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himself, and the pride and self-satisfaction to which servants of humanity are so prone are impossible in those whose service is prompted and rewarded by the vision of God.

The dependence of morality on religion means that there is no future of any consequence for purely ethical societies, and the fact that personal character is a condition of the vision of God means that there is no validity in such supposed short cuts to that vision as Theosophy or Gnosticism. In fact, the vision of God is not to be regarded as available only or chiefly in mystical experiences with an emotional tinge, for which some temperamental aptitude may be necessary. The mirrors of God in the world He has made and in the heart of man, in which the Hebrew prophets and the Greek philosophers found their image of Him, are still with us, but we have also the vision we need in the 'face of Jesus Christ.' It is to this that our worship should be directed. 'We all, with unveiled face, behold and reflect the glory of the Lord.' 'That I may know him' was the longing which animated St. Paul's self-discipline, and it is the deepest desire of the Christian.

Men and women are asking to-day why they need be sober or continent or honest, so long as others are not damaged or social coherence threatened; and there is no answer to be given except this—that you may know Him. It is said that virtue is its own reward, but that savours of smugness; for when it does not pay but even proves costly, as it so often does, how can virtue be its own reward except to those who find self-satisfaction in the contemplation of their own well-doing?

Worship directs us to an other-worldliness which

is not a next-worldliness, but rather embraces this world. The empirical is understood in terms of the universal and transcendent. Worship makes holiness of life and the service of man imperative, not merely as good in themselves for this temporal world, but as required by what we have seen of the eternal God. We cannot acquiesce in any evil, for there is none in Him. Says Thomas Aquinas: 'The last end for man is the contemplation of the truth . . . and to this end all other human activities seem to be directed. For perfect contemplation we require bodily health, which is secured by all such artificial contrivances as are necessary to life. We require freedom from the perturbation of the passions, which is attained by the moral virtues and prudence. We require freedom from external perturbations—a freedom at which the entire organization of civil government aims. So, if you will look at the matter rightly, all human occupations appear to be directed to the needs of those who contemplate the truth.' All such occupations acquire a greater importance and urgency from the fact that they are means to an end greater than themselves.

And the fuller the vision, the purer will be the holiness and the less intermittent the service. Those who are 'before the throne' 'serve him day and night.' The utmost fidelity here is but being 'faithful in little,' and its reward is the opportunity to be faithful in more.

Christianity is not simply 'a name for a particular type of moral practice.' It is a way to God which involves that type of moral practice.

'This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.'

## In the Study.

### *Virginibus Puerisque.*

#### Impressions that last.

BY THE REVEREND SIDNEY H. PRICE,  
GREAT SHELFORD, CAMBRIDGE.

'How shall it be known?'—I Co 14°.

Not long ago a friend and I were walking along the sea front at Torquay, and my friend stopped suddenly, examining the footpath. 'Look there,' he

said, pointing to a dog's footprint that had left a deep impression on the concrete. The day those paving slabs were made a dog had walked over this one before it was hard, and the impression he made will last many a long day.

A few days later, another friend was telling me about the old home in which he lived as a boy. It was an old farmhouse built over four hundred years ago. One of the things he remembered best was an impression left on the fireplace where a

child had placed two fingers. So many years ago, a little boy or girl had made that mark, and it still remains; so it looks as though you and I will need to be careful what we do. Some things we think little about might be remembered by some one else, or some things we do might last for many years, telling other people the sort of boys and girls we were.

The dog's paw marks and the two small finger marks don't matter very much, but some impressions are made that do matter; especially, I think, impressions left on our minds.

My old Sunday-school teacher was a stonemason, and most of his life was spent on the new cathedral in Liverpool. I imagine it was thirsty work, but he would never drink beer, as many of the others did. One day he left an impression on my mind, and it has often helped me. He told his class he had been laughed at by the other men for refusing to drink or gamble. I saw my old teacher in a new light that day. I saw him as a brave man, and I was proud of him. He could stand being laughed at, and still do what he believed to be right. That was a lesson I had to learn, and now, whenever I think people will laugh at me for doing the right thing, I remember him. He did not know he had left such a deep impression that day, but there it is. Can you stand being laughed at for being thoughtful about your mother, for instance, or for bringing your Missionary collection to Sunday School when others are spending money at the sweet shop on Sundays, or for coming to church when others want you to go a walk?

Then there are some things we would like to forget. They leave ugly impressions. A little girl once visited relatives who lived at a distance. She was placed in the care of the guard of the train, and as the guard was her uncle, all was well. In her excitement at seeing her uncle, and also her joy at the thought of a holiday, she quite forgot to purchase her ticket, and when she arrived at the end of her journey, the guard just whispered to the ticket collector, and he allowed her to pass without paying. For nearly thirty years that left an impression on her mind that troubled her, and one day she felt she must do something to blot out that impression if she could. She wrote to the stationmaster telling him what had happened so long ago, and sent him the money for her fare. In that way she has found happiness again, not by blotting out the impression as she hoped, but by changing it.

I saw the letter the stationmaster wrote to her. He seemed puzzled at her honesty, and it is quite

evident she has left an impression on that stationmaster he will not easily forget.

Every day we are all making impressions on somebody or on our own minds, some of them good, and some bad. If we are selfish, we leave ugly impressions, but if we are Christ's boys and girls, and really try to please Him, we are likely to leave impressions that will help other people and make us happy ourselves.

#### The Victorious Life.

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

'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.'—I Jn 5<sup>4</sup>.

There are over 275,000 different kinds of living creatures in the world which are divided into two great classes—Vertebrates, those that have backbones, and Invertebrates, those that haven't backbones. Most of the living creatures are in the second class, more than a quarter of a million of them. The lowliest member of this vast group is a little creature called Amœba. It lives in ponds and ditches, but it is very hard to find—you need a microscope—for the length of Amœba is just about the hundredth part of an inch. Amœba, small as it is, has its troubles and gets into difficulties. Sometimes, for instance, the pool in which it lives dries up. What does Amœba do in a difficult situation like that? It has what is called the power of encysting. That is to say, it can form round itself a sort of protective envelope, and inside this envelope it lies quiet and asleep and just waits till its troubles right themselves, till the rain comes again and refills the pool. Then it becomes active once more, bursts through the envelope and casts it aside, and resumes its life.

We can't do anything like that. To us, as to little Amœba, troubles and difficulties come, but we can't deal with them in that fashion. We can't just go to sleep, as it were, and wait till they right themselves. They won't right themselves. We have to struggle with them, and get rid of them by overcoming them. There is no other way. Amœba is the lowliest of the backboneless creatures, but we are the highest of the backboneed creatures, and facing up to, and struggling to overcome, the difficulties that meet us in life is one of the ways of showing that we really have backbone. You're not very old yet, but even so, life is sometimes difficult enough for you, isn't it? You have your tasks and your duties, and they aren't always easy. It isn't always easy to tell the truth, and be

good, and stand up for what is right, is it? No, it means struggling, but you can overcome in the struggle. And as you grow up, and other greater difficulties meet you, you can overcome them too. Jesus is calling you to overcome, calling you to live a victorious life in this world, and Jesus doesn't ask of any of us what is not possible. In *Huntingtower*, a story by John Buchan, in which a company of boys who call themselves the Gorbals Diehards have some strange and wonderful adventures, there is an occasion on which they are faced with a very great difficulty. Their leader speaks out, 'There's just the one road open—by the rocks. It'll have to be done. It *can* be done.' That's the spirit. That's the spirit in which to face up to all life's difficulties. Don't be afraid of them, don't try to dodge them, don't think they will right themselves. Tackle them and overcome them. It can be done. But you'll need to try your very best, and it's worth trying, for to be an overcomer is to find the real happiness of life. You have Jesus to help you; you can never win through without Him. 'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith,' says our text. We must have faith if we want victory. We must trust Jesus, we must look to Him and receive His help. He wants to be the best Friend you can have. Let Him be your Friend and make you strong to overcome.

### The Christian Year.

#### FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

##### The Bundle of Life.

'We . . . are . . . every one members one of another.'—Ro 12<sup>5</sup>.

Whatever life may contain for us of success or failure, it is a great and noble calling, because it affords an opportunity of being a force, in harmony with God, for the development of the perfected society.

When we rightly understand that we are all bound up in the bundle of life, the knowledge may get on our nerves a little. It is a startling experience to awake to the fact that we do not live unto ourselves. It upsets so many of our comfortable views. We discover, amongst other things, that the phrase 'he only sins against himself' is all but nonsense. The Apostle sets forth the right view of our lives when he compares each of us to a part of the human body: one to the eye, the other to the hand. Clearly, if one part is diseased, the whole is in discomfort; whereas, if one is healthy, so

much the better for the rest. In so speaking, he would have us free from any false notions of the solitariness of life. He desires us to regard ourselves as part of the great whole, to the well-being, or otherwise, of which we are incessantly and inevitably contributing.

Our influence upon society flows out from us continually in two directions. It flows outward from us horizontally and downwards from us vertically. We affect those about us, even those we have never seen, through our influence upon those we have seen; and we affect those who come after us, even unto the thousands of the generations of the children of men.

Wise men rightly tell us that this thought is not nearly so vivid to us as it should be. It has been made fairly clear in the physical realm. Indeed, there, perhaps, it has been pushed too far. But it has not been made living enough in the spiritual realm. We are specially indebted to such a writer as George Meredith for giving to it power and vitality. He goes the length of saying that a man who cannot live for the generation that is to be is soulless:<sup>1</sup>

The young generation! ah, there is the child  
Of our souls down the Ages! to bleed for it, proof  
That souls we have.

Spurgeon wrote to Gladstone: 'You do not know how those of us regard you who feel it a joy when a premier believes in righteousness. We believe in no man's infallibility, but it is restful to be sure of one man's integrity.'

'I remember him at Eton,' wrote a contemporary, 'a pure and noble boy.' The Earl of Rosebery tells of a banquet at which an indecent toast was proposed and drunk by all the boys except young Gladstone. He refused to drink, and there was a storm of ridicule, but he remained loyal to his conscience. One who was present wrote to his parents the same night, asking that he might go to Oxford instead of Cambridge so that he might remain under the influence of young Gladstone. His influence in the University was of the same nature. Archbishop Temple, who followed him to Oxford after the lapse of ten years, declared that, 'men drank less in the forties because Gladstone had been abstemious in the thirties.'

Now this is a very fearful fact of life. Atlas-like, each one of us carries the world on his shoulders. And it is all so utterly unavoidable. Simply *live*, and we are forces—forces acting inevitably through an endless chain of lives.

<sup>1</sup> J. R. P. Sclater, *The Enterprise of Life*, 232.

Which leads us to make an observation. A great deal of questionable advice is given about *becoming* a force, *becoming* an influence. Nobody can *become* an influence, because every one is one already. The ardent person, who tries to become one too obviously for good, usually diverts such force as he has into less desirable channels. The 'watch me' attitude is no use to us in these grave matters. An attitude of that sort has a suggestion of posing and of self-consciousness and, therefore, of unreality. It is a true and pithy statement that 'the profession of doing good is one of those that are full.' The fact is, in Dr. Peabody's words, 'a man need not concern himself to imagine whether he has an influence. All he has to do is to live, and the influence of his life will follow him as surely as his shadow.'

Dr. G. L. Prestige, in his recent *Life of Dr. Gore*, writes: 'Gore's face alone was worth a concentrated study. It fascinated Mrs. Illingworth. Once she spent a whole meal in watching it. At the close Holland asked her what it was that had interested her so much in Gore's conversation. "Nothing," she replied, "I have no idea what you were all talking about: I was thinking of what he was, not of what he was saying."'

Canon H. R. L. Sheppard, speaking a few months ago at Islington Central Hall Anniversary, told the story of his first attempt to serve in East London. He was a cocksure university student, full of zeal to set the world right. He was given first of all the job of trying to reclaim a hopeless drunkard. He talked to him as well as he could. The man listened, but he made no impression on him. But one day when he called he found that the man had signed the pledge and was keeping it. A parish clergyman, Mr. Strickland, whose congregation was sparse, who had no reputation as a preacher or anything else, called on him. He was shy. For long periods Strickland and this man would sit in the room together, neither saying a word. But when he had gone the man said to his wife: 'It's just as if Jesus Christ had been sitting in that chair.' It was the sheer influence of goodness that had brought the change.

We should aim at being natural in our social relationships. What a marked characteristic that was of our Lord's dealings with individuals. How well He 'got on' with people; how quickly He found points of contact with men; how He avoided anything of the nature of 'preaching at' those whom He met.

If, then, we are forces by *being*, success in this matter may be given to the world's failures. For

the Christian ideal, that of grace and truth, may be reached by the unclever, and, indeed, is specially exhibited in circumstances of unsuccess. It is being that matters, because being creates our *atmosphere*, and the right atmosphere is the outcome of a state of being which is alive unto God. The process of becoming alive unto God is due to the act of God upon a willingly receptive human spirit, but the process of conscious aliveness to God may be slow.

We observe what this comes to. We have a great destiny to fulfil. In some sort we must fulfil it. Its right fulfilment depends upon our getting into the range of God's power. We cannot get away from that fact. Wherefore, all through our days, let us stay not our earnest search for God, and for more of God, and for still more. Through success or failure, through sorrow and glad days, let us keep the windows of our heart open to Jerusalem. May Jesus Christ be before us as our Star, that with Him we may enter into the secret place of the Most High. So may we go forth with a light in our eyes to an existence which affords opportunity of being used of God for purposes that are His own.

#### SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

##### The Thin Chalk-Line.

'Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love.'—Ro 12<sup>10</sup>.

Stevenson in his *Picturesque Notes of Edinburgh* tells this story: 'Another legend is that of the two maiden sisters. This pair inhabited a single room. Here our two spinsters fell out—on some point of controversial divinity belike: but fell out so bitterly that there was never a word spoken between them, black or white, from that day forward. You would have thought they would separate: but no! whether from lack of means, or the Scottish fear of scandal, they continued to keep house together where they were. A chalk-line drawn upon the floor separated their two domains; it bisected the doorway and the fireplace, so that each could go out and in, and do her cooking without violating the territory of the other. So, for years, they co-existed in a hateful silence; their meals, their ablutions, their friendly visitors, exposed to an unfriendly scrutiny; and at night, in the dark watches, each could hear the breathing of her enemy. Never did four walls look down upon an uglier spectacle than these sisters rivalling in unsisterliness.'

This thin chalk-line in life is the emblem of

unseemly separation between people who should be knit together in love and sympathy—the symbol of all ugly uncharitableness, nursed grievances, and contention among friends—the fruitful source of sorrow and a hundred unnoticed family tragedies.

There are certain people with whom, try as we will, we can have little or nothing in common. We live in different worlds, having different interests, a different build of mind and heart, different outlook, different affinities; and we could as soon get near to them as we could to a stone. But that is a different matter. Unfortunately, the chalk-line of misunderstanding does not crop up between people who have little in common, but between those who have much in common—those who are necessarily thrown much together by common work, common interests, and common ties.

Let us consider some spheres of life in which we draw this chalk-line of separation, to the loss of brotherhood and peace.

1. At the outset, in the broadest application, there is the chalk-line drawn through the social life. We speak to-day of the alienation of class from class. That alienation is a fact. One class makes no attempt to understand another. We know, of course, that we cannot avoid having dealings with men, but there is always between us that thin chalk-line, not to be over-stepped, which proclaims, 'Thus far and no farther.'

Now, however much we may believe in the need of social adjustment (and it is needed), no amount of mere social adjustment is going to help this. Social adjustment may touch the outside, but by itself it cannot touch the inner nature. In this matter it is not outward but inward improvement we need. 'The soul of all improvement is the improvement of the soul.' Until men learn to regard each other in the love and brotherhood of Jesus, social distinctions will always remain as callous and cruel as ever. Mere tinkering with outward forms leaves the heart unchanged. But if by any chance there once was that inward brotherhood, there would be no difficulty about the outward adjustment.

And first the social chalk-line must be wiped out in the Church. It does nothing but grievous harm to Christ's Kingdom. What is there more worldly than social distinctions drawn through a church's membership, where fellow-Christians sit elbow to elbow, and are as cold as icebergs? It casts slander on Christ's name, and mocks the very mention of fellowship. There are no society rules, however accepted, which should *dare* compete with the rules of the society of Christ!

2. Again, there is the thin chalk-line so often drawn through the family life, through friendship and the home. This is where the separation hurts most, just because no one has such power to wound us as those whom we love.

Home life, if it is not to be a curse, needs much 'give and take,' and much forbearing love. There are constant causes of daily friction, if we are seeking for them. Let us learn to repress temper, and be very slow to put the worst reading into any word hastily uttered. Again, if offence should be given, let us hug no grudge. It is a mark of strength, and not of weakness, to make the first advance to reconciliation. Had we been willing to take the first step, how many foolish quarrels should have been silenced in shame! Further, there is no place where forbearance and thoughtfulness are more needed than in the intimate relations of the family. We are apt to presume there, as we should not dare elsewhere. Further, even if we are grossly wronged, remember that God's condition of forgiveness with us is our readiness to forgive others. If we were all judged as hardly by God as we judge our brethren, who of us would stand?

3. Finally, there are some of us who have drawn this chalk-line through our hearts. There are things within us that we never reconcile. There is, for instance, that thin line drawn between Duty and Pleasure. There are some of our pleasures, our pet pleasures, that conflict with our duty, but rather than have duty cross over and subdue them, we draw a chalk-line through our life, and say, 'We shall not let duty invade our pleasure farther than this.' How many of us have reached that high altitude where, instead of speaking of pleasure and duty, we speak only of the pleasure of duty? Or further, there is the other chalk-line that some of us draw within our hearts between Business and Conscience. Unless we can wipe out that chalk-line, and let justice, truth, and pity permeate all our work and industry, there will be havoc in the soul, an ugly cleavage that will wreck the character. Or, to go still further, there is the thin chalk-line that many of us draw between Life and Religion, between the soul and Christ its Lord. How common and how fatal it is to divide the heart into compartments and closets, and give some to God and some to ourselves!

There can be no true Christian life where there is any such division. God claims the whole life as His province. We often wonder how so many who began the Christian race flag and falter after a time. It was not that their early profession was insincere or purely emotional. It was not that they did not

have a good grasp of the Christian faith. It was not that they failed to understand the step they were taking. But the reason lay simply in this, that their consecration was not complete and their surrender was not full. In most cases, it is the tragedy of the chalk-line, the life that is parcelled out and divided off into compartments, the life where there are unreconciled elements, where Christ the Lord is not really the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

### THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

#### Halfness.

'As much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. . . . If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.'—Ro 1<sup>15</sup> 12<sup>18</sup>.

One hundred years ago an Englishman wrote a letter to a Scotsman, with this sentence in it: 'If human beings would but do thoroughly all they do, I believe with you that good would be more forwarded than evil. Halfness is the great enemy of spiritual worth.' The writer of these words was John Stuart Mill, and he was addressing his friend Carlyle.

Now St. Paul at the very dawn of Christianity was thoroughly alive to the risk of not being thorough in the spiritual service of the faith. In himself as well as in other people he felt the same danger of halfness.

'As much as in me is,' he begins, 'I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.' He is facing a new mission in Rome, the capital of the Empire, a city which was even more pagan than most capitals are to-day in Christendom, and he engages to put all his heart into the business. Already he had won success in other spheres of the mission field; behind him lay a good record of service in Asia, in Macedonia, and at Corinth. But he did not dream that he could carry out this fresh task simply in the flush of his reputation, as though a man of his wide experience could afford to take things easy now.

In any vocation of life some are found who do not put themselves into the work, partly because they have the idea that it does not call for their full strength. Incredible as it may sound, they undervalue the task or opportunity, imagining that they can handle it without exerting themselves to the full, or supposing that for some reason it is not important enough to demand their whole time and strength. Such people are not necessarily indolent. They may be energetic in their own way; but the

<sup>1</sup> J. Black, *The Burthen of the Weeks*, 98.

trouble is, they do not consider that their vocation furnishes a sphere sufficiently large for their abilities. It is one source of failure all over life, that we yield to this undisciplined temper of halfness.

If we do not believe that a cause is of supreme importance, we had better not commit ourselves to it; for this at least is asked of us, in all that we undertake, that we will not be off-hand or spare ourselves, on any pretext. Joseph Conrad makes one of his sea-captains contrast the absorption of sailors in their duty with what he considered the easy-going habits of a landsman over his job. 'If we at sea,' he declares, 'went about our work as people ashore, high and low, about theirs, we should never make a living. No one would employ us. And, moreover, no ship navigated and sailed in the happy-go-lucky manner people conduct their business on shore would ever arrive into port.'

Then again, the Apostle reminds us, this quality of thoroughness is required also from the rank and file in their Christian relationships and responsibilities. 'As much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.' It is not merely a question of breaking fresh ground or of undertaking some new and conspicuous line of duty; the danger of halfness emerges in the task of managing our common life, which is so close to us and so unromantic and yet so exacting, much more exacting than we sometimes care to realize. For to live means to live with other people, in a series of concentric circles. The new spirit of fellowship and brotherhood calls us as Christians to *live peaceably* with our fellows. Now, whether it is international peace or social peace or the peace of churches and families, it is not enough to utter pious platitudes or to cherish airy ideals of unity. To exalt brotherhood and co-operation in warm language is by no means the way to secure harmony on earth. Lovers of peace have to translate their hope into fact and act, beginning with the people next to them. True peace has to be worked for—yes, we might even say, fought for—by resisting our pugnacious instincts, by overcoming selfishness and prejudice, by getting over the antipathies that set us against certain individuals in our circle.

'Offences would not fail,' says Carlyle, speaking of King George the Second and Frederick of Prussia in the eighteenth century: 'these two cousins went on offending one another by the mere act of living simultaneously.' Well, sometimes offences arise, in our families even, through no more serious occasion. People take dislikes to one another. They ruffle one another easily. In our human

relationships we are thrown against men and women who prove annoying in all sorts of ways; they irritate us by being unpunctual and wasting our time, or by being unreliable, narrow-minded, inconsiderate, incompetent, lazy, self-absorbed. It requires a real effort to preserve the peace in their company. But we have to do this 'as much as lieth in us.' St. Paul recognizes the difficulty; he was well aware that, if it takes two to make a quarrel, it also takes two to keep the peace.

Each must judge for himself and herself when it is no longer possible to continue making the effort. But there is a temptation to halfness in this connexion; we may relax our effort too soon, when nothing seems to be coming of the business. Genuine Christian love is long-suffering, slow to give up, and always ready to do its very best for others, even for people who are unpromising and thorny. The trouble with some of us, too, is that while we may not break off relations, our interest is abated. When some failure occurs in a human relationship, in the strain of common fellowship as we have to bear it, may not the fault be that, owing to impatience and disappointment, we have begun to slack off and to lose the vital glow in our contact with other people? Depend upon it, they will not make much response to our appeals if they are under the impression that we do not take them very seriously.

It is to the quality of thoroughness that the Bible is always calling us back; for 'halfness is the great enemy of spiritual worth' in every summons with which we are being honoured in our Christian discipline, and on the lack of it most of us need to be addressed. We may be unconscious that we are not exerting ourselves to the full. Often it is a failure in true humility, for the humble spirit means that we are ready to serve anybody within reach and need of us, and not to think that anything will do, as we handle them. We ought to be catching that spirit from the self-sacrifice of the Master who sets us to our tasks in His company. 'No man,' Jesus once said, 'no man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.' Our Lord saw this peril of halfness in some who were not indisposed to join His cause and take part in His service of men. Such natures as He describes are not deserters; what is wrong with them is that their heart is not in the business, they look back over their shoulder, and take their attention off what ought to be absorbing every hour of their time and every faculty of their being. 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord

thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.' Or again, 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.' With thy might! Most of us are such average people that we cannot hope to be mighty in any other way, but we may all reach this divine level of thoroughness in doing or in bearing the will of God, as that will meets us in some high undertaking or in the prosaic duties of common life.<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. Gaskell's biographer says that one of her favourite texts was: 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, that do with all thy might.' 'Just try for a day to think of all the odd jobs, as to be done well and truly as in God's sight—not just slurred over anyhow—and you'll go through them twice as cheerfully, and have no thought to spare for sighing or crying,' was her practical way of explaining this text.

#### FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

##### More than Conquerors.

'We are more than conquerors through him that loved us.'—Ro 8<sup>37</sup>.

'More than conquerors' is an expressive phrase. It means we are super-conquerors, not ordinary conquerors, through Him that loved us.

1. We are not ordinary conquerors, because our victories through Him that loved us are always worth the cost. There is often a doubt, is there not, whether some victories are worth the price paid for them, victories in war, some victories in peace? At the end of a modern war, victors and vanquished alike are exhausted: the whole world is unsettled; trade, by which the victor must live, is disorganized; millions of the best and fairest citizens, not of one side only, but of both sides, victors and vanquished, lie dead. The price paid for victory in war is a long, long price, paid in part by the victor's children, and his children's children. An entirely justifiable question is—'If that is so, where did the victory come in?'

It is also quite frequently the case, is it not, that a man gives himself up to carving out a successful career and nothing must stand in his way? He wins power, possessions, and glory; he is a great success; he is a great victor. The newspapers say so, his obituary notice says so, drawing attention to all his victories. But one sometimes wonders whether, far from being a victor, he is not one of the vanquished, his victories having cost him too much. The price may be his health—not that that is so much; it may be his home and his friendships,

<sup>1</sup> J. Moffatt, *His Gifts and Promises*, 158.

and these are a good deal ; it may be his peace of mind, and that is a terrible price ; it may be his soul, and that is everything. He is a conqueror, but he is an ordinary conqueror. ' We are more than conquerors through him that loved us.' The victories we win because Christ loved us and because His love inspires us and sustains us are not such victories as these. They are victories that bring no regrets ; they add no burdens ; they never mean that we have sacrificed things of greater worth for things of less ; they are always real victories and never camouflaged defeats. These victories are pure gain, not only for those who win them but for every one else. ' We are more than conquerors through him that loved us.'

2. We are more than ordinary conquerors also because our victories through Him that loved us are over our real foes. The victories which the world holds as its greatest victories, and will continue to hold as its greatest victories until it learns wisdom, are victories over men, with wives and children to worry about them when they are in the fighting-line, and to mourn for them bitterly when they are dead. These other victories in peace, to which we have referred, so often mean, do they not, the remorseless trampling of competitors underfoot ? Who are competitors but men with wives and children, made sad by the same sorrows, and glad by the same joys, as all their fellows ? Peace has its victories no less ordinary than war. They are victories over men.

But men are not men's real enemies. Our real enemies are within ourselves, our selfishnesses, our weaknesses, our jealousies, and especially our fears. Fears of what ? Fears of life and of death, of things present and of things to come ; fears of calumny and criticism, fears about our own sufficiency for the responsibilities and duties of life ; fears to commit ourselves to the highest vision we have seen. Paul gives a fairly comprehensive list of the things that men fear : Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height and depth. It is over these that ' We are more than conquerors through him that loved us.'

3. The world has plenty of ordinary conquerors whom it acknowledges and acclaims, conquerors whose conquests cost far too much, conquerors over men, who leave men's real foes unvanquished and undiminished. There is need for another word for the men and women whom no one acknowledges, whom no one ever recognizes as having won victories at all. What shall we call those who are bearing

burdens cheerfully, who are making great sacrifices for others, who are resisting the temptations which so easily beset them, who are fighting fears in their own hearts ? Paul's name for them is ' More than conquerors.' He means that there is more of the stuff of conqueror in them than in ordinary conquerors.

It was Paul who said ' More than conquerors,' and he knew what conquerors were. He was a Roman citizen. He saw the Roman victors as they went riding in their chariots through the streets, those proud men and their proud dames ; they belonged to a conquering race. Paul knew them, had seen them, would see yet more of them, knowing well that he might be arraigned before their governors.

But Paul had to visit obscure corners of Rome and Antioch and Ephesus to find those who were ' More than conquerors.' There he saw men and women who were fighting against the old lusts, the pagan superstitions, who were indeed fighting a universe, full, as they believed, of devils, angels, principalities, and powers. They were slaves and poor folk generally, but in the sight of God they were conquerors in a truer sense than those who despised them. It was Paul who said, ' We are more than conquerors.' He was himself only a wandering preacher, not very strong, not of commanding presence, not very eloquent, seeking his precarious lodging from place to place, sometimes lodged in prison, sometimes thrown out of doors to be stoned and left for dead. No one thought of him as a conqueror in an Empire full of the pride of conquest. Yet does not history say he was, in his generation, the greatest conqueror of them all ?

God recognizes and acclaims not the ordinary conquerors, but those who are more than ordinary. Make no mistake about it. Men acclaim the ordinary conquerors, but not God. It is only as a man or woman wins a cleaner, stronger, more Christ-like spirit that God will recognize in him or her one who is more than conqueror. ' What are these that are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they ? These are they that came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'<sup>1</sup>

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#### SEPTUAGESIMA.

##### Labourers in the Vineyard.

' And when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and pay

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<sup>1</sup> E. D. Jarvis, *More than Conquerors*, 11.

them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.'—Mt 20<sup>8</sup> (R.V.).

The Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard is one of no little difficulty. It is only found in St. Matthew, and its difficulties will no doubt disappear if studied in connexion with its context. From its context we learn the circumstances out of which the Parable sprang. The Apostles had just witnessed the great refusal made by the rich young ruler, who, when compelled to choose between his wealth and Christ, clung to his wealth. Then Peter, instituting a comparison between himself and the young ruler, remembers with great self-satisfaction and self-complacency his own sacrifices, and those of his fellow-disciples. 'Lo,' he declares, 'we have left all, and followed thee; what, then, shall we have?'

To this question of Peter our Lord gives a twofold reply. (1) All who labour in the Kingdom will most surely be rewarded; (2) but the reward will depend on the motive of the labourer. The first of these is expressed in Christ's words (to quote Mk 10<sup>29, 30</sup>): 'Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands, for my sake, and for the gospel's sake, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.'

1. In this first reply of Christ to Peter, Christ declares that he who surrenders earthly affections, or earthly goods, for the sake of God and man will receive, not merely an equivalent, but the very things he has surrendered, and these raised a hundredfold in value, and that he shall not have to wait for this return till the next life, but shall have it 'now in this time.' The significant words attached to this promise, 'with persecutions,' point to the fact that no true life can be free from stress and sacrifice, from pain and conflict. But the promise abides unshaken; we shall get back manifold more than all that we have surrendered, and even the same kinds of good we have surrendered, though no doubt purified and in a higher form. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' Ultimately the true and faithful shall inherit the earth. Sooner or later everything is given to him whose chief desire is to do God's will. He who does right in scorn of consequence will be justified to the full before men and angels. To be disinterestedly good is to be divinely strong: the universe is at the feet of the men it cannot tempt.

The promise of Christ shows that what we need is not the destruction of our various interests in life, but the ennobling of these interests; not the extinction of our natural affections, but their transformation by the Spirit of God. Suffering and sacrifice are indispensable for our spiritual development; yet suffering and self-sacrifice are not ends, but only means. Christ declares to His disciples that the object of His coming is that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

And, here in St. Matthew, Christ promises not merely that we shall enjoy a blessed immortality, but that into all the ties, natural and spiritual, that bind us to our fellow-men, a new life and a new spirit will be infused, and that all our rightful affections, all our justifiable admiration and ideals, will be given back to us, raised to a higher spiritual power, and ennobled and enriched a hundredfold.

An English poet has enshrined a partial form of this truth in two unforgettable lines:

I could not love thee, dear, so much,  
Loved I not honour more.

His devotion to honour has deepened and enriched his love indefinitely. So the love, the friendship, the quest of truth, the ambition, that are being brought wholly into subjection to the love of God in Christ, must inevitably be transformed into things that are priceless and eternal.

(2) Christ gives a second answer to Peter's question; and this answer is directed not to his question, but to the spirit that inspired his question. 'But many shall be last that are first, and first that are last.' It is not the quantity of work that is done, but the quality—in other words, it is the motive and spirit with which the work is done that count in the Kingdom.

To enforce this truth our Lord tells this Parable: 'For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.' Now that the labourers should make a definite contract as to the amount of their wage is a perfectly business-like and justifiable proceeding. The definite terms on which they undertook to work are right in themselves, but the fact that the later bands of labourers made no bargain of any kind, but trusted to the householder's word that he would give them that which was equitable, suggests that there is a special significance attaching to the bargain made by the first body of men. Their attitude recalls that of Peter, when he said, 'What, then, shall we

have?' and it prepares us for the wrong spirit that is revealed at the close of the story.

But to continue the Parable, we read that the householder 'went out about the third hour,' and 'again about the sixth and ninth hour,' and, finally, at the eleventh hour, he found others idle in the market-place, 'and he saith unto them: Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard.' Now, so far, there is nothing unusual in the conduct of the lord of the vineyard. He acts just as any other owner of a vineyard would have done, in Palestine or elsewhere, who was eager to make the most of his vineyard. His frequent visits to the market-place from dawn to sunset show how earnestly he was bent on securing the best returns possible.

But, when the hour for the payment of the labourers arrives, they soon discover that the lord of the vineyard is a very unusual person. The men that were hired at the eleventh hour received to their astonishment and joy every man a penny, as those that were hired earlier. When those who were hired first came forward, they naturally supposed that they should receive more. And so their day's work closes in bitter discontent, to which they give outward expression in the complaint, 'These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us, who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.'

Clearly the lord of the vineyard appears, at this stage of the story, to be a very eccentric person. For he pays his labourers, not so much for work, as for goodwill. He thought more of one hour's work done by the men last hired than of the twelve hours' work done by the men that had been first hired—a thing wholly unnatural in human affairs. Moreover, it was clearly contrary to the opinion that the labourers themselves had naturally formed

of his character; for had not the lord of the vineyard with unwearying zeal sought from the dawn of day to its close for men to work in his vineyard, and so led them to believe that his main concern was with the large returns he hoped to secure from their labour in his vineyard? Here it must be admitted that the discontent of the labourers first hired appears perfectly reasonable. The lord of the vineyard was not like any employer of labour they had ever known. And the reason is that the heavenly meaning behind the story has here reacted on the story, and changed essentially the conduct and spirit of its leading agent. The attitude of the lord of the vineyard to his labourers is so transformed as to represent the attitude of God to His own servants. We have here the valuation that Heaven sets on earthly values. In Christ's Kingdom one hour's work, done in the right spirit, is worth more than twelve hours of mercenary labour, for, in Christ's Kingdom, the labour of the hireling is really valueless. Mercenary servants of God naturally conceive that God is concerned first and foremost with the service they render Him, and particularly with the amount of that service.

Now the Parable condemns such a view as a complete misconception of God. God's chief concern is for His servants themselves, and not for the service they render. Our Lord's aim is to transform us spiritually, so that we may work in the same spirit in which He Himself works, in the same spirit in which God Himself works.

We may bestow all our goods in charity, or give up our body to self-denial and self-torture, like St. Simeon Stylites, and yet, because we do all these things from the wrong motive, they are of no account in the Kingdom of God. Hence our Lord closes this Parable with the same words with which He had introduced it, 'So the last shall be first, and the first last.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> R. H. Charles, *Courage, Truth, Purity*, 184.

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## The Epistle to the Hebrews.

BY THE REVEREND DEAN K. BURNS, PH.D., DOLBEAU, QUEBEC, CANADA.

No New Testament writing, with the exception of the Fourth Gospel, has so continuously engaged the attention of scholars as has the Epistle 'To the Hebrews.' And though no general agreement

has been reached as to its date, purpose, destination, and authorship, for some time there has been a real unanimity of opinion upon such features as its character, place, importance, and relationship