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In the Study.

Virginitus Puerisque.

Parrot Disease.

BY THE REVEREND R. W. DICKSON, M.A., M.TH.,
PETERHEAD.

'Whatsoever things are true, . . . honest, . . . pure, . . . think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, . . . do.'—Ph 4⁸⁻⁹.

I WONDER if you are interested just now in a new disease we are reading about in the newspapers chiefly because it has such a queer name. Really it has two names: one, the name doctors give it, and that I'm sure you wouldn't care to spell; the other, the name that everybody else uses. It is called Parrot Disease.

The doctors are worried about Parrot Disease. They say it is rather dangerous, and they are not yet quite sure of its cause or cure. You see, in our country at least, it is a new kind of ailment, and we must give the doctors time to find out a lot more about it before we can expect them to cure it.

But really, I doubt if Parrot Disease is such a very new disease. Lots of people appear to suffer from it. There is a friend of mine who has a parrot, and that bird seems such a cheery fellow, singing and whistling all day long. If you were to visit my friend, Polly would welcome you with screeches of delight. He would cock his eye at you in the friendliest possible way and say invitingly, 'Hallo, old chap, shake a paw, shake a paw!' But, my word! if you did try to shake his paw he would give you the ugliest, wickedest bite. Then he would laugh and laugh in your very face as he watched you suck your injured finger.

Some children have contracted that kind of Parrot Disease. They pretend to be ever so friendly and then, when they think you are sure of their friendliness, they take advantage of it, and they hurt. They pretend to be very chummy, but they are selfish and unkind. That kind of pretending is a very dangerous form of Parrot Disease.

But I know another parrot whose symptoms are different. (You know what symptoms are? If you get all sick and hot and covered with red spots, the doctor comes along and says, 'Ah! these are the symptoms of measles.') This bird is counted a wonderfully good fellow; in fact, some of his admirers who don't know him very well think he

is rather a religious parrot. You have heard, I suppose, that some silly people teach their parrots to say extremely naughty words. Well, the lady who owns this particular bird was determined that her parrot would never learn to say anything shocking, so what do you think she did? She taught him to repeat texts from the Bible. Sammy—that is his name—will sit on his perch and look very solemn and very thoughtful, and for hours he will say nothing. That is how some parrots and people make others believe they are fearfully good and wise—they just sit on their perches and look very solemn and say nothing. Then on a day when Sammy's mistress has some ladies in to tea, and they have all been talking at once, and suddenly there is a pause while they are thinking of what to say next, just when everybody is silent Sammy will say in a low, solemn voice, 'God is love, God is love.' Of course, all the ladies look at Sammy and exclaim, 'What a charming bird! I'm sure he understands what he says, he looks so wise. Dear me! aren't parrots wonderful creatures!' And Sammy nearly bursts with pride.

But listen to Sammy after the party is over. If his mistress forgets to give him sugar he brings the whole house down with his cries. Even when he has had his sugar, and everybody is quietly in bed, Sammy will utter the most piercing shrieks all night long—just for spite.

You see, the bother with Sammy is that, with all his wise looks, he speaks without thinking. Now, it is no good being able to repeat, 'God is love,' unless you think and act on what you are saying. Lots of you are learning texts in Sunday school and at home, but do you always think what they mean and try to act on their meaning? If you don't, you've got Parrot Disease. And I must tell you that this form of the disease is worst when it attacks Sunday-school girls and boys, who repeat the beautiful truths they have been taught without thinking and acting on their meaning.

Now, let me offer you a cure, or, better still, a prescription which, if you follow it, will prevent you ever catching the infection. First, always be sincere. Don't pretend. Don't be a little sneak. Second, think on all the good things you are taught. When I say that, I mean think on them so that they will become part of you, and you will act on them.

Don't be like a silly parrot that thoughtlessly repeats good words and then makes life just wretched for everybody around. You are not really good because you can repeat your text every Sunday. You will only be a worth-while boy when you try to understand its meaning, and to put its meaning into action.

You've heard of that splendid hero, Paul, and you know he wrote a number of fine letters to his friends, and always he urged them to put into practice the great things he had taught them, and that he himself had learnt of Jesus. Paul had some friends at Philippi, and though most of them were really fine folk, some of them, I am sorry to say, contracted Parrot Disease. And this is the cure Paul gave them—'Whatever things are true, honest, pure, *think* on these things; and those things which ye have learned, and received, and heard, *do.*' THINK, and do.

The Signed Picture.

BY THE REVEREND HAROLD BICKLEY, B.D.,
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'He made it again.'—Jer 18⁴.

One autumn morning a young Scotch boy took his easel, his paints, and two or three clean pieces of paper carefully pinned on his drawing-board, down to the bank of a little stream near his village. He sat down by the stream to paint. All the morning he worked hard at his picture, and at lunch-time he lay down on the grass to rest and eat his lunch, which his mother had packed in a nice little box for him. Just then two men strolled along the river-bank, and when they came to the boy, one of them stopped and bent down to look at his painting. 'Is this your painting?' the elder man said. 'Yes, sir,' said the boy. 'Would you like me to help you with it?' 'Yes, please.' 'You have made a few mistakes; the perspective is wrong. Let me show you how to do it correctly.' So the stranger sat down on the bank, took the board and the painting on his knees, dipped a brush in the water, and began to wash out all the picture. 'Don't do that, sir,' said the boy, almost in tears. 'It has taken me all morning to do that much.' 'That's all right, my laddie; but you're not doing it correctly. Let me show you. We will begin all over again.' So when the man had washed out the boy's painting, he began to sketch the scene in beautiful colours. The boy sat beside him with wondering eyes. At last the picture was completed, the stranger gave the boy sixpence, and went on his way with his friend to the village.

The boy didn't stay longer; he packed up his things and hurried home, to show his mother the beautiful landscape picture and tell her all that had happened. Of course the boy was curious to know who the stranger was, and it didn't take him long to discover that the man who had painted his picture was none other than Sir John Millais, the great English artist who did so much to revive British art in the last century. Every autumn, Sir John Millais was accustomed to stay in one or other of these Scotch villages. Most of his beautiful landscapes were painted there.

Now, that boy never forgot that such a great man had helped him, and he determined to become an artist. So he stuck to his work, and in a few years' time he won a scholarship and came to London to study, and there at the head of the school of art where he chose to study was this same famous artist who had helped him years before. He spoke to Sir John Millais, and reminded him of that autumn morning when he washed out a boy's painting and gave him his first real lesson in art; and the great man said, 'Bring the sketch along and I will sign it,' and he signed it with his own name as his own original work.

My friend who told me the story said, 'I was that boy, and my most prized and valued possession is that signed landscape by Sir John Millais.'

I like to think how that great master of art washed out all that was wrong in the boy's painting and made it again for him. I know quite a number of true stories like that in the New Testament. Jesus came across men and women who were doing wrong things with their lives. They were making wrong pictures of themselves, they were putting selfishness, greed, pride, unkindness, and many sinful things into their lives. When Jesus saw them He said, 'You are doing wrong with your life; let Me wash out all the wrong things and make your life again, and show you how to live.' He made Zaccheus again, a beautiful, kind, unselfish life. He made Paul again, and everybody who really knew him loved him. When Jesus re-made them they were far more beautiful than they were before, and He signed them with His own new name, so that when people saw one of them they said, 'He is a Christian; he has been made again by Jesus.'

Jesus comes to you girls and boys who are not making the best of your lives. He says, 'Let Me show you how to live, how to be kind and good and loving; let Me help you to live like Me.' If we say Yes, and mean it, then we shall be pictures of Jesus signed with His name, and our lives will be the most beautiful things any one can see.

The Christian Year.

EASTER SUNDAY.

Immortality.

'Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?'—1 Co 15¹².

The number of those who boldly assert their denial of any future life is few, but occasionally one finds men more bold than their fellows who are prepared to assert definitely that all hope of a future life is illusory. In Mr. Wyndham Lewis's book, *The Art of being Ruled*, this attitude is adopted. 'Christ's doctrine,' he says, 'was a drug. Beneath its influence men saw their wrongs being righted, saw "the oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely," punished and humble faith rewarded, the last first and the first last. Is it,' he continues, speaking of the teaching of Jesus, 'the action of an honourable man to give people these flattering visions?' For one man thus outspoken, there are twenty whose minds are filled with questionings. There were men in the early Church who felt like this. Perhaps they did not boldly assert that dead men do not rise, but they doubted the Apostle's teaching, and in 1 Co 15 Paul strives to demonstrate the certainty of the faith in the individual's resurrection to eternal life.

1. Paul had one advantage over the modern preacher. Few of those whom he addressed doubted the truth of the Resurrection of Jesus, for it was impossible for them to do so. They need only go to former unbelievers like James the brother of the Lord to find him tell the story of the appearance of the Lord which turned his hostility into loyalty; or to cautious disciples like Thomas, who except he had seen would not have believed; or they could find at hand many of the five hundred brethren of whom Paul writes, 'the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.' The early Church was living on the impulse communicated to it by the appearance of the Risen Lord. The preachers proclaimed no conquered leader, lying in a Syrian tomb, but a living Lord who had kept His appointed tryst with His favoured followers and who had made His power manifest in their midst. The Jewish world is keenly interested in a book published by the foremost orthodox Jewish scholar of our time. Although other writers, such as the historian, S. Setzer, and Dr. Chaim Zhitlowsky, caused much comment by their books urging the Jewish people to reconsider their attitude to Jesus, Dr. Klausner's book,

Jesus of Nazareth, in which the author represents Jesus as the embodiment of ethical and religious idealism, has caused a sensation. There is much which causes sorrow to a Christian in this brilliant book, but the treatment of the Resurrection is significant. While he believes that Joseph of Arimathea, after having laid the body of Jesus in his new tomb, secretly removed it at the close of the Sabbath, and placed it in an unknown grave, he denies that there was any deception on the part of the early Church. 'The nineteen hundred years' faith of millions is not founded on deception. There can be no question but that some of the ardent Galileans saw their Lord and Messiah in a vision.' As Christians we are convinced that there was reality behind the visions. 'If Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?' We do not doubt that Jesus overcame death, why do we doubt that others than He may share the victory over the last enemy of all?

When from the dead He rais'd His Son
And called Him to the sky,
He gave our souls a lively hope
That they should never die.

2. In addition to this argument which we may call the argument from history, Paul used another argument which may be regarded as the argument of the emotions. As the years pass, heaven becomes a more powerful conception in the thought of all good people. The vacant chairs on earth remind us of appointed places in the Father's home.

I never stand beside a bier and see
The seal of death set on some well-loved face.
But that I say one more to welcome me
When I have crossed the intervening space
Between this land and that land over there,
One more to make the strange Beyond seem fair.

We are so conscious of failure in our own lives that we would not charge God with harshness if He did not consider our lives worth conserving, but allowed them to be extinguished as a match by the night winds; but we have known lives of such saintliness that we are sure that God has other work for them to do. The Church at Corinth had its roll of saints, with regard to whom the thought of extinction was impossible. Unbelieving husbands, heedless sons, could remember wives, mothers, sisters, brothers who had witnessed a good confession, and many turned to Christianity because they believed it held out to them a hope of being reunited with the beloved one who had gone. Confining our-

selves to one of the many possible meanings of Paul's words, we find this idea behind the question, 'What shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all?' Many careless Corinthians who had refused to listen to the pleadings of devoted Christian relatives when they had been with them, found themselves longing for the handclasp of a departed friend and for 'the sound of a voice that was still,' and the promise of reunion which the Christian faith offered had proved the determining influence in winning them for allegiance to Christ and for witnessing to that faith in baptism.

3. The third argument is that based on the lives of the men who formed the early Church. If they had desired, they might have been as others, interested only in worldly aims. 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.' Instead, it was apparent that they were living their lives on a higher level, striving to realize noble ideals which time did not create and which time could not destroy.

So much of the weakness of our religious life today arises from the fact that we do not truly believe and put to the test these great words, and many others like them. Divested of the garments of our frail mortality, the soul goes on to a life more wonderful by far. To the Christian, death is an episode in life, an adventure at one stage of the long journey which brings us to God. The great gift of God is not immortality, but something better, a possession infinitely greater, eternal life, which is already possible in this world through such a union with God in Christ that the death of the body cannot interfere with it in any way whatever.

Jesus uttered words which make us know that the departed are living a life more glorious than any we know, following the great Captain of our salvation in another state of being more glorious than any we can imagine. 'Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.' Our sorrow must therefore be accompanied by its note of triumph. It is not for us to allow our imagination to carry us beyond the simple yet unfathomable words of the Master.¹

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

In this Life most Miserable.

'If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.'—1 Co 15¹⁹.

1. Do these words mean that if the Christian hope of life everlasting is never to be realized, then

¹ A. Chisholm, *High Roads and Cross Roads*, 80.

the Christian life is one of uncompensated delusion, an irrecoverable waste of a singular opportunity? With such an interpretation of St. Paul's words many thoughtful people cannot agree. On the contrary they hold, whatever may be the future after death, that the Christian life is the finest in quality, the widest in scope, the most animating in spirit the world has hitherto been able to conceive; and that should there be no life when this life is over, the man who has lived the Christian life and cherished the Christian hope, which is inseparable from the Christian life, has made the best of the only existence he is ever to know.

2. Whatever St. Paul meant we must not be intimidated by texts. We must understand them. If we would understand this text we must put ourselves in the time and place of him who wrote it. Indeed, we must do so in all our Bible reading if we would escape the misapplications and misinterpretations of Scripture which have made some men unbelievers and others fanatics.

Now, if we try to put ourselves back into St. Paul's day and position, imperfectly as we may be able to do so, we see that the life of the Christian propagandist was one of exhausting labour, anxiety, and suffering. But the cause of the suffering was not directly Christianity itself; it was the hostile action of Jewish and pagan society upon Christianity. To communicate what Paul considered the Divine revelation of a Father in heaven and life with Him for ever, he had to become an outcast from his family and descend from his high social position, to renounce his place in the government of his people and his prospects of distinction; he had to run counter to his intellectual tastes, to adapt himself to the society of classes beneath him, whose manners and speech and idea of life were all against the grain. He had to endure suspicion and stiffness and secret hostility from the party he had joined and to whom he brought so much, as well as incessant attacks upon his orthodoxy and the validity of his orders. In addition, he was subjected, with painful frequency, to violent bodily persecution.

Now, if suddenly, when Paul was near the end of life, worn out with labour and suffering, and murmuring to himself, as his tired eyes looked up to heaven, 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,' if *then* a fatal, infallible voice had struck upon his soul: 'There is no living Christ, no life to come, no God, no heaven in the wide grey, lampless world,' proclaiming that all his labours and sufferings had been endured for a great delusion, then we can understand the thought—

sharp as a knife stabbing into the heart, blinding the soul in a black hopeless night—bursting out into a passionate cry of irresistible unmeditated protest, 'If in this life only we have hope in Christ, then are we of all men most miserable.' But amid all his miseries Paul was not miserable. On the contrary he described himself as 'sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as having nothing and yet possessing all things.' Those who realize the Christian life, and believe in the ever-continued development of the soul in a life continued after death, attain the highest possibilities of which this human nature is capable.

3. Nevertheless, there is widespread a sort of belief or feeling that a Christian life, when thoroughly carried out, is a joyless one of self-suppression, and not one of complete self-development, and is only to be undertaken for the sake of unspeakable bliss hereafter. In harmony with such a misconception are the words once spoken by Dr. Newman: 'This world is a very little thing to give up for the next. Yet if we give it up in heart and conversation we shall gain the next.' On the contrary, it is a crime to give up this world. For this world is as truly the world of God as is the unseen world.

Whatever may be the nature of the next life, it cannot be the same as this. For this life is a combination made up of body and spirit. But we know that death disintegrates the body, for 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.' To lose what this world and its Divine combination may do for us, is to condemn ourselves to be so much the poorer for evermore. This has been well said by Browning when he declared that the true end of this life is the expansion of the human soul into a love passing out of itself with some other soul to mingle:

Else it loses what it lived for,
And eternally must lose it;
Better ends may be in prospect,
Deeper blisses (if you choose it),
But this life's end and this love-bliss
Have been lost here.

4. What is the central idea of Christianity? It aims, as its central idea, at the reconciliation of man with God. Now, as the whole order of the universe is a product of the creative mind of God, reconciliation with God must mean harmony with the indwelling, energizing mind of the universe, of which man (body and mind) is the highest manifestation known to us. Reconciliation with God means

man's body and mind realizing their potential perfection; the mind of God inherent in them. It will be admitted, even by moralists who do not appeal to a Divine sanction, that, on the whole and in the long run, happiness arises from virtue. Would a man who had lived a life of temperance say on his deathbed, if then he became convinced that there was no life for him when he was dead: 'If I had my time to live over again I would not be restrained from the gratifications of drink, but would take the jovialities and intoxication of a drunkard'? When we see the shattered, degraded, burnt-up beings who have succumbed to this degrading vice, who of us would think he had wasted a chance because he had not experienced this? Are sullenness and malignancy, the meanness of the liar, the feline caution of dealers in dishonesty, the apprehensions of the underhanded, the greed which pinches a home, the crossness which darkens it, the cruelty which terrorizes it, and the unfaithfulness which shatters it—are these the dispositions and experiences a man would choose to possess, if he were sure there was no life after this? Whether it be true that things are right because they produce happiness, or that happiness is the preordained result of right conduct, whatever be our moral theory—Eudæmonism or a Divine moral order—happiness and virtue are by the nature of things allied.

But the aim of Christianity is to make all men virtuous, to reconcile them to God's moral order; and therefore if virtue tends to happiness, and Christianity tends to virtue, then does Christianity tend to happiness. It condemns extravagance, intemperance, ungoverned and consuming passions, the secret and sly paths of dishonesty, the dishonour and infamy of a life of vice. It bids us honour the body and cultivate the mind, and elevate the spiritual nature and be temperate in all things. It tends to lengthen the days, to prolong happiness, to keep off disease, to assuage mental distress, to give peace and courage to the conscience, to make a man a fine and noble creature in mind, body, and estate. All the virtues which good men cultivate and hold in honour, even when they do not believe in God, are enforced by Christianity. Beauty and truth and love; all that science can tell, and art can show, and honourable ambition attain, and manly and womanly pleasure enjoy, 'all things are yours and ye are Christ's: and Christ is God's.'

5. But through it all, says the Agnostic, is the delusion of another life after this. But how do you know it is a delusion? If ours is a delusion it is

not an ignoble delusion. It is the delusion which expects a to-morrow. But is it ignoble for the scientist to hope to complete to-morrow his investigation, or for the artist to hope to-morrow to realize his ideal of beauty? All our to-morrows have an element of uncertainty about them, for death stops the investigation, and the picture, the poem, and the music are unfinished; and there are no wedding bells. Yet do we look for to-morrow, and to-morrow is heaven—for heaven is our idea of perfection, and to live a life with the ideal and hope of perfection is the highest life which can be lived. If it can never be attained, it is a supreme distinction to have had it. Now at least we may confidently say that under all possibilities the Christian life is the finest that can be attained; and interpreting the exclamation of St. Paul for ourselves, we may reverse it and say, 'If in this life only we have hope in Christ, still are we of all men most blessed.'¹

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Faith, an Activity of the Soul.

'The work of faith.'—I Th 1³.

1. Of the three phrases which the Apostle uses in this verse—'The work of faith, the labour of love, the patience of hope'—the one which is most difficult to understand with exactness is certainly the first, 'the work of faith.'

'The labour of love'—that comes home to us all at once. We know that love at its purest has within itself the quality of pain. Love is, indeed, an election to suffering. A pure love lays us open to a thousand assaults of suspense and fear.

The other phrase—'the patience of hope'—if somewhat more obscure, also comes home to us at once as something which we ourselves know to be true. We only need to consider for a moment to see that patience is the very heart of hope. To be living by a great hope is for any one of us to be living in the midst of fears. To be living in this world on some private hope is like carrying some precious vessel across a crowded street. Anything may happen. A strong hope introduces us at once to a new world of misgivings and possible disasters. Like love, like any spiritual call, like any word of God, hope brings not peace, but a sword.

In the same way—so the Apostle must mean—work is the very soul of faith, the very atmosphere in which faith lives. We know that where love is, there is that inner condition of longing and

suspense and prayer—a true travail of the soul. We know, too, that where hope is, there will always be need of patience, the soul steadying itself under the shock of many a disappointment. In the same way—so the Apostle assumes—faith put its own kind of strain upon the soul; faith too involves us in a kind of life of its own. He who would have his lamp of faith burn brightly must see to it that he lives in an atmosphere of work. He must see to it that he purge his soul of all indolence and heaviness; that he gird up the loins of his mind; that he respond to all his surroundings, acting and reacting, maintaining a certain alertness and watchfulness, accepting and rejecting, according to a kind of spiritual taste or standard within himself. In short, faith also puts the soul upon a certain strain; and as the strain of love has for its note, labour, and as the strain of hope has for its note, patience, so the strain of faith has for its note, *work*.

2. Now, at the very outset, this is not the opinion about faith which we find amongst outsiders. In their view, faith is a form of human weakness or insincerity. Now the point of this text is that here St. Paul says something about *faith* which is the very opposite of all that. He says it is not the easy and convenient thing—to believe; but the hard and inconvenient thing.

Yes: the easy thing certainly is, not to believe. Faith is surely harder than sight, and bears witness to a finer and more delicate perception. It is easier to build a fence than to write a poem. It is easier to be engaged in the business of the world—its eating and drinking and its pleasures—than to feel the power and summons of that other world of which the best souls are aware. It is easier to see nothing than to see God. Fifty men, a thousand men, can walk over the fields in the evening, for one who, as he walks, can feel what Wordsworth felt when he wrote the lines on Tintern Abbey. And which of them was right? The fifty men who saw nothing, or Wordsworth who saw God; the fifty men who felt nothing, or Wordsworth who 'felt the Presence which disturbs us with the joy of elevated thoughts, the sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused, whose dwelling is the light of setting suns, and the round ocean, and the living air, and the blue sky, and in the mind of man'?

It is surely easier to see than to believe. Well, that is the idea underlying the words 'the work of faith.' And the idea is that faith lives within an atmosphere of work, of spiritual liveliness, and daring.

¹ W. Page-Roberts, *True Religion*, 35.

3. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews defines faith as 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' That is to say, he who has faith has within himself as his own personal secret the proof and the pledge of things not seen. It is by his faith that he perceives the unseen world and takes hold on God. It is therefore the work of faith to keep clear and free from all obstacles and hindrances and distorting mediums the passage between one's soul and God.

Now one thing which that involves is that a man must deal strictly with himself. He must take charge of his own personal integrity and honour. For let us never forget that one can believe only what he is meanwhile living for. Anything else is not faith. It is at best superstition; it is an attempt to outwit God by a manœuvre. We believe in the unseen only as we live for the unseen. We believe in the soul and in God only as we reverence the soul—the Divine capacity in ourselves and in others. Let any one live frankly for this world, and what is the penalty? Many things doubtless, but this for certain: that person loses all happy sense of God.

It is laid upon each one of us, and it ought to be a happy responsibility—it is our work of faith—to take up the obscure tasks within ourselves which we know must be attended to if we are to live on happy terms with Jesus Christ our Lord. We must see to it that the Holy Spirit has His way with us. We must work along with the Holy Spirit, we must work *out*, work out in real actions within ourselves and in the world also, what the Holy Ghost is working into us. If we refuse this work of faith, if we disregard and put aside these private instructions of the Holy Spirit—why, then, we are like children who have disobeyed a mother whom all the time they love—we are unhappy even in our disobedience, and we shall never be happy again until, like children too, we fling ourselves in sorrow and confession upon that loving One whom indeed we love, although for one miserable hour we disobeyed Him.¹

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Things which destroy Joy.

'Your joy no man taketh from you.'—Jn 16²².

It has sometimes been said that we do not emphasize the dreadfulness of sin to-day, that we slur it over.

But was Jesus continually inveighing against sin and denouncing those glaring sins which went

¹ J. A. Hutton, *The Fear of Things*, 35.

on in His time as much as in ours? Was He continually dwelling on those grosser sins which prurient people love to hear denounced from the pulpit? No; the things He chiefly denounced were just the very things which religious people don't like hearing denounced because they are the things to which they probably are most prone. The things He really did use hard words about were the sins of the religious people of His time—hardness of heart, uncharitableness, inhumanity, self-righteousness, pride, and hypocrisy. His method was rather to show the beauty of goodness and the marvellous love of God for men in such a manner that people would see for themselves the dreadfulness of their lives, the hopelessness of living away or apart from God. Except in the case of the Pharisees His message to the people was almost entirely positive rather than negative. He put before them good, and the joy of goodness; He talked to them of happiness and how happiness could be obtained by positive virtues; He showed them love and all that it means; and those who heard with their hearts saw the pettiness and misery of their futile lives and became new people. Sin is a dreadful thing, for it is that by which we put a cloud between ourselves and God; the light of God's love cannot get through; and so surely the best way to get rid of that cloud is to tell of the love that is ready to break through, rather than to harp continually on the cloud that hides it.

1. The things which destroy joy in our hearts are those which put this cloud between us and Him; we no longer feel the sun's warmth and healing power and the joy goes out of life.

The root of all sin is selfishness. Selfishness is the antithesis of that self-giving which is Love. We do not emphasize enough our Lord's teaching about the heart. 'Out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies,' these are the things which defile a man; we see a man's actions and we judge his actions, but it is that which is in his heart, *i.e.* his thoughts, which matters most; if a man's heart is full of self there is no room for God, as Trench says:

God often would enrich, but finds not where to place
His treasure, nor in hand nor heart a vacant space.

Now each of us can know our own thoughts, and what is more we can to a very large extent control them. It is not necessarily sin to have evil, selfish, licentious, or impure thoughts, because they may

come spontaneously; but it is to dwell on them, because we can try to think of other things. St. Paul is teaching this truth when he says: 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things.' The greatest saints I know are those whose minds are filled with beautiful thoughts, and especially thoughts of how they can help others and kindly thoughts about others. One feels instinctively that God is close to them because the love in their hearts has thrown out selfishness; in fact, they seem to have no time to think of themselves. And the things which destroy joy are just those things which make us think about ourselves. The answer of Moody to the man who asked him if he were saved, 'I am so busy trying to help others that I have no time to think of myself,' might well be taken to heart by a great many people who worry about themselves.

2. The things which destroy joy in our lives are just the very things which we religious people have to guard against—self-righteousness, pride, hypocrisy, self-satisfaction, envy, hatred, and malice; and it is time that we Church people should realize not only how soul-destroying these things are to the spiritual life, but also how much harm they are doing to the cause of Christ and His Church. If the joy of the first Christians was one of the chief reasons why people were attracted to Christ, and joined His goodly fellowship, and the lack of it in Christians to-day is keeping people out, we have to study the reasons why we have got away from the early Christian attitude; and few will deny that the chief reason is to be found in just those things which our Lord denounced in the Pharisees—self-satisfaction, pride, pompousness, snobbery, small-mindedness, censoriousness, and lack of sympathy and real love in dealing with others; and these are unfortunately only too noticeable both in the clergy and the laity.


We know well enough that snobbery is to be found in every class of society to-day. But the one place where it should not be found is in the Church and among Christian people, for the man who is a snob loses all sense of that joy which is able to abound and be abased as well. A certain padre in the war, a very able man, went to the officer commanding his unit one day, and asked him why it was he did not seem to be getting on with the men in that unit, to which the officer replied: 'You have asked me a plain question, and I will

give you a plain answer. It is because you are such a snob.' All the padre could answer was, 'I believe I am.'

Closely allied to snobbishness is our ungentlemanliness. There can be no better definition of the word gentleman than a man like Jesus Christ, for there was nothing in His character of weakness or sentimentality, but there was everything of strength and courage and courteousness in His dealings with others. Unfortunately the term has come to be used of, and applied to one section of society, so that the accident of birth is the only passport into this category; and, in consequence, men and women ape this section in dress and speech. It has come to matter a great deal more whether a man does not wear brown boots with a tail coat than whether he is courteous and kindly to others, and especially those dependent on him. The unchristian—which means the ungentlemanly—behaviour of people in all grades of society, is responsible more than anything else for our social troubles. Through our ungentlemanliness we lose a great deal of the joy of life, the joy of seeing others happy and contented, and the joy of knowing that we are playing the game by them even if they do not respond.

3. It is time that some of us who profess and call ourselves Christians did some healthy changing of our minds about some of these things. We have allowed ourselves to adopt the standard of the society in which we live, and have got away from Christ's standard. There is no Christian joy in the heart of the man who is always worrying about whether he has got the position he deserves, or thinking of his rights. Our Lord's saying: 'It shall not be so with you,' needs emphasis to-day. It is frightening when we read of societies being formed to secure the rights of the clergy, or to hear that young men won't become parsons because of insecurity of tenure or the encroachment of the laity on their rights: it all sounds so sub-Christian.

Are we altogether right in our ideas about the magnification of the office of a clergyman? The ordinary Church layman wants his vicar to be a 'big' man in town or village, to take a certain place in its society, and to remember the dignity of his office. Above all, he must be dignified, which generally means that he must be just a little remote; and one sees men gradually losing just that human touch and approachableness, and becoming afraid of giving away themselves or their position. There is a standard type to which we must conform, and once we conform to type we lose our naturalness, and with it the joy of being ourselves. We

think of the office and not the work, and aim at a false dignity. We have a tremendously responsible and honourable position as priests and ambassadors for God, but the position will not help us to be of use to God and to do His work unless we hold it as servants of Christ and of our fellow-men, as ministers and instruments for God to use. He can use our personality, our humanity, because we have placed ourselves in His hands. Once we 'put on side,' or fail to be human, we lose our influence for good, because nothing could be more unlike Christ than that; the spontaneous joy of being led by the spirit of Christ has gone.¹ 

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Capitalized Grace.

'The unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.'—2 Ti 1⁵.

Is this reference to Timothy's grandmother and mother to be taken as anything more than a pleasant remembrance of two good women? Is it seriously meant that what they were counted in Timothy's religion? It is hardly to be doubted that this is the suggestion, and thereupon arise more questions. Have family connexions and a family heritage any bearing upon particular and personal religion? Has the precarious science of eugenics, which is the application of biological science to sociology, any kind of foothold in morals and religion?

1. The idea, at first, wears an attractive look. It looks like a principle of conservation. It looks as if it would solve at least some of the bitterest enigmas. The Kingdom of God might be secured on the simple lines of succession. The law of the Spirit might resolve itself into a law of natural inheritance.

But a suspicion infects the mind. We begin to wonder whether goodness and godliness which came by a way so easy would be worth the name of goodness and godliness. Spiritual achievement would be only a reminiscence. More disconcerting still, such a law of spiritual heritage would of necessity work both ways, if it worked at all. Multitudes would be damned from their birth, and with a finality more real than any social reformer has had to reckon with. So the speculation grows grim and forbidding. Responsibility disappears out of wickedness; value goes out of goodness; worth departs out of character; initiative vanishes from life.

¹ W. P. G. McCormick, *Be of Good Cheer*, 60.

There is more than a disintegrating suspicion about these fancies. The facts of life break the notion to pieces. There is the plain fact of the bad who come of good stock. 'The sons of Eli were sons of Belial.' Happily this is not all that is to be said. If the moral succession cannot be reckoned upon, the immoral succession breaks down also. One of the most sinister life-stories of the Old Testament is lit up by a surprise of this kind. It is the bad story of Jeroboam, of whom the prophet said, 'Thou hast done evil above all that were before thee.' But a light shone in the dark house of Jeroboam, for there was a son of that evil line who was different. He could not save the situation, and, in truth, all that came to him was an honourable grave. But this was not a small thing in a dishonoured line. 'He only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave; because in him there is found some good thing toward the Lord, the God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam.'

2. What is this talk of good stock or bad? Who is there that is altogether either of one or the other? Be it asked with all reverence, was the genealogy of our Lord Himself without spot or blemish or any such thing? The genealogy stands within the Gospel, and there are significant omissions. 'Joram begat Ozias'; but Joram was not the father of Ozias. Between the two came no less than three ignoble life-stories. It was a recognized principle among the Jews that nefarious names might be dropped out of view in genealogies, but there are names frankly written in the list which lie in shadow. 'There were links of iron and brass in the line, as well as of silver and gold.' The Incarnation has its human roots in the mixed Adam stock.

Timothy's lineage is not exhausted by two good women. Of his father we know nothing, but the surmise is that he was Greek. If then there is talk of heritage, in the blood of Timothy a Greek and a Hebrew strain were mingled, and greater contrast and more probable antagonism could hardly be found.

Thus we are at the problem of heredity, and it is here that biology takes up the discussion. For long we grew accustomed to a determined scientific dogmatism, and we listened so meekly, and found the teaching so insistent and confident that heredity and its problems became an obsession for more than one generation. But the biologist has shed much of the dogmatism, and is not nearly so sure as once. This is the conclusion of one of the foremost biologists of our day: 'What has the biologist to say? Little more than this, that

well-fated, or ill-fated, each living creature is born a new creature—an individuality. There is variation as well as continuity, and the mould is, so to speak, broken each time. Each creature is a new creature. And in the case of man this seems to imply a personality with a will of its own to this extent, that it may or may not use possibilities of nurture in a manner quite unpredictable. The radius of freedom of choice may be long or short, but there is some freedom, *something unpredictable in the activity of each new child.*'

3. There is the religious and Christian view to be stated, and it is no nerveless confronting of a fate, and no helpless bafflement by an enigma. To the Christian, heredity is no iron fate gripping and clamping the individual life in the vice of the past. If inherited evil has power, so has inherited good, and God is greater than any human inheritance, and keeps a power of surprise in His hands for use.

Lois and Eunice are not irrelevancies in the story of Timothy. What they were had much to do with what he was, or they would not have been named with this honour. 'To make a sound Christian of a Hindu,' said a missionary, 'you have got to convert his grandmother.' If it is our lot to be of good stock, let us give thanks for it every day we live. It is a great thing to be in the line of a spiritual aristocracy. Let us take it and acknowledge it as the preventive love of God which made ready for our good, planting in us a quick spiritual sensitiveness.

The late William W. Peyton, in an arresting book, *Memorabilia of Jesus*, has a final chapter with the daring title 'The Christ in our Blood.' He expounds our Lord's boundless faith in the unspoiled elements of our human nature. 'It is the standing danger of all civilizations,' he says, 'and it has been the grave of civilizations, that we forget the early moorland of our birth in the paved streets, stocked shops, bonded warehouses, halls of science, and the artificial lawns of our villas.' There are elements answering to Christ entwined in the primitives of us. And of the human sources of it, he has this to say: 'If you are an earnest man, your Christianity is a transmitted instinct. You have two thousand years of it in your blood.'

There is not a good life lived before us in our stock which has not made the battle of life easier for us.

4. Yet beyond human heritage, and if need be in the teeth of it, there is an immediate and mightier

Power available and at work, and every new thing that comes with every new life is open to the grace of its dealings. 'Something unpredictable in every new life,' says our biologist. That unpredictable is rooted in God. The law of human heritage is transformed and transfigured in the region of redemptive grace into a Divine heredity. At the close of the table of names in St. Luke's Gospel there is an astonishing utterance. Coming at the end of a dull list of births and deaths, it is a declaration staggering in its magnitude. If it is not true, it is a blasphemy, for it is a libel against God. If it is true, it is enough to shame us utterly in the thought of stain upon our kinship, and, at the same time, to bring a catch in the breath as at a sudden glimpse of potentialities beyond our measuring. 'Enos, which was the son of Adam; Adam, which was the son of God.'

There are many things to say in answer to that sinister side of heredity we have been thinking about. That the power of it is limited is a fact verified by experiment and in experience. There is the denial that Nature is mightier than nurture, which was made on the authority of Dr. Barnardo, out of his unique experience in dealing with thousands of young lives. There is the fact that whatever heredity is, it does not put an end to moral freedom and thus to moral responsibility. It may fix our trial but it does not fix our fate.

And there is a greater thing to remember. God, who gave to man his being, made him partake of His own nature. It is only in the fact that man is the child of God that sin gets meaning. It is for us to accept our sonship, to live in the consciousness of it, and in its strength and dignity. We need power for this, and it is what Christ brings—the power to be what we truly are; the power to fulfil our possibilities and reach our destiny.

This was the power Jesus gave and gives to those who believe in Him—a great lifting love, a mighty affection, a carrying enthusiasm—power to become sons of God. If so be that there comes to us, by the far or near human stock to which we belong, an invasion and pressure of God's grace in our very blood—that good thing which was committed unto us, guard through the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us. But if so be that no such reinforcement be ours, let none despair because of it, nor reckon the pull of lower things to be a fate. 'The Eternal has lodging in us; it is ours to turn it into a home.'¹

¹ T. Yates, *The Strategies of Grace*, 158.