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qiqâlôn occurs, whose meaning is doubtful (translated 'shameful spewing' in A.V., and 'foul shame' in R.V.).

Ynhm. From the Hebrew root *nhm*, to which belong several well-known names in the Old Testament, such as Naḥum, Menaḥem, Neḥemiah, etc. The name *Ynhm* is identical with *Yanḥamu* in the el-Amarna Tablets.

Yp'. Cf. Japhia, Jos 10³, 2 S 5¹⁵, etc.

Some time ago, in the course of quarrying at Hederah, in the plain of Sharon, the headmaster of a neighbouring school discovered a number of oblong earthenware ossuaries (mostly broken in fragments), embedded in a layer of sand about five feet from the surface of the ground. The curious thing is that they are imitations of houses, though hardly two feet high or one foot broad. In shape they are rectangular, and one has a sloping roof, an opening (evidently a door) on one of the narrow sides, and three windows on the other. They have been carefully examined by Professor E. L. Sukenik, and a detailed report on them has now been issued. He places them in the beginning of the fourth millennium B.C. (the Chalcolithic Age), the period of the Ghassûlian culture

brought to light near Jericho. The discovery is valuable for several reasons. For one thing, these ossuaries give us the most ancient models of human dwellings that have been found in Palestine or elsewhere in the east, showing that the earliest houses were more or less rectangular in shape. The once accepted theory that at first they were round or semi-circular, then oval, and finally rectangular is upset by this and other discoveries (such as those at Jericho and elsewhere). Further, they prove the existence in these early ages of the belief that death is not the end of life but merely a transformation, the dead being thought of as living in houses or shelters in the other world, much the same as they had lived here. Was Christ making use of this ancient belief when He said, 'In my Father's house are many mansions' (Greek 'abodes')? His statement has usually been connected with the numerous chambers in the Temple at Jerusalem, or the habitations assigned to courtiers within the precincts of palaces, but this discovery at Hederah may offer a better explanation of His words. Further still, as these 'dwellings' enclose bones only, they give evidence that the practice of secondary burial, as adopted by many primitive peoples, was prevalent in Palestine in Chalcolithic times.

In the Study.

Virgínius Puerisque.

Christmas and the Joy of Giving.

By THE REVEREND JOHN MOWAT, M.A., ABERDEEN.

'God so loved the world, that he gave.'—Jn 3¹⁶.

CHRISTMAS has come round once again—Christmas, that most wonderful season of the year—when every window in the town is crammed with such wonderful toys and things that you can't help flattening your nose against it in the sheer joy of looking at them. A great time, Christmas! like no other time in the year. I wonder what it is in Christmas that makes it so full of happiness? There is a whole lot of things, of course, that do it. There are the parties it brings, when the hall is decorated and you are decorated, and the trees are laden with gifts, and dear old Santa Claus comes, clad in his scarlet cloak. When we are lucky, there's the excitement of frost and snow, with glorious skating and

sledging and the building of large snow-men, and we're in a world made white and beautiful in a mantle of sparkling snow. And most of all, there's the thrill of hanging up your stockings and wondering what Santa will bring you—and lying there in the dark, struggling to keep awake, with one ear cocked and one eye just the tiniest little bit open, hoping to see him come down the chimney. And then the next you know it is morning and you have missed him after all—and there's your stocking bulging with the gifts he brought while you slept. And oh! the fun and excitement, as you handle it all over—feel one bulging lump after another, trying to guess what it is! A great time Christmas—a glorious happy time!

And yet I feel that that's not the whole reason why it is so happy. I feel that there's something more in it than that. Once upon a time, away in

the beginning of the world, all the rivers of the world met together. The Teviot was there, and the Tweed; the Forth was there, and the Thames; the Ganges was there, and the Brahmaputra; and all the rivers were there. And when the meeting was over, the chairman asked them where they were going and what they were going to do. And the Thames said, 'I am going to a place called London, where I shall be known as the mistress of the rivers of the world.' The Hudson said, 'And I am going to America, and on my banks are going to be great cities, and I shall be the wealthiest river in the world.' The Ganges said, 'And I am going to India, and children will be thrown into my bosom, and I shall be the most sacred river in the world.' But there was one river that did not say a word. 'Who are you?' they asked. 'I am the Nile.' 'And where are you going, and what are you going to do?' And the Nile said, 'I am going to Africa. There's a desert there, called the Sahara—a huge burning desert—so scorched and parched by the heat of the sun that men cannot live in it, and nothing will grow. And I am going to roll down my waters from the mountains and bring down life from the mountains to the desert. And then I shall flow on into the Mediterranean Sea.' All the other rivers laughed. 'Africa' they said, 'that hot and barren land? Why don't you go to some place worth while?' But the Nile said, 'I will go'; and it went, and gave of its richest and best. And God, sitting on His throne, saw what the Nile had done, and said, 'That is the most beautiful and most holy river in the world.'

And I think that's what makes Christmas so beautiful and so merry and so holy a time in the world's life. It's not because we *get* things, but because we *give* things that it's so happy. Didn't you feel that when you brought gifts here to-day? It *cost* you a lot to give up what you brought. You wanted to keep it for yourself—didn't want to give it away. But then you thought of those poor children—so ragged, and cold, and hungry, and uncared for—knowing nothing of the wonder of Christmas, because they are so poor and forgotten. And thinking of them, you said, 'I *will* give it'; and then wrapped it up in brown paper and brought it here to God. It *cost* you something to give it up. But didn't you feel the queer glow at your heart when you gave it—felt happier somehow and better, just because you gave it? That really is what makes Christmas so wonderful. Though it is nice, too, to *get* things, it's because we *give* things to other people that Christmas is so holy and happy. That's why the streets are so

busy. Mothers go out buying things, but not for themselves. Staid uncles and aunts openly buy dolls and are not ashamed to be seen buying them—chuckle over daft clock-work toys and buy them—not for themselves but for others. And there's a twinkle in their eyes, and a lurking happiness in their faces which are born of the spirit of Christmas.

The strange thing is that that's why God is so happy too. You remember the beautiful old story? how the shepherds sat round the camp fire watching their sheep by night, and the angels appeared in the sky singing with joy and gladness. It is *not* because God was *getting* something from men that heaven rang with happiness. It was because He was *giving* them something that Christmas night—the most wonderful thing He could give—His only Son Jesus to save and redeem the world. There are some people who feel that God is very stern and terrible—always demanding things from us. The wonder of Christmas is that it tells us of a Manger in Bethlehem, and a little Child wrapped in swaddling clothes—and that God finds His happiness, too, in giving His best and His all.

The Perfect Record.

BY THE REVEREND R. OSWALD DAVIES,
MANCHESTER.

'God hath spoken.'—Ps 62¹¹.

I remember once reading an account of the making of a gramophone record. It was made by a party of singers. Three things impressed me which I would like to pass on to you.

1. In the first place, very careful preparation had to be made for the successful making of the gramophone record. When the great day came, the party went to the studio, and there they were led to the recording-room. Soon, the Instructor came in who made all kinds of suggestions. He examined their programme, and cut out certain items. He also speeded up the music. Then, when all was ready, the work of recording began. And when they had come to the end of their work of recording that afternoon, they had actually spent two and a half hours in the recording-room! And yet when the record came later to be reproduced, it lasted for only two minutes and twenty-five seconds. But what careful preparations had to be made.

And is it not so with ourselves? What great preparations have been made for us. Once an American University celebrated its two hundred and fiftieth anniversary. The students marched in a great torchlight procession, and among them

were the Freshmen of the College who were only a month old as students. At their head they carried this motto: 'The University has been waiting two hundred and fifty years for us.'

How amused everybody was to see that motto, and yet how true it was. Our homes, our Church and Sunday School, and our day school—all have been prepared for us. And not only have they been prepared for us, but they are there in order that we may prepare ourselves for life. Life needs very careful preparation if it is to be lived aright; we cannot prepare ourselves too carefully. Even the Lord Jesus did that while He was at Nazareth. He was constantly preparing Himself for His great work. We, too, should prepare ourselves that we may live our lives to the glory of God.

2. Then, there was the actual work of recording which was done in an adjoining room. What careful and delicate work it was. First of all, the matrix, that is, the original record, was placed in position. The party was waiting for the signal to begin. First, a white light shone. That called them to attention. Then, a bell rang; it rang once and then a second time. Finally, a red light shone. That said 'Go!' and the party immediately began. But oh, what trouble they had. Matrix after matrix was spoiled. Once a wrong note was struck. Another time, the programme was two seconds too long! And each time they had to begin all over again. In the end, however, the perfect record was made. And how glad they were when they found that in the end the Instructor was satisfied.

We, too, are making a record—it is the record of our life. What kind of record are you making? To make a good record is not an easy matter. Sometimes we strike the wrong note. It may be a fit of bad temper, some untruth we said, or a mean act done to a friend, and that spoiled our record. Our Instructor, who is none other than the Lord Jesus, is not satisfied, and we have to begin all over again. What kind of record did you make last year? I hope it was a good one—better than the record of the previous year. Yet, it can be better still. With the New Year you may start again. The New Year says 'Go!' to you and me. Try again; take another chance; make a better record than you have ever done before.

3. So the party finished their work. They had made their record and felt proud of what they had done. They went away knowing that the record which they had made would be reproduced in thousands of homes in our land. The music which

they had sung would be heard again and again, and would gladden men's hearts everywhere.

One thing is certain; it is that our lives can be readily reproduced. Others copy us, and therefore our example counts among our friends. While we are at school or at play, the things we do, and the manner in which we behave are seen by others.

Above all, think of that perfect record of a life—the life of the Lord Jesus—how it has been reproduced. Men and women throughout the centuries have endeavoured to reproduce that life, and owe to Him the secret of their greatness and goodness. Think of the joy and happiness that have been brought to men through Him. Indeed, what better thing can we do also than to copy Him in our own lives?

God spoke in His Son, and it is the most wonderful Word ever spoken to men.

The Christian Year.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

David: Minstrel, Poet, Saint.

BY THE REVEREND R. W. STEWART, B.D., B.Sc.,
KILLERMONT.

'Have ye not read what David did?'—Mt 12³.

One day the Pharisees in their carping way said that, because the disciples of Jesus had plucked and rubbed some ears of corn as they passed along a cornfield, they had thus worked on the Sabbath and broken the Commandment. Must it not have been with a smile at the absurd solemnity of these worshippers of ritual and red-tape that Jesus flung this question at them, 'Have ye not read what David did?'

Jesus accepted David in all the legendary glory of his fame. Is it not more wholesome to cherish the memories of heroes than to be adepts in the modern art of 'de-bunking'? Let, for instance, David's example correct narrow notions about religion. The Pharisees were out to make life good and safe by multiplying restrictions that were as impressive as a notice board making a mountain-side 'private.' David was joyous, alive, and free, and knew when a convention was a triviality.

What is it by which a man strikes the popular imagination and wins homage? It may be through some accidental circumstances, such as one American President's rise from humble origins—'from log cabin to White House.' Swift promotion in youth is spectacular and appealing. In the Great War one battalion led into battle by an officer under twenty-one would dare anything at

his word. Beauty like that of Helen or Mary, Queen of Scots, takes nations captive. Others rivet attention by sheer genius, like Shakespeare or like Michelangelo, who was painter, poet, sculptor, architect, soldier, engineer. In Francis of Assisi, and Gandhi, and many another instance, the secret is the reverence men give to one they count a saint.

David is one of these charmers. His very name seems to mean 'beloved.' 'Whatsoever the king did,' writes the old chronicler, 'pleased all the people . . . David bowed the hearts of Judah as one man.' By one amazing exploit he took rank with Saul's chief warriors, and presently the shepherd lad was king. He had genius, was soldier, musician, poet. In every situation he 'had a way with him'; he was the hero of the army, the pride of the nation, the ideal friend. And withal religion ran like a golden thread through all the pattern of his life. He was human in his fall yet a saint in his repentance.

1. *David the Minstrel.* Life is poor without music and laughter. 'A merry heart,' says Solomon, 'doeth good like medicine.' 'Men's muscles move better,' writes George Eliot, 'when their souls are making merry music.' Shakespeare's Cæsar dislikes Cassius, for

he loves no plays,
As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music;
Seldom he smiles.

Something is amiss mentally or physically with one who cannot laugh. David though chased for his life by Saul, like a partridge over the hills, could parley with a jest, 'why do you hunt me like a flea?'

It may be that these are natural gifts not in reach of every one. Barrie in *What Every Woman Knows* makes Maggie say wistfully, 'I wish I had charm.' Yet ought there not to be music and laughter in every life that is Christian. Jesus explained the contrast between the gloomy followers of John and His own disciples by the fact that He was with them; and in the birthday of the Church it was a mark of a Christian to be joyful. Why is it that people have tried in the name of religion to suppress the expression of gladness, and have so often thought they were serious when they were merely dull?

True, 'life is real, life is earnest,' and there will always be need to entreat the frivolous and slack to gird up their loins. Yet is there not need, too, to make an appeal to the censorious and interfering, to those suspicious of joy and laughter. If the sense of strain is always felt, then the conviction

is lacking that the ultimate triumph of righteousness depends not on one's own little contribution but on God, and is therefore sure. Faith in God makes wholesome laughter possible and delight in innocent pleasures. Life will never be made good by making it bare. The soul cannot be kept clean by keeping it empty. 'Seven devils,' said Jesus, 'will return to the house swept and garnished.'

Have ye not read what David did,
Who danced before the Lord?
Who strung his harp to melody
With the hand that swung the sword.

2. *David the Poet.* The touch of poetry is an essential element in a full life. Not that all can be poets—though there must be few who have never in secret tried to turn a rhyme—but all need the sense that life is not just prose.

The drift of pinions, would we hearken,
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.

Romantic lights fall on the most commonplace businesses. A clerk in the stuffy office of a sheep-dip firm deals with letters from Arabian sheiks in the desert who are agents for its tins. It is the artists and poets who open men's eyes to the romance of every day and the eternal beauty of simple and common things. There is need to cultivate sensitiveness to their message, so that, for example, one may come back from a picture gallery not bored but with new visions in the mind of such familiar things as a mother, or a child, or a man following the plough, or a cottage nestling under a hill, so that the heart has a new feeling for the elemental sanctities of life. Or is it some tragic thing like war, sordid, brutal, pitiful, tremendous? Great words are needed for it. David gives them, 'How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!'

It is not true that ordinary folk have no use for poetry.

In a concert hall in a home camp shortly before the battle of the Somme some hundreds of cadets, most of whom were to perish in that shambles, were making merry after the long hours of training. At any moment the summons might come to one or all to join a draft, but for that evening care was forgotten in uproarious laughter and song. One turn in the programme, however, was a recitation. And as the great words of Shakespeare rang out a sudden tense, stillness fell on that young audience, and they were carried to heights and depths of thought and feeling as they perceived that the

words might have been written for that hour and for themselves.

If we are mark'd to die, we are enow
To do our country loss; and if to live,
The fewer men, the greater share of honour.

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.

David was poet as well as musician. For this, too, his people loved him. And loving such as him men may all come to share something of the poet's larger joy in life and keener vision of beauty.

Turn from David for a moment to David's son and Lord. Christ too was a poet. His words rise above prose and calculation, and set things in eternal light. 'There is joy among the angels of heaven over one sinner that repenteth.' Or about the offender of a child—'it were better that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he be drowned in the depths of the sea.' Such words are not prose but poetry, passionate appreciation and disclosure of eternal reality and truth.

3. *David the Saint*.—Again and again the story of David shows how religion is needed if life is not to miss its climax. As the Psalm, possibly his own, quaintly puts it:

By thee through troops of men I break,
And them discomfit all;
And, by my God assisting me,
I overleap a wall.

In one incident after another religion adds the crowning touch. When the three mighty men handed him the cup of water fetched from the well of Bethlehem at the jeopardy of their lives, the story hangs on the edge of an absurd anti-climax. It would have been to step from the sublime to the ridiculous if David had taken a drink and said, 'Thank you, that is most refreshing.' It is religion that finds the right ending. The gift won by such devotion must be dedicated to Him who alone is worthy to receive it. 'He poured it out unto the Lord.'

When Shimei cursed David how ignobly the story would have continued if there had been a slanging-match across the gully and then a futile chase of angry men up the ravine after a rascal who had too long a start. But how nobly it does continue. 'Let him alone. It may be that the Lord will look on the wrong done unto me and will requite me good.'

In particular, there are two facts about which religion alone has anything adequate to say. There is sin. David once sinned grossly, meanly with

intrigue and bloodshed. There was no excuse, and there in shame the story might have had to stop. But David bowed in penitence. He is remembered more for his broken and contrite heart than for his ugly sin. Nothing else could have let that story go on except repentance before God and the breaking in of Divine forgiveness. And in every life there are matters for which there is no remedy and about which no comment or reflection leads anywhere except just this—that for the contrite there is pardon.

And there is death. If David wrote the words of the Shepherd Psalm, religion spoke to him concerning this mystery.

And in God's house for evermore
My dwelling-place shall be.

David had all the gifts of genius but the crowning gift was faith. Without this no life is perfect, possessing this every life is blessed. And all the saints bear witness that God offers it alike to monarchs and to common men.

Have ye not read what David did,
Who danced before the Lord?
Who strung his harp to melody
With the hand that swung the sword.

Have ye not chanted David's dirge
For his lovely, pleasant friend
Fall'n on Gilboa's battle heights?
O glorious, pitiful end!

Have ye not prayed as David prayed,
Who bowed his kingly head,
And owned his shame, and took the blame,
As 'I have sinned,' he said?

Ah! merry hero, poet, saint,
Aglow with fire divine!
Thy starry gifts, joy, music, tears,
Would that they all were mine!

Nay, but one part, the broken heart,
Is needful, till by grace
Restored and shepherded, with God
Shall be my dwelling-place.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

The Triple Sign.

'And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.'—Lk 2¹².

The corroboration of the angels' story was the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a

manger. We who live so long after the shepherds cannot expect to find the same corroboration of the good news of God's love and grace. At the same time, there are signs—not entirely out of relation to that which is spoken of in our text, which do corroborate our faith in the angels' story that 'A Saviour which is Christ the Lord' has been born to us.

1. First there is the sign of the Babe. This is the sign which so far at least corroborates our faith that, when God would exercise saving grace on behalf of the world of men—He sends a baby. It is a method of His. He works through men—and therefore through babies who are the fathers of men. He revolutionizes human thought and action: He brings new direction to human affairs: He changes the character of art, literature, custom, history in this way.

Who was the old scholar of the Middle Ages who, contrary to custom, taught his pupils with no covering for his head? When asked the reason, he replied that it was in honour of the future consuls, poets, philosophers, masters, whom he was teaching. That old scholar knew what God's method is.

As a modern writer has said, 'We fancy that God can only manage His world by big battalions abroad, when all the while He is doing it by little babies at home. When a wrong wants righting, or a truth wants presenting, or a continent wants opening, God sends a baby into the world to do it. That was why, long, long ago, a babe was born at Bethlehem.'

2. The second sign is the sign of the manger. This sign draws attention to the kind of cradles in which the babies who have meant most for the world have been laid. They have not, as a rule, been expensive cradles: but rude and rough, akin to mangers. Such were the cradles of Martin Luther, John Bunyan, Abraham Lincoln, David Livingstone, William Carey, Robert Burns, to name only a few. And to-day men do them reverence because of what they accomplished.

John Bunyan writes: 'I was of a low and inconsiderable generation, my father's house being of that rank that is meanest and most despised of all families in the land. . . . I never went to school, to Aristotle or Plato, but was brought up in my father's home in a very mean condition, among a company of poor countrymen.' That was the beginning, and here is the ending. Froude writes of Bunyan's works: 'They have for two centuries affected the spiritual opinions of the English race in every part of the world, more

powerfully than any book or books except the Bible.'

How shall we explain it? Heredity is something, but how little! Environment is something, but how little! Genius has no ancestry: genius laughs at circumstance. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth.' There are constant irruptions of the Spirit of God into the life of the human race—God finds, or makes new lenses for the light to shine through. He breathes of His spirit into human flesh as He did at the first. And how shall we limit what that breath of the Spirit can accomplish? Why should God not say, 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased?' Why should not His eternal light find a lens of the Almighty's making so that the Light of the world is made visible?

The manger is not a sign confined to the first century. But on every occasion when we see the sign we are transported to the first century to a manger where the infant Redeemer was laid. To-day we remember with thankfulness the grace and love of God made manifest in one who was born of a woman and laid in a manger.

3. And the third sign is the sign of the stable. It was not only mean, but as those who have slept in an Eastern stable know, it must have been dirty, unswept, unclean.

We cannot, as the shepherds did, corroborate our faith by seeing the Heavenly Babe in the Bethlehem stable. But here is the thought we have in mind: Were Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem born But not in thee—then wert thou still forlorn.

Once on a silent night a Child was born
Who brought again what once was lost and torn.

Could but thy soul, O man, become a quiet night
Christ would be born in thee, and set all things right.

We cannot see Jesus the Babe born in a stable—but we can see Him reborn in lives and hearts that are unclean, that have such features in them that we should say they are no places for the dwelling of the Holy Spirit of God. And that sign is not only about us, but it is within us.

There lay in Florence, near the Church of Santa Maria Novella, a huge block of marble. Sculptor after sculptor tried his chisel on it, the idea being to make it into a colossal human figure. All to no purpose except to arouse ridicule. Then came Michelangelo. He built a house over it, and, after eighteen months of secret work, the figure of David

was revealed, the majestic figure which to-day is one of the triumphs of Florentine art.

When God tackles the problem of the misshapen soul, it is not by chiselling at it that He brings shapeliness and beauty to it, but by the rebirth of Christ in it.

There is a day in Spring
When under all the earth the secret germs
Begin to stir and glow before they bud.
The wealth and pomp of mid-summer
Lie in the heart of that inglorious hour
Which no man names with blessing, though its
work

Is blessed by all the world. Such days there are
In the slow story of the growth of souls.

These are the Nativity days, when Christ is reborn, and the soul which was and is still unclean becomes the shrine where God is.

This is the sign of the stable, and when it appears, though we might not always notice it in others, or even in ourselves, the angels sing Hallelujahs and give glory to God in the Highest.¹

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

'I will remember.'

'And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High.'—Ps 57¹⁰.

In this Psalm a Hebrew poet gives an account of his having gone to God; but not to pray, for he had given up all faith in prayer as useless. He had gone to Him to upbraid Him as an unfeeling Deity. 'Hath the Lord,' he cried, 'forgotten? Hath He shut up His tender mercies? Is His mercy clean gone for ever?' But as he thus complained a thought came into his mind—he does not explain how, perhaps he could not explain how—which changed everything.

That thought is contained in our text. It has two sides to it. Some plants, as we know, have a different colouring on the upper and the lower side of their leaves. The broad-leafed begonia, for example, is on the lower side of its leaf a dull green, while on the upper one it is a rich brown shot through with gold. So is it with this thought. It has two sides. One side, the darker side, relates to the Psalmist himself. 'Then I said, This is my infirmity.' He realizes that his trouble is largely due to himself. We do not know what was the cause of the poet's distress originally. Probably it was physical, for he speaks of his 'sore running in the night.' He tells us, too, he could not sleep.

¹ E. D. Jarvis, *More than Conquerors*, 53.

'Thou holdest mine eyes waking.' But if it had begun in a physical malady it had gone far deeper than that. It had been allowed to blot out faith and hope from his soul. It is this he recognizes in the first half of our text. 'Then I said, This is my infirmity.'

But this is not the whole, or the chief part, of his spiritual restoration. There is the other side of the leaf—the side which looks upward to the sun. 'But I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High.'

Let us consider the two steps in more detail.

1. There is the poet's recognition of his own weakness; and 2. There is his accompanying vision of God's strength.

1. It is a hopeful sign of a man, when he turns from self-pity to remonstrance with himself. Pity is at best a poor virtue. It is not to be compared to its twin-sister, Sympathy. When a man regards himself as only an object of commiseration, when he thinks that his faults are only his misfortunes, that every one is to blame for his condition except himself, he is in an evil case. There is no hope for him, indeed, so long as he remains in it. It is therefore always an hour of moral recovery in spiritual experience when this abject commiseration of self is exchanged for accusation, and he can turn to his misfortunes and say like a brave man, 'This is my infirmity.'

In *Sartor Resartus*, Carlyle's spiritual autobiography, he tells how he passed through a similar experience. For months he had been suffering from nervous dyspepsia. He could neither sleep nor eat. He was tempted to commit suicide, but his moral upbringing had hitherto kept him back from it. One hot day, in June 18—, he was walking up Leith Walk, in Edinburgh, feeling almost at the end of his resources, when suddenly a thought arrested him, as if a hand had been placed on his shoulder. 'What art thou afraid of?' he said to himself. 'Wherefore like a coward dost thou go whimpering and trembling? What is the worst that can befall thee? Death? Well, then, let it come and I defy it.' As he thus thought, something like a stream of fire seemed to rush through his soul. The temper of his misery was changed, the Devil had said to him: 'The universe is mine and thou art a poor fatherless orphan in it.' But his soul made answer. 'No, I am not thine. I am free. I may die, but I shall not die a coward's death.' 'From that time,' he says, 'I date my spiritual birth. Then first I became a man.' He had passed from the Everlasting No to the Everlasting Yes.

Something like that is our author's resolution here, when he says, 'This is thine infirmity.'

2. But there is more in his mind than this. This is only the preliminary to a far grander and nobler resolution than the acknowledgment of his own weakness. There is an accompanying vision of *God's strength and the casting of his soul upon that in faith and hope.* 'Then I said, This is my infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High.'¹

'I will remember.' Nothing is easier than to abuse memory. We abuse it when, for instance, we make it the minister of despair—when our dwelling on the past brings about only a paralysis of all effort and an abandonment of hope; or, when we brood over old injuries and misunderstandings, real and imaginary, until the smouldering ashes of bitterness are fanned into a flame instead of being allowed to die out; or when we make it the minister of discontent. We prostitute the glorious faculty of memory when we employ it only in such a way as renders us miserable and discontented with our present.

Memory is one of the most priceless gifts that God has bestowed upon us. And how should we use it successfully? The first use here is as a means of contrition. Now, if there be nothing in our past that needs forgiveness we are either wondrously advanced in holiness or singularly self-deluded. Two rather celebrated men are said to have declared that, as they looked back upon their early days, they found nothing to regret, nothing to be ashamed of. It may be that they were either very ignorant of themselves or had a very low standard by which they regulated their conduct. But none of us can really doubt the use of memory as a means of self-discipline, and as a healthy sorrow—which includes resolve—for much of our past.

A second use to which memory may well be put is as the spring of hope, and so it is used in this psalm. At first it looked as if the Psalmist were to use it only as an instrument of despair. Nothing could be more despondent than the opening verses of the psalm with its perplexed questionings, Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies? But a change comes over the fashion of his dream.² 'This is my infirmity—but I will behold, I will think upon, the years of the right hand of the most High.'

The right hand of the most High is a striking and beautiful phrase. It points to power first of

all, but not to power only. The right hand is no doubt the symbol of power; with the right hand the worker wields the instrument of labour. But the right hand is not the symbol of power only. It is also the symbol of knowledge and of love. With the right hand the writer wields the pen which is mightier than the sword. With the right hand we grasp the hand of friendship and of help. And so when the Psalmist thinks of 'the right hand of the most High' he thinks of His most original acts of power and wisdom and love.

But the Psalmist does not merely speak of the right hand of the most High, he speaks of 'the years of the right hand of the most High.' And what a panorama that suggests! We seem to see rising before us a mighty range of Alpine peaks, stretching away back into the illimitable distance of time, mountain peaks of human history where God revealed Himself for the defence of His people. These 'years of the right hand of the most High' are long, long years, and if the poet had liked he could have written much about them, as indeed the succeeding Psalmist does; but he concentrates rather upon one, the greatest of them all, when God delivered His people from the mighty power of Egypt. It is a significant circumstance that it is no merely personal or narrow experience that leads the Psalmist to a confident hope but the great, broad, historical fact of Israel's redemption from a cruel bondage. This surely teaches us that, although we seem to have little in our own experience on which to build hope, we have always the great broad fact of redemption as it was carried through in the life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have always the Calvary Cross to look to as the great inspirer of hope.

We are wise, then, if we do some honest thinking and make an effort to lay to heart the lessons of our experience as the Old Year passes from us. The book of memory, if we take the trouble to read it carefully, contains much wisdom and instruction which for the most part have been somewhat painfully acquired. Many of life's opportunities, as we all have good cause to know, never return; but quite a number of them by God's mercy do come back. A good many hopes, ideals, and broken vows have been buried by the wayside. Some of us have suffered, and suffered in soul as well as in body. But those who pledge their loyalty to Him who trod before them the road of life know with confidence and gratitude that, whatever their past may have been, for such as trust His love there is opening up a fresh world.³

¹ W. M. Mackay, *Our Attitude to Self*, 182.

² A. Badenoch, *The Gift of Vision*, 93.

³ C. L. Warr, *Scottish Sermons and Addresses*, 132.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

Principles and Perfection.

'Leaving the principles . . . go on unto perfection.'
—He 6¹.

The writer of this Epistle to the Hebrews has just been accusing his readers of criminal ignorance of what he calls 'the first principles of the oracles of God.' The time had come when they ought to have been giving themselves to the work of teaching others, yet they themselves still stood much in need of teaching. What they needed was a more intelligent grasp of first principles. The writer proceeds, 'Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection.' 'Like a cog-wheel with a catch—our law of life should be one tooth higher in the wheel every day.'

Faithfulness to first principles is an indispensable condition of progress. What our fathers loved were the deep and abiding principles which form the only substantial foundation of good living. The superstructure of an upright moral life received comparatively little attention—beyond the living of it. The ordinary private, family, and social duties were not much in the thoughts of men who were most scrupulous in the performance of them. What they gave themselves to study was not so much the fruit of good works, as the seed of principle, the root of doctrine, from which spring both flower and fruit.

At the same time it cannot be denied that their study of the seed was too microscopical, and their digging among the roots sometimes retarded the harvest. And so a reaction came; and, like most reactions, it carried men to an opposite extreme. 'We have had enough of doctrine,' they cried. 'What we want is something practical.' But already another reaction is setting in. It is not so violent as the first. There need be no fear that it will carry us back to where our forefathers were. What thoughtful men are insisting upon is this, that the one eternal thing in God's universe is truth, that nothing less solid than principle can bear the weight of life. What is being every day more fully realized, by the comparatively few who do their own thinking, is this, that certainty of belief is the sheet-anchor of character, that only after a man has 'taken his stand' can he go forward, that faithfulness to first principles is essential to progress.

On the other hand, it is none the less true that genuine progress involves the leaving of first principles. He who abides by the foundation will

never complete his walls. The man who spends his life squaring and plumbing his foundation, or sitting admiring its strength and fair proportions, will never cover himself with a roof. A city of foundation-stones, however well and truly laid, is nothing but a desert after all. He who would reach the capstone must leave the foundation.

This is how Edward Wilson, the great naturalist of the Antarctic Expedition, puts his experience: 'My old beliefs are every atom as strong as ever. It isn't that any of my convictions or any of my longings have altered or died out; it is that they are out of sight only, as the foundations of a house are out of sight, but they are there for as long as the building lasts, and they are quite sound. Once foundations are laid they should be built on, and the more they are built on the more they disappear from view. If ever you see signs of the foundations giving way, then tell me it is time to stop building—but until then and as long as God puts the bricks and mortar before us so constantly, and each day more than we can get finished with, so long must we go on building and building. Every now and then one must glance over the whole show, even look into it carefully, to see that the foundations are not giving way . . . to see that there aren't any cracks or signs of settling.'

In the region of the severely practical also, true progress involves the leaving of first principles. The foundation principle of conduct is duty; but the man who thinks of nothing but duty is morally a babe. As ethical development advances the sense of duty diminishes. The principle is not abandoned, but it is built upon, and so left behind. This truth was apparent even to pagan Pythagoras, who said to his disciples, 'Choose that form of life which is most excellent, and use will render it most delightful.' He whose meat and drink was to do the will of His Father thought nothing of duty. It was a term which, so far as our record informs us, only once fell from His lips. They who had served their Master perfectly were commanded to speak in humble disparagement of their service: 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do.' Let us aspire to this higher level of Christian living, and rise to that which is not so much a principle as a grace, a master-passion. For only he who has left the principles, and become possessed by the passion, can go on to perfection.

Yet in all this there is no minimizing of the importance, the enduring and perpetual value, of first principles. For this advance from first principles strengthens our grasp of them. He knows best

what repentance means who has gone from it to 'new obedience'—not the obedience of the slave, but of the son. When I want to learn the nature of faith I go to the man who can tell me something of holiness. He is the most expert sower who has reaped many a harvest. It is the man who has lived the most saintly life, who has walked in closest communion with God, and most in the company of Christ—it is that man who can tell me best what 'the gospel' is. It is not the man who can state principles most glibly, but he who has lived them most consistently, who has the firmest grasp of them. To know my duty I inquire of one who has risen above the thought of duty, I study the life of him who loves. Where is the fullest knowledge of first principles to be found? Among those who, like the Captain of their salvation, have been made perfect through suffering. Who can tell me most impressively the meaning of 'coming to Jesus?' They who see His face, and His name is in their foreheads. He who has made most progress in spiritual experience has the firmest hold on first principles.

Which leads to this final thought, that first principles have infinite issues. Perfection is the only legitimate goal of the Christian life. 'Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' He who is not making for perfection has not yet reached a working knowledge of 'the principles of the doctrine of Christ.' No genuine disciple can be content with spiritual mediocrity. No man can start on the Christian race without becoming increasingly anxious to reach the goal. If you would know whether you have entered the race, ask yourself if there is ever a Divine voice sounding in your soul, urging you forward? If you are conscious of the call you may be assured that the Divine strength will be made perfect in your weakness, and that 'He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ':

On, then, to perfection!
 Truth is infinite!
 Be not babes, with milk content,
 Take the strong meat that is meant
 For the man of might.

Lay no more foundations;
 Seek the higher faith,
 And a larger life to know.
 For the soul that does not grow
 Is not far from death!¹

¹ J. Pollock, *The Farther Horizon*, 218.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

What we all need to Learn—How to Pray.

BY THE REVEREND W. RUSSELL BOWIE, D.D.,
 NEW YORK.

'And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.'—Lk 11¹.

The disciples wanted to learn to pray because they had seen Jesus pray. Their own desire did not begin in a vacuum. They wanted to learn what He already knew and to get what they saw He already had.

It is well for us to approach the thought of prayer in that same spirit. If some one should come to us and say, 'Come now and I will teach you about prayer,' the suggestion might leave us cold. But if he should say, 'First, I will show you somebody who prays and show you the difference it makes,' our interest would be alert. So the right Christian message about prayer is never an abstraction. It says to us at the outset, 'Look at Jesus, and see Him pray.' The Gospels are starred with their references to Jesus' prayers. He did not merely teach men about God. They saw in Him a spirit which every day was being lifted up to God. So when we think of prayer, we are not dealing with an exercise handed out to us by some one who has not shared it. We are entering rather into the secret of the greatness of Christ Himself.

1. To whom shall we pray? The New Testament rings with the phrase which is the answer—to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. A man may go a certain distance toward apparent self-fulfilment and self-satisfaction by directing his reverence no higher than his own powers, no higher than the crowd opinion, or no higher than the mass emotion of his own nation. But he will never go all the way toward finding himself and toward finding life until he has stood in the presence of that God whom Jesus called His Father. For Jesus knew that the real God is greater than our own ideas and greater than the ideas of any crowd. The real God is revealed only when a man with a teachable mind and an humble spirit stands still before the utmost that he knows of beauty and goodness and truth. He will feel in contact then with One who is not himself, and yet from whom everything that is best within himself proceeds. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the Spirit who gave Jesus the power He had, the One who took a life that was bounded by Nazareth and

Calvary and yet filled it with spiritual energies so tremendous that it shook the earth.

Great forerunners of Jesus had spoken of God in other terms, as 'King,' as 'Judge,' as 'the Almighty Lord.' It is true they had thought of God's fatherhood also. But with Jesus that one thought of God as Father made every other conception disappear, as the rising of the sun makes the stars fade in the sky.

No man can pray to the God to whom Jesus prayed and be proud and self-sufficient. No man can pray to His Father and be subservient to the common impulses of the crowd. No man can pray to that God and then bow down to any narrow nationalism or to any other cruel political or social creed. For the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ humbles the soul before the consciousness of the beauty and the goodness which is infinite, and yet lifts that same soul up by the consciousness that no lesser life than the life it sees in God can satisfy it.

2. How shall we pray? There is a beautiful memory of that grand old saint who walked so close with God, Father Huntington. A boy to whom he was talking one day said that he had no time to pray. As soon as he got up in the morning he had to eat his breakfast and rush off to work. He worked hard all day, and when he got through, he said, he was too tired even to think. 'Where do you live?' asked Father Huntington. The boy told him. It was in a tenement, on the fourth floor. 'Well,' said Father Huntington, 'every morning you come down three flights of stairs. As you come down the first flight, say, "I praise God this day for all His mercies"; and then think of the things you are thankful for. When you come down the second flight, say, "I pray God to keep me this day from harm." When you come down the third flight, say, "I dedicate myself to God this day," and try to think of something you can do for His glory.' How simple that was, and wise, and how astonishingly inclusive!

Consider the three elements in that suggested praying. First, there is praise. Prayer ought to begin that way. We are in danger of shutting ourselves up into our petty little fears and inhibitions if we begin first by *asking* God for something, for the very fact of asking implies that there is something we lack or something we are afraid of, and that shuts us up to a cramped and timid mood. Open first the windows of the soul. Let the mind and heart expand in the recognition of whatever blessings may be already ours. Praise God, if not, as St. Francis did, with ecstasy for all

the marvel that he found in God's least and commonest things, yet nevertheless for whatever is good and glad in what we do recognize. Praise Him for all the great framework of life in which our little energies are set. Thank God for every day of health, for the shelter of a house and the blessedness of a home, for food to eat and work to do. Thank Him for friends and books and great interests that widen our minds and put a warmth within our hearts. Thank Him for a child's touch and for the trust in a woman's eyes. Say to ourselves every day: 'Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me bless His holy name!'

Then we may ask Him to protect us and do it with a braver and more buoyant spirit; for we shall have begun to believe first of all in the essential goodness of life and of the Spirit behind it, and we shall feel that the mighty forces of the universe are on our side.

This does not mean, of course, that we shall always have every particular prayer answered in the way which we at first think is most desirable. Jesus did not. He prayed for His disciples; but He could not keep them all. He prayed in Gethsemane to be delivered from the Cross; but the Cross remained, and the answer to His prayer was strength to go up and be crucified. There is no promise that the soul which prays will have immunity from all the hard things of this earth. There is no promise of an easy road always. The promise is rather of a courage which can walk on any road, be it smooth or be it rough and perilous; and, meanwhile, the man who has learned to pray knows that whatever kind of life he must face, he will find a grace to cope with it courageously and to carry through with a high heart because he knows that God's good purpose for him does not fail. The man who has asked God for protection will know that, whatever may happen externally to his life, there is an inner citadel of confidence which nothing can assail.

As the boy went down the third flight of stairs and went out into the street, he was to say, 'O Lord, I dedicate myself to Thee this day'; and then he was to try to think of something he could do that day to God's glory. Certainly there is nothing in that prayer which the simplest of us can fail to understand, and yet it is so wide that the greatest life could not exhaust it. Many people are busy glorifying themselves, reaching out secret and greedy demands on life, irritated and offended unless the world seems to minister to their importance. Some men glorify a business or pro-

fession, and think that they are sufficiently successful if they have exalted the prestige of the organization to which they belong. But the man who has said in his heart, 'I must glorify God this day,' may walk alongside those other men and be engaged in exactly the same activities and yet may touch them with a spirit which makes them altogether different. In his relationship with other people, he is seeking instinctively not what he can get out of them but what he can give them in understanding, in sympathy, and in comradeship. He will put his best strength and diligence into his everyday work; but he will see that work not as an end in itself but as a means through which he can contribute a far-reaching idealism and an unshakable integrity.

3. 'When and where shall we pray?' There are no arbitrary rules. It was Jesus Himself who said that men are not 'heard for their much speaking.' In general, however, it is safe to say that if a man is leading any purposeful life at all he is expending every day more effort and energy than he has the spiritual resources of his own to supply; and he had better every day lift up his heart to God in prayer, and do it regularly. He needs to set his spiritual compass in the morning, and he needs to take his bearings at night and see what sort of a course he has steered that day.

Besides it should be remembered that the prayers which may count for most do not need a long form of words. Prayer is the direction of a sincere desire. It is the quick pull upon the rudder of the purpose that brings the ship of a man's living back into a straight line with the star he steers by. One single sentence in the midst of the rush of the day's affairs may be enough. Let a man say, if need be, no more than this: 'O God, keep me true

to the best I was thinking when I did have time to think.'

What of corporate prayer? 'Why not cultivate my spiritual life by myself?' a man might ask. Well, conceivably he might. But it is not likely that in doing so he will get far in the kind of experience that belongs instinctively to a Christian, for the genius of Christianity is a fellowship in spirit. The message of Christianity is that we are sons of one Father, and that the real life is not only a reaching up toward God but a reaching out toward men. We cannot understand the Kingdom of God until we feel it as a comradeship with all the other great souls of the past and present whose purpose and power enter like fire into ours. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, it was not that they might go off singly into corners; but that each man for himself, yet all together, they might learn to share His spirit and enter into communion with the God whom they saw reflected in Him.

In the church where one worships habitually, there are innumerable associations which kindle and inspire. Here are the memories of dear and lovely lives. Here breathe the prayers of souls struggling with great temptations, of souls which exemplify the daily heroism of faithfulness in obscure affairs, and of those who out of their own struggles fashion ideals by which a generation may be made better. When one kneels down in the hallowed atmosphere of the church and tries to let his spirit be open to all the influences which are moving there, he may be released from all his inhibitions. The spiritual life may seem to him more wide and sure and real. And even when his own prayers are lame, he will have the sense of those mighty wings of the spirit which in his need will lift him up.

Christianity in Action.

Stewardship of Wealth.

BY SIR DANIEL M. HAMILTON, BALMACARA, ROSS-SHIRE.

'THERE IS NO WEALTH BUT LIFE. Life, including all its powers of love, of joy, and of admiration. That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings; that man is richest who, having perfected the

functions of his own life to the utmost, has also the widest helpful influence, both personal, and by means of his possessions, over the lives of others. A strange political economy; the only one, nevertheless, that ever was or can be: all political economy