
A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

which he sware to our father Abraham, etc. etc.'

If we turn this back into Semitic speech, we shall see Zacharias looking at us from the script. We may, if we please, write Zakar-iah on the margin in Hebrew letters. That is as it should be, if the canticle is to be something more than a nationalist hymn.

In the next place, when we turn to the *Magnificat*, where we are faced with a similar problem and with the interpretation of language which is certainly parallel to that of the *Benedictus*, we find the singer recounting what God has done for her, and how

> He hath holpen
> his servant Israel, *In remembrance of his mercy:*
> As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, etc. etc.

The parallelism of this passage with the one previously quoted may lawfully be invoked to prove that the mercy, promised and performed by God, is the same grace in both cases. That is to say, it is the birth of John and not the birth of Jesus which is the theme of the singer; and since Mary can hardly be expected to sing *Magnificat* over John, we infer that she is not the singer, but it is perfectly in order that it should be Elisabeth. From which we infer finally that it is the name of Elisabeth which stood originally at the head of the canticle, and should be restored to it. If that leaves Mary songless, we have a reason before us for the subsequent modification of the text. The same conclusion is implied in the statement that 'the Lord had *magnified His mercy* with Elisabeth, which corresponds to the versicle in the Canticle that He that is mighty hath *done great things* for us . . . *and His mercy* is for ever and ever.' If the foregoing criticisms are just, it will supply us with one more vindication of the Western text.

In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

'信—Faithful.'

By the Reverend Alexander Baxter, Hawick.

'Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God; the FAITHFUL God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.'—Dt 7^9.

Those of you who have read Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* will remember that one of the men in that story is called 'Faithful.' We don't need to ask what kind of man he was because his name tells us. He was 'faithful.' Now if you could read Chinese you could learn what the man who first wrote that queer-looking character I have shown you meant by 'faithful,' because in the character he has really given us a picture of his meaning. Look here: the character is made up of two parts: 亻 which is 'a man' (a short form of the original 人). The other part 言 means 'words' (the mouth 口, and I suppose what comes from the mouth 舌). So, you see, we have a picture of A MAN STANDING BY HIS WORDS—the Chinese 'Faithful.'

Now let me tell you a story from China. You all know that China has been greatly troubled by brigands or robbers in recent years, and that one of their favourite methods of robbing is to steal, or kidnap, people and force from friends of the people captured large sums of money for ransom. A Chinese friend of mine was once captured in this way and carried off to the hills. He was a teacher in a Christian College, and the robbers thought the college would pay a large sum of money for his ransom. It, however, could not do this, and would not. Time passed, but one day some friends of the college discovered a man who was really the leader of the robber band. They told him the college would never pay any ransom money, and asked if he would visit it, see the work that was going on, and talk things over with the missionary in charge. 'We will do you no harm,' they said, 'you need have no fear, for Christians keep their promises.' The robber believed this, and promised to visit the college. The evening before he was due to arrive, a number of Chinese students and young teachers turned up at the house of the missionary. They were quite excited, and said they had come with a plan for getting back the teacher from the robbers. Their plan was next day to capture the robber leader and lock him up till he made arrangements to set free the teacher. When the missionary first reminded them of the promise made not to harm

the robber, they replied, 'Oh, but you do not need to stand by your words to a robber; robbers would not keep their promises to you.' After talking over the matter in the light of Christ's teaching, however, they soon saw that the missionary was right. So the robber came, and went away free and unharmed. Not long after the teacher was set free also without any ransom. That is not the end of the story, however. Before the teacher came back the missionary had a visit one day from two young men. One he knew was a Christian and the other was not. 'I have brought a friend to see you,' said the Christian Chinese, 'he wants to be a Christian and to join the Church.' A talk followed, and the missionary asked the inquirer what it was that first made him want to be a Christian. The reply was, 'What you told us that evening about Christ requiring His followers to stand by their words to everybody—even to a robber.' He then went on to say how different he felt his life would be if he could be faithful like that: how different China would be if all Chinese would be faithful like that: and how different the world would be if all nations would stand by their words to one another. He had come to see that Jesus was the only one who had done this Himself perfectly, and made us see that God was that kind of faithful God. So step by step he had been led to desire to trust and follow the faithful Christ, and be made a faithful disciple.

It was a happy day for the missionary, and the next time he read the old Chinese character it had a new meaning for him. It didn't speak to him only of the Chinese scholar who first wrote it, but of Jesus who wrote it again by His own life and teaching, fulfilled it with a new meaning, showed us it was a picture of God Himself, and gave to men an example and a power that could make them faithful even unto death.

'Frank Buckland's Monkey.'

By the Reverend E. A. Anthony, M.A., Trowbridge.

'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.'—Eccles 9^{10}.

When I was a boy I was very fond of a book that seems to have disappeared. I never come across a copy of it nowadays, but it was a book well worth reading. It was the life of a great naturalist, whose name was Frank Buckland. He loved all animals and was deeply interested in them. He was even fond of disagreeable animals, and made pets of snakes and ferrets and toads. His house was a menagerie of beasts and birds and reptiles. People who stayed there never knew what animals they might meet, wandering about the stairs or passages, or coiled up in their beds. Frank Buckland didn't mind, and he couldn't see that some people might be upset at finding a snake coiled up in the bed, or by a monkey jumping on to their shoulder and catching hold of their hair. There were some amusing stories in that book about the animal pets of that strange household and their adventures. The one I liked best was the story of one of the many monkeys who lived there, from time to time. This particular monkey spent most of his time in the kitchen. He found it was an interesting place. The cook's back was turned now and again, and he could snatch up something nice to eat. If she did not give him a chance of stealing anything, well, she would sometimes drop something, and his little fingers would snatch it up in a moment, and with a spring he would be up out of reach on the top of the cupboard. Then, too, there was always a good fire burning in the kitchen, and it was pleasantly warm for a monkey who disliked cold and damp, and who liked a fire even on a summer day. One cold day the monkey strolled into the kitchen. The cook was not there. There was a big pan of water on the cooking range, and with a monkey's curiosity he put his paw in the water. It was pleasantly warm, so up he climbed and sat down in it. It was delightful. He felt really warm for the first time since he left his sunny home in Africa. But before long he began to feel it was just a little too warm. So he stood up—ugh! the air felt quite cold, so down he flopped again. He did that again and again, and all the time the water was growing hotter, and if that long-suffering cook had not come in, caught him by the neck, lifted him out and given him a smack that sent him, chattering and grimacing, scurrying away, I think he would have been boiled alive.

I have never forgotten that story. There are times when we can all understand that monkey. It needs an effort, doesn't it, to step out of a nice hot bath on a cold night? I don't think there is one of us who has not lifted up the bedclothes some cold winter morning, put one foot out, and then snuggled down again. I think, too, we have all come to know that in other matters, it is the first effort, the first step that is most difficult. Whatever it may be,—some task we don't like, some duty we would like to avoid, some wrong habit we want to conquer—the best way is to face

up to it and to tackle it at once. The longer we play about with it, the longer we put off doing it, the harder it will be. Perhaps we shall never do it. Often when I have found myself trying to get out of some difficult task or duty, that I know I shall have to do in the end, I have remembered the story of that monkey.

Will you remember it too?

The Christian Year.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

The Father of Mercies.

'Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.'—2 Co 1^3.

In the opening verses of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians we find St. Paul using some old words about God in new sequences of thought; he puts the old words together in new ways, in fresh combinations; he talks of God as the Father of mercies and as the God of all comfort. Now it would be easy to show that there is nothing novel or original here. That God is our Father was taught in the Old Testament, before Jesus and His apostles re-emphasized it in the New. 'Like as a Father pitieth' is not far apart from 'Father of mercies'; and the 'God of all consolation' is certainly no different Being from Him who spake by the prophet and said, 'As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.' Thus we might be tempted to assume that the Apostle's language here merely refers to the Father-God and Mother-God of the ancient Hebrew Scripture.

On the other hand, we might proceed to hunt for Hebraisms in the terms St. Paul used; for instance, we might say that 'Father of mercies' means simply 'merciful Father,' and 'God of all consolation' means 'all-pitiful God'; and then we might stop to reflect that we had isolated a couple of God's attributes.

At Cambridge there exists a famous lectureship called the Hulsean Lectureship, designed for the defence and vindication of the Christian religion. The founder of this lectureship, Mr. Hulse, ordered by his will that the lecturer in any given year should discourse upon some one or other of the attributes of God, and that *when these were exhausted* some other religious or moral subjects should be selected. From the present-day themes upon which the Hulsean lecturers discourse, we need not infer that the attributes of God have been exhausted, but only that God cannot finally be known in an eighteenth-century manner by any list of qualities like a botanist's description of a plant. In Scripture the attributes of God come out incidentally from His observed actions, by which we infer that He is, or that He knows, or that He feels—including, maybe, that He suffers. Certainly St. Paul was not making contributions to a Hulsean catalogue of Divine potencies and virtues, when he talked of the mercies of God and the comfort of God. He was a plain man, talking plain things to plain people.

We also are plain people, occupied with the simplicity of things. When, therefore, we are told that God is the Father of mercies, we observe that God has a family, and also that the Father takes His name from the family, and is known in terms of them. Our simplest parallel will be the passage in the Gospel of St. Mark, where Simon the Cyrenian is called the father of Alexander and Rufus. The Evangelist wants to explain to those to whom Simon the Cyrenian might be an obscure individual, whose personality and dignity were hard to discern, that he was the father who had given to the Church two notable Christians who did not need to be introduced because they were well known already. It was not that Simon of Cyrene really needed a family illustration. We can see, however, that even then people had not realized what honour had been his when he was commandeered to help in the carrying of the Cross, and how near Simon stood on the earthly plane to the great anonymous angel on the upper plane who had drawn near to the Lord to strengthen Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. The family illustration just meant, 'If you do not know him that way, you may know him this way: for all of you know Alexander and Rufus.'

Let us return to our theme: the mercies of God, and God as the Father of the mercies; God as the Father of a family, and the mercies as the family by which God is to be known. It is a very beautiful family, an array of loved and lovely forms. Here are three of them in a specified group, which we come across constantly; they are known as Grace, Mercy, and Peace. These three belong to the postal service of heaven, and teach unskilled people how to begin and how to end a letter. The 'Ready Letter Writer' of heaven, on which the apostles were brought up, tells us to open the letter with 'Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,' and to end with a similar triple farewell.

Sometimes these three fair forms come to visit

us; they knock at the door, and wait for us to open it and give them welcome. They tell us, 'We are come to stay with you.' 'Come in, dear Grace,' we reply, 'your room is ready on the very ground-floor of my life; and you, Mercy, shall share the living-room with me; and you, sweet Peace, there is an upper chamber prepared for you with an eastern outlook, from which on fine days one can see as far away as Paradise, and where the opening heavens will often shine with beams of sacred bliss.'

We again notice that the family of God which we are studying is spoken of in the plural—to intimate that it is a very large family. We are not to Hebraize the word 'mercies'—as the commentators on Genesis do with the much-disputed word *Elohim*—and say, 'this is a plural of majesty, and it means that God's mercy is very great.' It is a family—not 'a plural of majesty.' It is a very large family; it includes grown-up children—the flower of the faith and experience of the past, together with some that are very little, newly arrived and always the dearest, because they are so little and so new. As for the grown-up members of the family, these are sometimes known as 'the former mercies.' In the heading of Ps 61 they are spoken of comprehensively as the 'former experience'; *David fleeth unto God upon his former experience.* When they are thus grouped together, they go by the common name of Ebenezer, and they form a choir of their own with a special book of songs appropriate to the places where they sing. By the way, that description in the Prayer Book of 'choirs and places where they sing' has a much wider range of locality than the insides or upper ends of churches. When David's heart was overwhelmed, he addressed his psalm from the ends of the earth. At another time he, or some one in his name, constructed a choir on the margin of a horrible pit, and made the bricks for its building out of miry clay, and then broke out into a new song for the new sanctuary, even praise to our God. But the 'Ebenezer Hymn Book'—there is nothing like it! There are some stately songs in it. One of them begins:

> When all thy mercies, O my God,
> My rising soul surveys,
> Transported with the view I'm lost
> In wonder, love, and praise.

Among the lovely group of the Father's mercies there are two who are constantly in evidence. Some have called them by the name of

> New mercies each returning day;

their real names, however, are rather longer, and run as follows:

> Pillar-of-cloud-by-day,
> Pillar-of-fire-by-night.

Their service is continuous, as it is written, 'He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night'—which is another way of saying, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.'

In conclusion, among this lovely company of the Father's mercies there is one more stately and more lovely than all the rest. She is called *Crowning Mercy*, and sometimes they name her *Great Deliverance.* Every consecrated life knows her, sooner or later; every believer confesses her. Her special anthem is *Nunc Dimittis.* Not every one recognizes this lovely form before the closing day of life, but all believers behold her then. She brings us the message that Jesus is able to save us *to the uttermost*, that is to say, 'up to the goal.' With the goal in sight, she sings of 'sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,' and of the sweet denizens of those fields; and of Jerusalem, the happy home; and of the City which is the continuing City of God.[1]

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

The Dignity of our Lord's Death.

'I have power to lay down my life.'—Jn 10[18].

These words carry within them an unusual and memorable suggestion of reserve and dignity, a hint of the majesty in which the Saviour offered Himself, unhurried and uncompelled.

There is a passage in Amiel's *Journal* in which he says that 'Napoleon with his arms crossed over his breast is more expressive than the furious Hercules beating the air with his athlete's fists. People of passionate temperament never understand this. They are only sensitive to the energy of succession: they know nothing of the energy of condensation. They can only be impressed by acts and effects, by noise and effort. They have no instinct of contemplation, no sense of the pure cause . . . which does not need to throw itself into violent motion to be certain of its own power.'

Some of the saints have loved to pause in reverent contemplation over against this passage, finding something here in their Lord which they did not find so clearly any other where. Here is what

[1] J. Rendel Harris, *As Pants the Hart*, 132.

Dora Greenwell saw in it. 'The Man Christ Jesus was, of all created beings—as far as we know their history—the only one who chose His own destiny, who foreknew and accepted its full conditions; who saw a great need and responded to it—"Lo, I come." "My leave," said the acute Frenchwoman, "was not asked before I came into the world!" *Our Saviour's leave was asked.* His fulfilment of His Father's will was voluntary.' Thus reverent eyes behold Him as no helpless victim of circumstance. Here is no mere prey of the mighty, caught in the man-traps of a world's hate. Here is one who, uncompelled, offers Himself.

1. At this point two important things are done for our thinking on this whole theme. The first lies in the vision of the self-determination of our Lord, with all that is implied of reserve and dignity. He is the Captain of His own soul in becoming the Captain of ours. This is important for a practical reason. One of the reasons why some modern minds halt before the Christian ethic and hesitate to launch themselves upon a sacrificial life is that it seems like a slave-morality to lay oneself down in front of one's fellows, and be trampled upon by every foot, and drained by an endless demand. If we take this utterance of our Lord, and use His life and actions as a commentary upon it, it becomes plain that His conception of sacrificial living and sacrificial loving was very different from that. He was not a passive agent, letting Himself be trampled upon without discrimination or be drained as much by men's whims as by their needs. When they asked Him to be a judge and a divider, He refused to shoulder a responsibility that was not meant for Him and gave them instead a parable and a sermon. There are some wise words on this point in Dr. Newman Smyth's *Christian Ethics*. Speaking of love to one's neighbours, he says: 'A friend who does not keep himself in the pure worth of his own soul has nothing worth giving to another. True self-love (not love of the happiness of self but of the worth of the self) is therefore the antecedent condition of all genuine and worthy love of others.'

There is something here which is very close to some of our practical perplexities. Christian sacrificial love is not to give every one all he asks, but to offer to God and to man the best we can do, and the best we can be, for man and for God. When we hear our Lord say, 'I have power to lay down my life,' we are close to that same lesson. He does not regard His life as a ball to be tossed lightly about, or to be crushed by any hand that cares to grasp it. He holds His soul like a citadel in trust for God's service and man's true welfare, and He retains His self-direction, subject only to the overruling will of His Father, as that will shall progressively reveal to Him His true path of obedience and service.

2. But these words do a second thing for us, not inconsistent with that first thing: they supply a needful corrective to our usual idea, which is apt to be the world's idea, of power. When men think and speak about power, they tend to think too exclusively of power to dominate, and far too little of power to serve. Yet it is well to remember how great a part that second kind of power has played, and does still play increasingly, in the life of the world. Benjamin Kidd's *The Science of Power* is full of suggestion to any one interested in politics or ethics or the problems of human society, whatever the philosophers may have to say to the validity of his argument. His position is that the Darwinian doctrine of evolution—the theory of development through the struggle for existence—carries us only a little way. It accounts for the efficient individual: the inefficient perish, the efficient survive. But then he goes on to show that evolution has now reached a new stage, the social stage, and at this stage a new law works. In the struggle for his own development the individual had to assert himself: now in the struggle for the perfected society, the individual has to learn to subordinate himself. Here lies the vast scarcely tapped reservoir of power for the future.

In social development the eternal law of efficiency can only be summarized in one word—Sacrifice. . . . The progress of humanity has over and above every other feature this meaning. It is the epic of the vast, tragic, ennobling, immortalizing, all-conquering ethic of Renunciation. If that be in any measure true, then our Lord when He said 'I have power to lay down my life' was not only stating His own personal power and obligation, He was illustrating a principle vital to human progress.

There are two practical results for those who believe and would obey.

We bow with adoring and endless gratitude before the Lord Christ, who in His life and death brought the sacrificial principle to its full fruition. This idea of power must not be lost sight of: His use of it here ought to re-fashion the moral universe and be like a talisman against worldliness and against materialism. All the way along, those who knew Him felt a strange suggestion of power about Him. There was power of healing, power

of teaching, strange power over Nature's forces, as if He were in some mysterious way allied with the ultimate sources of control. But it was all power of service. And the power in Him had not turned to weakness—rather it had mounted to its greatest intensity, it clothed itself in its uttermost sublimity when at the last, in the exercise of His power over Himself, He stretched Himself upon the Cross. So He became the world's High Priest, and so the Cross became the one Shrine for ever for souls that know their need and their sin. Because He incarnates in Himself a principle which is neither arbitrary nor accidental, but is set into the very nature of things and into the course of this world's events, it is no surprise that a listening ear should overhear every creature, saying, 'Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb, for ever and ever.' And we who, being, like patriarchs and prophets, creatures of human sin and need, have sought long for the altar where we may meet with God, know that our quest is ended. He gave Himself for us. With Him we give ourselves to God.

A second point emerges. It is morally impossible to bend in adoration and gratitude before the sacrificial Christ without coveting something of the same spiritual likeness. Is this sacrificial way indeed God's chosen way of helping and uplifting the world? Then men who number themselves among His redeemed are in honour bound to be His helpers in the task. More and more it becomes apparent that there are no self-contained lives in human society, or rather that in proportion as men try to be self-contained and self-regarding they remain mutilated and incomplete. To acquire the sacrificial spirit may cost them much: to live without it may in the long run cost them more. 'Vicarious suffering,' says Dr. Inge, 'which on the individualist theory seems so monstrous and unjust as to throw a shadow on the character of God, is easy to understand if we give up our individualism.' No Christian is called to give up his *individuality*: there the dignified self-direction of the Master teaches us a great and unexpected lesson. But every Christian, by the fact of his being a Christian, is called to give up his *individualism*. Then the burdens and tasks that come are undertaken not with querulous claims for justice, but with the eager spirit of those who have seen the glory of service. 'I have power over my life'—that is true of every man as of Him, true within smaller limits, perhaps, but true.[1]

[1] J. M. E. Ross, *The Tree of Healing*, 114.

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

The God of Different Personalities.

'I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'—Ex 3[6].

1. These three men stand as types of character in all ages of Israel. Abraham is the type of all men of faith—those who adventure their souls after God. Isaac is the type of men whose religion is quiet, meditative, almost timorous. Jacob is the type of men of double nature: worldly and devout. And our text tells us that God is the God of all these types of human nature. He has no favourites: He is as much the God of the uninteresting Isaac as of the double-dealing Jacob; as much the God of the double-dealing Jacob as of the far nobler, more heroic Abraham.

All of us are included in one or other of these three types. Abraham, the 'Father of the faithful,' is the representative of all who in every age have had a faith in God strong enough to drive them forth from the religion of their fathers in search of a purer religion. Now God is the God of all such men. Much of the present rebellion against the faith of our fathers is quite unworthy of respect. Nevertheless, this rebellion against tradition sometimes springs from a Divine inspiration. And if that is true of any of us, then Abraham's God is our God. He responds to that trust which ventures our life itself upon Him. Often we will be in doubt, often the Divine promise of hope in our heart will be disappointed; but sooner or later the God of Abraham will lead us, as He led him, to ends and issues diviner far than anything of which we now dream.

But God is not the God of the adventuring only. He is the God of Isaac also—of quiet, uninteresting, commonplace men and women. And in truth this is well for most of us. For most of us, undoubtedly, live quiet, uneventful lives, that seem to accomplish little. Yet, however uninteresting we may seem, God has an interest in us. He is the God of ordinary and commonplace men and women who have no history. He has His own dealings with Isaac—His own course and methods of special education for him as surely as for his father and his son. There is not one of us overlooked by God—not one wholly commonplace in the eyes of the Eternal. Lincoln once dreamt that he overheard some one say of him, 'What a plain man!' and that he turned round and answered, 'Yes: God likes plain people. That's why He made so many of them.'

And now we turn to Jacob, and find ourselves face to face with another personality. He is two

men: worldly and unworldly—crafty and devout. In short, he is the type of multitudes in all ages. Is God the God of such men? Many are indignant at the favour shown to Jacob in Scripture, almost shocked that God should have anything to do with a man so treacherous. They dismiss as hypocrites our modern Jacobs—members of the Church who are also men of the world. Fortunately, God does not dismiss them. He has no love of worldliness, or craftiness, or treachery, any more than we have; nevertheless, just because Jacob needs Him so badly, He becomes Jacob's God. He passes such men through many a painful struggle with their own sins, if by any means out of the wily Jacob He may create the diviner Israel. There are few Scriptural phrases for which most of us have greater reason to be profoundly thankful than this —'the God of Jacob': the God who does not turn away in contempt even from men of double nature; but who will do His best for them, bearing long with the duplicity which He hates that He may in the end cast it out.

2. And, further, God is a different God to these three types. Of course, He never changes in Himself: yet He seems to change with our changes. A man of one temperament thinks of God in one way: a man of another temperament in another. Similarly, experience of life gives its own bias to our thought of God. Hence no two men worship precisely the same God.

Take Isaac's conception of God. When Jacob was pursued by Laban he objected that Laban would have sent him away empty-handed 'except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac had been with me'; and, again, to ratify the agreement come to between them, he 'sware by the fear of his father Isaac' (Gn $31^{42.53}$). To Isaac, then, God was a Fear—so much so that He was called 'the fear of Isaac.'

Contrast this fear with Abraham's conception: 'Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.' This idea of God sprang out of his character and circumstances. A wanderer in a land of which he possessed not so much as a foot, called to defend his kindred from the lawless kings of the country, he grew to feel his great need of a shield in the midst of constant danger: and God said, 'Fear not: I am thy shield.' Further, God had promised him a land and a great posterity: yet neither land was given nor son born to him. And in reply to his natural disappointment God says, 'I am thy exceeding great reward.' How different is all this from Isaac's Fear—God no terror threatening his life, but a protecting shield: his exceeding great reward, more to be desired than any of His promises!

The thought of God changes once more with Jacob. True, his conception seems to change from form to form; but perhaps his most characteristic name for God is 'the Rock of Israel.' It is a name which fits in with Jacob's own temperament. In spite of his double dealing there was in this man a certain tenacity of purpose which could not be turned aside—a rock-like firmness which could not be shaken. And he came to recognize the same firmness in God. Against that Rock he dashed his life in vain wrestling to have his own way. And then the Rock against which he broke himself became the firm foundation of his life.

These three conceptions of God represent in general the three typical attitudes of men towards the Deity.

3. And, further, God had three different modes of educating these men, according to their nature and their need. Abraham's faith was purified by many disappointments. But this school of disappointment would have been disastrous to Isaac, incapable of the Divine unrest of Abraham. Hence God gave him what training he was capable of receiving through his family life: not all of it happy, as we see from the rivalries of his sons. All this is changed when we turn to Jacob. Undoubtedly he had disappointments, like Abraham, and family training, like Isaac; but his chief school was in struggle with his own sins. He wrestles with his own craftiness, his own worldliness, in the darkness of the night by the brook Jabbok. It is his own strength, his trust in his own cunning, which gives way when the sinew of his thigh shrank. God gave Jacob that great education which changed him into Israel in the school of his own sins. It is a painful school; yet the only one for men of Jacob's character. The only thing that would rouse such a man was just to feel his own sins closing in round his life, his duplicity entangling him like a net, and to understand that there was no way of cutting through the entanglement save that of straightforwardness and honesty—becoming a new man, worthy of his new name of Israel.

The idea underlying all this is the individuality of God's dealings with every human soul. To each type of nature and character He gives that personal, individual training which it needs. And out of that training He gives to each a separate, individual revelation of Himself. And, however hard it is to believe this, be sure it is true of all men. Never read the words, 'I am the God of Abraham . . . of Isaac . . . and of Jacob' without remembering that God treated these three according

to their separate individualities, their distinct nature and needs, and that so in all ages He treats all human souls, and our souls with the rest.[1]

PALM SUNDAY.

Life through Christ's Death.

'And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.'—Lk 9^{51}.

1. Very early in the Christian era, one of the New Testament writers, summarizing the work which Jesus Christ had accomplished by His mission to the world, said that He had brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. That was the difference Jesus had made for mankind. He had given the promise of *life*, given it in such a way that men could lay hold of it with sure confidence. The Christian gospel came into a world over which death brooded like a pall. It was the world of Jew and Gentile. The Jews were the little minority, the Gentiles the great mass of human kind. Yet the world was thus truly divided, for the Jews had knowledge of the unity, the sovereignty, and the ethical holiness of God, while the nations outside their pale were groping in a hundred different ways amidst idolatries. But, for Jew and Gentile alike, the course of man on earth was shadowed by the forebodings and the fear of death.

We may take as witness their literature. No one could say that the Old Testament is a happy book. There are songs of rejoicing, and countless utterances of dogged confidence in a final victory of good, past all seeming. But it is shot through with these, rather as a dark day of cloud and storm is shot through with gleams of sunshine. Its general tone is of judgment and retribution. And no one could affirm that the literature of the pagan world was a literature of happiness. Its best poetry, when it is not light and frivolous, is set in a tragic key, despairing of human life and ending with a great interrogation, however nobly uttered. The same is true of its best history and philosophy. But the New Testament—the literature of the generation that woke with wondering eyes to faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ—is above all things happy, as is all the literature that has been born out of its inspiration up to this day. It comes from men passing through fires of tribulation and persecution—a despised and often outraged minority in a great world set against them. And yet it rings with joy, with the sense of triumph, certain, complete, and final. It is no sad story. There are sad things in it. We must endure to read there of men bearing great sorrow of heart, of some men's awful sinning, of one man of perfect heart torn in the agony of Gethsemane, deserted and betrayed by His friends, and crucified. But the sad things are as discords in a piece of music which are resolved into glorious harmony. And the joy and the brightness and the triumph come from this—that here is a message for men, which they have been able to receive and believe and prove for themselves in the experiment of living by it, of *life* poured into them which nothing can destroy. Death stands in front of them still, death as one of the facts of this present world, with its premonitory weakness and pains, sometimes its accompanying tortures. Still loved ones pass, one by one, out of their sight. Still the body decays. Still the passage through this world is a pilgrimage which ends at a portal where the gate opens only to those outgoing, and allows none to see the mysteries hidden on the farther side. But these men who have embraced this message of the gospel are certain that they *live*, and that this life of theirs is beyond the reach of harm. And with this conviction of *life*, everything is changed for them in what we call living. This transmutes all values.

It is well that we should sometimes look back like this and try to see in the broad light of the New Testament record as a whole what it was that Jesus had done for men, looking at it as a fact of human history. He made men—those who believed the message—secure in their confidence in *life*, life eternal, begun here and now, life in God. And Christianity has gone on proving itself worthy of men's acceptance, through all the centuries that have passed since the beginning, because people have been brought by it into that same confidence.

2. Jesus Christ brought that gift of life to men by going, of set purpose, to meet death. 'He stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.' And we know the Gospels well enough to know that that is the meaning of it. Jerusalem meant death. The more we read the story of Jesus, the more it comes home to us that the most astonishing thing in it is the fact that He took this dying at the hands of men as a purpose. That is woven into the whole narrative. Early in the story, in the days of His success and popularity as a teacher in Galilee, when the storm clouds of opposition had hardly begun to gather, we read of His defending His disciples against the Pharisees' rebuke because they did not fast, by comparing them with the bridegroom's friends who could not be mournful

[1] J. S. Carroll, *The Motherhood of God*, 128.

while the bridegroom was with them. 'But the day will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them.' When the clouds had begun to lower, and He had withdrawn more and more into solitude with His disciples to concentrate on teaching them and preparing them for their work in coming days, after Peter had confessed his belief that He was the Messiah, He startled them all by beginning to tell them plainly that He must go to Jerusalem and be rejected and killed. He took three of them apart to share with Him a vigil of prayer on a hill by night. They had a remarkable experience of seeing Him transfigured to a form of dazzling brightness, and hearing Him in converse with Moses and Elijah. And what they heard them talk of was the death which He should 'accomplish' at Jerusalem. And as the story draws on to its close, more and more persistently this is in it: Jesus is certain that He must die. He knows He has a baptism to be baptized with and a cup to drink; He is shut up to it by a Divine constraint. And when He sits to keep the Passover with His disciples, He draws them into a final, loving covenant with Himself and with His Father by the cup which He bids them drink henceforward in remembrance of Him, and says it is the covenant in His blood. The Son of Man is come to give His life a ransom for many.

As we try to think into the story this is the most wonderful thing in all the life of Jesus. This makes Him stand truly alone. We may compare His teaching with that of others and not be sure that His words are absolutely unique. His example of integrity and unselfishness, that may perhaps be paralleled in others who have been great and good, faithful and devoted even to death. His mighty works of compassionate power, these are not without analogies in other records. But in Jesus we find all this, this high teaching, this pure example, this compassionate power, along with something unparalleled—the purpose to die, that thereby men may live. 'Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit.' That is what makes the death of Jesus different from—something more than—a martyr's death. Socrates was willing to die, believing that gain might come to others from his death. So has been many another. Jesus was *determined* to die.

Ride on, ride on in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die;
O Christ, Thy triumphs now begin
O'er captive death and conquered sin.

Ride on! Ride on in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die;
Bow Thy meek head to mortal pain,
Then take, O God, Thy power, and reign.

What does it mean? Not for theology, not for theory, but for the business of our living?

It means that we have been loved with an everlasting love; that God cares that we should live with life abundant; that He has done the uttermost that love can do that we might share this life with Him. It means that we are debtors. 'This have I done for thee: what hast thou done for me?' And it means that we know how our debt must be paid. 'Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.' We have been saved for life, and life here means service and sacrifice in love to others, following Him.[1]

[1] H. C. Carter, in *Lenten Sermons*, 29.

Recent Foreign Theology.

Amos.

In a volume of three hundred and thirty-two large pages [1] Professor Weiser of Heidelberg has subjected the prophecy of Amos to as acute an examination as it has ever received, more particularly on its psychological side. It is a courageous attempt to penetrate the secret of the prophet's religious experience. This has been in part obscured, he believes, by the theological glosses of later editors, who modified or reinterpreted the words of Amos. He argues, for example, that in 7^{7b} an original אֲנִי was displaced by אדני and then transferred to the end of the clause, so that the vision of '*the Lord* standing beside a wall made by a plumb-line' (חומת אנך) was originally only the vision of 'a *plumb-line* laid to a wall' (חוֹמָה). The visions were not ecstatic, but simply normal experi-

[1] *Die Profetie des Amos*, von Artur Weiser (Töpelmann, Giessen; Mk. 18).