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In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

A Sermon in a Salad.

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

'Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.'—Mt 6⁹.

I WONDER how many girls and boys have heard of Kepler. 'Oh!' you say, 'Kepler's Extract of Malt! I should think we have heard of him, and we don't want to hear any more of him!' No, it's not that Kepler. I am not surprised that you don't want to hear about the 'Extract of Malt' gentleman, although his Extract did you a lot of good. I would as soon expect you to be interested in Scott who made the 'Emulsion of Cod Liver Oil.' Ugh!

But this is Johann Kepler. He lived three hundred years ago, and next year all the papers will have articles about him, for 1930 will be the tercentenary of his death. He was a great astronomer and discovered the laws by which the planets move, and many other wonderful things. Now to the story! He tells it himself.

'Yesterday, when weary with writing, and my mind quite cloudy with considering these atoms, I was called to supper, and a salad which I had asked for was set before me. "It seems, then," said I aloud, "that if pewter dishes, leaves of lettuce, grains of salt, drops of vinegar and oil, and slices of eggs had been floating about in the air from all eternity, it might at last happen by chance that these become a salad." "May be," says my wife, "but not so nice and well-dressed as this of mine is!"'

Of course Kepler was only joking; but what he said in jest many people say in earnest, and think they are very wise. They think our world and all that is in it, and all the other countless worlds, just happened. Topsy in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, when she was asked, 'Who made you?' said, 'I dunno, 'specs I growed.' So some people think our world 'just growed.' Atoms were floating and whirling about in space and somehow at last they came together and our world began to be. It didn't need a Creator; it 'growed' itself.

And so they have no thought of God. They do not wonder and worship and give thanks. They take it all for granted.

Some girls and boys do just the same with the little world in which they live: I mean the world of house and home. It's there, and they just take it all for granted. Of course it's there. Of course there will be food on the table; of course there will be new clothes when old ones are done; and stockings will go on getting mended. It's all quite natural and very nice. It's all a matter of course, and it will just go on as a matter of course.

I remember once telling my little girl that we couldn't get something she thought it would be nice for us to have. 'Why not?' 'No money.' 'But you can go to the bank and get money.' It was all very simple. Banks were there to hand out money and father's only task was to go and ask for it!

But, you know, it's not so easy and simple as that at home. Things don't happen; they have got to be contrived and planned, and made to happen. Buttons don't sew themselves on. Torn clothes don't mend themselves. Soiled clothes don't gather themselves into a bag and check themselves off in a book and trot off to the laundry. The food-stuffs in the cupboards don't hold a general meeting and appoint sub-committees to form themselves into soups and pies and puddings, so that the children may be fed. That may happen in fairy tales, but we do not live in Fairy Land. All these things have got to be thought out and planned and done by somebody. Father must work to provide; Mother must think and plan. It wouldn't all be there and it couldn't all be so nice if there was not Love behind it all. Things never make themselves. You can't get a picture by gathering together canvas and colours and brushes and glue and wood and waiting for a picture to happen of itself. It needs an artist. Lettuce and radish and eggs, etc., might lie side by side for ages and ages but never would they say to each other, 'Go to, let us arise and make ourselves into a salad.' It needs a cook.

We talk about things 'turning out' happily. But things don't turn out, not even puddings; they've got to be turned out by somebody. Behind all beautiful things is some one who loves beauty. Behind all the comfort and smoothness and certainty of our homes there is some one who 'knows what we have need of before we ask it'; her name is Mother; and behind all that makes these things possible is one who works to provide; his name is

Father; and the power that lives and moves in them is Love. So behind all the beauty of the world is One who loves beauty, and whose hand paints the loveliness of the butterfly and sets the colours in a bird's wing, and the glory on the lilies of the field. Behind all the bounty of the world, by which we are fed and our daily bread is provided and harvest never fails, is One who 'knoweth what we have need of before we ask him.'

Behind all that we call 'chance' is One who foresees all things and makes them do His will; and joy and sorrow, sunshine and shadow, life and death, are the servants of His gracious will. His name is God, and all the love that we mean when we say 'Father and Mother' is but the shadow of His love, whom Jesus taught us to call our Heavenly Father.

No! things don't happen of themselves, not even a salad; they are planned by Love, and if ever you think that perhaps this world just came to be without God, remember the words of Kepler's wife—who not only put the ordinary things into his salad, but also love and a spice of sacred sense: 'May be, but not so nice and well-dressed as this of mine is.'

'Double Dutch.'

BY THE REVEREND J. IVOR WENSLEY, M.A.,
B.D., BIRMINGHAM.

'Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.'—Ro 12¹⁰.

When we were very young, and did not know many words, and said even the words we knew very queerly, some one used to say to us, with a laugh and a hug, 'You are talking Double Dutch.' Not long ago in the House of Commons, an M.P. who had listened to a speech, got up and said that 'It was all Double Dutch' to him. When people hear what they cannot understand, or what seems to them to be nonsense, they sometimes say, 'It's Double Dutch.'

I suppose that there is such a thing as 'Single Dutch,' which is not so difficult to understand! If 'Single Dutch' means ordinary Dutch as spoken by people in Holland, some of it is not very difficult to understand. If you had a book in Dutch, it would look a bit strange, but you could easily guess the meaning of some of the words because they are very much like our own English words.

I am going to speak to you about a Dutch proverb, and I should be surprised to learn that any of you find it difficult to put into English. 'Zelf is de Man.' Two words, 'is' and 'man,' are just

the same as our own words. There is only the difference of one letter between 'Zelf' and 'Self,' and sometimes we sound the letter S just like the letter Z. Then, of course, 'de' is something like 'the.' So we very easily turn the Dutch proverb into English, 'Self is the Man.' But what does the proverb mean?

Very often some one, by the way he acts, or by what he expects from others, is saying, 'I am the important person; I am the one to come first, the one to be considered. No one else counts. I am the one to have his way. Other people do not matter, or do not matter so much.' You know the boy who always thinks that *he* ought to have the biggest share of anything good about, the first 'read' of the magazine that has just come, and the right to the most comfortable chair. Perhaps, sometimes, it is a girl who thinks like this. There is a great deal of trouble and unhappiness in the world just because so many people have for their motto, 'Zelf is de Man.' Paul in the epistle to the Roman Christians, from which the text is taken, tells them not to think of themselves 'more highly' than they ought to think, and to be ready to honour one another.

But there is also a right way to say 'Zelf is de Man.' Suppose that there is something to be done, some help that we can give. 'Shall I do it, or shall I leave it for some one else to do?'—that is the question we ask. 'I don't think I shall bother about doing it. Some one else is sure to do it.' That is the answer that we are sometimes tempted to make to our own question. Perhaps, in the story of the Good Samaritan that Jesus told, the priest who came along and saw the wounded man in the road, said to himself, 'I need not do anything for him. There is another man coming along. He will help him.' And when the Levite came along, he said much the same. But when the Samaritan arrived on the scene, he said to himself, 'Here is something to be done, and I am the one to do it,' and he set to work. If we went about like that, looking for chances of giving help, when help is needed, and we can give it, we should make people happy, and find a new happiness ourselves.

'Be kindly affectioned one to another,' said Paul, and people who have kind hearts do not stand by lazily, or slink off, when they have the chance of showing kindness. We must be ready to say, 'Here is a job for me, and I am going to do it. "Zelf is de Man."' Many wrongs in the world would be put right if people did what they could, and did not leave everything for others to do,

The Christian Year.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Penalty of Shirking.

'Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.'—Jg 5²³.

There is a very common and a very well-meaning verdict which is often pronounced upon a man after he has passed away. We say, 'Such a one never said an ill word against any one, never did any one any harm.' That might have been the verdict pronounced upon the inhabitants of Meroz by any one who was not very discriminating in his judgment. He might not have been able to put his finger on any acts worthy of condemnation. And failing in any other or higher standard he might have said, 'Meroz never did any harm.'

Is the curse of Deborah, then, undeserved? This is one question to be asked in reference to this text. There is, of course, another question which may be and which has been asked, and that is, whether Deborah had any right to pronounce such a curse. The importance of that question cannot be denied. But it is of more importance to us in considering the moral and spiritual import of this incident to find out what was the basis of the poetess's fierce denunciation and whether it was deserved.

Conceive, then, the position of the speaker. It is a grave crisis in her country's history. Israel is threatened with horrors of a foreign invasion. The deliverer appears. She is a mother in Israel. Her rising was like the rising of the British princess, Boadicea, or Joan of Arc, the peasant maid of France. It was an inspiration in itself. The effect was instantaneous and electric. She summons Barak to her side, and bids him with ten thousand men move northward to beat back the army of Sisera. He falters for a moment. But he consents if she will go with him.

The result was as she had said. Barak was victorious. The army of Sisera was defeated and driven back. It was a glorious triumph, but it was not won without effort and loss. It had cost many brave lives. Tribe after tribe had flocked to the standard of Barak. Zebulun and Naphtali were there, risking their lives unto the death in the high places of the field. The chiefs of Issachar were there, and Ephraim sent its strong contingent, and Benjamin also raised its war-cry, 'After thee, Benjamin.' It was only the distant tribes that hung back. But there was one city which lay in the very valley along which the torrent of war

swept. It alone stood aloof. Perhaps it approved of the action of Deborah, perhaps it wished her well. But it gave no help. It did not feel in any danger itself, and so it was not inclined to bestir itself. The tide of battle might rush past. Meroz would wait the issue of the fight. Little wonder was it, then, when the conflict was over and the battle won, and Meroz came forward with the rest to share the fruits of victory, that Deborah gave vent to this passionate outburst; 'Curse ye Meroz, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.'

Certainly from our own point of view the curse of Deborah does not need any defence. There is nothing which men are more ready to condemn than the conduct of those who will take all the gain and bear none of the toil, who will hold aloof when success is doubtful, and lend a hand only when the end is certain. And this was what Meroz did, and even worse than this. She was false to herself, false to her country, false to her God. She was false to herself, for she did not recognize her true relation and the duties which that involved. She was false to her country, for she took no part in what should have been a common cause. She was false to her God, for the cause of Israel was the cause of her true King, and her true King was Jehovah. This was the cause which lay nearest to the heart of Deborah.

And yet, after all, we might say Meroz never did any harm. Meroz simply did nothing. None the less did she merit, and richly merit, the curse of Deborah, for there are times when inaction is a crime, and to refuse to aid a cause is to betray it. Her name has disappeared from history: not so her curse, not so the moral of her story.

It is repeated over and over again. We see it and we hear it everywhere in Church and State, in society and in individual life. There are politicians and there are political parties who refuse to lend a hand to further (not to speak of doing all they can to obstruct) a measure of reform and claim all the credit for it when it has proved itself a good working measure, and is producing good results. Such parties and such politicians rightly call forth the indignation of a statesman whose first and only aim is the welfare of his country. There are witty critics inside the Church and outside the Church who are ever ready to speak of the fussiness of those who do the Church's work. And such men are always likely to provoke a more than righteous anger in one who has the cause most deeply at heart. There are many men who are

ready to wish well to any good movement, but they do no more. Only when it is successful will they come forward, hoping to reap what they have not sowed, and to gather what they have not planted. Meanwhile they stand idly by, secure in their own safety, like Meroz in its own valley, never, it may be, saying or doing anything that will obstruct the movement, but never coming to its help. We cannot wonder at it if the strong-minded enthusiast, full of the justice of his cause and carried away by its success, is led to reprobate the conduct of such men in terms such as those which Deborah employed, and to say, 'Curse ye Meroz.'

And who are such men? Are they to be left in the vague third person? Are not we such men? Do not we ourselves exhibit this conduct which we have now so freely condemned? I believe we do, most of us, in one way or another.

It is a working principle with many of us, for instance—whether uttered or unexpressed—that the Church is a great institution which goes on all of itself. This principle is based on some vague idea that Christianity must inevitably succeed, and that the Church, being the visible embodiment or expression of Christianity, must also share that success. That idea is undoubtedly a true idea, but in the form in which it is held it is almost the reverse of truth. The Church is not a vague abstraction. It is a community of souls. Christianity is not an abstract principle. It is the life of all these souls. Christianity is Christ: the Church His Kingdom.

Now the first duty of the subject is loyalty to the king. Failure in that is failure in all. There are few of us who will not admit that; but even Meroz, I suppose, would have admitted that, and yet Meroz merited the curse, 'because she came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.'

You see, then, where her sin lay. She recognized her duty, but she did not perform it. Perhaps she thought she could do so little, it was no use her doing anything at all. Things would go on somehow. May it not be the same with some of us?

It may be that amid the controversies of the Churches and the difficulties of religious questions we think it best to let things go on as they may. This stir and commotion, these differences of opinion, will put themselves right by and by. Meanwhile, they threaten to disturb our comfort, to expose us to danger, to interfere with our ideas of culture or refinement. And so we think it best to leave them alone. It is so little we can do at the best. Besides, if God's work is to succeed,

it is sure to succeed, and if it is to fail, we cannot help it.

Christ calls upon us to help Him in His great work. He knows how little we can do, but He asks that little. He knows we have few talents, but He asks those few. Within the sphere in which He has placed us, with the powers He has given us, He calls upon us to come to the help of the Lord, to fight for God and the right, to be valiant for the truth.¹

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Divinity of Christ.

'Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.'—1 P 1²¹.

1. Most of us would probably say that the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ is the central doctrine of the Christian religion. The early Church in the first centuries devoted itself to a great and long-lasting elaboration of this central doctrine of the Person of Christ, and we still repeat in a central place in our service the creeds which were thus worked out.

But in spite of all the insistence on the importance and essential character of this doctrine for the ordinary man or woman it means strangely little. If it really is the central doctrine of our faith, it should inspire us in all our life. For, if our religion is not a power and inspiration and driving force in our lives, it is nothing at all, and we had better be honest and do without it. Religion is not something to be half-hearted or conventional about—above all, not something to keep in a watertight compartment or to regard as the special concern of those whose professional business it is. And it may be worth while to go back to the New Testament and see what actually happened to the men and women who first knew or heard about Christ.

2. The text makes it clear that these Christians are not spoken of as though they began by believing in God and then went on to assert that God whom they knew and worshipped was revealed or had become incarnate in Christ. That is the way we usually take the doctrine. But with them the process is the other way round. 'By him you believe in God; because of his resurrection and glory your faith and hope is in God.' We tend to begin by taking belief in God for granted, as though of course and without saying we believe in God. All respectable people do. But these

¹ A. W. Williamson, *The Glorious Gospel*, 92.

Christians had not come to Christ through God, but to God through Christ. What they saw or heard of Christ had made them think and feel quite differently of the world; they saw a Man who had none of the ordinary means of authority or power, who went without money or established position, and who met with apparent failure and an ignominious and shameful death. And yet just because of what He was, because of what He said and did, power came from Him. Men got from Him such a conviction of power that they knew that He had triumphed even over that failure and death, and that made the world for them a place irradiated and ruled by the power of God.

3. Such was and such has always been the real evidence for Christian doctrine, and that means surely that we are to fix our minds on the life and death of Jesus as they are recorded in the Gospels, try to make vivid to ourselves what it would have looked like if we had been there to see; ask ourselves what it would look like now if Jesus were living here in England in the twentieth century; think of the men and women whom we know who seem most obviously to reproduce something of the spirit which was in Jesus of Nazareth, and then ask ourselves whether we honestly think that the finest and noblest thing we know; honestly, so that we really want to be like that, and want to try that way of solving the problems that confront us; and ask ourselves whether we have taken the trouble to see and experience the power that comes from that way of life.

Do not let us confuse ourselves by saying, 'Yes, no doubt there were all these special signs and wonders in the life of Christ, and our religion tells that they happened, though it was a very long time ago.' The men and women to whom this Epistle was written had not seen Jesus themselves. What should make them believe that strange story of the Resurrection, and what vital difference would it have made to them if they had? They believed God had raised Christ from the dead and had given Him glory, because they saw the power and life in His disciples. They had met men who were, in St. Paul's words, risen with Christ; they had seen in their lives something of the power that was in Christ's. They had had experience of the same power in themselves, and so through Him they had come to believe in God and to have faith and hope in God.

4. To believe in the Divinity of Christ is to believe that what Christ was in His life and death is the greatest thing in the world—that there is the real secret of the power which is behind the world;

and if we really believed that, we should act on it, we should try His way far more and far more courageously than we do, and we should make the world a very different place. For, if we are to take to heart the lesson of our text, we must remember that we, if we profess to be followers of Christ, must in our degree bear witness as He did to the power of God. We must ask ourselves if men are helped by us to believe in God—if we show ourselves to be so filled with life and power that men seeing us have faith and hope in God. We are bound to give evidence one way or the other; either to help men to believe in God or to make men feel that the world is a place where greed and hardness of heart and clever cunning are the powerful things and the explanation of its working. What is true of our personal life must also be true in their various ways and degrees of our social life and our institutions. They ought to be such that they make men have faith and hope in God, that they are evidence that the men who made them and maintain them believe that the kind of life that Christ led is the greatest thing in the world; make men believe that those who trust in violence and cunning and cleverness do not understand the secret of life as well as those whose social life expresses, however inadequately and crudely, that all men are brothers, and children of one Father.

Let us remember that the greatest promise that Christ made to His disciples was that He would be in the midst of them when 'two or three' of them were gathered together in His name. If the Church of Christ believed in the doctrine it professes, and would believe in that promise and act upon it, then we should know what it was to have the power of God behind us, and in our industrial relations and all our social life we should have faith and hope in God.¹

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Declining Curve.

And Job again took up his parable, and said, Oh that I were as in the months of old, as in the days when God watched over me . . . but now.—Job 29¹⁻² 30¹ (R.V.).

Will nobody ever contrive to get life so systematized and subjected to control that accidents shall be entirely ruled out and made impossible?

To ask the question is to answer it, and in the negative. It cannot be done. There are some things that man can reduce to a certainty, but his own life is not one of them.

¹ A. D. Lindsay, *The Nature of Religious Truth*, 119.

If we could master the science of eugenics, and ensure that every baby was well bred, if we could arrange our social system so that no child lacked reasonable provision, if we could perfect our educational system so that nothing but wisdom should ever be taught, there would still remain the problem that every separate life would at some point or another break through the rules and upset the system.

There is never a man who at some time or another does not find himself saying: 'I thought I should do this or that, I thought I should be this or that—but now—'

It is true, of course, that this principle of uncertainty operates in opposite directions. Frequently what we thought boded ill turns to good. But it is harder when the principle works the other way, as it does for every one of us in due season. We had comfort and dignity, and perhaps, best of all, a clear conscience and the assurance of God's presence—and then came a tidal wave in from the sea, making the stream a flood, and wrecking our ship. All the bitterness of our soul is concentrated in two words, 'Then'—and—'Now.' Those are the days when we doubt the providence of God.

Another thing to observe in passing is that we are often living two distinct lives simultaneously—a life of actual circumstantial experience, and a thought life which may be of quite another character. Nothing is more common than for a mood of melancholy to sweep over us in hours of happiness. Just when we are fingering our joys we suddenly realize that they may one day leave us.

We live mostly with our thoughts. Dark thoughts can dissolve marble in a moment of time, and bright thoughts can weave rainbows over festering pools. 'We are such stuff as dreams are made of,' and while dreams have some relation to reality they also add to it fantastic elements. If one could go through London to-day, taking some acknowledged state of mind, such as happiness or peace, or sorrow and fear, as a magnet, which would draw men and women to itself after their kind, it would be the most heterogeneous assembly imaginable; all the cliques and castes would contribute their quotas, and only the one word 'humanity' would probably describe the multitudes.

It would be better for us if we did not forget these things. Our real soul-mate at any particular time is probably not in our caste at all, but is entirely disguised by the cloak of circumstance. Do not let us despise the poor if we are rich, nor despise the rich if we are poor. Do not let us condemn the unlearned if we are learned, nor dis-

parage the learned if we are unlearned. We harden our circumstantial differences into rigid conventions, but in our thought-life we cross and counter-cross each other's orbits.

It is true that we cannot systematize life, or eliminate its uncertainty. Yet there are two great principles which may give some unity to our experience.

The first we might call *the law of the declining curve*. We climb upward to our zenith, which is usually when we are from forty to fifty-five, and then the line droops downward toward the setting sun. We may outlast the maximum of our power. This does not mean that we should succumb utterly to that thought, and come down the hill as those who are already packing up ready to take their departure. There is no real reason why we should not increase in value until the end. We can keep our brain cells open to receive new ideas, and so long as one's brain is growing, years are added glories.

But just because we are coming down toward the sunset, we ought to be thinking of to-morrow and not of the day that is drawing to its close. We should need less luggage since our time is short. The centre of gravity should shift more from self to others. When we are old we should not be drags upon the chariot-wheels of youth. We need not resent them flashing by in their motor-cars, since we have only a lesser way to go, and the old horse will reach the journey's end by the time the stars come out.

No man was ever a good sport who was not a good loser. That may be why the curve declines, that we may lose gracefully. If one was beautiful at seventeen it was the accident of fate, but, if one is beautiful at seventy, it is the soul's supreme achievement.

The second principle is *the law of spiritual progress*. There is not a clash between the natural and the spiritual, but there is an order of precedence. The world is, first, full of things, and in the use of them we learn the meaning of the things.

Principal Jacks has a fine chapter in a recent book upon 'The Importance of the Material.' The book is entitled 'Constructive Citizenship.' He pours humorous scorn upon the folk who say that the evil of the world is 'materialism' and wish to set over against it something that is 'spiritual.' He rightly says you cannot expel matter, bag and baggage, and get on without it. 'Ask any one,' he says, 'who advocates the spiritualization of society how he proposes to set about it, and you will find that he immediately commits

himself to some form of "materialism," though it be only that of holding a public meeting or a Copeck Conference, for which the railways will be invited to issue tickets at reduced fares, and much coal will be consumed in conveying the delegates to the place of meeting.'

The grosser substances are essential. What is needed is not to abolish matter, but to keep it in its proper place. 'The way to spiritual things lies through them and not round them. Spirit is matter clearly seen into, rightly used, and profoundly experienced.' All the culture we ever acquired we got through doing our work honestly. But when the work is slipping through our fingers, need we surrender the culture?

Life follows the line of a curve—from the cradle up to the zenith, and then downward to where the setting sun speeds through obscurity to the new morning; but spiritual progress should fly as the crow flies, through the kingdom of the natural to its home in the spiritual.

'Then'—we may say as we recall the days of the full hand and the untried soul; 'Now'—as our hands hold less, but our souls more.¹

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

A Name of Appearance and a Name of Reality.

'The Lord hath not called thy name Pashur, but Magor-missabib.'—Jer 20⁹.

Pashur and Jeremiah started together, both were sons of priests, both had equal opportunities; and Jeremiah was not the one with less ability or feebler character. Yet Pashur found popularity and ease the way to overflowing success, while Jeremiah found poverty and pain and the hatred which is much worse to bear the only way to true manhood. The issue of it is that Jeremiah sits in the stocks, the object of scorn and ridicule to every passer-by, and Pashur is in a position to order it to be done.

Here is something which actually takes place in life: and the meaning of it is worth inquiring into, and the lesson of it worth pondering. Neither Jeremiah nor Pashur wished to practise self-denial any more than was quite necessary. Nor should any one ever practise self-denial any more than is quite necessary. The sole difference between them lay in the kind of necessity each acknowledged. And that is the sole difference between any of us. What for us is quite necessary? Is it only what is physically necessary—the compulsion of the body, or is it what is spiritually necessary—the compulsion

of the conscience? What man calls us is chiefly determined by the former; what God calls us—the infinitely more important consideration—is determined wholly by the latter.

In those old days people did not choose names for their children by the sound but by the sense. To this significance of names Jeremiah refers in our text. The origin of Pashur has been sought in our day as far away as Egypt, but Jeremiah found it nearer home. Pashur, the son of Immer, he derived from ordinary Hebrew words which make them mean, 'Prosperity all Round,' the son of 'The Talker.' Let us think of it as one of those old Puritan names like Son of Humility Ford. Prosperity all Round Ford! What an auspicious name with which to set out in the world! What a popular name it would become were English parents to take to saying what they think!

Jeremiah's first mistake in the way of getting on in the world was his father—Jeremiah, 'The Lord shall Appoint,' the son of Hilkiah, 'The Lord is my Portion.' To regard the Lord seriously as one's portion is apt to make a man forgo other more tangible portions both for himself and his children. And equally clearly his second mistake was with himself. His name was 'The Lord shall Appoint,' and the man who takes that seriously is very apt to find the Lord not appointing prosperity all round, but quite other things.

There you have the secret of their lives. It lies in the necessities which determine them. Pashur will appoint for himself, and nothing will stand in his way except sheer outward obstacle. Jeremiah will have the Lord appoint, and everything will stand in his way that is not utterly veracious and just. Pashur will only be defeated if circumstances are too strong for him. No other necessity in the world could demand from him self-denial. But upon Jeremiah another necessity is laid of an entirely different order, one which makes circumstances a quite secondary and even unimportant consideration.

The difference appears at once in their preaching. But when Jeremiah preached, he had no ear at all for the voice of his hearers asking for what they wanted. The sole voice he heard was the voice of the Lord appointing the truth. Then he had only awful, heart-shaking, soul-shattering things to say. 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel that cannot be made whole again.' Never in any age could that be popular preaching. We ought to be amazed at the moderation of Jeremiah's contemporaries that they merely put

¹ F. W. Norwood, *The Gospel of Distrust*, 59.

him in the stocks and dropped him into a pit. It gave him an opportunity to think seriously of his life.

To lie like Pashur could not so much as enter into his thought. To be guilty of complicity in his country's fate, saying, 'Ye are all good and worthy people for whom God can have nothing but blessing in store,' was not conceivable for him under any pressure of violence. Might he not, however, hold his peace? That might not give him the highest seat in the Temple with its popularity and honour, but it might at least save him from the lowest with its scourges and derision. His night of reflection there makes him think of not making mention of God or speaking any more in His name, which was precisely the effect Pashur had confidently expected.

But, when Jeremiah thought of silence, it was as a burning fire shut up in his bones. He could no more be guilty of complicity in his country's ruin by criminal silence than by lies. He had no wish to practise self-denial any more than was quite necessary, but the final, irresistible, compelling necessity only God's word in his heart could lay hold upon him, not any word of man, however enforced with scourge or stocks.

Even the longest night at length will pass. With the morning Pashur comes and, of his condescension and good pleasure, orders the prisoner to be taken out of the stocks. Suddenly all is changed. The authentic high officer of God is Jeremiah. It is now Pashur's turn to sit white and haggard in the stocks. The fire goes from Jeremiah's bones into his eyes and his tongue, and he flashes out on Pashur: 'The Lord hath not called thee Pashur, Prosperity all round, but Magor-missabib, Terror round About.'

What the Lord had called him had not concerned Pashur much hitherto, but the importance of it now came home to him with the insistence of the very physical force he understood. 'Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends.' Before his sight they would fall by the sword, and he himself would go captive to Babylon and there be slain; while the gain for which he had sold his soul would serve only to tempt the spoiler.

With good success in outward things and health and manifold activities, and attention well fixed on what man calls us because of our reputation and standing in the world, the stress of life's tremendous issues may be long escaped. The notion that life is a business of taking up our cross daily may be so remote as not even to seem absurd, or become the pleasantest unreality, as when one

hangs up a crucifix over the bed whereon his last desire is to suffer God to deal with his heart. But sooner or later every one's palace of illusion falls about his ears. Then nothing is of any practical concern at all except what God has called him, except, that is to say, what he really is and how it will ultimately fare with him amid the realities God appoints to try his spirit.

Other things being equal, we should all prefer to be Pashur, honoured in the chief seat of the Temple, to Jeremiah dishonoured in its lowest. To make light of ease and honour and prosperity is only a poor unreality. We are not even self-deceived, but are only offering ourselves a very foolish kind of incense, when we pretend that they have no value for us. But first let us be sure that other things are equal, especially the vital, the victorious, the impregnable things both for this life and the next. They are just what God appoints, the truth He requires us to utter, the deed He requires us to do and such consequences of them as He requires us to bear. We have only to prefer what is good to what merely seems good and leave the rest to God. Then let our life be as easy and prosperous as God grants.

Look upon Jeremiah in the stocks in the high gate of Benjamin. Look upon a greater than Jeremiah. See Him spit upon, buffeted, nailed to the Cross. For us also that is what the everlasting wisdom and love may appoint. Our heart sickens at the sight. It is a terrible necessity this, to speak God's word, however unpopular, and do God's will, however unprofitable.

But if it is the bed-rock necessity of life, all the other necessities of chance and circumstance and age and death are at once put in a quite subordinate place. Even this life and this material world can in a quite amazing manner be put under our feet. Nor without this victory will there be peace, even the poor peace we have chosen, when God's authentic messengers of loss and pain shake our souls and drive us back upon reality.¹

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Indisputable Signs.

'He that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.'—Ro 14¹⁸.

There is a conciseness here which may hide the fact that the statement holds within its compass at once a full and simple description of the nature, programme, and issues of the Christian faith and

¹ J. Oman, *The Paradox of the World*, 211.

life. The essence of Christianity, viewed as a life, is in this simple phrase, 'He that serveth Christ.' For a definition of that service we are led to a reference to the context, and it is an unexpected definition. Lastly, the end and issue of personal religion is portrayed in the terse but wealthy words, 'Accepted of God, and approved of men.'

1. *The Vocation of a Christian.* He serveth Christ. That is the essence of the matter, as the Apostle would state it. For himself, the Christian faith and life always translated itself into these terms. No title had he for himself more loved and used than this, that he was a servant of Christ. Apostle and ambassador were the terms of his vocation he used and was ready to defend, but these and every other term were subservient to and defined by the simple designation: 'Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ.'

Thus also he regarded his fellow-believers. He knew well how deep was the rootage of the Christian's faith, and how deep the springs of the new life in Christ. His mind grappled with the transcendent mystery of redemption. But the practicality of it, the thing in its working, was a greatly simplified thing. Its concrete signs in the lives of men and women, redeemed, like himself, by the grace and power of God, in Jesus Christ, were plain and unmistakable. 'Ye serve the Lord Christ.' It is this that makes a Christian.

Into this word 'servant' the Apostle joyfully put the uttermost meaning. It was no conventional word, robbed by current use of any significance other than that of empty courtesy, like the 'Your faithful servant' at the end of a letter from some one who in no way means it, and who may mean something entirely to the contrary. In one figure taken from the Roman triumphs, he declared himself led like a captured man, bound to the chariot of his Conqueror. 'Ye are not your own,' he said in another place. 'Ye are bought.'

We may go past Paul to hear from our Lord Himself of His claim for such service. He made it in the fullest way in the days of His flesh. It could not be made in terms more complete and imperative. Hear, for example, this: 'He that loveth: father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me.' It is an astounding utterance. There follows upon it in the narrative the parables of cost: one of the optimistic builder whose resources ran out before he could finish, and the other of a warlike leader who failed to take measure of his task. Straightway upon these follows an increased austerity of claim: 'Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all he hath, he

cannot be my disciple.' Over the claims of natural relationship and family affection, over the entanglement of worldly possessions, over even the deep-rooted instinct of self-preservation and the care for life's security, He deliberately sets Himself as the supreme Lord. Beyond each of them and all of them together runs His claim of mastership, and He will have disciples on no lower terms. It is not for us to minimize the force of His word 'hate' as He utters it, not of things ill, but of things which men count, and count rightly, as excellent, beautiful, and beneficent. It is a question not of good or bad things ruling life, but of what is the supreme and sovereign authority, and what Jesus said is that if we are making these most excellent things supreme, we are allowing the good to be the enemy of the best.

Jean Paul Richter tells his dream of the old gods, all seated at their feast, when suddenly there enters a pale Jew, with drops of blood upon His brow, a crown of thorns upon His head, and a heavy cross upon His shoulder. On the marble table of the feasting gods the Galilean flings down His Cross, and lo! the golden cups vanish, the gods fade quietly out, and He is left alone. Christ has been flinging down the Divine challenge of His Cross to human kind, and lo! they have risen up to be His men for ever and carry that Cross through the world.

2. *The Definition of the Service.* 'He that in these things serveth Christ.' What are these things? The answer in the context is explicit. Nothing ceremonial, nothing simply intellectual, but something ethical and spiritual, having to do with the qualities of the soul and the values of life. The Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

(1) 'In these things.' In righteousness first. If we track the significance of that word through the Old Testament into the New, we should be upon a wealthy path. Let us take it at its simplest. It is the life that is good. It is the life that is good in Christ's way. All the exposition of goodness in the New Testament comes to us united with a life and an example. In Christ is that goodness incarnate, and goodness, in the Christian way of it, is Christlikeness. It does not find its standard in a code, but in a character. It does not find its enforcement through precepts, but through a Personality. It is not obedience to a set of laws, but the response to and the following of a living Mind. It is not listening to the repetition of old commandments with some new ones added: it is hearing and obeying a voice more arresting than the

negatives and prohibitions of Sinai, a voice which says, 'Follow me.' The moral straightforwardness which translates religion into the terms of character and everyday conduct conditions all service of Christ and acceptance with God.

(2) In joy also. 'The Kingdom of God is joy.' The life lived in Christ, as in a presence and an atmosphere, will find the permanent reality of joy in Him. This is to be in harmony with the real nature of things: to have a soul revolving round its just centre. It is to have inward health and be master of self. The joy of the Holy Ghost is the full activity of soul in fellowship with the supreme Love and Truth. It is the consciousness of this which makes the New Testament one of the happy books of the world. It was the phenomenon in earliest Christianity which perplexed the world.

(3) In peace also, for the Kingdom of God is peace. It is the maintaining of the poise of life. It is not stagnation, for the opposite of the peaceful life is not the busy life, but the discordant life, as the opposite of rest is not work but restlessness.

3. *The Crown of Personal Religion.* 'Well-pleasing to God and approved of men.' It is a

word which comes laden with good remembrance. 'This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.' Here is the end Godwards, of personal religion, 'to have this testimony that we have pleased God.'

'And approved of men.' What does that matter? It must matter greatly to the Christian. St. Paul spoke of 'a good report of them which are without.' Let us not suggest that the outsider is in no position to judge true Christianity. He judges it shrewdly enough. The natural man is not so far from God that there are not at least moments when for him

The Spirit's true endowments
Stand out plainly from its false ones.

To carry such a mark that the godly joyfully consent, that the evil shall mark, and that the indifferent shall in their soul covet, is a true and worthy ambition. Coleridge said of some lines of the 'Prelude,' that he would have cried, 'Wordsworth,' if he had met them running wild in the deserts of Arabia. The Christian character must be as instantly recognizable.¹

¹ T. Yates, *The Strategies of Grace*, 247.

The Battle of Gibeon.

BY THE REVEREND A. T. RICHARDSON, BURSAR OF ST. BONIFACE COLLEGE, WARMINSTER.

THE tenth chapter of Joshua tells of a celebrated battle. But the account is spoiled for most thinking men of to-day, and even rendered doubtful, by a supposed stupendous interference with the course of Nature; viz. the supposed stationary appearance of the sun in mid-heaven for a period of 12, or even 24, hours.

The impossibility, or extreme improbability, of this was not so apparent in days when men thought that the sun was a comparatively small light which travelled across the sky, and got back to his starting-place again, no one knew how. But now, when we know of the earth's diurnal rotation, we realize that such an occurrence would mean that the earth's rotation was suddenly arrested.

For many years I have studied the narrative, and asked myself what is the real meaning of 'the sun standing still' in the original Hebrew text. During the past four years I have paid visits to Palestine to explore the locality of the battle. The

conclusion which has been forced upon me is that the translation given in the A.V. does not represent what the Hebrew account intended to convey to the reader. Put shortly,—when the Hebrew writer said that the sun stopped, he meant the sun stopped shining, and not, the sun stopped moving.

But first we may note that all human phraseology about celestial phenomena is based on what is *observed*, or thought to be observed, and not on what actually happens. We ourselves say, for instance, 'the sun rises.' But we know to-day that, relatively to the earth, the sun is stationary, and does not travel up into the sky. The sun always does stand still, relatively to the solar system. But the earth's movement produces the observed effect of sun-rising. In the Elizabethan period there was bitter opposition to the discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo on the part of those who wished to take every word of the Bible as expressing literal fact. We ourselves use the expression