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but may it please you to remember that it is an anvil that has worn out many hammers.'

That such was really the final result of the travail of the Church in the centuries before Constantine, when she could put no trust in the arm of flesh and her weapons were not carnal but spiritual, is shown by the fact that the apologists continually drew attention to the reality of the Christian life. 'How effective the precepts of God are in the minds of men,' says Lactantius, 'because they are both simple and true, is proved by daily experiences. Give me a man who is easily angered, scurrilous, unrestrained: with a very few of God's words, I will make him as quiet as a sheep. Give me one who is grasping, greedy, close-fisted: I will give him back to thee forthwith generous and distributing his money liberally,' and so on. 'Our people,' he says, 'do nothing but what is equitable and good.' There may be, no doubt, a touch of rhetoric about this, but it is obvious that this claim, upon which they rested so much, was capable of being disproved at once if it were groundless.

I do not know that one needs to qualify this description by pointing out the extravagances and excesses into which the early Church in its zeal ran, overreaching itself in asceticism and neglect of the body. True though this may be, and still truer that, under the fatal gift of Constantine, Christianity became corrupted from her simplicity, yet there has always been a power of recovery unknown to ancient Rome.

My task is finished. I have tried to describe a period fascinating in all the varied movements of thought, in the vision it gives of a return of the tide that had been ebbing from the shores of faith, in a new approach of the spirit of man to God, however faulty and dim, yet driven by that necessity that is ever asserting itself after a sojourn in the far country. Into this movement come these strenuous souls the pagan evangelists, tireless in their energy, impressive in their earnestness, reaching, when at their best, a high level and often approximating closely to that message which their despised contemporaries, the Christian missionaries, were carrying from city to city. Yet in the end it is not they who pass on as the leaders of a religion that was to control and shape the future, but these same humble, persecuted men 'of whom the world was not worthy'; and, when we compare the two and ask why the victory falls at last to those who, judged by ordinary worldly standards, seemed the least likely, there comes only one answer: 'The preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness, but to us who are saved it is the power of God.'

# In the Study.

## Virginibus Puerisque.

### Our Defence is sure.

By the Reverend R. L. A. Tingle, B.Sc., Glasgow.

'Jesus saith . . . have faith in God.'—Mk $11^{22}$.

All you boys and girls have heard about Red Indians. You have read stories about them, and I suppose you have all seen them on the 'Pictures.' Perhaps you think that Red Indians are altogether cruel and have nothing in them but hatred and wickedness. Well, what I have to tell will show you that Red Indians, like all other kinds of people, have good in them too!

When the white man commenced settling in the Red Indian's country of North America, there was much terrible fighting. The white men, you see, settled in the best parts of the land and drove the Red Indians out, and they did not like it.

Amongst the white people were some good folk called 'Quakers,' and they believe that all fighting and killing are wrong, and against the teaching of Jesus. Owing to the fierceness of the Red Indians, the white settlers mostly lived in villages protected from their enemies by high fences or walls. These they called 'forts.' They would go out to their work in the fields all day, and at night they would come back into the forts in order to be protected from the Indians. Even in the daylight, when they went to their work in the fields, they would be sure to have their guns with them. Only so could they feel safe with the fierce Indians prowling about. Now, the Quakers did not live in forts. They built their homes in the open fields where they worked. Neither did the Quakers carry guns

with them when they went out to their work. Indeed, they had no guns! They would not buy them! for they believed it was wrong to shoot and kill; and even if they were without guns and in unprotected cottages outside the forts, they believed that God would take care of them.

Two of the Quakers, true to their faith in God, went day after day to their work in the open fields carrying no guns, and they returned safe and sound each evening.[1] They did not know that Indians were round about them in hiding. Time after time the Indians said to each other, 'Let them pass. They are peaceable men and will hurt nobody, for they carry no guns.' But these two Quakers heard of terrible massacres being done by the Indians in other places, and they began to be afraid. They felt so frightened that they secured some guns, and the next morning they started out to work armed with their weapons. In the distance the hiding Indians saw two men approaching. They also saw that the two men were armed. Now, to the Indians, armed men could only mean one thing—that they were out to kill! Therefore as soon as the two Quakers were within range the Red Indians shot them dead! Afterwards, when the Indians learned that these two men were Quakers they came and humbly apologized. 'But,' they added, 'the men carried arms!'

Another day the Quakers of a village were sitting silently in their 'meeting-house.' This was really their church, and to sit in silent thought and prayer is their way of public worship. The door of their meeting-house stood open, and a party of Red Indians in all their feathers and war-paint filed past. Then the Indians turned and passed the door again, glancing in with curiosity at the silent worshipping people. Once more they turned and filed past, and then the Indian Chief walked in and his followers filed in after him. The leader of the meeting came down to meet the Chief, with the outstretched hand of peace, and then guided them to vacant seats. All through the worship the Indians sat in reverent silence, and at the close the leader took them to his home and treated them generously as his guests. At the end of the meal the Indian Chief took his host to one side and said, 'When Indian come to this place, Indian meant to tomahawk every white man he found. But when Indian found white man with no guns, no fighting weapons, so still, so peaceable, worshipping Great Spirit, the Great Spirit say in Indian's heart —No hurt them, no hurt them!' So with a final grip of the leader's hand the Red Indian Chief promised that the Quakers should live in perfect safety from the attacks of Red men, and gathering up his followers, he hurried away. Jesus says, 'Have faith in God'; and a beautiful hymn declares:

> Sufficient is Thine arm alone,
> And our defence is sure.

[1] Dunkerley, *The Arm of God* (Oliphant).

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### Big Ben.

By the Reverend Leslie E. Soal, Doncaster.

'What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?'—Mic 6[8].

At the Westminster Bridge end of the Houses of Parliament in London there stands Big Ben, the capital's biggest grandfather clock in its case of stone. Most people think of the name as applying to the whole clock and all its works, rather than to the great bell that supplies the name. It is a wonderful clock, and the nation might well be proud of it. The figures on the face are two feet long, the pendulum is thirteen feet long, and the 'bob' on the end weighs four hundredweights. The great weights are two and a half tons each, and they rise and fall for a distance of one hundred and seventy-five feet. The bell that strikes the hours when you are listening-in weighs thirteen and a half tons, so that altogether Big Ben is a wonderful old clock, and I can never look at it without thinking of a text in the Bible, 'What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.' And I'll tell you why.

When the big bell strikes the hours it makes a tremendous boom, and if it were not for being cracked it would sound still louder. It waits a long time between the strokes, and takes its work very seriously. Boom—boom—boom, it goes, like a stern old judge slowly pronouncing sentence, or giving a warning. And as a matter of fact, it is doing something like that, for so it was intended from the first. In the reign of Edward I. a poor man who appeared in the police court was fined thirteen shillings and fourpence, and when he appealed to a higher court the Lord Chief Justice said he would let him off if he paid half the amount. Certain people complained that this was not justice, and that the man should have been made to pay the uttermost penny. The consequence was that the Lord Chief Justice was hailed to court, and fined eight hundred marks. And so that it should be a warning to other judges to do the right thing,

they spent the money on the first Big Ben! It was put up just at the entrance to the Court of Justice, and every time it struck the judges inside could hear it telling them to do their duty. Sometimes when people afterwards wanted judges to reduce their fines they used to refuse and say, 'I have no mind to build a new clock tower.' Personally, I feel very sorry for the judge who was fined eight hundred marks, but nevertheless, the lesson of Big Ben every time it strikes is worth remembering and acting upon—Be just—Do the right thing—always and everywhere.

And just as clearly Big Ben says, 'Love mercy.' And because mercy is so beautiful and kind we shall agree that she deserves loving. It happened one day that a sentry from among the King's soldiers was charged before his officers with being asleep while on duty. The penalty for such a serious crime was death. The soldier said that he was innocent. He said that he could prove that he was *not* asleep at midnight on the night in question, because as he was passing up and down on sentry-go he heard Big Ben strike thirteen! When the officers heard it, they said the story was ridiculous, until inquiries were made, and it was proved that Big Ben had actually gone one over the mark that night, and had really struck thirteen times! This soldier owed his pardon and his life to London's fine old clock. If it could speak, it would say, 'I'm glad that I struck thirteen that night; it is better to do too much than too little; be kind, love mercy.' When you listen-in to Big Ben striking the hour remember this deed.

Now the last part of the text is still left. 'Walk humbly with thy God.' The best thing that can ever be said about Big Ben is that it goes on, day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year, quietly and accurately doing its duty. There is no more accurate public clock in the world. The Astronomer Royal once thought he would test it, so Big Ben had to stand for an examination every day for two months! And during the sixty-one days it was being watched and checked the error in time was less than one-fifth of a second a day. Big Ben stood that examination well, and came out with ninety-nine plus, the reward for steadily keeping on and doing its best. Be like Big Ben. Not in everything, of course. For Big Ben only gets a good wash at long intervals, and always looks down on everybody, and as I said—it *is* even a bit cracked! But you can copy Big Ben in these three things at least—you can do the right thing; you can be kind; you can do faithfully the little duties that come to you every day.



## The Christian Year.

SEXAGESIMA.

### The Need of loving God with the Mind.

'The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.'—Mk $12^{29f.}$.

The words of our text are a direct quotation from Dt $6^{4f.}$. That these words were familiar to every Jew is a well-attested fact. According to Josephus, they were repeated by every faithful member of the Jewish community twice a day in the first century of the Christian era. They should, therefore, be an accurate reproduction of the original text. But, as a matter of fact, they are not a correct reproduction. In Deuteronomy the text reads: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength.' How comes it, then, that Mark and Luke, when quoting this passage, add a fourth phrase—namely, 'and with all thy mind'? To the Hebrew scholar there is no difficulty whatever here. He recognizes that the two phrases in Mark and Luke—namely, 'with all thy heart' and 'with all thy mind'—are simply two independent and alternative renderings of one and the same Hebrew phrase in Deuteronomy. The first rendering, 'with all thy heart,' reproduces the Hebrew word for word. It is a literal translation; for according to the Hebrews the heart, and not the brain, was the seat of the intellect or mind. Hence the second and later rendering in our text, 'with all thy mind,' is an idiomatic and good rendering. This second rendering stood at first most probably in the margin of Mark or Q as an alternative rendering, and was subsequently incorporated by a later scribe into the text. To recover, then, the original form of these words, we have only to omit one of the alternative renderings. We may omit 'with all thy mind,' and retain 'with all thy heart,' if we are careful to remember that the latter phrase has exactly the same meaning as the former.

This first great commandment we might translate more or less accurately in a modern form as follows: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind, and with all thy affections, and with all thy will.'

1. The mind, therefore, is to find its full expres-

sion in our love to God. Now what does this mean? It means clearly this: that God asks us to use our minds in dealing with our religious beliefs and conduct, and not only with our religious beliefs and conduct, but also with all His works so far as they come within our ken. Obscurantist views of the Old and New Testaments made it impossible for the best scientists of the last generation to be members of the Christian Church. Even nowadays there are multitudes of men who shrink from applying their minds to their theological beliefs lest they should be disturbed regarding them, or even be forced to disown them. Surely the creed that cannot bear investigation is in a perilous condition, and can never be a source of strength to a man in the hour when he needs it most.

There are, no doubt, ignorant men who in truth, purity, and goodness reflect wondrously the life of Christ, and in their humility enjoy the unbroken sunshine of His presence. And yet none the less their ignorance detracts inevitably from their sainthood. Frequently, unconscious of their limitations, they congratulate themselves on their freedom from all doubt. But this freedom from doubt, unless it is won in spiritual and intellectual strife, is generally the mark of an inferior and limited intelligence. Faith, if it is living, is ever advancing in its ideals, spiritual, moral, and intellectual.

The ignorant saint, moreover, is not always a humble saint. Indeed, only too often dogmatism, intolerance, and fanaticism follow closely in the wake of ignorance. To most minds, therefore, learning and knowledge are helpful. For learning enables a man to get outside his own limited experience; it supplies him with ethical and spiritual standards transcending his highest attainment; it acquaints him with the goodness, the heroism, and saintliness of men far more highly gifted and far more faithful to their ideals than he is to his own. In fact, such knowledge cannot but humiliate every one of us alike morally and intellectually. But if learning is to be of this helpful nature, it must not be fettered from without, it must be free to go whithersoever God summons it; and so it must often go forth, not knowing whither it goeth. Without such freedom theological learning is but a mere bundle of barren facts and traditions, strung together by some artificial tie. And so such learning becomes the letter that killeth, not the spirit that giveth life. It confuses dogma with the essence of religion. But, as we are all aware, the theology of any particular period is nothing more than an intellectual expression of the religion of that period—if the religion of that period has the power of self-expression. It is changing and human, not permanent and Divine; it is at the best but things seen through a glass darkly, not truths as they shall be known more and more fully in the light of God's Presence.

No Church can be truly Catholic which lays the chief emphasis on the acceptance of certain intellectual formulas. This acceptance of tradition is what is called being orthodox. But, even if the tradition be true, the mere intellectual acceptance of it is of no service.

Furthermore, Christ never intended men to accept tradition without the closest examination. Only the slavish mind accepts it without examination. Thus in Jn $15^{15}$ our Lord says: 'No longer do I call you slaves; for the slave knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard from my Father, I have made known unto you.' And St. Paul says: 'Prove,' or rather, 'put all things to the test: hold fast that which is good or true.' So far, then, as a Church lays the chief emphasis on the mere acceptance of intellectual formulas, it is essentially irreligious, and such a wrong emphasis must ultimately issue in the claim to infallibility, in the absolute identification of dogma and religion; in other words, in the identification of a temporary and partial expression of religion—and that often of its least valid expression—with religion itself. We live, when we live truly, by the present inspiration of God's Spirit; our souls are guided and sustained by living truths. And such inspiration and guidance make each generation to a great extent a law to itself. If it belongs to the true succession of the saints, it will be ever advancing onward and upward.

2. Though our subject is the first phrase of the first and great commandment, we must touch briefly on its two last phrases. 'With all thy soul' may be taken to mean 'with all thy affections.' No one should congratulate himself on his religious raptures, unless these raptures are translated into right action. No right emotion is given to us by God to end in its own indulgence. If the generous affection, if the sense of gratitude, if the impulse of mercy and unselfishness, if the aspirations reaching forth to an ideal life in God, fail to lead us to undertake the spiritual tasks in which they were designed to find their fulfilment, then they are so much spiritual waste and serve only to corrupt the heart it was their sole purpose to enlarge and glorify.

3. Next, as regards the words 'with all thy

strength.' The essence of this command is to love God with the will. Hence it is the indispensable complement of the two commandments that precede it. We are to translate all the truths, the leadings, and inspirations of God's Spirit into true and noble deeds, and make our lives transcripts of that of the Divine Master. Our daily life is our religion. If we would be faithful therein, we must love God with all our will. So, the will can never be neutral. It cannot be neutral. It is perforce obliged to act, whether rightly or wrongly. For it is called upon from day to day, from hour to hour, to carry into the actual experience of life the truths that it has learnt. From the fulfilment of such tasks it can neither grant itself nor receive from others any dispensation. He that seeks the blessedness of religion can never escape the burdens and duties that religion lays upon him, and if he fulfils these, even in a very inadequate degree, that blessedness will be given to him in the generous measure of the Master.

Surely it is a fact of the most transcendent importance for the human race, that the command that was issued to Israel fully seven hundred years before the Christian era, and was acknowledged by Israel as constituting the supreme requirements of their faith, was exactly the command singled out by our Lord as the first and great commandment, not for Israel, but for all mankind. And now, two thousand years later, we Christians should feel, more intensely than ever, the obligation of fulfilling the first and great commandment—the first and great commandment in the order in which it is enunciated in the Old Testament and reinforced by our Lord in the New: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength.' [1]

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QUINQUAGESIMA.

### The Threefold Gospel.

'For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.'—Ro $1^{16}$.

'For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.'—1 Th $1^{5}$.

'In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.'—Ro $2^{16}$.

We wish to deal here with the threefold gospel of Jesus Christ (or rather, with the threefold aspect of that one gospel) suggested in the Pauline passages chosen for the text. In the first phrase—'the gospel'—we have its objective aspect, what it is in itself, in virtue of its inner contents and self-evidencing truth and power. In the second phrase—'our gospel'—we have its social or communal aspect, as realized in the fellowship of believing souls. In the third phrase—'my gospel'—we have the personal, experimental aspect of it, as held in the faith of the individual Christian. As objective, it is fact, and truth, and power, ready to be assimilated, believed, and practised, but as yet unrealized and disembodied. As social, the fact is believed, the faith realized, the power exhibited in the common life of the Church. As personal, the objective fact and truth, held by the Church in trust, is experienced and manifested in the life of the individual.

1. *The Objective Gospel.*—What do we mean by this? We mean by it the 'gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God,' which implies that Christianity as a religion is founded on, or rather rooted in, certain facts and events in history. It is not an abstract philosophy, it is not an ethical code, it is not a vision of truth; it is a religion which, while fruitful of much philosophic speculation, and of very definite ethical results, and of rich doctrinal developments, consists in the last resort in an historical revelation centred in a definite personality of transcendent beauty and power, and consummated in and through certain events in His life, death, and resurrection.

We are familiar with the attempt that has been made to divorce Christianity from history, and to exhibit it as a theory of life or a programme of conduct which is in no way invalidated by the surrender of the supposed historical positions with which it has hitherto been associated. The religious environment when Christianity arose, they say, was charged with certain vital religious ideas and impulses. Men were universally filled with a passion for spiritual redemption; they dwelt longingly and lovingly on the old-world myths in which this longing had been successively enshrined; and round the figure of an obscure but attractive Jewish peasant, who had a certain vogue in His day as a teacher, these myths were deposited in a rich compost of ideas and doctrines first formulated and disseminated by the Apostle Paul, who was the really creative source of historic Christianity as a creed and a power. In Germany, the land of its birth, this theory is already dead and almost forgotten.

It is the function of the study to deal with the question of evidence; here we will only emphasize

[1] R. H. Charles, *The Resurrection of Man*, 150.

the undoubted fact that Christianity as we know it is the fruit of a deep and blessed faith in a revelation that was historic or nothing. It is significant that the earliest creeds contain no theory of life, no code of morals, but a brief, pregnant confession of belief in the facts through which the Christian gospel poured its healing stream into the world; and in thus emphasizing the historic element they show a sound instinct, for it is the facts of the gospel which are the fountain-heads of the ethics of the gospel, the taproot of its doctrinal developments, and the centre of its practical power. The interpretation of these facts has differed in the successive ages and stages of faith, and they will continue to change as time goes on and men's thoughts widen with the process of the suns; but without the facts there can be no interpretation of them.

2. *The Social Gospel.*—The first original company which was the germ of the Church was composed, it is true, of individual believers, but from that day to this the converse has been true—the Church is the antecedent fact; the communal faith, that is, has been the matrix or medium in and by which all individual faith has been quickened and fed. So we pass on next to the Church rather than to the individual—the Church as the social embodiment of the gospel. The fact of Christ unquestionably created the faith in Christ. 'The' gospel, thus becomes 'our' gospel. This implies two things: that the objective gospel has power to create a living faith in it, and that this faith has taken historic form in the Christian community or Church. And how potent and persistent has been this power! For two thousand years the story of Jesus has awakened, and sustained, and renewed a certain form of spiritual life among men. Wherever two or three of His people have been gathered together, there He has been, no longer as a splendid but isolated figure in history, but in their very midst as a living Presence and Power. Were it not for this extraordinary projection of Himself along the channel of history, the story of Jesus would long since have been forgotten; but while it continues men will turn back to the records of His earthly life and ministry, death and resurrection, with a passionate interest and an unfading faith. What is it that always keeps men so busy with the origins of our faith? Is it not its historic fruits? Is it hard to believe the story of the Gospels, in these days of a rigid critical temper and of pitiless historic methods? Then, we ask, why is it harder for some of us to disbelieve in it? Because of the existence and vitality of the Church which continues that story—because of the regenerated lives of the men and women who through faith in Him have become new creatures; nay, because His risen life has become our own life and our own joy.

This communal faith has been a mighty power over thought as well as faith. It has quickened theologically into the historic systems of thought; it has blossomed practically into various types of Christian character; it has germinated periodically into political and social reformations; it has awakened men into speculative activity in philosophy, into artistic fruitfulness in painting, music, and architecture, into literary creativeness in poetry and drama, into a fuller and fresher life in a thousand directions. Take away the stimulating influence of the communal faith of Christendom, and what would history have been? We do not know; but we do know that the ages of faith have been the ages of accelerated progress and most rapid advance in every fruitful direction; and that when the lights of faith in the Church have become dim, the higher life of men in the world has grown faint, and fallen stagnant. Every great revival in religion has issued in a renewal of all that makes men great and progressive in every social direction. The race has been at its best when faith in Christ has been at its brightest, when the Church has been at its purest. When 'the' faith becomes 'our' faith in the universal sense, then will the Kingdom of God come to birth, and earth be 'crammed with heaven.'

3. *The Personal Gospel.*—But Paul speaks not only of 'the' gospel and of 'our' gospel, but of *my* gospel. The communal faith was significant to him because he possessed it as his very own.

Our faith, too, must be a personal faith, or it will not finally avail for us. Paul, writing to a Church which held the faith as a social fact, spoke of its members with solicitous and yearning desire: 'My little children, of whom I am in travail, till Christ be born in you.' The first and last word of the gospel is to the individual. A great writer speaks of Jesus as having first awakened that fine sentiment which he calls the enthusiasm of humanity. This, if we may say so, is a very partial and inadequate way of indicating a great fact. Jesus had no love, apparently, for man in the abstract or in his totality. He loved men in the concrete. The State is the political unit; the family is the social unit; but the religious unit is the soul. And it was to souls that He preached; it was to souls that He laid siege with His loving influence and appeal; it was souls He died to save. Therefore, the aim of all spiritual activity is the

conversion of individual men and women to the faith of the gospel. The true Church is composed of believers, and all true believers are men who believe on their own account. Only as the Church grows by the addition to its numbers of such believers can it really and truly grow at all.

We cannot live on the faith of others. A life so lived is spiritually parasitic; it is a borrowed life, having no initiative and no propagative power of its own. Faith, indeed, is not faith at all till it becomes a personal faith. Alone we came into the world, alone in the deepest sense we pass through it, alone we must pass out of it. What, indeed, avails it for us that we live among people who are believers, Christians, saints, if we do not ourselves believe? Their faith can bless us in a thousand ways, but it cannot save us; in the end it can but mock us with a sense of its own fulness and of our emptiness.

But when this personal faith awakes in men, what a moment in their life is that! Sometimes like the snapping of a chain, like the breaking open of a prison door, and all things are become new. Sometimes like the slow recovery from a fever, like the dawning of the morning after a night of fear and nightmare. But always it issues in a 'new creation,' turning chaos into order, and barrenness into beauty. It is nothing less than a passing from death into life.[1]

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FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

**The Discipline of Uncertainty.**

'Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.'—Lk $21^{34.35}$.

Discipline is not an accident of life. It is its essence. And like most essential things, it is provided for in the constitution of life itself. If it were merely an accident, it might be profitable for us to devise with infinite care its various means and occasions. But being essential, its means and occasions are here already. It is only necessary for us to take serious note of them and turn them to fruitful account.

There are several aspects of this discipline which is imposed upon our lives by their necessary relation to the universal life of things, to that life which we usually term Nature. But we will confine ourselves now to what we are wont to call the uncertainty of life. We have come indeed to believe, as our fathers could not, in a fixed order of succession in the life of Nature. But our belief has its limits. It is theoretical and not practical. We may believe in an undeviating process in the life of Nature, but its particular issues and their particular relation to us remain often as incalculable as they were for the men of a less scientific age. Theoretically life is caught up in a movement of uniform and immutable law. Practically the issues of the operation of that law for each individual life are unknown. Our lives are set in the midst of an ever-baffling uncertainty.

Now it is that uncertainty that makes us. Into the most naturally careless life it has introduced some leaven of discipline. If, indeed, uncertainty were absolute, then doubtless we should never have learned the need of discipline. And, again, if life moved along a path of changeless certainty, discipline would have had no meaning for us. But it is just because there is an assured order whose secrets we almost instinctively learn to obey, and yet whose issues for us we can never count on with certainty, that some measure of discipline becomes not so much a voluntary choice as an imperious necessity. We must learn to guard against a hundred possible risks, and where we cannot hope to evade them we must learn how to meet and survive them. On the lowest plane of life, on the merely material plane, the serious exercise of that discipline is the first sign of man's emergence from the stage of barbarism. And even on that plane the contrasted forms of this necessary life-discipline appear. Even there it is both the discipline which takes risks and the discipline which prepares for them. The pioneers of civilization were the seaboard peoples, the peoples to whom the bounty of Nature was not offered on easy terms, as it was to the pastoral peoples who roamed undisturbed the illimitable plains. They had to take the risks of the great deep; they had to trust themselves to the venture of discovering unknown shores. And against those risks they had to make adequate provision. They were the founders of capital, the savings of the past which prepare the larger future; and they were the founders of the city, the collective life which is possible only through the existence of capital. Before them, the city, the collective life which transcended the family or the wandering group of families, did not exist. Boldly facing the uncertainties of life, they increased indefinitely the fruitfulness of the earth and at the same time evoked the civilities which belong to the collective life of mankind. They induced

[1] E. Griffith-Jones, *The Unspeakable Gift*, 83.

men who would never otherwise have thought of it to enlarge production beyond their own immediate needs. And in doing so they broke down the barriers of tribal exclusiveness which but for them would for ever have kept men apart.

Now all this is a parable of how man grows spiritually through the uncertainty of life. There is for most of us just enough certainty about life to make us easy-going in the matter of character. We can count on our ordinary moral equipment to carry us through the ordinary dangers which we have to meet. So customary, indeed, are they that we never think of them as dangers at all. They are but the daily chances and changes of our spiritual weather. They urge to no unwonted self-control, they call upon no reserves of moral force, they make none of the extraordinary demands of the unexpected. If life were always thus a thing of moral routine it is certain also that morality would have lost all its force, that the disciplined and trustworthy will which is its life-blood would never have been formed. Fortunately for us, life is not for any of us this placid, equable movement of customary and expected routine. The dark days come to all of us, which try what we are, and which too often reveal a degree of weakness, a lack of moral fibre, which we could never have ourselves suspected. Those days, dark as they are, are our opportunity. We move about among our fellows with the pain of the new glimpse of self-knowledge burning within us. We seem to them to be alive with the fair life of the spirit which they have ascribed to us, which we had confidently thought was our own. But we know that we are in fact but whited sepulchres, full within of the crumbling bones of our poor dead selves. It is a dangerous moment for any soul to have to pass through. But it is also the Divinely-appointed occasion of our renewal. We learn in those hours of strain that we cannot count on life as a calm procession of foreseen and expected certainties, that the unexpected call may any day be made upon our energies, that the temptation whose danger has not been, and perhaps could not be, foreseen may assail us, that we are nothing if we have not stored up the reserve force on which we can draw in any emergency. And then, too, we learn that the soul must gain its real courage, that it can only perfect its self-discipline, in going forth to meet all the dangers which may threaten it. It is at least by facing danger that it will learn where danger can be and ought to be avoided. The prudence which knows how and when to retreat is never gained in the midst of panic. It is always the ripest fruit of courage and often its surest proof.

So it is that the uncertainty of life is the greatest occasion of its discipline. It is just this uncertainty which drives us to seek and to find some hidden ground of certainty within. 'Nature is fickle, we have need of rest,' said Matthew Arnold. And, we may add, we have need of certainty, which is our only ground of rest. The rest of the human spirit lies in the measure of self-sureness it can attain. It is not in spiritual idleness that we can find it, but in the unceasing spiritual activity which is ever gaining the right to trust itself. It is in strenuous reaction against circumstance, not in passive acceptance of it or submission to it, that we are safe. If we could ever secure the outward conditions beyond the reach of chance and change, we should have done our best, or rather our worst, to arrest our moral growth. But that is just the security we can never, fortunately for us, achieve. We ought to strive to secure such a uniformity in outer conditions as will enable all to live, to enter upon the full heritage of life. That is within the scope of human effort, and it is just on that account a responsibility imposed upon us which we dare not even try to evade. But the life-heritage into which all must enter is a heritage of struggle, of watchfulness, of effort. The trial will come at a moment that we know not, it will come in a form which we had not expected.

There is one other thing to be noted in this unexpectedness of spiritual trial. It is unexpected only in the forms which it happens to assume. But however various its forms, it sifts us always in the same way: it presses home upon us at the same points; it tries the same fundamental stuff of character; it proves our courage, our seriousness, our loyalty; it winnows away as chaff the superficial sentiment in which we have deceived ourselves. It is always in all its forms the day of the Lord, the urgency of the judgment of God. It is God that is proving us in all the uncertainty of things, and proving us that we may find the roots of an assured strength in Him.[1]

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SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

**The Reconsecrations of Life.**

'And Abram went up out of Egypt . . . unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the Lord.'—Gn $13^{1-4}$.

Every man expresses himself and the trend of his life in some characteristic act. Were we to

[1] A. L. Lilley, *Nature and Supernature*, 61.

review our lives in some dispassionate hour we would find our ruling desire condensing itself again and again in some decision, or some service, or some repeated word. We would disclose what we are in the make and grain of our nature. The reason why we repeat the same sins, make the same choices, and find our thoughts reverting to the same current, is this truth of our self-expression in a characteristic act. Abram expressed his inward passion in the building of altars. He built nothing else. He never had a secure and settled home in the land, but dwelt in tents as a sojourner in Canaan, and did not possess more of its soil than enough for a grave.

What is the meaning of this recurring building of the altar? The altar was not the symbol of his faith. It was not a place of morning or of evening prayer. It was not a consecrated sanctuary where God would be pleased to come. The angels of God hovered round his tent door and met him on the highway. The building of the altar had a definite meaning. It was not only the token and the medium of his covenant with God, it was the place of the reconsecration of his life.

As we pass on in life there recur our times of need, or of high privilege and enlarged opportunity and fresh call, or of defeat and shame. Then we should return to the place of the altar made at the first, and reconsecrate our lives unto the Lord. Let us sum up some of the most marked occasions of reconsecration.

Think, first, of reconsecration *at the changes and vicissitudes of life.* All life is full of change. A man leaves his youth behind him, and steps out into the ranks of the men who carry on the world's work, to find his heart stirred with new ambitions and his feet beset by strange temptations. He begins to see what life may mean for those who fail, and for those who succeed, in its tasks. Although he has built his altar in some day of surrender and acceptance, he needs to rebuild it now, and reconsecrate himself. When every man begins his career, when another personality comes into his intimate life, when a little child is born to him, or when those on whom he has leaned have passed away, the only method of meeting such changes, and of passing through them strengthened and enriched in faith, is to build again the altar, and reconsecrate life unto the Lord.

There are other times, when no new joy or fresh impulse visits us, and no enlarged horizon allures us on. Sometimes our life seems to flow on like a quiet stream. But we come to the rapids, and the current is too strong for the bravest. Sickness lays its hand upon us, and leads us aside from the busy paths of the world's work. We suffer a mortifying disappointment in the thing which we dreamed would crown our life, and we understand the meaning of Crabbe's pathetic cry of 'conquered hope's meek anguish.' We begin to see how little of what we covet is going to be given us, and how certainly the road winds uphill all the way. How shall we meet these disillusioning changes? We shall come back to the place of the altar which we made at the first, and call anew on the name of the Lord. We shall reconsecrate our lives unto Him.

Think of John Bright sitting in the depths of grief, almost of despair, when his wife lay dead and the sunshine of his home was extinguished, and nothing was left except the memory of the gracious life and the too brief happiness which had gladdened him in his two years of married life. But his friend Cobden called upon him; and after wise and tender words of sympathy, he made an appeal to Bright to rise, and throw his moral passion into the endeavour to repeal those laws through whose operation there were thousands of homes where wives, mothers, and children were dying of hunger. Bright responded, and returned to the altar of his faith, and reconsecrated his life unto the Lord. Or, think of Miss Waring, when given her sentence of death which meant a seclusion from the world of broad interests and of happy activities, going quietly to her room, and coming out in the morning with the hymn she had written:

Father, I know that all my life is portioned out for me,
And the changes that are sure to come, I do not fear to see,
But I ask Thee for a present mind, intent on pleasing Thee.

That is the issue of a reconsecration. Not every one may pass through such searching vicissitudes. Not every one may be able to respond to the call with such arresting deeds and words. But every one has his own vicissitudes, and they are his occasions for the reconsecration of his life.

Think, second, of reconsecration *in the progress of our years.* We all realize that youth should have its hour of vigil in which its vow is taken, and that young blood should leap in chivalrous ambition. No life is safe which is not pure, and no purity is safe which is not passionate, and, therefore, loyal to goodness and to truth. But the consecration of a man's youth is not sufficient for his older years. Many a man, who has run bravely in the lush meadows of youth, has reached middle life to find

his high ideal blurred, his conscience no longer keenly sensitive to evil, his baser desires mastering his will.

If middle life has its perils and its sad-coloured stories of decline, the temptations and the falls of old age are more amazing still. What are the facts which so often shock and terrify us all? A man has worn the white flower of a blameless life throughout the heyday of his eager youth. He has been a pillar in God's house in the fulness of his powers. In his old age he has almost made shipwreck both of faith and conscience. Young King Saul was so uplifted in aim and desire while he was a youth that he found himself at home among a band of men whose hearts the Lord had touched. In his old age his spirit became haunted by evil, and a foul envy corrupted his magnanimous nature. Young David sang the psalms of a consecrated innocence in the fields of Bethlehem, came forth to face the foes of Israel with an unblanched face, and taught his people to joy in God their Shepherd and their King. In his old age the crown of his purity was taken from him, and the men who loved him walked the streets of his city with their faces filled with shame. It is too possible to begin to run well, and to be hindered, long before the end of the course is reached. Jesus pointed to the truth when He said, 'If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered.' The only mode of safety is to make each new stage in the journey of life an occasion of rebuilding the altar, and calling on the name of the Lord.

Think, third, of reconsecration *after a fall into sin*. Here we must speak with all tenderness of the dark passages in life's history, and speak only to strengthen and comfort. There is no hour when we are so tempted to give up the battle, to think that we have been mistaken and are now discovered to be hypocrites, and to desert from the ranks of God's service, as when we have fallen into some ashaming sin. The peril of a fall into sin does not lie in the misery of its shame, or in the knowledge of the consequent estrangement from God. It lies in the blinding of the eyes, the dulling of the sensibility, the bitter self-mockery, and the callous indifference which follow upon it. The question never is whether we have fallen. 'All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.' Every man must cry, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner.' The real question is how a man behaves himself after he has fallen. Judas and Peter are both disloyal to Jesus. But Judas goes out into the darkness, with a maddening remorse, to hang himself. Peter goes out into the darkness to weep bitterly and to come back again with meek confession. Demas and Mark were both numbered with the apostolic company. Demas loved the present world and was taken captive by it. Mark yielded to its power, and in his unworthy fear was unfaithful in the service. But Demas played the traitor to Christ. Mark returned to fight the good fight of faith. What is the secret of the difference? One sinner returns to the place of the altar and reconsecrates his life. The other turns his back and is seen no more.

What, then, is the instant imperative of the man who has fallen into an ashaming sin? Come back to Abram who built the altar. He went down into Egypt in a time of famine. Like most men, he had a faulty streak in his grain, a mean fibre in his nature, a dark spot in his soul. This sublime believer, who went out not knowing whither he went, trembled for his life as he faced Egyptian lawlessness. He played the coward. For many months he lived out a deliberate and continued lie. He said that Sarah was his sister. When his lie had been discovered, and he had been reproached by heathen lips, and his shame was shadowing his heart, he saw the way he should take. He came back from Egypt, and made his way, with his burdened conscience, to the place where he had built his altar at the first. He gathered its stones and rebuilt the altar, and there, in humble confession, he reconsecrated himself unto the Lord.

We live in a different world, meet different temptations, fall into different sins, but our healing is gained by the same reconsecration. Sanctification has been defined as a succession of fresh repentances. We may reach the heart of the truth more securely if we define it as a succession of reconsecrations.[1]

[1] W. M. Clow, *The Evangel of the Strait Gate*, 235.