

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

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

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expository-times\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php)

pdfs are named: [Volume]\_[Issue]\_[1<sup>st</sup> page of article].pdf

## In the Study.

### Virginibus Puerisque.

'Very Like a Whale!'

BY THE REVEREND J. S. STEWART, B.D.,  
ABERDEEN.

'As for me.'—JOS 24<sup>15</sup>.

IN Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*, which most of you have read or are reading or are going to read at school, there is a character called Polonius. The scene of *Hamlet* is laid at the Court of Denmark, and Polonius is Lord Chamberlain; and a rather vain and pompous old man he is, fond of using long words, and quite without any sense of humour at all. One day the young prince gets hold of him, and pointing to a cloud up in the sky, says, 'Don't you think that cloud yonder has almost the shape of a camel?' 'Indeed it does,' replies Polonius, 'it is exactly like a camel!' 'Well, now,' goes on Hamlet, 'I think it is rather like a weasel.' 'Why, so it is,' answers the old man, 'it has a back just like a weasel.' 'Or don't you think it might be a whale?' says Hamlet. 'Very like a whale,' says Polonius. (Could you imagine three things more utterly different than a camel, a weasel, and a whale?)

Now I know what you are thinking of. The Loch Ness monster, isn't it? He is quite a well-known character nowadays. He has had a leading article about him in the *Times*. He has had his photograph published. Some people say he is the original sea-serpent. Others declare he is just a gigantic eel. Others believe he is a seal. Others say, with Polonius, 'very like a whale.' Some think he must be an amphibian—which means he could live equally well in the water or on the land: he might come up out of Loch Ness and go for a stroll among the bushes on the shore—an awkward customer to meet on a dark night, don't you think? Anyway (as Henry Drummond used to say to the Edinburgh students), don't you be an amphibian, living two lives; be out-and-out!

But to return from Loch Ness to the Court of Denmark, the thing to notice about Polonius is that here was a man ready to agree with absolutely anything others might say. If you had said to him, 'Isn't it charming weather this winter?' he would have answered immediately, 'Yes, indeed—most charming!' And if some one else a moment later had exclaimed, 'Did you ever see such horrid weather as we are having this winter?' 'No,

never,' he would have said, 'it is perfectly awful!'

Well, that is one way of getting through this world. Say what others say, have no opinions of your own—and you will avoid a good many hard knocks, and win a kind of cheap popularity. But it is a wrong way. God meant us to have the courage of our convictions. Know your own mind!

I do not mean, of course, that we are to be like the people who 'know their own mind' so well that they regard any one who is not of their way of thinking as either a fool or a knave. If some one says to you, 'I have never once changed my mind all my life,' the only possible answer is, 'What a pity!' For it is a real virtue to be able to change your mind sometimes, and to do it cheerfully and with a good grace.

But when I say you should have the courage of your convictions, I mean that once you have given your vote for Christ, stick to it! And stick to it wherever you are. It is a poor thing to say your prayers at home, and then suddenly drop them when you are at summer camp, living in a tent with half a dozen others. It is a poor thing to resist some temptation, and then yield to it just because somebody says, 'Oh, be a sport!' Be like Joshua. 'Serve any god you like,' he said, 'but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.' Don't be a Polonius, agreeing with anything and everything. Don't be a chameleon, changing colour according to surroundings. Don't be a Loch Ness monster, of which no one knows exactly what to say. Be one thing—and be decided. As for me!

Whoso has felt the Spirit of the Highest

Cannot confound nor doubt Him nor deny:

Yea with one voice, O world, tho' thou deniest,

Stand thou on that side, for on this am I.

### Penny Loaf Sunday!

BY THE REVEREND H. L. PICKEN, NEWARK.

'Being warned of God.'—Mt 2<sup>22</sup>.

Have you ever heard of Penny Loaf Sunday? No? Ah, well, if you lived in Newark, you would know all about it.

Penny Loaf Sunday is so called because on that particular Sunday, for the past two hundred and ninety years, it has been the custom for hundreds of penny loaves to be given to the poor, who

attend at the beautiful parish church to receive them.

It all started in this way. During the great Civil War between the Royalists and Roundheads in 1643, Newark stood for the King, and its castle was heavily bombarded by Cromwell's forces from a hill near by. In a house not far from the castle, lived a well-known citizen named Hercules Clay. One night during the siege Mr. Clay dreamt that his home was on fire. The next night he dreamt the same thing again. And yet again on the third night, March 11th, 1643, he had the same dreadful dream. He started from his sleep, sure that God had warned him in order that he might escape. He quickly roused his family, and as hastily as possible they left their home and found shelter elsewhere.

Now this is the wonderful thing. Hardly had they done so when a cannon-ball, aimed at the castle, fell short and burst on Mr. Clay's home, setting it on fire. Before long the house was blazing furiously and soon was a mass of charred ruins.

In gratitude to God for his wonderful escape, Mr. Clay set on one side a large sum of money with which bread was to be bought and given to the poor of the town every year. So for two hundred and ninety years the custom has been kept, and as many as one thousand penny loaves have been given away at a time.

It is a very remarkable story, isn't it? We find similar stories in the Bible, of how God warned men in dreams. At the birth of Jesus, you remember, the wise men were warned by God in a dream to return another way lest they should fall into the clutches of Herod. So too, Joseph, was warned in a dream to flee into Egypt and then again to go into Galilee.

Many people to-day could tell how they had been warned of God in a dream, with the result that they had escaped some dire evil or disaster. But God warns us from evil and danger not merely by dreams. Dreams of this kind are exceptional, whereas God gives us warning at all times when we are in danger, or threatened by evil.

For instance, when our BODIES are in danger, because we are ill-using, or ill-feeding, or neglecting them; or because some disease is threatening to attack us, God sends His warning. It may be a pain—pain is God's warning signal. Or it may be we get what the doctor calls a 'temperature,' or that we faint. These are God's warnings, and if we do not heed them at once it may mean disaster—a long illness or something worse.

Again, when our MIND, our SOUL, our REAL SELF is in danger, as in times of temptation, when we are sorely tempted to do what is wrong, God sends His warning. We 'pick up' the warning by means of CONSCIENCE. But our conscience can only pick up God's warning signals so long as it is kept lighted. This will explain what I mean. When I drive my car along the Great North Road at night, suddenly I see a line of bright red lights right ahead of me. They sweep in a sharp curve off to my right for one hundred yards or so, and show me that I am coming to a dangerous curve in the road. Immediately, I slow down and, as I pass the red lights in safety, I realize that but for them I might very easily have missed the curve and crashed into the wall. I notice, too, that what I had thought were lights are only red reflectors. IT WAS MY OWN CAR LIGHTS THAT LIT THEM UP. If they had been dim, or unlit, I would never have seen the warning signals.

It's like that with CONSCIENCE. Conscience can only pick up God's warning signals when it is kept lighted. Need I tell you how Conscience is lighted? Did not Jesus say, 'I am the light'? Yes, He is 'the light that lighteth every man.' Those who get 'LIT UP BY JESUS' before they start out on the new day pick up God's warning signals at every twist and turn in the road, at every danger spot, and come safely past many places where they would otherwise have gone wrong, have fallen into trouble, or crashed into disaster. So remember, GET LIT UP BY JESUS EVERY DAY!

### *The Christian Year.*

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

#### **The Temptation in the Desert.**

'Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.'—Mt 4<sup>1</sup>.

It seems to us as if the experience of the Baptism awoke Jesus to new issues almost as one is roused from sleep. So large a part does the consecration of this service play in His life that it is not too much to say that He entered the water of Jordan as Jesus the carpenter, and left it as Jesus the Christ. In His own heart, if we may judge from what followed so startlingly, the one thing of which He was supremely conscious as the outcome of this experience was power. This gave Him at once a sense of quiet assurance and a suggestion of danger—peace and questioning. All true revelation acts like this. On the one hand, it thrills us and brings its own drive and passionate energy.

But with the elation a wise man is equally conscious of danger, the danger of excess and misuse. . . . In regard to Christ's special danger, we question if any single thing in human life has been so frequently and ruinously misapplied as power.

Having this gift of power, as yet untried and unmastered, He has now to face the question how He will use it for His high purpose. Could He establish His Kingdom by any expression of this power other than the highest?

This strong confidence within Him came immediately from God: that was undoubted. But a God-like gift may be misused and perverted, even when it is apparently used for God's ends. Indeed, it is this 'perversion of the best' that is always the worst. Consider, for instance, what it is that revolts us in all religious persecution. Our disgust lies here—that this persecuting zeal is a sincere passion for God and God's truth, ruinously misused! It represents power and passion completely perverted.

Thus our Lord has now to settle how He will apply this divine power that has come to Him like a sudden dawn. We read that the agony and conflict of this question drove Him into the desert. He felt that He must be with Himself and God to think it all out. He had so many things to settle—His own self-discipline, His inward loyalties, and a line of direction for His work. For these powers within Him carried their own danger. He might use them selfishly, thoughtlessly, arrogantly, or mischievously. Or He might use them for the pure glory of God and the need of man, even though He Himself might suffer in doing so.

However formal or fanciful the details of the temptation scene may appear, it was of pure necessity an inward experience; for temptation must actually insert itself as an attractive thing into the tempted mind, before it can be real in any sense. He Himself thought it so real, and remembered it afterwards with so much poignancy, that He told it in later days in this flashing way to His disciples. For Him it was an unforgettable memory.

Any theory of this struggle that makes Jesus more than a man in the powers He employed, makes Him less than a man. For such a view awards Him the victory through unnatural means, supernatural devices of which we in our conflicts can never make use. Moreover, if He needed these unnatural means to aid Him in His resistance, His victory was not His own, and in its moral value was really less than the victory of any boy who in his own and God's strength resists a theft and

stands for honour. Either Jesus fought His own devil here as we do ours, in His own strength and by communion with God, or He is no Saviour for us. His victory, if secured by means beyond our power and resources, would not help us, but would be a tragic mockery of our passion. The man who would help us by his example must stand wholly where we stand, and fight as we fight.

After His victory the angels ministered unto Him. After His victory, thank God! There is nothing magical in that, for we find that these gracious angels do the same for us after our victory!

*Could Jesus fall?* Unless Christ's contest is only a make-believe and not a staggering reality, there is no other conclusion. Any idea of His sinlessness that excludes the possibility of His sin or the choosing of alternatives makes it an achievement of no moral worth. We dishonour Jesus and His victory by some of our hesitant theories. He might have denied God—but He didn't. He might have denied Himself—but He didn't.

That is the majesty of His Sonship.

This is the ground of His Saviourhood.

Not only was Jesus genuinely tempted, but He was always tempted. We protest against the constant use of the definite article in describing this scene—The Temptation—as if He dealt here so sweepingly with the issues of His life and ministry, finally and for good, that He was never tempted again. Were that the case, He would, once more, be utterly different from us; and being different, He would be no Saviour for us. In our life, when we are tempted, we may with agony settle some matter as He did with signal victory. But the victory is never complete or final, for we are tempted again in the same point to-morrow. Our decision is a series of decisions. No doubt there is a gracious truth in the fact that one clear, ringing answer makes the next answer easier. But a stricken enemy rises again. That Jesus won here does not alter the fact that He, like us, was tempted again, and always tempted. Why! almost at the end, in that grim scene of Gethsemane, He faced one of these precise temptations again—if, by any chance, the cup might pass from Him, and He might use His power to save Himself from the shame of the Cross.

It is of great spiritual profit to notice *when Christ was tempted*. It was after the uplift of His call and the consecration of His baptism, that Jesus was supremely tempted. This is true to the experience of our life, and it links Him with all human nature.

He is tempted on two aspects of one great experience. What may that fact imply? It means surely that—on the one hand its great exaltation, when He is lifted up on wings; or, on the other hand, in its reaction. Surely we can understand this, and even link ourselves with Him in this experience. There are no more dangerous moments for us than these—the moment of conscious thrill and power, and the moment of natural rebound and reaction. Any one who has been ‘down’ knows that there are queer, insinuating temptations that rap imperiously at the gate of the soul. But there is something in the average man that keeps him strong in such a situation—an element of tenacity.

When is a young man’s danger? Is it not when he is at the top of his bent, when his blood runs hot and red, when he feels, as Christ felt, the sheer mastery and mystery of power? It is then that most of us play the fool. If we may say it reverently, that is when Christ was tempted—when He, too, stretched His arms in new and awful strength!

Or it may be the other side of this experience, when the elation has passed, as all emotions must, and one is in the natural reaction of the strain. By this time, Christ’s early wonder and consciousness of dawning power has passed. He had undergone that emotional struggle regarding John’s baptism and the consecration of the service itself. The experience was now over. Like us, He had to drop back to the level of His daily life and ministry. But does any one ever drop back immediately to the level? Do we not rather sink a little below it, like the swing of a pendulum before it comes to rest? Evil so often catches us on the rebound. The experience of the baptism carried with it a moment like this. Jesus is linked with us in the very naturalness of such an event. His moment of danger is ours.

There is gain also in considering *the manner and fashion in which our Lord was tempted.*

His contest came to Him quite definitely and clearly along the individual line of His own peculiar powers. Christ’s temptation was purely concerned with His own work. Perhaps that is one reason why we shall never understand its especial poignancy to Him, as in a lesser degree we never understand the plea and appeal of our brother’s temptation. It is foolish to think, therefore, that because these temptations of Jesus seem easy to us, they were easy to Him. Any one of us might smile at the suggestion to cast ourselves down from a pinnacle of the Temple to dazzle a multitude. But Jesus could well smile at our temptation to cheat or tell a lie! He was tempted along His own

special line. He is sitting there on a spur of rock, with His chin resting on His hands, looking out wistfully on the scattered world of men and women whom He so passionately wishes to save and serve. How can He do it?

How can He attract these careless, self-centred, worldly, idly-busy people down in the cities and villages of Galilee and Judea? If only He could arrest and grip them! Would it not be worth while to do something that might arrest and startle, win their interest, so that from that He might go on to deeper things? We are tempted along our line. Let this remembrance only make us the more reverent and gentle with some other man’s debate, at which we might feel inclined to sniff with contempt. No doubt he might return the contempt if only he knew the thoughts and dreams that haunt our minds.

As we look at Jesus it is worth saying, *temptation in itself is no sin.* A man says, ‘I am in plain despair about myself. I try to live as much like my Lord as I can; but do what I will, at some unguarded moment, wretched thoughts steal into my mind. Am I an evil thing,’ he asks, ‘that these gaunt spectres steal into my thoughts?’ May we answer the question simply by pointing to Jesus? We believe that He was without stain. But we know that He was not without temptation!

It is our Christian duty to aim at a clean soul, and especially at some self-mastery of our own vagrant thoughts. By discipline and watchfulness, we believe it is possible, in Jesus, to attain to this great ideal. A clean mind and heart may indeed be the beautiful reward of daily faithfulness. But none the less, it needs to be said that temptation is natural to us, and in itself it is no sin. It is the obvious penalty of a great privilege, the genius of which lies in debating opposites.

The *source of Christ’s victory* lay in an unfailing reliance on God. On each occasion Jesus slew His temptation with a text, as a hunter uses a particular bullet for his gun. That does not mean that texts are magical, or will do their own work independently of us. But it does suggest how richly and intimately Christ leant back on the known records of God’s mind and how He steeped Himself in God’s spirit. The Bible may save no one, as a priest may save no one: for both may be equally outside of us. But it is true to say that if the word of God is in our hearts, it will give all needed light, courage, and direction. The secret is to know God’s mind, walk in His plain ways, and lean heavily on His strength.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. Black, *The Dilemmas of Jesus*, 27.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

**The Woman of Great Faith.**

'O woman, great is thy faith.'—Mt 15<sup>28</sup>.

1. How was this woman great in faith? She was so, first of all, because hers was an *unexpected* faith. She was a woman of Syro-phœnicia, Mark tells us, a land where you would naturally expect neither purity of love nor nobility of faith. Its people were worshippers of Moloch and Astarte, hideous names that are synonyms for cruelty and lust. Yet it was out of this dismal swamp Christ plucked this beautiful flower of faith.

Extreme poverty can make faith difficult. There are thousands living in one-roomed houses, in dreary tenements, surrounded with vice and crime on every side, for whom faith is a very difficult thing. Yet not an impossible one. And extreme wealth, too, makes faith a hard thing. 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle . . .'; yes, difficult, but 'with God all things are possible.' Surrounded by the enervating influences of pleasure and sins of every kind, one may yet be a Daniel in Babylon, a 'saint in Cæsar's household.'

2. It was a *mightily persistent* faith. It refused to be conquered. That is the most striking feature of the story—the silence of Jesus and the faith that would not be silenced. When first we meet her she is uttering a piercing, heart-broken cry, 'Have mercy on me, thou Son of David. My daughter is grievously vexed with an unclean demon. Have mercy on me.' And He, what does He answer to that cry—He whose ear was ever open to the prayer of human need? 'He answered her never a word.' It is the strangest incident in all the life of Jesus—His silence to this broken-hearted mother's cry.

Why was He silent here? Some have said it was to test this woman's faith. He knew she would conquer all through. As Dr. John Ker puts it: 'He knew the strength of faith that was in her heart, and wished to bring it out for the perfecting of her own spiritual nature and for an example to us.' That was the view of the old writers—of St. Chrysostom, for example.

But more recent interpreters have refused to take this view. Professor A. B. Bruce pointed out the biographical setting of this story. It happened when the Cross was just coming into clear view of Jesus. A little before, He had received news of John's cruel death—a foreshadowing of His own—shortly after, He made His great announcement of His fast-approaching Passion to the disciple band.

On that occasion Peter tried to turn Him from the Cross with a kindly intentioned remonstrance. But the Master met His disciple's interference with a rebuke of extraordinary severity. 'Get thee behind me, Satan!' He cried. He saw in Peter's words a temptation of the devil, 'changed into an angel of light.' It was the same as He had already conquered in the wilderness—to choose the path of honour and glory instead of the way of the Cross.

It was this same temptation, says Bruce, that assailed the Saviour here. He had come aside into the quiet to meditate on the solemn crisis at which He had now arrived. As He does so the old temptation confronts Him in a new form. Why not turn aside to the Gentile world? His gift of miracles would make Him a hero and perhaps a king there. He need not end His days on a cross. Mr. Coulson Kernahan has put this very thought into a little story, *The Man of No Sorrows*. It is the story of a modern Saviour, identical with the old one, save that He has *no* sorrows, either for Himself or His disciples. The Cross is eliminated.

This eloquent silence of Jesus was no artifice of love. It was a real refusal. This woman felt that. She knew she had a battle to fight. Yet she refused to be beaten. She followed on, crying and weeping, right into the house where Jesus was. There she falls at His feet and sobs out the piteous prayer, 'Lord, help me,' until at last He is moved to speak.

Now, what does all that teach us? Surely the power of persistent prayer. There are moments when God seems silent to us also. Why is God thus silent? No doubt to test us. 'When He hath tried us, we shall come forth as gold.' But this story suggests to us that God may have other reasons for His silence than merely to educate our faith; nay, more, that these reasons can be overcome by persistent prayer. This is a great mystery; but it is a fact in the history of the intercession of the saints.

3. The last crowning quality of this woman's faith was *its spiritual insight*.

This comes out in her marvellous rejoinder to what must seem to many the sternest word ever spoken by the Son of Man to a seeking soul. 'It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs.' However we explain this saying, it has a harsh and forbidding tone about it. There is, indeed, only one thing that can explain it fully—that, like the similar word to Peter, it was not really spoken to the woman at all, but rather to the temptation of which she was but the instru-

to a superior Being, the horrible invention of human sacrifice, the dying away of all sense of Divine protection, and its replacement by ideas solely of savage vengeance—all these are incidents in an immemorial history, in which the religious ideal sometimes advanced, but more often receded.

The coming of the Incarnate Son has set forth sacrifice in a new light. All that was inadequate, all that had become distorted, passed away; the root idea reached its full development. 'Wherefore when he entereth into the world he saith, sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body didst thou prepare for me. In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hadst no pleasure: Then said I, Lo, I am come (in the roll of the book it is written of me) to do, O God, thy will.' In those words the past is linked to the present. In Him the partial sacrifices find their completion. Earthly sacrifice is at best imperfect; but there is an offering that is perfect and complete. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews saw how we must not liken the Godhead to anything that had not the love and the righteousness that are eternal. He saw that in the life of Christ only could he learn what sacrifice meant.

1. It was a great fulfilment: the broken lights met, the purpose of Creation was at last accomplished. Dimly the old fathers had looked forward, not to transitory promises, but to a Divine completion of their sanctification. Kinship: the disciple felt that he had become, in a way that was awful and mysterious, a partaker of the Divine nature. Tribute: what his faltering heart and sinful hand offered trembling was presented now by One who was the Perfect Man—and how much more!

2. But there is more than fulfilment or concentration of the old ideas. There is the imparting of a new, intensely practical, vital power. The doctrine of sacrifice, like all other doctrines, to the Christian is practical. It is also distinctively social. It is wholly coloured by the inspiring conception of the Christian society, that we are members one of another and of Christ, heirs and joint-heirs with Christ, if we suffer with Him. Here was the great root idea of true religion, which the disciple found expanded and consummated. Nothing that is external to man can profit him—no sacrifices, offerings, worship, that do not touch the heart and enter into the innermost soul. He must absorb truth till truth transforms him; and every ray of truth has its work, vivifying and enlightening, to do. Christ the Lord must be more than the disciple's example. He must be born within him,

the vital principle of his life. So at once all that was external was turned into a new life within. 'The good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep'; and the body that was prepared for Him was prepared too, they might say, humbly and trembling though they might say it, for them.

So it was that, while He was still with them working, the Lord spoke so clearly of His Mission, that it was one that completed the old conception of sacrifice. He took the idea, and at once, in a double sense, made it personal. He was their Shepherd, they were His sheep: the close association of protection and fidelity. And for them He would lay down His life, in the body that ages of typical anticipation had prepared for Him. Thus the disciple is brought face to face with the great mystery of the Atonement. It came to him not primarily as a theory, not as a philosophic explanation of the phenomena of forgiveness, but as a historic fact. The atonement of Christ was *the great sacrifice*, the unique offering of perfect love and perfect submission, the tribute of the heart, and the consecration of the covenant of God with man.

We can offer to God only what comes from Him. The completion of the disciple's life means an absolute offering to God. Without that we are none of His. The singleness of our aim, our patient following, our knowledge that we are in the world as God sent us, and solely to do what He designed and go where His will shall show the way—all these, essential each in its way to the growth of our life in the Spirit, cannot be complete save in the sacrifice of all. And this does not mean only the cutting away here and there of things pleasant, the steadfast turning away from sin. It means that the whole man, the whole body, the whole soul, are given to God in Christ, after the fashion of Him who only in the complete offering of body, soul, and spirit could give perfect obedience and win perfect conquest over sin.<sup>1</sup>

#### FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

##### God the Judge of all.

'To God the Judge of all.'—Heb 12<sup>23</sup>.

Life is complex and difficult to handle. In these intricate times it has become 'one tumultuous whole,' and the trend of its way is hard to see. But it is still possible to set it in the 'light everlasting,' and to view it from that standpoint. It is still possible to come in spirit and in truth to 'God the Judge of all,' and to judge our national

<sup>1</sup> W. H. Hutton, *A Disciple's Religion*, 37.

life and industrial controversies in the light of God. 'Ye are come,' says the writer of this so rich and gracious letter, and he names the places and powers and persons to whom the Christian soul draws near, 'Ye are come to Mount Zion, to the city of a living God, to hosts of angels, to the Church of the first born, and to God the Judge of all.' The first readers of these words felt the rich majesty that was in them, all the more because the outward and ornate ritual of the Old Testament Church in which they had been trained was calling them back. Here was something inward, nobler, grander than all that the Old Testament offered; and, shining through it, unchanged and loving, the Living God.

All religions claim to bring God and man into living relation to each other. That faith which most truly effects its purpose strengthens its claim to be the true faith. And in this passage the writer claims that the faith of Jesus Christ opens wide the way of approach to God. He speaks of the near access to God which Jesus secures for men, as closer and more intimate than that which the Old Testament offered. We need not linger over the 'setting' of the words. Our concern is with the phrase itself as we note in it: (1) What worship is—'Ye are come to God.' (2) What God is—'The Judge of all.'

(1) There is deep need in every age for this act of reverence. And our time requires it urgently. It is no light and easy matter to come to God. 'He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.' In these latter days some men have tried to banish the thought of God. They would either politely bow Him out, or scornfully cast Him out. These men would leave this truth to the ignorant and unlearned, as fit only for such minds.

Leave thou thy sister when she prays,  
Her early Heaven, her happy views;  
Nor thou with shadow'd hint confuse  
A life that leads melodious days.

So sings Tennyson in his 'In Memoriam'; and there is just a suggestion in the words that religion is for unthinking, rather stupid people, something that will vanish at the first breath of criticism or questioning.

And yet another kind of mind is met; a noisy, scoffing mind that laughs at the very thought of God. It is easy to laugh so when life is sunlit, and all seems gay and secure. But grey days come; the cold shivering winds of sorrow come; and our hold on life is shaken. Then, through the door

closed in our foolish days, God comes back in His mercy, that we may 'come to Him.' For we cannot live aright without God.

This forgetting of God has been notable of late. Pride in human power and intellect has fostered a very shallow way of thinking. Thoughts of food, clothes, and money fill the whole minds and time of many men; and the nobler part of them is starved and shrivelled.

As Dean Inge says, 'It is quite natural and inevitable that if we spend sixteen hours daily of our waking life in thinking about the affairs of the world, and about five minutes in thinking about God and our souls, this world will seem about two hundred times more real to us than God or our souls. That must be so, however real and important the spiritual world may actually be. The fact that it seems unreal to us is no argument that it is unreal, if we hardly ever think about it. Things that we do not think about always seem unreal to us. Do not then argue that God is unreal because He seems unreal to you. Ask yourselves whether you have given Him, or rather yourselves, a fair chance.'

Men all round us drift away from God. The nation drifts away. As one grows older one learns the far-spreading nature of godlessness. For one thing, it stunts the true growth of the soul. It is only in the nourishment of a living faith in a living God that human personality expands and grows to its full stature. The dwarfed minds of to-day, handling great issues without God, have sadly bungled the matter in hand, and have wounded the soul of our nation. It is because they are themselves ungrown and stunted for lack of God that they cannot recognize the divine in man. They treat man as merely human, and therefore all goes wrong.

For another thing it stifles the soul's longings. Our souls, if they are to rise to their true nobility, must spread their wings in God's free air. As a bird soars to the sky, so the soul of man rises to God. 'In him we live and move and have our being.' But to forget Him is to cage the soul, and close it in a dull prison. In Plato's *Republic* there is told the parable of the men who spent their lives watching the shadows on the wall of their cave, and who, when one of their company escaped into the world of reality and brought back word of the true state of affairs, laughed him to scorn. They were content with shadows, who might have handled and seen reality. And so they stifled the adventurous and inquiring soul that would lead them out to nobler enterprise. The parable has

meaning still. The liberating of man's soul is God's holy work, who stirs the longings in our souls that He may satisfy them with His mercy.

Canon Green, in *Our Heavenly Father*, writes : ' One Monday, more than twenty years ago, I was walking, between twelve and one o'clock, in a particularly unlovely suburb of Manchester. I was passing a bare open space, near a great ironworks, and some two hundred men and lads, out for their dinner-hour, were kicking footballs about. I looked at them, wondering why the Church so failed to win men to God, and what one could do to awaken religion in men and lads like these. Suddenly a football bounded almost to my feet, and a boy of nineteen in blue cotton trousers followed it and, picking it up, kicked it back to his mates. As he did so he smiled at me, and I saw he was the lad who had served me that morning at the half-past seven celebration of Holy Communion. In those days ironworkers started at 6 a.m. every day except Monday, when the hour was 9 a.m. Yet Johnny, who had to leave home at 5.30 a.m. on ordinary days to get to work, gave up one Monday a fortnight to serve at 7.30 a.m., from the time he left school till he married. And one day he said to me, after serving : " It was beautiful in church to-day. I wish I could serve every day." What did the boy find beautiful in a dark, cold, dingy city church at eight o'clock on a drizzling November morning in Salford? No mere outward beauty, I am sure.'

For a third thing, it hardens the heart. Man is all too easily content to ignore or forget the sufferings of his fellow-men. He is apt to be hard on others. We grow callous to their pains so long as we ourselves are comfortable. Human hearts are seldom tender when they are godless. Coming to God allows the soul to grow and to expand, and keeps the heart tender and compassionate to other men. In His true holiness all untrue, petty, belittling thoughts wither and die. Life and its duties assume a new nobility. ' Oh, come, let us worship and bow down.'

(2) But the word goes deeper, and tells what God

is in one aspect of His nature—' the Judge of all.' We have rightly emphasized in later years the tender aspect of the character of God—His mercy and His grace. But there is another aspect of Him. God is love : and love can flame and blaze. God is holy, and in His presence sin and selfishness and selfish strife stand out stark and clear in their ungarished, naked hideousness. God is true, and His judgment is unerring and final.

It is right for us now to bring to this judgment-Presence all the troubles and perplexities of the times in which we live. We are painfully conscious of generations of terrible neglect of many of our fellow-men. Do not ask whose fault it is, without also asking what ' God the Judge of all ' thinks of it. We have drifted into bitterness and quarrels because God has not been remembered and feared and loved by us all. But ' the Judge of all ' is looking down upon employers and employees, upon leaders and unions and parliaments, and on the whole country.

To the Apostles this truth shone clear. The Church of Jesus believed that a holy Father would commit judgment to the Son. In the clear atmosphere of His truth all excuses and evasions would shrivel and fade, and our action and inaction stand out in their inherent selfishness. Here is the one hope for Society and for men now. God is ' the Judge of all,' and ' he judgeth righteously.' To keep truth; to remember the brotherly covenant; to know that all our life will come one day for scrutiny before God's holy eyes—that it lies there ' naked and open to-day '—this is a salutary and cleansing truth. And the knowledge of it will help us, if we really believe it, to be calm, patient, self-controlled in all our ways, and to consider our lives and our duty in the light of eternity. And it will call us to a more devoted service of our fellow-men, and a more compassionate care for their needs and sorrows. The scene of judgment drawn by our Lord Jesus will waken in us concern lest ' inasmuch as we did it not to one of these his brethren, we did it not to him.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Miller, in *British Preachers*, 3rd ser., 193.