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In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

Learning his Verbs.

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

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was made flesh.'—Jn 1¹, 14.

GIRLS and boys who are learning Latin at school know what is the Latin for 'word.' It is *verbum*, and we have cut off its tail and have taken it into our language as 'verb.'

We have all sorts of words—'parts of speech' we call them—and our grammar gives us names for them. A 'noun' is the name of something; an 'adjective' is a word added to a noun; a 'preposition' is a word placed before a noun; and a 'conjunction' is a word that joins words together. But there is one sort of word which has no name. It is too important. It doesn't need to be described. We just call it 'the word,' the 'verb.' It is the backbone of the whole business. Everything hangs on it—the word, the verb.

Now I am happy to say I haven't seen an English grammar for forty years, so I don't know what the grammars of to-day say; but I can tell you what the old grammars said about the verb. I was glad to say good-bye to mine, for I hated it, as we hate lots of things that are good for us, and I laid it away with joy. But there was one thing it said which stuck to me, and which has come to mean more and more to me the longer I live. It was this: 'A verb is a word which signifies to be, or to do, or to suffer.'

When I put away my grammar I thought I was finished with learning the verbs, but I found (and you will find) that I have been learning these verbs all my life, and still haven't learned them perfectly. For life is not just getting things; it is learning 'to be, to do, and to suffer.' It is not what we have that is the important thing, but being and doing and suffering—what we *are*, what we *do*, and how we *bear* what comes to us.

The Lord Jesus had nothing—nothing at all but the clothes He stood in—nothing like what you have. When He wanted a piece of money He had to say 'Give me a penny.' An old writer in Egypt seventeen hundred years ago says, 'The Lord ate from a cheap bowl, and made His disciples lie on the ground, on the grass, and He washed their

feet with a towel about Him, the lowly-minded God and Lord of the Universe. He did not bring a silver footbath from heaven to carry about with Him. He asked the Samaritan woman to give him to drink in a vessel of clay as she drew from the well. He *had* nothing.'

But He is the Saviour of the world and the high example to men, and His Name is above every name because of what He was, what He did, and what He suffered. He was the Word, the Verb of God, being, doing, and suffering.

He *was* pure and holy and good. He *did* works of truth and kindness. He *suffered* with men, for He took their sorrows on His heart and felt them as if they were His own, and He *suffered* for men, for He took their sins on His heart and bore them on His Cross.

He was God's Word, the Verb of God, the Word become Flesh, being, doing, suffering.

We have to learn the verb with Christ. These words have to become flesh, to become alive in us. That is what life means. It will not be what we will bring in our hands, or have in our bank, that will matter at the end of our life, but what we have in heart and conscience and character, what we have learned by being and doing and suffering.

We are to Be? Like Jesus. We are to Do? The things He asks. We are to Suffer? Not on that terrible Cross, but as He did among men, feeling for others, feeling through others, and taking their sorrows on our heart. That is what 'sympathy' means; not just feeling for others, but suffering with them.

Here is what a poet has written, looking back on his life, and it will be good if we, when we come to look back, can say the same:

I have learnt 'to be'—well, a man:
How 'to do'—well, a part of my duty:
And in 'suffering,' own that the plan
Of the world is all goodness and beauty.
Still at times from the path I may stray,
And thus make the journeying rougher,
But at least I am learning the way
'To Be, and to Do, and to Suffer.'

Some of you will go to the University and by the things you learn there take a degree, and mayhap an honours degree, and have letters after your name. Some of you won't. But all of you are entered in the Great University of Life and, by the things you learn there, have the chance of

winning a degree and having at last 'W.D.G.F.S.' after your name.

Do you know what those letters mean? 'Well Done, Good and Faithful Servant.' It is the honours degree God gives to those who have followed Christ and with Him have learned the verbs 'To Be,' 'To Do,' and 'To Suffer.'

Game to the Last.

BY THE REVEREND ARTHUR JONES, D.LIT., OXFORD.

'That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore.'—Eph 6¹³⁻¹⁴.

There is a phrase which we use sometimes, and which conveys something for which we have a great respect. It is the phrase 'sticking it.' When we say that, we do not mean merely going on with the thing, but going on with it when it would be quite pleasant for us to drop it. We use it, for instance, about games. I have sometimes seen, and I daresay you have, a fellow 'sticking it' grandly at Rugger. Perhaps he is one of the 'threes,' and is making a run with the ball. How the other side get on to him! You think he is done for, and his run at an end. But, out of the ruck of them, there comes a figure, still going, still in possession of the ball. It is our 'three,' who has refused to acknowledge that the other side was too much for him, and has been 'sticking it' to such purpose that he is still all there, and, very likely, will get 'a try' in a few minutes. We use it sometimes of work. Maybe there is an exam to prepare for. Well, preparing for an exam is sometimes awfully slow and difficult, and there are all sorts of temptations not to go on with it. But the girl or boy who recognizes that exams are things to meet and overcome, and who 'sticks' the long preparation, refusing to be beaten, is the one that will arrive. Why, not long ago, I had to examine a man, not a boy, and it was an oral exam, too. This particular man had not had the opportunities of some of the others, and he was not quite as good as some of them. But the plucky way in which he came up to each question, and evidently made up his mind that he would do his very best with it, won our respect. He might so easily have said: 'This is beyond me, it's no use my trying.' But he was a stickler. Some of his answers were quite wrong, and some of them made us smile, but we liked him, for he would not give in.

Now the writer of this Epistle has evidently some such idea as this in his head, only the picture which *he* gives is of something worse than Rugger,

and worse even than exams; it is a picture of war. Now war is a horrid, horrible thing, so horrible that we all want to get rid of it, once and for all. But, while war is so dreadful, and we do not want to get a love for warlike things, let me tell you this, that many soldiers have been simple, tender, lovable men. I met hundreds of them in the Great War, and, while war is, more or less, the fault of people in general, those men were just true and straight and good, and very fine. And I think that St. Paul was thinking of some soldier-boy of that kind. Perhaps he was thinking of one whom he had seen just once, in his many travels, or, perhaps, he was thinking of one whom he may have known, and possibly had a chance to talk to about Christ, and who, in turn, may have talked to him about some of his own adventures. At any rate, it seems to me that St. Paul had a pretty definite picture in his mind, and I am going to try to pass it on to you as it has come to me.

It is war-time, and 'at the front.' Also, we will suppose, it is night. Our soldier-lad is on sentry-go. He has his orders, which are to let no one pass him. Well, he takes over, and, for a time, all goes well. Then there is a noise. Round goes the sentry's head; he is all alert. 'Who goes there?' There is no answer, but now there is something dim to be seen, and it moves! It is some of the enemy. Our boy gives the alarm. But that is not all. He must try to hold this enemy until help comes. The enemy must not be allowed to penetrate the camp. So he goes at it. He is overpowered, they are several to one, but he does not care. It seems as if, now, he has done his utmost, but still he keeps on at it. At last, at long last, as it seems, help does come. In the end, the enemy is overcome. And then our boy, who has not been relieved of his sentry-duty yet, goes on with his work. He is faint, his nerves are a bit jumpy, perhaps he is hit, but he goes on, and, when the officer comes round, he is ready with his salute. He has 'withstood in the evil day' and, having done all, he is still standing. Or, as you would put it, he has stuck it.

Girls and boys, we hope there will not be much more need for the sort of fighting which we have been talking about. But God always, and never more than now, needs those, especially those young ones, who can withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, still stand. It is not those who begin, not those who begin and go half the way, or three-quarters of the way, but those who begin and go all the way who are of value in doing His mighty work. Are any of us guilty of not going through

with it, in the matter of dealing honestly with ourselves, or of doing our duty by other people, or towards God? It is good, of course, to withstand a bit in the evil day, but it is far, far better to withstand all the way through, and be found standing at the last, evil having battered at you, and hurt you, perhaps, but not having power to make you cease from standing. So that it becomes true of you that you did your all, and did not let even that exhaust you, but were found standing where you should be at the end.

Did you notice that my text finishes up with another 'stand'? That is very full of purpose, if I am not mistaken. St. Paul means something like this. 'You think this a good idea? You feel that it is what ought to be true of you? You mean to make it true? Well, the way to end by standing is to begin by standing. Take your stand once and for all, and that will go a long way towards your being found standing at the end.' And that is true. In the things that matter most, we gain resisting-power by taking a stand for right. That sentry of whom we were thinking could never have done what he did unless he had begun by taking his stand as a sentry. No more can you; no more can I. 'Stand, therefore,' now.

It is said of Jesus Christ that He loved His own 'unto the end.' It seems to me that that means that His love was such that, come what would, He would *never* let His loved ones go, His love was proof against everything that might tempt Him to do otherwise. That is a grand thing. And we want to be like Him in our love for humanity, and in what we do for the world. Let us ask God to help us to take our stand now, and to keep it; withstanding, as we go through life, everything that we believe to be evil, and, although perhaps knocked about in the great struggle, to be found standing at our post at the last.

The Christian Year.

SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION DAY.

The Ascension.

'And when he had said these things, as they were looking, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.'—Ac 1⁹ (R. V.).

The fact which we call the Ascension is stated or assumed by several of the New Testament writers, but only one writer, St. Luke, gives any description of it. In his Gospel he writes: 'And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven'—though the

last clause 'and was carried up into heaven' is not found in some of the most important MSS and may be a later addition. Possibly St. Luke himself invented it, for in the Acts he quite distinctly describes a physical ascent, and describes it in detail. If he did not himself actually write the passage, he embodied it in his story as a trustworthy tradition.

Now different minds will take different views of this incident. Some will say: 'If our Lord had to depart, what more natural than that He should ascend? Since men habitually think of heaven as above their heads, and since in the traditions of His own people there were stories of men caught up from earth into sky, He would in this way be giving to His departure a form not unfamiliar, and one capable of impressing itself upon His imagination.' Others, more critical, but not therefore necessarily less believing, will feel that we have no means of knowing what happened, that the New Testament description belongs rather to the region of symbol and poetry, and cannot be taken literally. That there was a real departure, that a real event happened, which made a marked impress on the minds of the disciples, they do not deny. Only they will not commit themselves to any theory of the manner of the departure. A smaller number, feeling the difficulties which gather round all the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus, will tend to regard the story of the Ascension as simply the creation of the pious fancy of the disciples.

But why the *last* manifestation, why did pious fancy stop here? Why not continue the series of appearances? There is no answer, on the supposition that the Ascension was a fancy and not a fact. But grant that Jesus really did rise from the dead and show Himself to His disciples, then there is no reasonable objection in supposing that there was a last manifestation, after which He withdrew from earth. Certainly we cannot read the narratives of the Ascension without realizing that somehow the disciples knew that this was the last appearance. Nor can we deny that the New Testament writers everywhere take for granted that an important event called the Ascension happened, which had unique results for their theology, and in particular for their view of our Lord's person.

For us the thing which matters most is not that we should be able to give an exact account of what happened when our Lord ascended, but that we should understand the religious significance of the Ascension. The meaning of the fact is often more important than the fact itself.

What, then, for us to-day is the significance of the Ascension ?

First, it witnesses to the reality of what we call a spiritual world. The event is in tune with the record of His post-Resurrection appearances, when He appeared and then vanished. 'Their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight'—the movement from the physical to the spiritual plane. 'Jesus cometh, the door being shut, and stood in the midst'—the reverse movement from the spiritual plane to the physical. And at the Ascension the withdrawal finally into the world of spirit. Do we at times think this to be impossible? Why should it be? Who knows what is the power of spirit over body, when spirit has free control, as it has not under the conditions of our earthly life? We creatures of physical sense, tied to earth, framing so many of our judgments out of our earthly experiences, with only a limited foothold here in the eternal, with the difficult task before us of growing less earthly and more spiritual—how difficult it is often for us to preserve our sense of the largeness of things!

The presence and reality of the spiritual world. We do need to be constantly reminding ourselves of this, and of the fact that the meaning of the universe is spiritual, and that we are passing through time to a life where things eternal will take the place of the things of time. Our task here is to make this unseen world as real and vivid as we can. We have to grow in the things of the spirit. We do not want to seek for them through occult mysteries. They are close at hand, within us, all around us. Where can we find them? On our knees, when we shut out the world and pray. In following out that noble aspiration which comes to us—comes like a flash of light from Him who dwells in light unapproachable. In quenching that natural resentment at an injury, and in being ready to forgive a human brother. In the glory of a sunset, which reveals a God of beauty; in the mystery of our own self, with its mind and will and haunting visions of things Divine. Of all this spiritual world the Ascension reminds us. It is a vivid and graphic symbol of the eternal realm, calling us to ascend with Christ. 'If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.'

And then, secondly, against this background of a mysterious spiritual world the Ascension sets a figure—the figure of Jesus Christ. He moves through the whole gospel story, its central and dominating personality. And at the end it is He who withdraws from the gaze of His wondering

followers. What does it mean that we fix our faith on an ascended Christ? As time went on, and successive generations of Christian thinkers tried to think out what Jesus Christ meant, what His work meant, what redemption meant, more and more did they find significance in the fact of the Ascension. In fact, so rich was the fact that they grew interested more in the meaning than in the fact itself. And that perhaps accounts in part for neglect of Ascension Day as a festival.

Lastly, let us make two points, both of them full of practical lessons.

A mysterious spiritual background of the unseen and eternal—and against it the figure of Jesus Christ. Into that unknown has come Jesus Christ, and He is the revelation of what the spiritual mystery is. He showed men what it was, to the measure of their capacity to understand Him, and He said that the mystery was a mystery of love, and that in and through time the light of the eternal was always shining. And what does that mean? It means that, as there is only one chemistry of the earth and stars, so there is only one moral chemistry for earth and heaven. Truth here is akin to truth there. Love here is of a piece with heavenly love.

Jesus Christ, and what He stood for, are the realities of that spiritual world which is our true home. Jesus, truly human when on earth, has taken His humanity with Him into the heavenly places. There is an essential kinship between the Divine and the human. The known need not be for us strange and remote.

The second point is this—that the figure of the ascended Christ speaks of power. God's purpose centres in Him. He is the fulfilment of it. All things, as St. Paul says in the Epistle to the Ephesians, 'are to be summed up' in Him. His Ascension marks His triumph. The Cross was followed by the Resurrection, the Resurrection by the Ascension. In principle the victory was complete. Henceforth throughout the ages that victory is slowly being made actual in the field of history and in men's hearts. The advance is indeed slow, and often we wonder if the victory will ever be finally won. But here comes in the assurance which the Ascension gives. Can God's purpose fail? To believe it even for a moment is to destroy the foundations of our Christian faith.

There is a Divine purpose working itself out; and Christ is that purpose personalized. It is for us to co-operate with Him. Indeed, He cannot do His work without us. If we grasp that and link ourselves to Him and His purpose, we shall realize

that the Ascension, which, as a surface view, seems to mean His absence and withdrawal from the world, is really a pledge and token of His presence. Physical absence is spiritual presence. 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' He is present as power to reinforce our wills, to lift us into the enthusiasm of a great purpose, to help us to ascend with Him into a world rich with spiritual forces. All this, and much more, does the Ascension mean.¹

WHITSUNDAY.

The Self-Evidence of Pentecost.

'Every man heard them speak in his own language.'
—Ac 2⁴.

1. The first sermon preached in the Christian Church was a sermon having the Holy Spirit for its text, and the preacher found no difficulty in expounding his subject to a popular and nondescript audience. It did not for one moment seem to St. Peter's hearers that he was preaching over their heads or dealing with an abstruse theological dogma when he spoke to them of the Holy Spirit. Three times over the fact is emphasized that what so astonished and delighted the casual audience which came together on that first Whitsunday was the fact that each man heard the truth proclaimed 'in his own language.' It was something conveyed to them in terms and expressions with which they were entirely familiar. There was not a touch of anything foreign or strange in what the Christian witnesses were saying.

Now this spontaneous testimony is, one feels, in sharp and amazing contrast to the kind of untutored criticism that would be passed to-day by the man literally in the street, as on the first Pentecost. He is most conscious, so he tells us, of the unintelligibility of the whole doctrine. He is apt to taunt the Christian preacher with setting forth 'cold Christs and tangled Trinities.' He has not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Spirit, in the sense of a present Comforter or Strengthener. He does not even know whether to speak of the third manifestation of the Divine character as 'He' or 'it.' Is it any wonder that the hosts of the Lord move in such straggling formation, and with such seemingly halting steps go forth to battle, when the trumpet gives an uncertain sound? In *Lavengro* Borrow describes the almost magical effect that followed the utterance of certain sounds by a rough Irish smith

¹ V. F. Storr, in *Anglo-American Preaching*, 121.

when speaking to a horse. 'He uttered a word which I had never heard before, in a sharp, pungent tone. The effect upon myself was somewhat extraordinary, a strange thrill ran through me; but with regard to the cob it was terrible; the animal forthwith became like one mad, and reared and kicked with the utmost desperation.' Then the smith 'uttered another word in a voice singularly modified, but sweet and almost plaintive; the effect of it was as instantaneous as that of the other, but how different!—the animal lost all its fury and became at once calm and gentle.' If such effects can follow the addressing even of a dumb animal 'in its own language,' how much more swift and telling would be the effect of allowing the Spirit to move men through a medium they could understand, and to which they could respond!

2. We should be chary and suspicious of any statement of the vital truths of our souls' salvation which does not call for at least some mental as well as moral effort on our part. 'In mystery the soul abides,' and when we are speaking of these things we cannot be expected to deal meanly with them, either in language or in thought. As Dr. Dale used to say, 'though infinitely mysterious, the revelation of the one God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit fulfils the profoundest, the richest, and the noblest conception of the Divine Life.' But where God feeds us with the loaves of the little lad we do not honour Him or satisfy any more the hunger of our souls by demanding mysterious manna. The thought of the Divine Spirit was apt to be associated with vagaries of religious experience which are wild, extravagant, and abnormal; with emotional excitement rather than with clear thinking. It was this tendency which St. Paul had to combat when he pleaded for comprehensible preaching against utterances of which no man could make anything, and when he insisted that the evidences of the Spirit are desirable things like love, joy, and peace.

3. The doctrine of the Trinity and of the Holy Spirit was arrived at and formulated by the Church, not by the way of philosophic speculation on the nature and being of God, but by the way of immediate spiritual experience. We can never go wrong when we say, 'that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.' This is the great fact which the Church joyfully celebrates this Whitsunday, that God has communicated Himself to men in ways that they can understand. The Holy Ghost is God speaking to each man in his own language. The Oriental mystic who heard the apostles speak has his counterpart in the man of

to-day who with immediacy can catch the intimations which come from the unseen. The Greek amongst us, with philosophic bent of mind and delicate perception and love of beauty, finds that the Holy Spirit, if he will but listen, is addressing him also directly in his own language, through this love of beauty. For the scientist, with his Roman-like devotion to law and order, it is in no strange tongue that the voice of God comes to him. And for those among us of a kind of Egyptian, sphinx-like reserve, who never utter much of their mind upon these great questions, but who are guided by an innate sense of fairness, governed, as the ancient Egyptians were governed, by a conviction that the souls of men will be weighed in a scale as unswerving as Osiris's own, it is not in unfamiliar accents that the tones of the Holy Spirit come to them.

4. These are days in which we are being reminded over and over again that the world has escaped from the shackles of convention and authority. But does the demand of the age for freedom not carry with it more than the demanders realize? It means that a new freedom is granted also to the Holy Spirit. What if our formulæ and precedents, our prejudice and orthodoxy, have been acting as so many swaddling bands fettering and limiting the working of the Holy Spirit? Evidently it was not difficult for people who passed as religious, zealous pilgrims to the Temple at Jerusalem, to dodge the demands of righteousness when the message was droned to them in ecclesiastical phrase and time-worn ritual. It was when they heard the voice of God speaking conviction to them 'in their own language' that we read that they first were 'pricked in their heart.' This age which so loudly demands freedom and reality and unconventionality is going to set the Holy Spirit free as well. It was open formerly to one resisting conviction and the striving of the Holy Spirit to say that he could make nothing of such expressions as 'washed in the blood of the Lamb,' or 'vicarious sacrifice,' or 'atonement' and 'regeneration.' But he does know the meaning of brotherhood and social responsibility, of self-control and self-development, of commercial morality and business rectitude; and if he has got a heart at all, it will not be so hard for the point of the two-edged sword to prick it in days to come. At least he cannot pretend that he is ignorant of his native tongue, and the Holy Spirit is able to speak in those accents as well as the loftier language of theology and philosophy.

'To every man,' says Stevenson, 'there comes at

times a consciousness that there blows through all the articulations of his body the wind of a Spirit not wholly his.' The only unforgivable sin is that of the man who closes the windows of his being to the incoming of this viewless power. The unforgivableness is not arbitrary, it is rooted in the nature of things. For we gradually poison ourselves if we breathe nothing but our own vitiated atmosphere. And if a man do but open door and window, the Guest comes in and makes His abode—as the bloom of health upon the soul and the perpetual inspiration of the life.¹

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
So shall I never die,
But live with Thee the perfect life
Of Thine eternity.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

The Great Companion.

'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.'—Mt 28²⁰.

There are a great many ways in which men are lonely. Sometimes it is the physical absence of loved ones. There is the loneliness of lack of sympathy. There are plenty of people about, but the flash of the comradely eye and the sense of the nearness of the comradely heart are absent. There is the loneliness of the selfish man. He has no end of intimate relationships in business and in society. But gradually it comes home to him that none of these people of whom he sees so much really cares about him. In spite of the round of busy activity together, and the contact of the hours of recreation and pleasure, he is a solitary man. His spirit moves alone through the days and the nights. Then there is the loneliness of hostility. A man is fighting for a forlorn hope, and as he stands faithful in the hard hour he feels the strange loneliness which comes when the eyes which might be bright with fellowship are, in fact, cold with disapproval. There was a day in Boston when it seemed to one of Boston's sons that those who might have been his dearest friends had been turned by the slavery contest into bitterest foes.

It is in a world like this, with so many kinds of loneliness, that the Master promised to be with His disciples. He gave them a great task, and as they set about its accomplishment they might rest with comfort in the knowledge that He would be with them always, even to the end of the world. In

¹H. L. Simpson, in *Ascension and Whitsuntide Sermons*, 166.

truth, in an even more intimate sense than these words declare, He is the Great Companion always near to men and women and little children even when they least realize His presence.

1. He is *the Companion of our thoughts*. As a matter of fact, the little world in which we do our thinking is a much more important world than we realize. We always say a thing in our mind before we say it with our lips. We always do a thing in our mind before we do it with our hand. And so the man who is lord of his thoughts is king of his life.

Many a man does things in his mind which he feels sure he would never do in any other way. And many a man thinks things he feels sure he would never say. But all the while there is an unseen Presence. He lives this life in his own mind with the Great Companion always near. Mrs. Wharton says of a great mother, 'She overheard her son's thoughts.' Not even the greatest mother can always do that. But the Master Himself always overhears the whole silent conversation of the mind with itself. And so He knows us with that astonishing insight from which no secrets are hid. But the unseen Guest may be made the seen and welcomed friend. We may rise in the morning glad of His nearness and with the first morning prayer committing our minds to His keeping. We may meet the problems of the day remembering His presence, and at last every thought may be coloured and ennobled because we live in the daily sense that He is with us.

2. The Master is also *the Companion of our words*. There is such a thing as a life whose speech is set to the music of a constant consciousness of His presence. Emerson refers in one of his poems to 'the manners of the sky.' There is such a thing as the manners growing out of the consciousness of the august and friendly Presence. There is a kind of speech subtly influenced by the awareness of the Great Companion. A good deal that men say is really dictated by the people they meet, and the experiences through which they pass. An adroit man does not find it hard to get a good many people to say just what he wants them to say. If a man does not watch closely, his speech is merely the mirror of his environment. The consciousness of the nearness of Christ gives a new background, a new standard, a new stimulus, and a new inspiration. There are a great many things a man does not say because of his invisible Friend. There are a great many things a man does say because of that high prompting. The fine old phrase, 'His conversation is in

heaven,' expresses something of the meaning of all this.

Men go to no place where the Great Companion does not follow them. And there is no difficult or intricate or ugly situation which comes to the point where it crystallizes into speech without His understanding apprehension. There is infinite sympathy as well as infinite nearness. There is infinite comprehension as well as a perpetual and insistent and noble demand. Professional life, business activities, and all the manifold processes of statesmanship come to the point of speech under the scrutiny of this constant Listener to the words of men.

3. The Master is *the Companion of our deeds*. Our thoughts deepen into feeling. They leap through our lips in energetic speech. They harden at last into the steel strength of deeds. And as what we are becomes what we do, the Great Companion stands at our side. There are deeds which are more the thoughtless expression of nervous energy than the deliberate expression of intention. There are deeds which take their colour from our surroundings. For men, like chameleons, often wear the protective colouring which makes it hard to distinguish them from the other men about them. 'Everybody does it' seems to many people the sufficient justification for their actions. There are deeds in which the slowly maturing experience of years, the maturing processes of thought, the crystallizing decisions after countless moral struggles, put their whole meaning into decisive action. And all the while the Great Companion is waiting, ready to save us from our own carelessness, ready to rescue us from our environment, and ready to deliver us from evil intentions into that goodness of purpose which is the safety of the soul.

Blessed is the man who does his thinking in constant consciousness of the nearness of the Great Companion. Blessed is the man who speaks with a deep awareness of the presence of the invisible Listener. Blessed is the man whose action expresses a conscious companionship with the living Christ.

This acceptance of the nearness of Christ, so that it becomes a thing we choose and accept and love, brings us nearer to all other human beings. For nearness to God means nearness to all the other men and women and little children in the world. The heart of loneliness is alienation. And the man who gladly practises the presence of Christ has the heart of a friend as he moves about the turbulent town, the little village, and the open country.

His personal experience of fellowship with Christ is the beginning of a new social experience with men.¹

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Revelation in History.

'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.'—Is 55st.

The gospel of Christ is neither a philosophy nor a law nor a system of worship, but a life which is Divine as well as human, revealed through life to mankind and to men. That life is complete in one sense, for the Son of Man has long ago ascended where He was before. Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more. The days of His flesh are ended, and He sitteth now at the right hand of the throne of God.

But in a higher sense the revelation is hardly yet begun. The infinite fullness of that life is what no one man or nation or age of the world can realize. Even the Divine Teacher can only reveal it gradually, in an infinite variety of dealings with mankind and with men. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; yet not the same to Jew and Gentile, Greek and Roman, English and Japanese, to our fathers and ourselves. He is the same power of life to all that truly come to Him; yet that power is quite as much revealed as limited by a vast variety of race and country and historical and personal circumstances. The same Lord and Saviour is rich in mercy to all that call upon Him; but we see Him from an infinite variety of points of view.

But leaving on one side as far as may be the varieties of race and climate and personal character, let us speak more generally of the revelation of the Life to men through history. Turning to history, we see our text blazoned on every page of it, that the thoughts of God are not like our thoughts, and our ways are not His ways. The apostles themselves who walked with Jesus were so far from understanding Him that they persisted in looking for an earthly kingdom, and strove for a place in it the very night before the crucifixion; and even the enlightenment of the Spirit only just overcame their slowness to receive the mystery of the call of the Gentiles. So again in the fourth century, when the patience of the saints had at last overcome the rage of the persecutors, and a

long prospect of peace and prosperity seemed to lie before the Churches, we cannot wonder if Constantine's bishops were ready to cry, 'This is the kingdom of God.' But even then destruction was upon them, and in a few more years the ancient world was overthrown. Pass on to the sixteenth century. Rome sat again as a queen, and said, 'I shall see no sorrow.' She had overcome the restless North at last, and given the flesh of her fellow-servants the heretics to something worse than the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field. She was building the dome of St. Peter's as her memorial for ever—building with the price of sin, when Christ came suddenly and cut her in sunder, and appointed her portion with the hypocrites.

We have no need to envy the men who saw the face of Christ with the eyes of sense, and heard His gracious words with their outward ears. They were not the better for knowing Him after the flesh, neither are we the worse for knowing Him after the Spirit. It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing, though it were the flesh of Christ. It is but the text from which His Spirit preaches to successive generations, and His teaching is the unfolding of the mystery of the ages with a clearness that increases as the centuries lengthen that separate us from the carnal presence of our Lord. 'He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.' We can often read something of it in the light of history. What, then, did the Spirit say to the church of Israel, the church of Pharisees and Sadducees, of Gamaliel and of Ananias the whited wall? That the Gentiles were their brethren in Christ, and that Israel itself would gain by their admission a better liberty than any that Barabbas or Judas of Galilee could offer. They would not listen; and therefore the Romans came and took away their place and nation. What did He say to the Romans themselves in the fourth century? That the barbarians were their brethren in Christ, and partakers with them of His promise. They would not listen; and therefore these same barbarians came in like a flood and overthrew the Roman Empire. What was His message to the Latin Church of the sixteenth century? That the nations of northern Europe were their brethren in Christ, and no longer needed to be kept in leading strings by a visible catholic Church of Latin sectarianism. They would not listen; and therefore Europe was rent in sunder to this day, and the leadership of Christian thought was shifted to the North. And now what does the Spirit say to modern England? We need no prophet among us to read some of the writing on

¹ L. H. Hough, *The Renaissance of Religion*, 137.

the wall. That the outcasts of England are our brethren in Christ, and the victims of our social system are children of God as well as we. We have cared far too much for this world's wealth and this world's fashions, and even the good gifts of culture and learning have too often helped to puff up our pride. It is not enough to offer them charity, or justice, or political rights. Nothing will suffice but a welcome in Christ which the man of the world will never give; and nothing short of this will heal the discords of the State, and avert the war of classes which darkens the horizon of the whole civilized world. So much of the Spirit's message we can safely read by the Light of Scripture and history, and the rest will be revealed to us in due time, if we are willing to receive it. When we turn to history, we find that God seems to reveal Himself to nations chiefly in their trouble and distress.

But why is this? Let us look to history again and see. It is on a stubborn and rebellious generation that the affliction comes. If men prefer their sin to the Spirit's teaching, that sin will find them out. They are quite free to disobey if they like. Meanwhile God gets His work done whether we are willing to be labourers with Him or not; and if we refuse, the loss is ours. If the Jews of our Lord's time had been willing to put away their hatred of the Gentile, Jerusalem need not have been destroyed. Had the Romans chosen to overcome

their scorn of the barbarian, he would have been proud to serve their glorious Empire. So too, if we refuse to lay aside our pride and lose our class divisions and our party hatreds in the love of Christ, England also will have to go the way of Israel and Rome, for there is no respect of persons with God.

Once more, the thoughts of God are not our thoughts, neither are our ways His ways. Our systems are like the stately icebergs that plough their way for awhile through the sea, glittering with rainbow colours in the sunshine. But the waters pour down their sides in cold cascades, and soon they shall vanish away, and the face of the deep shall know them no more. The thoughts of God are infinite and changeless as the azure sky. The covenant of the Lord is from everlasting, and His counsel shall endure for ever. It is He that rules the tossing sea of this world's wickedness, and causes the Pharaohs and Sennacheribs to do His will, and accomplish the thing He would have done, and to sum up not all men only, but all things in Christ, from whom they came, in whom they consist, and to whom they are moving as their final end. And His will is to have mercy on all men.

May He of His infinite mercy strengthen us to hear His voice and serve His will in our own generation.¹

¹ H. M. Gwatkin, *The Sacrifice of Thankfulness*, 15.

The New Physics and Religious Thought.

BY THE REVEREND J. H. MORRISON, M.A., BUCKSBURN, ABERDEEN.

WEYL, in his great mathematical treatise on *Space, Time, and Matter*, says, 'In our time there has been unloosed a cataclysm which has swept away space, time, and matter, hitherto regarded as the firmest pillars of natural sciences, but only to make place for a view of things of wider scope and entailing a deeper vision.'² These words are no exaggeration, but a sober description of the cataclysmic change which has taken place. If one may use the expression, physics has begun a new innings, and all the signs indicate that it is going to be a big innings.

This revolution is destined to have a profound influence in every field of thought, though it will take years, probably generations, to work out all its

bearings. Professor Muirhead has expressed regret³ that idealist philosophers, having in general had no training in physics, are but ill-equipped to deal with the situation which has arisen, and it will be freely granted that theologians are in no better case. None the less, it is incumbent on us to endeavour as best we may to attune our thinking to the new modes of thought, lest haply some day we wake up to find that we are using terms which have grown obsolete and categories which have been discarded.

Special points of interest in the new physics may be said to gather round Relativity and the Quantum Theory, mysterious words which have

² P. 2.

³ *Contemporary British Philosophy*, i. 320-2.