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1912). It is the Pauline counterpart of his *Quest of the Historical Jesus*. It leads up to his own peculiar view in which the key-word is eschatology—further elaborated in his *Mysticism of St. Paul the Apostle* (Eng. tr. 1931). That view has found little whole-hearted support; but for its history of opinion the work is invaluable. The other is A. C. Headlam's *St. Paul and Christianity* (1913). It provides a brief summary and criticism of the leading types of theory; (a) that represented in English in P. Gardner's *Religious Experience of St. Paul* (1911), according to which St. Paul with little originality combined Judaism with Hellenism; (b) the view of Baur, now held by nobody as Baur expressed it, but in many quarters still influential, that between St. Paul and the older Apostles there was a conflict; (c) W. Wrede's view (*Paul*, Eng. tr.

1907) that St. Paul was the real founder of Christianity.

Of books dealing with special departments of the thought of St. Paul, note should be taken of H. A. A. Kennedy's *St. Paul's Conception of the Last Things* (1904), A. B. D. Alexander's *The Ethics of St. Paul* (1910), C. C. Everett's *The Gospel of Paul* (1893), for its discussion of Atonement, and W. M. Macgregor's *Christian Freedom* (1931).

It will be seen that the Pauline literature is very extensive. The books here adduced are numerous, and are only a fraction of the total number. Every year adds to the list. That is just because of the many-sidedness of St. Paul. One can scarcely conceive of a time when the richness of his personality, the marvel of his achievement, or the elusive depths of his thought will be finally explored.

In the Study.

Virginitus Puerisque.

The Glory of Bethlehem.

BY THE REVEREND JAMES S. STEWART, B.D.,
EDINBURGH.

'But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel.'—Mic 5¹.

BETHEHEM! What music is in that name! London, Paris, and Berlin have meant far less to the sons of men than this straggling village among the Judean hills. And when Christmas comes, people in every corner of the world—in Africa, India, China, and the islands of the farthest seas, in places where the sun scorches the tropical forest and in Arctic regions where gleam the eternal snows—will be saying, 'Come, let us go unto Bethlehem, and worship the King!'

Let us run rapidly through the pages of the Bible, and gather together the incidents in which Bethlehem plays a part. They may help us to understand why it was to Bethlehem, out of all the towns of Palestine, that the Christ Child came.

The first time we meet Bethlehem—away back in Genesis—it is a place of tears and sorrow. A caravan is moving slowly down the road. Two people are in the caravan, a man and a woman, and the woman is dying. And as the caravan jolts

and rumbles on its way, the man is kneeling by the couch on which she lies, and now he is praying God to come and help them, now he is shouting to the driver to drive faster and reach the shelter of the little town before it is dark, and now he has fallen silent and sits watching her in grief too deep for words. The man is Jacob, the dying woman is Rachel—out of love for whom he had served a master for twice seven lonely years, years 'which seemed' (as the old Book puts it very beautifully) 'but as a few days for the love he had to her.' But just outside the Bethlehem gates, she goes from him for ever; and ere he passes on his lonely way, he sets a pillar of stone to mark her grave. Such is our first glimpse of Bethlehem in Scripture—a place of tears and sorrow.

We turn over the pages, and the scene is changed. We meet Bethlehem again, but now it is a place of love and high romance. It is the season of harvest, and all round Bethlehem the fields are golden in the sun. The reapers, men and women together, are busy at their task from early morning till the shadows fall, and the harvest-field rings with singing, for God has been very bountiful, and their hearts are happy, and they think that surely there has never been just such a harvest as this. But there is one solitary reaper following behind the others, gathering up the chance sheaves that they let fall; and she is not singing. She cannot sing.

She is sad, and homesick for her country far away. Her name is Ruth. But God has His plan; and on that field, when the sun is setting, Ruth and Boaz are brought together—Boaz, the noble young Bethlehemite to whom the fields and the harvest belong. God, in His wonderful providence, makes the paths of these two lives to cross, and crowns their joy at last by making them man and wife. That is our second glimpse of Bethlehem in Scripture—a place of romance and love.

We turn over the pages again, and again the scene is changed. Bethlehem is now a place—not of sorrow, not of love, as in the former scenes—but of humble, common toil. Up on the hillside a flock of sheep is pasturing. There is a shepherd lad watching them, ready to ward off with staff or club any prowling beasts, sometimes going after a lost sheep until he finds it, sometimes risking life and limb in the dark and dangerous ravines that cut the mountainside, sometimes carrying a tired lamb in his arms. He is clad in plain, rough clothes, but he is born to be a king, and in the depths of those steady eyes are dreams such as only poets dream. For that shepherd lad is David. And it is on Bethlehem's hills that David's psalm is born—

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.

So he watches the flock, through sunshine and storm, in noontide and at midnight, caring for them, toiling for them, going in jeopardy of his life for them. That is our third glimpse of Bethlehem—a place of common toil.

We turn the pages once again, and this time we come upon a scene of heroism and adventure. Bethlehem is now full of soldiers. The Philistines are in its streets. But one dark night, when the camp-fires have burnt low and all but the sentries are asleep, three dim figures begin to crawl stealthily towards the Bethlehem gate. One false move would mean discovery and death; but on they go, across the enemy trenches, creeping between the outposts where the Philistine sentries stand on guard, until they have reached a well just beside the gate. There they fill their bottles with the precious water, and then creep back the way they have come, and morning finds them safe in their own camp again. 'See, Captain,' they are saying to their leader, 'here is the prize of our night's raid—water from your own dear Bethlehem well!' And David takes it, and he looks with pride at the three gallants who have hazarded their lives for love of him, and he feels that the water is too holy for him to drink: he does something better—he pours it out as an offering to the Lord

God of his salvation. And that is our last glimpse of Bethlehem—a place of matchless heroism.

There are our four scenes. Do you see *now* why God chose Bethlehem for the first Christmas?

Into the place of Sorrow came the Christ Child. Where Jacob had wept for Rachel as though his heart would break, there Jesus was born. What a difference that birth has made to all the sorrows of the world! You can face your troubles bravely now, for He is in them with you.

Into the place of Love the Christ Child came. Where once the song was heard (as Keats puts it)

that found a path

Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn,

there Jesus was born. What a new glory His coming has given to all our human affections! Love's real wonder is never seen until the light of Jesus falls upon it.

Into the place of Toil the Christ Child came. Where David tended the sheep through the long drudgery of weary days and nights, there the Good Shepherd appeared. And 'the trivial round, the common task' are common and trivial no longer, since God's Son walked our way.

Into the place of Heroism the Christ Child came. Where the three young gallants broke through the enemy lines for love of their leader, there the Bravest of the brave was born. What flames of heroism that Christmas Babe has kindled! Shall we not say, 'O Jesus, born in Bethlehem, make me a hero too, strong to endure, valiant for the truth'?

And so to-day we bless God for Bethlehem, bless Him for its scenes of sorrow, and love, and toil, and heroism, bless Him most of all for the Child who was born there that sorrow might be vanquished, and love perfected, and toil ennobled, and heroism crowned in heaven.

The Escalator.

BY THE REVEREND F. W. ROBERTSON DORLING,
A.T.S., LAFORD, DEVON.

'They went up by the stairs of the city of David.'—
Neh 12²⁷.

Every girl and boy who has ever been to London knows the Escalator, and thinks it fine fun to go up and down the moving stairs—not like those in the wall of the city of David, which had to be climbed up by painful steps and slow. But it is not easy at first to go up the Escalator. I knew a little boy who on his first journey tumbled off at the top,

and although he didn't hurt himself much, wasn't very pleased about it. Although we were going to an exciting visit to the Zoo, he remained very quiet for some time. Presently he asked if we should be going back the same way. We knew what he was thinking, so we told him we would not go on the Escalator again that day, and he brightened up considerably! Well, it does take a bit of care to get on, especially if one has luggage to carry, but once on the stairs it is easy until one reaches the top (or the bottom), and then again one has to be careful in getting off. Do you know, I think of the journey of life as something like an Escalator, especially on the upward going. I think of it particularly at the beginning of a New Year.

Just as with the Escalator, the first thing is to get a good start. Put your foot firmly on the first step and trust that you will be helped all the way along. Begin the year with God; look up to Him; ask Him to help you; trust in Him. Almost everything depends on a good start. It is so in a race: 'One to be ready, two to be steady, three to be off!' And the girl or boy who doesn't make a good start in life will have a hard job to get through.

Then having made a good start, the next thing is to keep going.

I know that the Escalator will carry us up to the top without our moving at all, but if one wants to get on quickly, then it is well to *walk* up the Escalator. On the right there are those who stand still and let the moving staircase carry them up, but on the left are those who reach the top twice as quickly, for they are not only carried up, they also mount the steps. So, as you are young and active, don't be lazy; foot it bravely; do your best, and you will get to the top happily and successfully. God helps those who help themselves, and nothing in this world is ever won without effort.

Then don't take too much luggage with you. As I said just now, luggage on the Escalator is one of the most awkward things. So in the journey of life it doesn't do to have too many wants and wishes, too many selfish desires, which is just like a lot of luggage.

Do you remember what the Apostle says about 'laying aside every weight, and the sin which so easily besets us, let us run with patience the race which is set before us, looking unto Jesus.'

Yes, we can trust Him to take away our sins and bear our burdens if only we will leave all things in His hands.

Then you will be helped through a Happy New Year and through all the years, and step off happily at the top.

The Christian Year.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

The Word of God.

'God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son.'—Heb 1¹. 2 (R.V.).

(1) How can the words of men, recorded in a book, be the Word of God? (2) How do so many different words come to be, as they are evidently held to be, one consistent Word of God? (3) How can it be claimed for ancient words that they have a modern, indeed a permanent, meaning, and that old words are still new words? These are the three related questions which we are going to try to answer, for they are being asked to-day by many to whom our observances were never a habit, and they must be answered by us, if we are to justify them.

1. *The Authority of the Word.*—Whatever claim be made that the Bible is the Word of God, it confronts us in the first place as the words of men. Be men ever so faithful in reporting what they have learnt about God, we cannot eliminate the human link in the coming of the Word of God into the world. Why should we? least of all those who believe in a religion of incarnation, the acceptance by God of the limitations of our humanity in order to manifest Himself? Follow up any single 'Word of God' in this book, through the oracle of the priest or the ecstasy of the prophet, examine the faith of a God-intoxicated psalmist, or the vision of one who writes of the providence of God in human history, and we will be brought to a sort of Land's End. That is the point at which some man believes himself to be in such contact with God that God's thought is reflected in his own.

We may call it mysticism if we like—but we can never get nearer to God than such points of contact in the individual lives of men, including at last our own.

If we have realized that truth is always born into the world by the travail of a human spirit, even though the generative touch of God is its true parent, we shall not raise that impossible and misleading question, how we are to separate the words of men in the Bible from the words of God. The Word of God will always be a word of man; it is inseparable from the spiritual wrestling of a Jeremiah or a Paul. It is true flesh and blood like the Son of God Himself, and its fullest truth is in that very incarnation. It is a divine activity,

but one in which it is man's humble dignity to share. Its authority does not lie in any external aid, or in the testimonial of any one else to God ; it is the authority of intrinsic truth.

2. *The Unity of the Word.*—Does not this individuality of the coming of the Word of God in the words of men necessarily prevent any guarantee of unity in the result ? Whatever unity is to be found in the Bible will be one that makes the principle of development an essential part of its truth—one, that is, which admits of movement and progress from less to more. Men often quote the words of John Robinson, pleading for the open mind : ' The Lord had more truth and light yet to break forth out of his holy word.' But they forget or they are hesitant to apply it backwards as well as forwards, to see that it must have been true of the growth of the Word as well as of the use of the Word.

We cannot, therefore, find the unity of the Bible in any verbal consistency. We must go deeper. It seems attractive, for example, to think of Bible history as a great drama, with many acts, of which God is the author. We do not look for the author's ' message ' in the words of any one of His characters, so much as in the unity of the whole, the result of the interaction of all these lives. So far, the analogy may be helpful. But it breaks down in one important feature. The many characters in this drama of the Bible do not simply speak their pieces according to a prescribed book of words. They are flesh and blood, living lives of their own, and refusing to live by rote. We have rather to think of such a drama as that weird production of Pirandello's, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, where the creations of the author's brain refuse to conform to his pattern, and so dispossess the actors of their stage, in order that they may work out their own destinies at their own wills. That would be nearer the truth of the Bible considered as history. The restlessness of nomad raiders invading a settled land, the conspiracies and rivalries of petty States, the ambition of a Nebuchadnezzar, a Cyrus, an Alexander, the prejudice of a Caiaphas, the time-serving of a Pilate, the treachery of a Judas—these do not seem to stand in any marked relation to the revelation of the will of God. But we must go deeper still than this. We must enter into the thought of the prophet who said of Cyrus, in the name of God, ' I gird thee, though thou dost not know me.' We have to see the transforming touch of God's hand, not simply on this or that isolated event, but on the working out of the whole, and to realize that the love of God is far deeper than man's

deepest hate. We have to seek the Word of God in deeds, even more than in words, and in deeds wrought out for the most part unconsciously by their human agents.

It is not easy, indeed it is impossible, to reduce those deeds to the verbal unity of a word or a phrase. Something of their deep and dynamic meaning lies in the word of our text, which speaks of sonship as the final goal of the long history. We see the sonship of a nation in the Old Testament moving towards the thought of the sonship of individual men to God as their Father, though hardly attaining to it, and we see the perfect sonship revealed in the character of Jesus, only that He may be the centre of a new family of God. Paul tells of adoption into sonship, Hebrews of the training and discipline of sonship, John of the birth into sonship. Through it all, whether in the Old or the New Testament, there is a thought of God which works itself out in the lives and experience of men. But let no one reduce the idea of that sonship, and the fatherhood which it reflects, into something so simple and obvious that it becomes a thing to be taken for granted. However true it be that man is akin to God, there is all the story of man's sin and God's grace to make the mystery of godliness far greater than the mystery of iniquity. Any family may seem commonplace and ordinary to a stranger who pays some casual visit, but how many deeper things are there beyond his knowledge !

3. *The Continuity of the Word.*—So we come to our third and last question : God has spoken ; does God still speak—and how ?

One thing ought to be clear—that the real response of man to the Word of God is just as essential and just as much a moral responsibility for each, as when these words of revelation first came to men in divers portions and in divers manners. There was no mechanical compulsion then, and there is none to-day. But there is a moral compulsion, an inward searching of the heart, the pressure of an unseen hand, which can be described now as then in purely human terms, though it surely belongs to the providence of God, and to the activity of His Holy Spirit. The prophet of old cried in the name of his God, ' Is not my word a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces ? ' Think of that tiny hammer of bone behind the drum of the ear of each hearer which the mere sound-wave sets vibrating ; think, too, of the lines of cleavage of the human rock which enable that hammer to do its work. Think of all that has gone before—of home and friendships, of prayers and longings, of the struggles to escape

from the grip of a vicious habit, of remorse for the unforgotten sin, of the desperate loneliness of life, of the heart ready to be stirred by the promise of a friend and a lover and a saviour. Words, mere words, however brilliant with rhetoric or cogent in reasoning, can be no more than a mockery of the deep human needs. But words as the messengers of deeds, divine deeds, of a deliverance worked out in a history of the past, and made by the Spirit of God to be the prophecy and power of a victory in the present—these are no mockery, but a divine answer to our prayers and longings. They bring men, as of old, face to face with God and with God's grace in Christ.

They teach us once more to climb the steps, like Rossetti's 'Father Hilary,' above the mere forms of earth, even its most sacred observances, and to stand for ourselves on the tower-roof that we may look forth on the wide horizon, and then find God for ourselves. We find him, and we hear His Word because of that

breath

Of God in man that warranteth
The inmost, utmost things of faith.¹

CHRISTMAS DAY.

Giving a Reason for Christmas.

BY THE REVEREND RODERICK BETHUNE, M.A.,
ABERDEEN.

'God was in Christ . . .'—2 Co 5¹⁹.

To many events and customs in our life reasons are attached. Only when such events and customs have been made clear to our own minds can we possibly explain them to others, and, even then, it is difficult sometimes to make ourselves explicit. For the sake of those who are younger and no less for our own sake, lest we forget, we should recount the reasons for certain things; for, while some things bear forgetting, others don't. Of what significance is Christmas to us? 'In the United States of America, the 22nd February is observed as a national holiday. Why? Because on that day Washington, whose name and honour are deservedly revered throughout the length and breadth of the continent, first saw the light of day. Correspondingly, would it be satisfying to explain Christmas as the commemoration of the birth, two thousand years ago, of a young Jew of extraordinary genius?' Are Washington—and Jesus, on the same level? Is Jesus remembered for much

the same reason as is that hero of America? Is that why there are holidays and festivities and special services of thanksgiving at Christmas? Is there nothing more to it than that? Were we asked, what should we say?

For some it may be satisfying enough to place Jesus and Washington upon a level and to leave it there; but these, we may say, have not plumbed the depths of Christmas. We celebrate Christmas because He who was born at Christmas did something which gave an entirely new orientation to life. We believe that God was in Christ and, because we have seen and heard Jesus, our whole life has been changed. The change wrought by Him was so great that we feel we must go on for ever celebrating His contribution to our life. 'God,' says Paul, 'was in Christ.' That is why we go on celebrating Christmas. For the difference that that fact has made to us and life is overwhelming. What is that difference?

I. To those of us who give any thought to life it means much to know whether this universe is reasonably controlled and what kind of Power controls it. Are you and I like eddies of purposeless dust, serving no specific purpose, and without definite objective?—or are we something more? Is the Power in control of the universe just blind force, mechanically precise, with nothing corresponding to personal interest in you and me? Do you and I ever ask ourselves such questions? They are important, because upon the answers we supply, or which are supplied us, depends whether we will live hopefully or hopelessly, whether we will strive to do the right or, carelessly, drift with whatever is popular with the company in which we happen to be. Those of us who have read one of Thomas Hardy's best known novels—*Tess of the D'Urbervilles*—will remember a conversation which amply illustrates the importance of our beliefs. In that story, Tess speaks with another character in some such terms as these: 'Did you say, Tess, that the stars were worlds?' 'Yes.' 'And on which kind do we live—a splendid one or a blighted one?' 'A blighted one,' came the reply, and its hopelessness was no greater than the hopelessness Tess felt. And people everywhere must be hopeless as Tess who share her point of view. Whenever life seems purposeless, and the world seems in the hands of an impersonal power, there can be nothing corresponding to hope.

To-day scientists of note have gone far towards answering the questions uppermost in your thoughts and mine. They have dispelled from our minds all thought of a madcap universe and, in

¹ H. Wheeler Robinson, in *Sermons for the Year 1932*, 80.

its place, have substituted the thought of a universe in which orderliness is everywhere apparent. The longer they explore the secrets of the universe in which we live, many of them have declared, the more do they become conscious that they are re-thinking the thoughts of an Infinite Mind—a Mind in whose plan, says Eddington for one, you and I play no inconsiderable part. We acknowledge with gratitude their contribution to religion from the strictly scientific point of view. To many, their corroborative statements have been valuable beyond words so far as faith is concerned.

But can't we go beyond the submissions of the scientists to our questions? Is it not just because we can that we celebrate Christmas? 'God was in Christ'; and the God therein revealed is a God to whom every individual is of value and who maintains a personal interest in every individual. It is that personal touch that makes Christmas all that it is. It is not a 'Mind' Jesus speaks of, but a 'Father.' He does not say that *perhaps* we men and women have an integral part in the plan of God; that, according to Jesus, is a certainty. How very valuable is this personal touch of God of which we are reminded at Christmas! How it has made life for ever different! Personal interest always does make a difference. Do you remember how, in his *Heart of Midlothian*, Scott describes an interview between Jeanie Deans and her friend, Butler? Jeanie communicated news of her intention to make the journey to London for an interview with the Duke of Argyle, who, she thought, might exercise his influence on behalf of her unfortunate sister. Butler, you remember, protested strongly against her going, on the ground that she might be set upon by one of numerous gangs of bandits who preyed upon unsuspecting travellers. 'I will write to the Duke of Argyle,' volunteered Butler, 'report speaks him a good, kindly man. . . . I will conjure him to stand between your sister and this cruel fate. There is but a poor chance of success, but we will try all means.' 'We *must* try all means,' replied Jeanie; 'but writing winna do it—a letter canna look, and pray, and beg, and beseech, as the human voice can do to the human heart. A letter's like the music that the ladies have for their spinets—naething but black scores, compared to the same tune played or sung. It's the word of mouth maun do it, or naething, Reuben.' How fully Jeanie's contention justified itself is known to all of us. She so impressed the Duke of Argyle that he gained her an interview of the Queen. And, through the offices of the Queen, the pardon Jeanie sought was granted.

A letter, however well framed, could never have achieved that goal. How could Argyle, or the Queen, least of all Jeanie's own sister, be left in any doubt of her passionate love when, to their amazement, she recounted how she had tramped from Edinburgh to London, laying herself open to all the perils of a journey by road? At Christmas-time, you and I recall another personal touch—this time not on the part of man, but of God. 'Our faith began,' says one, 'not as an idea, not as a philosophy, but as a nativity.'

Thou cam'st a little baby thing
That made a woman cry.

It is the personal touch of God which we celebrate at Christmas. 'When God gave music to the world,' says one writer, 'it was not in abstract formulæ about counterpoint and harmony; as some one has said, "He wrapped a song in feathers and set it on a tree." When God gave poetry to the world He did not give it in abstruse theories of rhyme and stress and metre; He caused a poet to be born. And when God had a new, divine Word to speak to all people about Himself He did not put it into a treatise, but into the soul of a little child, and the Word became flesh and wrought "with human hands the creed of creeds."' To adapt the words of Jeanie Deans—the 'Mind' of which the scientists speak is like the music that the ladies have for their spinets—nothing but the cold theory, compared to the same thought extensively lived out in the life of Jesus Christ. For, through Him, we speak not of a 'Mind' but of a 'Father.' The reason for Christmas, therefore, is not the commemoration of the birth, two thousand years ago, of a young Jew of extraordinary genius. We commemorate Christmas because Jesus, at that time, brought God near to us; and we always will commemorate it because of what that has meant to our life.

II. And now could anything be more natural, in view of all that has been said, than that you and I who have appreciated God's personal touch upon our life and the unmistakable thrill of the knowledge that He has a personal interest in our life, should want to give to others the benefit of a personal touch from us?

There are many of the Scrooge type, inimitably portrayed by Dickens, for whom all money expended in cards and gifts at Christmas is nothing but an inexcusable waste. But those of us who have stood by Jesus and, through Him, have been given a new interest in life, cannot hold any brief for that interpretation. The personal touch, inspired

by God's personal touch that first Christmas morning, counts, and counts very considerably. And how much it is needed to-day! The life we live is so rushed and hurried, we have little time to tell people how much they mean to us or we mean to them; everything, too, has become so centralized that men and women are given every encouragement to reckon themselves as mere automata with no more meaningful relationship to their neighbour than one part of a machine bears to another. Christmas, which has brought so much to us, can bring much more to many through none other than ourselves. Some personal touch on our part upon the life of some one may mean everything in the world to them, since, in this life which bears so much evidence to the contrary, it may convey to them that they mean something to somebody. A personal touch on our part will raise their eyes from the darkness of the earth to the light of the stars, will give them a new outlook and, if a new outlook, a new life. Why shouldn't we, who at Christmas are assured, by a personal touch, of God's interest in us and for whom, because of that, life is for ever different, give the benefit of a personal touch on our part to others? Some personal touch on our part may lead some one to Him in whom the Word became flesh.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

Our Little Life.

'The time past of our life.'—I P 4^a.

'Ah! that was the time of my life,' we sometimes sigh; 'the time when our children were young, when their merry laughter made music round our fireside, and health and vigour crowned our days. We did not realize it at the time; but that was the time of our life.'

But Peter would remind us here that all our life is such a time. He is not thinking of special portions of our life. He is thinking of life as a whole. He is thinking of that segment of eternity which is summed up in our little span of time. Small as it is, it is big with importance; it is rich in opportunity. According as we live it, we make our characters and mould our destinies. It is 'the time of our life.'

Let us think on this closing Sunday of the year of three things that are suggested by this text, according to the different ways in which we emphasize its key-words, 'time,' 'past,' and 'our life.'

1. First of all, we are taught here how precious

a thing is the gift of life. Robertson of Brighton tells in one of his great sermons of a marble statue of a Greek goddess he once saw in the public square of a continental town. Art had fashioned her into a perennial fountain; so that through her lips and hands fresh water was ever flowing. But the marble image stood there itself impassive; making no effort to arrest the gliding water. So time seems to flow through the hands of some of us.

We see how precious a thing life is when we think of what happens to its possessor when that gift is taken from him. We read the description of some great funeral, the obsequies of some great monarch, or statesman, or poet; the crowds that gather in the stately Abbey, the solemn service, the long procession, the gorgeous tomb, the plaintive music of the Requiem, and then—then comes the end—the coffin left alone. We hear nothing of that. That does not come into the picture, and yet that is the reality behind all these outward trappings of public lamentation. It is the committing of a dead body to the dust, the burying of it 'out of sight,' as Abraham said with pathetic candour.

It reminds one of what the great French preacher, Massillon, said at the funeral of 'Le Grand Monarque,' when looking down at the wizened and discoloured face of Louis XIV., still exposed to view as it lay in the chancel of Notre Dame, he burst into tears and, instead of preaching the eloquent funeral oration he had prepared, could only articulate, 'Only God is great! Only God is great!'

And then, too, think of how precious a thing life is, in view of its vast potentialities. We read the life of some nobly gifted or generously inspired man, and we say to ourselves as we finish the last page: 'What a beautiful life!'

Not many lives have we to live,

One, only one.

How precious should that one life be,

This narrow span!

2. The preciousness of our life is further emphasized by the Apostle when he reminds us that life is not merely a gift but is also a quickly passing gift. Hence he speaks not merely of the time of our life but *the time past of our life*.

And how has that time been spent? In the case of those to whom Peter was writing it had been largely misspent; misspent in 'working the will of the Gentiles.' It gives us a strange picture of that Early Church, when we read that the time past of its members had been spent in 'lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings,

and abominable idolatries.' Is it so with any of us?

Lasciviousness! Alas, if our secret hearts could speak they could tell of many a foul blot on the conscience even of God's professed disciples by reason of this defiling sin! And lusts? The lust for gold, the lust for honour—is there none of that in the modern Church? And besides this waste of sin is there none of the waste of idleness? Peter mentions here things that cannot be called actual sins. 'Banquetings' are not sinful in themselves; but when all our days are passed in pleasure, when there is no record in it of generous service to others, then it is worse than sinful. It is the waste of life itself that brings the soul to that terrible awakening of which Rossetti has given so striking a picture:

The lost days of my life until to-day,
 What were they, could I see them on the street
 Lie as they fell? Would they be ears of wheat
 Sown once for food but trodden into clay?
 Or golden coins squandered and still to pay?
 Or drops of blood dabbling the guilty feet?
 Or such spilt water as in dreams must cheat
 The undying throats of Hell, athirst alway?

I do not see them here; but after death
 God knows I know the faces I shall see,
 Each one a murdered self, with low last breath.
 'I am thyself,—what hast thou done to me?'
 'And I—and I—thyself,' (lo! each one saith,)
 'And thou thyself to all eternity!'

3. This brings us to the last great thought the Apostle would bring before us in our text, the opportunity of the future. Life for his hearers is not merely a precious gift, and a passing gift: it is for them a still present gift. He speaks of it as *our* life, ours to do something with yet, ours to make its future rich and noble.

To quote the fine commentary of the saintly Archbishop Leighton on this Epistle, 'The time past may suffice us. Therefore, O corrupt lusts, look for no more. I have served you too long. The rest, whatever it be, must be given to my Lord. Ashamed and grieved am I to be so long in beginning. So much, it may be the most of my race past, before I took notice of my God. Oh! how I have lost, and worse than lost, all my past days!'

'The time past of your life.' These words have a message for us at all times, but they have so

specially at anniversaries in our life. So Milton makes use of his twenty-third birthday for reflections and resolutions:

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
 Stolen on his wing my three-and-twentieth
 year!

My hasting days fly on with full career,
 But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.

He resolves thereafter to live a more earnest life.

Curiously enough, the same occasion is mentioned in the life of Gladstone, leading to a similar admonition. 'This day I completed my twenty-third year. In future I hope circumstances will bind me down with a rigour, which my natural sluggishness will find it impossible to elude.'

Is not the close of the year such an occasion and opportunity? This may be to us the birth-hour of a high and holy incentive, that will make the prophet's vision to be fulfilled by us. 'Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered nor come into mind.'¹

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

The Heart of the Gospel.

BY THE REVEREND JOHN K. CARTER, M.A.,
 GRANGEMOUTH.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. . . . For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.—Eph 2⁸⁻¹⁰.

Speaking of the difference between Christianity and other religions, St. Augustine said of the other religions:

No one in them hears a voice calling,
 Come unto me all ye who labour.

Christianity offers new life not to the intelligent only, not to the strong-willed only; but also to those who have lost faith in themselves, to those who are at the end of their resources, to the weary and heavy-laden. 'For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.'

In that text we feel the beating heart of the Christian gospel. It speaks of a person 'being saved.' Unfortunately, that phrase has been used a little too glibly by some Christians, and has fallen into disfavour. 'To be saved,' however, means, simply, to be set free from anything which

¹ W. M. Mackay, *Days of the Son of Man*, 58.

cramps or clouds one's life, to be set free from those removable things which deprive one of some of the zest of life and the peace of God; to be made feel that one has recaptured the spirit of one's childhood and is living in the wide, open spaces.

And the text tells us *how* we are saved. 'By grace are ye saved through faith.' It is not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. For we are His workmanship.

That is to say—if we are to be saved, if we are to enjoy life gloriously and have the peace of God, there has to enter into the situation that spiritual something which is here called the grace of God, which comes through faith in Jesus Christ and which is *not of ourselves*. It is something which is additional to our own thinking and striving in life—and that is why the gospel brings hope to the hopeless and unsuccessful.

The reaction of many people to preaching which says, 'the grace of God will do for you what you could not do solely with your own resources,' is: 'I am willing to stand or fall by my own resources, by my own thinking about life, and by the strength of my own will.'

There are different answers to be given to such an attitude. Here we take a simple one. We would ask people honestly to look into their own experience before finally adopting this strong, self-assured attitude.

About nine-tenths of every congregation, including the minister, feel, from time to time, that they are decidedly poor specimens of what a Christian ought to be. They feel that there is that bit of the devil in them which is liable to get busy at times and upset their apple-cart. For days, for weeks perhaps, it may be even for months, they pursue the even tenour of their ways, their lives are tranquil and their minds and consciences are at peace—and then, of a sudden, things get into an unhappy, unchristian disorder. They find themselves being more indulgent than they like to be, and more uncharitable, and fearful, and anxious, and unsettled. They find themselves being very materialistic, and saying with suspicious frequency such things as 'business is business,' 'business must come first'; or a resolution to be courteous above all things to a provoking person is lost sight of in the annoyance of the moment. They find themselves enjoying a bit of spicy, but uncharitable and hurtful, gossip; or saying, 'he can't do that to me and get away with it,' or 'I'll make him sit up,' 'he surely thinks I am a soft mark,' 'I must teach him a lesson,' 'nobody will pass me on the street twice,' and such like things. Or they discover

that they are doing things their consciences do not approve of, just because other people do them. And so on. At the end of it all they ruefully reflect: 'I am a poor sort of Christian. There is a good bit of the prodigal about me.'

Curiously, although we know ourselves and our own failings and susceptibilities well enough, we never suspect that our next-door neighbour has the same problems. She always seems to have herself well in hand; she always seems to have her tongue under control, she is always smiling, courteous, discreet, and of an equable temper. And we decide that of all people we are most miserable. Perhaps that next-door neighbour could get along without the grace of God.

The fact of the matter is, however, that nine-tenths of us are fighting the same battles, with the same varying success, and are succumbing from time to time to the same insidious temptations. It is human nature. As the Psalmist says: 'He fashioneth their hearts alike.'

The human nature in us all has, too, the same way of reacting to the failures and shortcomings. It says, 'I'll need to see to it that it doesn't happen again,' or, 'I'll need to make up for the past by doing better in the future: meanwhile I must look for opportunities of being useful; I must raise my Infirmary subscription, I must be a good Samaritan in general.' In its predicament, our human nature relies on its own resources, in the first instance.

But, the Apostle Paul says: It is not a bit of good. Take my own case, for example. I flatter myself that I was as sincere as any one could be, and as determined to live a really good life. But this was how the thing seemed to work: my mind and will were determined to do good; but, it seemed as if there were residing in me a force which upset my plans and undermined my will-power just at the critical times, with the result that I had to admit time and again that although I had *resolved* to be a different man and live a different life, I was thwarted. That is why I glory in preaching the grace of God which comes by faith in Jesus. Why, man, this is the very problem with which Christianity professes to deal! It professes to be able to unravel all these human tangles and solve all these human conflicts.

How? 'By grace.' . . . That is, before you can make anything of your human tangles and conflicts there has to be in you that spiritual something which we call grace. Whenever we get upset we have to ask: Am I living my life entirely on my own resources, or is my life so ordered that this extra

something, this spiritual factor—this grace of God—is bringing inspiration and peace to my daily efforts? Am I, for example, making full use of the *means of grace*?

One night, at the Round Table which we have after Evening Service and at which people are at liberty to ask questions, we had this simple one: 'What exactly is meant by "being a Christian"?' Before an answer was attempted each one in the group was asked what he or she understood by it. One after the other, with the exception of the last person, gave the same answer in every case, and it was a wrong answer. Their answer was, that 'being a Christian' meant 'being good,' 'being as good as you can,' 'doing the right thing,' and so on.

Their similarity, and their common error, lay in their placing the emphasis on goodness. It is an error which many of us would be liable to make.

We do not need to be told that the Church champions goodness, and never ought to lose sight of it. Nevertheless, this has to be emphasized with all possible emphasis: to put the effort to be good right into the centre of the picture is *not Christianity*.

Christianity says: Face the facts. You have been striving for five years, twenty years, fifty years. You have been pressing on after that dream of an iron will. Where has all your effort brought you? Have you got anywhere with it? Are you a better man to-day than you were a year ago? twenty years ago? Are you happier in mind; less troubled in desire; stronger in will?

Stop! Ease the pressure! You are just deluding yourself. Because it is a plain fact of experience that 'even the *youths* shall faint and be weary, and the *young men* shall utterly fall.' But God 'giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength.'

How? 'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.' *Wait upon the Lord*. Then you will be on the right lines. For it is by grace that ye are saved, through faith.

To put the effort to be good in the centre is not Christianity. A man said to Jesus: 'Good master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' 'Good master. . . . What shall I do?' Just that emphasis which we are liable to give. Jesus said: 'Why callest thou me good? None is good, save one, that is, God.'

Surely the whole point of Jesus' reply is: Get

your mind off what *you* are going to *do*; and do not focus your attention upon your abstract ideals of goodness and virtue. Turn yourself towards God. Wait upon *Him*. It is by the grace of God that you will be led into truth and goodness.

'Just as I am' (without trying to settle my problems by means solely of my own resources):

Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind—
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yea, all I need, in Thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

The Christian in his Home.

'And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.'—Lk 2²¹.

We English people, in whom the domestic virtues are strong, do not perhaps always realize the part which home and home-life played in the life of Him who is our Master. And yet, the greater part of His earthly life was spent in such surroundings. From the day when, at the age of twelve, He went up to Jerusalem, to the opening of His ministry at the age of thirty, the scene of His labours was that house at Nazareth. We have no account of those years, but a devout imagination can picture for itself the devotion, the kindly affection, the self-sacrifice which adorned and beautified that circle which numbered among its members the Lord Jesus and His blessed Mother. Nor need we depend wholly upon imagination. The doctrine of the Fatherhood of God which occupies so prominent a place in our Lord's teaching is something which can only be taught and understood in virtue of our domestic experiences. The medium through which it becomes intelligible is our knowledge of our own home. 'I never knew what the Fatherhood of God meant,' says a great preacher, 'until I held my own child in my arms.' If the Christian doctrine of God be based on the ultimate realities of the Divine nature, the terms in which it is translated to us are those of the home at Nazareth. Whilst our Lord expressly contemplates the existence of those who have forsworn home and its ties for the sake of His work, those who in His expressive phrase 'have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake,' yet there can be little doubt that Christianity as a way of life expects the scene of the activities of the ordinary person to be a home with all the lesser loyalties and kindly discipline which that involves. Monasticism and celibacy

have their place, but they are a by-product—a tributary to the great river of human life, legitimate only in so far as they sweeten and purify it.

What are we to say, then, are some of the marks of the home which takes that of Nazareth as its example?

1. *Simplicity*.—Where our faith is in full possession there is a simpler standard of living, a tendency to be satisfied with simpler amusements and simpler ambitions than is the rule where Christianity is excluded or only very lightly held. And the reason for this is twofold; first, there is the knowledge that the practical disciple very soon gains that few things destroy the soul's gentle touch more quickly than luxury and extravagance, that the body is a good servant but a bad master. And then there is the love for God going forth and energizing itself in the love of man. No follower of Jesus who has entered into His secret can feel happy in allowing himself the best of everything while the poor abound in such numbers. He is driven by a force greater than himself to limit the scale of his living, the cost of his amusements, the amount he spends on his clothes, in order that the children in the slums may go into the country, that the hospitals may be more efficiently staffed, that a promising boy or girl may be sent to the University. For the Christian social service is learned in the best school—the school of practical experience. There is here a kind of New Testament Puritanism which looks upon a lavish personal expenditure, if not as actually sinful, at all events as unnecessary.

2. *Kindliness*.—We must not imagine that the main note is repression. We only prune that the growth may be more luxuriant. We deny ourselves for the sake of others in order that our sympathies may more freely flow out. And we are very conscious of the sympathy of a Christian home, of the interest of parents in their children and the reciprocal affection which that produces. Indeed it is not too much to say that in such an atmosphere the thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians becomes incarnate, that we find it written not on tables of stone, but on what the quaint language of the Authorized Version calls 'the fleshy tables of the heart.' And the joy of such sympathy is that it is spontaneous and unaffected. To paraphrase the heathen writer: '*Christianus sum, nihil humanum a me alienum puto.*' Anybody can take his sorrows and his joys, his little triumphs and defeats, his enthusiasms and dislikes, and find a ready listener. And in such an environment where affection and sympathy, gaiety and gentleness so easily mix, cynicism and bitterness rapidly melt away. Indeed

it is a very hard thing to maintain a cherished theory that all men have a price in the midst of such light-hearted unselfishness, or to champion cruel theories of men and things when before our eyes are the living embodiments which contradict them at every turn. It is not only in Dickens's novels that miserly Scrooges are transformed by being placed in a happy family, but in actual life, and, if we are fortunate enough to know such people, we shall learn to cure many a black mood by the simple expedient of paying them a visit.

3. *Simple Piety*. Here we reach to the root of which the rest is but a flower. Without being learned, without joining much in what is called religious conversation, without self-consciousness we find invariably that the basis of the Christian home is to be found in devotion to God and humble following after Jesus Christ. And when we have got behind current controversies and the confusion of contending theories, what is Christianity but that? For religion is prior to theology, and when we have settled the difficult theoretical problems which surround the faith, we have still a practical discipleship to undertake. Simple piety begins there. Its main object is not the satisfaction of the mind but the response of the whole personality. And, as of old, *solvitur ambulando*, intellectual difficulties assume their true proportions. Faith may be but a loophole in our prison-house, but it is one from which we can see green pastures and pleasant streams and somewhere beyond is the Promised Land.

There are two simple words in conclusion:

(1) It is surely much to be regretted that the custom of family prayers, once so common in England and even more frequent in Scotland, has been allowed almost to disappear. Probably there was a good deal that was formal in the habit. And yet even at the worst, the rearing of the family altar is a witness to family religion, and where it is undertaken in sincerity and with conviction is a powerful stimulus to that simple piety.

(2) If simple piety be the basis of the Christian home, then there must lie upon parents the responsibility of instructing their children in the rudiments of our faith. This duty is sometimes neglected by quite good people, either because they do not feel competent for this task or because they think it would bias the children's choice. But *pectus facit theologum*, said the Schoolmen, and religious zeal is more inspiring than accuracy of fact divorced from love. And to be silent about the truths by which we profess to live is to bias the children in the wrong direction. It is to give them

the impression that religion is an indifferent affair, or at least a matter of opinion. No system, ecclesiastical or educational, should be allowed to rob the parents of their right and privilege. Upon

Christian homes is built not only the stability of our race but all our hopes for the realization of the Kingdom of God upon earth.¹

¹ G. Birchenough, *Human Relationships*, 9.

The Present Situation of Theology in Germany.

II.

BY PROFESSOR KARL HEIM, D.D., PH.D., TÜBINGEN UNIVERSITY.

FROM this point I begin my own train of thought in order to bridge the gap which dialectic theology has left open. A part of what I have to say on this subject is contained in that book which Scottish scholars have translated into English so well that it is better than the German original, *God Transcendent*. In this book I go back to the ancient tradition of the Church, which is more highly esteemed in Scotland and in England than it is in Germany. I go back to the times of Augustine, when philosophy and theology were as yet unseparated. I hold the separation of these two branches of knowledge to be indeed a necessary division of labour, but one which their nature does not justify. As soon as the individual is taken up with the problem of the ultimate meaning of life, two things at once become clear. Firstly, that it is no longer sufficient for him to have a temporary aim in life, as, for instance, the enjoyment of a pleasant week-end or of an old-age free from care or assuring the greatest amount of happiness to the greatest number of his fellows. Those are all transitory goals. The man who is awake to the ultimate problem can live only to reach an object which can never cease to exist. A relative sanction or legitimization for speech and action granted, perhaps, by an appointed official, or by a parliament, or by the majority of his nation fails to satisfy him. These are mere relative factors which must, sooner or later, cease to exist. They are unable to bind me irrevocably. When I am inwardly awakened, I then desire to direct my every action towards the loftiest aim; I require the authorization of an absolute power.

Secondly, as it is with our desires and actions, so it is with our belief, that being the other part of our existence. When I have been awakened I can no longer be satisfied with a temporary answer to the question; why and whence? It suffices no

longer that I can, in the light of modern scientific research, trace the origins of this world back to some original state, a fiery nebulous ball, perhaps, or a meteoric hail. All such original states serve only to raise more forcefully the original question; whence came the elements and motive forces which brought about this original state? Once this ultimate question is awakened within us, we are also no longer satisfied to reduce the arguments of logic and mathematics to those axioms which are generally recognized, for those axioms bring the question before us in still clearer form; why do these basic principles, without which we cannot think or reckon, operate? In their place we could just as well have other laws. In place of the Euclidean conception of space, with its three dimensions, we might just as well have a non-Euclidean conception, with four or n dimensions, the geometry of which would then be built up upon other axioms. What is it that gives our thought and mathematics their absolute validity? Are they not perhaps mere chance habits of thought? Involuntarily we ask ourselves these questions as soon as we can no longer be satisfied with the usual answers, for then we have become aware of the fundamental question that is within us. As children, we all of us had within us this fundamental why-question. No answer that our mother gave us could slake our thirst for knowledge when we asked for the reason for all those wonderful things in the world which were crowding in upon us. Insatiably we kept on asking until our mother could answer no further. This passionate inquiring after the fundamental is only dulled at school and at the university, for there we learned to be satisfied with the superficial answers of science. When we are inwardly awakened, we become children again and unceasingly strive to penetrate to the root cause of all causes. As soon as we do that, the