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fores' might be collected. They would lead us to a deeper knowledge of the ways of that God whom to know is Life Eternal.

These notes are meant to be but a few brief indications of the lines and subjects that might

serve as a basis of an investigation. A Science of Prayer founded in such a manner would give a new inspiration to the exercise, a new confidence in pursuing it, and yield a vast enrichment of our spiritual life.

In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

A Christmas Talk.

BY THE REVEREND S. GREER, M.A., AYR.

'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'—Mt 25⁴⁰.

WHAT is your idea of Christmas? Perhaps you are one of those people who are always thinking about what they are going to get, and have your list already prepared of all the things you could be doing with—a doll's pram of the latest model, or a motor car which really and truly lights up. Well, that's all right up to a point; it wouldn't be Christmas at all without its wonderful surprises, and the other things we only *pretend* are surprises.

But isn't it rather selfish if we're just thinking of what we are going to get? A little fellow of three whom I knew left, one Christmas Eve, a glass of hot milk and a piece of cake for Santa Claus in case he might be hungry after his long ride. He placed them at his bedside before he went to sleep, and *in the morning they were gone*. You must believe in Santa Claus after that!

After all, it is Jesus' birthday, and we should be giving Him presents. We might address them to the hospital, or to some young folk whom no one else perhaps is remembering at this happy season, and little arms will be held out rapturously to clasp and hug them. And behind them I seem to see the form of Jesus with shining eyes, for He loves to share His birthday gifts. 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren,' He says, 'ye have done it unto me.' I heard of a boy who had heaps and heaps of toys and who one Christmas was looking out some that he was going to send to a Children's Hospital. His mother watched him as he put into the parcel an engine which wouldn't run, and an earless teddy-bear, and a battered railway train, and a rabbit whose leaping days were done. 'Is that what you are

going to give?' she asked, and added very softly—'to Jesus.' 'Sorry, Mummy,' he said flushing, and hanging his head, 'I didn't remember whom they were for.' Back he ran to his cupboard, and brought out some of the things he really loved; then with a little ache, but a great big happiness, he solemnly kissed them one by one, and quickly packed them up.

What a jolly time Christmas is, with parties and crackers and paper-hats, and Christmas pies (which are really little representations of the Bethlehem manger). A great deal of that fun-making comes down to us from very ancient times before Christ was born. The last days of the year were often spent in feasting and jollity, and in old Roman times slaves were given liberty to hold revels, and would wear paper-hats, just as we do at parties. But all the best things about Christmas we owe to Jesus: our loving wishes, and our thoughtfulness for those who may not be so fortunate as we are. That brings a better kind of jollity, when we try to make other people happy too.

Do you know the legend of the chrysanthemum? They say it first appeared on earth on the day when Christ was born. The Wise Men had followed the guiding star until it led them near to the Inn at Bethlehem, but, search though they did, they could not find the manger. Suddenly one of them, looking to the ground, saw blooming a new and beautiful flower, 'rayed like the star which has guided us here,' they said. As he stooped to pick the strange bloom, the door to the manger wonderfully opened, and they all entered into the presence of the Holy Child. God, they believed, had caused that first chrysanthemum, 'star-like and lustrous,' to blossom, in order that they might be guided to the place where the Infant Jesus lay sleeping. So the kind things we do, and the love we show, may shine like starry flowers to lead somebody's thoughts to Christ. 'It is Christmas morning,' they say; 'how much kindness there is in the world since Jesus came!'

Love for everybody, and especially for the unhappy or the unfortunate—that is Christmas. For it speaks of God's wonderful gift of love in Jesus, our Saviour. It is Jesus' birthday. We worship Him best when we offer Him the gifts of our love. What about giving Him as a birthday present the one thing He most desires—yourself?

Higher and Higher.

BY THE REVEREND GORDON HAMLIN, B.A., CARDIFF.

'And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.'—Lk 2⁵².

You all know, I am sure, the game called 'Higher and Higher.' Most children like playing it; and even when we grow too big to enjoy jumping over a rope we become interested in a new form of that old game: the high jump in our school sports. How thrilling that is! when we watch the competitors springing higher and higher and then higher still; and how we cheer the victor who leaps the highest.

Now, don't you think that would make a splendid motto for you and me during this New Year? What better one than 'Higher and Higher'? In Brittany there is a very big and famous castle. Long ago when it was built the knight ordered that his motto should be carved in stone on the castle walls. There it is to-day for all to read: '*au plus*.' Some of you who are doing French will know what that motto means. It could be translated by the name of our English game: 'Higher and Higher.' That was the knight's watchword long ago: let it be ours, who are knights of the King of kings all through this New Year. Then it will surely be a happy year as well as a new one.

Of course boys and girls will grow taller this year. That is good. The other day I was watching an old gardener friend at work in his potting-shed. Upon the whitewashed wall I could see a series of marks something like the steps of a ladder. I wondered what they were, and in reply to my question the old gardener said: 'That's where my young master used to measure his height to see how fast he was growing.' Yes, it is good to grow higher and higher, to be strong in our body, and good at our games.

But it is better far to mount higher and higher in our mind, to gain in knowledge as well as in height; to rise higher in the class; to do our homework better; and to secure a place near the top, or perhaps even at the top in our exams. God doesn't want one of us to be a dunce. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind.' So let

us try hard to go higher and higher at school this year. When William Carey was a professor in India and well known as a great scholar, he wrote: 'I can plod. That is my only genius. I can persevere. To this I owe everything.' Yes, and that is something we all can do: plod and persevere. So, 'higher and higher' at school this year.

But most important of all is for us to go higher and then higher still in the best things: to become stronger in our character, and to follow Jesus more and more steadfastly. Could we not resolve that during this New Year we will read our Bible more thoughtfully? And what a difference it would make if we were to pray more regularly, and more and more reverently. Nothing goes really right if the best things are going wrong.

Besides, God wants us to become 'all-round' girls and boys—strong in our bodies, alert in our minds, and splendid in our character, too. He shows us that in the life of Jesus. Do you remember what we read about Him when He was a boy?—'And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man.' Yes, our Lord loved to go higher and higher, and to live that 'all-round' life which is well-pleasing unto God. How good it is to know that He will help us day by day to do the same, if we do our best and follow Him. So, then, knights of the King of kings—onward and upward!—*a plus!* 'Follow me, and I will make you to become . . .' says Jesus. Therefore let us:

Follow the Christ, the King.
Live pure, speak true, right wrong,
Follow the King!

The Christian Year.

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

The Helpful Trend of Modern Science towards Religion. II.

BY THE REVEREND P. N. BUSHILL, B.A.,
ORPINGTON.

'What is man, that thou art mindful of him?'—Ps 8⁴.

Last time we considered God and His universe. The sum and substance of our thought is that it is only an antiquated view of science that holds it to be unscientific to believe in God. Science to-day not only permits, but requires, a spiritual interpretation of the universe. The modern educated young person, however, is faced with a further difficulty: What about *man*? Does not the popular scientific conception of the universe make man very puny, very insignificant? Let us face

this difficulty—a difficulty which is very real to some people.

I. The difficulty is twofold.—(1) *The Insignificance of Man in comparison with the Magnitude of the Universe*. Listen to Sir James Jeans in the opening passage of *The Mysterious Universe*: words told so quietly, so simply, so ordinarily, and yet presenting a picture so immense that it is impossible to grasp it. 'A few stars are known which are hardly bigger than the earth, but the majority are so large that hundreds of thousands of earths could be packed inside and leave room to spare; here and there we come upon a giant star large enough to contain millions of millions of earths. And the total number of stars in the universe is probably something like the total number of grains of sand on all the seashores of the world.' A very calm way of talking, but very bewildering. That is through the telescope. But look through the microscope also: a still more wonderful universe on our little earth. This from the *Daily Telegraph* recently, commenting on the findings of Sir John Russell, Director of Rothamstead Experimental Station: 'Go out into your garden and look at the flower-bed. How still and silent the mould seems! Yet, do you know that if you took a teaspoonful of the soil there would be in it probably a thousand million creatures?' Such figures are staggering. In a universe so immense, so wonderful, what right have *we* to think so much of ourselves? Surely we hardly count! Man's idea of his own importance is sheer egotism: man's views of immortality are simply the expression of his own desires! Now such views as these have been current among thoughtful people of all times: it is the old difficulty felt by the Psalmist, and so graphically portrayed in the verses adjacent to our text.

The parallel difficulty is (2) *The Apparent Insignificance of Life*. It would seem that life is a by-product of this universe, almost an accident according to the scientific view of a short time ago. 'Above all else,' says Sir James Jeans, 'we find the universe terrifying because it appears to be indifferent to life like our own. . . . Perhaps we ought to say it appears to be actively hostile to life like our own.' And what is the end of it all? 'The tragedy of our race is that it is probably destined to die of cold, while the greater part of the substance of the universe still remains too hot for life to obtain a footing' (p. 12). The old materialistic view of the universe of a generation ago included human life in it—which led to a very material view of life: we were so much part and

parcel of the universe that it certainly was not scientific to emphasize our freedom of will; our presence or our absence upon the world's surface could not make any difference to the inexorable running of the infallible machinery of the universe, alike indifferent to our pain or pleasure. Jeans has well summed up these difficulties in a very fine sentence (p. 13): 'Is this, then, all that life amounts to? to stumble, almost by mistake, into a universe which was clearly not designed for life, and which, to all appearances, is either totally indifferent or definitely hostile to it, to stay clinging on to a fragment of a grain of sand until we are frozen off, to strut our tiny hour on our tiny stage with the knowledge that our aspirations are all doomed to final destruction, and that our achievements must perish with our race, leaving the universe as though we had never been?' To this question, Jeans gives an emphatic No!

II. Much of our difficulty is created for us by our human standards of measurement.—We say that a thing is ten feet high, and the standard of measurement is a man's foot. Three men's feet make a yard: 1760 yards a mile: and so we talk of millions of miles, and we get lost and bewildered. We simply cannot imagine it, and where the imagination cannot go there is lack of faith, lack of certainty. I wonder whether the ants think of us in the same way as we view the universe: I wonder whether they measure us by so many million ants' feet! I wonder whether our ants in this country know anything about their cousins out in India: but cousins they would hardly be: they are a different race of ants, so big, so huge: our ants, I wonder whether they know of the sons of Anak in India! Now we know ourselves: we know our world; and all the time there are these poor little ants, millions of them, and poor tiny microbes within our blood, billions of them, blissfully unconscious of it all. And yet if they had a mind, they would be just as sorely puzzled over what we know so well, as you and I are over the universe. The universe for human beings is no bigger than our world for ants. This world is a fact, and we know much about it: it is surely not a far step to the universe being a thing comprehended and controlled by Almighty God. We want a sense of proportion; we must not become slaves of our human standards, and, because of our being limited to these standards, think that all that is beyond them is incomprehensible and impossible.

III. Now what has modern science to say to the question, 'What is man, that thou art mindful of him?' Science to-day brings us two

helpful facts. (1) *Modern Science emphasizes the Uniqueness of Human Life.* The older view that many of the stars, if not all, were inhabited, is not held to-day. Certain conditions of temperature are necessary for life to exist at all, and only in very small zones in this universe can these temperatures exist. Jeans says (p. 4): 'Life of the kind we know on earth could only originate on planets like the earth.' And again: 'The view that every point of light in the sky affords a possible home for life is quite discarded.' The number of planets which could satisfy the conditions for life is extremely small. 'Of the eight or nine planets in our solar system only the earth, Venus and Mars could conceivably hold life, and while it is almost certain that there is vegetation on Mars it is increasingly regarded as unlikely that there are higher forms of life either there or on Venus' (F. C. Bryan, *New Knowledge and the Old Gospel*, 61). 'We have no real evidence of life anywhere but on the earth,' says Sir James Jeans; and again: 'We, the only thinking beings, so far as we know, in the whole of space.' Modern thought lays a new emphasis on the uniqueness of human life. (2) *Modern Science allows room for the 'Purposefulness' of Human Life.* The case for absolute strict causation, amounting almost to a fatalism in human life, is destroyed. Human life is not now regarded as a joint in the machine of the universe. Jeans (p. 29) says: 'The picture of the universe presented by the new physics contains more room than did the old mechanical picture for life and consciousness to exist within the picture itself, together with the attributes which we commonly associate with them, such as free will, and the capacity to make the universe in some small degree different by our presence. Human life is not such an accident as at first supposed: human life is not so much at the mercy of blind force as thought: human life is not so much a by-product as has been suggested.' . . . And on p. 149: 'We discover that the universe shows evidence of a designing or controlling power that has something in common with our own individual minds.' . . . 'We are not so much strangers or intruders in the universe as we at first thought.' . . . Again, p. 148: 'The new knowledge compels us to revise our hasty first impressions that we had stumbled into a universe which either did not concern itself with life or was actively hostile to life.'

So, according to the modern view, as so recently put forward by Sir James Jeans, man is after all very important in this universe. The old exclamation of the Psalmist may still express our wonder and astonishment at the wisdom and love of God.

Man is unique in this universe: man has a purpose in life, a mission which he can fulfil: he can make this wonderful world just a little bit different, just a little bit better, by his life upon it! F. C. Bryan in his book (p. 63) sums it up in this very fine passage: 'And so we come back once again to the simple faith of our fathers and find it entirely congruous with the new knowledge. Here is the whole vast creation stretching to utterly unimaginable distances, travelling through utterly inconceivable stretches of time—and producing what? Gigantic celestial furnaces? Well, what of them? There is nothing of abiding significance and worth in furnaces, however big or however numerous. A furnace hasn't a soul. You cannot commune with it, you cannot love it, you cannot be loved by it. But out of these millions of celestial furnaces, out of the æons of time, out of the incredible celestial immensities, for one short space of time on one small planet life has appeared, and people—thinking, purposing, loving, living people. Something spiritual has blossomed out of the material. A human face animated by a human soul looks upward, scanning the heavens for traces of its Maker, listening to a still small voice that whispers within. . . . Paul has it surely in one of his unerring, inspired intuitions, "The whole creation groaning and travelling in pain . . . waiting for the revealing of sons of God." With infinite care and unwearying patience God has been working and waiting for this . . . "sons." . . . Faces that would look upward from the clod into His face, crying "Abba, Father," and recognize Him and love Him.'

What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Man is supreme in all God's creation. 'Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.' We need not bemoan our insignificance: it is not scientific so to do. We can thank God for our wonderful life and wonderful powers, and by living with Him and working in fellowship with Him, may strive to show ourselves not altogether unworthy of the unique position we hold in God's universe.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

The Christmas Way of Peace.

'The appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel.'—2 Ti 1¹⁰ (R.V.).

St. Paul is fortifying Timothy to face and to bear hardships for the sake of his message. And that message is this: God has saved us to live a new life, not because we were able to achieve it, but be-

cause He undertook to do the great thing Himself. He has saved us through the coming of Christ who conquered death ; and He has brought to light, so that we can see it, the hidden secret of life and the great reality of immortality in the revelation of His gospel.

On Christmas Day the Christmas evergreens decorate our homes and our churches ; the circle of the Christmas family gatherings is complete. What a wonderful thing this Christmas is which survives all the confusing disappearance of familiar landmarks around us ! We know how many old things are crumbling under the hammer-strokes of change. But Christmas lives on, linking us to the past, linking us to God. From tortured Russia we hear of its Red Christmas and the far-extended and elaborately organized attempt which is made there to crush out all religious celebrations, and to substitute for them the fancy-dress and fireworks of a mere pagan festival. But here in England all but the hopelessly cynical or the fanatically perverse are feeling again the magic touch of the Christmas spirit of goodwill and peace. We have Scrooges still, as when Charles Dickens wrote his *Christmas Carol*, who are ready to snarl that 'every idiot who goes about with "Merry Christmas" on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding.' But most of us will echo Bob Cratchit's reply : 'I have always thought of Christmas-time, when it has come round—apart from the veneration due to its sacred name and origin, if anything belonging to it can be apart from that—as a good time ; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time ; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys.' Many of us may be disenchanting and disillusioned from the easy hopes and promises of a new world which we cherished during the years of war. But surely all alike must respond to the call, once more renewed, to believe in the essential soundness and truth of the Christmas ideal. It sums up and embodies in a form consecrated by many centuries of good and potent usage the things we know that we need most in a troubled and distracted world.

And what are those things ? All our experience points us to the answer : fellowship and peace ; release from the intolerable entanglement of conflicting interests in which we have been and are still enmeshed ; love, not hate ; co-operation, not division ; service, not self. That is what we need—the spirit of the home instead of the spirit of the

jungle. We are weary of strife ; weary of the strain and discord, of the rivalry and the smouldering hates which are always threatening to blaze ; weary of the haunting sense of insecurity and disorder ; weary of the lack of rhythmic movement towards a goal and a fulfilment ; weary of the absence of a great, firm, sure background to life, and of the lack of the great anchors which hold fast in stormy seas. We want peace.

The writer of a recent religious article in the press sets forth eloquently the world-wide value of the Christmas festival, its dramatic pause in the midst of national and international affairs, its family spirit, its celebration of brotherhood, its vindication of mutual comity and kindness, its proclamation of the commandment that men should love one another. So far good, and very good too. Who can help agreement or refuse assent ? But as he draws on to his close and climax he breaks off just where so many homilies leave us. 'There is a way,' he writes, 'open to peace, material and spiritual, and it lies along no other path than that of the human heart at its domestic best.' Is the soul and essence of the Christmas message nothing more than that ? What does Christmas mean, and what are its real values ? First and above all, God, coming to make peace by giving us Himself, pouring into life new love and new hope. 'He brought life to light by the gospel.' And the gospel creates new fellowship and peace by enriching all lives with the joint-possession of God. We cannot omit that and call a summons to brotherhood the gospel of Christmas. It is God that we need, if we are ever to make life the fulfilment of His purpose. Christmas is a promise and a summons to fellowship, because it is the revelation of a God who communicates to all who will have it the real secret of life, which is to live by faith and in obedience to Him. To do that is to live in peace ; and not to do it is to be committed to the darkness which is discord, and wandering, and conflict, and spiritual death. That is why so much genuine aspiration after fellowship and peace exhausts itself in desire and talk. Peace is 'not for anything we have done.' Unaided we cannot make it and keep it for ourselves. We need God, faith in the God who is the background against which we are to set all life—our social life, our national life, all our life-relationships, the life of our own individual souls.

New life for the world lies along that road and no other. We have tried and are still trying other ways, and as long as we pursue them we shall go on failing as we and others have failed before. If we are to be saved from ourselves, we must 'come

to the Father.' Human brotherhood can only be realized in the family of God. That is the deep, true, family message of Christmas, its road to fellowship, its pathway to peace. Nations, classes, individual men and women—we come home to peace when we come to Bethlehem, and find ourselves at home in the family circle of God.

Thus the call of Christmas is above all things a call to faith in the God whom it reveals—not, of course, in His bare existence. The supreme question for all who think is this: What kind of God is He? What is His character? Has He a purpose? These are the very questions which Christmas answers. It makes all the difference in the world to believe in the God of Christmas. Men will not long persevere in working for peace unless their faith in God assures them that He is working for it also. They will lose heart and say that the universe seems to be against them. Show them a God whose heart is wounded by men's conflicts, a God who wills peace, and they can believe that peace on earth is possible at last, if men co-operate with Him. God wills peace, and the knowledge of that is new life to all who possess it. It is treachery to our faith in God to think that the evils in the world which we are all deploring are inescapable, when Christmas tells us that it is a world into which He Himself has come down to save us from them. Believe in the God whom Christmas reveals, and that faith will work salvation here and now in this hard actual world of sundered nations, and shattered fellowships, and broken lives. The Christmas fellowship flows out of the Christmas faith in God. Mr. Chesterton has put it all into his *The House of Christmas*:

There fared a mother driven forth
Out of an inn to roam;
In the place where she was homeless
All men are at home,
The crazy stable close at hand,
With shaking timber and shifting sand,
Grew a stronger thing to abide and stand
Than the square stones of Rome.

To an open house in the evening
Home shall all men come,
To an older place than the Eden,
And a taller town than Rome.
To the end of the way of the wandering star,
To the things that cannot be and that are,
To the place where God was homeless,
And all men are at home.¹

¹ F. B. Macnutt, *From Chaos to God*, 177.

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

The Triumph of Faith.

'By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.'—He 11²⁹.

Nothing can teach us so much as history, if we read it aright. There is only one way to read it aright—by the light of God. That is what the Bible does for us; it gives us history read by the light of God.

This sentence is a lightning sketch of a great historical event seen in the light of God. Here are two bodies of men facing the same difficulty. They have gone out on the same road, the one pursued, the other pursuing. There is very little to choose between them so far as the eye can see, except that we would imagine the Egyptians had the best chance of overcoming the impasse. Yet the one failed and the other succeeded. Wherein lay the difference? That is what the writer explains in our text. He is not dealing with this matter from the scientific point of view. His business is not with the mechanical process by which the Red Sea was crossed. He is concerned with the spiritual secret which in the end lies behind all physical processes—the final root of all victorious achievement even in the brute struggle of life. It was more than a coincidence, more than mere bad luck. The secret lies deeper. It lies deep down in the roots of the soul, in the attitude with which they were facing life. By faith, says the writer, the Israelites crossed over the Red Sea.

Now this is a tremendously suggestive way of putting things. It sends its light into the life, to-day, both of men and nations, in many directions. There are two things which lie upon the surface. The one is that it is not circumstances that count in life; it is the men who face them. When David Livingstone stood facing the Kalahari Desert and looked longingly across to the other side, he was warned on every hand that it was no use attempting it, for others had tried better equipped than he, and their bones lay white on the desert sand. But Livingstone went and got through. There is only one explanation; he was David Livingstone, and they were not.

The second thing which lies upon the surface is this, that the vital difference between one man and another lies in the possession of faith, or the want of it. The secret of triumph is victorious personality, and that is the product of creative faith. Faith is always creative. It puts that into a situation which changes everything. On the surface, the Egyptians should have won. They were far

better equipped. They had the advantage of civilization and the gift of a hundred vanished arts. They were highly skilled and efficient in many departments of life, as we know from their ancient monuments. The Israelites were a race of slaves, cowed in spirit, petty and short-sighted, wearied out with years of drilling and tyranny. But they had faith, and the others had not. It was only a spark of faith they had, a mere germ which a chance visitor would hardly have detected. But faith is a thing of infinite possibilities. Zinzendorf, the Moravian mystic, was fond of riding, and could master the wildest horse in his father's stables. Some one remarked on his efficiency in horsemanship and wondered how it could exist in a man of his unworldly mind. His answer was that only the man who is living above the world is the master of the world.

If we want proof that the religious man is the master of all things and has the power of shaping life, we have it in one familiar fact. When we take it seriously, life is always carrying us into circumstances which we cannot meet and master without the help of God. Here is a young man who is forced out into life by the necessity of his career. In a moment he finds himself up against strange and intoxicating temptations, where he is in constant peril of being carried off his feet. It comes to him that if he is to meet these things fairly and keep his footing, he must find something to hold on to, something big enough to quell the illusion of temptation that is for ever laying its spell upon his soul. Or take the fact of sorrow. Sooner or later we are forced up against it. All our life is in ruins. That is a common situation. How are we to meet it without going under? The ordinary commonplaces of comfort are not enough; they are insipid; they are an insult to a broken heart. When a great singer lost his only son in the war, he said to a friend, 'When a man comes to a thing like this, there are just three ways of it. There is drink, there is despair, and there is God; and by His grace, it's God for me.' Perhaps it is the necessity of the world's need which sends us out to a difficult situation. God knows, it is oftentimes harder to see others suffer than to suffer ourselves, and especially to see the suffering of those we love. On the impulse, we rush in to help. We long to save some one from the grip of a habit which is dragging him down to the depths. Is there anything more baffling, more disheartening, anything which throws a greater strain on our patience, on our faith in humanity, than to look at the world as it is in many places and to try to do

some service in it? There is only one way in which a man dare meet the need of the world, dare face its crushing burdens and sins—by a new and victorious faith in God and in the amazing potency of grace.

There is a picture by a great artist which depicts God in the act of making His world. As the vision of it, with all its terror and tragedy, looms up amid chaos, there is one who says to Him, 'If about to make such a world as that, stay Thine hand.' This is how we all feel sometimes. But the truth is, the world was never meant for the man who would live in it without the power and hope of a living faith. Life is a spiritual adventure which we can only face upon the terms of faith. The love that made the world, alone can give us power to live in it. That is a great word of Paul's, that in God we live and move and have our being. What does it mean but just this, that the whole order of things is a spiritual order? It is from God's hand we take it, and we dare not take it without God any more than a captain dare face the ocean without that contact with the magnetic current by which his compass is directed, without the sun and stars by which he steers.

This incident has a very special application to our time and to its needs. Life has forced us in these days upon a very difficult adventure. We are moving into a time in which we shall need more faith than ever men had before.

There is the international situation, for instance. How is that to be met? One thing is certain, we must get out of the old place in which we have lived so long, into a land of new relationships between the nations. God is calling us to such a new way of life as is foreshadowed in the League of Nations. To be sure, that has its difficulties. So had the journey to the promised land for the Israelites. There was the Red Sea to begin with, and if they had waited till everything was clear they would never have gone out at all. The League of Nations means a call to sacrifice and to unselfishness. It means exchanging the old securities for the forces which are awakened by a great-hearted faith in God and in one another and in the power of justice and righteousness—to hold the nations together and bring them into a way of peace. There is no going back! And there is no going forward without this faith and all that proceeds from it. The League will be what we make it by the spirit we breathe into it. It will have the power we put into it, and the power by which it can stand is the power that comes from the vision of the Kingdom. By faith we shall cross over, without faith we shall go down.

And there is the national situation. Here again we are being forced out into a new world. The old world of self-interest has become too narrow for the growing soul of democracy. And the question is, how are we facing the transitions? Is there vision enough in the rising democracy to lead it clear of the swamps of sheer materialism and class-selfishness? Is there vision enough in the stalwarts of the old order to let the past go at the right moment, as men on the harbour-side let go the cables when the ship is ready to start out. The crux of the matter is that we are being forced into a new way of social and economic life, which demands spiritual qualities—goodwill and unselfishness and loyalty to one another. Do we realize that these can only come from faith in God and a new vision of His Kingdom? It is an hour when the nation needs men of faith and vision at the helm of State, men who will steer by the stars and not grope from point to point with the rush-light of expediency. In 1652, when things were going badly with this nation in the war with Holland, the great John Owen preached to Parliament, ‘You take counsel with your own hearts. You advise with one another. You hearken unto men with a repute of wisdom, and all this doth but increase your trouble. You do but more and more entangle and disquiet your own spirits. God stands by, and says, “I am wise also,” and very little notice is taken of Him.’

Beside every impasse God stands till we come up to it, waiting to work the miracle, waiting to reveal Himself in the endowment of power. God never gives any man power in reserve. We live only by the grace we are forced to use. In the *Pilgrim's Progress* Bunyan puts this very clearly. Christian went out at the secret bidding of his soul with his face to the light, went on till he fell into a slough that lay just across the road; and being in it went on, still with his face to the light, though he could see no way of getting out. Then, and not till then, did he see the stretched-out hand of Help, who mysteriously came and mysteriously went—none other than the Holy Spirit Himself. Only when we face tasks in His name which put a strain upon our faith, only then will rise within us the strength of God.¹

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

The Motive and the Sum of Obedience.

‘I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice,

holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.’—Ro 12¹.

At this point we are standing on the watershed of the Epistle to the Romans. Our text is like the ‘Great Divide’ over which the traveller across Canada passes when he has drawn up into the mountains away from the Great Lakes, and his face is set to British Columbia. He is up on the roof of the world, and all the rivers begin to flow in a new direction. So here, the eleven chapters before centre in the wonderful redemption that is in Jesus Christ; the five later chapters show how that redemption ought to colour daily life. Thought has hitherto been moving from heaven to earth, with grace as keynote; now it commences to move from earth to heaven, and all is based on gratitude.

That is always the Bible’s way, is it not?—first to unveil what God has done, then to point out what thankful faith will lead us to do. Ephesians and Colossians, as well as Romans, are bisected by a line on exactly this principle: on the one side creed, on the other conduct. Naturally—for creed and conduct are parts of one vital whole, like breathing in the air by the lungs and breathing it out. They are one organically; and if you amputate either, the other member of the partnership will bleed to death. Doctrine without precept always leads to mischief. If men hear nothing but assurances of their privileges in Christ, with never a word to remind them how they have to live as Christians in home and street and counting-house, their ideas of religion will soon go bad. The absence of salutary thoughts of moral obligation corrupts the whole, and religion begins to do more harm than good. Creed must issue in definite obedience, or it becomes like a pool without an exit—dead, sluggish, dark, and breeding in its bosom all manner of foul things.

But if doctrine without precept can be dangerous and unwholesome, precept without doctrine is baffling and forlorn. If we have not been gladdened by the truth of God, what chance have we of overcoming in the power of God? As it has been put: ‘Christian ethics are relative to the Christian revelation. It is the relations in which we stand that determine our duties, and the new relations in which we are set both to God and to other men by faith in Jesus Christ have a new morality corresponding to them.’

1. Note first in the text what St. Paul appeals to—the mercies of God. That is the point of the argument he is clinching in this verse. Here is the fulcrum on which he rests a mighty lever that has moved the world—the mercies of Divine love; that

¹ J. Reid, *The Victory of God*, 211.

deep overflowing kindness for man which has throbbled in the heart of God from all eternity, and took shape in Jesus Christ.

Gain the heart, and duty infallibly will be done. The ice-breaker forcing a way across the frozen bay with an infinite expenditure of steam and noise may bore a channel that will close over in an hour, but the gentle winds of spring touch all Nature's sleeping powers, strike off the world's fetters, and sweep the steely barriers pell-mell into the open sea. So, too, the iron wedge of passionless duty can pierce but a little way into the hard integuments of selfishness that wrap conscience, but grateful love melts all bonds by its own persuasives. It is when the mercies of God have been remembered, and their wonder felt, that the entire man is dedicated as a sacrifice.

The question is often canvassed, why some people even in our churches care so little about getting the Kingdom of God built up amongst us, or in foreign lands through missionary effort; and occasionally very subtle and what seem far-fetched reasons for that are given. The simple answer, though not perhaps the most welcome, is just that they lack a strong motive. The mercies of God have left them cold; they are stirred by no inner fire. Gratitude is not at work. But if we are going to have the true driving-power, we must be touched, moved, transformed, inflamed, by the great love that poured itself out for us. So again, when earnest men look round and see professing Christians whose life does more to keep churches empty than preaching will ever do to fill them—men who are shamefully self-indulgent, or who drive pitiless bargains in business so as to make the very name of religion unsavoury—and when they ask, what will change these men, and bring professed creed and action into harmony, again the reply is the same. Nothing but a heart full of thankfulness to God for what He has done in Christ, and to Christ for doing it. Lose that, and the frost of worldly self-interest chills all feeling; keep that, and the whole nature stirs and blossoms in service. Love is the moving energy of life.

2. Note, in the second place, the sacrificial character of personal Christianity. 'Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.' That is what St. Paul asks his readers to do, as the practical outcome and goal of all his previous exposition of the mercies of God.

Now we are not to suppose that, because the Apostle writes 'your bodies' instead of 'your selves,' he is making distinctions here, or appealing for the dedication of the body as contrasted with

the inner spirit. The body is the instrument and organ of all life, and for that reason St. Paul singles it out. Outwardly and visibly our bodies can quite well be taken for ourselves, and as the cause of whatever effect we produce in the world. Hence when we are urged to present our bodies in sacrifice, it is a call simply to devote to God all the active powers of our personality, a vital offering to Him who has blessed us.

And yet, what is that word 'sacrifice' doing in Christianity: there surely it is out of place? Scholars tell us, do they not? that wherever Jesus' name has come, the bloodstained offerings we read about in the Old Testament, and which still here and there smoke in dark lands of heathenism, cease for good and all. The one word 'living' explains everything. Sacrifices are not, after all, abolished by Christianity; but now they are not the dead victims of former days, dragged helpless to the shrine in blind unconsciousness. They are living men and women, boys and girls. Christian sacrifice is nothing if it is not conscious, willing, eager, free. Previously the offering lasted only during the brief hour when the creatures were being struck down and their limbs smoked on the pile; the Christian offering of self to God, in return for love, is lifelong and irrevocable.

'Protestantism,' says a well-known Roman Catholic teacher, 'is essentially the abolition of sacrifice. To abolish mortification, abstinence, and fasting; to abolish the necessity of good works, effort, struggle, virtue; to shut up sacrifice in Jesus alone, and not to let it pass over upon ourselves; no longer to say with St. Paul, "I suffer that which remains to be suffered of the sufferings of the Saviour"; but rather to say to the crucified Jesus, "Suffer alone, O Lord"—there you have Protestantism.' Now it is not difficult to answer this, as an accusation. It is not difficult to show that our deep evangelical faith, by setting a man face to face with God and insisting that no priest shall prescribe his religious life for him, but that he must have a faith of his own, given him by God, is really by far a harder thing than Romanism, a much stiffer proposition. But merely to refute a calumny will not help us much. Far better let this unfriendly voice remind us of our faults, and send us to humility and penitence. *Is* there sacrifice in our lives? My life in Christ a cross-bearing—is that how we naturally think about it, and is that, in any honest sense, what we try to make it?

St. Paul closes the verse by describing such living presentation of self as our reasonable service—it is, he says, the proper ritual of the Christian life.

Ancient religion was always apt to be absorbed in cult and ceremonial, and much, too, of modern religion leans that way. But there is no evading the principle laid down here that no ritual can for a moment compare with a consecrated life; no sacrifice can please the Father's heart half so much as a child's brave loyalty in common things. We have taken the words 'Divine service,' and limited them wrongly to denote worship in church; and so the nearly incurable tendency to separate off the sacred and the secular still finds its way into common speech, and the gulf between the two is kept open. But all Christians are priests, and all

their lives should be service. There can be devotion in the lowliest duty, there can be prayer in business routine, there can be praise in drudgery, there can be consecration in everything. That, as the Apostle puts it, is the one kind of service which is *reasonable*. No other sort will bear being planned for, no other sort will bear being looked back upon. In His mercy God gave all He had, for Jesus Christ was His very heart. We must render back our all for very thankfulness, with the overflowing joy of those who have been put deeply in debt and are content to owe everything to God.¹

¹ H. R. Mackintosh, *The Highway of God*, I.

Recent Foreign Theology.

A Swedish Philosopher.

THE scholars and thinkers of the smaller nations who use their mother-tongue are at a distinct disadvantage, unless their writings are translated into what may be called one of the international languages. I had not even heard of this Swedish philosopher¹ until the editor of this volume sent me a copy of this German translation. The contents consist of lectures, delivered on the Claus-Petri Foundation at the University of Uppsala. The editor has prefixed an Introduction of forty pages, giving an account of the author and a sketch of his philosophy. Vitalis Norström was born in 1856, and died in 1916. From 1890 till his death he was Professor of Philosophy at the University of Gothenburg.

His philosophical standpoint can be stated in the following propositions: (1) Philosophy should be regarded as epistemology, and not as ontology. (2) The start must be made from psychology, as containing the roots of all special sciences. (3) The activity or self-activity of thinking should be brought under the direction of the logical principle. (4) Logical necessity expresses not the *is* but the *should be*; and this formal normative science leads on to the real normative science, or ethics. (5) Moral obligation demands the wider content of society, law, and culture; and thus ethics leads on to history. But history may be regarded either

¹ Vitalis Norström, *Religion und Gedanke*, mit Einführung von Elof Akesson (Borelius, Lund; Kr. 12).

circularly (statically) or progressively (dynamically); the crucial point is whether the historical interpretation is *naturalistic* or *supernaturalistic*. A meta-historical standpoint must be attained, and that is attained only in the religious consciousness. The advance of philosophy is thus from psychology to logic, from logic to ethics, from ethics to history, and from history to religion (pp. xxxiv-xxxvi).

The Table of Contents indicates the progressive exposition of the volume. The first chapter discusses thought as the organizing principle of experience. The last sentence here may be quoted: 'We have accordingly fixed three different standpoints, which can be assumed towards scientific work. Of these the one *Empiricism* attaches itself one-sidedly to content and experience; the second *Formalism* one-sidedly to form and activity; while the third traces the form back to the subject as its source, sets the subject over against an object as the capacity over against a material, determines the capacity more closely as motive and power towards systematic unity, and derives the scientific transforming work from this motive and this power' (pp. 42-43).

The second chapter deals with the conception of Truth. The author starts from *truth for us*, not *truth in itself*, although the movement is from the one to the other as an ideal. Three types of science are recognized—natural science, mathematics and logic, and history. It is the author's conviction that 'the fundamental significance of truth belongs to the historical type' (p. 67).