant joy in life. Indeed, a well of fresh-springing joy has been opened, and it will be in the providence of God to settle how much of suffering shall come upon us.

The point from which we began and at which we end is the challenge that Christ offers to a man that he should organize his life to co-operate with the wide love of God, and not let it drift. Let us organize our lives on the basis of the mind of God; and we know what God is, as we see Him in the face of Jesus Christ. The mind of God, the mind of Him who made and rules the world, is the mind of love that is universal and without qualifications; and in this and no other way shall all men know that we are children of God and Christ's disciples, if we have love one to another.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> C. Gore, *Christian Moral Principles*, 62.

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## The Origin of the Hebrews: A Suggestion.

BY LIEUT.-COL. K. L. STEVENSON, SCARBOROUGH.

THE traveller from Basra to Baghdad, by rail, leaves Makina Station, Basra, at 10 p.m. At about 8 a.m. the following morning the train reaches Ur Junction, halts for an hour while the engine is watered, and the passengers partake of breakfast in the restaurant. Two miles away, to the west of the line, rises the extensive mound of Tel Mugheir, covering the ruins of Ur of the Chaldees, and

dominated by the ziggurat, or stage-tower, of the great temple of Sin, the Moon-god.

The country round is uncompromising, waterless desert, as flat as the sands at Shoeburyness, and destitute of any vegetation whatsoever. It is not a cheering prospect; but if the traveller gazes past the southern end of the mound of Ur, he may distinguish faintly, on the horizon, the pointed summit