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group of articles, written without collaboration and in entire independence, is an outstanding feature, and an indication that real progress is being made. One wonders how a similar Series, written in five or ten years' time, will read, and what further progress will then be evident. Meantime, the contributors of the present articles will be amongst

those most eager to sit at the feet of their Old Testament colleagues in studying the essays on 'Some Outstanding Old Testament Problems,' for nothing is more clear than the fact that the secret to further advance in solving the enigmas of Gospel research, so far as they bear on the thought and teaching of Jesus, lies in the sacred books of Israel.

In the Study.

Virginibus Quærisque.

'Babel Reversed.'

Address for Armistice Sunday.

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

'Seek peace and pursue it.'—1 P 3¹¹ (Weymouth).

I WANT to tell you something about pirates. These ones don't fly the Jolly Roger, or swagger like Captain Hook. But villainous pirates they are all the same, and they behave in a particularly cold-blooded way. For these fierce little hunting-spiders will weave a few tiny twigs into a raft, and sail up and down some convenient pond, keeping a sharp look-out for any insect that is drowning. When they see some unfortunate creature, they pick it out of the water, and calmly proceed to eat it.

These are not the only villains in the world of tiny creatures. There's the bombardier beetle. When he is fighting another beetle he lets fly a jet of liquid which goes off in the air, and explodes with a bang. His opponent, blinded by the nasty stuff and deafened by the noise, runs off in terror. Then there's the ant-lion which lies at the bottom of a tiny sand-pit, and pelts with sand any unwary ant that crawls over the edge, until his poor victim loses its foothold and rolls down into his clutches.

Many little creatures have to fight to protect themselves. We don't blame them. It is their nature to fight. But when it comes to human beings, it is another matter altogether. God has not given us claws or fangs or stings to destroy one another: He has given us minds to understand each other. And when men use poison-gas, or kill one another with bombs, they're copying the lower animals. Fighting has, alas, had to be done sometimes in the past. But in the future we must rather try to learn to know one another better. If we do, we shall find what multitudes of delightful

folk there are in the world, even though they don't talk a single word of English.

At a Swiss holiday resort I once saw a charming thing. A Scots lady sat with a German lady in the hotel garden with their children, when they were joined by Louis, a little French boy. A game of 'Hide-and-Seek' was suggested for the children, but none of them understood a word of each other's language. Then the Scots lady by dumb-show indicated what was meant, whereupon the French and German children excitedly yelled out the name of the game as they knew it. A moment later flying legs were bearing them to distant corners of the garden, and delighted shrieks in several different languages proclaimed that one or other was 'spied.' A juvenile League of Nations! The confusion of the Tower of Babel was reversed, and everybody understood everybody else!

But what about ourselves? What are we to say when young folk are quarrelsome, and make nasty remarks, and cruel words are going off with a bang, and bad feeling is poisoning the air? A quarrel looks so ugly when you see it without being in it, doesn't it? It's just as ugly when others see it, and we're in it. Little snappings and snarlings—isn't it dreadful that any one could ever so far forget oneself?

Let us 'seek peace and pursue it.' Let the strong gentleness of Jesus dwell in our hearts. What was it He said? 'Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God.'

The Owl and the Starlings.

BY THE REVEREND G. SHERIFF JOHNSON, HITCHIN.

'Let us consider one another.'—Heb 10²⁴.

Some time ago the daily newspaper gave a most interesting account of a happening at Bourton-on-

the-Water, in Gloucestershire. Some farm workers saw an owl fly out of an apple tree into the midst of a flight of starlings, seize one of the starlings and carry it to the ground. Instantly, as though obeying an order, the starlings turned and flew to the help of their comrade. They beat the owl with their wings, until at last it was bound to let the captured starling escape. It is worth our while thinking about that incident. Instead of flying on, thankful that they had escaped the owl, the rest of the starlings came to the assistance of their companion.

I think those starlings would fly away feeling as happy as it is possible for birds to be. In his *Cloister and the Hearth*, Charles Reade tells of a young man who saved his comrade from drowning. When they got out of the water to the river bank they looked at one another from head to foot as if eyes could devour, then by one impulse flung each an arm round the other's neck, and panted there with hearts too full to speak. And at that sacred moment life was sweet as heaven to both. 'To save a human life; and that life a loved one. Such moments are worth living for,' says Charles Reade, 'ay, threescore years and ten.'

Helping a comrade in difficulty and danger is a Christlike thing. Our Lord would have us think not of our own things but of others. He bade the strong help the weak. Once a Salvation Army girl officer was brought before the magistrates in Manchester charged with obstructing the traffic. She had been preaching about Jesus, and rough men had made game of her; and now she stood forlorn before her judges. Then one of the magistrates, Frank Crossley, came down from the Bench and stood by her side at the bar all through her trial. How comforted and strengthened she must have been! Who taught Frank Crossley to do that? Jesus. It was the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ in His disciple. And if we are taught of Jesus we shall stand by the weak, we shall be ready to help those who are in trouble, we shall be kind to all.

The story of the starlings helps us to understand the value of co-operation. One starling was helpless against the owl, but the whole flock of them were able to overcome him. It is because we can do unitedly what we cannot do separately that we join together in the Band of Hope, Boy Scouts, and Girl Guides, and in the Church of Christ. I heard the other day of a little three-year-old who said: 'When I grow up, I'm going to be a Boy-Sprout.' I hope his wish will be fulfilled if it means training himself to help and serve others. It is because Christians unite together in the Church of

Christ that the gospel is sent to people living without its comfort and peace and life. We are fond of the words 'my' and 'mine,' but Jesus teaches us to turn 'my' into 'our'—'Our Father, our daily bread, our sins, our temptations.' To learn the lesson of living for others is to discover the secret of the happy life.

The owl and the starlings remind us that we have enemies who will try to destroy us. We need help to resist them and to escape them. It is a great thing to have a friend who will stand by you in the hour of need and add his strength to yours. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is such a Friend. He will stand by us in temptation and danger and give us strength to escape. He will also give us His own chivalrous spirit to stand by others who are in need of help.

The Christian Bear.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Jesus as the Champion of the Individual.

'There shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.'—Lk 15' (R.V.).

'One sinner!' Not 'one saint!' Not even 'one good man.' There is joy in heaven over even a bad man saved. Every individual soul is of priceless worth in the sight of God, and so there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.

Sir John Seeley entitles one of the chapters in his *Ecce Homo* 'The Enthusiasm of Humanity.' There is much that is wise and good in the chapter. But the title is somewhat unfortunate and misleading. He says that this was one of the things which Christ came to foster in His followers—this enthusiasm for Humanity. We do not forget that he defines this 'enthusiasm of Humanity' as the love not of the race or of the individual, but of the race *in* the individual. Nevertheless the phrase, even when so qualified, suggests a temper remote from the spirit of Christ. It is far easier to be enthusiastic about Humanity with a capital H than it is to be enthusiastic about the individual man. We can idealize Humanity. We can look at it in the abstract. We can think of its great and splendid achievements in the course of the generations, and we can quite easily conjure up some sort of enthusiasm of Humanity. That is exactly what Auguste Comte and the Positivists did—they established what they called a Church of Humanity, and made Humanity the object of their worship and their service.

The modern Humanistic movement does very

much the same thing. Mr. Lippman, having got rid of God, puts in His place what he calls the 'Great Society.' But the test of any real enthusiasm of humanity comes in our attitude towards the individual man and our estimate of the individual man. And not simply towards some picked man or men. It is easy enough to be enthusiastic about a General Booth or a Nansen. But what about the average man, and even the bad man? Christ believed that every one of them was of infinite worth to God. And that sense of the worth of the individual personality, that enthusiasm for man as man stands expressed in this text—'There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.' That is the distinctively Christian note—not the 'enthusiasm of Humanity,' but enthusiasm for man as man. It would do us all good if we gave these abstract nouns—Humanity and Society and Civilization, and their like—a rest for a while. After all, Humanity and Society are made up of individual men and women. Let us get down out of the nebulous abstract into the concrete and the real. The question is not, have we an enthusiasm of Humanity, but what is our attitude towards the individual men and women in the midst of whom we live? Some of them are mean, and some are base, and some are soiled, and some are vile, but we have not shared in Christ's spirit until our love reaches down even to these, and we believe every one of these to be of supreme and infinite worth.

In saying all this we are not in line with the stream of modern thought. We are living in collectivist days. The individual has become merged and lost in the teeming city, the masses, unions, combines, and trusts. He has ceased to count. He is just one of the herd! Even in our thoughts of reform and betterment, it is aggregated life that is important in men's eyes, and little interest is taken in the human unit. We are concerned, not with individual men and women, but with big things like the 'economic system,' and 'the social and political order.' 'To rescue an individual here and there,' says Dr. Jefferson, 'seems a pottering, paltry occupation, and to alter the structure of Society, the framework of the world, is counted the only business worthy the efforts of a full-statured, far-visioned man.'

We all know that our social practices need altering and our social order needs changing, and that environment does exercise great influence upon the development of character. All the same, when men stress the community and neglect the individual, they are certainly reversing the New Testament order. Jesus had His social vision—

but He practised the individual method. He has been called 'the Champion of Personality' and not 'Personality' in the abstract—He was the Champion of the individual *person*. Nobody ever dreamed till Jesus came that the slave in the sight of God was as precious as Cæsar. Isn't there a story that one of the most magnificent diamonds in the world—a jewel which is now the most flashing gem in a monarch's crown—once lay for a long time in a shop in a street in Rome, labelled 'Rock crystal—price one franc'? It lay there until some expert in precious stones came along and recognized in what was regarded as worthless rock crystal a gem beyond price. And so exactly the jewel of the soul for generations lay unheeded and unregarded until Jesus came—the soul which is in every man, in the poor as well as in the rich; in the unlearned as well as in the gifted; in the woman who was a sinner as well as in Mary the holy mother—which soul makes every individual man and woman unspeakably precious to the heart of God.

We want to recover this sense of the supreme worth of man as man which was so characteristic of Jesus for various reasons.

In the first place, we want it in order that we may preserve our self-respect in face of the vastness of the material universe. That is the danger of the revelations of the immensities of space and time which modern science has given us—the danger that in face of this vastness we should feel dwarfed into complete and absolute insignificance. It was hard enough to maintain one's sense of the value of the individual when our world was supposed to be the centre of the universe. It is infinitely harder when we know that our little earth is no bigger than the millionth part of a grain of sand in comparison with the vast universe of which it is a part. But we must refuse to be bullied by bulk. It is personality that invests the world with meaning. In a sense, the world might just as well not exist at all, if man were not here to understand it. The winds might blow and the mighty waves of the sea beat in thunder upon the shore or break in gentle ripples upon the beach, but there would be no ear to hear them. The flowers might bloom and the birds might sing, but there would be no heart to be gladdened by them. The waters of Niagara might fling themselves into the chasm below, the Matterhorn might still lift its spear-head summit into the sky, but there would be no soul to be moved to awe and worship. It would be a world of mere things, and of dead things, and of unconscious things. It is man with his mind, who can give meaning to a universe which is all

unconscious of itself. So let us 'stand upon our feet' and remember that our real value is what we are worth to Almighty God. And the message of Jesus is just this, that even the humblest of men is of infinite worth to God.

In the second place, we want to recover our Lord's sense of the value of the individual because that and that alone will make our labour for the individual seem worth while. If we are to labour for the salvation of individuals we must have Christ's sense of the individual's worth. We remember what Myers says about St. Paul as he stood in front of a congregation. There were all sorts and conditions of people in the throng, but Paul had no eyes for their differences of condition. 'Only like souls I see the folk thereunder.' 'Like souls!' To see them so is to realize their worth. Griffith John, the great Chinese missionary, in an address he gave at the Jubilee Meetings of the Congregational Union at Manchester, thrilled a great audience which filled the Free Trade Hall, by declaring that he would think it worth while to labour for aeons and aeons if God made him the means of saving one Chinese soul. That was the authentic Christian note.

And thirdly, we want to recover our sense of the worth of the individual because we believe it is only through regenerate individuals we shall realize the Kingdom of God. This truth lies at the root of the great ameliorations which the centuries have brought, and it has been behind all the movements for social betterment. Oppressions and injustices are possible when personality is little esteemed. But a sense of the value of the individual makes anything like oppression and injustice indecent. Men cannot do wrong or treat harshly a 'brother for whom Christ died.' That is why we have a secret dread of the emphasis laid in these days upon Society, upon anything that depresses or even hides the worth of the individual. But in another and deeper sense, the regenerate individual is the key to the redeemed Society. In the long-run the only way to create the new Society is to re-create the units who compose it. The only way to build the gleaming city of God is to attend to the individual living stones that are built into it.¹

SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE ADVENT.

The Use of the Imagination in Religion.

'The evidence of things not seen.'—Heb 11¹.

'Imagination,' said Sir Benjamin Brodie, in a presidential address to the Royal Society, 'is the

¹ J. D. Jones, *Morning and Evening*, 70.

source of all poetic genius, and it has been the instrument of many of our most remarkable discoveries in science. Without the aid of imagination Isaac Newton would never have invented fluxions: nor Humphry Davy have decomposed the earths and the alkalies. Nor would Christopher Columbus have ever found another continent.'

It is the same in the world of literature. It was a fruitful observation of Coleridge that a certain 'visual image' lies buried at the root of every single word we speak and write. And he urged on his generation that an instructed and an imaginative glance at that buried and forgotten image is absolutely indispensable to him who would either think or write or read aright.

Simply to name the greatest works of genius of the ancient and modern world is to point to so many triumphs of the literary imagination. Wordsworth has said that Homer is the father of poetry because he always sings 'with his eye on the object.' That is to say, Homer always sees, and that with an intensely imaginative eye, what he forthwith sings to us. And thus it is that Homer sings to us as no other singer has ever sung—unless it is Dante. And if Dante is more to us than Homer, it is because his superb imagination was first sanctified and was then directed, not upon 'things seen and temporal,' but 'upon things unseen and eternal.'

And then our common Christian people have, in their own tongue, those two great triumphs of an evangelical imagination, *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Holy War*.

When we come to the highest literature of all, we find the imaginations of holy men of old taken up into the hand of the Holy Ghost and made a vehicle of divine revelation and a means of transmitting that revelation to the minds and the hearts of men.

As 'all that is within us,' as all man's mind and heart was made instrumental in the production of Holy Scripture—from Moses to John—so did imagination get her own high place from one stage of revelation to another, and from one outpouring of inspiration to another. And just as scientifically instructed men can see the past of this earth, and just as men of literature can look back ages and recognize the splendid service that imagination has performed in their world of things, so the instructed and open-eyed and imaginative student of Holy Scripture can see his favourite faculty at constant work in the revealing hand of the Spirit of grace and truth. There are whole books of the Bible of a sanctified and inspired imagination 'all compact'—for example, Job, Isaiah, Ezekiel.

And not to dwell on our Lord's parables, or on

Paul's Epistles, all gleaming as they are with his sanctified genius, we come to the Book of Revelation. A book in which the heaven-illuminated imagination of that aged seer lays this shining coperstone on the glorious edifice of Holy Scripture: 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law!'

And then, what a fundamental, and what an all-essential part does this wonderful faculty perform in all true prayer and praise. It is true we may be employing this great talent and faculty of our minds when we are not reflecting on its use: we may employ it even before we know that we possess it. But we would perform all our devotions far more intelligently and far more fruitfully if we studied all the capacities and all the possibilities of our minds, and called on 'all that is within us,' as David did, to praise and magnify the Lord.

Listen to what William Law has said to us on this matter. 'Seeing our imaginations have great power over our hearts, and can mightily affect us with their representations, it would be of great use to you if, at the beginning of your devotions, you were to imagine to yourself some such representations as might heat and warm your heart. As thus: Be still, and imagine to yourself that you see the heavens open and the glorious forms of Seraphim and Cherubim before the throne of God. Help your imagination with such passages of Scripture as these also: "I beheld, and lo, a great multitude which no man could number stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb." Think upon all this: see all this, till your imagination has carried you above the clouds and has placed you up in your own place—among those heavenly beings, and has made you to long to take part in their heavenly music.

'Again, sometimes imagine that you had been one of those who joined with our Blessed Saviour when He "sang an hymn." Strive to imagine to yourself with what majesty He looked: and fancy that you had stood beside Him and had seen His face and heard His voice.'

Let us carry into all our prayers and praises that visualizing and realizing practice that Coleridge has taught us. Let us see what we say and then say what we see. When we say, 'O God!' let us see Him on whom we so call. When we say, 'for Christ's sake,' let our eyes flash faster than lightning to where He once hung on the tree; and then to where He now sits on the throne. When we say that 'our sins are ever before us,' let them be before

us. When we say, 'pardon mine iniquity, for it is very great,' let our broken hearts lie in the dust under the great aggravation of our sins.

And then, once we really begin to employ and exercise our emancipated and ennobled imagination upon Almighty God in that way, we shall never be able to lift either our imagination or our heart off Him. We shall say to ourselves continually and to all that is within us, 'to whom shall we go?' And we shall come to those other magnificent words of Saint Augustine: *Deus ubique est! et totus ubique est.* God is everywhere, and He is wholly everywhere. And then, God's presence ever with us, and His whole presence ever with us, will take possession of both our imagination and our heart, till sometimes, whether we are in the body or out of the body we cannot tell: we are now so immersed in God and He is so immersed in us.

And then, let us think of this. This—that we have our imagination in our own hand. It is in our own hand and power and choice to open and turn our inward eye as it pleases us. We can debauch and pollute our imagination till both our heart and our life are filled full with all the corruption and uncleanness of the second death. Or we can fill our imagination with visions of beauty—created and uncreated—visions of love and holiness and heaven—till we are rewarded, at last, with the Beatific Vision itself. 'While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.'¹

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

The Advent Summons.

'And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.'—Ro 13^{11, 12}.

The generally accepted view of the meaning of this fine passage is that it relates directly to the second coming of Christ. There is little doubt that in the main this is correct.

But a study of the context shows that in the words before us the Apostle was not dwelling so much upon the thought that Christ might appear again at any moment as upon the thought that His previous coming had been of such wondrous benefit to mankind that the Church should ever be

¹ A. Whyte, *The Nature of Angels*, 18.

seeking to give fuller expression to the new and higher mode of life thus divinely revealed.

The composite metaphor in the text bears out this view, for it takes for granted that a moral warfare is proceeding in which every follower of Christ is called to engage. The phraseology is suggested by St. Paul's acquaintance with Roman military usage. He must often have watched the process of changing guard in the early hours of the morning, and it is to this that he alludes here.

'It is high time to awake out of sleep'—that is, the bugle has just sounded and the drowsy men are turning out to take their first spell of duty for the day.

'The night is far spent'—that is, the sun is rising, a new day is beginning.

'Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light'—that is to say (still keeping to the imagery of the barrack room), the occupations of the hours of night, whether sleeping or carousing, must not hold us longer; we must arm ourselves and go forth. The parenthetic statement, 'Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed,' relates specifically to what all the apostolic Church expected to follow upon the Saviour's glorious second advent. The word 'salvation' is used in its most comprehensive sense. It means the final deliverance of God's people from all the evils that beset them in this world. Believing that the night of sorrow and sin is drawing to a close they are to have done with the works of darkness—that is, the practices pertaining to the heathenism and unfaith of the age; and some of those practices were very gross—and to clothe themselves in the panoply of the gospel as true soldiers of Christ in the campaign against every form of evil.

How, then, do we stand with reference to this counsel given to people of a day long gone by and belonging to a world order so different from our own? Let us remark here that although the expectation of Christ's second coming is not as intense with us as it was with the original followers of the risen Lord, it must not be allowed to fall into the background of our thoughts. There are three reasons why we cannot afford to give it up.

First, there is nothing in the New Testament, and nothing in our knowledge of history, to encourage the view that this world is ever likely to become by means of enlightened human effort an ideal dwelling-place for human beings.

Secondly, experience does not tend to show that men are necessarily made good by improving the outside of life. There is greater capacity for

wealth production in the modern world than the ancients ever dreamed of, but men are as selfish as ever in their manner of using it and as ruthless in their material rivalries. Nay more, we have reached a point at which it must be honestly confessed that we have succeeded in acquiring a greater mastery of natural forces than we are morally fit to be entrusted with, and no greater danger threatens our civilization. Some chemist or other will by and by succeed in exploding the atom, and what then? Then there will be energy enough and to spare at the control of the mind and will of self-sufficient man; will it make him happy, generous, and kind? No, there needs something more if salvation in any true sense of the word is to be attained by mankind. There needs divine intervention to make us what we ought to be; it is human nature that needs to be re-made, not the faculties we have at command.

Thirdly, the day must come when, as the Bible assures us and science affirms, this old earth will have run its course and passed away, and the human race along with it; and, whatever be the mode of that passing, we cannot fail to be concerned with what lies beyond. Individually, we are passing now. But we shall not have done with life; that goes on, and the question of questions that we have to face is what are we making of life?

The answer to this question is that faith in Christ implies aiming at a new quality of life and in a new power. What came to the world in Jesus of Nazareth nearly two thousand years ago has to be worked out in ourselves and expressed in all our relationships. We know not how or when God will intervene to deliver us from our present bondage, but we know that He will do so, for this is His world, and He cannot forsake it; our salvation may be nearer than we think, and no follower of Christ should be so faithless as to cease to look and labour for it. The truth is always other than merely what appearances proclaim; Christ is always coming in the hearts and lives of men. He cannot be stayed, and He shall yet be manifest—perhaps more speedily and overwhelmingly than most of us dare to hope—in an invincible uprising of the latent good that slumbers in the human soul, sweeping away before it the nightmare of universal dread, and bearing on its wings to the uttermost corners of the earth a new and joyous confidence in the reign of universal fraternity and goodwill. If we believe this, we must act on it. Not even omnipotence can deliver us from our ills in spite of ourselves. Spiritual ends are attained by spiritual means, and the one force that can save and lift humanity is the Spirit of Christ

operating through the consecrated wills of the men and women who really believe in Him and are prepared to dare everything for His sake.

There is one special task to which the Church of Christ is urgently called at the present time. It is that of moralizing the group mind. We shall have to master and train the herd-instinct so that it shall become something worthier than a mere co-operation of material interests; we must purify and ennoble the group consciousness, whether that of the nation or that of the class; and this will be a very difficult thing to do, because the group consciousness is so largely sub-rational.

'Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.' What we would not stoop to do in the case of our next-door neighbour becomes no more reputable because done by the community as a whole and to another people. Once see this clearly, and it will make all the difference in the relations of one class with another or one people with another.

In conclusion. There are dark hours in every individual life when all that once was bright and blessed in our experience seems to us to have perished for ever without hope of resurrection. John Bunyan knew what he was talking about when he placed the Valley of the Shadow of Death after the Valley of Humiliation, for the one does commonly succeed the other; it is when we are brought low and have our hardest battles to fight against the enemy within ourselves, the temptation to let go our grip on the great essentials of right living, that the hobgoblins of the night begin to gather round our path and we can neither fight nor fly. Bunyan's Pilgrim did not know the sound of his own voice—a most suggestive touch that, so true to life. Which self is it that we are listening to when we preach despair to ourselves in the black moments that blot out the memories of past joys; is it our best self or our worst? Nine times out of ten, when a man has lost touch with high and holy things, it is his baser nature that is dictating his thoughts; the voice that is speaking is not his real voice though it deceive him into thinking that it is his final judgment upon life; it is a whisper from the pit of hell.

Listen, then, to this word of authority: 'Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' The danger is not what we think it is; it is not that we may continue in darkness for ever, but that we may prove unfaithful to the call of the morning. 'The night is far spent, the day is at hand.' The worst part of any dark experience is the feeling that it will never end.

But this is sheer delusion; it is not the will of God that any soul should abide in the prison cell of sorrow and sin, and the two are more often found in conjunction than is commonly supposed. 'Unto you that fear my name, saith the Lord, shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.' Every day is a new advent of Christ, every morning the refreshing beams of His love shine anew upon our waking eyes. Rise up to meet Him; shake off the deadly deceits which accompany loss of vision; put on the whole armour of God, and go forth into the light.¹

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

Hope.

'Begot us again unto a living hope.'—1 P 1⁸ (R.V.).

'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.'—Ro 15¹³.

Men and women are very largely made what they are by their beliefs about the future. That is why the life of a man or a woman is so affected in their early years by the prospects which life holds out to them. Consequently hope of the future, hope of making their life a great and splendid success, of the good position, of the happy marriage, of influence over their fellows, largely makes them what they are, and affects their whole conduct, stimulates them to effort, gives them self-control and self-respect. The reason for this is that man has the power of living in two worlds—that of the present, and that of the future. So long as hope survives, he lives largely in the future life which he is going to create for himself, and this living in the future alters for good his life in the present.

One evil of our life here in this world is that to many men and women there comes a time when their soul ceases to grow on that side of it which is turned towards the future. And then the soul which is living in the present suffers and decays. The things which were so looked forward to are attained, and are found disappointing, or are found to be impossible of attainment. Experience shows that further progress in position is out of the question. The girl marries, and perhaps finds that marriage does not bring the expected happiness. So long as hope exists, men and women live healthily. When hope dies they are only half living.

Now the Lord Jesus Christ knew this quite well. And, in order that men might always live healthy lives, He gives them a hope that can never die. He comes to us, and says to us: 'You cannot

¹ R. J. Campbell, *Vision and Life*, 35.

really live unless you are living in both the present and the future. The hopes which you have for this life are sure to die away—at least, they are limited and bound by death. I will give you a hope which looks forward beyond the grave. So that you may never cease to live in the future as well as in the present, and so that your soul may go on growing and expanding, and developing on all sides, and so that your hope of the future may affect your present life.'

Let us consider this hope which Jesus Christ can give to us.

First, it is a hope which knows no limitations. All earthly hopes are bounded by death. The man or woman who has this hope will say to death when he comes, 'Here am I. You may have my body, but you cannot have me. For I carry within me Jesus Christ, my hope. And I am going through you to the life beyond, in which my hope is centred. You may kill my body, but you can't kill my life, for it is the life of Jesus, and over that you have no power. God has said that neither death nor any other creature can separate me from His love in Christ Jesus.'

One of the great romances of missionary enterprise is the *Life of Adoniram Judson*. Judson buried his wife and his entire family in Burmah. The grave was under a hope-tree, and the heart-broken man saw a wealth of significance in that fact. 'They rest together *under the hope-tree*,' he says, again and again, in his *Journal* and in his letters.

Secondly, it is a hope which is quite independent of the circumstances in which our earthly life is lived. Many people seem still to think that the Christian life ought to bring a man prosperity and comfort in this life. There is really no vital connexion between the two things. Jesus Christ did not promise His people comfort here. He told them that they might have to suffer tribulation, that they would have to take up His Cross. A man, thank God, may be a Christian whose circumstances are outwardly wretched, who is torn by disease and suffering. He may have the Christian hope, though comfort and ease in this life have gone.¹

It is the cross-bearer whose feet march to the rhythm of hope. Would you find the pessimist, the gloomy, fretful, hopeless critic of life? Go to the man who turns his back on life's duties and responsibilities, shuts his doors to sorrow, and refuses to become acquainted with grief. There is only One in whom hope is constant and perfect—

¹ W. C. Allen, *The Christian Hope*, 93.

He who carried a world's pain and sorrow and gave His heart to be broken for its sin. Where is the man so deeply sunk in sin and degradation that the Lord despairs of his redemption? Where is the spot so steeped in infamy that He will not stretch hands of healing and help over it? The philosophical optimist in his cushioned arm-chair has no hope for the vulgar mass of mankind, but the disciple who bears his cross has the secret of deathless hope. The detached theorist may regard missions as a waste of energy, but the missionary toiling through long years without gaining a single convert, and the slum sister spending her days amid squalid vice with little apparent result, know only of the joy of service and carry hope as a day-star in their hearts.

In days of baffling problems and perplexities, we tend to seek relief by turning our thoughts away from the turmoil, and building a nest for ourselves out of calm thoughts and comforting considerations. We want to be rid of the fret of it all, if only for one brief hour, and seek refuge in green pastures and still waters. But the hour of enchantment passes. The present claims us once more, and we are all unready to meet it. The hope we had so eagerly treasured evaporates. Where, then, shall we seek strength and healing? Clearly, near our Master. Such is the law of the spiritual life. It is ever the heart broken for sin and woe that hopes on and hopes ever. For the broken heart is a heart united to Christ, the Source and Sustainer of hope.

During a truce in the American Civil War, when the hostile armies sat sullenly facing each other with a field between them, a little brown bird rose suddenly from the long grass and darted skywards. There, a mere speck against the blue, it poured forth that liquid music of which the lark alone has the secret. And steely eyes melted to tears, and hard hearts grew pitiful and tender. There was a God who cared. There was hope for men.

Hope is a lark on the battlefield. It will not sing in a gilded cage. It cannot soar in an atmosphere of religious luxury. But brave souls, exposing themselves fearlessly for God and their fellow-men on the battlefield of life, hear its song and are made strong and glad.

At dawn He sent him a bird,
Which lured from slope up to slope,
Such singing never was heard!
The bird was Hope—
Hope was the bird.

A star at twilight He sent,
Which shone, and filled from afar
His soul with peace and content.
Hope was the star—
The star was Hope.¹

And, thirdly, what is this hope which thus looks out towards the future beyond death, and which is independent of the circumstances of this life whatever they may be? Well, it is hard to describe because it is so big. It means hope of being something far better than we now are, of being free from temptation to evil and inferior things, of being interested in and happy in all noble and lovely things. It means hope that all whom we love may be far better than they are, and that we and they should live together in much closer union than we do now. It means hope that we shall not suffer from the thought of the suffering of others. How

¹ E. Herman, *The Secret Garden of the Soul*, 172.

are we to describe it? We can put it into two words, Jesus Christ. He is our hope. Our hope for ourselves, for, when we have Him, then we shall be better than we are. Our hope for others, for, when they have Him, they will have happiness. He is our hope because we hope to be like Him. That would be bliss beyond compare. He is our hope because we hope to see Him.

And, lastly, when will this be? This is Advent, and the thought of Advent tells us. When He comes. When will that be?

Who knows? Perhaps to-day.

But perhaps not for another many thousand years. Then we shall die first, and hope shall vanish into sight. Then shall we be one with Him whom we hope for. And then shall we and all who are His serve Him day and night in His Kingdom, bound together, as never before, by a common life radiating from Jesus Christ, acknowledged and adored as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Second International Congress of Old Testament Scholars at Göttingen, September 4-10.

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IT will be of interest to readers of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES to have some account of the Second International Congress of Old Testament Scholars which took place at Göttingen, from September 4 to 10. It is perhaps not without significance that on this occasion the place of meeting was in Germany. For it is in that land that the problem of the Old Testament has been most acutely felt in the last few years, and it is there that a battle is being fought out to which no one who is concerned for the future of the Christian religion can afford to be indifferent. It was encouraging to observe that German scholars, upon whom must inevitably rest the brunt of the present conflict, are keenly alive to the grave issues at stake. One got the impression that, in these days of crisis, while they are becoming no less exact in their thinking and writing, they are reaching a clearer understanding than ever before of the purpose and value of the study of the Old Testament. It was, moreover, a pleasure to discover the unity of aim which makes scholarship international and which is able to bridge even

confessional frontiers. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the gathering was the fact that Protestants and Roman Catholics met on terms of cordiality and mutual respect. It was not that theological differences were suppressed, but, when they had to be expressed, it was always with the utmost forbearance and friendliness, and with the recognition of how much there was in common.

The Congress enjoyed the hospitality of the University of Göttingen, Georgia Augusta, as it is named after its founder George Augustus, Elector of Hanover, who became George II. of England. Ten countries were represented, namely, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain (including England, Scotland, and Wales), Holland, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States. The joint presidents of the Congress, who fulfilled their office with much graciousness and tact were Professor Volz of Tübingen and Professor Stummer of Würzburg. Very special mention must be made of Professor Hempel of Göttingen, the well-known Editor of the *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche*