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

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

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

In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

After Many Days.

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

'The day shall declare it.'—1 Co 3[13].

Everybody is reading, or has just read, or is about to read *In Search of England*. Now reading *In Search of England* has a queer effect on most people. After a few pages you want to get a pack on your back at once, and a stick in your hand, and a map in your pocket, and be off and away, over hill and down dale, wherever the winding road leads. And is there a purer joy in this world than the feel of a pack on your back at eight o'clock of a summer morning, and the road and the day before you?

Here is one thing the author of this book saw near Shrewsbury. He came upon a crowd of men digging in the fields. Every spadeful of earth, as it was brought up, was carefully examined; and lying all around were bits of red pottery, tiles and jars and bowls and bricks. They were digging on the site of an old Roman town, the town of Uriconium, built by the Romans who came over the seas to Britain in the far-off days of the Cæsars. One of the diggers pointed to a black stratum, deep down in the earth. 'That was Uriconium's fate,' he said. 'That is the mark of fire: the place was burned to the ground.' Five hundred years this Roman town had lasted; and then, away in Italy, Rome was attacked, and the legions in Britain were recalled, and the natives saw their chance, fell on the weak garrison left behind, destroyed the town by fire, and took the stones of it and built them into Shrewsbury near by.

And now all the Roman relics that have been unearthed are being collected. There are huge piles of bricks and tiles, made by the Roman legionaries themselves out of soft, moist clay. Among those tiles are some that had been stepped on by meddlesome children before they were properly set and hardened; and there, after nearly two thousand years, is the mark of a boy's foot on the surface, clear for all to see. You know what happens to-day when the painters have been busy on the railings in the streets, and have put up a notice—'Wet Paint.' Along comes a little girl in the cleanest of clean white frocks, and looks at the notice. 'I wonder if it really is wet?' she thinks. And she just must try it to see, and out goes one little finger, and it really *is* wet, that paint, and—well, the clean white frock is not quite so clean or white now. 'Wet Paint' is a magnet. It is simply shouting for trouble! Something like that must have happened in Uriconium long, long ago. The Roman soldiers who were making the bricks were away at dinner one day, and had left a notice—'Soft bricks—not to be touched.' Then two small boys came. 'They certainly look hard enough,' they said. 'Let's try!' And they tried. They trod on one or two of the bricks, and they weren't hard after all: and there were the tell-tale footprints! 'Anyway, no one will ever know,' they said, and ran away. And now, all those centuries after, the footprints have come to light.

So we had better take care! 'The day shall declare it.' What about that poetry you are learning at school? Do they still make you learn *Tintern Abbey*? Certainly they used to. And *Tintern Abbey* has one hundred and fifty-nine lines. Now there are two ways of learning a poem like that. Either you can calculate out the lines you will probably be asked to say in class and learn only these: or you can learn the whole thing. Of course the first way is ever so much easier, and it may work sometimes, but—the end of the term! Your way of working is awfully apt to come out then, isn't it, on the day of the exam? It is the day declaring it.

Happily Paul's maxim works both ways. The good you do—that, too, the day declares. Dr. Laws of Livingstonia says that once out in Africa he owed his life to a Paisley mill-girl. A lion attacked his tent in the African forest, made one leap and then slunk away: and it was the girl away in far-off Scotland who had seen to it that the seams were well and properly sewn, it was she who had saved the missionary's life. The day declared it. So we must remember we are building now for eternity. There is a day coming, not here at all, but yonder, when every good deed will be suddenly lit up by the light on the face of Jesus. Isn't it worth while sticking in for that, worth any amount of present self-sacrifice for that? For the great day of Christ is going to declare it at the last.

Penetrating the Darkness.

By the Reverend T. Greener Gardner, Blackburn.

'The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light.'—Is 9^2.

'The people which sat in darkness saw great light.'—Mt 4^{16}.

I should imagine that every boy and girl has at some time been afraid of the dark, and has longed with all their heart for a light.

Do you remember the first time you travelled through a short tunnel when in the train, and there was no light in the carriage? I once heard of an old lady who had to travel through a short tunnel—too short for the railway people to light up the train—carrying with her a box of matches and a taper, and when she entered the tunnel she lighted the taper. Well, a taper is not a great light, but it was a source of satisfaction to the old lady, for it helped to dispel the darkness.

Now whenever I think about light, I think about fog, and when I think about fog, I think about John Logie Baird, a Scotsman, the son of a minister, who is ever experimenting with light. John Logie Baird has had a great struggle with ill-health, and the consequent ill-fortune which so often accompanies ill-health; but he used his periods of enforced retirement from business to experiment with electrical equipment and discover things about light waves. By and by he succeeded in making it possible to send pictures across the Atlantic Ocean by wireless. I expect you have wished again and again that, when you listened to a singer from a Broadcasting Station, you could see her; or when Sir Henry Wood conducted the Queen's Hall Orchestra, you could see him and his orchestra. Well, all that is coming in the near future, and when we buy a wireless set, we shall buy one which will give us pictures of the artists who entertain us, as we sit by our firesides.

That is very wonderful, but I think it is when John Logie Baird talks of penetrating the darkness and the fog that he is most wonderful. Fog is a horrible thing, and darkness is unpleasant. Mr. Baird has discovered that by using the invisible infra-red rays, a person sitting before the transmitter in total darkness, where the unaided eye could not penetrate, could be easily seen by aid of the noctovisor; that even when the lights of a motor-car were covered by sheets of ebonite, so that the human eye could not see the light, this instrument could pick up the car three miles away and show its progress on a screen.

Even fog is not likely to be a terror to this instrument, and you do not need much imagination to realize what a blessing such an invention will prove to the sailors at sea in dense fog. Have you ever heard a sailor speak of fog? It is his greatest terror, for ships have to travel then without being able to see the lights of other ships, and they know that their lights cannot be seen, and there is danger of collision. Now there is hope that the noctovisor will be so improved that it will be possible to use it at sea, and that will mean that those who now have to sit in darkness in the times of fog, will be able to see the lights of other ships, and fog will be robbed of its terrors.

That is very wonderful, yet I believe that the darkness of which the prophet spoke was worse than even a dense fog, for it was darkness of mind and heart. Men were groping for the Light of Life, and they had not found satisfaction. But the prophet saw a vision of a Great Light, which would mean that men would no longer have any need to walk in darkness, for the revelation of God would be such that all would know how to live. Then in after years, when the Lord Jesus came, they remembered that this prophet had left this saying on record, and they were sure that He was the 'Great Light' who lightens all the dark places of life for us.

The Christian Year.

Seventh Sunday after Trinity.

Our Lord's Idea of Blessedness.

'And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed . . .'—Mt $5^{2.3}$.

That is the keynote of the mountain-preaching—'Blessed.' Not once, but nine times over, with most solemn reiteration, does our Lord repeat that word. He seems to be struggling, with all the energy of thought and language, to drive this great idea deep into His disciples' minds. They are called to 'inherit a blessing.' The gospel is good news of blessedness, now for the first time brought within their reach. So Jesus starts His preaching with a nine-fold benediction. 'That is indeed,' as Martin Luther says, 'a fine, sweet, friendly beginning of His teaching and sermon.'

St. Matthew gives eight Beatitudes, but St. Luke gives only four: in St. Matthew the form is general —'Blessed are the poor in spirit,' but in St. Luke it is direct and personal, 'Blessed are ye poor'; and, while St. Matthew's blessings are attached to inward spiritual states, St. Luke's blessings, in the literal wording at least, are attached to mere out-

ward conditions—to actual poverty, actual hunger and sorrow and persecution. Now, in the presence of such differences, it is certainly not unnatural that the question should be raised, Which of these two versions should we attribute to our Lord? And yet we cannot but think that the differences and the difficulties have been much exaggerated. It may be true that St. Luke's report is, taken as a whole, closer to the letter of the Saviour's utterance. It may be true that the Beatitudes in St. Matthew have been expanded a little to bring out their fullest meaning, and their original number enlarged by one or two sayings spoken by Jesus at another time. But there ought to be no reasonable doubt that the spirit and intention of the Saviour's teaching are preserved with perfect faithfulness by the first evangelist. Here, if anywhere, we should seek for the solution of our problem, What has our Lord to teach us concerning blessedness and the blessed Life?

Jesus Christ sat upon the mountain-side. And as our Lord looked down upon the throng, so anxious and fretful, so restless and impatient, He saw each single one of that huge company possessed and ridden by a vehement desire—for Happiness, Self-satisfaction, Blessedness. Yet none seemed to know what Blessedness was, or where it might be found. But all that there was to know about the Blessed Life Jesus knew; all that He knew He was prepared to tell. 'And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed . . .'

But now comes something strange, something new and paradoxical. The Master actually proclaims to be the happiest of exactly all those people who were generally accounted as of all most miserable. Here was the Greek, entranced by the lore of sages, worshipping beauty and art and reason and the balanced intellect, making the highest good consist in a life enriched to the very utmost with all the varied treasures of experience and knowledge. And Jesus said, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit!' Or here was the Roman insolently proud and insatiable of conquest. And Jesus said, 'Blessed are the meek!' Or here was the Jew, wrapt in sweet dreams of national prosperity and earthly greatness. And Jesus said, 'Blessed are the persecuted!'

Is it not a fact that from the very beginning and fount of human history there streams, as it were, a vast torrent of conviction that blessedness is found in prosperity, in enjoyments long drawn out, in freedom from sorrow and pain and humiliation and suffering? Yet Jesus sat upon the Mount and said, 'Blessed are the mourners!' All the conventional notions He sweeps clean away. In manifest defiance of the wisdom of the ages, in pointed contradiction of the traditions of the race, He says that blessedness inheres in that which all men shrink from as the ground of misery.

But let us look more closely at this teaching. What, in the first place, according to our Lord, is the cause or the condition of the Blessed Life? And, secondly, in what exactly does its Blessedness consist?

1. *The conditions of Blessedness* we find set forth with fullness in the first half of each Beatitude. And when we come to consider them attentively, we find that they are all of them just states, or modes, or aspects of a character. And therefore, on the last analysis, the various conditions of obtaining Blessedness resolve themselves quite simply into one condition; and that one condition is a character, schooled in humility, matured by suffering, instinct with gentleness and purity and love.

There was an ancient pagan once who wrote in his book, 'Blessed is he who possesses many goods.' And there are plenty of modern pagans who still reiterate in practice and opinion that same pernicious formula: 'Blessed is he who has health and wealth and fame and friends and a solid reputation and a fine establishment—who possesses many goods.' But our Lord says that this old popular pagan view is utterly false and misleading and absurd. It is character, and wholly character, and only character, that determines human bliss.

Can we sum up in one comprehensive word the quality of this character? The blessed character is the Christlike character. Take the Beatitudes as a whole: that whole is a representation of the character of Christ. Or take them singly; we discover some feature of Christ in every one of them. Was He not poor in spirit, who with infinite condescension 'took upon him the form of a servant,' and 'for your sakes became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich'? Did He not mourn, who 'himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses'? Was He not 'meek and lowly in heart'? Did He not hunger for righteousness, whose 'meat' was to do His heavenly Father's will?

And there is just one other point we ought to notice. This Christlike character, that makes for blessedness, is meant to be developed, not under ideal circumstances in an ideal world, but here, among ordinary, dull, depressing, unreformed surroundings; in the midst of sin and sorrow, in the

midst of every kind of evil and distressing influence. 'Our crown,' as the ancient martyrs used to say, 'blooms on the thorns which lacerate our brows.' But if this be so, then we and every one may be numbered with the blessed. The troubles that perplex us, our fears and our vexations, the dull, humiliating round of daily tasks and duties—all may contribute to build up in us that character. The way of the Blessed Life thus opens out for all. The gospel is in very truth a gospel for the million.

2. Now just as the condition of Blessedness is described in the first half of each Beatitude, so *the essence or content of Blessedness* is described in the last half of each Beatitude. The first of the blessings which our Lord proclaims is this: 'theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' And the last of the blessings which our Lord proclaims again is this: 'theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' The kingdom of heaven, then, according to our Lord is the beginning and end of blessedness—it includes all others. There is abounding consolation for the mourners; there is the certainty of victory for the meek; there is satisfaction for those that crave for righteousness; there is compassionate acceptance of the merciful; there the Beatific Vision enraptures the pure in heart; there the peacemakers are owned and recognized as the sons of the Most High. Thus every form of blessedness, adapted to every phase of character, is found within this kingdom. In the teaching of Jesus, the kingdom of heaven and blessedness are one.

But what can expound this figure of 'the kingdom'? One of the greatest of the German theologians explains it thus: 'it is God Himself in His power.' What more is left that we can seek or hope or long for, when God Himself is ours? Are we poor and needy? Then all the resources of God are placed at our disposal. Are we lonely, bereft, forsaken? The Infinite Soul holds converse with our soul, and breathes a comfort deeper than words can utter. Does trouble come upon us or danger threaten? Does the malice of men make us fearful and disturbed? Still God Omnipotent remains our refuge, and underneath for ever are the everlasting arms. Here, in God, then, is the goal of all our striving. Here in our sense of God the desire of the heart at length is satisfied.

This is our Saviour's doctrine of the Blessed Life. And down the centuries countless witnesses, of every country and of every age, rise up and attest its truth. We may listen to St. Augustine. 'Thou hast formed us for Thyself,' he cries, 'and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee.' Or we may read the words of Pascal: 'Happiness is neither without us nor within us; it is in God, both without us and within us.' Or we may take the saying of Goethe: 'To recognize God, whereso-ever and howsoever He reveals Himself, that is true Blessedness on earth.' Or we may open our *Sartor Resartus* and ponder this sentence of Thomas Carlyle: 'Love not pleasure; love God. This is the Everlasting Yea, in which all contradiction is solved: wherein whoso walks and works it is well with him.'[1]

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Christian Ideal:
An Address to Young Men.

'Till we all come . . . unto a perfect man.'—Eph 4^{13}.

Supposing that the writings of St. Paul were introduced to us for the first time as a new document, and that we were to proceed to study them with the care and attention and freshness that we devote to a newly discovered treatise of Aristotle, or to a new fact of physical science, we would be astonished at the philosophic power and insight which are displayed; we should find that some of our most modern theories about human life and its conditions had been forestalled.

One of the great ideas of the nineteenth century which is often put before us as something very new, which, in fact, in the hands of a brilliant French thinker became the inspiring influence of a new religion, is the solidarity of humanity. To look upon humanity as an abstract idea binding together all the different races of the world, to believe that fundamentally, as man, Caucasian, African, Polynesian, are to be looked at as one, sharers in the same high destiny and working to the same lofty goal, burst upon many minds as a brilliant conception. Yet the full idea seems to have dawned upon St. Paul. His conception of the Christian Church was such that in it distinctions of race or language or sex were of no account, and at his time to conceive that was more wonderful than it would be now. It has taken many centuries to work it out as a practical idea, and it is still only very inadequately realized. It is an ideal which, fundamentally true, it is often hard to harmonize with the facts of life.

Another idea, in many ways equally novel, has its germs in St. Paul, and that is the progress of humanity. St. Paul, though his insight may be imperfect, has a clear idea of the development and evolution both of the world and of the human race.

[1] F. H. Dudden, *Christ and Christ's Religion*, 47.

He feels that the human race is still in the making. A new man has been created in Christ, but he has a long growth before him. In this passage he tells us that the spiritual gifts which have come from above have been distributed in the Christian Church so as to build up, in the unity of the Christian faith, in the knowledge which comes from Jesus Christ, the perfect man modelled according to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Man as yet is being made, and ere the crowning
Age of ages,
Shall not æon after æon pass and touch him into
shape?
All about him shadow still, but, while the races
flower and fade,
Prophet-eyes may catch a glory slowly gaining on
the shade,
Till the peoples all are one, and all their voices
blend in choric
Hallelujah to the Maker: 'It is finish'd! Man
is made.'

The making of man, the building up of a perfect man, suggests a line of thought which applies to many questions which affect us to-day.

1. Most of us are anxious to form what we may call *our philosophy of life*. We want to know why the world exists, why we are placed here—we want to know what is the end and object and purpose of our life. We know that if we were to give ourselves up to philosophic thought, we might hope, at the end of our life, to obtain some shadow of the truth on one or two questions. But we are in a hurry, we cannot wait, we want to know, at any rate, something which will give us a rule of life. We think of ourselves, as Socrates puts it, entering on a voyage over an unknown sea—a voyage which may be dangerous and difficult and lead us to a goal which we do not quite understand, and we are ready to take any chart, however imperfect, which will help us a little in our difficult navigation. But let us keep this before us as the ideal of our lives, whatever they may be. We are helping to build up a perfect man. We are helping to attain the ideal of humanity. We may work in many ways and in many directions—some of us may be concerned with the physical, some with the spiritual, side of human nature. One, as a politician or a statesman, may help to build up the form and polity of a state; another may have to bridge the rivers and make roads over the mountains, to bring races of men nearer to one another; but to all alike the idea that they are furthering the ends of humanity, that they are building up the life of nations, that they are helping to attain the ideal of the perfect man, will be an inspiring thought.

2. There is *the problem of education* which troubles people at the present time. We talk about it and we are spending enormous sums upon it, and we have a gigantic machinery erected for the purpose of promoting it, but when we come to ask what is the end of education and what education should be, we find an unfortunate diversity of opinion. Is it not possible that the solution of our difficulties might be in the ideal we have put before us, the building up of the perfect man? If we have that ideal we shall soon banish all those inadequate and one-sided and imperfect ideals which are continually before us. There are some persons who have no idea of education except as a means of preparation for earning a livelihood. There are many who tell us that whatever we do we must be practical. There are some whose ideal is one of pure scientific research, whose horizon is limited by the pursuit of knowledge. But man is a complex being; he is body and soul and spirit; and the ideal that we should have before us is that of the well-proportioned growth of all the different parts which go to make up human life and the building up of a lofty and inspired character.

3. Many people are asking themselves what is *the meaning and the purpose of a religion*. It has come to them, perhaps, in forms which seem to be outworn, and it has been associated, perhaps, too much with restraint rather than freedom; and they perhaps wonder whether after all religion is of much use. According to St. Paul the end and purpose of religion is given in the text: 'Till we all come unto a perfect man.' To him the purpose of religion is the building up of character. We are sometimes inclined to take too narrow a view of what human life means. We forget that it is not enough to satisfy our intellectual needs; we forget that, when the struggle of life comes to us in the future, it will be not our intellect only, but our whole character which will determine our fate—our self-discipline, our self-control, our tenacity of purpose, the strength and discipline of our affections and our emotions; and religion reminds us that it is our character as a whole that we have to fashion; and our Christianity not only gives us this as an ideal, but also gives us both a model and an inspiration. It puts before us the life of Christ, and it sums up the meaning of that life in the new Christian doctrine of love. It tells us that it is the jealous temperament and the sour disposition and the angry passions which mar human life; it tells us that we shall not get the happiness and the

good of life here unless that love or charity which has its source in God and is God's great gift to man penetrates every joint and articulation in our whole being. There are many theological questions which trouble people, many ecclesiastical questions which divide people, and it is right that we should turn our minds to solving these difficulties; and we cannot do so unless we have realized that the end of the religion which we profess is the building up of the perfect man. It is speaking the truth in love, it is uniting all things to the head, even Christ, 'from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.' [1]

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

'According to my Gospel.'

'In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.'—Ro 2[16].

The English word 'gospel' is the Anglo-Saxon translation of the Greek word *Evangel*, good tidings, the good news of the Kingdom to all people. As Christ was the first great Evangelist of the Evangel it came about quite naturally that the word was used to express the story of Christ. Thus the word gospel was applied to a book in which that story is related. It is used in this technical sense when we speak of the four Gospels of the New Testament.

But the word is used in the New Testament in a wider sense still for the whole Christian teaching generally, the essential message of which the books are the record, and all that the message implies. It includes, therefore, the Christian morality and the Christian beliefs, as well as the facts of Christ's life; as, for example, when St. Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, speaks of those who 'obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.' It is in this comprehensive sense of the whole Christian teaching that the word is here used; for the statement which Paul says is part of his gospel is that God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. It is not our intention to consider this particular item of Paul's creed, or to give a statement of Paul's gospel as a whole, but exclusively to consider the very striking phrase in which he calls it *my gospel.*

We might dispose of this unthinkingly by saying, what is on the surface and is of course true, that it is merely a question of the particular standpoint from which it is viewed at the time. From one point of view, the point of view of the Bestower, it is called, as St. Paul puts it in this same letter, the gospel of God, and Christ's gospel. From the point of view of the contents of the message and its purpose, it is called the gospel of the grace of God, and the gospel of salvation. So from the point of view of participation, it is Paul's gospel. This is, of course, evident and true. But if we left the matter there as a sufficient explanation, we would miss some lessons.

1. From this phrase we might well learn lessons of *charity and humility*. In the written records of the story of Jesus we have differences and discrepancies that are insurmountable difficulties on any theory which leaves out of account the personal equation of the writers. According to Paul's gospel the truth took shape individual, not after the pattern of James. Each picture, because it was a true picture and not a copy, had its own perspective. We note at once the difference between St. John's Gospel and that of any other. It is the same as St. Mark's and yet not the same. It is the same incomparable Master, the same adorable Saviour; but the one narrative is unmistakably different from the other. The same is true of the first three Gospels, the Synoptic Gospels. They worked over the same ground to a large extent, with much material in common; but each is individual, with special characteristics, according to the writer's bent of mind, and according to the special audience he designed it for. We note, for example, the differences between the First Gospel and the Third: the one written for Jews, with special emphasis on the fulfilment of the Mosaic law by Christ as Messiah; the other written for Greeks, with special emphasis on Jesus as the Good Physician and the pitiful Saviour of sinners. Noting also how appropriate it is to speak of St. Matthew's Gospel and St. Luke's Gospel, we are helped to see in what sense St. Paul could speak of 'my gospel.'

The great heresy of the Church of all ages, as it has been the great temptation of the Church, is literalism, the worship of the letter in some form or other. It is responsible for all kinds of formalism in the region of morals as well as of worship, the ethical formalism against which our Lord protested in the Sermon on the Mount, which interpreted the commandments by the keeping of the letter of the law. In interpretation of Scripture also it is difficult to purge our minds of verbalism, juggling with words and texts, and never taking count of the great spiritual realities, the thought of which the words are but the garment.

[1] A. C. Headlam, *The Building of the Church of Christ*, 97.

The same unthinking literalism dogs our footsteps even at the very heart of our faith, the revelation of God in Christ which is the gospel. Men speak with censorious judgment of some as not preaching the gospel, because their ears have not heard the particular phrases which they are accustomed to associate with the great message of the love of God. They seem to think that the gospel means a set of formal propositions; whereas it is a question whether we can speak of the gospel at all apart from the gospeller.

Christian truth is eternal, unchangeable, but it is also relative and personal. It may, of course, be put down formally in a set of propositions; but here also the letter may kill, and only the spirit giveth life. The propositions may contain everything of importance, from the being of God to the scheme of redemption, all the things most surely believed, the things that cannot be shaken—and so these propositions may be fairly called the gospel; and yet it may be dead. Everything depends on the interpretation, the spiritual insight with which the heart of the mystery is seized and revealed. Christian truth is not formal but vital; a spiritual thing, and therefore personal. So Paul was able to say 'my gospel,' a distinct thing, different from any other man's presentation of Christ, his own soul's apprehension of the Saviour.

Thus, preaching is not simply the statement of truth, formal truth. If it were it would be an easier thing than it is, and could be without travail of soul and sweat of brain. Its function might then be served by repeating the necessary propositions. But preaching is truth *plus* personality. A man has to take the things of the Spirit, the things of Christ, and show them as he has learned them from his Master, no more and no less. Unless, therefore, we are so left to ourselves as to imagine that our knowledge and experience should be the standard and measure of all other religious experience, we will give up our attitude of censorious judgment. We will judge all things by Christ, by what is worthy of Him, as St. Paul declared that according to his gospel God would judge even the secret thoughts of men by Christ. If men are brought out of the bondage of sin into the glorious liberty of sons of God; if the Kingdom be extended, the Kingdom of righteousness and peace and love and joy; if Christ be preached, therein we do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. Ought we not to be able to say this in the noble, great-souled charity of St. Paul?

2. But above all, the lesson of most moment to us is that *the gospel requires personal spiritual appropriation.* In the final issue religion is personal—how the deep of God's love calls to the deep of the human soul. The gospel may be put down, as we have seen, as doctrine in a system of theology, to which may be given mental assent. Or it may be stated as a morality, a code of precepts, a teaching to be obeyed and carried into life. It may be expressed as literature, the story of Christ with the wondrous beauty of the ideal life, entrancing the heart and captivating the imagination. But essentially the gospel means the personal appropriation of the truth. It must be made our own. It must be a principle of life to us, the centre of our world, that by which we live. Paul's gospel will not save us, nor John's gospel, nor any man's.

When we speak of the gospel, the question is—What gospel? It is the one thing, the same thing, to whomever comes the vision of it, the revelation of the burning heart of God, the story of redemption, a message of love and reconciliation. But how do we accept it? In what sense is it our gospel? The life that we now live in the flesh, how do we live it? Is it an earthly superstructure on an earthly foundation that must crumble away at the touch of time? Have we simply left the higher life out of account, neglecting all spiritual interests, cutting our life off from any future and even from any reasonable purpose? Our gospel is that by which we live; and if we have no other principle of vitality but animal existence, what a death in life it is!

But in Christ the whole horizon widens and life grows richer, and the world becomes an arena which claims and receives the interest of heaven. To be able to say, 'The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me,' is to be able also to say, 'My gospel'; for it is to be able to say, in spite of all weakness and sin, 'My Lord and my God.'[1]

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Appeal from Tradition to the Witness of Experience.

'And know ye this day: for I speak not with your children which have not known, and which have not seen . . . what he (God) did unto you in the wilderness, until ye came into this place; . . . But your eyes have seen all the great acts of the Lord which he did. Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments which I command you this day . . .'—Dt 11^{2-8}.

1. No doctrine of God, no abstract notion of God can in itself have force to compel loyalty, and to call

[1] H. Black, *According to my Gospel*, 1.

forth obedience. In the long run it is what life reveals of God, what life has contained of the Divine that gives God to us in the true sense of the word. And by life we mean just the ordinary everyday events that go to make our human life: daily activities, desires, choices, practices, ambitions, purposes, plans—our relationships with the world around us, our attitude toward duty, the way in which we fulfil our obligations, the motive which inspires our actions, etc. It is here that we have to lay hold of God, see Him, believe in Him, know and love Him. The only God we believe in, in the real sense of the word, is the God we find by living.

What is fire? Give what answer we like, define fire as we choose, we can have only one reason for not putting our fingers in it—namely, the experience that it is a thing that burns; and that is as good a definition as we need for the purposes of life. Similarly, the final and convincing reasons for believing God are those furnished by experience. We do not know there is a God until we find Him in life. We cannot be certain that God exists. Of course there are those who maintain by cogent reasoning that God is; there are many who declare positively and emphatically that God exists. But who is to know they are right? We can know in only one way. We must interpret life and consciousness, and find God there, and if we do not find God there He does not exist for us in any real sense. Religion therefore is not second-hand, it is not tradition—it is first-hand experience, it is a kind of personal discovery.

In the Bible we have a picture of God. God Himself is not in the Bible. We hear the sound of His Voice—and His footsteps, but it is only an echo—the echo of the voice heard by human beings. In history we read of a God who has been; but God is not dead—history is past and gone. It must repeat itself—God must speak to man all over again. Even the Jesus of the New Testament is a 'past and gone'—the Christ of literature is a dead Christ. He must dwell in the tabernacle of a personality to be a living Christ. 'Christ dwelling in you.'

2. God does speak to men all over again. Life is still miraculous. That is an elementary axiom of religion, but it is not easy to see God in life despite the fact that the God we see in life is the only satisfactory God for us. 'He hides Himself so wondrously'—but He is there all the same, if we look. The reason we do not see Him is not because He is playing hide-and-seek, but because we are blind. We can see God when we harbour God. It is in life and nowhere else that He can be found. 'Your eyes have seen all the mighty acts of the Lord which he did.' We are familiar with the story of Israel's wanderings in the wilderness. To us it appears as a long-drawn-out romance of forty years' duration—wonder succeeding wonder—the Red Sea, Marah, Elim, Taberah, Massah, Hattaavah, Sinai, Pillar of Cloud, Pillar of Fire—one grand Epic; and Divine guidance, Divine assistance, all the way. But it is not one whit more miraculous than the journey of our own lives. To the children of Israel it was not miraculous, it was as commonplace as our own seems to us. 'Every ship,' says Emerson in one of his essays, 'is a romantic object except that we sail in—embark and the romance quits our vessel and hangs on every other sail on the horizon.'

How did the Israelites regard the miraculous wanderings? 'Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, it is a people that do err in their heart, and *they have not known my ways*.' They were surrounded by romance but failed to see it. To the children of Israel the desert journey was a commonplace and wretched business.

But it is not the journey of life that is commonplace. 'All martyrdoms looked mean when they were suffered.' Think of the greatest—Calvary. Behold the bravest, most heroic, hanging on the Cross between two thieves! a sight not seen before nor since.

> Towering o'er the wrecks of time
> All the light of sacred story
> Gathers round its head sublime.

That is the judgment of history—that is the universal opinion of mankind. This being so, surely all Jerusalem went out to witness the unique sight. Not at all. Three o'clock that Friday afternoon struck as usual—that first Good Friday afternoon passed quietly away without incident as far as the majority was concerned—only a few women, weeping at the Cross, only a squad of Roman soldiers, and a few priests in long robes and beards, and a mixed crowd of idly curious folk who had paced the street with nothing to do but crawl along to see 'another show' in the darkness of that tragic night. 'All martyrdoms looked mean when they were suffered.'

We are a 'blind race' in very truth. 'Verily, verily, I say unto you that many have desired to see the things which ye see and have not seen them, and to hear the things which ye hear and have not heard them.' God is always 'somewhere

else'—the great movements have happened in 'some other land,' to 'some other people.' 'Where is God?' we ask. 'Where is He not?' asks Jesus. 'Whither shall I flee from Thy presence?' asks the Psalmist. 'Nature is the vesture of God,' says the poet, 'the living garment of God'—another poet.

It is not the denial of the inspiration of the Bible that constitutes infidelity—but the denial of the Divinity of common ordinary daily life.

'And the manna ceased'—who said so? Is not the loaf which nourishes us to-day as miraculous, as wonderful as the manna of old? Think of the common loaf; through how many processes has it reached our table? A field was ploughed, harrowed, and fertilized a year ago. A sower in Canada, New Zealand, and other parts of the earth, sowed his field. The brown earth changes its colour first into beautiful green, then into gold, under the influence of rain, light, and heat. Then comes the bustle of the farm, of a gathering in of the harvest; the threshing follows, then ships leave distant ports, cut their way through the deep, arrive in Cardiff, Liverpool, London. The grain is ground into flour at the mill, and at last it reaches our town or village, where the baker turns it into bread, and we buy our loaf for 4½d. All that complex machinery has had to be kept going to provide us with a 4½d. loaf!

If thou hast wanderings in the wilderness
And find'st not Sinai, 'tis thy soul is poor;
There towers the Mountain of the Voice no less,
Which whoso seeks shall find, but he who bends,
Intent on manna still and mortal ends,
Sees it not, neither hears its thundered lore.

The rumblings of conscience are the thunders of Sinai. Have we not heard them? Does not the hard rock of difficulty, disappointment, sorrow, loss, pain, yield us draughts of limpid water? We are not strangers to that most common thing in the world, a mother's love. Is that indeed not a bush that burns and is not consumed? In some lonely experience, when we have felt forsaken, forgotten, has not the God of Horeb come to us, changing the whole scene, and giving us fresh hope? Has not many a stony place turned out to be a Bethel? and we have realized that 'God was there' and we 'knew it not.'

Henceforth our hearts shall sigh no more
For olden time and holier shore;
God's love and blessing, then and there,
Are now, and here, and everywhere.

'Look for the action of the Deity,' so says Sir Oliver Lodge, 'if at all, then always, not in the past alone, not only in the future, but equally in the present. If His action is not visible now, it never will be, and never has been visible.' And yet again, 'The interventions of God are universal and constant.'[1]

[1] W. J. Rowlands, *The Suburban Christ*, 33.

Recent Foreign Theology.

French Theology.

THE number of commentaries on Job continues to multiply. Since Alb. Schultens (1737) opened a new epoch by his philological notes on the book, followed by Reiske and Schnurrer in the same direction, the literature on the subject has been immense. Now we have *Le Poème de Job*, by P. Bertie (203 pp.; Rieder, Paris, 1929), consisting of a translation, introduction, and notes. The author recognizes the plurality of hands which have given the legend its actual form; he discusses the Babylonian, Egyptian, and Hindu analogies, as proving its great antiquity; and he admits that the text in some places is so corrupt as hardly to admit of translation. He is probably the first French scholar to reproduce in French the simple grave rhythm (*le rude martellement*) of the Hebrew poet. On the whole, the Book of Job, strange and sublime, continues to hold its mysteries, but students who are seeking for a key, without wishing to grope through long commentaries, will have a good counsellor beside them in Bertie's volume.

It has been known for many years that, among the names in the commercial texts discovered at Nuffar (ancient Nippur), in Babylonia, there are many Hebrew or Aramæan ones. The texts, which