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it take heart, when it recalls what God can do in pursuance of His will towards it. At the beginning He purposed to have the nation separate from the world and consecrated to His service. He therefore broke Egypt, and by His power led His people into liberty. What He did once He can and will do again, for His purpose is unchangeable. Let Israel do what is within its power in connexion with this purpose of its God. Let it segregate itself from the peoples which are in its land, and refuse to intermarry with them. Then Yahweh will not fail to do His part. He will give the conditions which are necessary to keep it separate and consecrated to Himself. He will break the power of the nations and make Israel master of its own life in its own land. Did He not do this very thing, when He brought it at the beginning out of Egypt?

The chapter, accordingly, is late. What it demands goes beyond the terms of the Code, though its aim is the same, namely, to maintain the distinctive religious life of Israel. The conditions, too, which it implies are not those of the Code, for the nation is weakened and has lost its self-confidence. It remains to ask whether there is any period in the life of the people to which it is possible to assign it.

Now I have recently offered the proof of the existence of a movement in North Israel about the time of Josiah in the direction of segregation from the heathen settlers among whom it had to live after the destruction of Samaria.[1] It took the form of a solemn fast at which appropriate passages from the Torah were read. Certain liturgies, which were written for this special service, have survived. Two of them are found in the Psalter, namely, Pss 80 and 44. One of them has been included in the miscellaneous material at the close of Nehemiah (9^{1-37}). In all these appear the same features. The people are under the power of their enemies in their own land. They seek to preserve their nationality and their faith by segregating themselves from their heathen neighbours, and by refusing to intermarry with them. Nowhere do they anticipate a Return. Instead, they seek to strengthen their hold on their distinctive faith, by separating themselves from the foreigner, by joining in the ritual of their fast and prayer, by reading from their law. And they trust in Yahweh's power to give them help in their intolerable situation. This fast continued at least until the period of the building of the second temple, for there is mention of a deputation which came from Bethel to Jerusalem to ask whether the men were at liberty to discontinue it (Zec $7^{1ff.}$).

The chapter in Deuteronomy belongs to the same period and the same movement. It enacts a specific regulation, a rule against intermarriage, which was to serve the purpose of segregation from the heathen. Living now under institutions which are not their own, and subject to constant disintegrating influence from the paganism among which they are plunged, the people took the only means which remained within their power to preserve their distinctive life.

[1] Cf. two articles in *Z.A.W.*, 1929, pp. 130 ff.; 1930, pp. 175 ff.

In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

The Vigil.

By the Reverend R. E. Thomas, M.A., Middlesbrough.

'A good soldier of Jesus Christ.'—2 Ti 2^{3}.

Most boys and girls must have seen a picture which is called 'The Vigil.' It is a picture of a young man who is kneeling in church before the altar. He is alone, and evidently it is night, for no light burns save the altar light. The young man is dressed in white, and his strange clothing and the locks of hair falling to his shoulders tell us he belonged to an age of long ago. In front of him, indeed, is the armour of a knight of old, while on the altar lies a sword. What is this young man doing? What does the picture mean?

The picture, I have said, is called 'The Vigil,' and this young man is keeping the vigil, or watch, which every youth of noble birth had to keep in olden times before he could become a knight. It carries us back to the customs of the Middle Ages. In those days the sons of noblemen might serve first as pages when they were but little boys. As such they would bear the trains of the dresses of the ladies, just as sometimes to-day at fashionable weddings we still see little pages acting as train-

bearers. Then, when they grew older these boys became esquires. They might now accompany a knight in the tournaments, keeping bright his armour, or carrying his shield, and themselves wearing silver spurs and special collars made up of a series of links in the shape of the letter S. But when a young man came of age, it was his great ambition to become a knight himself. This meant a special and very solemn ceremony.

It is this ceremony which the picture represents. First, the young man who would be a knight fasted and bathed, and made solemn confession of any sins of which he was conscious. Then the vigil in church followed, as the picture shows us. All night he knelt there alone, offering himself to God, with his sword laid upon the altar to signify his devotion to God and determination to lead a holy life. In the morning he took Communion, and then in the presence of the bishop, or priest, he pledged himself to protect the distressed, to maintain right against might, and never, by word or deed, to stain his character as a knight and a Christian. He who heard this vow then touched the young man's shoulder with the sword, afterwards binding it and his spurs upon him and saying, 'Be thou a good and faithful knight.' Later in the day there would be feasting and merry-making, and perhaps the new knight would take part in a mock tournament.

All this was long ago, and the days of knightly tournaments and knightly chivalry are past. But the days of true chivalry are not past, nor the days when the world needs those who will give themselves to living pure and holy lives. And if our king on his throne no longer calls for knights as in the far-off days, yet there is an even greater King, Jesus Christ, who needs His 'good soldiers.' Is there not a time in the lives of us all when we ought to dedicate ourselves to the service of this King of kings, and this in a way as definite and solemn as ever was observed by knights of old?

Yes, and this giving of ourselves to Christ's royal service must not be in word only. There was one other thing which the young man had to do in olden times before he could become fully and truly a knight. He had to win his spurs. That is, he had not merely to dedicate himself in church, but he had also to perform some brave or chivalrous deed in the world. The story goes that at the battle of Crécy, or Cressy, when the English, under Edward III., were fighting against great odds, news was brought to the king that his son, the Black Prince, was in a tight fix and needed help. 'Is my son wounded or dead?' asked the king. 'No,' they answered him, 'it is not as bad as that.' 'Then,' the king replied, 'leave my son to win his spurs.' And the young Prince, who was but sixteen, did a brave deed that day and did win his spurs. Indeed, he took as his motto the famous words, '*Ich Dien*' ('I serve'), which ever since has been the noble motto of the Prince of Wales.

Yes, '*Ich Dien*' ('I serve'), that is the motto for all true knights of Jesus Christ. It is a motto which must not end in words only, but must be expressed in deeds of love and service.

'The Devil's Snare.'

By the Reverend Duncan Fraser, M.A., Invergordon.

'Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped.'—Ps 124[7].

You have all heard about 'man-eating' animals, have you not? Many of you, I am sure, have looked with wonder and perhaps a little fear at the 'man-eaters' caged behind strong iron bars in the Zoo. But how many of you have heard about a 'man-eating' plant?

Many years ago a naturalist was in the wilds of South America hunting for specimens for a museum. One day while he was busy exploring a swamp, he heard his dog cry out as if in great agony. He ran to the spot from which the sound came, and to his surprise he found the dog enveloped in a perfect network of what seemed to be long roots or fibres. He drew his knife and began to hack at the network, when, to his horror, the fibres immediately curled round his fingers like living things, and it required all his strength to tear them away, and when finally he did tear them off his hands were all red and blistered.

When he returned to his camp he asked his native servants if they knew anything about this strange plant, and they replied that it was well known in that district and went by the name of 'The devil's snare.' They told him how a certain Englishman happened to be out in that very swamp, and feeling tired lay down beneath a tree where unknown to him there was one of these plants. He fell asleep, and when he awoke he found himself enveloped in its network, and in spite of every effort made to extricate him he perished in its deadly embrace.

Another of their stories was about an escaped convict who took refuge from his pursuers in that swamp. After a long and fruitless search the pursuers returned home, and it was not till long afterwards that his bones were found, white and

bleached, in the embrace of the 'man-eating' plant.

Now it is not at all likely that we shall ever fall into the clutches of that strange plant, though it is quite probable that we may see it in our Botanical Gardens when naturalists have discovered how to grow it in our country. But even in Scotland it is possible for us to become entangled in the coils of a snare just as terrible as 'the devil's snare' of South America, and the name of that snare is Habit. I am sure you have heard grown-up people speak of some one or other as having 'fallen into the habit' of doing something, and usually they mean something which is not quite right or nice. There is a well-known proverb which says that 'Habit is second nature.' Your nature is made up of a great many things, but one may put it simply by saying that it means your way of doing things, and your way of doing things may be changed for the better or the worse. Many a cross, bad-tempered boy grows up to be bright and good and courteous; while many a bright, intelligent boy turns out later on to be one of those terrible people who cause trouble and annoyance wherever they go.

What is it that changes people like that? It is just the kind of habits they have formed. The cross, bad-tempered boy has been taught by some one to form good habits, and these have taken the place of his old nature; while the bright, intelligent boy has fallen into the snare of bad habits, and when he reaches manhood he is entangled so firmly in their coils that escape is very difficult.

But there is a way by which we may escape from the snare of bad habits. Not long ago I saw a little kitten that had fallen into a trap set for rabbits. One of its forepaws had been caught in the trap, and for a whole day it remained a prisoner, but then some one came along, took pity upon the poor little creature and set it free. Its paw was badly cut and swollen to twice its normal size, but by limping along on three legs it managed to reach home, and now it is slowly recovering from its adventure. When we are lying caught in the snare of bad habits there is One who comes along and offers to set us free—the Lord Jesus. The snare holds us so firmly that we cannot ourselves break it, but He can and does.

Very often Jesus sets us free by showing us a more excellent way of doing things. He lets us see how poor our own ways are, and then He says to us, 'This is how these things should be done,' and once we have seen His way we are never again satisfied with anything else. We look back with horror on the old habits that held us bound, and we say in the words of the Psalmist, 'Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we are escaped!'

The Christian Year.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Christ in Fiction.

'For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.'—2 P 1^{16}.

Most readers of the Gospels allow that the character of Christ is sublime. But beyond the fact that it is beautiful lies the question: Is it true? There are critics who contend that its sublimity was created by uncritical admirers. Disciples heightened goodness into perfection, and then ascribed to their own creation the attributes of Deity. We who live in a period of great unsettlement may do well to consider why we are convinced that the gospel portrait is a fact and not a fiction.

1. There is one thing which fiction has never yet achieved; fiction has never yet created a perfect character. There are two opposite types of human excellence—that which excels in gentleness and that which excels in strength. But those opposite virtues do not easily unite. Now this is exactly what is seen in the character of Jesus Christ. If our first impression is, How gentle! our second is, How strong! And these conflicting qualities of love and power are blended together in Him in a marvellous proportion.

Remember the great artist whose painting was presented to the nation on condition that it should be hung beside the masterpiece of a celebrated predecessor. Reflect on that fearless challenge of comparison; think of the consciousness of power therein implied. And then ask whether there is any character in fiction fit to be set side by side with the gospel masterpiece. Why is it that the evangelists alone have produced the ideal of a perfect man? Moreover, the distinction of the gospel character does not only consist in the perfection of its human graces. It consists further in the intensity of its religion. It is a character which can only be described as the Son of Man, who was also the Son of God. It is a conception which is perfectly unique. For it represents how Deity would behave under human conditions. Is there any work of fiction which has ever succeeded in such an enterprise as this?

2. Let us remember the use which imagination

has made of the gospel character down the centuries. Think of the Apocryphal Gospels far back in the primitive days. The *Golden Legend*, versified by the American poet, illustrates for English readers what Christ became in fiction. And what are the characteristics of the Apocryphal Christ? He is reduced from the unutterable moral sublimity of the evangelists to an inferior third-rate figure, whose personality could never have uplifted any one. There is no conscience-moving power in this work of fiction.

When we pass from the Apocryphal legends to the great devotional writers of a later time, who also bring Christ into their works and make Him speak, we pass indeed into an atmosphere very lofty and refined, but yet beneath the level of the evangelists. St. Bonaventure in his Life of Christ has done a daring thing. He invented a long prayer for Christ to say in the Garden of Gethsemane. Pious student as he was of the words of Christ, he could not rise to that occasion. No one would mistake Bonaventure's production for a genuine utterance of his Lord. Far higher than Bonaventure's imaginings stands à Kempis and the *Imitation*. Those unearthly conversations between God and the soul are filled with intense devotion and sublimity, and yet it is not possible to feel that they are precisely what Christ Himself would say. There is a mediæval and monastic stamp upon them. They are marked with the limitations of the author's time and place. And if even men like these have failed to invent new sayings of Jesus Christ, no wonder if our Puritan poet failed still more. The failure of Milton is conspicuous. He ignores the Christology of St. Paul. He could not in the least appreciate St. John. He reduced our Lord to a mere humanitarian figure. It is commonly agreed that Milton's Satan is more convincing than his Christ. That estimate is surely true.

3. What men in our time desire to know is not so much how Christ conducted Himself in the simpler life in Galilee many centuries ago, but rather how Christ would behave in the complex life of to-day. The desire to answer this question has created a literature of its own. It has given us such books as *In His Steps* and *If Christ came to Chicago*. Would it not fairly represent the impression such works have made to say that when we closed them we thought—Well, yes, probably if Christ were placed in that predicament He would say something like that and do something of that kind? But He would do it on a far sublimer level, and in a perfectly inimitable way. The social reformer desires to transfer Christ from the first age into this, but is not able to sustain our Lord under changed conditions on the same unearthly heights as the gospel places Him.

Christ has been often introduced into modern poetry and romance. Take those two well-known poems *The Light of Asia* and *The Light of the World*. Whether or not the one reproduces the Buddhist ideal, most assuredly the other does not reproduce the ideal of the Christian Gospels. It does nothing more than versify selected fragments of Christ's teaching, while vital elements in the Divine original are altogether set aside. The great poets in the nineteenth century scarcely ever invent a speech for Christ. The greatest of them tells us the story of Lazarus and lets St. John the Evangelist speak in *The Death in the Desert*. Christ is the subject of their noblest thoughts. But Christ Himself is not impersonated in their poems. That popular romance *Ben Hur*, with its realistic story of the leper's fate, brings in the Figure of the Christ simply to repeat the gospel sentence, 'I will—be thou clean.' But when that mighty word is spoken, Christ is at once withdrawn. And why? Partly, no doubt from reverence, but partly also from a wholesome sense of limitation. Three well-known illustrations of this reserve have appeared in recent years. The Russian writer Andriev, in *Judas Iscariot*, tells the story of the Passion and of the traitor going mad. Judas speaks, is voluble, incoherent, raging—page after page is filled with the ravings of lunacy. But Christ? Christ is kept in the background, silent all through. A second work was by an Englishman. It is called *Good Friday: A Tragedy*. Here Christ speaks a few words borrowed from the Gospels. But nothing more.

Still more significant is the treatment of our Lord in *Christ in Hades*. The gifted author of those melodious lines follows Christ in imagination through the regions of the departed. He tells us how the dead assembled round the wondrous Figure, keenly aware that He is not as they; how they waited wistfully to hear Him speak; how they made pathetic and piteous appeal, how they fell to calling Him by sweet human names. And He—how did He answer them? Ah! there was the poet's perplexity. With all his genius, he could not imagine it. Christ in Hades does not utter a solitary word.

> Seeing He stirred not once, they wandered off,
> . . . . . .
> Then to despair slowly dispersed, as men
> Return with morning to the accustomed task.

The Evangelists were not competent to create the ideal which the Gospels contain. Is it credible that these men, with their most imperfect style, nevertheless had the power to imagine what all the genius of the cultured ever since has failed to conceive? We are driven by force of facts to the conclusion that what the Evangelists had no power to invent, they were able to report. 'That which we have seen with our eyes, that which we have beheld, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you' (1 Jn 1^{1-3}).[1]

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The New Commandment.

'A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.'—Jn $13^{34.35}$.

1. *The nature* of the commandment. What was there so peculiar in the nature of the commandment that Jesus described it as *new*? It was not His first mention of love as a Christian duty. But the love here enjoined was something other and more than any He had hitherto taught. As the context shows, it is the circle of the disciples to which the Master is now confining His regard, and it is about their mutual relation that He is now concerned. Their love as brethren (*philadelphia*) is to be, not a contradiction or exclusion, but a concentration and intensification of their love as men for their fellowmen (*philanthropia*).

When Jesus called His disciples to be with Him as His daily companions, He took the first step towards the formation of the Christian society; but the common bond was attachment and devotion to Himself. The withdrawal of His visible presence, and all that it meant for the company of His followers, necessitated the provision of another motive and means of unity, in order that the society not only might be preserved as it had hitherto been, but might even make progress in becoming more completely one. On the one hand, the memory of what Jesus had been, taught, and wrought must be kept vivid, and the expectation of His return in power and glory intense; on the other hand, the hostility of the world around must be dared, and its persecution must be endured in bearing witness to the Risen and the Returning Lord. For so great a trust and so hard a task isolated individuals would have been altogether insufficient; only a society held closely and firmly together could avail for such a burden and such a battle.

While the Christian Church even in the Apostolic Age fell far short of perfect obedience to the perfect teaching and example of Jesus, yet this commandment of love was recognized and obeyed. Not only do we find it echoed again and again in the First Epistle of John (3^{10-14} 4^{11}), and brotherly love represented as the distinctive feature of the Christian community in contrast with the hostile world; but a very practical application was given to it in what has been described as the communism of the Jerusalem fellowship (Ac 4^{32}). Paul wrote the hymn of love in 1 Co 13, which, as the connexion with the preceding chapter shows, referred to the fellowship of believers within the Christian Church. In his comparison of the Christian society to a living body, he is not describing an ideal altogether unrelated to actuality, for the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit were realized in a *Koinonia*, a community of life, a participation in common gifts, a mutual service. It was in the communion of the Holy Spirit that the new commandment was fulfilled in the Apostolic Church. As the Church grew in numbers the closeness of the fellowship could not be maintained; and yet as late as the end of the second century (in A.D. 190) Tertullian testifies to the fact that the heathen world bore its unwilling witness, 'See how these Christians love one another.'

2. The new commandment not only commends itself to the conscience by its nature, it makes its appeal to the heart by *its reason*. It is the love of Christ which constrains the brotherly love of Christians. In presenting as its motive His own love to His disciples, 'because I have loved you, that ye also love one another,' Jesus reveals His secret. He shows the meaning, worth, and aim of all His dealings with His disciples, of all His teaching and training of them. There was a restraint and reserve in the relation of Jesus to His disciples in His earthly ministry which might lead us to misunderstand its character apart from such revealing moments and utterances. Terms of endearment were seldom on His lips; His disciples would never have thought, as mystics of a later age even dared to do, of searching the Song of Songs for epithets to apply to Him. Yet what a glimpse into His heart is given us in the saying about His disciples: 'Behold, my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother' (Mk $3^{34.35}$). We shall not understand that saying aright if we

[1] W. J. Sparrow Simpson, *The Revelation of God*, 55.

suppose that Jesus appreciated natural relationships less than other men. He so spoke because He appreciated spiritual relationships so much more than these have ever been by other men.

Love, then, had been the motive of all His teaching and all His training. He did desire and expect love towards Himself. But the love He sought was no narrow, selfish attachment to His person, but rather a participation in His purpose, an absorption in His spirit, a submission to the same Divine will as He so constantly and absolutely served. He had loved His disciples, not that they might love Him in any such individualist affection, but that they might love one another, in a social devotion.

3. The reason for the new commandment is the love of Jesus for His disciples; but the love enjoined on them has also its reason; and that is disclosed in *the purpose* of the new commandment stated in the thirty-fifth verse. The love of the disciples to one another will be a sign and proof of their relation to Himself. Here Jesus speaks of all men, while in the seventeenth chapter He speaks of the world; while the terms are not strictly synonymous, they are practically equivalent. Accordingly there appears here a thought which runs through the high-priestly prayer. Jesus prays for Himself, for His disciples, for the world. Here He also sets His relation to His disciples, and theirs to one another, in the widest context. In describing the issue of their obedience to the new commandment as the knowledge of them as His disciples, Jesus does not mean merely that the fact of such a relationship to Himself will be admitted; He surely means that in His disciples the revelation of God found by man in Him will be continued, and so through them men will have the opportunity and the inducement to come into the same relationship with Himself. His love for His disciples, and their love for one another, have as an end the spread of love among all mankind. His individual love and theirs alike have a universal intention: it is not exclusive, but expansive.

4. This new commandment of Jesus is a judgment of, and a challenge to, Christendom. In the early centuries it was obeyed in such measure as to impress even the hostile world; but during many centuries the Christian Church has represented to the world discord rather than unity. What quarrels more bitter have there been than theological disputations? What hatred more fierce than sectarian antagonism? What persecutions more persistent than those of heresy by orthodoxy? Even the memorial feast—symbol not only of the Master's dying love, but also of the disciples' fellowship in remembering His death—has become a bone of contention, and not a bond of union.

How is the discordant Christendom to be brought to harmony? Only in Christ's own way. It is love which alone is a bond in which there is no bondage. It is not a common creed, code, ritual, or polity that can restore unity, which is not uniformity, but admits diversity. It is very doubtful whether one universal ecclesiastical organization would be a benefit to mankind; for it would probably exalt authority, and repress freedom; it would aim at fixity, and shrink from progress. Those who are so possessed by the desire for visible unity in such an organization forget that love can make itself visible to all men apart from any such means. Charity, tolerance, sympathy, co-operation are all possible without uniformity. We must move beyond by rising above all sectarianism. We must welcome as a Christian brother, and be ready to join in the fellowship of the Lord's Supper with every man who confesses Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. We must go hand in hand with men of all denominations in making our own land in all its institutions and relations thoroughly Christian. We must fight with them shoulder to shoulder in the battle of the Lord against heathenism. The disciples were made loving only by the love of Christ, so the unity of Christendom depends on its union with Him. Only as He abides in His Church, and His Church in Him, will it be one, even as Father and Son abide in oneness (Jn $17^{20.\ 21}$).[1]

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Universal Quest.

'We would see Jesus.'—Jn 12^{21}.

On several occasions during the earthly ministry of Jesus we find Him coming into touch with representatives of the world beyond the boundaries of Judaism. But among the incidents in the Gospels which suggest a larger mission than a ministry to Israel alone stands out pre-eminently St. John's story of the Greeks who came up to the feast at Jerusalem with an earnest desire to see Him. That some rumours of His strangely unique person and character had reached them is clear. Had they some programme to suggest, or did they want to invite Him to come and preach to a wider and more sympathetic audience than He had found among His own people? Whatever their intention, their coming kindled in the mind of Christ a vision of

[1] A. E. Garvie, *The Master's Comfort and Hope*, 27.

universal human desire, and of Himself as the answer to it. 'Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself.' That was the sovereignty to which the Cross would admit Him.

1. Was Christ right, or was this but His dream? Is there, as a fact, in the hearts of men this desire to see Him? 'We would see Jesus.' It is the cry alike of the saint of ripe experience, and of the beginner in the spiritual life who only dimly knows that Christ is the source and giver of life eternal. It is the cry of the broken man who has travelled into the far country and longs to return to God. It is the cry of the puzzled man who feels that Christ is fading from him. It is the cry of the hopeful man who is beginning to see all that Christ will be to him when he finds Him more fully. And this desire for Christ, so conscious and clear to itself, which knows what it wants and in its own fashion sets out to seek it, is not the only way in which the quest of St. John's Greeks is to be traced still among us. There is the unconscious cry of all lives, whatever quest they are bent upon, and travelling along whatever road of thought and endeavour and purpose and aspiration. The successful man of business standing at the summit of ambition knows that there is a void in his soul which no prize of wealth or position can fill and satisfy. The happy man who has surrounded himself with all that the world can give him—there are times when his spirit, confined in its cage of earthly happiness, struggles to be free that it may soar to a higher joy. The pleasure-seeker, as he exhausts the resources of selfishness by employing every faculty in the endeavour to please the jaded senses, shudders as he sees that he is sitting at a table where the spread banquet is less and less able to minister contentment. The thinker exploring the secrets of truth is growingly conscious that he has not discovered the key to unlock the hidden mysteries. The man of action loses his zest for doing, and is haunted by the higher craving to be and to see. Behind all that they think or do or love or seek for is a deep persistent hunger for something higher.

Christianity offers itself to men conscious of its power to speak to a universal desire and to give the answer to a universal quest. The question is often asked, 'What is Christianity?' and to that question there are many answers. All Christian experience replies, 'Christianity is Christ.' It is a religion; but its distinctive characteristic is the message of the personal Saviour, Christ. It implies a creed; but its basis is the revelation of a Person. It becomes an ethical system; but its controlling principle is devotion to Christ. It lives as a Church, but its bond of fellowship and its vital secret are Christ.

Robert Blatchford writes: 'We must get rid of the idolatry of Jesus before we can get rid of the power of this Christianity to delude the minds of men.' 'This one thing,' writes Archbishop Benson of his revered schoolmaster, Prince Lee, 'is the first and last thing we learned of him, that the personal friendship of Jesus Christ our Lord was the gift which God was incarnate to bestow on every man who sought it.' 'This is the will of him that sent me,' said Christ Himself, 'that every one that seeth the son and believeth on him should have eternal life.' And so in an experience which knits up the Christian generations into a unique spiritual unity, there has been, there is, a new strange blessedness for those who can

Gaze one moment on the Face, whose beauty
  Wakes the world's great hymn;
Feel it one unutterable moment
  Bent in love o'er him;
In that look feel heaven, earth, men, and angels
  Distant grow and dim;
In that look feel heaven, earth, men, and angels
  Nearer grow through Him.

2. To those who see Christ thus, the one and only failure that matters is the failure to respond to that vision when it is offered. The real tragedy of life is to be blind to Jesus. There was a picture by Mr. Dicksee exhibited in the Academy some years ago, and familiar now in print upon the walls of English homes, with the title 'The Two Crowns.' Clad in glittering armour and wearing his jewelled crown, a king rides his white charger in royal progress through the city streets, while maidens scatter flowers before him. Regardless of all else, his uplifted eye is turned toward a Crucifix which hangs by the wayside, and gazes upon the image of Christ in His Passion with His crown of thorns which overshadows Him, strange contrast to the pageantry of his own regal magnificence! It happened that one stood looking at that picture, and as he tried to take in its lesson overheard the comments of the passing crowd which thronged the picture-gallery on that summer day. 'Who painted it?' asked one to whom its chief interest was the personality of the artist. 'What is it worth?' asked another, whose eyes were blinded to the painted message by calculations about its market

value. 'What exquisite colouring!' said a third, who saw only beauty of design and brilliancy of execution. At last one came by, and in a low, hushed voice said to a friend, 'What a contrast!' and he alone saw the picture and had a vision of its meaning.

It is only the scholar who can read the faded characters on the strip of papyrus; other men see but a scrawl of meaningless hieroglyphics. To many Christ is but a literary figure, or an historical problem, or an inexplicable influence; they have not the vision of what He is. Christ was veiled to the Pharisee because of his self-righteous pride: He was veiled to the Sadducee because of his determined scepticism: He was veiled to Herod, though he had desired for a long time to see Him, for he saw Him only through the blinding mist of his arrogant lusts. And so, because Christ is the eternal antithesis to sin and self-assertion, the world which knows so much about Him still knows Him not, though its heart is unsatisfied.

3. There are two questions which claim an answer as we think of the quest for Christ. First, where and how can we gain the vision?

Even from His Church Jesus was hidden till He died and rose again, and the full meaning of His message was obscure till it stood out large and luminous in the light of His Cross and Resurrection. Speculate about Jesus, make Him a mere theological thesis, admire Him only as the supreme religious philosopher, and we will not see Him. But kneel at His Cross, and hear His 'It is finished,' and yield our souls to Him, and to us with all His saints there will come the Epiphany of Himself, the one unveiling which makes God real, and brings redemption within the range of practical experience, a gift to possess and a life to live.

And then, what is the price to be paid for that vision? It is twofold. First, Search. 'Seek ye my face . . . thy face, Lord, will I seek.' Desire and longing must pass into earnest and believing quest. If we would see Christ we must seek Him. It is an old road, and the only one, the road of secret prayer, the road of reading His Scriptures, the road of worship; a road plain but not easy, for it leads away from fashionable self-assertion to the low door of self-humiliation. It is wet with the tears of generations of penitents, but it leads to Jesus, and that is everything.

First, Search, and secondly, Surrender. 'I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.' Those deep words of St. Paul take shape in the *Imitation*: 'If a man should give all his wealth, yet it is nothing; and if he should outwardly express great repentance, yet it is little; and if he should be of great virtue, and very fervent devotion, yet there is much wanting, to wit, one thing, and that most necessary. That leaving all he forsake himself and go wholly from himself.'[1]

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Downfall of David.

'And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: . . . because he had no pity. And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man.'—2 S 12^{5-7}.

King David had every quality that makes a man admirable to his acquaintances and an idol to the crowd. He had strength, beauty, talents, courage, address, chivalry, kindliness. He was as unassuming as he was audacious. And he had a signal genius for friendship, and the power to arouse impassioned loyalty.

We need in justice to recall these very noble traits in the character of David, and to realize his essential honour, if we are to appreciate aright his terrible fall. The horror of this incident of squalid intrigue and murder lies in the fact that so honourable and decent a man as David should be flung by a sudden wave of lust into such a crime.

The morality of that day, with its plurality of wives and concubines, gave free rein to a man's desires. But there were order, legality, and a certain mutual regard in these relationships. David was clearly a man of pretty inflammable temperament; no thought of ascetic restraint ever entered his head. But he was fair-minded and generous in the ordinary dispositions of his life, and in his normal senses he would have shrunk from such treachery against Uriah. But in the hot fit of passion even a noble nature will deceive itself with every sort of worthless excuse and subterfuge, unless it has been sternly disciplined in self-control. There came a relaxed and indolent hour on his palace roof one summer afternoon when an unexpected vision of beauty gave play to the lust of his eyes. David lingered and gloated over it, with the itch of desire that invades an empty, idle moment when the will is slack and the conscience drowsy. He was in the reckless grip of lust before he knew it; and alas! he had a king's power of self-indulgence. And David the magnanimous, David the splendid, dauntless and forgiving prince,

[1] F. B. Macnutt, *The Inevitable Christ*, 67.

became the adulterer, the crafty, mean intriguer, the murderer of a brave and loyal lieutenant.

Like a toad within a stone
Seated while Time crumbles on;
Which sits there since the earth was curs'd
For Man's transgression at the first;
Which, living through all centuries,
Not once has seen the sun arise;
Whose life, to its cold circle charmed,
The earth's whole summers have not warmed;
Which always—whitherso the stone
Be flung—sits there, deaf, blind, alone;—
Aye, and shall not be driven out
Till that which shuts him round about
Break at the very Master's stroke,
And the dust thereof vanish as smoke,
And the seed of Man vanish as dust:—
Even so within this world is Lust.

That magnificent passage from Rossetti's *Jenny* chills and sobers us all. We know how true is his figure of the loathsome toad lurking hidden within us. And it is wholesome for us to be reminded of it in such sombre and doomful words. But there is a gospel which Rossetti does not utter. He does not discriminate between the ineradicable physical desire, God-given in every man, and the uncontrolled fling of it upon selfish ends which turns it into sinful lust, toad-like and abominable. Desire remains eternal; but the Master's stroke may surely liberate it into wholesome sunshine without waiting for the pulverizing blow of death.

God's will is in the natural passion, but it is in the moral forethought, too, which governs the passion to just and wholesome ends. Natural desire is of God and not of the devil, and we cannot annul it. If, Manichee-like, we look upon it as of the devil, and try to extirpate or suppress it, we do but drive it into obscure corners of our nature, whence it works its subtle derangements upon us. But, if we see it as a power of God in us, we can guide and liberate it into spiritual and open-hearted affections, making it a sacrament of life to our salvation. We mortify its base growths only by vivifying its noble growths. We cast out lust by love alone. We need to catch the glowing delights of love in the loyal wedding of a mate; or, diffusedly, in the unselfish service of mankind, in friendship, in happy play with children, in all the eager pleasures of an alert imagination.

Love comforteth like sunshine after rain,
But Lust's effect is tempest after sun;
Love's gentle spring doth always fresh remain,
Lust's winter comes ere summer half be done;
Love surfeits not, Lust like a glutton dies;
Love is all truth, Lust full of forged lies.

But no abstract statement of the truth—not even from Shakespeare's lips—will convince us, unless we are feeling and enjoying the positive delights of a desire that has been lifted on to spiritual levels. Hence the enormous need of an environment which shall engage us all, and especially the young, with idealistic pursuits toward health, beauty, and philanthropy. All too soon in youth we are given this heady steed of passion to ride, and we may be tumbled a good deal before we get the mastery. Success is no doubt furthered by the wholesome outlet of our energies, physical, imaginative, affectional—in sport and art and friendship. But we need more than this for security. We need the glowing admiration and awe of a great faith. For there will be an element of sheer battle now and then, and we are armoured for those fights only by a consuming love of God.

We live in a world of strain and temptation, a world which brings its dingy tragedies before us day by day. How pathetic are the closing passages in David's life, which began amid such brilliance! Fratricidal war and undutiful rebellion bring the old king with sorrow to the grave. We see him, like Lear, 'a poor, infirm, weak and despised old man,' going in flight from Jerusalem with the curses of Shimei ringing in his ears. For his own example had been followed up by lesser men, and chaos threatened the land; just as Guinevere's sin with Lancelot was followed by the sin of Tristram and Isolt; and others 'drawing foul example from fair names, sinn'd also,' till the whole fair structure of King Arthur's dream went toppling down to ruin.

David was brought to penitence, indeed. We see him a broken, humbled man, ready to forgive all others because he cannot forgive himself. A very noble dignity shines out in his penitent old age. But sin costs very dear, and its effects are very stubborn to remove. Be sure our sins will find us out. And many a man will find here no scope for his repentance, though he seek for it with tears. Some such thought as this seems to underlie the message of the prophet Nathan. He allows that David's penitence must mitigate to some degree the consequences of his sin, but the doom of it cannot be wholly annulled. The prophet is represented as foreseeing such doom in the death of his child. The child did die, as undesired children born in shame and fear are most apt to do. But David could make amends in some measure.

and labour to straighten out the sorry tangle as far as might be. And for the sake of his repentant efforts he should not be utterly crushed into ruin and despair.

The famous fifty-first psalm was assuredly not written by David, but it was not inappropriate for a later age to attribute it to him. For he was certainly a man sincere in his repentance, and he, for one, learnt the good news: 'A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou shalt not despise'; he could even lay hold upon the hope that 'Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.' There is an earlier psalm, the thirty-second, which some Biblical scholars have claimed to be a composition of David's. But it strikes a note of such cheerful escape from the sense of guilt that it is hard to imagine David writing it. 'I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.' Something of that blessedness David no doubt felt, even though he did not arrive, perhaps, at so complacent a sense that all was well as the psalmist expresses. He did acknowledge his sin; and such confession is the beginning of all happy absolution.

It is easy for us to assume righteous indignation at this story of David's crime, and pour out a sneering scorn upon those who speak of him as 'a man after God's own heart.' He might well be called so in his hour of promise, ay, and in his hour of remorse. It were better for us to remember our Lord's satiric thrust about the mote and the beam, lest we should be found the objects of some later Nathan's parable, and should stagger before the accusing finger and the thundering word, 'Thou art the man!'[1]

[1] L. Johnson, *The Legends of Israel*, 229.

From the Institutum Judaicum.

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Of recent studies claiming attention from the student of the religious history and philosophy of Judaism, the publication, under the auspices of the *Institutum Judaicum* of Berlin, of 'Stages of Development of the Jewish Religion' (*Entwicklungsstufen der jüdischen Religion* — Töpelmann, Giessen, 1927) is of particular importance. With the exception of a preliminary article by the gifted scholar, the late Professor Gressmann, the book consists of lectures from adherents of Judaism itself. Each lecture is a useful introduction to its own department of study and investigation, while together they give a comprehensive view of the growth of Judaism in its various periods and aspects.

(1) Gressmann describes the Mosaic religion as having its roots in the historical event of the defeat of the Egyptians, as being a religion of covenant and choice (*Wahlreligion*) with the moral ideals of nomadic civilization. At this time there were no State, no taxes, no money, no proprietors of land. Worship was without temple or image. Priests and altars of Jahve were rare. The occasions on which the religion of the race found highest expression were the days of market and festival, when the House-father or war-leader sacrificed, and the people ate flesh.

Established in Canaan, Israel the Nomad became Israel the Peasant, and his God underwent a similar change. Jahve becomes the Baal who sends rain and fruitfulness, and possesses himself of the high places of the Baalim, with their holy stones and pillars and the rites associated therewith. Even such a practice as the offering of the first-born appears. Barriers in faith and practice, separating the people of Jahve from the people of the land, have fallen, except the tradition of the Mosaic past, its moral heritage, and of the rough purity of the custom and law of the desert experience.

Certain groups in Israel—Rechabites, Levites, Priests, and Prophets—opposed the gradual absorbing of the religion of Jahve by that of Baal, but only when their spiritual energy became embodied in the great literary prophets could opposition rise to victory. The spiritual significance of the teaching of these prophets is that, for them, God and goodness, morality and piety, are one. God is He beside whom there is no other. His purpose and thought embrace the destiny of the nations as of Israel. Isaiah even draws a picture of all the