

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

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

material they possess, they will never seek its attainment. It may be that our interpretation of divinity has been too narrow. In our anxiety to safeguard the greatness of Christ we have vested Him with divine qualities, and have regarded it almost as sacrilege to suggest that those qualities can be shared by the ordinary men and women of the world. This is a false homage, and not anything that Christ Himself would desire. There is a divinity which belongs to Him, and which cannot be shared by any of us, but there is also a divinity belonging to Him which is the high prerogative and destined glory of every man, and for the purpose of sharing which Christ was born. We say that our Lord was Divine seeing that He was able to forgive sins in the Name of the Father. But He was also able to forgive those who had sinned against Himself. Again, men say He was Divine. Obviously, these two do not belong to the same category. We cannot forgive sins in the name of God, but we can forgive those who have sinned against us. In so doing have we not all felt that we have come very close to the spirit and temper of Christ Himself? What has drawn the wondering and worshipping world to Him is not the stilling of the tempest or the feeding of the five thousand, but just those things of which we know ourselves to be capable—forgiving with gracious and ungrudging pardon all who have wronged Him; going out of His way to be kind to those who only deserved His scorn; seeking to make people happy without any thought of what it was costing Him. It is in this way that

He lives out His humanity of the highest summits of everyday life, and He tells us that in so doing He is expressing a spirit which is latent in every one of us, a spirit which, being brought into activity, will transmute our life into something that is radiant with beauty and pregnant with power.

In this way Jesus comes into the circle of our humanity, and we are drawn into the circle of His divinity. We do not bring Christ down to our level. We raise man to His. When we are most human, then are we most like Him.

Because we have within us 'intimations of immortality,' we must needs have an Eternal God in whom the hope of that immortality can rest. Because we have sinned and alienated ourselves from God, we must needs have a Saviour who will offer Himself on our behalf and so open up the way for our return to God. But because we are men with a life to live which is a preface of that immortality, and a representation of that God, then we must also needs have a Man to show us how to live. The intended life must not be left to the abstractions of philosophers or the sophistries of moralists. It must be shown to us in living, human form. It must be revealed in such striking manifestation that he who runs may read. It must be one who knows everything there is to know about us, a life that has shared all our life, and partnered all our experiences. And ever since Jesus came into the world the questing, searching heart of that world has been satisfied as it has looked upon Him, and cried 'Behold the Man.'

In the Study.

Virginitus Puerisque.

Are You Lucky?

BY THE REVEREND H. B. GIBSON, M.A.,
WHIFFLET, COATBRIDGE.

'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'—Ac 20³⁵.

ARE you a lucky person? What does being lucky mean? Well, you say, if on going home from Church to-day I were to find a shilling, that would be lucky. Or, you say, if in an examination for which I am not too well prepared—dear, dear, are you ever that?—in which I might be asked many things I know very

little about, I discover that the questions set are just the ones I can answer perfectly, that would be lucky. I see your meaning. Luck is something that benefits yourself, brings some gain to you. Now here is a story about luck, a true incident from a most beautiful book—*My Lady of the Chimney Corner*. It was written by Dr. Alexander Irvine, who is still living, though a very old man. It is the story of his mother. They lived in Ireland, and were very, very poor—poor in the sense in which, I think, no one is poor to-day. There were twelve of them in the family, and because of a certain circumstance at his birth, Alex. was believed by many of the simple folk

amongst whom they lived to be a luck-bringer. It was a good sign to meet him when you had some business in hand. One old woman, who went about selling things, carrying her shop on her arm, had him hired to meet her at a certain place every Monday morning. That ensured her luck in her business for the week. They were very poor, and Alex. often went to meet her, on cold mornings, in somebody else's shoes. He hadn't a pair of his own. He must have been thinking of their poverty, and wondering about it, for one day he asked his mother why it was that this luck, that he brought to others, couldn't be made to bring a pair of shoes to himself, and his mother gave him a strange answer. 'Yer luck, dear,' she said to him, 'isn't in what ye can get, but in what ye can give.'

Now, wasn't that a strange answer? I am sure none of us ever thought of a meaning like that. It is quite a new way to look at the matter, and a very fine way too. The word 'luck' doesn't occur in the Bible. It is a fine thing to be lucky you say (in the ordinary meaning of the word), and yet the Bible makes no mention of it. It can't be such a fine thing after all, for the Bible mentions all the really fine things in life. Luck isn't one of them. It can't be so important then, can't be worth believing in. But there is in the Bible a saying of Jesus which has a resemblance to this new meaning of luck. 'It is more blessed to give than to receive,' Jesus said. 'Yer luck isn't in what ye can get,' said Alex.'s mother, 'but in what ye can give.'

Now what about your luck at Christmas-time? Of course, you are all hoping that Santa Claus will be good to you, and bring you lots of presents. And that is very natural and exciting. But you won't be content with getting things for yourself only. We do not keep Christmas by getting for ourselves; we keep it by giving, for at this time we are rejoicing in the greatest gift that God has given us when He sent the Lord Jesus to our world on a Christmas morning. You are happy as you search your stocking. You think your Christmas luck is there. But it isn't. You will be far happier in what you can give. Perhaps you found this out yourself when you were planning a present for father or mother—something they never thought you could do and were so surprised! Or perhaps when you sent a gift to a hospital for a sick child who had no toys. And there are other things to give—readiness to help, and kindness and cheerfulness—greatly needed gifts. Will you think this Christmas rather of what you can give than of what you can get? It will be a Merry Christmas for you then indeed, and your heart will be singing.

Keep Out and Come In.

BY THE REVEREND D. G. FLEMONS, B.A.,
PARKSTONE, DORSET.

'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.'—Rev 3²⁰.

There is a house in which I would like to live. It has bright sunshine and a view of the hills. Yet it is not the house, but two words now covered with trellis-work, which interest me. What are they? you ask.

To tell you, I must take you there where I watched them cut the green sod and dig the foundations deep. The walls grew higher and higher, the window-frames were built in, and I watched like a boy till the roof and tiles were finished. Often, too, as I passed, when the workmen had gone home, I saw the boys and girls at play. Sand in the front they built into sand-castles, long planks were excellent fun for see-saws. The bricks and tiles must have been thrown about for the broken halves told a tale of rough play. One day . . . why, what's this? . . . broken windows. A drunken man has been in and done the damage. Oh no, it is not all the children. Now we come to what I could not help seeing. To-day as I come swinging round the corner I do not need to wait till I near the house. It hits me from far off. Right across the end of the house in letters too big for this page or any other book or poster a large whitewash-brush has been busy and left its message on the wall:

KEEP OUT

I kept a curious watch. Still the sand-castles were built. The planks went up and down see-saw, see-saw. The tiles and bricks were broken. Above them the huge letters, KEEP OUT. But very few seemed to notice. The play and the damage continued.

But it's a long time now since I saw any children playing in the house or garden. One day as I passed I looked, and in the windows were curtains. A little curl of smoke came from the chimney. Ah! some one is living there now. That is why no one goes in except those who live there. We never go into houses which are occupied. Our house needs no huge white-washed letters and warnings across the end. Something tells every one that the house has some one within.

I know another story of an empty house. It was a wedding-gift to a son. The father asked when the builder was going to finish the front garden. 'Not till the house is occupied,' replied the builder. 'If we do it before, it will be damaged, and we shall have to do it all over again.'

So the secret is, having some one living within.

I want my house to be beautiful. I mean this house of my life and character. Paul calls it the temple of my body, doesn't he? My notice-boards seem so little use. I put up, 'KEEP OUT' and 'Trespassers will be Prosecuted.' Bad thoughts and unkind actions still enter. Yet I know what to do. Just you listen for a moment. Do you hear that noise? Tap, tap, tap. It is followed by a kindly voice. 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.' It's Jesus. He takes charge. I've found that letting Him into my heart is the only way I can make these things which hurt me keep out. The way to keep the enemy out is to let the great Prince in.

The Christian Year.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

How to become a Child of God.

'As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.'—Jn 1¹², 13.

'For he shall save his people from their sins.'—Mt 1²¹.

Lord Balfour once told, in an election speech, of 'a black man who looked in a dark room for a black hat that wasn't there.' The margin of human error is a great mystery, but it is a sad fact. It is nowhere more sad than in the human search for a real salvation of the soul. There are certain palpably wrong directions in which to seek this highest good of the soul.

The Fourth Evangelist in the prologue to his Gospel gently eliminates three of these wrong directions in his attempt to define the method by which men become the children of God.

1. 'Not by blood.' The first reference is to *salvation by race*. What is in the writer's mind is the claim of the Jew to special standing with God. As children of Abraham the Jews were heirs of the promises. This was one of the most violent points of dispute between Jesus and the Pharisees, that Jesus seemed to ignore this privilege of race, and to admit all sorts of folk into the Kingdom of God. Jesus, in His teaching, was indeed quite emphatic as to the illusory nature of this hope. 'The publican and the harlot go into the kingdom of God before you,' He declared. 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold.' 'I have not beheld such faith, no, not in Israel!'

We have to-day an outstanding example of a nation basing its hope on a nationalist ethic, on racial purity:

Winston Churchill, writing in the November *Strand*, says: 'Every kind of persecution, grave or petty, upon the world-famous scientists, writers, and composers at the top to the wretched little Jewish children in the national schools, was practised, was glorified, and is still being practised and glorified. . . . The hatred of the Jews led by a logical transition to an attack upon the historic basis of Christianity. Thus the conflict broadened swiftly, and Catholic priests and Protestant pastors fell under the ban of what is becoming the new religion of the German peoples, namely, the worship of Germany under the symbols of the old gods of Nordic paganism.'

But though found in its most extreme form in Germany, narrow nationalism is not confined to that land. It is surprising to find a psychologist of the weight of William M'Dougall suggesting in his *Ethics and Modern World Problems* the need for definitely returning to a nationalist ethic. It is true that he speaks of the true ethic, ultimately, as the synthesis of the nationalist and universalist outlooks, but his whole book is directed to putting a very heavy check upon universalist ethics. As he says: 'It may be said there is little danger that the precepts of universal ethics shall be generally acted upon. I reply that even though not generally acted upon, their acceptance as the moral basis of our civilization constitutes a very serious danger, and that in so far as they influence the conduct of men, they must tend to produce the deplorable results I have indicated.' M'Dougall evidently believes that a diluted Christianity is the best hope of the world. He is not prepared to say, definitely, that salvation is not by blood.

There are unhappily still other forms of this superstition. A further type of this kind of false hope is provided, for example, in those young people who, because they belong to a respectable home and are the children of Christian parents, are apt to let their personal relationship to God be taken for granted, and go by default. The tragic catchword, 'There ain't no ten commandments East of Suez,' has been built upon innumerable instances of a false trust in mere good blood—in mere inherited virtue.

We all know the type of person whose religion can be defined as being 'a good Englishman' or being 'a good American.' There are people who simply will not reckon with the fact that to be a child of God may, quite conceivably, mean breaking at some crisis with nationalist and racial pride.

2. 'Nor by the will of the flesh.' Neither is salvation to be found in our *natural relation to God* by

creation and in the furtherance of our physical well-being. How sadly true it is that the possession of health and strength combined with economic security is apt to blind the soul to its deeper need of spiritual harmony with God.

Suppose a satisfactory issue to life is ultimately dependent, not upon our physical relation to God at all, but upon the establishment of a harmony of character with Him, a certain moral character of the soul, it will not be enough in that case merely to let life drift along its lower material level or even to achieve the highest physical and material well-being—a rich cultured prosperity. To put our trust wholly in eugenics as Lothrop Stoddard and others would have us do may certainly produce a better race physically, but if it is a race without pity—a race devoid of the will to sacrifice itself redemptively for others—it will be as far as ever from Christian salvation—utterly divorced from that true Life which is God.

3. 'Nor by the will of man.' Here lies man's subtlest danger. The experience of St. Paul is a supreme illustration. Morally earnest, he flung himself might and main into the pharisaic method of achieving salvation. He would store up merit with God by the *due and full fulfilment of all God's requirements!* Yet the result of all his striving is found in the pitiable confession—'When I would do good, evil is present with me.' He found that all the time the following of such a method meant such an assertion of selfhood as to corrupt his piety at its very heart.

The religion of human achievement is a human religion. It is the pitiable and futile attempt of humanity, as it has been described, 'to lift itself by its own waistband.' No wonder St. Paul speaks of the folly of 'will-worship.' Unhappily the world is full of this kind of mock salvation at the present time. Our daily press is replete with advertisements showing a man how to develop his personality and secure a bigger income by his own wise and self-directed efforts. But the achievement at the end is only a paltry one.

4. 'But of God.' There is a fine simplicity and comprehensiveness about this phrase 'of God'—as though the Evangelist wants us to be quite clear that the soul's rebirth is not effected merely by the operation of one of God's powers among others, but by the overshadowing of His whole Person. It is by the quickening union of the soul and God that the new nature is imparted. And it is by Christ we are drawn unto and united with the Father. We have the power to say no to Christ, to bar and bolt our doors against Him, but also we have the power

to receive Him, and to such as receive Him 'giveth he power to become sons of God.'¹

I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him.

But there are many whose chief pain is that they do not have a conscious thirst for Christ, or any emotional longing that sends them to the fountain. Does the Advent hope have any gospel for the life that knows and would will the right but yet has no thirst for it? 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' 'But, Lord, I forsook thee and hewed out for myself broken cisterns that can hold no water.'

I have not sought Thee, I have not found Thee,
I have not thirsted for Thee:
And now cold billows of death surround me,
Buffeting billows of death astound me—
Wilt thou look upon, wilt Thou see
Thy perishing me?

What answer can the Evangel give to a life such as this? Long ago, in the heart of a prophet, the chord of love's music was struck, and the strains have sounded through all the days—'I was ready to offer an answer to those that consulted Me not; and to suffer Myself to be found of those that had sought Me not. "Here am I, here am I," I said to a people that call not upon Me.'

Yea, I have sought thee, yea, I have found thee;
Yea, I have thirsted for thee;
Yea, long ago with love's bands I bound thee,
Now everlasting arms surround thee;—
Through death's darkness I look and see,
And clasp thee to me.²

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

The Coming of thy Lord.

'The Lord is at hand.'—Ph 4⁶.

Advent calls us to consider the Second Coming of Jesus Christ in the power and glory of His Judgment.

1. There must, so Advent reminds us, be some final event to which all things are moving. What is it? The mind of man has always to a greater or less extent been persuaded that the mingled tragedy and splendour of this earth demand an explanation which the things of time themselves cannot properly

¹ A. D. Belden, *The Harmony of Life*, 42.

² C. Robson, in *United Free Church Sermons*, 207.

afford. The Christian religion, as Dr. T. R. Glover has strongly emphasized, gave utterance to a new conviction that summed up and consolidated all previous gropings after a solution of the tangled scheme of human affairs: 'We must all appear at the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.' The world had a meaning, life was purposeful, Jesus was the final arbiter and rewarder, and the down-trodden and the oppressed took fresh heart at this. The persecution loosed against the Early Church and the seeming triumph of the powers of the world forced the first Christians to anticipate this judgment-seat as actually imminent. The wish perhaps was father to the thought. Christ would come shortly, avenge the afflictions of His faithful, destroy their oppressors, and establish His kingdom. We have moved away, of course, from this limited conception. We no longer look for a sudden advent at any moment of the Eternal Judge. But into that imagery which our fathers held to be a reality let us hope that we have read a deeper meaning.

Advent as with a trumpet should rouse us from our 'ease in Zion,' our intellectual and spiritual indolence, our self-centredness, and our slipshod thinking concerning God, and man, and life in general, to the remembrance that the judgments of the Lord in very truth are in the earth, and that here and now, daily and hourly, we and all men are weighed in the balance of His justice. Disregard the fact as we may, and evolve our shoddy philosophies of life as we will, we cannot avoid the knowledge that the moral sense of the best of mankind has through the crucible of much bitter experiment and experience evolved steadily towards the standard of the character of Christ. In the light of all that He was, these imperfect lives of ours are sternly judged even by our own conscience.

2. The stream of life is constantly swelling and ever flowing. But whither? We cannot get rid of the necessity for embarking on this wonderful mental exploration by stating in general terms that it is an infinite progressiveness. What does that mean? If this be an ordered universe, progressiveness must have an ultimate object which is both reasonable and good. Where does that object lie? Does it lie in time or beyond it? We know that at some point in time this planet will become no longer capable of supporting life, and all that man has built upon it must inevitably be swept away. The planet itself must some day cease to exist, and it seems possible to prognosticate

with moderately reasonable accuracy the limits of this terrestrial episode. The whole universe, indeed, as we also know, is slowly dying. Is that to be the conclusion to the history of the human race, which through æons of evolving life has felt itself akin to the Divine, and through sacrifice, pain, and travail has won its spiritual and intellectual strength, climbing, with many sordid failures and backslidings, to the heights of moral grandeur?

Is it not more in keeping with our highest thought and the most deeply rooted instincts of our being to believe that human life is destined towards something which, though wrapped in the infinite and eternal, is nevertheless positive and definite?

Then comes the question before which the mind falters and the vision fails. What shall be the end, when at last the curtain falls, and the lights go out, and the players leave the stage—when man's experience in these earthly scenes shall be complete? How can we answer this but in words whose allegorical significance and dramatic imagery we do not even begin to understand?—'Behold, I shew you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.'

3. Confident through the ages rings out the voice of Christ proclaiming that His kingdom must prevail and His victory is secure; that in Him, in whom lies the solution of life and death and all the baffling perplexities of this bewildering world, all shall one day be completed, explained, and understood; that the labour and the travail, the pain and the toil, will be proved to have been well worth while, since they have forced man to search for the truth of God and thereby have won for him his citizenship in that new world of undying spirits for which all things here have been the preparation.

Thus are we called to remember the Christian virtue of patience. 'Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.' Christ Himself quite certainly prepared men for an indefinite future, and expressly set Himself to instil into the minds of His followers a sense of the magnitude of the task which He committed to them in commissioning them to be the ambassadors in the world of the Kingdom of God. True it is that His friends misunderstood His language, and after He had left them looked expectantly for His immediate return and the final judgment of the world. But Christian thought ere long read His words with clearer understanding, and realized that His emphasis on the microscopic piece of leaven which leaveneth in time

the whole lump, and on the grain of mustard-seed which will eventually become the tree, was the teaching of One who did not anticipate immediate results by a catastrophic setting aside of natural development by the sudden appearance of a descending God, but of One who sowed the seed of a gospel prepared to wait through the long evolution of man's moral and spiritual nature until the coming to fruition of the harvest. 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.' 'The kingdom of God is like unto a grain of mustard-seed.' 'Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations.' These were surely the words of One who obviously looked into the uncharted vistas of ages yet to come.

4. We must not forget that the will of God can be done only by methods which accord with that will as revealed in Jesus. We have to learn to be enthusiastic without being offensive, and to be resolute without being uncharitable.

The petition, 'Thy kingdom come,' is definitely related to its successor, 'Thy will be done.' An inert indifference to the woes and sufferings of mankind is quite inconsistent with the spirit of Christ, but in reality no more so than efforts to alleviate them carried on by methods which are foreign to His nature. Men, for instance, have frequently and with quite honest conviction sought to advance the Kingdom of God by merciless and bloody cruelty; and the somewhat naïve belief that one is doing a man a good turn by putting him to bodily death in order to save his soul was for long a popular conception in the Church, as was evident in its persecutions against heresy and error. And though this venerated savagery in its crudest sense has been outgrown by the Church, it is still very much alive in the world, and our own era has witnessed at least one nation attempting the recreation of a society which was admittedly bad by the direct expedients of destructive despotism and widespread massacre.

5. Advent has also another practical lesson for us men and women, living as we do in this present world and busied and harassed with its problems and activities. We touched on it earlier, and saw that we will receive little help from this season by the contemplation of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ as a remote contingency. What concerns us most deeply is that it is an ever-present reality.

In our individual experience we certainly know that our dear Lord comes back again. He returns in supremest reality in the Blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood, by which transcendent mystery

He comes among us and feeds us with Himself. He returns in our times of prayer when the spirit is quiet and the heart is responsive and still. He comes in the worship of the Church, and at the door of our souls He stands and knocks. And in all the difficulties, and worries, and sorrows that befall us, the Redeemer comes back with healing in His wings.¹

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

On Escaping from this World.

'Jesus . . . withdrew again into the mountain himself alone.'—Jn 6¹⁶ (R.V.).

A man who has not learned to escape from this world has missed one of the elemental lessons of life. A man cannot stand the world, its externalism, its immediacy, its noise, unless he can get away from it.

If we ask the psychologists, they will tell us what devious and dangerous roads men use to escape the world: make-believe, fantasy, rationalization—evading reality, constructing wish-worlds, and so falling at last upon ineffective living, or, it may be, insanity. Men are making a sorry business out of this deep, human need to escape the world.

Of late, therefore, the whole idea of escape has fallen into the shadow. It is pathological, we are told; we ought not to want it. The world's realities are our conditioning environment. Face them, we are exhorted, and quit this desire to escape. So a man tries that, but no man can keep that up long. If he is one kind of person, he turns to a monastery to escape the world; if he is another kind, he turns to drink or drugs; if he is another kind, he turns to music or Nature.

It is no adequate answer to the soul's imperious need of escape from the world to tell us it is wrong. Can it be wrong when it is so necessary? Can it be wrong when Jesus Himself so needed it. But He returned to it again. Yes, with an impact such as no other personality has ever made, but the strength of His blow upon the world was proportioned to the lift of it above the world. He withdrew again into the mountain Himself alone.

On the last Sunday of the old year, as we think of the world we have left behind and of the world ahead, is there not a secret here which all of us need? Nietzsche said once, 'If thou gaze long into an abyss, the abyss will also gaze into thee.' So some of us feel about this world. We live in it, are obsessed by it, look into it until it begins to look into us. Then we must get away.

¹ C. L. Warr, *Scottish Sermons and Addresses*, 221.

Hazlitt tells us that once Coleridge was to preach on a Sunday morning, as Coleridge sometimes did preach, in an English parish church. So Hazlitt walked ten miles in the mud across the countryside to hear him, and, in sentences that even yet are marked by awe, he tells us how, arriving late, he entered just before Coleridge stood in the pulpit and in a voice that filled the sanctuary announced his text: 'Jesus therefore perceiving that they were about to come and take him by force, to make him king, withdrew again into the mountain alone.'

Surely, an aspect of the Master's experience is there uncovered which at the beginning of another year we lack—and need. Is it unfair to our generation to say that it is marked by three characteristics—externalism, immediacy, and noise?

Such characteristics, dominant in a generation and pervading its culture, creep also into its religion.

But any man who tries to handle his life merely with the technique of energy, activity, and business, comes at last to the place where he cannot go on. When tragedy befalls and the heart is stunned or broken, one cannot handle *that* merely by being energetic. When youth passes and life depends on discovering meanings that will not wear out with the passing years, one cannot handle *that* merely by being energetic. When temptations come and desire and duty are terribly arrayed against each other in the soul, one cannot handle *that* by mere business. Then the technique of restless activity fails us and we need the deeper, serener power which enabled Jesus to stay patient in Nazareth, to keep His head level when the crowd urged Him to insurrection, to keep His spirit sweet when the crowd hated Him, to walk through Gethsemane to Calvary. Who cannot feel in that life its deep undertone: He withdrew again—and again—into the mountain Himself alone?

Let us try to make this as pertinent to our practical help as possible by imagining some specific gains which Jesus won from this experience.

For one thing, like all the rest of us, Jesus was sometimes sickened by the world. When we read the Gospels we see this is plain. Was He merely loving the world when He denounced those who 'devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers'? Was He merely loving the world when He said, 'Ye are of your father the devil . . . He is a liar, and the father thereof'? Was He loving the world when He said to His disciples, 'Neither cast your pearls before the swine'?

But this is the paradox of savourhood, that while a wise and good man will at times be sickened by the world, a wise and good man must not remain so.

Consider, then, what happened to the Master on the mountain. He went up sickened by the world; He came down ready to die for it.

Is there anything that some of us need more? We need a place alone and quiet, where the sediment will settle, where disgust and bitterness will die in an altitude too high for them to live in, where, knowing all this world's evil, we will learn again to love the wayward multitude of blundering men and women, to love them until afresh we see them at their best, to love them until again we take up our tasks on their behalf. In the end, it may be, if we learn well enough the uses of that mountain-top, men will remain unaware that sometimes they made us sick and will remember about us only that we were lovers of our fellow-men.

Again, Jesus faced situations, as we do, where He could not do much more for the world until, first of all, He had done something for Himself.

Is it an accident that, after the mountain-top communion of the Master, the Fourth Gospel says that, coming down, He walked upon the tempestuous waves of Galilee, and other Gospels add that the winds ceased? They never will tell that kind of story about us, that we came down from a mountain-top communion so radiant with power that we walked the stormy waves and stilled the winds. Not even if we had lived in first-century Palestine, where such miracles were easily credited, would they ever have told that about us. But they did tell it about Jesus. Something happened in Him on that mountain-top so that when He came down He seemed to His disciples to walk the world's tempests and quell them.

Finally, Jesus faced situations, as we do, where He had to escape from the world's low compulsions by deliberately putting Himself under the highest compulsion. All of us, willy-nilly, live under one kind of compulsion or another. As the years pass something *gets* us.

That is the essential meaning of prayer—deliberately to put ourselves under the control and compulsion of the Highest. Many people never get that idea of prayer.

The prayer the Master offered in Gethsemane was surely not offered there for the first time. Is not that the way He always prayed on any mountain-top, Himself alone? 'Not what I will, but what thou wilt.' So all great souls in their greatest moments have always prayed. Around them flowed the strong compulsions of this world, and they escaped to the high compulsion and came back again, no longer to be compelled by the world but to compel it.

For this is the ultimate mystery of the mountain-

top, that when one withdraws himself alone, behold, he is not alone!¹

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

Toward the Sunrising.

'And they journeyed . . . and pitched . . . in the wilderness . . . toward the sunrising.'—Nu 21¹¹.

Taken at its face value this statement merely records a geographical detail in the march of Israel from Egypt to Canaan. A certain type of Western mind, cold and unimaginative, will see only fantasy in a use of it which goes deeper and lingers on that phrase, 'toward the sunrising.'

But the writers of this history were Eastern and not Western, and saw spiritual truth where eyes which have not their vision see only dull and rather meaningless facts. We stand beside them and see with their eyes. A journey and tents pitched toward the sunrising in the wilderness; life and its meaning, life and its direction, life and its goal—the two seem to go naturally and vividly together. And especially on the first Sunday of the New Year.

That strange young woman of genius, Marie Bashkirtseff, wrote this entry in her journal one New Year's Eve: 'It is the new year. At the theatre, precisely at midnight, watch in hand, I wished my wish in a single word, intoxicating whether it be written or spoken—Fame.' Such an ideal of life as that, common though it is in its many forms—pleasure, money-making, ease, self-pleasing of any kind—stands condemned in the conscience of every one.

Life is service—only the selfishness of perverted egoism will deny the truth and necessity of that as an ideal. But we know how far we fall below the ideal in practice, and even lapse from it altogether, or so mingle alien elements with it that it loses inspiration and degenerates into a perfunctory routine.

Life is service. But why? And the service of whom? What is life for? We pass one milestone, and at the end of one year we begin another; and so on. Whither are we journeying?

Starting out in the sunshine, a boy's path passes into shadows, and soon he loses the joyful elasticity of step with which he began it. All too often men become pilgrims of despair, travelling they know not whither. Take as a typical instance the philosopher Von Holtzmann, who constructed a theory of life and history which deliberately accepted pessimism as its ruling idea. 'In his historical

¹ H. E. Fosdick, *The Secret of Victorious Living*, 221.

theory he made mankind the victim of successive illusions; as one illusion vanishes another comes, leaving the process of final disillusionment as its supreme problem to the philosophy which, by preaching the vanity of human expectation, hopes to promote the beatitude of the future. The first illusion, belonging to the childhood of the race, was the dream of happiness in the life that is, which was soon discovered to be a vain illusion. It was followed by the dream of happiness in a life to come. That, too, has proved empty; in its place there came the dream of happiness for the race in another age, with a great future for humanity. That also has proved an illusion; and now man, disillusioned or in process of disillusionment, has before him the problem of how to bring this march of misery, consoled by illusion, to its final close, when misery will end with the ending of existence.'

True, such a synthesis of human facts will never succeed for very long in binding men in chains like these. There will always be J. M. Barries to sing their pæans in praise of courage: 'Courage is the thing . . . you must cultivate lightheartedness.' 'Pegging out' in the Antarctic 'in a desperate state—feet frozen, no fuel, and a long way from food,' men can still face death 'with songs and cheery conversation.' And 'the brave ones who have turned their necessity to glorious gain, after they have put away their dreams,' will always achieve their stark triumphs in despite of everything. But the gospel of stoic courage, even at its best and most dauntless, is a poor substitute for the trumpet-calls of God to see in Christ His challenge to a world in darkness, and to find in Him the way out to a complete triumph over the worst that it can bring.

A God who lives and loves, and calls all His children to share His life and love, and gives them life to live in the knowledge and service of Himself; a God who is revealed in Jesus Christ, who is like Him, as He is like His Son, and lives and speaks in every human soul to draw it into fellowship with Him; a God who saves men from their evil selves, and claims them for blessedness and peace; a God who suffers more than they suffer because of their follies and sins, and purposes to lead their lives out of darkness into the light of His own goodness and joy—to believe that is to discover the meaning of life. It is journeying and pitching in the wilderness toward the sunrising.

We may debate and legislate and improve our social conditions. And of course we have to do that; we cannot escape from it. But after all we shall be only just where we always have been, if we ignore the one renewing, rebuilding, regenerating thing—

the faith in God which transforms life because it transforms men.

With God, life here on earth is a journey to the sunrise, and it is beautiful and good, lived that way. Without God it is chaos ; our way through it leads into the meaningless silence of the final darkness ; and over it all there broods the spirit of the Persian pessimist :

The Worldly Hope men set their hearts upon
Turns Ashes—or it prospers ; and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face,
Lighting a little hour or two—is gone.

At the beginning of this New Year let us meet the age-long challenge of God, the challenge to men to make room for Him first in our thoughts of life, and then in our use of it henceforth, and to bring to Him our trials and perplexities, alike with the efforts of our service and all our hopes and aspirations.

What does a nation require most in its people ? Character. And are they right or wrong who ask us to believe that the day of religion as the primary architect of character has passed, and that faith and prayer are as much out of date as feudalism and the crinoline ? For the moment let us wave aside all secondary ecclesiastical questions as beside the mark. Many of them are only outworks which little

concern the central citadel of faith. But the great facts of religion are supreme things, and upon our attitude to them depends everything that determines the character of life. The chief issue before England, before the nations to-day, is not whether this or that government rules, or this or that policy prevails, but whether the souls of the people are right or wrong with God.

To turn to God, to abandon the futile path of making believe to treat life seriously when we are leaving out that which really interprets it and reveals its true values ; to bring our sins and weakness to Him who alone can cure them—that is to be journeying to the sunrise indeed. To do that is to leave behind the haunting uncertainty about everything which eats the heart out of hope and robs work for others of its finest qualities, and to see before us the certain victory of goodness, righteousness, and truth, however long it may be delayed. To do that is to live and to prevail, and to be of a great good cheer and valiancy to help others and to redress human wrongs. May He make us all fellow-workers with Christ in bringing in the glory of His Kingdom ! And may Jesus, His Son, be with us and within us, and lead us along the road of fellowship and service toward the sunrise, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day !¹

¹ F. B. Macnutt, *From Chaos to God*, 186.

Experiments in Christian Service.

II. An Approach to Educated Youth.

BY THE REVEREND IVOR J. ROBERTON, M.A., D.D., WHITBY.

IN the summer of 1932, two or three of us, who had already been brought closely together in inter-denominational fellowship and service in Bristol, suddenly found a new and difficult and worth-while task suggested to us.

Some of the Heads of the Public and Secondary Schools which abound in that west country city made us aware that certain of their senior scholars were plying them privately with queries both serious and far-reaching, with quite fundamental questions on matters of life, morals, and religion. We, on our part, easily recognized how natural it was for many senior lads and girls who read modern novels and magazines, and see modern plays and pictures, to be pretty thoroughly bewildered to-day. We also

felt that we had a freedom, if not a capacity, to tackle such questions and questioners, provided they wished it, which the Heads themselves, compelled to keep parents in view and facing possibly in the same class the children of fundamentalists and the children of pagans and atheists, could hardly be reasonably expected to have.

So after considerable thought and consultation we circularized all these Schools, suggesting that if they contained any young folk, boarders or day scholars, of sixteen years and above, who would welcome a series of Lecture Talks on life, morals, and religion, Talks going pretty thoroughly down to bedrock, Talks given with fullest encouragement to the listeners to question,