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mistaken we are in understanding such portents as referring to some distant day at the end of the world. There is nothing in what is called our Lord's eschatological discourse which even hints at an end of the world. Everything that is said there can be explained of the abolition of the Jewish polity in the destruction of Jerusalem. And if this be so, it is clear why the Fourth Gospel has preserved no reminiscence of this discourse. When that Gospel was written Jerusalem had fallen ;

the Holy City was no longer the centre of Jewish (or even of Christian) life, and therefore no report of Christ's words on the subject was any longer needed. The crisis had passed. But had those words contained any prediction or warnings about a final Judgment or an end of the world, the case would have been quite otherwise. We should have expected the writer to hand them on. For the author of this Gospel evidently the 'Coming' was to be understood in a spiritual sense.

In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

Scouting for the Harbour.

BY THE REVEREND WILLIAM MAXWELL, M.A.,
MONTROSE.

'I will guide thee with mine eye.'—Ps 32^o.

THE Scout Movement has captured the imagination of the world in a wonderful way. The Jamboree at Birkenhead has focused attention on its far-reaching influence. Each nation has revealed how scouting can fit into its own natural customs, and all together have revealed in action that spirit which surmounts barriers of race and class ; which laughs at difficulties ; which defies hardships and 'smiles' through all.

What is the secret ? Scouting is a game—the greatest of all games—the game of life. Every field is a playing field. Every circumstance gives a call to play the game. Every difficulty tests the boy's physical, mental, and moral nature. Every patrol movement brings him into line to play his part in the great game. Take the simple game of 'Blindfold Drill.'

Every scout who knows the game of 'Blindfold Drill' soon discovers how hopeless his chances are of keeping in line or making progress towards the desired goal.

The long line is drawn up in perfect formation. Each scout from the properly dressed line looks straight ahead, ready for the call to advance. Then eyes are closed. Commands are issued 'Advance,' 'Right Turn,' 'Left Turn,' 'About Turn,' 'Steady.' So the orders go in any order and in quick succession. Every order is obeyed with precision. Two minutes pass in movement.

Then 'Eyes Open !' and behold you are here, while your 'Second' is yonder, and your 'Third' is nowhere within reach. Some face each other. Others have their backs to each other. Some are even in danger of falling into the ditch or the camp fire. No one is in the way of reaching the proper goal. No one could believe that the troop had been in perfect formation. Yet they have listened to orders. They have turned at the summons. They have advanced straight forward when left to do so. But in spite of their obedience they are hopelessly lost.

That is life. It is pretty much 'blindfold drill.' We obey. We turn. We advance. We do our best. But we don't get there. How the Israelites wandered in the wilderness ! They turned. They halted. They marched. They came to Massah and Meribah, Sinai and everywhere, and anywhere except to the promised land. Obedience is not enough if the eyes are closed. But the eyes are always closed. We never know what a new turn will reveal or a new step bring us to. Life is not a walk by sight, but by trust in One who knows whither we are going and can lead us in the true way.

The Scouts have another game called 'The Hidden Harbour.' That harbour is pointed out to them as their goal. One of their own number is chosen to take up the position from which he can survey the whole ocean. His voice is sounded often enough to make each scout familiar with it. Then single file is the order ; each scout holding on to the belt of the one in front. All are blindfolded. The order is given, 'March !' Then the pilot takes command. 'Steady !' and forward they go in the straight course. 'Port !' and they turn to the

left. 'Starboard!' and they turn to the right. Thus the line moves, diverges to right or left according to rocks, shallows, or traffic on the same route. Ever onward they sail. Ever nearer they come, and at last they turn right into the desired haven. It is the work of the pilot. He has guided them with his eye set on them, the way, and the harbour.

There is something very very like this in life. The One who occupies the position of eminence knows the way, watches the traffic, sees the dangers, issues the orders, and in an unknown way we go onward and forward to our desired haven. 'I will guide thee with mine eye.'

The Invisible Beam.

BY THE REVEREND S. GREER, M.A., AYR.

'He [Christ] hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.'—Ac 2³⁸.

Here is a detective story, such as boys love, and girls sit up very late at night to finish. He was a very mysterious sleuth, for nobody had ever really seen his face. Always he was lurking in concealment, his eye upon everybody. They had him lately at a London exhibition to guard a collection of valuable silver, and trusted him so much that they didn't even bother to put it behind steel bars or in plate-glass cases. People could see nothing between them and all those precious things. But there was. Let anybody just stretch out his hand to touch or take, and instantly—such a clamour of electric bells rung by that invisible detective! Never had valuables been so well guarded by steel safe or padlock as by that invisible wireless beam, which, when you passed your hand through it, set all the alarms ringing, yet there was nothing to be seen!

What wonders a wireless beam can perform! One day it will cook our dinner, and heat and light our home, and stand like a sentinel at our gate. It just walks through doors and walls as though they weren't there. You don't understand? Well, neither do I. Fortunately there are things you don't need to understand before you try them. The last Sultan of Turkey didn't believe in electricity, and wouldn't have it in his palace. Now, how could you ever explain wireless or anything to a man like that? Some things you must try first and explain afterwards—like Religion.

Once, long ago, strange things began to happen in Palestine. Curious changes were seen in people whom everybody knew. Folk who had been fierce and cruel became courteous and kind. Timid,

gentle people grew as strong and brave as lions. Men who before had been going all wrong, began suddenly to go all right. Nobody could account for it but those who tried it, and *they* said it was a beam from Above: 'Christ hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.' . . . And some folk think of Jesus as dead, when the same wonders are happening every day. A young man once said to me: 'I can't explain it, but if I put out my hand to do a mean or selfish thing, it is as if some one gripped me by the sleeve.' An invisible beam from Jesus!

'*Noblesse oblige*' is a fine motto from the days of knights. Because they were knights they must be chivalrous, and upright, and risk their lives for something that is bigger than life. 'What obliges them?' you ask. And the answer is '*Noblesse*' (nobility) obliges them—and us. It is not anything they or we can see, but something we can feel, and must respond to, or forever despise ourselves.

What a protection that Invisible Guard is for the precious things in life—for truth and honour! When you're in danger of losing them—and to lose honour is to lose all—what a clamour of warning bells in our heart! You feel you can't speak that untruth, or do a low-down thing. You may put out your hand to do it, but there's a grip on your sleeve. 'I *can't* do this thing,' you murmur. That is, if you have made Christ your Friend.

The Christian Year.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Excellent Curiosity.

'He tried to see what Jesus was like.'—Lk 19⁷ (Moffatt's translation).

Our familiarity with the story of Zacchæus, as narrated in the Third Gospel, probably hides from us the awkwardness and opaqueness in the translation of the opening sentence: 'He sought to see Jesus, who he was.' Dr. Moffatt's change is simple, but it is sufficient to freshen our impression of one of the most captivating of gospel stories. 'He tried to see what Jesus was like,' puts us in possession of a very vivid picture of this tax-gatherer of the town of Jericho.

1. Consider *the things which quicken men to an interest in Christ*. How came this man to be interested at all in this passing Rabbi? What knowledge had he beforehand that so kindled his curiosity and made him so keen and determined to set his eyes on the Passer-by?

A suggestion is made which may hold a clue.

We know that tax-gatherers were shunned, and were forced to seek society among their own class. They thus drew to one another and knew one another well, though stationed in different districts. Our Lord's coming to Jericho had been prepared for in an unusual way. Two of the seventy followers, whom He sent in advance to prepare for His coming, had been before Him in Jericho. It is possible that one of these two was Matthew, that tax-gatherer whose conversion had caused so great a stir in Capernaum. If so, one may be sure that Matthew and Zacchæus had talk together, and probably it was thus that Zacchæus knew that Jesus might be expected to pass that way.

He knew, then, something about Jesus which came home to him closely. A man very like himself, engaged in the same calling, despised and hated as he was, entangled in the shady things inseparable from an office which farmed taxes, such a man, whom Zacchæus knew, had been so taken with Jesus that he had put everything down and followed Him. 'I must see this Rabbi,' said Zacchæus of Jericho. One who can cause a tax-gatherer to give up his office and forsake his commissions must have something about him worth observing. Many are the things which draw men to an interest in Christ, and every man from his own point of view. Curiosity is one of the gates at which the trumpeter of the Spirit sounds his summons.

This is a speculation that the converted publican of Capernaum awoke an interest in Jesus in the publican of Jericho. Whether it be a likely thing to have happened or unlikely, it is certainly true that in this way many are aroused to an interest in Christ. They are not taken with doctrines and dogmas, and theological discussions leave them cold. But when one day they encounter a man they know, and find he is changed—a man much as they are, with the same kind of life to live, under much the same besetments, burdens, or circumstances, but now made into a new man—they are not so dull that no interest is quickened in One who is reputed to be responsible for the change.

There are to be found, and that readily, men and women who are still strugglers, many of them 'old strugglers,' as Samuel Johnson confessed himself to the beggar-woman in the market, who are still consciously unworthy of their Lord, but who have been changed—changed in mind, changed in motive, changed in all the things which determined the quality of life and the issues of it, and who with one consent ascribe this to Christ and what He has wrought in and with them. And through these

an old challenge flings itself out again: 'If I, by the finger of God, cast out devils, is not the kingdom of God come among you?'

2. Consider *the hindrances men meet in their desire to see what Jesus is like.* 'He could not for the crowd.' A crowd of people may not interfere with our physical vision, while it can gravely affect and hinder that other and deeper seeing which we call our judgment. It can affect our estimates, and there are many things we should see more clearly if other people did not get in our way.

How was it possible for Zacchæus to take with him an unbiased judgment when he sought to see what Jesus was like? There were two hindrances. There was first the opinion which Zacchæus knew these people had formed of him. It was a bad opinion, and Zacchæus had good cause to know it. See how inevitably this must react upon his mind with regard to all men. It will set the standard of his expectations about Jesus. If he should meet the eyes of Jesus, would they not darken with the same antipathy Zacchæus had learned to expect when he encountered the gaze of his fellows?

Secondly, there was the opinion which Zacchæus had of the crowd. He had taken the measure of these people. No one knew better than he the sinister side of human nature as it was to be found in Jericho.

Can we suppose, then, that a man with such an estimate of human nature was in any fit way to take a true impression of Jesus?

Here is an old difficulty men have in seeing what Jesus is like. Their contact with the world has spoiled their capacities and dulled their expectations, so that it is hard for them to see or hear One new and unique among the sons of men.

Though it takes us for a moment away from the case of Zacchæus, there is another aspect and development to-day of the hindrance the crowd may offer to the apprehension of Jesus and a just estimate of Him. The believing and devout get between men and the real sight of Jesus. It is the commonest complaint from those who curiously or wistfully say, 'Sir, we would see Jesus,' that He has been so surrounded and so dressed and disguised by the interpretations of His familiars and friends, that He cannot be seen as He was and is. 'The worst that any sect can do for Christ is to make Him incredible.'

3. Consider *the surprises men meet as they seek to see what Jesus is like.* The supreme surprise is that they discover how clearly and completely Jesus sees what *they* are like, and reveals it to their own mind and conscience. It is not difficult to surmise

what the crowd said when Zacchæus climbed the tree by the wayside. They saw a little man taking advantage of a good position to secure a better sight than his neighbours. Doubtless they saw something characteristic in what he did. 'The nimble rascal,' said one; 'if he cannot get what he wants in one way, he will in another.' But Jesus saw with other eyes. He saw a man seared and hardened in long years of apathy and neglect, unable to overcome the disablements of training, environment, occupation, and repute, with a soul capable of great attainments but with little chance given to reach them.

The last sight we have of Zacchæus carries all the happy discovery men and women have been making ever since, when they have tried to see what Jesus is like. It is a sight of a man moved by mercy to mercy, and by generous love to penitence and a deed of restitution. Thus is the pardoning and renewing love of God made visible and credible to us for ever in the face of Jesus Christ, and comes upon darkened souls with the happy surprise of spring after the winter of their discontent, of morning after the night of their forsakenness and despair.¹

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Persistent Purpose.

'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.'—
Gn 32²⁶.

This is one of the many arresting sayings in which the Bible is so rich—sayings that write themselves for ever on the heart of mankind, and may become the guiding principle, the final epitome, of a human life. The saying is a paradox, for it defies reason by treating an obvious enemy as a disguised friend; but in this apparent inconsistency it ranks with other memorable paradoxes of the Bible. The helpless and agonized father, appealing to Jesus for the restoration of his son, cried, 'I believe; help thou mine unbelief.' Simon Peter, at once attracted and repelled by the discovery of the unsuspected majesty of his teacher-friend, instinctively prays, 'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' There is a paradox even on the lips of the Lord, in that perplexing cry of the Cross, which appeals to the very Father who seems to have withdrawn from His Son, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

The unforgettable cry of Jacob has a not less memorable setting. We think of the dark torrent rushing through the ravine, and the dangerous ford

¹ T. Yates, *The Strategies of Grace*, 171.

by which Jacob's company have crossed. We see this man of mingled purposes lingering behind, as though reluctant to meet again the brother he wronged so many years before. Then, in the darkness of the night, there comes the lonely struggle with the stranger, that desperate encounter for very life, the agonized effort, and the grim discovery by Jacob that the stranger is stronger than he. It is a defeated man who somehow penetrates to the hope of a friend behind the fact of a foe, and appeals to a hidden power and will to save and not to destroy: 'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.' What is the meaning of a story so impressive and so suggestive as this?

One of the first discoveries we make in the great adventure of life is of *life's inevitabilities*. As soon as the little child begins to assert himself, he must learn that there is a world of objects round him which do not yield to his will. Unless he is to be that unhappy thing, a spoilt child, he will also discover a world of boys and girls, men and women, who do not always give way to him, whose wills must often assert themselves over his. When he is old enough to form his ambitions and plan his career, he is apt to forget the lessons he has learnt in other realms, and to ignore the inevitabilities of life.

Life is a bigger and more brutal thing than we thought, and it seems strangely regardless of our desires. Many a homely proverb, many a saying of the wise, teach us these stern laws of life, which reflect and continue Nature's sequence of cause and effect. We learn that bad work will follow us as long as we live, that every debt we incur must sooner or later be paid, that the lost opportunity never recurs, that the past is irrevocable. These are the realities of life, and until we learn them there is no reality in our religion. We do not really cry to God for help, we do not really pray, until we find something against which we are powerless, something from which we seek to be delivered, and from which we cannot save ourselves. The spiritual agonies through which a man must sooner or later go, if he does not drug himself by work or pleasure into unconsciousness of the real meaning of life, are the birth-hours of true and genuine religion. The ancient world saw its terrors gathered up into the forms of demons and evil spirits, and cried for deliverance from these. The modern world has brushed these forms of thought aside, but there still remains the sense of life's inevitabilities from which they sprang. There is still the handicap of some physical weakness that robs us of the prize of life when it seemed within our grasp; there is still the

consciousness of the divided heart, the grip of some evil passion that will not let us go, or the scars of the old sin that will not be forgotten; there is still the great mystery of death. The proudest of us lives to learn that he is beaten and humiliated by something that is greater than himself, and unless he did learn it, he would remain an untaught fool, though all the intellectual wisdom of the ages were his.

The faith that gives the victory over these inevitabilities of life is that which sees them transformed by *God's initiatives*, that approach of God to man, in and through all these things, which gives to them a changed meaning. This does not mean an evasion of them, a mere flight from them. A good deal of what passes for religion is a running away from facts. These things are facts, and the only way in which their inevitability can be overcome is by changing their meaning. The Cross of Christ is the greatest example of this. In itself, it meant the inevitable end of a dreamer beating against the bars of the stern facts of life—for how could the lonely prophet of Nazareth hope to escape the cowardice, the selfishness, the prejudice, the spiritual blindness which crucified Him? Yet the Cross of Christ was transformed by a new meaning when men saw it in the light of a victorious purpose, crowned by God, when they saw it as the measure of the world in which they lived, and of the love of God which was seeking to save that world. The Cross is a transformed inevitability. In such transformation of meaning we have the new fact, as real as the old, and more powerful. God's greatest work is from within, rather than without, for this personal experience is the realm of His Holy Spirit. When the unbeliever tauntingly asked what God had done for Stephen, in letting him be stoned to death, the just reply was: 'This is what God did for him: He gave him the power to say, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."' "

The power of the Spirit of God to transform the meaning of life for us comes through God's own initiative. We love, because He first loved us. It is in and through the grace of Jesus Christ that we discover the God who has come out to meet us, sinners as we are, not in wrath but in holy love. A prophet pictures Israel's God as coming forth from Zion across the wilderness to seek His people, saying, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.' This is a prophecy of the Parable of the Prodigal Son, and of the revelation of the Father in the gospel and Cross of Jesus Christ. Phillips Brooks put the emphasis in the right place when he

answered the question as to what had been the secret of his life by saying, 'Less and less, I think, grows the consciousness of seeking God. Greater and greater grows the certainty that He is seeking us and giving Himself to us to the complete measure of our present capacity.' Through the discovery of Him who has come out to meet us, we gain the new confidence that plucks victory from defeat, and share the new spirit that transforms life and life's inevitabilities. Those only are 'saved' men who share the Spirit of Christ through the grace of Christ, men who no longer fear what life can do to them, because all things are theirs, and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

But the power of God's initiatives to transform the meaning of life's inevitabilities is conditioned by *man's persistencies*. If it is in the spirit of man that the victory has to be won, that spirit must be made God's. Now it is our very nature that we cannot be made good or brought into fellowship with God against our desire. That is His own law—the law He has laid down in making man in His own image. Our need of Him must not be the passing wish of a moment, a sentimental longing, the base expedient of insincerity or cowardice. It must be a persistent purpose that learns to cry, out of the darkness and the apparent defeat, 'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.' Let us try to take that as a bit of prosaic logic, and we make nonsense of it. How can man constrain God? How can man win his best victory by defeat? Yet that paradox is true of the highest and deepest things—that they pass beyond our reasonings, and prove themselves by our experience of them. It is enough that we have caught a glimpse of something beyond the appearance of things, a glimpse that gives us the courage and hope to go on, and teaches us to see the truth of the saying, 'Tisn't life that matters. 'Tis the courage you bring to it.'

It would seem that the supreme witness that we belong to God is in our persistent purpose not to let Him go; and this is true, if we rightly understand what we are saying. It does not mean that we find assurance in our unaided effort, or even in the moral strength by which we do go on. The truth is rather that in this close and desperate grip on God we discover the yet closer grip of God on us. We shall not let Him go—because He will not let us go. He has us in His power; he has taught us our weakness; and now He will show us His strength. The proof of all this is not in any text of Scripture, not in any testimony of other men. The proof must come new and clear to our

own hearts in this inner consciousness of a struggle with God Himself. We thought it was a struggle with an enemy, we find that an Unknown Friend is holding us. The persistency of our own purpose is, indeed, a frail and unsafe thing; but what if it is the witness of His Spirit in us, the proof of His purpose? This is where the innermost transformation of the Spirit is wrought—when He convinces us that within our wavering, despairing purpose there is God's own purpose concealed. Then we see that His grace is perfected in our weakness. We learn the truth which underlies the testimony of Israel's prophets, and indeed of all who witness for God—that ours is somehow God's, and therefore God's is ours.¹

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Immortality as preached by Christ.

'In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you.'—Jn 14².

As the Jew looked forward to an immortal nation that would dominate all the nations of the world, so Christ taught men to expect an immortal kingdom in which all the empires of earth should find a place.

1. *Its character.*—From the outset Christ proclaimed that His Kingdom was at hand, was indeed present in the world though not yet manifested. Its manifestation would take place at the end of the world. But, though He knew all about it, being as it was a principle included in the foundation of the world, He does not say as much about it as we should like. This reserve may be partly due to the fact that no earthly image could convey a clear conception of its wonderful realities. We live in the limitations of time and space: our thoughts are bounded by material conditions. How, then, could the Eternal Kingdom, which we are led to suppose transcends time and space, be expressed to us so that we could understand it? It may also be that He felt that it was best for us to concentrate our minds on so doing our duty here that we should not miss the glory there. There was always a danger lest the vast interests of the world to come should blind men's eyes to the importance of the present.

Christ then said but little, but He said enough to stimulate hope and nourish self-sacrifice. Speaking generally, He described it under the most delightful images: He compared it now to a bridal festival, now to a joyous supper, now to the springtime of the world, the regeneration, when all things are

seen in the fresh glory of youth and life. Joyous freedom was, then, the general character of the new Kingdom. But it was an organized Kingdom, and as such was under the rule of a King and authorities acting under Him. And the one spirit that pervaded every action, corporate or single, was service.

2. *The varied positions that find place there.*—

There were thrones on which the Apostles would sit; there were cities over which those who had been faithful over a few things should rule; there were high positions, a right and a left, only granted to those for whom they had been prepared. Christ took up this feeling which protests against a dead level of equality, and promised that it would find expression in the Kingdom of God. He knew its dangers in competition and rivalry, He saw them active amongst His own followers, but He did not meet them by saying that it was wrong and must be stamped out. He did not rebuke St. James and St. John in their desire for the very highest places by saying that they did not exist, but by showing that they were only won at great cost, and, therefore, could not be bestowed in any arbitrary way and could only be given to those for whom they were prepared. And, when the ten were indignant with their two brethren for having, as it were, tried to steal a march upon them and win a first promise, Christ does not say, as some have misrepresented Him: 'These distinctions that you quarrel about are unreal, and can find no place in a perfect Kingdom, for there all are equal,' but on the contrary not only declares there are great positions and first places, but tells them how to win them. In the world, He says, such positions are expressed by lordship and authority, but in His Kingdom by humility and service.

3. *Its wide expansiveness.*—We pass now to the consideration of its large hospitality. When we think of the ages that have passed since the first man, and of the hopes and expectations formed in all ages of entering at death into a new life, the mind is unable to realize the immensity of human life that has passed before the mind of God to its great future. Egyptians, Assyrians, Persians, Grecians, Romans, Indians, Europeans, Kaffirs, Malays, Chinese, Japanese, and the countless others of whom history knows nothing are all immortal spirits, waiting for the decision of the Great Judge of All Mankind. When the mind becomes dizzy with the contemplation of this infinite number, the thought presses in that they are not all immortal, that millions and millions have been buried in the dust-heap of humanity,

¹ H. Wheeler Robinson, in *If I had only One Sermon to Preach*, 187.

that as the vast majority of seeds never flower, and an infinite proportion of eggs are never hatched, so most of the men and women who have lived are as though they had never been. It is very tempting to cut the Gordian knot in this easy way, and, after the analogy of physical life, to reserve immortality to those who are in Christ. And it is not therefore surprising that the New Testament should have been read by some scholars in this sense, and the words life and death always interpreted as meaning existence and non-existence. But the difficulty remains that, when our Lord taught, the belief in universal immortality prevailed. His disciples held it. If, then, Christ taught conditional immortality it was new teaching, and would surely have been made perfectly clear and free from all ambiguity. This, all would admit, is not the case. And further, there are teachings, such as that contained in the Parable of Dives and Lazarus, where Dives is still found existing after death, and those which imply a universal judgment of bad as well as good, which are inconsistent with this belief.

And apart from Scripture it is not easy, in view of the knowledge that each created soul is infinitely precious to the heart of God, and that in the language of the Gospels He leaves the ninety-nine in order to recover the one, to suppose that He would destroy the souls of myriads to whom no gospel came. Rather it is better to throw ourselves upon that one saying of Christ which opens out such great possibilities: 'In my Father's house are many mansions, or abiding-places.'

What are those abiding-places? It may be, as Dr. Swete suggests, that they are a means of progress in which 'men go from strength to strength as men on a long journey go from halting-place to halting-place till the end is reached.' World after world stretches in the infinite space over which God rules, and afford fresh training-ground for those who have had but little opportunity. Christ's promise, then, stands for a wide expansiveness.

4. *Exclusiveness*.—We now ask, Does this wide inclusiveness include every one? Does it mean universalism? We know that God's Will is that all men should be saved, that He is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe, and that His mercy is over all His works. But we know also that the gift of free will to His creatures has in some measure limited His Almighty power. Man's freedom stands up against God's freedom in a mystery that none can explain. It is possible for a man to reject the love of God. And the

experience of life confirms the witness of history that some men as they draw near to death grow worse instead of better. It might be said that the shock of death and the facing of spiritual realities change that. But there is no evidence to show this. The Bishop of Oxford does not probably overstate the case when he says: 'The universalism which is so popular to-day—the belief that every created spirit must ultimately be recovered to fulfil the end of its being in God, though it is supported by some early Christian authorities, and though it has never been formally condemned by the Church with any œcumenical judgment, is flatly contrary, plainly contrary, to the language used by our Lord about the destinies of men, and generally to the language of the New Testament.'

But whilst this may and must be said, no reader of the Scriptures doubts that such as find themselves excluded from the bliss of the redeemed are there of their own will. In some mysterious way the capacity for goodness, the taste for heaven, the joy in God have been destroyed.

It is hard to suppose that the evil, sullen will which refuses to acknowledge God's goodness and justice should be eternally set against Him. The Kingdom of His love and glory would not be ideal if even in a corner of it there was perpetual discontent and hatred. In some way evil must be overthrown. It might be by the loss of the resurrection body. That, at least, has been the thought of some close students of our Lord's words.

But if this be so, what, then, is the condition of the faithful departed? The souls beneath the altar are pictured by St. John as crying, 'How long, O Lord, how long?' as if they longed for the fullness of the resurrection life. And it is specially interesting to note that, in response to their prayers, 'there was given to each one of them a white robe,' *i.e.* some partial expression, some beginning of the resurrection life which one day would be perfected. They were not left unclothed but 'clothed upon,' and so were enabled to rest, *i.e.* remain content with this holy pledge till their final and complete glory should be obtained.

And these suggestions from Revelation are confirmed by reason. We know that in this world wherever there is life it will find outward expression. 'There is no known form of energy separate from matter.' Life is ever seeking to clothe itself. If in the autumn it sheds part of its glory, in the spring it again embodies itself. And as it is here, so it may be in the world to come. But there the power that makes for embodiment may well be faith, as the power here is called life. It is true

that the thought exceeds our grasp, but when we seem overwhelmed and our feet begin to slip we can turn in confidence to the simple fact of Jesus. He is the resurrection and the life, and He will bring us there.¹

We know not when, we know not where,
We know not what that world will be ;
But this we know—it will be fair
To see.

With heart athirst and thirsty face
We know and know not what shall be :
Christ Jesus bring us of His grace
To see.

Christ Jesus bring us of His grace,
Beyond all prayers our hope can pray,
One day to see Him face to Face,
One day.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Altered Face.

'And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered.'—Lk 9²⁹.

1. Never was any face watched with closer scrutiny than the disciples watched the face of Jesus. The Gospels are full of these touches of intimate observation, particularly that one which we suppose to have come directly through Peter, the man who was gifted with powers of observation superior to his powers of reflection. Many times the meaning of the words or deeds of Jesus was read in His face before it was revealed in what He said or did. The face is always the mirror of the soul, and the face of Jesus could not have been other than beautiful, since it mirrored the most beautiful soul that ever found a home in this shadowed world.

2. The passage demonstrates that *the Transfiguration took place within before it was manifested without*. The glory was in His soul before it extended its lustre to His face, His form, His clothing, and brought about it the voices of the unseen world. The real miracle—if that be the word to use—was the soul of Jesus. The soul is indeed the only home of miracles. They do still happen there and are not even to be wished for anywhere else. But miracles within the soul may still be prayed for. They are indeed the normal works of God.

3. In the life of Jesus there was a high mountain of glory and a deep valley of humiliation—Tabor

and Gethsemane—the one where heaven came down to Him, and the other where Sheol yawned at His feet; the one where the wings of angels cast shadows of light upon His face, and the other where drops of bloody sweat fell from His brow to the ground—in either case He was at prayer. He Himself has not described these great experiences. We have only the records of the disciples, and they, alas, were external witnesses, rather too coarse as yet to enter fully into their deepest meaning, but they could not but notice that He ever sought communion with God and with Nature, rather than with men, at such times. Because to pray alone was a rule of His life, their references to it ring through their stories like a formula.

4. Here a suggestive question emerges. Did Jesus pray to induce a certain attitude of mind, or was it because of His state of mind that He prayed? Doubtless it was both, but just now we may emphasize the latter aspect of the case. Having the mind He had, Jesus could do no other than pray.

So far as we are concerned, we usually pray in the hope of inducing a better state of mind. We become conscious of our sins, and pray in the hope of being forgiven or helped. We are in doubt, and pray for faith. We feel revengeful, and pray for grace to forgive. Normally our prayer life is quiescent or undecided. It becomes intense in our hour of need. And for this reason our experience is often unsatisfactory. Our prayers often increase our anxiety, give poignancy to our doubts, make more abject our impotence. All depends upon our belief in the reality of a definite response. Failing that, our case is worse than before. We are like Peter, whose unrooted faith tempted him to venture upon the waters, only to be stabbed with sudden unbelief, so that he cried, 'Lord, save, or I perish.' By such experience we judge the efficacy of prayer. No one would deny that such evidences have been given, but they are not to be taken as normal. Abiding prayer is the outcome of life. If we lived a certain kind of life we could not help but pray. We pray to be made good, but if we were good we would instinctively pray. We pray for faith; but if we had faith, could we do other than pray?

5. Can any one be surprised that Jesus was a man of prayer? The Gospels give us clear insight into His mind. It is evident that God was very real to Him. He was in the world as its Creator and Governor, and yet more wonderfully as a Father. The world was His, for He made it. Therefore it was very sacred to Jesus. He revelled in its order, its mystery, its peaceful operations, its stormfulness. He preferred the beauty of the

¹ G. H. S. Walpole, *Life in the World to Come*, 52.

lilies to the grandeur of Solomon, and was surprised that His disciples should be terrified by a storm. He loved the creatures of the wild and counted not their ravaging as though it made jangling discord of the anthem of creation. 'In the wilderness,' says Mark, 'he was tempted of Satan, and was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered unto him.' Satan, wild beasts, and angels! His was a comprehensive mind, wherein apparent contradiction subsided into harmony. He seems to have prayed and trusted, as we declare we cannot:

Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shriek'd against his creed.

We may think that He was wrong, as morbid people do think that healthy people are wrong, but we are bound to admit that *the constitution of His mind made prayer perfectly normal.*

We note also that what Jesus taught of Nature was reflected in His thought of man. Loving all things, great and small, it was inevitable that He would think more of man than of any other creature. The reason was that man could have fellowship with God as they could not; could work with God as they could not. 'My father worketh hitherto, and I work,' was His interpretation of His own life and ministry. He reacted against whatever prevented man from enjoying that fellowship and co-operation. It was why He disliked sickness and lack of faith. To cause even a little child to stumble upon this upward path was a crime unspeakable.

He was aware of evil. He held that men should resist it, and overcome it, but He did not expect to see it entirely eliminated. The wheat and the tares would grow on together to the end, but, for all that, there was a process of selection already at work which in the end would be precisely discriminating.

His belief in the possibilities of good in man was infinite. 'Ye shall be perfect as your father in heaven is perfect'—the boldest words ever spoken by human lips.

For such an one, the Beatitudes are not counsels of perfection, but working principles, reasonable in themselves and actually tried out in life. They are a transcription of the rules by which He lived. Because they had 'blessed' Him, He declared that any one else who lived by them would also be blessed.

6. The greater part of our difficulty is to persuade ourselves that the world is really, in fact, what it seemed to be to Jesus. Our impression is that the hard facts of life make faith and prayer difficult, if not, indeed, impossible. We are tempted to

think that the Master was a great soul who, by some ethereal quality, skimmed lightly over the surface of life, borne up by angels' hands, 'lest he should dash his foot against a stone'; only the truth is that He did not pass lightly over its surface, but went down into its depths, 'the man of sorrows, acquainted with grief.' If ever a man had the right to say that the world was cruel, unjust, capricious, it was He. Whatever the secret of His wonderful trust, it was not superficiality, but rather depth. Is not our lack of faith due to shallowness? We cry out so quickly when we *begin* to sink. We surrender our ideals to the mere challenge of a blatant Goliath. Opportunism is the real antagonist of faith and the destroyer of prayer. Perhaps, after all, the world is as Jesus saw it, if we saw deeply enough. It is justified to the soul that maintains its trust.

7. To return to the words of the text, 'as he prayed, *the fashion of his countenance was altered.*'

This is, indeed, the distinctive feature of the Transfiguration scene. Something of that glory He brought with Him as He drew near to God; something of it was brought to Him as God drew near to Him. There was first an emanation and then an invasion. It was, in superlative degree, what an ancient scribe recorded of Moses: 'The Lord talked with Moses as a man talketh with his friend.'

Only twice did His disciples—and not all of them, but the three most intimate—watch Him at prayer and record their impressions. Once it was upon Mount Tabor, and once in the Garden of Gethsemane. Once it was at the height of His glory, and once in the depth of His sorrow. Once His face shone like the sun, and once they saw great drops of blood falling like sweat to the ground. Once He seemed upborne by invisible wings, and once He groaned like a man in hard labour. Once the face was transfigured, and once it seemed disfigured. But heavenly succour completed both manifestations.

In the very greatest hours of His soul-life Jesus sought man as well as God. Just where our human fellowship most often fails, His was consummated. There are few hours more lonely for most of us than those of triumph and bitter sorrow. Then, if we know not how to go to God, at least we get away from man. Jesus found fellowship with God and with man when life reached its zenith and its nadir. The altered countenance was the symbol of the perfected fellowship with the Divine and with the human.

Oh! for a prayer-life that would alter our faces! ¹

¹ F. W. Norwood, *The Gospel of Distrust*, 49.