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In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

Easter.

By the Reverend James S. Stewart, B.D., Aberdeen.

'God planted a garden.'—Gn 2^{8}.

Easter is the time of two resurrections. There is the one we read of in the Book of Scripture—the resurrection of Jesus. And there is the other we read of in God's other book, the book of Nature—the resurrection of the earth. Easter brings them both. For the happy day when every heart is crying—'Christ is risen!' is also the day when everywhere from the dead ground new life is breaking, and 'the flowers appear on the earth, and the time of the singing of birds is come.' It is a great thing to go out on Easter morning and watch the garden suddenly coming alive!

I expect you have a little bit of the garden that is all your very own. Do you remember the first day that corner was given to you? You went off to the shop to buy something to plant, but there were so many lovely things in the shop—geraniums, roses, chrysanthemums—that it was dreadfully difficult making up your mind at all, until you suddenly remembered it was only a penny you had to spend; and so you chose a mysterious packet of mixed seeds with a wonderful picture on the outside of the flowers that would come up, with all the colours of the rainbow amongst them. And that evening you opened the packet and sprinkled the seeds into a little trench in the earth; and then you waited, and waited, and wondered, and every morning you went to see if those rainbow flowers were not coming yet, and nothing ever happened. And you were just a little disappointed with that packet, and you couldn't understand why the seeds never grew into flowers, for you had only dug them up twice to see how they were growing—or was it thrice? Certainly not more than thrice. Of course it was a pity that Fido would persist in choosing your little corner to bury his bone in, but still it was disappointing that no flowers ever came. But the next packet was more successful, and soon there were masses of red and blue and white and yellow, and whenever visitors came—'Come and see the flowers that I grew!' you said, for you were really enormously proud of them. 'I grew them all myself!' Yes, it is a great thing to have a garden all your very own.

God thinks so too. God just loves having a garden of His own. 'God planted a garden,' says the Bible. The fact is—God planted three very special gardens. One was the Garden of Innocence—and Genesis tells you all about that. One was the Garden of Sorrow: we sometimes call it Gethsemane, and all the olive trees in it once heard Jesus weeping. And one was the Garden of Joy: and the dew-pearled flowers of it laughed and danced round an empty tomb. God loves having a garden all His own.

And how God loves the flowers! We put flowers on the altar and on the Communion Table. We feel He would like them there, in the holiest spot in the Church—because He loves them so much. But God loves the commonest flowers best, the buttercups, the daisies, and the bluebells: that is why He scatters them everywhere. Once on a day when our beloved Queen Mary was visiting a Sick Children's Hospital in a London slum, she was carrying a bouquet of magnificent orchids that had been given her. In one of the wards there was a little cripple lad who had been lying on his back for months, and when the Queen stopped to speak to him his wan, white face lit up. And when she was going on again, he reached out to the vase at his bedside, where somebody had put a bunch of yellow daffodils, and he took one out. 'Have a flower, lady!' he said. And very graciously the Queen accepted the gift, and put that ordinary, drooping, half-faded daffodil right in the centre of her wonderful bouquet. For it meant more to her now than all those glorious orchids. Yes, God loves His common flowers best. He never grows tired of making bluebells in the woods in spring. And that recalls Abraham Lincoln. 'God loves ordinary folk most of all,' he said; 'that is why He has made so many of us.'

'God planted a garden.' And this is Easter. This is Resurrection time. Time for the flowers of kindness and unselfishness and love to be breaking into beauty. Time for the songs of spring. And so—

> . . . the sleeping earth shall wake;
> New-born flowers shall burst in bloom,
> And all nature rising break
> Glorious from its wintry tomb.

Changing the Clock (19th April).

By the Reverend S. Greer, M.A., Ayr.

'Redeeming the time.'—Col 4^5.

'Lost or strayed at Greenwich, between the hours of two and three this morning, a valuable possession. No reward is offered for its return, as there is no hope of recovering it. Lost—an hour.' Nothing can bring it back: another hour will by and by be given in its place, but that won't be the wee waif which has been lost to the world. Think of it! There was no three o'clock this morning. At least there was, but they hustled it off before it could say its name. Sad little waif! Nothing happened in its brief life: no babies were born, no ships sailed, no trains started.

There are other ways of losing time. Are you one of those little folk who don't fix their mind on what they're doing? You're at your home-lessons—or supposed to be. But where were you really—not your body, but You? Out in the Western prairies with the cowboys, chasing the wild steers? Up in the play-room, puzzling how to get that meccano model to work? Dressing your doll for her tea-party? And then, How did that tune go, which you heard the other day? 'Dear me,' you say, 'I'd no idea it was so late: I've been a whole hour at my lessons.' But were you really? What about the 'lost hour'?

There's a fine word that has a lovely picture in it: 'Opportunity.' I see a ship making eagerly for the harbour, and at the moment when the tide is favourable it is just opposite the entrance, which it 'makes' triumphantly. 'Opposite the harbour' is what the word 'opportunity' means. Every morning as we leap from bed finds us opposite a harbour; don't let us miss the tide, by dawdling and dreaming. Life's a splendid adventure, and the best prizes are not for the brilliant, but for the diligent, who get down to their job, and stick to it.

It's a queer thing about clocks, how unequal the hours are: some fly as swiftly as poor little two of this morning, others are fearfully long. There's a clock in Princes Street, Edinburgh, which bears on its face the name: 'Sympathetic Clock.' That's what I've always been hoping to find. You know how it is with the ordinary clock. When you're sleepy in the morning, it insists that it really is eight o'clock. It is quite cold and relentless about it. But a sympathetic clock! We must really buy one. Then when we want to snuggle back in bed, 'Eight o'clock!' you say; 'oh, surely not.' 'Very sorry,' replies the clock, 'my mistake,' and quickly moves its hands back to five! Just as I was thinking how fine this would be, I saw other words on the Edinburgh clock: 'Electrically controlled from the Observatory.' So *that* is all it means; keeping time with the master-clock.

'Redeem the time,' says the Bible: 'give to each flying minute Something to keep in store.' Let us keep time—His time, our hearts beating in unison with the great Master-heart of our life. 'Controlled from on high'—that is the secret of some of the most radiant lives this world has ever seen. God's will directed all their doings, and that mind was in them which was in Christ. Keeping His time is the only way of truly redeeming the time. 'Feeling as another does about things' is what sympathy really means: loving the things He would love: hating what He would hate—all dishonouring things—fearing only cowardice, hating a lie. Shall we not fall into step with Him, marking time, as soldiers do, to the sound of a distant beat?

The Christian Year.

Second Sunday after Easter.

Toward the Sunrising.

'And they journeyed from Oboth, and pitched at Ije-abarim, in the wilderness which is before Moab, toward the sunrising.'—Nu 21^{11}.

All that the writer of the Book of Numbers meant to convey, probably, was that the travellers held east. But his phrase means more than that, for it suggests to us a company of men making their way through a flat, uninspiring land, upheld by the hope of To-morrow Morning. The very words have poetry in them! 'Travelling in the wilderness, toward the sunrising.' That is true living; that is the life of faith.

1. This is the *glorious* way to travel. It is not true to fact to say that 'Life is a desert drear,' though we sometimes sing words like these. But neither is it true to say that life is a picnic. For the heart knoweth its own bitterness, and each man has his burden to bear. Yet, whatever the trouble be, the glorious way to take it, ay, even with tears in one's eyes, is with one's face toward the sunrising.

In *The Road-Mender* there is a man breaking stones by the roadside. He is content in his work, as he sits by the winding white road, to make the way easier for man and beast. On a fine summer day he was working away without avarice or anxiety when he was joined by a tramp in search of work. The tramp says to the road-mender, 'Seen better days?'

'Never,' says the road-mender.

That is the spirit in which to face life. That spirit makes life a success under any circumstances.

The creator of that inspiring figure *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch* has given in her later story a companion picture in 'Mr. Opp,' a poor, shambling, country editor, living in a decaying old house with a half-crazed sister to support. A city-bred, cultivated young man visits the Opp household as a business agent, and is confronted by the problem of his host's optimism. 'Everything about the old house spoke of degeneration, and decay; yet in the midst of it lived a man who asked no odds of life, who took what came, and who lived with a zest, an abandon, a courage that was baffling. Self-deception, egotism, cheap optimism—could they bring a man to this state of mind?

'But he could not imagine Mr. Opp, lame, or blind, giving up the fight. There was that in the man—egotism, courage, whatever it was—that would never recognize defeat, that quality which wins out of a life of losing, the final victory.'

His outlook was his dynamic. Shambling Mr. Opp, doing his duty, saying his prayers, believing in himself, his town, the future and Providence, is on the road which outstrips the cynic, and leads through failure and past it into unknown victories and sunshine ahead.

To travel hopefully, making for the land we cannot see, and the love we have not scales to measure, is to travel in the company of earth's noblest pilgrims. Best of all, it is to travel in the company of Jesus Himself; for the glory of His life, above its seeming failure, was its faith and hope. As one who catches sight of some far beacon marking the way home, He sets His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem and 'for the joy that was set before him endured the cross.'

2. This is the *helpful* way to travel. What a great deal of good it does one to happen upon a cheery soul on life's highway of a morning! Stevenson has said that the man who looks at the silver lining in his cloud is a public benefactor, and that is true.

Of one thing we may be certain: however great may be the evils of the present time, they can only be met in this spirit of hopefulness and faith. An army in the field is entirely dependent upon hope. If that fail, courage, resource, and persistence perish with it. 'The optimist,' as Mr. Chesterton says, 'is a better reformer than the pessimist; and the man who believes life to be excellent is the man who alters it most.'

The world rolls towards the sunrising of a new and greater and better day. Humanity has never been better than now. The air was never so filled with moral ideas. Dogmatic Christianity is declining, but we have never seen the Christ so clearly. The face of the world is toward the sunrise as it never has been in any other age. Let us help to keep it there by being there ourselves.

Do we not also need this attitude in the Church? Yet how pessimistic and gloomy we are in our talk about the Church. Think of the early Christians, think of their persecutions, and yet they are the optimists of the world. Christians are to be the brightest and most hopeful people to be found anywhere. We are to think hope, speak hope, and live hope.

Yet what is the real state of affairs? Is not the common practice even in the Church to 'talk down' the Church? Yet, though much is wrong, of some things we are confident. The Church's influence is right. No Church points men away from righteousness. Its standards are right. The best things in the world have been cradled by the Church. Its aims are right. No living man can say with truth, 'I walked in the way the Church was tending, and I am ruined.' Its hopes are right. Its teaching is right. The best life on earth to-day is that most completely representing what the Church declares as to religion and morality. Believe in the Church and say so; do something to make it better. The Church, the poorest Church, is one of the greatest things in the world.

Mr. Begbie said: 'When the Founder of Christianity said, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," His church would have occupied the last place in a census of the world's religions. But we must be for ever counting heads under our own roof. We make the figures in our Church books the standard of Christ's victory. We inquire the number of communicants last Sunday, the amount of the offertory, the circulation of the local magazine—and we are depressed or elated as these figures are scornful or flattering of our parochial conceit.

'It is so important for Christians to be happy and attractive people, it is so contrary to the spirit of the Master that they should be vexed, gloomy, and disquieted, that one cannot too often preach the gospel of optimism, and too frequently upbraid the dismal prophets of despair.'[1]

Along this line also, Jesus brings new life to men. When we see that in a life as truly human as our own, there shone such faith in the Father's love, such an assurance that beyond the darkness, past the Cross and death, there lay hope and light and

[1] J. Learmount, *God's Endings*, 65 ff.

victory, our hearts reach out to claim it as their faith. There are men whom that has drawn as nothing else could draw them, for whom even that alone marks Jesus as the Lord and Leader of their choice and sworn fealty.

3. This is a *strenuous* way to travel. We do not read that these Israelites longed for the sunrising or gazed toward it, but that they journeyed in that direction. It is not enough to sit still and admire the promise of the dawn, as travellers in the East watch the mirage shimmering in the heat. The thing to do is to bend our lives that way, to work towards our faith, to live in the direction of the sunrising. And sometimes that is far from easy.

Even when the hope is dim and the vision blurred, however, we can still remain loyal to the old direction; and that is often the best way to get the old hope back again. It was a true and shrewd remark that Lady Blanche Balfour once made to a friend who confessed that, because of his doubts, he had given up the practice of prayer. 'That is a mistake,' said Lady Balfour; 'keep the frame and the picture will grow into it again!' Keep the frame. Point for the things we wish to be true. Even when we question whether the sun will ever rise again, let us lay our last course bravely for the dawn. 'Then said Evangelist, pointing with his hand over a very wide field, Do you see yonder wicket gate? The man said, No. Then said the other, Do you see yonder shining light? He said, I think I do. Then said Evangelist, Keep that light in your eye, *and go up directly thereto*, so shalt thou see the gate.'

4. This way of travelling has its *reward*. It has its reward here, for, as Evangelist told his pilgrim, the light grows clearer as one travels towards it. But it has its final reward also. As those who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled, so they who travel toward the sunrising shall come to the full light at last.[1]

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Balaam.

'How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?'—Nu 23^{8}.

'And when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness.'—Nu 24^{1}

1. The great dramatists have given us many a story, which shakes us with its terror, of a man with a bad conscience. 'Macbeth,' 'The Scarlet Letter,' 'Eugene Aram,' occur to us as pictures of the horror that descends upon one when his conscience awakes. These are all wonderful; and, despite the observation of an able man some years ago that 'to-day none of us is worrying about his sins,' stories of that kind will never for more than a time be without their breathless and understanding readers.

But the story of Balaam—the earlier part—has all that moral terror which we associate with the great literature of the soul—with Æschylus and Shakespeare; and it has something in addition. For the story makes of poor Balaam not only an unhappy and terrified figure: in the most delicate way in the world it succeeds in making him look silly. The Bible is very fond of that particular stroke: that a man who does wrong is, amongst many things that sound more serious, a fool. That a man who was quite comfortable at home, highly honoured and respectable, should, for the sake of some presents sent him by the king, set out upon a journey which his own conscience disapproved, and which, he knew, God disapproved; that he should subject himself to all that discomfort, lashing his poor beast to get on, imagining it was not going so fast as usual, though the probability is that it was keeping up quite the regular and predestinated pace of an ass, getting hotter and hotter, and angrier and angrier, crushing his leg against a stone wall, until—well, until he saw that his ass had more sense than he had; all that, I say, is the kind of thing which the Hebrew men of genius loved to do—to describe the ridiculousness of any human being trying in this world to get the better of God.

Perhaps that is enough to recall the earlier portion of the story of Balaam. But deep and true and searching as is that earlier part, it is not the best; and in any case it is not the whole.

The story is sometimes obscure, as though the editor had before him more than one source, and has simply embodied everything, leaving it to us to make of the narrative what we may. Again and again that is the task which the Bible leaves with us: we are left to use our own good sense. If we come upon places, passages, stories, of which we can make nothing useful, we are intended to move on. We shall not have gone far before we come to something which takes hold of us. And besides, we live and learn; and things which at one time seemed to have no very urgent meaning may one day, when we encounter them, we being now older and wiser and not so sure of ourselves,

[1] A. Alexander, *The Glory in the Grey*, 227 ff.

take on a meaning which fits our case as a glove fits the hand it was made for.

Balaam, it would appear, went on to fulfil his contract with Balak, though by this time he knew, what he had always suspected, that it was a contract into which he should never have entered. But there you have Balaam. He had made the contract, and he would stand by it.

Perhaps he thought of going home—on the sound principle that it can never be good to go further on a wrong course. But perhaps at that very moment he recalled the old psalm which defines a good man as a man who, when he has once sworn, will not change though it be to his own hurt, who will fulfil his contract though the market has gone against him. The fact is he went on: remembering, perhaps, one clause in his agreement with Balak which at least would always provide a way of escape so that he need not lose his soul. The clause—literally the saving clause—was that when he came in sight of the advancing hosts of Israel, he, Balaam, would say only what God gave him to say. He might, as Balak desired he should, curse those Israelites; but, again, he might not. It would all depend—and in the last resort it would not depend upon Balak, but on his own conscience and on God's guidance at the moment. All things considered, Balaam comes well out of it, and less damaged in his soul and reputation than he might have been.

'How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?' As Balaam stared at the advancing hosts he knew what he had to say. He opened his mouth and poured out not a curse but a blessing.

2. Upon this Balak intervened, and with a suggestion which shows that he was a very shrewd man. 'Come away,' said Balak, 'come away from that place where you can see them all; and come down to this low-lying place from which you can see only a part and section. And curse me them from this low-lying place.' That was shrewd. For there Balak had hold of a great principle. What principle? This: that when we see only a part of anything at which God is working, we may curse, we may lose heart, or we may sneer and scoff. But when we see the whole thing, as in fine moments we do, we do not curse; we hold our breath and wonder and wait.

This is the function of all true art—of sculpture, of painting, of music, and of that still greater art which religion is: to let us see the whole, the meaning, the spirit, the intention, the end; and if it must deal with life or Nature or experience in parts, to let us see the part within some suggested context, even as God lets us see the crescent moon with the complete circle drawn in pencil on the azure background; so that looking at the crescent we infer and anticipate the coming glory.

And this also, and nothing else, is the function of the supreme art—the art of living. It is with this very intention, certainly with this very effect, that we ought to speak to one another, disclosing in the very tone of our voice the final and eternal harmony which life's details may seem to make incredible. A kind word, a friendly deed, what is that but the breaking through of the All, of everything, of God through some partial thing? What is that but a high and cheery summons to him or her to whom we speak, towards whom we act, and to ourselves, to lift up our hearts from the sadness or confusion of some jarring thing—like sorrow or like death? I say that is our one business in the world—to help each other to see God.

Joseph Conrad says of one of his great human figures, that looking at her one perceived that she was one of those creatures which are not the playthings of time.

To have a significance—that is perhaps our very calling, our task and business in this world. To be to one another encouragers, so that those at least who know us to any depth shall become composed and happy in our company, having found a new quietness and purpose, which, if they could only make their mood plain to themselves, they should see, has just this as its source: that near to us, and breathing our air, they have come within sight of the reconciling things, and that our lives have their completeness somewhere, that is to say, in God.[1]

3. Balaam built seven altars in his desire to get near God, and in his anxiety to please King Balak. But it availed nought: and he only found his soul when he left them behind him and set his face toward the wilderness. And it is typical of the kind of experience that so many have had.

Man's way is to build stone altars; God's way is the wilderness, with its revelations of burning bushes and kindled imaginations. Man's method of fighting social and moral evil is to go for it direct. God's way, Christ's way, is to hide a little leaven or bury a tiny seed—and wait. When we stop building our trim little altars, and get out into the great unmeasured spaces of God's temple not made with hands, we shall begin to understand.

But the tragedy of Balaam consisted in just this, that, though he went so far, he stopped short

[1] J. A. Hutton, *Discerning the Times*, 169.

of the highest. Israel needed a poet such as he, yet he is less famous than his ass. And from poor Balaam we must turn to that other Rider upon an ass who also set His blessed face toward the wilderness; who for the joy which was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and hath given us not only an example for our guidance, but salvation for the asking.[1]

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

The Christ that is To Be.

'I am the way.'—Jn 14^6.

In a book, called *The Victorian Tragedy*, which some of us may have read, we have a study of the achievements and failures of the generation whose tasks we inherit. The Victorians had to attempt something quite new, to reshape the forms of civilization and build a new home for the human spirit on the basis of machines and cheap products. They came within an inch of success too; they made enormous improvements in all directions, they bred vigour, confidence, and enterprise, and a certain massive solidity of character. But one thing they did not succeed in doing. They could not make Man master of himself. They left Man himself uninterpreted, lonely in his palaces of industry, driven along as the slave of his own mechanisms. We to-day are heirs of that problem. We are caught in a whirl of ceaseless activities, but the meaning of those activities escapes us. We have lost the sense of a guiding purpose, and life seems fragmentary and futile—terribly like a Chekov play—unknit loose strands of experience that are worked into no intelligible pattern. We may not be burdened with a sense of sin, but we are oppressed with a feeling of futility, that nothing means much or matters much.

It is silly to talk of the 'decadence' of Oxford. It is now in a great many ways a far better place than it was. Here as elsewhere in the world there is a certain atrophy of conviction. Having taught the young for so many centuries that there are two sides to every question we have come ourselves to believe it. We find it hard to commit ourselves to anything. But people who say that our generation has abandoned its interest in religion know very little about our generation. We all know now what it is we need most; we cannot recover mastery in life without a creative faith in a purpose which makes us free of the sweep and range of life. We have passed through some wild and baffling times since the War. But now we can see the harvest ripening. The anti-religious self-seeking reaction of the post-war years is nearly spent. Cheap scepticism is now entirely obsolete. Few thinkers of real eminence are now hostile to the religious interpretation of life. There is no serious thinker of whatever kind who is not earnestly seeking for a faith by which to guide our bewildered footsteps. Experience has taught us our lesson. 'It is high time to awake out of sleep'—out of that mist of unreality, half-living and half-thinking and half-awakened conventionality, which blankets all our aims and our achievements—to awake to the Christian gospel as at once our hope and our judgment.

Non-Christian thinking is bankrupt.—We say we live in a scientific age, but its real characteristic is an almost shameless irrationality—a mixture of credulity and scepticism which has no firm basis in reason at all. Scientists vie with one another in doubting the truth of scientific concepts. Faith in the possibility of science, as Whitehead said, is a 'derivative from mediæval theology.' Indeed, it is only the Christian scheme of thought which has any claim to be called truly rational. Where is there any guarantee of truth unless the world is grounded in a purpose which responds to our minds and spirits? Christianity can interpret the Universe in terms that do justice to all Man's experience.

Non-Christian morality is bankrupt.—We have tried to believe in Man instead of God, and now we find ourselves distrusting Man. Every new novel adds its testimony to the pessimism about Man and the low view we take of human nature. The question, What is Man? cannot be answered until we see Man in the light of Christ. We thought for a while that psychology would save us; all it has done is to rob us of our selfhood. 'What is my soul in a boundless creation?' Psychology is barren without theology.

Non-Christian politics are bankrupt.—There is no conviction anywhere in politics because we hold no faith in common. The adjustment of the claims of personality to the necessities of the social order—of liberty with fraternity—is too much for the children of this world. Only look, for example, at Africa. We are faced there with the attempt to reconcile the inevitably conflicting claims of the European settlers on the one hand, the African population on the other, of both with their Asiatic fellow-subjects. What can organize these diverse claims into effective co-operation? Where can we find a principle of unity save in the light of a con-

[1] H. L. Simpson, *The Intention of His Soul*, 41.

trolling *purpose*, in which all share, to which all are committed, in which all and each find fulfilment? Hence, no doubt, the sinister attraction of the Fascist and Bolshevist experiments, which seem at least to impart some mystic touch to the functioning of the social mechanism, and implant some faith at the heart of politics. These smash and ruin personality and achieve equality at the price of liberty. But what live alternative is before us? The world will have to choose in the near future between one or another form of Bolshevism—the organization of men in the mass—and a rediscovery of the Christian faith which finds meaning for the individual in a fellowship of free co-operation.

What do we suppose would be the result if Oxford gave itself to Christianity? It might not look very different on the surface. We might perhaps talk less about religion; we should not proliferate in holy tea-parties. We should still be the same light-hearted creatures, only perhaps rather more light-hearted, as men who know that they have been gathered out of the futility of aimlessness into the inspiration of a purpose. That is what gives men mastery and freedom, and often lends a touch of greatness to men of quite commonplace ability. What would it mean to the world if men and women naturally went forth from it, without any self-consciousness or priggishness, along the various avenues of life, held by the vision of life as a whole, inspired and steadied by the conviction that in Christ is the purpose of the world? Would it not revolutionize public life? That could happen: it could happen quickly if our generation can rise to the opportunity which is laid upon it in loyalty to the purpose which claims us.

The Coming Christ, the Christ which is to be: we have been speaking mainly in the future tense. But Christianity has its roots in history. And that for some minds is the crucial difficulty. The perspective of the early believers was, as we know, violently foreshortened by the expectation of a world catastrophe. Our thought is controlled by evolution, and we look down long vistas of the future. How, then, can we claim this finality for a revelation that came in the past? We can accept with gratitude and reverence the light which He shed upon our way, but may we not perhaps outgrow Him? The New Testament at least uses precisely the opposite language: it speaks about 'growing up into' Him. Christianity has never said that Jesus is God's last word or work in mankind. 'He is not the goal of man's destiny but the direction to be followed, and the power to follow it!'

No doubt, of course, that our whole attitude is changed by the new scales of space and time. Our planet seems as a millionth part of a grain of sand amid all the sand in all the seas of the world, our history but the twinkling of an eye in the vast backward and abysm of time. And all this involves readjustment. Our civilization is still very primitive. What seems to us at times the exhaustion of an old and weary civilization is really perhaps the confusion of adolescence. Christianity is still in its infancy. It may demand in the coming time new forms of expression, new interpretations. Why should we be afraid of that? Let us take our full share in helping to discover them: so that we may grow up into Christ, no more children tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of teaching.

Yet one thing more must be added. We should not be faithful to Christianity if we were to suggest that the final goal of all our spiritual strivings could be found within the time process. God has set eternity in our hearts, and in nothing temporal can we find fulfilment. Not in any mere futurity can our spirits find peace and confidence; only in a Kingdom which is eternal, in communion with God who is our home.[1]

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

The Appeal of the Ascended Christ.

'Now is the judgement of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself.'—Jn $12^{31.32}$ (R.V.).

These are bold words; and they seem all the bolder when we think of the position of Him who speaks them. Holy Week has already begun; before it is over our Lord will be crucified. Soon the crowds will fall away; even the Apostles will desert Him, and He will be left alone to bear His Passion. And yet His words are the words of a conqueror. He does not say, as we might have expected, 'Now is my judgement,' but 'Now is the judgement of this world.' It is not He, but Satan, 'the prince of this world,' who will 'be cast out.' Instead of thinking of the time when all men will desert Him, He says, 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.' There is something attractive about boldness like this. Such words draw us to Him who speaks them. But what did the Lord mean? How could He speak as He did in the face of death? It was because He looked forward to the Resurrection and the

[1] F. R. Barry, in *Christ in University Life*, 145.

Ascension, and to all the work for us that would follow them.

In the gradual teaching of our Lord there is one feature which arrests us. With ever-increasing clearness He informed His hearers that soon He was going home to God. As the shadows deepened, and the Cross came nearer, He grew very pitiful for His disciples. He saw what an awful hour that would be when He departed and they were left alone. And so with all the compassion of a mother He began to tell them of His coming glory, and of the offices He would exercise in heaven. 'Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. In my Father's house are many mansions, I go unto my Father and to your Father. I go to prepare a place for you.' With such words of comfort and of love He sought to mitigate their coming sorrow, when they would look for Him, and look for Him in vain. Cannot we picture how, on Ascension morning, these words would leap to their memories again? Taught by their loneliness they would recall them, and recalling them would know where He was gone. It was an hour of disclosure for their hearts.

And yet with that disclosure there was a great reserve. In that hour when their Lord went home, and every disclosure was on the point of crowning, they looked, and lo! there was nothing but a cloud. No Father's face—no feet of the shining ones beside the river—no many mansions gleaming in the light—no leaves for the healing of the nations; only a cloud—something they could not penetrate—something that hung its folds about the glory—and Christ was gone, and they were left alone, and the wind was blowing quietly across Olivet.

But it is not upon the Ascension that we shall fix our thoughts to-day, but upon our Lord in His glory. 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.' The Ascension means what it does to us because of what it can tell us of our Lord as He is to-day. How little, as a rule, we care about the lives of the dead, and how much we care about the lives of the living! Alexander, Cæsar, Napoleon—we read about them in our books of history, but as a rule they do not greatly interest us. They have passed away, and we have no more to do with them. But let our newspaper tell us something of the past life of men who are still alive and working, of the statesmen, of soldiers, or writers of the present day, and at once we are interested. It is their past lives that have made them what they are to-day, and that enable us to understand them. So it is with all that we learn about our Lord Jesus Christ. If our Lord had passed away, and we had no more to do with Him, His life and experience would have lost their interest. But it is not so. The Lord is not only one who has lived; He is living still, and alive for evermore.

How does the Ascension enable Him to draw us all unto Himself?

1. It enables our Lord to draw us all by *His example*. We see in that glory that our Lord has won the certain end of every life that follows Him. It is hard to be really honest in a world like this; hard to be temperate, hard to be pure when others are not so, and our passions are as strong as theirs. And harder still, perhaps, it is to sacrifice ourselves and live for God, to love Him and to love our neighbours, when our neighbours do not love us, and we cannot yet feel that God does either. It was hard for the Lord Himself. But He did live for God only. He did sacrifice Himself to the uttermost, and the Ascension was the consequence. Just as Jesus on the Cross is the revelation of human suffering, so Jesus on His throne is the revelation of human joy. And now to-day, from His throne of glory, He draws us all thither to Himself. He points us to the joy, with which His whole nature is filled, and He says to us, 'If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.' Can we ask more than that—to be where our Lord is, to be honoured in our measure as He is honoured? If we follow, it will be so. 'Faithful is the saying: For if we died with him, we shall also live with him: if we endure, we shall also reign with him.'

2. But our Lord draws us also by *His work for us in heaven*. Yes! His work for us, for the Lord is working still. Glory and joy lie in grand, free, successful action. To feel ourselves alive, and active; to have work to do, and be able without hindrance perfectly to do it; to see all round us the fruits of our activity, and to be carrying it forward to the end, that is glory and joy even here. The idle man is not enough alive for joy. And, little as we can know as yet of the joy of our Lord, it is, we are sure, no idle joy. He has work to do for us, and He is able perfectly to do it.

First of all, there is the work of Intercession. The same Lord, who lived and died for us here, stands ever in the presence of God to plead for us there. There is no need that we can feel, in any circumstances of temptation or conflict, but finds perfect expression in the intercession for us of the Son of Man. And, in that heavenly region to which our Lord has gone, He is, as He has told us, preparing a place for us, a place that will one day be our

own, and our own for ever. If He were not there, we could never go there; but, now that He is there, we can.

3. Once again, our Lord draws us by *His work within us*—by that Holy Spirit, whom He has sent to lead us upward to Himself. And of all His means of drawing there is none so powerful as that. It is the Holy Spirit that awakens us to see those needs in ourselves which only our Lord can satisfy; it is the Holy Spirit who shows us the Lord as the One who can satisfy them; it is the Holy Spirit who imparts to us the life by which we can follow the Lord, and will help us all the way, until we are one with Him for ever. And therefore it was that the very first thing that the Lord did after His Ascension was to send to us His Holy Spirit.

So, then, by His example, by His work for us, and by His work in us, our Lord is drawing us all unto Himself. It is not enough to be drawn; we must freely yield to the drawing. How many kinds of drawing there are! See two teams of men pulling one against another in a tug-of-war. Each is being drawn, but each is resisting the drawing. So it may be with us. See two horses drawing a waggon up a steep hill. We cannot say that the waggon resists, but it does nothing to help. So, again, it may be with us. We rise, thank God, but oh, how slowly! How little we do to help our rising! But there is a third drawing. See a party of men climbing a Swiss mountain. The guide goes first, cutting the steps. From above he lets down his rope, and draws the climbers after him. Not only are they drawn, but they welcome and respond to the drawing. Is not that the model for us all?[1]

[1] H. L. Goudge, *Sin and Redemption*, 109.

Recent Foreign Theology.

Is Romans vii. Autobiographical?

MANY scholars have endeavoured to find some light on the preparation for, and the nature of Paul's conversion in the passage in Ro 7, throughout which he uses the first singular personal pronoun 'I' on the assumption that it may be taken as autobiographical and as describing his struggles before he found his victory in captivity to Christ. But the writer of this thesis[1] for the doctorate will not have any such use of it on any terms. And, whether one agrees with his conclusion or not, one cannot but appreciate the industry and ability, the care and the skill, which this study displays. He seems to have read nearly (if not) all the relevant literature in French and English as well as German, and even refers to Spanish and Italian. In his Introduction he states the problem to be explored, if not solved, 'Thus to-day there stand in opposition a confident use of the chapter in its psychological interpretation and an ever renewed effort to establish the actual essence of what is here described, without the issue being settled' (p. 2). The first chapter places Ro 7 in its context in the Epistle; the second discusses the fundamental conceptions of Paul's Anthropology; and the third examines with meticulous scrutiny 'the interpretation of Romans vii. apart from the question of the subject,' which, however, like King Charles' head, keeps obtruding itself. In chapter four we come to the crucial question: Who is the 'I' here described? It is very convincingly proved in my judgment that the reference cannot be to the Christian, as such an assumption would contradict Paul's essential teaching as to the salvation from sin and law which is experienced in Christ. Less convincingly in my judgment it is argued that the use of the first person singular is rhetorical in accordance with the usages of the time. There is, however, it seems to me, passion and pathos in the tone, which rhetoric cannot account for, and which only painful memories of past experiences can adequately explain.

If autobiography is to be altogether excluded, is this an imaginative or speculative account of what a human experience under the Law might have been till Christ brought deliverance? That seems an incredible supposition. The description Paul gives of his Pharisaic contentment in Ph 3, which he surrendered on being apprehended by Christ, does not seem to me to exclude necessarily such an experience of bondage and misery, as is here described, as a stage in his personal development. While I fully recognize the weight of the exegetical considerations which

[1] *Römer 7 und die Bekehrung des Paulus*, von Weiner Georg Kümmel (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1929).