FROM EGYPTIAN RUBBISH-HEAPS

Five Popular Lectures on the New Testament,
with a Sermon,
delivered at Northfield, Massachusetts,
in August, 1914

BY

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To

MR. AND MRS. W. R. MOODY

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR DEAREST

WHO

SINCE THOSE DAYS OF HAPPY FELLOWSHIP

HAVE GONE INTO THE BRIGHT LAND

TO SING THE NEW SONG

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PREFACE

On July 31, 1914, the ill-fated *Lusitania* landed at New York after what proved her last peace voyage. A week later two of her passengers proceeded to the Conference at Northfield, where some two thousand Christian people were gathered in sight of the grave of D. L. Moody. It was very hard for us all, doubly hard for Britons, to detach our thoughts even partially from the horrors that were already beginning—horrors which will long make it impossible to name even the best of Germans without a sharp stab of pain. But we were studying the only Book that can ever bring peace and comfort to men in their direst need, and there is no fear that those who know will think we were 'fiddling while Rome burned.'

There is, however, a very obvious apology due for the publication of this little book. Every scholar will see at once its scrappiness and imperfection, leaving out so much that seems to call for mention, and recording many personal speculations and theories which my better-qualified fellow-craftsmen will perhaps want to cancel. I can only insist on the implications of the word *Popular* in

the sub-title. Popular lectures to audiences deeply interested in the subject, but including few experts, should aim at stimulating further study by freshness of treatment, and presentation of matter which will capture attention, even if not claiming a place in any systematic handbook. I confess there are a good many things in this little book which ought to have seen the light first in technical journals, well provided with proofs and references. I can only plead that I am overloaded just now with the production of technical matter, and must offer these hints to the wider public if they are to appear at all. Both the scholar and the general reader are at least warned. I am correcting the press thousands of miles away from my library, and other shortcomings may well be due to this disadvantage. The lectures were originally taken down by a stenographer for the Northfield *Record of Christian Work*, and freely corrected by myself to make them read better. I had no time to do more, but the time I had to spend suggested the possibility that without further polishing they might interest a larger circle. Hence the kind permission to reprint was sought and readily given.

Without losing two or three months in writing for leave, I have dedicated the little book to our hosts who made that August week so memorable to us by their lavish and genial hospitality. They and I

alike have traversed the Valley of the Shadow since then. What we thought were early morn and noontide have suddenly shown the sunset glow, and messages of comfort, which in the spoken word were general, have in the Dedication come very near home. I am now for a year alone in a distant land, trying to teach the New Song to some lips of them that are dumb. It is the only music that can permanently solace either the solitary mourner or the nations where wellnigh every house has one dead. And so, in spite of all the changes that have come, I send my song across the sea, and pray that some notes of it may reach those who 'know me not, yet weep with me.'

J. H. M.

Y.M.C.A., Byculla, Bombay,
New Year's Day 1916.

I

EGYPTIAN RUBBISH-HEAPS AND THE STUDY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

I AM trying to give you some sidelights upon important things in the New Testament, and I am going to give them, not as things which everybody knows already, or as things about which there is no question. They come from recent opinion, and some are speculation. Sometimes speculation may be wrong, but at least it may possibly prove stimulating.

The documents about which I am going to speak this morning are documents which have been known to a certain extent for over a hundred years; but it is a very strange thing to reflect that, although known, although actually published, they were not in the hands of scholars likely to read them, and practically nobody paid any attention to them. Indeed, so far was the opposite true that one of the three greatest biblical scholars England produced in the nineteenth century, Bishop Lightfoot, remarked as early as 1863 that if we could only get hold of a large number of private letters from individuals who never thought that their writings would be read by after ages,

we should have a unique way of learning the meaning of Biblical Greek. And all the time there were two or three volumes of such documents which Lightfoot might have read. If he had only read them, I believe he would have anticipated by fifty years the discovery made in our time.

I have said that from the sands of Egypt have come to us vast numbers of documents from antiquity. The excavations that have been made in Egypt, especially during the last twenty years or so, have brought these documents to light by the hundred thousand. We have now a large library of books in which these old papers are made available for our study. All nations have co-operated in this fruitful work. Among your own American scholars I would especially mention my friend Professor Goodspeed, of Chicago. In Great Britain the foremost place belongs to those famous Oxford pioneers Drs. Grenfell and Hunt. Then there have been the busy investigators from Paris, Lille, Leipzig, Berlin, and many another place, who have all been at work gathering together these documents from antiquity, reading them, translating them, annotating and indexing them.

What is the nature of them and where do they come from? Well, to begin with, they come from rubbish-heaps. It seems to have been the custom in Egypt in the olden days not to burn

waste paper, but to dump it outside of the town, and then let the sand of the desert sweep over it. Egypt, you remember, is the country where it hardly ever rains.[1] It is out of this sand that we get these documents, perfectly fresh after thousands of years. How many thousands of years is best illustrated by the fact that some accounts have been found which belong, they say, to the thirty-sixth century before Christ.

These documents are written upon the paper of antiquity. Our word *paper* is, as you know, taken from the word *papyrus*, which word I shall use during these lectures. I might tell you the way in which this writing material was made. They used the papyrus plant, a plant with a very long straight stem filled with pith. It grew in the marshes of the River Nile. We are all familiar with the word from the story of Moses. The little basket that contained the baby Moses was put among the 'papyri' in the Nile. These reeds were gathered, cut open, the strips of pith taken out, laid upon a flat table and soaked with clayey water. On top of them another layer of strips was laid crosswise. Then it was rolled with a heavy roller, put out in the sun to dry, and the paper was ready to be written upon.

[1] I said 'never' in my lecture. Then in October, 1915, I had my first glimpse of Egypt—and we landed at Port Said in a shower!

Now this paper when it was done with was, as I have said, simply thrown away. The sand came up and covered it. Another layer of paper accumulated, and the sand covered that also. The excavators are able to-day to show us where we are most likely to find this paper. Drs. Grenfell and Hunt have been for many winters carrying on researches in some specially favoured spots, where they have been very careful to preserve everything they have found. When documents are found in pieces, these pieces must be carefully put together, so that the investigators can study them.

These papyri have their characteristic difficulties. Papyrus is very brittle, and a great many of these documents are remarkably like the Irishman's coat, of which it was said that it mostly consisted of fresh air. When you have documents consisting mainly of holes—when you have a few holes and then a few words and then more holes, it takes a great deal of skill to be able to read them; but it is perfectly marvellous how highly trained observers can read things not there—calculate how many letters must be put into a space in order to fill it up, and do it so carefully that there is little danger of a mistake. All this labour goes to the composition of the volumes I am describing; and when the transcripts are complete there is

still the commentary to write and the indispensable toil of the indexing.

But I must tell you that these documents come from other places as well, and particularly from tombs. The tombs of ancient Egypt are the places from which in all ages men have been recovering relics of antiquity. The ancient Egyptians, as you know, had a very strong belief in the continued existence of the soul; and they thought that when the man was put in the grave it was necessary for him to be provided for in every way. Especially it seems to have been thought necessary that he should have his favourite reading; so they buried with him copies of the books he loved to read. I am afraid we have very unkindly taken away large numbers of these books, which repose in our libraries to-day. On one occasion Drs. Grenfell and Hunt excavated a tomb which gave them a great deal of trouble. What was their disgust when at last they found that a tomb which promised so richly contained only mummified crocodiles! The crocodile was, you remember, a god in ancient Egypt. I rather think that that was politic, for it clearly might be wise to keep such a dangerous beast in good humour by deifying him. When orders were given that the tomb be abandoned, one of the workmen, vexed at so many hours of useless digging, broke with his

spade the back of one of the crocodiles, and behold! from the interior of the beast there came rolls and rolls of paper. The explorers found this was mostly material written in the third century B.C.; and the waste paper which came out of the crocodiles in that tomb was enough to make almost two big books full.

There is one other kind of writing material which you would not think of. The ancient pottery was generally not glazed, and it took writing very well. That was convenient, for although the pottery was not so nice to look at or to use, at the same time it had advantages. Suppose a piece of it dropped and smashed into a dozen fragments. These fragments were saved, and when the mistress of the house wanted to send a note to a friend, or when the master wanted to send a receipt, or a bill, or a cheque, a fragment of broken pottery was used for the writing; and we have to-day multitudes of these *ostraca*—'treasure' veritably 'in earthen vessels,' as Paul puts it. Such, then, are the materials about which I am speaking.

Now what is there written upon them? Sometimes the documents contained in these old papers are literary. We have a very large number of new literary finds. We have classical writings, some that we have had before and some quite new. Not only so, but we have a great many documents bearing directly upon the New Testament.

We have, for instance, a precious fragment manuscript of the first page of the Greek New Testament of the third century A.D., a good hundred years older than the oldest manuscript we possess. There is also a manuscript of the fourth century, of the Epistle to the Hebrews. That is a great find for us, because it happens to have some parts complete in that portion of the Epistle where the greatest of all manuscripts, the Vatican manuscript, comes to an end.

But there is one precious half-sheet of paper, very tattered and torn, which must have given its discoverers a thrill of delight when they read thereon, half a dozen times repeated, the two words: 'Jesus saith.' Some of the sayings thus introduced we have in our Gospels already. There is our Lord's word about the mote and the beam, and (in an expanded form) that about the city set upon the hill. Then there are other sayings not found in our Gospels at all, about which we have no information outside. I myself believe that they are real and genuine fragments from the teachings of Jesus, possibly changed and damaged in the process of transmission, but at the same time beginning from Him. For, when you come to think about it, to invent a saying which anybody could possibly attribute to Him who spake as never man spake,

is an almost impossible task to set even those who have made the closest study of the Great Teacher's style. One of these new sayings runs thus: 'Jesus saith, Wherever there are two, they are not without God; and where there is one only, I say I am with him. Raise the stone, and there thou shalt find Me; cleave the wood, and there am I.' There is the characteristic parabolic form; there is also the surface obscurity which makes one feel that if it had been forged the inventor would have made the meaning of the pregnant aphorism more obvious. The depth of meaning which rewards a little study of it makes it highly probable that the words fell from the Master's lips.

I might say more about these discoveries of literary and biblical material, but I want to talk to you of some things that at first sight seem entirely secular and utterly uninteresting. But they prove to be full of valuable information with regard to the language and meaning of the New Testament. In these rubbish-heaps you find all the kinds of writing you would expect to find in sacks of waste paper collected down street nowadays. In one house there is a lawyer's office; lower down there is a shop; next door a private house. Farther on we pass a school, a church, a court-house, the government offices, and so on. Suppose waste paper collected from all these, you can picture

the very large variety of documents included, and will see how many characteristics of our modern life they would illustrate, especially if among them there are many private letters, from people of all ages and degrees of culture. Now that is exactly what we have got in these Egyptian rubbish-heaps. We have official documents, some of them very much elaborated. Petitions to officials account for a good many papyri. Procedure in what seem to us decidedly urgent matters was very deliberate in ancient Egypt. Thus before a householder could get a burglar arrested he had to address a formal petition to the proper official, setting forth his grievance in detail.[1] The waste paper of a government office accordingly presents us with various pictures of private life in documents of this kind.

Now let me mention in a word or two what we may get from the more definitely official forms and papers. I want to speak especially of one point. A large number of the papyri are census papers. You will remember how there has been for many years past serious difficulty about a

[1] I noticed a good illustration of this in a street in Bombay, where a signboard gave a man's calling as 'Authorized Petition-writer.' The sameness of the petitions shows that this calling flourished in ancient Egypt. By the way, those who want to read specimens of these and other papyrus documents should get the excellent selection (in Greek and English) entitled *Greek Papyri*, by my friend and fellow labourer, Prof. George Milligan (Cambridge University Press).

noteworthy verse in the Gospel of Luke, in the second chapter. That chapter begins, as you know, with the statement that in those days there went forth a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the inhabitants of the world—that is, of the Roman Empire—should be enrolled in a census. 'This was the first enrolment made when Quirinius was governor of Syria.' Fifty years ago historians who read those words were forced to say that they contained almost as many mistakes as it was possible to get into two lines. Even those who were most unwilling to admit that Luke had made such mistakes found themselves obliged to have recourse to conjectures which, I am afraid, sounded much like special pleading. But the explanation some of us kept hoping for has come, and come mainly through the papyri. First came the proof, from the masses of census papers found among our new sources, that every fourteen years there was a general enrolment. For, fortunately, the papers are dated. This is their normal style: 'In the year so and so of the Emperor so and so'—then would follow the whole string of his titles—'I, A. B., son of C. D., aged x years, with a straight nose, black hair, scar on my right shin, enroll myself, together with E. F., my wife, aged y years,' and so on, with name and description of each person. The census paper would proceed further

with a statement of effects. They had twenty sheep, two camels, and their house faced a particular street on the south, and adjoined somebody's garden on the west, and so forth. It is reasonable to assume that as Egypt was under the Imperial Roman Government at that time, there was a similar fourteen years' census taken in other parts of the world. Now we know that there was a census taken in the year A.D. 6. We actually possess a census paper from the census of A.D. 34, and probably one from A.D. 20. The only thing we have to conjecture—and it becomes highly reasonable to conjecture now—is that not only was there one in the year A.D. 6, but that there was also one in the year 8 B.C., which on other grounds has become a more and more probable date for the birth of Jesus.

Now for Luke's second 'blunder,' for there were three chief blunders attributed to him. It was regarded as certain that if there was a census people did not have to go up to any ancestral town for it. Well, but we have now got two or three pages from a Roman official's letter-book, dated A.D. 104, and in it we read a rescript from the prefect of Egypt ordering that all people are to go back to the county in which they live within the next six weeks in order to be ready for the census. *Exit* blunder number two!

What about blunder number three? Quirinius was governor of Syria in the year A.D. 6. We know that, and he carried out the census in that year. Therefore, it is a blunder when Luke tells us that he was looking after a census somewhere about 8 B.C. Moreover, we actually know the name of the man who was governor of Syria in that year, and it is not Quirinius. But about a couple of years ago Sir William Ramsay dug up a stone which shows that Quirinius was in Syria at that time after all. He had been sent there especially, as an extraordinary commissioner, to look after the census, which was a new thing and likely to be unpopular. I suppose it was because he did such good work that he was sent to the job again when the next fourteen years were over. So you see how with the aid of these rubbish-heaps of Egypt and the stones of Asia Minor we can show what an excellent historian Luke was after all.

Let me spend the remaining part of this hour in showing you how the non-literary papyri of all sorts help in the interpretation of the New Testament. I proceed to describe a memorable discovery made by a great scholar, a dear personal friend of mine, Adolf Deissmann, of the University of Berlin. I hope many of you have read his books. There is no more absolutely fascinating

book than his *Light from the Ancient East.* Adolf Deissmann, who is still under fifty, made twenty years ago a great discovery. He was only a young pastor when, in a library one day, he saw on the table a book that had just come in, a new section of the Berlin Greek papyri. The Berlin collection now makes four splendid volumes, in which the sheets are lithographed and signed by the scholars who had deciphered them. Deissmann picked up this book casually and turned over the pages till he came to the name of a friend of his at the bottom of a page. This stimulated his curiosity. He read the page through, and as he read the thought flashed across his mind: 'Why, this is just like the Greek of the New Testament.' You may imagine that he immediately began to read other papyri. So it was that in the year 1895 there came out a little unpretentious book with the plain title *Bible Studies.* Two years later there was a sequel, *More Bible Studies,* and the two books are now put together in an English volume.

Let me show the precise nature of this discovery. Scholars who have studied the Greek Testament through generations past have always been struck by the strange difference between the Greek of this little Book and all the other Greek, not only of previous ages, but of its own age. It is very

natural that the Greek of the first century A.D. should differ much from the Greek of the Attic period of the fourth or fifth centuries B.C. Why, just think of the difference between the English of Chaucer and the English of to-day. Let me repeat, in the pronunciation of the time, the first few lines from the Prologue of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*:

> Whan that Aprille with hise shoures soote
> The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
> And bathed every veyne in swich licour
> Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
> Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth
> Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
> The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
> Hath in the Ram his halfe cours yronne.

I daresay few in this audience have known what I was saying. Some might even question whether I was speaking English at all. Yet many of these words are the same now as they were five hundred years ago, except that they were pronounced differently and have different grammar. Well, if this is the case with our language, we can easily understand that it might be the case with the Greek language, and that the Greek of the first century A.D. would be different from the Greek of the fourth or the fifth century B.C. Of course, we have plenty of Greek that comes from that very first century. There is the great Plutarch,

whose *Lives*, translated in a famous Elizabethan version, supplied material for Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and other plays. Plutarch wrote in the same century as the New Testament. But you can come nearer still. Everybody here knows something about Josephus. Josephus was a Jew, a man of the same nationality as Paul and Peter and the rest, and he was a man who wrote Greek just as they wrote it. But if you were to look into Josephus's Greek you would say that it was not the same language as the Greek Testament. The words are the same and the grammar is more or less the same, but there is all the difference in the world. Take two samples of English. One is a full-blooded page from Samuel Johnson, with words half a foot long, and elaborate grammar and style to match. The other is from a letter written home by a schoolboy in the earlier stages of his education. There is an amusing passage—I quote from memory—in Macaulay's *Johnson*, in which he calls attention to Johnson's literary pose. In his own private diary he wrote something to this effect: 'When we got in, a dirty fellow jumped up from the bed in which we were to lie.' Then when he put it down in his published book he wrote: 'There emerged from the chamber in which we were to repose a man as black as a Cyclops from the forge.' We need not further

prove that there is a difference between English and English. I can assure you there is a difference between Greek and Greek. There is a difference between Josephus and the New Testament. The New Testament is written in plain, unadorned language which everybody can understand.

A German theologian a generation or two ago said the Greek Testament was unique because it was written in the 'language of the Holy Ghost.' It was written in a language that never professed to be in common use, fit therefore for a Book so sacred. Yes, it *was* the language of the Holy Ghost; there is no mistake about that. But we can give a better reason to-day for that assertion. Deissmann's discovery gives me a thrill which I should like to pass on to you. It proves nothing else than this: that the Book is the only book written in the language of daily life, in the very language in which the people talked at home, in the very language in which they communicated their deepest thoughts one to another. The Holy Ghost inspiring those who wrote this little volume inspired them with the common sense to avoid the literary, archaic, old-fashioned, out-of-date language in which the literary men were writing. And, mind you, they are using it still. If you were to read a modern Greek newspaper, you would find it is mostly written—allowing for blunders—in

the language of the fourth or fifth century before Christ. Of course, it is a language nobody would think of talking. But the Greeks still feel that the language of daily life is not good enough for use in writing a book. Now the writers of the New Testament did not care about that. They were not anxious about the literary impression. Paul did not care about having first-class reviews in the daily papers. Mark and John were not in the least degree particular if people were going to pull their style to pieces. You can find all sorts of words and idioms in their writings that are not to be found in the best writers. What did it matter if everybody could understand them? Does this not show us that the very grammar and dictionary cry out against putting the Bible into any other language than that which will be 'understanded of the common people'?

I will give you a few illustrations in detail. Here is something that gives us light upon the first verse in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, which tells us what faith is. 'Now faith,' says the Revised Version, 'is the assurance of things hoped for.' The word translated 'assurance' occurs in a long legal document, the 'Petition of Dionysia.' She was a widow who had had some trouble with her property, which had been claimed by litigious persons. She writes out a copy of the judgement

delivered in a previous litigation, and a full statement of her claim is sent with this to the prefect of Egypt. In the course of that document there occurs this Greek word *hypostasis*. Drs. Grenfell and Hunt tell us it was a technical legal word, and meant a collection of papers bearing upon the possession of a piece of property. When anybody bought a piece of land there were always some papers connected with it. There would be old census papers in which the owner and his land were registered, bills of sale, correspondence about it—in fact, any sort of thing that might be put in as evidence if any question should arise as to the title of the land. All this was carefully collected in a docket and then put into the public archives office. Each large town had a special keeper of the archives to look after the papers and produce them when demanded in order to help the security of property. In other words, this word may be translated 'the title-deeds.' Can we not see what a depth of meaning that puts into the word? 'Faith is the title-deeds of things hoped for.'

Now do not forget what *hope* means in the New Testament. The 'hope' of the New Testament means absolute certainty about the future. Things hoped for are things not yet seen, but things which God guarantees to us as something that absolutely belongs to us. Faith is the 'title-deeds of things

hoped for.' Suppose I go to a real estate agent and buy a piece of land in Canada. I have not time to go and see it; but if I buy that land I have certain papers put into my hands, title-deeds of that property. I take these home with me, and if ever I want to realize on that land I can go to an office and say: 'I have some land to sell. Here are the title-deeds.' I present the paper, and that paper is accepted as being the equivalent of the land. Even if I never saw my property, that paper represents it for me. And if you look at the eleventh chapter of Hebrews you will find that this is just what faith is there. Men and women who received a promise from God counted that promise as being the title-deeds to something they could not see yet, but which they were going to see some day. They were so sure of it, because God had promised it to them, that they acted upon the belief, treated it as their estate, as something absolutely theirs. We are told that Abraham so treated the son that was to be born to him, and we remember that the birth of that son was an absurdity, a wild impossibility. But God had said that he should be born, and Abraham behaved as if that child were there in the cradle at home already. That is the nature of faith as described in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews.

Take another word, this time from Paul. You

will remember a verse which includes the phrase 'us upon whom the ends of the ages are come.' Some years ago in reading papyri I came upon a whole series of wills, and I noticed how frequently this very Greek word came in an obviously technical sense. It is a legal word in documents dealing with property, which has '*come*' to a man from his father. We remember Tennyson's great line:

> We the heirs of all the ages.

I was speaking with Dr. Rendel Harris about it, and he asked why we should not translate the word 'ends' *toll*—a meaning it bears elsewhere in the New Testament. That seems to fit the metaphor still better. 'To us the toll of all ages has come as our inheritance.' We are the heirs of the spiritual wealth of all the ages past, the wealth of Greece and Rome and Israel, the wealth of the Middle Ages, the wealth of all times and of all countries, of all the accumulated experience of mankind—all this has come down to us to-day in order to teach us the wonderful works of God, and make us realize better than ever before what is the wealth that God has for those who put their trust in Him.

II

A SHEAF OF OLD LETTERS FROM EGYPT

YESTERDAY I was talking to you about words. This morning I am going to begin with letters—letters, that is, in the way in which they were used among the Greeks. It is a way unfamiliar to us, because we use letters for one purpose only. In counting—one, two, three, four, and so on—we use a separate set of symbols, the Arabic numerals which enable us to represent these numbers independently. But the Greeks lacked numerals, so they had to use letters for the purpose, and a very definite and elaborate system theirs was. They had four series of letters : the first, Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, Epsilon, and so on, until the letters ran up to nine ; then they went on, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, and so on, up to ninety ; then on again, one hundred, two hundred, three hundred, and up to nine hundred ; and then they used the first nine of these symbols over again with a little point on the end of the letter in order to represent the thousands. The result was, you see, that any sum up to 9,999 could be represented in Greek letters. But that

was not getting very far. So in order to get further they would write a very big M, and in the top angle of that M they repeated the symbols used before. Now they were worth a Myriad, ten thousand times as much as before. By that notation the old Greek could represent any number up to 99,999,999.

Now, if we add one to 99,999,999 we get 100,000,000, otherwise 'ten thousand times ten thousand,' which you will remember in the Book of the Revelation, where it describes 'a multitude which no man can number.' It is *one* beyond the biggest sum that can be represented by the Greek notation.

There is another curious and much-discussed passage in the Apocalypse which gets light from this subject of Greek notation. On the walls of Pompeii, when that city, buried by the terrible eruption of Vesuvius in the year A.D. 79, was uncovered, was found a vast number of *graffiti*, or scribblings, which tell much of the life and customs of that ancient time, when the people of Pompeii going about their daily life were suddenly overwhelmed by the streams of boiling lava. These scribblings give us a picture of the shamelessness of some of the ancient life, such as we shall hardly get from any other place; yet among them are many things beautiful and deeply interesting.

One runs thus: 'I love her the number of whose honourable name is five hundred and forty-seven.' Now you see the bearing of that. Since the letters of the Greek alphabet had their numerical value, there was a tendency to add up the number of the letters of one's name. Take, for a simple illustration, the name Ada. A is one, D is four, so that the number of that 'honourable name' comes to six. Well, the number of some other honourable lady's name totalled up to five hundred and forty-seven. And that lady, going by and seeing this *graffito* on the wall, mentally adds up her own letters, and should they come to five hundred and forty-seven—well, she might find it quite interesting.

So much for the number of Beauty. Let us turn now to the number of the Beast, which naturally comes in association with it. In the thirteenth chapter of the Book of the Revelation we read: 'Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixteen'—for such probably is the most ancient reading. We must try to find a name that adds up to six hundred and sixteen. People all through the ages have put in answers to the puzzle. Absolutely everything has been tried. If anybody has a particular objection to some particular person, he sets to work to fit the number of the beast

to him; and if only he takes fair latitude and is not too particular about the spelling, he usually succeeds.

If I take another line this morning, it is not because I think we can say positively that this is the right exposition. But I myself am very much helped by what my friend Professor Deissmann has pointed out. He claims that the Greek words *Kaisar theos*, whose letters add up to 616, represent best the idea that is behind John's enigma. Most Britons to-day would entirely agree that 'Kaiser is divine' suits the number of the Beast remarkably well! Possibly such a view is not unknown in America also. Whether Deissmann's theory is right or wrong, there can be no question that the battle-cry of that tremendous conflict, which began at the end of the first century and went on unintermittently until the fourth, was, on the one side, 'Caesar is god,' while on the other side were the people who proclaimed that there was 'another Emperor, one Jesus.' There was the greatest fight that the world has ever seen—one in which all the killing was done on one side, and all the dying on the other side, and that was the side that won! This strife, which we may recall to-day, had as the watchword on the side of the prince of this world, 'Caesar is god.'

Then what happened to the number six hundred

and sixteen? It was altered to the more symmetrical number 'six hundred and sixty-six,' the reason being, Deissmann suggests, that it is a caricature of another name, the 'name that is above every name'—Jesus. For the Greek letters of the name *Jesus* come to just eight hundred and eighty-eight, each digit one above the perfect 'seven'; and 'six hundred and sixty-six' Deissmann thinks is the hellish caricature of it. These things may seem very fanciful to you and to me, but they were extremely interesting to people who had to do continuously with letters all of which had a numerical value.

Yesterday, if I had had time, I was going to take up a few additional words. I will mention one of them now, as it is very closely connected with our subject this morning. Our Lord in speaking of His coming again uses the word *parousia*, which in the later parts of the New Testament becomes almost a technical term. Now that word so used, denoting 'advent' or 'presence,' had something very much deeper in its meaning. Egyptian papyri of the third and second centuries B.C. give some allusions which utterly puzzled the first editors. I remember one phrase in which even the acuteness of Grenfell and Hunt seemed to be baffled. Two words came together, *stephanouparousias*, which

we have now learned how to read. The Ptolemies, kings of Egypt after Alexander's time, were not popular, generally speaking, and I must say I do not think they deserved popularity. Our British sovereign, King George, has lately been up in Lancashire, riding all around the country, going into the cottages and talking with the people, and leaving behind him the most gracious memories. That is one sort of a royal visit. But the royal visits of the Ptolemies were quite different. When they came to distant parts of the country there were appropriate manifestations of enthusiasm, but it was all worked up beforehand. The tax-collector came round and extracted from people's pockets money for what was called a 'crown tax.' A free-will offering of a golden crown was made to the king on such occasions, to represent the spontaneous loyalty of the people. That was the type of thing that gives the setting for this word *parousia*. By getting the meaning of 'royal visit,' unconsciously the word was prepared beforehand for the time when the King of kings came in great humility, and they called His coming the *Parousia*. And we are relying faithfully upon the promise of another visit, the last and greatest, some day, we know not when.

But now let me go on to my sheaf of old letters. This first letter, dating from the second or third

century A.D., is written by a schoolboy, and is spelt most atrociously. Both spelling and grammar are, however, highly instructive to us who are concerned with New Testament Greek. I wish we knew more about this young man. He has evidently kept his father and mother in extremely good order. But 'even a worm will turn,' and the father has decided that he will go away and get a holiday from this *enfant terrible*. He has therefore slipped away to Alexandria, whereupon the young rascal writes his father the scathing letter which I am going to read to you. I will translate it into the English which represents his style most nearly:

> 'Theon to his father: *So* good of you not to take me with you to town! If you won't take me with you to Alexandria, I won't write you a letter or speak to you or wish you health no more, and if you go to Alexandria I won't take your hand or greet you back ever again. If you won't take me, that's what's up. And mother said to Archelaus, "He quite upsets me. Off with him!" Oh, it was good of you to send me a present! Such a beauty—husks!'

You see the circumstances. He had expected a hamper of good things to eat; and when he opened it he did not find the cake he liked. So he called it an opprobrious name—'husks!'

Then follows some more :

> ' They fooled us there on the 12th when you sailed. But send for me, do ! If you won't send, I won't eat, I won't drink. There now ! I pray you may be well.'

Now that is a specimen of the vernacular. There is nothing cultivated about that letter, nothing artificial. I can assure you it is not in the Greek of ancient Athens in her prime. But the letter means more for the student of New Testament Greek than any other piece of Greek of equal length anywhere, not only in grammar, but also in vocabulary. I turn your attention to one of the sentences I read just now. The young rascal declares that there is an excellent reason why he should go to Alexandria with his father. His mother had said : ' He quite upsets me.' Well, if he went to Alexandria he would be out of her way. Now do you remember what is said in the Book of Acts about the visit of Paul and Silas to Thessalonica : ' These that have *turned* the world *upside down* are come hither also ' ? It is the same word.

I might recall to your minds that word as it was used of Wesley's early ministry. It was said that he was turning the world upside down. You know the sermon preached by some of Wesley's men on those words. The main heads of the sermon were :

'First, the world is the wrong way up; second, it has got to be turned upside down; third, we's the men to do it.' I am rather inclined to think they were, and that they did their job uncommonly well.

Now that is a specimen of the vernacular, which is not brought in merely for a story's sake. I think you will be able to see that that word 'upset' has, even in English, a popular nuance about it. It is not a refined literary word at all. Nor was it in the Greek. If you turn to the great New Testament Greek dictionary of your countryman J. H. Thayer, you will find this word *anastatô* described as occurring 'nowhere in profane writers.' The suggestion is that it is a purely biblical word. Why biblical writers should want to invent a word of that kind is not very obvious. I think the letter I have just read will show you that it is not taken out of this classical literature; that it is just a common, ordinary word from common, ordinary life, and in the letter of this young man we find it just where we should expect it. So there it is, a word out of the popular vocabulary, having just that rough-and-ready vivid touch to it that we like.

And that is not all we get out of this letter. 'Off with him!' Put that into literary English—'Away with him!' Does not that suggest anything to you? Why, it is the very phrase that came from those hoarse, savage throats on Good Friday

morning. Here we have it again in the rude schoolboy's letter. I think that will illustrate the close contact there is between the language of the New Testament and the language of daily life as we have picked it up from under the sands of Egypt.

Let me read one or two more of these letters. Here is part of a letter from a husband to his wife. The wife is away on a visit, and has prolonged her stay more than he thinks she should, and he has been trying very hard to get her to come home. Apparently she was not as appreciative of his company as he was of hers. He says, among other things:

> 'I want you to know that since you went away from me I have kept lamenting by night and wailing by day. Since you and I went to the baths together on July 12, I never bathed nor anointed until August 12. And you sent me letters that could shake a stone, so much have you moved me.'

You will remember what our Lord says about fasting in the Sermon on the Mount. He is speaking of the way in which the hypocrites fast. Note what He says. He does not say that they shall fast; He does not say that they shall not fast. What He says is, that if they fast they are to take care that it is absolutely sincere, like every other part of their life. Do not be like the hypocrites,

for they parade their fasting that they may be seen of men ; ' but thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face.' That was just what the hypocrite did not do—he did not anoint his head, he did not wash his face. Our Egyptian husband gives us a sample of this kind of ' fasting.' We have another letter in which the writer, who is in great trouble because he has just had the news that his house has been robbed while he was in Alexandria, uses much the same expression : ' I shall not even wash myself until I hear the news.'

Here is another letter which I will read entire :

' Antonius, son of Ptolemaeus, invites you to dine with him at the table of the Lord Sarapis in the house of Claudius Serapion on the 16th at three o'clock.'

I could comment on that letter for the rest of this hour. Brief though it is, it has a number of points of contact with the New Testament. In the first place, in this invitation to dinner, though it is a normal and ordinary invitation, we have the statement that the dinner is to be in a private house, but ' at the table of Lord Sarapis,' the most widely worshipped god of the Egyptians. If the name Sarapis had been left out, one might think this a Christian letter. How well that illustrates what Bishop Lightfoot says in his *Historical Essays*

in the passage in which he describes 'the intrusiveness, the obtrusiveness, and the ubiquity of Paganism'! You can understand how it was that Christians were so unpopular in those early days. For a Christian could not accept an invitation to go out to dinner without compromising his faith. If he went he had to join in the worship. The table at which he sat was the table of a 'Lord'—not Jesus, but another. And for that reason the Christians had to keep out of social intercourse. When they were called 'haters of the human race' and had all manner of other bad things said about them in those days, we can quite understand it, for the heathen simply saw in them people who, because of religious prejudices, kept away from their kind.

The next point in the letter is in that word 'house.' You remember that the first reported words of Jesus—when found as a boy in the temple, in answer to His mother, who said to Him, 'Don't you know that your father and I have been looking for you with distress?'—are given in our Authorized Version as: 'How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?' That is quite a natural translation, but it is absolutely wrong. To prove that it is wrong we have to take not a literal rendering of the words, but the rendering of them as it comes from usage. It happens that the phrase in this letter is one among

a good many examples we have of this very idiom in which there is no question whatever that the meaning is 'in the house.' So this document, and those like it, clearly prove that the Revisers were right when they changed the translation to 'in My Father's house.'

Next, let us notice the time-table. The man, you observe, is invited to dine at three o'clock in the afternoon. If that hour of dining was in vogue in Palestine as well, we are reminded of that parable of our Lord in which He talks about the great 'supper.' The point in question is that it begins in daylight and it ends in the night. The people, you remember, who are invited to it, instead of coming at once, go on with the day's work, and then the king comes in to see his guests in the evening. It must be evening, because the man who had no wedding garment was taken by the hands and feet (so we should read) and thrown out into 'the darkness outside.'

Now we come to a letter of a prodigal son. It illustrates in some way the matchless parable which we always think of as containing the very marrow of the gospel:

> 'Antonius Longus to Nilous, his mother: Many greetings. I continually pray that you are in good health, and make supplication for you before our Lord Serapis.'

Let me state, in passing, that here we have another example of the formulae of letter-writing. All letters were dominated by formula to a very large extent, just as young people's letters from school are still. The formula with which this letter starts is one that is extremely common. You will notice at once that it is one which the Apostle Paul himself is able to take up. A great many things in Paul's letters are things found in this way in the formulae of the heathen letters. 'Making continuous mention of you in my prayers' is one that you will find in a so-called heathen letter. The god to whom these prayers were made was not by name the same; but when the prayer was earnest, and when it came from one who knew no better, I fancy that the fact that the address was wrong did not cause the letter to go into the dead-letter office. It was safely delivered in the place where prayer is heard.

Then the prodigal goes on:

> 'I would have you know that I never expected you were coming up to the city. This was why I never came into it. But I was ashamed to come up to Karanis, for I am going about in rags.'

The word 'in rags' is the word which, if it were classical Greek, would be *rottenly*. The word in the New Testament Greek has lost that sense. 'Every bad tree brings forth bad fruit.' That does not

mean a rotten tree. The word has the same sort of history as the word ' rotten ' has in English slang. If a schoolboy wants to say that he does not like the food at school, he says it is ' rotten.'

But let us get back to our prodigal.

' I write to tell you that I have not any clothes. I entreat you, mother, to be reconciled to me. But I know what I have brought on myself. I have been chastised as I have been because I have sinned.'

It is very interesting to gather together the word *sin* as it appears in the papyri and similar documents. We have made as complete a collection as we can of it, and it gives us quite a vivid idea of what the people to whom Paul wrote meant by it. This letter particularly shows that it implies a very definite picture of wrong-doing. There are only a few words more of continuous sense, and then the letter relapses into fragments:

' I heard from Postumus, who found you in Arsinoe county, and he has unseasonably told you all. Don't you know I would rather become a cripple than know that I owed anybody twopence? '

After that we have only the ends of lines left, with more of this abject entreaty:

' . . . come yourself . . . I beseech . . . don't fail . . .' and then: ' . . . mother, from her son Antonius Longus.'

Of course, we don't know what the result was, any more than we know whether there was any real penitence behind all this fine show.

Here is another letter that instructs us very much as to the manners and customs of the times :

'To Alis, his sister.'

Sister here means wife. Even in the New Testament the term meant that sometimes ; you remember Paul said it was his right to lead about a 'sister.'

'Let me tell you that we are still in Alexandria. Do not fret even though they do start, and I stay on in Alexandria. I beg and beseech you to look after the child, and as soon as ever we get wages I will send you up something. If you have a child—good luck to you !—if it is a boy, let it alone. If it is a girl, throw it away.'

Now remember that that was one of the great points upon which the early Christians had something to say to the heathen. Justin Martyr, who turned Christian before the middle of the second century A.D., has a scathing paragraph in which he talks about the habits prevailing in the heathen world. When a child was born it was taken and laid at the feet of the father. He, if he desired to keep it,

stepped out and picked it up in his arms. If he did not want to keep it, he let it lie. Then the child was taken away and put in some public place where it would be sure to be seen, and it was picked up by people who made a regular trade of collecting derelict babies. This was a very cheap way of getting slaves, and they were reared often for unspeakable lives. We have a great sheaf of documents from Alexandria, dating very closely around the appearing of Christ, which are contracts with women for acting as nurses of little children picked off the rubbish-heap and kept for slave purposes. And so here this man with absolute hard-heartedness says to his wife: 'If it is a boy, let it alone. If it is a girl, throw it away.'

Listen again:

'You say, "Do not forget me." How can I forget you? I beg you not to worry. In the twenty-ninth year of Caesar [i.e. 1 B.C.], June 17.'

Next we have a budget of letters from an educated family of Egypt of the middle of the second century B.C. They are evidently a family bound together by very close and affectionate ties. The father is an 'architect,' though in a much wider sense than we use that word. He is in charge of canal works and irrigation. His sons and his wife write

to him, and he writes to them. We have quite a bundle of their letters. Here is one:

'Polycrates to his father, greeting: It is good if you are well and everything else is to your mind. We are well ourselves. I have often written to you to introduce me to the King—'

The word 'introduce' is the same word that the Apostle Paul uses in 2 Cor. iii. 1.

—'that I may get myself released from the business I am now engaged upon. And now if it is possible, and none of your duties keeps you, try to come up for the Arsinoe festival, for if you do come I am sure I shall easily be introduced to the King. Let me tell you that I have seventy shillings from Philonides, of which I have kept half for necessaries, and paid the rest as an instalment of interest. This is because we don't get our money in a lump sum, but only in small amounts. Write us yourself that we may know how you are and may not worry; and take care of yourself to keep well and come to us in good health. Yours dutifully,

'POLYCRATES.'

Here is another letter from Polycrates to his father. It begins with the same formulae as the last. He goes on:

'Let me tell you I have now carried through my religious duties and am now apprenticed at the surveyor's.'

The word is *geometer*, for geometry was originally simply land survey.

'I have sent into the customs office a report of the site—'

The word used here for 'customs office' is the same as 'receipt of custom' at which the Apostle Matthew was found.

—'as bearing a house duty of sixteen shillings, that we may pay the five per cent. tax on this assessment and not on thirty as heretofore.'

To us in England who are greatly interested in the taxation of land values that passage suggests the old lesson that there is nothing new under the sun. But it is time to close my mailbag and be gone.

III

SOME SIDELIGHTS UPON PAUL

It is a daring thing to announce a lecture upon Paul, whose myriad-sided character and work could not be exhausted in a series of courses by very different students of his personality. I offer only a few stray suggestions, mostly connected more or less with that new field of illustration with which these lectures are specially concerned.

An early traditional account of the personal appearance of Paul comes down to us from the apocryphal *Acts of Paul and Thecla.* Here there is a description which Sir William Ramsay regards as authentic. Perhaps the best thing to be said for it is that it is hardly likely to have been invented; but this is hardly sufficient attestation should any strong objection arise. The general line of this description is that Paul was a little man, with meeting eyebrows, with a large nose and bald head and bow legs, but strongly built and full of grace. Well, Paul himself tells us that his enemies said he was not much to look at, and he certainly did not mind. The story went on to say that

when Paul spoke he looked like an angel. That, at least, is all right. But there are two considerations as to this description of Paul, both of which come out of the Book of Acts. In the first place, you remember that wonderful fourteenth chapter, in which Paul and Barnabas go to the little town of Lycaonia, Lystra. There they performed a miracle, healing a man all his life lame. As soon as the people saw this miracle they were immensely excited, and immediately dropped into their native tongue. They had been listening to Paul in Greek, and Paul did not understand the Lycaonian dialect. The people were saying: 'Gods have come down to us in the likeness of men.' Now it happened that the local legend told how Zeus, the king of the gods, and Hermes, the messenger of the gods, had come down to the earth and people had not recognized them. They sought for lodging, and at last came to the house of an old couple, Philemon and Baucis, who entertained them generously, and received a blessing when they went away. The Lystra folk were determined not to be again caught napping, and when they saw these two deities in their midst they prepared for a sacrifice to them. Now I have just to ask one question: Be it granted that in Lycaonia the conception of these deities would be different from that of people in Athens, yet one always has to remember that

these names of the Greek gods were associated with the very highest ideals of beauty. The principle, 'Handsome is that handsome does,' did not always work; but in all history, so far as outward beauty went, one could never beat the Greek gods. Surely for the Lystrans to call upon the name of Hermes, even if it did carry with it less than it did in Greece, when they saw a little bald, bow-legged man with a big nose, was a most unlikely thing, was it not? One may say that the magnitude of the miracle overweighted the mere aesthetic consideration. Perhaps, but it may stand just as an initial difficulty.

I take another part of the Book of Acts. You will remember Paul's thrilling escape from the Jewish mob, when the Roman soldiers came down just in the nick of time and got hold of him when he was being battered to death by the infuriated Jews. When, by main force, the soldiers had dragged him away out of the crowd and got him into the citadel, it appeared that he had only escaped being tortured to death by the mob to be tortured to death in a more systematic way by the Roman soldiers. They began to prepare him to be flogged, and he only got his breath in time to protest. But as soon as he began to speak there was a great difference. It seems that Claudius Lysias, who thought he was the leader of a band

of brigands at the head of an army of wild cut-throats, was quite astonished to hear him talking in Greek. Now here again is a difficulty. It is not often we hear of a horde of brigands following a little, bald man with bow legs. Must not these two improbabilities combine to put the evidence of the apocryphal Acts out of court?

The reason of my bringing in all this is that I want to ask a question which, oddly enough, I have never heard put. What on earth was Claudius Lysias doing when he thought Paul was a brigand leader? What suggested it? I think we can get an answer out of the papyri. We have among them a multitude of official papers, containing with a man's name his *eikôn*, his personal description. A man writing a census return or other such document describes himself thus: First comes his name and his father's name; then he will put in such additional points as straight hair, long nose, with a scar on his shin or some other part of him. An extraordinary thing is that in every kind of description that scar seems to be necessitated. If a man has not a convenient kind of a scar somewhere, he has to put to his name the word *asêmos*, 'without distinguishing mark.' (You know where Paul says he is of the city of Tarsus, no mean—no 'undistinguished' city, a city with many marks, though not necessarily

scars.) Accordingly, we should expect to find in any personal description the needed scar by which a man might be recognized. Now I fancy that we may be safe in saying that this brigand was badly 'wanted by the police.' All over certain parts of the Roman Empire there were descriptions telling how he might be found. Every Roman governor was looking out for him. It would be worth his while to capture that man, living or dead. It is perfectly clear that Claudius Lysias on this occasion thought he had got hold of the brigand. Why? Why, surely because Paul's appearance answered pretty closely to the circulated description of the brigand. And you may be certain that the scar was very prominent there. What about the scar? As to the brigand, that is easy. He had been in many a scrimmage, and he had come out with the marks of them—like German students with marks of duelling on their faces. We may safely speculate that there was a mark so conspicuous that as soon as Claudius Lysias saw his man he recognized by this the man on whose head there was a price. And probably that is why he took so much trouble to get Paul out of the hands of those wild Jews But how do we know that Paul had a scar anywhere? Let us go back to that fourteenth chapter. I sometimes think the most splendid thing we hear

about him is recorded there. Look at the picture of those fickle Galatians, how they turned right over when the Jews came from the next city and 'persuaded the multitudes'; and those very multitudes who had been regarding Paul as a deity come down from heaven are now prepared to stone him. Soon the jagged stones are flying, aimed, naturally, at his head, and he lies senseless and bleeding upon the ground. His disciples, of only a few hours' standing, are there around him. How soon, they think, has their discipleship been terminated! And while they sadly look on him where he lies, after the mob has dragged him over the rough ground out of the town, he regains consciousness and staggers to his feet. He must have been 'strongly built' after all to stand such an ordeal! What does he do then? Slinks away to hide till he can recover strength again, of course. Not he! He goes right back, back into the city where he has just been stoned, in order to exhort those new-made disciples to continue steadfast in the faith. And he says, pointing to his face, all covered with ugly wounds, 'Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.'

We have, then, a possible explanation for the scar by which Paul was recognized as a brigand. But does he make any other allusion to it? Why, yes. He is writing—as we believe who hold to

the 'South Galatian theory'—to these very people here at Lystra, Derbe, and Iconium the Letter to the Galatians, and he says at the end: 'From henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus.' The marks, as Deissmann puts it, were a talisman which should protect him, surely, in Lystra! He bears about with him until his dying day the scars which told how he had been a partaker of the afflictions of Christ, how he for that dear Name's sake had come so near to death. They are his identification marks, which will tell the churches wherever he goes how he has fought the battle of his Saviour.

Naturally, while we are talking about Paul's exterior you will be recalling that problem about his health referred to in his own words at the end of 2 Corinthians. You remember those pathetic words about his 'thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet' him. On this famous problem I have no new suggestions. I cannot choose even between those suggested already. The only thing I want to say is that the Revised Version, going upon the knowledge accessible thirty years ago, put in the margin the suggestion that we ought to read, instead of 'thorn,' the word *stake*. Now this word *skolops* in the classical Greek does mean a stake; and since, in the barbarous East, death

by impaling was common, the suggestion of it is that the man has had the stake thrust right through his body. But this suggestion we are now able to deny with confidence, and the margin had better disappear. We have a very illiterate papyrus in which the word most clearly means *splinter*. In medical writers we find the word used for a tiny lancet. You can see that it must have lost any connexion with size. However, a thorn in the flesh can sometimes be painful enough to destroy one's peace of mind or body, and Paul's description of his ailment as a thorn fits the conditions extremely well. Satan is allowed to inflict on Paul what would never let him rest, something which always reminded him that he was still in the body; but as he bore it he also realized that He who allowed it to remain was Himself abundant compensation. We hear Paul saying, 'Concerning this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for power is made perfect in weakness.' Sometimes I think that one little change—'He *hath* said'—is one of the gems among the innumerable beauties of the Revised Version, suggesting, as it does, a message realized once for all, but repeating itself daily as the 'thorn' pricks him, and bringing a new joy with every stab of pain.

I pass to something quite different, without attempting to be very orderly. I want now to make a short incursion into the literary criticism of the Pauline letters and get some help out of our papyri. I am not proposing to go over the writings of the Apostle Paul in this New Testament of ours. I can only remind you that in this matter criticism is very favourable indeed to the views which probably most of us here would like to hold. There was a time when only four letters of Paul were allowed by the more advanced critics; while now there is nobody with a reputation to lose who would dream of allowing us less than eight, and, as to the rest, even they are in a better position than in times past. But there is one of Paul's most precious letters the position of which has raised a great deal of difficulty, and about which I want to make a suggestion. That is the letter called the Letter to the Ephesians. There is very good reason to believe that this was not a letter especially to the Ephesians. The words 'in Ephesus' are left out in our very best authorities, and the explanation advanced two hundred years ago by Archbishop Ussher, that the letter was a circular letter addressed to various churches in Roman Asia, holds the field still. That is to say, it was a letter to Ephesus, but it was also a letter to the Laodiceans. In Colossians Paul speaks about a letter sent to the

Laodiceans, which would come on to Colossae to be exchanged for that which they have just got. That letter of which he speaks was almost certainly what we call *Ephesians*.

But then there comes another question. Was this letter to the Ephesians really written by Paul? There are a number of difficulties about it. The style is unmistakably different in many ways; and, though one does not want to lay too much stress upon this fact, it must count for something. A few months ago I was reading a paper at Oxford, and I had a curious experience. I was reading on quite a technical subject, the question of the 'Semitisms' of New Testament Greek—that is, traces of very close translations from Semitic language so that the translation was really not, properly speaking, Greek. I was discussing whether there were really such things as 'Semitisms' in the language of Paul. I examined two or three idioms which are rather test cases, and was extremely surprised to find that I could say about these particular uses that they were not to be found in Paul except in Ephesians; two or three instances appeared in that Epistle not to be found elsewhere.

The question immediately raised, of course, is whether this must be added to the arguments urged against Paul's authorship. I have been

thinking about it, and venture a suggestion by which we may conclude this letter to be Paul's in every sense of the word except one, and that is that the actual writing down of it was done by another man.

Let me try to restore by sheer conjecture the conditions under which Ephesians may have been written. Paul, Timothy, and others have a long and anxious conversation as to the religious condition of the churches in Roman Asia. Paul determines to write to them. He has not time to dictate a letter to every one of them, but arranges to write one letter for them all, to be sent on its way from one church to another. But, then, there are special conditions in the church at Colossae. The church at Colossae is being harassed by perils that need special treatment, and nothing else than the very careful handling of Paul himself could adequately meet the situation. So Paul must compose a special letter to Colossae. But he will not leave the other churches without a message. So in a long talk with his companions and friends he goes right over the whole ground; he tells them what he wants said, and then commissions one—shall we say Timothy?—to draft a letter. I suggest Timothy especially because we read of him that 'from a babe' he was steeped in the sacred writings; and he is the one of whom we can easily believe

biblical phraseology would come naturally from his lips, so that he would easily drop into 'Semitisms.' Paul was equally steeped in these sacred writings, but it does not follow that every man who knows his Bible will use biblical phrases in his writings. Paul quoted the Bible, but he did not let it mould his style to any appreciable extent; while Timothy may well have let biblical phraseology colour his ordinary writing. The letter, then, as we conceive it becomes simply a written report of exhortations which Paul has just been giving orally—as if, for example, somebody were here engaged in writing out a report of what was said to us last hour. The thoughts would be those of the speaker; but the language would tend to be the language of the writer.

This, then, is what I take it Timothy had to do. He took Paul's thoughts and Paul's words, so far as he could reproduce them, and brought the draft to Paul. Paul then proceeded to amend his letter, striking out a phrase there and putting in a phrase here. He turned it inside out quite freely, and at the end that letter was Paul's absolutely. It started from him and it ended with him; but there was the trace of another hand in it which, I think, is quite enough to account for those differences of style which have given some people not a little trouble as to the authorship

This conjectural account explains, I think, the close resemblances between the letter to the Ephesians, so-called, and that to the Colossians. I have still to illustrate from the papyri, as I promised, the combination of resemblances and differences of style between these two Epistles. I have been assuming, you see, that the reason why Ephesians and Colossians are so much like each other is that they were written at the same time, Colossians by Paul himself, and Ephesians by a friend who reported from memory an oral discourse of the apostle. Now among the papyri we have two letters which I may read, as interesting in themselves and for the light which they throw upon the New Testament. The situation of the two, and the date, viz. 168 B.C., is identical. A man having a wife and child had been in very serious money difficulties, and, to save himself from further trouble, he promptly went into 'retreat' in a monastery. Perhaps you may think that the monastery suggests Christianity, but the date is B.C., and monasticism is in fact not a Christian institution at all, but much older. (Some of us think that there is not much Christianity in it at the best of times!) In the Serapeum, the temple of the god Serapis, at Memphis, there used to be from time to time companies of temporary monks, who went there into retreat and stayed for a fixed

period. These letters are written after the retreat has come to an end. Most of the people have gone home, but this man has not. He knows that he will find things uncomfortable at home, and so he determines to be very religious and stay. When his poor wife knew the retreat was over, she wrote this touching letter:

'Isias to Hephaestion her brother, greeting:'

Brother here means husband.

'If you are well and everything else goes with you reasonably, it would be as I perpetually pray the gods. I myself am in good health, and the child and all in the house.'

And then the good woman adds words between the lines, 'making mention of you continually.'

You will find that phrase in Rom. i. 9, in Eph. i. 16, and so on. It was a formula of writing which was used, you see, among the heathen, and which Paul took up.

And then her letter proceeds:

'When I received from Horus your letter in which you explained that you were in retreat in the Serapeum at Memphis, I immediately gave thanks to the gods that you were well, but that you did not return when all the others who were shut up returned distresses me; for in view of

having piloted myself and your child through such a crisis, and having come to the last extremity because of the high price of corn, thinking that now at last your return would give me some relief, you have never even thought of returning nor sparing a look for our helpless state. While you were still at home I went altogether short, not to mention how long time has passed since, and such hard times, and you having sent nothing. But now that Horus, who has delivered your letter, has told us about your having been set free from the retreat, I am altogether distressed. And your mother, too, is in great trouble about it. I entreat you for her sake and for ours to return to the city, unless, indeed, something most important is keeping you. Remember to take good care of yourself and be in good health. Good-bye. July 24, 168 B.C.'

This letter was found in the temple. No doubt he left it behind in his hurry when he went home! From the same place comes this second letter, dated on the same day—from his brother. I think you will agree as you hear it that the wife and the brother-in-law had been having a conversation in which they have made up together the pleas they will urge in separate letters.

'Dionysius to his brother Hephaestion, greeting: If you are well and other things suit you reasonably,

it would be as I perpetually pray to the gods. I myself am well, also Eudaemonis and the children and Isias and your children, and all in the house. When I received your letter explaining that you had been brought safely out of great dangers and were in retreat, I rendered thanks to the gods that you were well, but I wished you had returned and come to town as Conon and all the others who were shut up, that Isias, who when your child had been in the utmost danger had done everything to pull him safely through, and had suffered such hard times in addition, might at last get a little breathing space by seeing you. For it is altogether needless for you to stay in seclusion until you can make something and bring it. Every one when he has pulled safely out of danger tries to get home quickly and greet his wife and his children and his friends. So please try quickly to return, unless something most important is keeping you. Take good care of your bodily health. Good-bye. July 24.'

The similarity of these letters comes from the same reason as the similarity—to compare small things with great—of Ephesians and Colossians.

I am going to say something now about Paul's position as a Greek, and why, incidentally, we can suppose that Paul was really familiar with the Greek life. In the first place, there are his quotations from Greek literature. A few years ago Dr. Rendel Harris discovered a passage in one of

his Syriac manuscripts, a passage in which was embedded one of Paul's well-known quotations from classical literature. The passage consisted of four lines which were translated very easily into Greek hexameter verse. They ran thus:

> 'A grave have they fashioned for thee, O Zeus, highest and greatest, the Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, idle gluttons. But thou art not dead, for everlastingly thou livest and standest; for in thee we live, and move, and have our being.'

The allusion is to the fact that in Crete there was shown a tomb of Zeus, the supreme deity of the Greeks, a fact which always roused the indignation of orthodox Greek religion, where, of course, Zeus was immortal.

Now you have already recognized the bearing of the striking quotation unearthed for us by Dr. Harris. We begin with learning the reason why the Cretans were called liars, in words which became proverbial. But we have seen the familiar line from Titus brought into close connexion with one much more familiar, which has now to be referred to the same author, traditionally said to be the Cretan poet-philosopher Epimenides, who lived in the sixth century before Christ. There were two contributions from Greek poets, then, in that wonderful speech—or, rather, exordium of a speech

—that Paul addressed to the Areopagites in Athens. Not only 'For we are also His offspring,' but also 'In Him we live, and move, and have our being,' is a gem from Greek thought. How far these quotations prove Paul's reading in Greek literature is not easy to say. If you found an Englishman saying, 'To be or not to be: that is the question,' you could not inevitably prove he had read *Hamlet*. It might be he got the tag out of a newspaper. If, however, he continued the speech beyond that line, it would be a little better evidence that he knew his Shakespeare. But I think, on the whole, Paul was not unfamiliar with some of the things that had been said about the gods by Greek poets. He was just the sort of a man to search the literature for traces of these higher things.

We have a striking parallel especially urged by Sir William Ramsay. We know how constantly Paul referred to the Greek games, which, let us not forget, were religious ceremonials. Greek athletics were clean in comparison with some modern sports, and brought out the very best there was in the Greek character. They always seemed to have a great attraction for Paul. 'Whatsoever things are manly, whatsoever things are of good report'—Paul was always very sympathetic towards such things wherever he found them. And if some one had come to him and said, 'These Greek

games are in honour of heathen gods,' what would he have said? 'Yes,' we may hear him reply, 'suppose they are! Whether you eat or whether you drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God; and if you do not know my God, then I have come to tell you about Him. Meanwhile, if you know anything about God it is something if you dedicate the best part of life to Him.' I am quite sure Paul's mind was so large and so tolerant that he would not stick at the fact that they were 'heathen' deities. What he saw was a groping after God, and he saw that men who groped after God had some of them found Him.

There was a very beautiful fact brought out by a friend of mine, a great archaeologist, at Cambridge. He told me something new about the most famous of all statues ever graven by art or device of man—the wonderful 'Olympian Zeus' of Phidias, which looked down the race-course at Olympia. Phidias was an innovator in a very startling way. His predecessors always portrayed Zeus as majestic and terrible, brandishing the thunderbolt before he hurled it to work havoc among men. The new Zeus had a face of unspeakable majesty, but the majesty of benevolence and fatherliness. Five centuries before Christ that great sculptor, that deeply religious man, had realized the idea that God was good. I think if

Paul ever saw that figure he must have caught its meaning. The glorious figure disappeared somewhere during the Dark Ages, but the face lived on. It was actually taken over by the Church to become in Christian art the traditional face of Christ. So true it is, to quote that text that I was explaining in a former lecture, that 'unto us the toll of the ages has come as our inheritance.'

One other question about Paul I should like to examine before I have done. What was his education and what his social position? No less a scholar than Professor Deissmann has regarded him as a plain, working man, like most of the Twelve. But would an artisan have had a chance to study at the feet of Gamaliel? Would he have been charged by the priestly aristocracy to carry out that mission in Damascus? I greatly prefer Ramsay's view that Paul's father was a Roman citizen, and presumably, therefore, a man of wealth and of importance in Tarsus. Moreover, as Ramsay most persuasively argues, there was a time in Paul's life when he was in possession of a good deal of money, which must have come to him by the death of his father. Since men among the Jews did not have wills, when a man died his money descended automatically to his sons, and Paul would thus get money which certainly never would come to him by his father's

consent. The father, who gave his brilliant son a costly training under the greatest of the Rabbis, was not likely to take cheerfully his defection to 'the sect of the Nazarenes,' and we might safely assume that he cut him off with, or without, a shilling. I wonder if we can see in Acts xi. 25 a hint that Barnabas had some trouble in finding Paul, who was not at his father's well-known address, but in an obscure corner, living as best he could? Whether that is so or not, we can at least recognize what new meaning Ramsay's suggestion gives to Paul's own record that for Christ's sake he 'suffered the loss of all things' (Phil. iii. 8).

In favour of Paul's lowly origin it is urged that his vocabulary is that of the common people. That is quite true. A German scholar, Dr. Nägeli, who has made a very careful study of Paul's vocabulary as far as the first five letters of the alphabet, has shown that Paul's words can all of them be paralleled from quite vernacular sources, and that none of them are out-of-the-way words, but such as the common people could understand. Quite so; but that does not make us believe that Paul could not have used philosophic and out-of-the-way words if he liked. The reason why he did not use them was because it was of first importance to him to speak so that he could be understood by everybody. If you read John Wesley's sermons, you will find

exactly the same thing. John Wesley was a learned man, a man of refinement, a man who could have gone in for polysyllables with the best of them if he had cared to; but he meant to be understood. And so, surely, did Paul!

One rather interesting example of this has struck me quite lately. In going over the record of the Greek word *Hades*, I was rather surprised to find that it occurs only once in the innumerable papyri that Professor Milligan and I have been searching, and that in a document very far from the normal style. What is the reason? I am satisfied that this word had dropped out of the ordinary vernacular. But, you say, surely the word occurs in the New Testament, and very often in the Greek of the Old. Quite so; but that was, I believe, only because the Septuagint translators found it an exact rendering to represent the Hebrew *Sheol*. They took it for this purpose from the technical language of Greek religion, but as a word in ordinary life it was apparently no longer in use. We seem to have at once an explanation of what has always rather puzzled me. You will remember that at the end of one of Paul's greatest chapters, the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians, he brings it into that sublime apostrophe: 'Where, O death, is thy sting? Where, O grave, is thy victory?' as the Authorized Version has it. That is a

quotation from Hosea, and in the original you have both *death* and *Sheol* mentioned. And I think we all agree that the phraseology is much more impressive than this that Paul uses. How does Paul quote it? 'Where, O death, is thy sting? Where, O death, is thy victory?' Why did Paul use the same word twice, and spoil the rhetorical effect from Hosea? The reason was that the word was not in common, ordinary use, and so, even if it were to spoil the literary effect, Paul put the word that everybody knew into the passage.

While I can only briefly put it before you, I do not want to talk about Paul this morning without mentioning something which has a great deal to do with the whole of the history of his life. Had Paul ever seen the Lord Jesus in the flesh? Had he seen Him before that great day when, in the clouds outside of Damascus, he saw that wondrous Face which changed his life? There is a very able discussion by a brilliant German theologian, Johannes Weiss, translated into English in an American series published by Harpers, and called *Paul and Jesus*. Johannes Weiss argues, I think with conclusive force, that that text in 2 Corinthians, 'Even if we have known Christ in the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more,' necessarily implies that Paul really had seen Jesus. Now, after all, that

is very natural. We know that Paul was in Jerusalem before the Passion, when he studied under Gamaliel; he was there very soon after, for the story of Acts implies it. The ordinary theory assumes that Paul had gone back to Tarsus when Jesus was exercising His ministry. It is at least as easy to believe that Paul never left at all. There are some indications in Paul's language that Paul really was in Jerusalem at the time when the Lord Jesus was there. And the most significant suggestion I find of that kind is in the Passion story as it is written in his friend Luke's writings. There are several places in Luke's story of the Passion not to be found in Mark. There are places where, apparently, Luke has deserted his usual source for a source which he regards as more important still. What can that source be? Why not the personal experience of Paul? I think we can easily realize why Luke took up that authority. Just let me simply mention some of those traces.

You remember the question that was addressed to Jesus by a deputation from Jerusalem as to the question of divorce. Have you ever asked the question why it was that they thought they were trapping Him when they asked Him this question? If He said a man must not divorce his wife, the only thing for them to say was that He agreed with Shammai, one of the greatest Rabbis. If He said he

might divorce his wife, why, the only thing for them to say was that He agreed with Hillel, a still greater Rabbi. What did they think they were going to gain by getting Christ to pronounce upon this question? Professor Burkitt, of Cambridge, has pointed out the relation of all this to the marriage of Herod and Herodias. Where Jesus says that not only must not a man divorce his wife but a woman must not divorce her husband, the critics have sometimes raised a great deal of difficulty. What does that mean? No woman could divorce her husband in those days. No; but a princess could do what an ordinary woman could not, and it happened that Herodias had done it. Paul has an allusion to that very matter in 1 Cor. vii., where he does actually raise the question of a woman's divorcing her husband. It came out in that question between the Pharisees and Jesus, and I believe that Paul was on that deputation. You may be very sure if he were in Jerusalem at all he would take care to go down and put in every effort to convict Jesus of unorthodoxy.

And then there is that expression 'a house made with hands.' That is very significant. In what is described as 'false testimony' in Jesus's trial, it was alleged that He had said, 'I am able to destroy this house which is made with hands, and in three days raise another, made without hands.' That is

described as false testimony; but the 'lie that is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies.' What I think Jesus said was, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise another made without hands.' Hence two or three allusions in the Epistles. Then again, 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.' The word for *tribute* in that passage of Mark is a Latin word. In Luke it is a Greek word, and Paul uses the same word in the similar passage, Rom. xiii. 7. I believe Paul was also on that deputation.

Finally, there is that tremendous saying of Jesus in the Garden, reported by Luke alone. He protested against arrest, telling them He was daily in the temple and they had never laid hands on Him, 'But,' He said, 'this is your hour, and the authority of darkness.' Darkness may enshroud the Prince of the Light, in order that darkness may be expelled for ever from the world which He came to redeem. With that word He relapses into awful silence. We meet with that phrase again in the Epistle to the Colossians, where Paul says, 'Who hath delivered us out of the authority of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.'

Here I must leave it, trusting that you will think of other quotations that might have been made. I only remind you that we may say, and with some confidence, that the poet may very likely have been

right when he proclaims Paul as having been present to the end. You remember that thrilling stanza in F. W. H. Myers's *Saint Paul*—a better exposition of the apostle than perhaps any commentary has achieved:

> Oh, with what bitter triumph had I seen them,
> Drops of redemption bleeding from Thy brow!
> Thieves, and a culprit crucified between them,
> All men forsaking Him—and that was Thou!

Yes, Paul was there, and what he saw burned itself upon his brain until, at last, the time came when he saw that Face in glory and he knew that He who thus died had died for him. I think we can understand why Paul says so little about the earthly life of Jesus. What he talks about is what he has seen and heard of, and for him the Cross was the central thing, as it could not be for the other disciples, just because it made up the whole of what he knew of Jesus. The Cross was the interpretation; it was the purpose of everything; it was the goal to which the Son of Man was going. It was the purpose for which He had come into the world, and for Paul the Cross was just absolutely the beginning and the end of all things. That is why this many-sided man, this wonderful Paul, who might have achieved the highest distinction in absolutely any rank of life, who might have become the most famous of men,

that is why he determines to narrow himself, to cut himself off from everything else in the world and say, 'I determined not to know anything at all among you save one thing, Jesus the Messiah, and Him—not as a great Teacher, not as a matchless Example, not as winsome Love—no, but something more than that—and Him as crucified,' as the Sacrifice for the life of the world. Paul lived and died for one purpose. He lived to point men to Calvary; he, a Hebrew, a Greek, a Roman, a man in whom all the different strands of the knowledge and the life of the day met in so unique a way, he felt that he was raised up to go and point to that title on the Cross where, in letters of Greek and Hebrew and Latin, were written the words,

THIS IS THE KING.

IV

HOW WE GOT OUR GOSPELS

THE title I have given for this talk is almost absurd. I hardly know how I dared to set it down! It suggests a handbook of at least a hundred pages, which might serve for a popular outline of a subject I am now to deal with in something less than fifty minutes! I propose this morning to be discursive and selective, picking out a few things here and there, that by so doing I may illustrate the salient features of a most important question.

Let me remark first that though most important for helping us in the face of the world 'to give a reason for our hope,' the question of this morning is not absolutely the first in rank for us. We ask how we got those four pamphlets which tell us what we know of the earthly life of Jesus, the Carpenter of Nazareth, the Son of God. But we have to ask something more vital first. We must begin with the twentieth century and find out what Jesus Christ is doing to-day, and start our Christian evidences from what is seen and heard and known here in our midst now. Till we have done this it is

not proved worth while, except as a mere literary problem, to trace the history of four little books which might be printed *in extenso* in a single issue of some daily papers.

For the present we may assume it as proved that the message of the Gospels is still profoundly influencing the world. It is therefore worth our while to test them; and we may be sure in advance that the test will be futile if it does not enable us to understand to some degree the secret of their unique authority; a test which only comes to negative results is self-condemned. The great Bishop Westcott, a friend and colleague of my father's on the New Testament Revision Company, observed once that when he began the study of the Bible he determined to treat it just like any other book, and that it was in this way that he found it was not like any other book. That is the brave utterance of a man who thought first of Truth, and not of his own favourite presuppositions. If we believe in the Book, we shall not be afraid of anything that is called 'criticism.' The word I have just pronounced is a terrible bugbear to many good people. It has, we may admit, a somewhat unhappy suggestion of a superior person talking down something that is below him. But that is what we put into the word, not what it really means. 'Criticism' comes from an adjective

attached to the Greek word for 'judge'; and of all people in creation the judge, if he knows his business, has to be most impartial, most rigid in his reasoning. He must give over all made-up opinions and investigate the evidence himself; and the truth is the one and only thing he cares about. And this is exactly what the attitude of the 'critic' ought to be. Critics may form very different conclusions. One comes to conservative results, and one to revolutionary results. So long as the critic is honest, I do not think it matters very much, for the things that matter most in these Gospels are strong enough to survive anything. We may differ about minor issues without endangering what is central.

What I propose to say this morning in an attempt to cover my title will be partly on 'lower' criticism and partly on 'higher.' 'Higher criticism' asks the question when and how and where these books were written, who wrote them, and why they were written. 'Lower criticism' meets the stream lower down, and asks how, after they left their authors' hands, they came down to us, how far we can be sure that we have them in their original form. Beginning, as is natural, high up at the source, I will try to summarize in a sentence or two what is now almost universally held among scholars with regard to the external history of our first three

Gospels. It is agreed to-day that our oldest Gospel is the Gospel of Mark. That Gospel was written, according to very early tradition, and a tradition which seems to have everything in its favour, by a man who had had special relation to the Apostle Peter; and this book was the historical basis of the two later Gospels, called after Matthew and Luke respectively. Since, however, there is a large amount of matter, almost exclusively sayings of Jesus, common to Matthew and Luke, but not found in Mark, we postulate the use of another document, which must have been lost very soon after the evangelists worked up its material. When we have recognized these two sources, we have still to allow for other sources, written or oral, which the authors of Matthew and Luke had to themselves severally, to account for narratives and discourses found in one Gospel alone.

This is, in a few bald sentences, the view of the beginnings of our Gospels which is held by nearly all scholars to-day, and is likely to remain in possession, with modifications mainly in detail. Before I say anything more about it I want to start with another part of the New Testament, from which we secure evidence that is of vital importance for the history of the Gospels. The Book of Acts contains, as you know very well, considerable sections in which the intrusion of the first personal pronoun

tells us that we have in our hands the diary of a man who was present himself at the events he records. We call this part of Acts the '*we*-sections,' and even the most revolutionary critics allow that they come from a companion of Paul, who set down his experience of travels with the apostle. Here, then, we have firm ground to build upon, for in claiming the presence of an eye-witness at this point of the story we are supported by men who will grant very little of the case we are accustomed to regard as undisputed. You will see why I lay such stress on the '*we*-sections' when I go on to say that of late the unity of these passages with the rest of the Book of the Acts and the Gospel of Luke has been asserted by scholars who are entirely beyond the suspicion of having prejudices on the orthodox side. The famous theologian Professor Harnack, of Berlin, has written four books lately on the Third Gospel and Acts, and has lent the great weight of his authority to a thesis which had been regarded by not a few prominent German scholars as a mere prejudice of old-fashioned orthodoxy, viz. that the man who wrote the '*we*-sections' wrote also the whole book in which they are embedded and its companion volume the Gospel. I confess, as a Briton, to some patriotic satisfaction at tardy justice done to an Irish scholar, Dr. Hobart, who wrote some thirty years since

a most admirable work entitled *The Medical Language of St. Luke,* only to meet with quite contemptuous treatment from an army of critics who never read him. Dr. Hobart's method was to illustrate Luke's language and style from the medical literature of the Greeks. That wonderful people, to whom we owe the foundation of every art and every science, and the earliest masterpieces of literature, include among their triumphs the first beginnings of medicine and surgery. We have, even from the fifth century before Christ, great works on medicine showing marvellous research and true scientific observation. Now Luke was a doctor; 'Luke the beloved physician' is mentioned in Paul's Epistle to the Colossians. And according to second-century tradition it was this 'Dr. Lucas' who wrote the two books which together make up the largest individual contribution to the library of the New Testament. Dr. Hobart put this tradition to the test, and he found in the two books, distributed evenly all through them, a large number of characteristic words and phrases which occur especially or exclusively in medical literature. They include not only words appropriate to the diagnosis of disease and to medical or surgical practice, but also more general terminology which happens to be conspicuous in this medical literature. The cumulative effect of the argument is very

strong. It makes it practically certain that the writer not merely of the '*we*-sections,' but also of the books as a whole, was a diligent reader of Greek medical works. To postulate another doctor as the author when by a marvellous independent choice tradition has given us the name of 'the beloved physician' would be simply fatuous. Professor Harnack has endorsed this argument of Hobart's, and he has strengthened the case by his own examination of Luke's phraseology, all tending to emphasize the individuality of the author's style throughout. I may add from some work of my own that the grammar tells the same story. We have, then, the assured result that these two books were written throughout by one man, a doctor, and one who actually travelled with Paul. That his name was really Luke may be regarded as certain. It is a certainty if only because of the complete obscurity of the man. He is only mentioned three times. Why should the Church pitch on that particular name, out of all the names of Paul's companions, and father the book upon him?

Let me go on to mention two directions in which fresh light has been cast on Luke. One is the suggestion of Sir William Ramsay that when Paul saw the vision at Troas, and the 'man from Macedonia' cried out to him, saying, 'Come over into Macedonia and help us,' it was the vision of his new

friend Luke that he saw. You remember that the author went with Paul from Troas to Philippi. and then the 'we' passages stop. They do not recommence until Paul gets back to Philippi, and then they begin again without any statement on the part of the writer, who is not concerned to talk about himself. Clearly he remained at Philippi, in Macedonia—a town named after the famous Philip of Macedon—until Paul came through again. It is natural to suppose that this was Luke's home, so that he was a member of the best loved of all Paul's churches. We may suppose that Paul made Luke's acquaintance at Troas, and felt at once that affinity of mind and heart which marked them out as friends. What more natural than that when he went to bed he should dream of his friend, and see him standing by him to utter an entreaty like this? Then over the morning meal Paul told his dream. We may be sure that Luke was quick to reply, 'That must be a divine admonition. You have been kept out of Bithynia, you have been kept out of Asia—and what a field there was in Asia, in Ephesus, and all those crowded cities! What a chance there seemed to be for you in Bithynia! But you have been telling us how you were kept out of the Province of Asia, how a vision of Jesus Himself closed Bithynia, how you were forced down to Troas here, where there is nothing to do but look

over the Straits to Europe. Surely it means that you must go on to the west over the sea, and take the gospel to the land where my people dwell.' Am I pressing too far the suggestion of that tell-tale 'we' that comes in here for the first time? 'When he had seen the vision, *we* immediately planned to set out for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to evangelize them.'

Then just one other point about Luke's personality. Professor Souter, of Aberdeen University, hit upon a point a few years ago which is obvious enough when once suggested. It is simply a matter of translation. If you will turn to 2 Cor. viii. 18 you will find, after a mention of Titus's eagerness to visit Corinth, the statement that Paul had sent with him 'the brother.' So it is read in Authorized and Revised Versions. But Dr. Souter has rightly pointed out that '*his* brother' is a much more natural translation. This applies even more to 2 Cor. xii. 18, where we should read, 'I exhorted Titus, and sent his brother with him.' What a very strange phrase 'the brother' is there! (I might add a further instance in Rom. xvi. 23, 'Erastus the city treasurer, and Quartus his brother.') Who, then, was Titus's brother, 'whose praise in the telling of the Gospel story extends through all the churches'? What was this brother's name? Now it is an old conjecture that the description

just quoted from 2 Cor. viii. 18 was meant for no other than Luke. It is a natural conjecture in itself, but it gains greatly by being associated with the amended rendering. For it gives a key to one of the notable difficulties of the Book of Acts. People have often said, 'We know from Paul's letters that one of the most important of all the early Christians was Titus. What a very strange thing it is that Titus is never mentioned in the Book of Acts!' But if Titus was Luke's brother he did not mention him any more than he mentioned himself. It is just a part of a great man's humility, content to shrink into the background. Luke was one of the company of those who wrote the New Testament; and if you want a motto for the writers of the New Testament—yes, of the Old Testament, too—it is, 'And they said, Who art thou? . . And he said, I am a voice.' *Vox et praeterea nihil.* In your own Whittier's words:

> What matter—I or they?
> Mine or another's day,
> So the right word be said,
> And life the sweeter made?

It does not matter. Those men were not in it for fame. They did not care whether after ages knew that they had written little books which were going to turn the world upside down. The

only thing they cared about was how the message of Jesus Christ was to be brought to men's hearts. They thought little about literary form; less than nothing about writing books that would be admired. They were not out for admiration. They only thought of their story, and rejoiced to know that their names were written in heaven, even though they might never be known on earth.

How far have we advanced now? We have shown that no impartial person can question the claim made for 'Dr. Lucas' as author of the two books dedicated to Theophilus, who when the first of them was written was addressed as 'Excellency,' as a member of the Roman public service. We pass now to the older Gospel from which, as every student has long believed, Luke took so much of his narrative.

How do we know that Mark wrote that Gospel? There is one reason, I think, which is quite enough by itself. Suppose the Church had set to work to guess which of the early Christians whose names they knew had written this book, which set in rough but wonderfully vivid language the story of Jesus, who do you think is about the last of them they would have thought of? Why, surely, the man about whom it was recorded in the Book of Acts that he had gone forth as 'attendant' with Paul and Barnabas, and that as soon as ever they got into a difficult place, when they were just coming

up against the high passes of the Taurus Mountains, infested by the robbers of whom Paul tells us, a dangerous place where a strong young man had his chance of service, his heart failed him, and he ran away back to Jerusalem. The man of whom that could be said is not the man whom the Church would have picked out as the man best qualified to write a Gospel. Not a bit of it. You and I could have made many better guesses. The reason why Mark's name is attached to that Gospel is again a very simple reason, like that which helped us to the authorship of the book that stands next to it. Mark wrote the book—that is all!

Now about Mark we have some traditions. We have one from Papias, one of the very earliest of Christian writers. He was the Bishop of Hierapolis, near Colossae. It is recorded of him by Eusebius, the historian, that he was 'a man of very narrow understanding.' We have quotations from him which entirely bear this out. But even if he was a bit of a fool, his early date—he was born before the first century was over—gives him an authority that cannot be questioned. The two or three brief sentences we possess from his *Expositions* as to the Gospel origins have supplied texts for the longest sermons criticism has ever known. One is the story which he gives us of the birth of the Gospel of Mark. I need only refer there to the fact

that he tells us Mark 'had been the interpreter of Peter.' He had been in special relation with Peter, and therefore he got his Gospel story primarily from Peter. There is only one reason I have ever heard against that, and it is typical of a certain class of criticism. I do not know whether it was invented by Professor Jülicher, but I am taking it from him. The Church says that Mark was the interpreter of Peter, and that Peter, therefore, stands behind the Second Gospel. This Peter was an eye-witness—he was actually a companion of Jesus. But the Second Gospel tells us of many miracles, and 'miracles do not happen.' Therefore you cannot suppose that an eye-witness recorded them, and therefore you must give up Mark's connexion with Peter. '*Q.E.D.!*' one is supposed to say, after the style of Euclid.

But I want to come to another question which I have never heard asked. It might be suggestive for our object. What was the purpose for which Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas, and for which Luke later accompanied Paul and Silas? We are told that Mark was the 'attendant' of Paul and Barnabas. What was he there for? I do not know what you have thought about it. I rather fancy that if I had put my own impressions into words a few years ago I should have said that Mark went with them as a younger man to look

after their luggage, to see their passages were got on ships, and to help them in every way he could so as to set the missionaries free to concentrate on their preaching. I take a very different view now, and I get it from reading again more carefully those four verses which are more important than anything else in the New Testament when you want to ask the question, 'What does Inspiration involve?' I mean the first four verses of the Gospel of Luke, that priceless little preface which tells us how an inspired writer set to work—how instead of finding inspiration to save him trouble, he found it gave him trouble! *Because* he was inspired, and *because* he had to write about something more important than anything the world had ever seen before, he had to work his subject up and 'trace over again the whole story carefully.' That was the way in which Luke wrote. Now he says he wants to do this in accordance with what he learnt from men who from the beginning were 'eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word.' This word *minister* or *attendant* is the word used in Acts xiii. 5, which I was quoting just now. So these men were the 'servants of the Gospel'—let us put 'Gospel' instead of 'Word.' The Gospel, so to speak, was their business. That was what they had given their lives to. Let us try to use our imagination, and see how this works out.

When Paul went to a new place, what was his *modus operandi*? We know he went to the synagogue first. There he found people who knew the Old Testament. That was the best preparation for the New. In the synagogue there were always a few people whose hearts the Lord had touched, who would recognize instantly that in this Gospel of the newly manifested Messiah they had the key to the Old Testament Scripture that they knew so well. Not many Jews were of this 'honourable' sort which has made the synagogue at Beroea proverbial. Paul found more opponents than friends, but he was well satisfied if he won a few who were prepared by the study of the Old Testament, and these people he could use in his own way. From the synagogue he would go out into the market-place, just as Socrates had done five hundred years before, and he would soon gather a curious crowd together and make a speech telling them about Jesus of Nazareth. Out of the crowd, when the talk was over, Paul would collect a varying number of inquirers, eager to hear more of this wonderful story. They wanted to hear all about Jesus—His parables, His works, His life, and more and ever more about His death. Now if Paul had spent the rest of his time in that place talking to such converts, he never would have had an hour to spare for the unreached masses

outside. What did he do? He had with him a man who had not the same gift of preaching to the unconverted, but who had an excellent memory, and full knowledge of all those great events which were being told among them; and he turned over the catechumens to this 'attendant' or 'minister.' Mark would take the inquirers aside, and in some quiet place he would begin to tell the story of the Gospel in detail. He would meet them again and again for as long as they were in the place. Necessarily, as he did not know how long he would stay there—they might be driven out by the Jews or the mob any time—he would tell them the most important things first What would be the first chapter of Mark that would get itself spoken? Why, of course, the fifteenth, the story of the Death, the death by which men live. That is the start, from which he would work back to tell other things about the life of Jesus. There would be no particular order in these lessons, any more than there is any particular order in the sermons a minister would preach to his congregation to-day. He does not arrange his topics chronologically. Neither does Mark. He learnt, as he told the tale in place after place, which narratives most vividly impressed his audience and drew them into full discipleship. So a selection gradually evolved itself from

experience. Meanwhile, as men grew older they felt the need of fixing these stories in writing for use by the churches in after time. So, I take it, when Peter had gone to his reward, and his 'attendant' or 'interpreter' was no longer young, Mark wrote out his oral lessons for later 'gospellers' to use when he was gone.

I must say a few words about the Gospel that stands first. Papias tells us that 'Matthew composed the oracles in Hebrew, and every one interpreted them as best he could.' There is a sentence upon which enormous arguments have been elaborated. It is the earliest mention of Matthew as an evangelist; and the name at once reminds us of other authorships which would never have been guessed. Luke was obscure. Mark had been a cowardly deserter. Matthew had been a tax-gatherer. And the tax-gatherers of that age and country were outcasts, and they deserved to be. They were men who entered into the service of the alien, and could only make their living by grinding the faces of the poor. Matthew was the only apostle whose past was shady, and whose record was preserved. Surely he was the very last of the eleven whom the Church would have picked out as the man to write anything like a Gospel. Therefore I come back to the simplest explanation of the choice of Matthew's name.

He must really have written what Papias assigns to him. He did not write the Gospel of Matthew as we have it; but he made the collection of the Sayings of Jesus, and this collection became the principal basis of the important book which is called 'The Gospel according to Matthew.' This book, like so many others in Old Testament and New, comes down to us without any certainty who wrote it. As before, 'Who art thou?' 'I am a voice.'

But I must abruptly leave the higher criticism. There is still much to say about the First Gospel, and everything to say about the Fourth. But it would be absurd to begin such a story in ten minutes. I had better use my remaining time on an easier subject, the transmission of the text of the Gospels—what we call lower, or textual, criticism. I want us to realize in this matter that the Gospels are very different indeed from any other books in history. That is not singular; there are a great many other points in which they differ. The special point I mean is this. Our ordinary books, even in antiquity, have come to us very nearly as they left their authors' hands. This is due to the method of reproduction. The manuscript passed to a *scriptorium*, or copying establishment maintained by a publisher. In that house there were some hundreds of slaves, slaves well skilled in writing,

who spent their whole life copying manuscripts. In that way, since slave labour was inexpensive, it was possible to turn out books very much more cheaply than we should expect when they were all written out in full by hand. All ordinary books were produced in that way. You can see that such a method of production differed from our results achieved by printing, in that there were large possibilities of textual error from the very first. If you have ever tried to copy a long passage from a book, and then checked what you have written by comparison with the printed book, you know what I mean. It is an amazingly difficult thing to keep a passage absolutely as it is written. And one thing that you will notice about it is that the best way to copy exactly is to write mechanically or even unintelligently. There is a story about a compositor in Sheffield who was a skilful workman, very rapid and very accurate. People suspected that he hardly knew anything of what he had set up. So his mates in the office one day played a trick upon him. They gave him copy which was the account of a most bloodcurdling murder that had been committed on the moors just outside Sheffield, and the murdered person was this man's wife, he himself being the murderer. A most detailed account of this murder was given. He set it up without turning a hair. Then they struck off one copy of the

paper, and said, 'Hello, Bill! Have you seen this bit in the paper?' He read it, and was very much astonished indeed. It never occurred to him that he had set up that copy. But that, I gather, is the best way of doing it.

Now our manuscripts of the New Testament were hand-copied, of course, but not on this principle. They could not go into the regular publishing houses. Remember that when the New Testament began to be circulated it was copied in times of persecution; and if that precious book had ever been put into the hands of the regular publishing houses some one would have informed the authorities and every copy of it would have been destroyed, and the publisher would have found himself in dire trouble. The result was that a large proportion of the copies made in the early days were written by amateurs. They were people who knew and loved the book beyond anything else. They knew it *too* well! Suppose, for instance, taking the first example that comes into my head, suppose one of these Christians is copying the beginning of the eleventh chapter of Luke. He comes to the Lord's Prayer, and he finds Luke describing that prayer thus: 'Father, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us day by day our bread for the coming day; and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive every one indebted to us;

and bring us not into temptation.' The ordinary mechanical scribe would copy that down just exactly as it is. But the Christian who said the Lord's Prayer every day in the early liturgical form given in Matthew would say, 'Something is left out.' Then very soon you have got, 'Our Father, who art in heaven.' And there is the additional petition, 'Thy will come to pass,' and the significant note attached to the three first petitions, 'as in heaven, so on earth.' At the end, moreover, came in 'But deliver us from evil.' Similarly, when the scribe was copying the fuller form of Matthew he added the doxology, taken from the Old Testament, 'For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever and ever.' Men put in what was familiar to them. I want to insist upon this point because I think it has a great deal to do with the history of our Gospels. The fact is that for some three or four generations the Gospels were not protected by the sort of sanctity that belonged to them afterwards. In the earliest days there were special conditions endangering the exact preservation of the text as the evangelist left it. Into a church which used a copy of a Gospel there might come any day a travelling missionary who could say, 'I remember hearing Peter say so and so,' or, 'I remember one time when I was visiting John, and he told me this.' Now, as a matter of fact, these

reminiscences, which came so directly from apostles or eye-witnesses, were not nearly as reliable as the written record. Supposing you say that you remember some great man, whom you saw thirty or forty years or even fifty years ago. Of course you remember seeing him; you remember that he said something to you. I remember thirty years ago having the privilege of a five-minutes' talk with Gladstone. I remember what the subject was, but I should be very sorry indeed to offer to any biographer of Gladstone my recollections of what he said. It was the man himself that I remember, and that is all I do remember. But people loved these reminiscences, though they were not reliable. When they got hold of them they liked to put them into the margin of their Gospel. The text itself was only precious to them in so far as it preserved a record of the words and deeds of Jesus, and the marginal addition was for them on the same footing as the text. Then there was another possibility of divergence in the existence of different translations made from an Aramaic text, according to that saying of Papias I quoted not long since. The result is that in the second century an extraordinary amount of variation sprang up, as witnessed for us still by the quotations from the Gospel story which we find in the Christian writers of that time.

What can we say of this? If you will look in the

margin of the Revised Version you will find places in the text especially valued by you that are left out. You will read in the margin, 'These words are omitted by the most ancient authorities.' I dare say you may have been resentful, and said, 'So much the worse for the most ancient authorities!' That is human nature. But I may safely bid you be quite easy. It is true that you have many passages omitted. Here is one in Matt. xvi. 2, 3, a parable of Jesus about the signs of the weather: 'When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather; for the heaven is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day; for the heaven is red and lowering. Ye know how to discern the face of the heaven; but ye cannot discern the signs of the times.' Then you will see in the margin of the Revised Version that these words were omitted by very important ancient authorities. Quite so; and, frankly, I feel certain that these words were not contained in the Gospel as it left the author's hands. Where, then, did they come from? Why, they were floating tradition. We have been hearing this morning in another lecture about traditional sayings of Jesus preserved by Clement of Alexandria. To my mind, the wonder is that we have not got very many more. I was telling you about the sayings of Jesus that were preserved in that half sheet of paper from

Oxyrhynchus, such as 'Raise the stone, and there thou shalt find Me; cleave the wood, and there am I.' Our manuscripts have many sayings like that which came into the text at a later time. Let me mention one which I think—whether I am right or wrong I do not know; I am only guessing—may suggest some useful ideas. In this passage I am sure that every one who ever picked up the Revised Version must have had a severe shock. In Luke's account of the Crucifixion we have these words—how sacred they are!—'And Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' And then you read in the Revised Version in the margin that these words are omitted by important ancient authorities. You do not like that? Well, I must rub it in a little. Not only are those words omitted by very ancient authorities, but really, though efforts to explain the omission have come from some very wise people, I am afraid that I cannot myself doubt that they are omitted by ancient authorities because they were not in Luke's Gospel. Luke did not know of them any more than Matthew or Mark did. How, then, did they come there? Let us try a little imagination. Ask yourself, first, Who heard these words? Were they shouted so that the crowd might hear? Was there one single friendly ear there? For it looks as if the words were said just at that first dreadful moment

when His friends were still 'afar off.' Did nobody hear them? Nobody, except the executioners themselves—the centurion and his four men. They heard them whispered in faint words of utter agony. *They* heard them.

Now I have mentioned the centurion. What else do we hear about him? Why, we hear that when the day was over and the lifeless form hung there upon the cross, this man, having seen and heard all that had happened, said, 'Truly, this man was Son of God.' Son of God! That was the title which was usurped by the Emperor of Rome, and this man who owed allegiance to the Emperor, having seen what he had seen, said of that poor peasant hanging up there, 'Truly, *this* man was Son of God.' What had influenced him—the earthquake, the portents? No; something much more wonderful. If that man heard the words in which the Lord prayed for the men who were driving the nails through His hands, I think that was more likely to influence him than anything else in the world.

And then I picture that man drafted to military duty at some distant station. In course of time he hears that strange fanatics have come into the place. They are preaching that men should believe in a God such as no one ever thought of before—a Galilean who was crucified in the procuratorship

of Pontius Pilate. And then he remembers. He thinks of something that had been in his mind all through the intervening time. He goes to their meeting. He listens to what they have to say about this Jesus. 'Jesus!' says he. 'Why, I fixed that name in letters of Hebrew and Greek and Latin upon a cross that day!' Jesus! He rises and tells those breathless worshippers what he had seen and heard. And then he said that at the moment when the other victims of that accursed cruelty were shrieking and cursing, this man said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' Can you fancy what an impression it would make upon the believers in that place? How quickly the words were written in the margin of their Gospel! How quickly the first traveller from that church to some distant place would tell the wonderful story! How very soon it came into all the copies of the Greek Gospel that were to be found everywhere throughout the world! Yes; the words are not in Luke's original Gospel, but as the great Professor Hort said in regard to the fact that these words cannot be textually defended, 'Few if any words in all the Gospels bear more intrinsic witness to the truth of what they relate than these.'

There I must end my effort to sketch some features of the long history of those great little books. Let

me end as I began by reminding you of the supreme attestation beside which all merely historical witness must pale. The Gospels about which we have been speaking are the first among many in a great Divine Library. 'There are also many other things that Jesus did, and if these are written every one, I suppose even the world itself will not contain the books written.' They have been written ever since, 'on tables that are hearts of flesh,' and the world is full of them to-day. So to the end of time shall that Library gather more treasures. For, as Mr. Glover says, 'The Gospels are not four but ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, and the last word of every one of them is, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."'

V

THE FULLNESS OF THE TIME

THIS concluding talk of mine might be described as a kind of informal sermon on a great passage of Paul's letter to the Galatians. You will remember how the fourth chapter begins with the parable of the child who is heir to a vast estate, but while he is a child is under stewards until the time fixed beforehand by the father. And we dwell on that word, for we remember that it is the Father who chooses the time that is best, best from the point of view of immortal love. Paul goes on to tell of the ages before that fixed period arose, and how at last 'when the fullness of the time came God sent forth His Son.' My object this morning is to illustrate from certain conditions of the first centuries B.C. and A.D. how that was the one time in all human history when the Birth at Bethlehem could take place, that Jesus came into the world just exactly when everything was made ready for Him.

I want to look at this from three points of view,

speaking successively of language conditions, political conditions, and religious conditions. I shall try to prove that in all these respects the date *Anno Domini* is absolutely ideal.

Firstly, as to language. I need not recapitulate what I have said about the character of Greek as the world language at the time when Jesus came. You realize that Greek was the language of a little country most uniquely dowered, a little country into which there was more intellectuality packed than into any other, large or small, in all the world's history before or since. When we speak of Greece we have to cut down our definition still further; for even in Greece most parts were ordinary. But there was an extraordinary strain of genius concentrated particularly in the people of Athens. Though the writers of Greece outside Attica produced some supreme literature, such as Homer and Pindar and Herodotus, the greatest and most varied literary, artistic, and scientific output has to be credited to that one town. Now when we look at the Greek of five hundred years before Christ, we find that in a little country, which could be dumped down several times over in most of your States, there were divisions of dialect which made quite near neighbours almost unintelligible. There were Athens and Thebes, between thirty and forty miles apart, as different as towns

could be. One was intellectual; one was stupid. One spoke a language which could be understood by anybody who knows any Greek at all; the other spoke a language which I might very safely present to a very decent Greek scholar and be almost certain that unless he happened to have worked on this particular line he would make nothing out of it. So different are the words, the pronunciation, the whole genius of speech, that it seems almost another language. Nor was it dialect alone that separated Greek from Greek. The country was divided into tiny commonwealths that were constantly at war with each other. The Greek spirit of freedom ran into individualism gone mad, and the result was what you might expect. When one town in a small country hated another town worse than it hated outsiders, when even within one town one party hated the other party far more than anybody outside, the end was inevitable. Under their powerful and unscrupulous neighbour, Philip of Macedon, the father of the great Alexander, Greece was subjugated and all the little city States forced to come together under one rule. They never had any real independence again. Then Alexander took his Greeks away with him into distant lands. He made those wonderful military expeditions of which we read, when he penetrated as far as India. One

of many by-products of Alexander's short life-work was the unification of Greece and the spread of Hellenism far and wide. Greeks from Athens and Sparta and Thebes had to meet in regular intercourse. As always happens when men with different dialects are thrown together for long, uniformity of speech began to arise. The intellectual primacy of Attic Greek, the dialect of Athens, brought it naturally to the top; and Attic, only shorn of marked peculiarities, became the basis of what is virtually a new language. Classical scholars have been accustomed to talk of Greek as if it came to an end somewhere in the fourth century before Christ. But the Greek language was not dead, she was hardly even sleeping; and after a brief interval we see her as a world power, risen from the dead with the New Testament in her hand. Greek became the language of commerce, the language of daily intercourse, right over a vast and constantly increasing area. Greek was spoken away in Rome, so much so that the Emperor Marcus Aurelius wrote his private meditations in Greek, that Paul wrote his letter to the Romans in Greek, that the satirist Juvenal says Rome had become practically a Greek city. It was needless to learn Latin even if one were going to settle in Rome itself. As to the extent over which Greek spread, I think one of the most vivid

illustrations of it has come to light within the last few months. Last October I was startled by a piece of news which was given to me by Professor E. G. Browne, the great Persian scholar of Cambridge University. He told me that he had just had a very interesting present from one of the remote parts of the world. A Kurdish Christian doctor, named Said Khan, had been called to a place away up in the mountains of Persia, a district called Avroman, in order to treat a sick Kurd chief. He responded at the risk of his life, but happily he was successful in his work. I have a letter from him which is written in very indifferent English, but which betrays the language of the heart that every one who loves Christ can understand. This good man received, apparently as a part of his reward for his services, something which he instantly saw was of great value. It was just a little clay pot, and in that pot there were some documents of parchment. One was in a language which so far no one has been able to interpret. Presumably it was a local dialect; but we cannot be quite sure what sort of dialect it was. Two were in Greek, and they were exactly dated. One was 88 B.C., and the other was 22 B.C., and they were title-deeds of a vineyard. Evidently this pot was some sort of a safe in which these title-deeds had been deposited for keeping. Here

you have an example of an astonishing fact. You have Greek right away among the wild mountains of Persia, and dated in the first century before Christ. It is a vivid illustration of that chapter in Acts where Jews 'from every nation under heaven' uttered their amazement as they heard their native languages being spoken by men of Galilee. 'Parthians and Medes and Elamites,' coming from the very district where that little pot was found, could talk together in Greek when they met for worship in Jerusalem, just as we see they could write Greek for business purposes far away in the lands where they had made their home. That little stone pot and its parchments tell us how the first Christian missionaries were able so quickly to publish their message everywhere.

We are not dealing here with the language of books, a language which became more and more archaic, as time went on, in its effort to maintain the purity of the Attic of the fourth and fifth centuries before Christ. We are dealing now with the vernacular, which could be spoken and written by half-educated farmers in Egypt, by the illiterate man away in the wilds of Persia, spoken from Spain to Persia, from Rome down to Alexandria and the cataracts of the Nile. How long had that vernacular been in existence? Only at most from about the third century before Christ; and

even during this period the wide extension of Greek was only characteristic of the later generations. We might safely say that the period during which Greek was at the height of its power, the period during which it was understood intelligently by the largest number of people, was simply the time just before and just after the coming of Christ, the first century before Christ and perhaps the first two centuries A.D., just exactly the time when it could be used for the great purpose of evangelization.

You must not forget that these people spoke also their own languages. We have evidence from Acts as to that. We remember how when Paul and Barnabas were at Lystra they preached and the people understood them; but you will notice that Paul and Barnabas themselves did not understand the language of Lycaonia. It was into this that the people relapsed when they were talking intimately among themselves. I am always illustrating this from something which is very intelligible to us in our country. At my own College we have always some Welsh students. They have to do their work in English at Didsbury College; but they are being prepared for work in Wales, and the churches to which they go will be churches in which Welsh will be spoken almost entirely. The Welsh people mostly understand English. But at home and at worship they want

to have their own language, for English is always foreign in sound to them. The situation in Wales to-day is almost exactly the situation in Palestine or Lycaonia during the first century A.D. Suppose our Welsh statesman, Mr. Lloyd George, goes down into Wales to make a speech to his constituents. He begins his speech in Welsh, because the people love to hear it. Then in a few minutes he will remark that he believes there are some people outside Wales who are wanting to hear what he has to say, and as a concession to their weakness he must relapse into English, which he promptly does. And, of course, the great company gathered together understand English almost as well as they understand Welsh. Now that is exactly what happened to Paul when he was allowed (Acts xxi. 40) to come forward and speak to the people. We are told that when he spoke in the Aramaic language they were 'the more silent.' That is to say, they were listening to him with the expectation that he would speak in Greek. They would have understood him if he had thus spoken, but when they found he was speaking in their own language they were 'the more silent.' This is a very typical instance of what would happen then in any part of the Roman world. I need say little to show how these providential conditions helped Paul's work. Look at our missionary

conditions to-day. There are thousands of our missionaries labouring in far countries all over the world. Most of them have had to spend the best part of two long years eating their heart out in eagerness to preach to the people, but unable to preach until they have learned enough of the language to be sure that they will not be doing more harm than good. That was not the case in the first century. When Paul went from Palestine to speak Greek in Cilicia, he found very little difference, only such difference as there is between the English of England and the English of America. He could travel to Rome, he could travel beyond to Spain, he might have travelled to Egypt or to Persia, and everywhere he could talk that same Greek and be understood at once. There was no time wasted in learning the language.

And remember that *gaining time* was really one of the most important conditions of success for the Christian propaganda in the first century. Why was it that the Church had such amazing success in those first generations? Why, because the missionaries of the Cross lost no time. '*Straightway* he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same.' Remember the inner history of that first century. Their clear-sighted enemies, the Jews, warned the Roman authorities that the Christian preachers were doing nothing

less than setting up 'another Emperor, one Jesus.' What they said was perfectly true, but the Romans did not believe them. The Romans looked down from the perfect security of their position. How could they be afraid of a few fanatics from despised Palestine who went about preaching the divinity of a crucified Galilean carpenter? How could anything of that kind ever disturb their Empire? And so, as the Book of Acts is constantly telling us, Paul was able to go everywhere, depending upon his Roman citizenship and the protection of the Roman governors. When the Jews tried to accuse him before the Proconsul of Achaia, and said, 'This man is trying to persuade men to worship God contrary to the law,' Gallio simply told them that the matter did not concern him. He brusquely nonsuited the prosecutors and kept to his own business.

But the time came when the Christians had done their work well, when mostly through the statesmanship and passionate zeal of Paul they had covered the Empire with a network of Christian agencies. Passing along the great Roman roads, Paul planted the Cross in one big town after another, and the men whom he had taught there immediately began to preach in all the country round. The Christians became so numerous that the Romans began to be alarmed, and they started persecution.

At first the pretext of punishment was that the Christians were criminals. All kinds of revolting crimes were charged against them. But this could not last long. The crisis came when the issue of the fight was simplified, and to accept the name of Christian was made a capital crime. So was thrown down the gage of battle, and the struggle of two and a half centuries began. The First Epistle of Peter helps us to see the transition very clearly. Now if Rome had made 'the Name' a capital offence thirty or forty years earlier, she could have crushed Christianity utterly by the simple process of putting to death every man, woman, and child believing in Jesus. The methods of Diocletian in the days of Nero could hardly have failed of their object. But God saved His cause by instilling into the minds of those who went forth to work for Him, prepared to preach Him at the risk of their very lives, the thought that the King's business required haste. They must go and do the work instantly—'evangelize the world in this generation,' for we can see that they anticipated the glorious motto which the Student Volunteer Movement has brought up again in our own time. And not only did they make that their motto, but they attained it. By the time that generation was over there were too many Christians even for the thorough-going

methods of Diocletian to kill them out. Christianity was already an imperial power when that long campaign began in which all the killing was on one side and all the dying on the other. And those who could die finally and for ever defeated those who could only kill.

I pass next to a few political conditions which favoured the growth of Christianity. The first century B.C. was one of the most evil centuries in all the history of the world. It was a century of civil war, and its cruelty was utterly unbelievable. I will mention one fact which gets at one's imagination more vividly than anything else I know. There was one class of slaves in the Roman world who were perhaps more pitiable than any. These were the gladiators, of whom that famous line was written, 'Butchered to make a Roman holiday.' They were brave, strong men, trained to the use of arms, and the only reason for their existence was that on great ceremonial days the bloodthirsty populace expected their officials to give them exhibitions of real fighting. Then the gladiators were thrown into the arena, and there they had to fight, not because they hated one another, or had the slightest grievance against one another, but simply because they were slaves, and as slaves they had to fight. As long as the arena ran red with blood, the thirst of the populace was appeased for the time.

At last there came a time when these gladiators revolted. They had a strong right arm. They could fight. Why should they not fight for themselves instead of simply amusing the savage mob? The only difficulty was to get together. But finally they found a leader, a man of military genius, Spartacus. Presently Italy was in a flame, and the gladiator host was spreading terror everywhere. The Romans were at their very wits' end. At last they succeeded in defeating these desperate men, and they took six thousand of them captive. What did they do with them? The road from Rome to Capua was one hundred and fifty miles long. Along that road, at intervals of fifty yards or so, they set up crosses, and they crucified these six thousand men along that road. All who travelled from Rome to Capua had to pass down that ghastly avenue. I do not think one could imagine a more typical example of the fury and blood-lust and panic of those days. It was out of travail-pains like those that the Gospel came to the birth.

It reminds me of a beautiful parable that came my way a few weeks ago when I went to talk with a friend who worshipped in our College chapel. He was stricken with what proved to be his last illness, but he talked very cheerfully, and told me some interesting things about his profession. He was a scientific florist, who had been many years supplying

the market of Manchester with beautiful cut flowers. He told me how he had tried very hard indeed to produce a particular tulip. He wanted to get this tulip double, and he also wanted to get it pink. He tried all his known methods. He succeeded in getting it double, but the double flower was white, and to get it anything but white seemed to be beyond his power. One day a sudden storm came up. He went quickly around his hothouses to see that nothing should be left that could be whisked up by the wind and break the glass. He picked up all the loose boxes he saw, but he overlooked one, and this one was taken up by the wind and a great gap was made in the glass. The cold, icy blast poured through the greenhouse. When he went to the greenhouse the next morning he found that this new flower upon which he had worked so long was pink! And I recalled what at the time seemed to me only an interesting piece of horticulture when, a few weeks later, I stood in the darkened room where my friend's big family were gathered together talking about their departed father. I told them what he had said to me, and reminded them that God has His own ways of producing His perfect flowers. Sometimes the icy blast of affliction will do what all other methods fail to do. Even so was it with the world in that first century. Weariness and despair after a hundred years of bloodshed produced the

conditions under which it was possible for the Gospel to come. May we wistfully hope that out of briefer but still more appalling slaughter to-day may come another preparation for the Gospel of Peace?

At last there came one of the most famous men in the history of the world, Julius Caesar. I always grudge him the title of Great, bestowed on him so emphatically by Mommsen, the German historian of Rome. His genius, of course, is beyond question, and his achievements such that the countrymen of Treitschke instinctively bow down and worship his image. When we look into the facts about his campaigns against the Gauls—taking the information from Caesar's own book—we find that their only crime was that of the Belgians to-day. They wanted to keep their country for themselves. For this crime Julius Caesar killed a whole million of them and reduced to slavery two or three millions more. A great man! Personally I prefer to keep the adjective *great* for men who have performed other services to mankind. But we must pass on. When Julius fell by the daggers of Brutus and Cassius on the Ides of March, 44 B.C., his heir, Octavian—better known as Augustus—pursued his way to the throne of that exhausted Roman world. He used his power well. He put a stop to all the bloodshed. He reduced the whole of the Roman

dominions to order; and against the outside world he established the *Pax Romana*, the iron peace of overwhelming military power which was so often only the euphemistic name of a desolation, according to the bitter epigram of the British chief in Tacitus. But, however attained, the Roman Peace brought relief to the world. No one was left to stand up against the government of Rome. At last civilization had its chance. My colleague, Professor Conway, of Manchester, puts the situation in a sentence very well: 'Free communication between different parts of the world was made possible by the new roads, the new postal system, and the complete suppression of war by land and by sea.' All of you who have been in England or on the Continent have seen some of those Roman roads. There they are until to-day. We have a network of them throughout our little island. With the splendid roads go the arrangements of the postal service, and those for travel by sea. Though they had no steam engines and lacked our modern means of travel, travel was nevertheless swift and safe to a surprising degree.

But as we study it we observe that these fruits of peace and good government were not destined to last. The decline of the Roman Empire began very soon. Indeed, the seeds of decay were there even from the first. But while these blessings lasted

unimpaired they contributed greatly to the spread of the Gospel. Roman roads, Roman ships, Roman administration of justice, all in their prime during that crucial first century—how much they meant to Paul and his comrades in their great work of 'turning the world upside down'!

So we come to the preparation for the Gospel in the field of religion. For most people who know even a little Latin the Augustan age is made familiar by the poetry of Virgil. Virgil entirely deserved the unique position allowed him by mediaeval Christianity, and especially by Dante, his only rival for the primacy among the poets of Italy. Men recognized Virgil as a Christian in soul, a true prophet of Him whom he never knew. He was one who 'uttered nothing base,' a lofty, pure, and beautiful spirit whom even the Middle Ages shrank from calling a heathen. On the very first page of the *Eclogues* of Virgil we read the words in which the simple shepherd expresses his obligation to the Emperor. 'A god,' he cries, 'made all this peace for me—for to me he will always be a god, to him my sacrifice shall ever smoke upon the altar.' Professor Conway, whom I quoted just now, comments strikingly on the misreading into which the thoughtless modern reader falls here. He says that Virgil calls Augustus 'God.' He does not. He calls Him *Deus*. Are you going to make no allowance for

all that has been put into the English word by the associations of Christianity? He goes on to show that this deeply religious poet never called Augustus by this title in the way familiar to us from the mere court flatterer Horace and the rest of them. With Virgil, Augustus was *Deus* only when the poet recalled some beneficence. It is always in connexion with kindness shown to himself, or some great blessing wrought for his country. So here, as in that wonderful statue of Phidias, these 'heathen' men were truly groping for God. And did they not find Him? They had attained to the greatest of thoughts about God, that God is good. And their conception of God—even if it was embodied in nothing higher than a man, a man who had enthroned himself in the vacant heaven, when no other gods survived whom the people really cared for—was one that meant not a little for the world. It was a true preparation for Christianity when the great lesson was taught that a man could be worshipped as divine because of the good that he did to mankind.

Now I might turn here to dwell upon the dark side of pagan religion. You remember Matthew Arnold's poignant stanza:

> On that sad pagan world disgust
> And secret loathing fell;
> Deep weariness and sated lust
> Made human life a hell.

Yes; but I do not think we need to dwell upon that so much this morning. We are in no danger of forgetting the shortcomings of religion in the Roman world, which made men long so earnestly for better things. It is more to our purpose if we look for the other side. Very much of the old religion was dead. The Greek gods were never much more than mythology, with no heart and no soul behind them. Roman gods were never more than abstractions, and could not arouse the real worship of men. Yet in spite of all these things there was a religion in that world, a groping after God. The way in which the Oriental religions ran like wildfire through the Roman Empire showed that. There was the worship of Serapis from Egypt; there was the cult of Cybele from Phrygia; and beyond all there was Mithraism, the religion which was destined to make a stern fight with Christianity itself. In Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill* there is a splendid 'Hymn to Mithras,' which helps us to picture to ourselves a religion which became predominant in the Roman army. These religions owed their success to the fact that they met the craving of the human heart for something that had glow and warmth in it, touching the heart and not the head of man.

All this Oriental religion mostly affected the lower classes. Among the educated, religious instinct satisfied itself chiefly through philosophy.

The philosophy which came nearest to religion was that of the Stoics, who in the dark days of imperial tyranny showed that they had a faith which taught them how to die. However hard and cold their doctrine seems to us, their splendid fortitude must move our admiration. And when we come to the second century we have the meditations of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, and the discourses of the slave Epictetus, both Stoics, to show us that truly God did not leave Himself without witness in those days. Look again at Greece itself in the first century, and remember that serene and pure-minded thinker Plutarch, whose famous *Lives* live on in the use Shakespeare made of them. There was much indeed that was beautiful in that time, much that was ready to be touched by the finger of Christ and to become the treasure of the Church. Nor must we forget Seneca, the man who says so many things like Paul. So much is he like Paul that the suggestion was made long ago that Paul taught him. He has given us a number of very beautiful sayings. Let me quote one or two. 'The gods give a hand to men as they climb.' 'Live as if God saw you.' 'He that lives for no man does not live for himself.' 'The gods give many things to the ungrateful.' 'A Holy Spirit dwells within us.' You can get a great many more samples of that kind out of the famous essay

'St. Paul and Seneca' in Bishop Lightfoot's *Biblical Essays*. Seneca was a very mixed character. You remember that pungent line about our British statesman-philosopher, Francis Bacon, 'the greatest, wisest, meanest of mankind.' It is not inapplicable to Seneca, who had greater difficulties than Bacon in preserving honesty in public life, in proportion as Nero was worse than James the First. No Christian should cast stones at a statesman who, unsupported by Christ's direct teaching, found his principles unequal to the terrific strain of doing right when life was at stake and Nero was on the throne. We have at least Seneca's words, and we thank God for them.

But it was not only in the philosopher that we have these lofty thoughts. We have evidence of the appreciation of the common people for teaching of a lofty ethical standard. It comes to us from a curious source, the scoffer Lucian, the great wit of the second century A.D. He described, in what he meant to be scorn, the eagerness of the multitude whenever any religious teacher came around who seemed to have anything of the message they wanted. Then they flocked to hear him. Lucian laughs as he talks of the absurdity of the things these men said, of the self-seeking and unworthiness of the lives of some popular preachers in those days. Well, perhaps they were all this, though I should be sorry to take Lucian's word

for it, without other witness. But even if they were all that he says they were, it is very pathetic to see these crowds gathered together, so eagerly asking, 'Who will show us any good?' Was their quest wholly in vain? We are not without scattered proofs of the fact that life had God in it even then. Here, for example, is a 'heathen' epitaph that is eloquent to Christian ears: *Bene fac, hoc tecum feres*—'Do good; you will take this with you.'

That reminds me of an epitaph I came upon the other day. It was in a book full of inscriptions and papyri from Egypt. I had been wandering through page after page of unspeakable dullness; it was only grammar and lexicography that made the task imperative, a task to which I should have been very sorry to set any one else. But I did get one grain of gold out of all that sand. After pages and pages of monotonous formulae, 'prematurely died—good man, farewell' and so on, I came suddenly upon this: 'Taesai lived twenty-eight years. He has gone to the Bright Land.' I think the glory of that Bright Land had begun to shed something of its light even in the darkness of the Graeco-Roman world before Christ came; for wherever men are eagerly looking for God we have the authority of our Book to tell us that they do find Him.

In these ways, then, the world was ready. 'The fullness of the time had come.' Others could tell you of many more evidences that the world was ready then as at no other time for the preaching of God's Son. It calls to our thought that glorious passage in Milton's *Areopagitica* where the great poet applies the old Egyptian fable of Isis gathering the scattered members of the mangled body of Osiris, and tells how men have been seeking all the world over the fragments of the body of Truth. 'We have not found them yet, Lords and Commons, nor shall do till her Master's second coming: He shall bring together every joint and member, and mould them into one immortal feature of loveliness and perfection.' It was our Master's supreme achievement to gather all the rays of truth into one focus, all words of righteousness into one message, all the sights of beauty into one supremely beautiful Face upon which the world might gaze for evermore. And if that day nineteen centuries ago was 'the fullness of the time,' are we to believe that He who reigned then has abdicated now, that some chance governs the world to-day, and that the events of the first century are not rather to be regarded as the glorious parable, the anticipation of events that are coming to pass now? Christ *always* comes 'in the fullness of the time.' He came thus to you and to me. He can trace the

way for Himself in the individual life of each one of us. And as we look back upon those days when first we knew Him we rejoice to think that it was not chance that ordained the first coming of that Light into our soul. He Himself had prepared the way, and He came when everything was ready for Him. Believe, brethren, let us believe that even now He prepares the world for His coming, and that from East to West, even through scenes of bloodshed and terror, He is preparing for the coming of His Kingdom. The day will dawn—no one can say how soon—when He shall have the nations for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession.

'THE NEW SONG'

A Sermon Preached at Northfield on Sunday, August 9, 1914

They sing as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders: and no man could learn the song save the hundred and forty and four thousand, even they that had been purchased out of the earth.—Rev. xiv. 3 (R.V.).

The phrase 'a new song' is one which comes to us from the Old Testament. We know it best in the psalm where the delivered soul cries out to God who has 'put a new song' in his mouth. Then we read in the great prophecy which begins with the fortieth chapter of Isaiah: 'Sing unto Jehovah a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth.' The special association of it there is that it is 'the new song' of redemption. It is addressed to a people coming from the thraldom of Babylonian captivity into their own land again. So in Old Testament prophecy it was a song of redemption, and it is still a song of redemption when it comes to us in this last book of the Bible. There it was the song of one little people living in one little corner of the earth, who were redeemed from an earthly captivity and brought home again to serve

God there. Here it is the song of the Israel of God—every people and tribe and kindred and tongue, English and Germans and Russians and Americans and all the other nations, all of them redeemed from something that is worse than any sorrow that ever came into this world—redeemed from sin and all that it means. They are bought back into 'the liberty of the glory of the children of God.'

But we need not speculate about the theme of '*the new song.*' We have the words of it in the ninth and tenth verses of the fifth chapter of the Revelation. It is the song of the whole creation singing to the Lamb that was slain, for He has redeemed them unto God.

Thirty-two years ago Mr. D. L. Moody held perhaps the most memorable mission of his life in Cambridge University, where I had just begun to study. Out of that week was born, I venture to believe, the World Student Christian Movement. One of the most beautiful of the Moody and Sankey hymns which we then learnt to sing begins:

> Tell me the old, old story
> Of Jesus and His love.

Yes, it is 'the old, old story.' We think of all the generations that have gone by throughout these nineteen hundred years. There has never

been the time when hearts have not been moved by that 'old, old story'; there has never been the time when men have not lived and died by the faith of it, when it has not performed its mighty miracles, as it is still doing to-day. We rejoice to think, and it is our greatest joy to think, that here we have entered into the heritage of the ages. Yet though so old, it is 'a new song.'

There is nothing inconsistent there. All of God's novelties are as old as creation, and all God's ancient things are eternally new. Go to that book with the sad title, the book from which men are inclined to turn away, for they do not like to read Lamentations. But there you find these lovely words: 'It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning.' 'New every morning,' for the sun never rises in the same place two successive mornings. No two birds ever sing the same note. The loveliness of the earth around us is never the same. It is always changing; it is always new. God never repeats Himself. And when men talk about 'the good old days,' they forget the infinite resourcefulness of the Creator. The blessings He has for us in store in the future are going to be altogether new ones, as new as everything that comes from that master Hand.

And if that is the case with all the blessings of God, most of all is it so with that which is before us here. God does not repeat Himself in the material world. Still less does He repeat Himself in the spiritual world. 'Of His fullness have we all received, and grace for grace.' Yesterday's grace is not good enough for to-day. God does not give us stale gifts. 'If any man is in Christ,' says Paul, 'there is a new creation: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new!' That does not mean there was one distant day in our experience, a day perhaps twenty, thirty, fifty years ago, when all things suddenly became new, and now it is an old story. That is very much the case with things on this earth. A 'Newcastle' and a 'New College' are among the antiquities of our ancient land across the sea. But God's novelties do not get old. When there is a new creation, God takes care that it is recreated every day. Once in Christ, there is a new creation; 'and though our outward man be decaying, yet our inward man is being renewed *every day*.'

'*They sing*.' Who sing? The angels. What are the angels? We do not know. We read a great deal about them in Scripture. We read that they are 'ministering spirits sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation.'

But what service they render we do not know. They are spirits. What are spirits? We do not know. They are not to be seen; they are not to be heard; they are not to be felt; they are not governed by the laws that apply to us. We simply cannot reach them. But the Book tells us of them; and we, unless we are very conceited, may surely believe that man is not the ultimate climax of evolution—or, if you prefer to call it so, of the will of God at His creative work, which is the same thing. There are those who are higher than we. They belong to the same order. They are above us and around us. We cannot see them or hear them, but we are told that they take a very deep interest in us. It is nothing else than the voice of Christ that tells us 'there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.'

Think what that means. It means that every time men and women gather together in this hall, the place is filled, not only with human visitors, with people whom we can see and hear, but with heavenly visitors. What are they here for? They are here listening and looking down upon us. What are they waiting for? They are waiting until one human heart is touched by the power of 'the old, old story,' until one human soul that has been in rebellion

has come back again to the Lord of life; and when that life is given up, why then, if only we could hear, they break forth into 'a new song.' Of course it is a new song, for it is a new subject. No two human lives are alike. The history of no two human souls is the same. They break forth into the song of praise for one more human life that has been given in God's unspeakable mercy to the service which is perfect freedom.

'*They sing.*' Of course they sing. Christina Rossetti said that heaven is the 'homeland of music.' We remember how long ago men had a lovely fancy that the whole universe was full of music. It was in those days that men thought this little world of ours was the centre of the creation, and all around it were crystal spheres, and as these moved, one within the other, they made celestial music. Some of the most beautiful words even Shakespeare ever wrote are on this theme. You remember that scene where Lorenzo and Jessica are looking up into the sky:

> Look how the floor of heaven
> Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold;
> There's not the smallest orb which thou beholdest
> But in his motion like an angel sings,
> Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims;
> Such harmony is in immortal souls;
> But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
> Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

Now there is silence indeed; and yet, after all, we have only come back to the nineteenth Psalm: 'There is no speech nor language; their voice cannot be heard.' Nevertheless

> In Reason's ear they all rejoice,
> And utter forth a glorious voice,
> For ever singing as they shine,
> 'The hand that made us is divine.'

'They sing *before the throne*'—and that word is enough. A holy reticence keeps back the writer, for the throne is the throne of the great God before whom 'brightest seraphim approach not, but with both wings veil their eyes.'

And around Him are the '*four living creatures*' and the '*elders*.' Who are they? The Four Living Creatures are simply taken from the Old Testament, like most of the symbols in the Book of Revelation. One has the face of a lion, one has the face of an ox, another has the face of a flying eagle, another has the face of a man; and they represent between them the manifold sides of creation. They are there in the very immediate presence of God that the Lord may rejoice in His works.

And what about the '*elders*'? The elders are the 'general assembly and church of the first-born . . . written in heaven.' But their number?

There are twenty-four. What does that mean?—for, like all the numbers in this Book, the number must be symbolic. We could understand twelve. Twelve would have been closely connected with the people of Israel; but there are twenty-four. It is not a single but a double chorus, and it makes us think at once of the glorious fact that when these words were written there was not only the old Church, the Church of Israel, but there was the new Church, the Church of the Gentiles. They were the new voices making God's wondrous doings known, new voices learning to sing a new song. And so we can say to-day there is not only the Church in the old land, in your country and in mine, where for centuries past there have been numberless hearts raised to God in prayer and praise, but there is the new chorus rising to sing the Saviour's praise far away in Korea, in China, in Japan, in India, in Africa—new voices learning to sing 'unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood.' And so in antiphon of harmony, from side to side of the mighty choir, 'Worthy is the Lamb' resounds for evermore.

And then there comes a word which at first may make us pause: '*No man could learn the song save the hundred and forty and four thousand.*' Does this mean that there is a limitation on the mercy

of God? Well, what are the hundred and forty and four thousand? We go back to the seventh chapter, and there we read: 'I heard the number of them which were sealed, a hundred and forty and four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the children of Israel.' And then there follows a list of the tribes. Does that mean that we have got back again to the people of Israel? No; just notice what has happened. The 'little one has become a thousand,' and every tribe of Israel has become a whole Israel. It has been the extension of the little people into the great, which mighty people combined is the 'Church militant here on earth,' the host of all those who have learned to sing to Christ.

There follows the description of those who have '*been purchased out of the earth.*' This is the song of redemption, and only the redeemed can sing. Now in human music we often find that the words do not count for very much. I have heard singing in which the words were in some foreign language, and I very much doubted whether the audience, or even the singer, understood them. And even if the words are English, sometimes they are so silly you hardly stop to think of them. The ideal, even on earth, is noble music set to noble words. And you may be very sure that in the music of heaven the words count, and it is the perfect linking

of the harmony with the words that expresses the music of the heart. For the only music of heaven is that of those who 'sing and make melody in their hearts unto the Lord.' Therefore, it is only those who are redeemed and who know their Redeemer that can sing the New Song.

We are next told that '*these are they which follow the Lamb.*' We come here back to that matchless gem of the Old Testament, the twenty-third Psalm. And we might well say of any one who dared to lay hands on that Psalm that he was trying to paint the lily and adorn the rose. But the seer of the Revelation can make even the Psalm lovelier. It is a great thing to read 'Jehovah is my Shepherd; I shall not want.' It is a still more glorious thing to read that 'the Lamb'—oh the paradox of it!—'the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their Shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life.' Even the twenty-third Psalm is outdone when the revelation is of God in Christ, and we can understand that He who is our Shepherd is not a dimly understood Deity whom no man hath seen, nor can see, but One who has come infinitely near to us in the person of 'God only begotten,' as John has it (i. 18, marg.), 'which is in the bosom of the Father.' *He* 'hath declared Him,' made Him clear, so that every one of us can understand

God as a Being infinitely near to us, One whom we may see and know.

And, finally, we read that they 'follow the Lamb *whithersoever He goeth.*' It is easy to follow Him through the 'green pastures' and beside the 'still waters'; but sometimes He takes those who are His own into 'the valley of the shadow of death,' whither He Himself descended. Those who have learned of Him have no fear even there, for He is with them, His rod and His staff comfort them. In the valley of the dreadful shadow His face shines forth with a light that can never be quenched. 'They . . . follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth,' for they have been 'purchased out of the earth.' But they have been left in the earth to do His work. They are in the world, and yet not of it. They follow Him everywhere, and their one business in life is to do His will.

I once asked a successful music-teacher whether it was possible for everybody to learn to sing. I reminded him of those who have the great misfortune of being unable to sing a note, whose voice hardly seems to rise when the music rises or sink when it sinks. 'Can you teach such people how to sing?' I asked. 'Oh yes,' he said, and he told me of a particular clergyman who was greatly depressed because he could not join his people in their singing, and in a few weeks he had taught

him so that to his great joy he could join in the music and sing praises to God. And that is a parable of the religion of One of whom it was said centuries before He came that at His coming the tongue of the dumb should sing.

Now there are some men who seem to sing by nature. One thinks of the words of Tennyson addressed to our great master-singer:

> O mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies!
> O skilled to sing of time and eternity!
> God-gifted organ-voice of England,
> Milton, a name to resound for ages!

But the very subject of Milton's supreme poem takes us back to a tale that comes from the beginning of English history. It takes us to the weather-beaten cliffs of Whitby on the Yorkshire coast, where still may be seen the battered old abbey around which so many stories cling. The Venerable Bede tells us how the swineherd Cadmon was at the banquet one night, where each in turn took up the harp and played and sang. As it came near the swineherd, he fled from the table in shame to his cell, and buried his head in his hands in an agony of weeping. As he wept, an angel presence filled the cell, and a voice said: 'Cadmon, sing.' He said: 'I cannot sing.' Then the voice said: 'Sing to me.' And with those

words the fountain of music in his soul was broken up and he sang. He sang of Creation and Redemption and the wonderful works of God. And even so, if we are weeping because our voice is dumb in the midst of a universe that is praising God, we too may see a more glorious Presence than that of an angel, and hear a wondrous Voice saying to us : ' Sing to Me ! '

Is there one thing that is more apparent in the study of human music than the fact that beyond all other things *practice* is necessary? Some of us have sung in chorus when a great musician has conducted. How soon we learnt that the smallest mistake in time or tune by any one of us would be instantly detected by the keen ear which would never allow our failures to be obscured by hiding in a crowd! How carefully we had to learn the music to come up to so exacting a standard! But you and I must sing the New Song ' before the Throne.' And yet we think, some of us, it is enough to come down to our churches and practise the New Song once a week for an hour and then go back again into the world and forget all about it until the next time. Can we learn to sing such a Song when we do not practise it more than that? O brethren, we cannot but agree that the reason why the world is not won for Christianity more rapidly is that Christian people to so large an extent

do not practise through the week the New Song they love to sing during the hour of worship.

We had an annual festival at Cambridge long ago that I used to delight in. There we sang the greatest choral music perhaps that has ever been composed—Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*. We gathered together in little companies and practised the great choruses over and over till we knew them well. Then came a day when we went over to the grand old cathedral at Ely and found a great chorus of three or four hundred. We did our practice separately, but all that we might meet at last in one united choir.

Brethren, that likewise is a parable. We are gathered together in this country and other countries, hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands of little choirs, all of us practising the New Song separately; and all too often we know nothing about our neighbours who are practising that same music. We are separated from them by all sorts of barriers, and we forget that this Song is being thus practised all the world over. But the time is coming when all these choirs are going to unite, for nothing but the biggest of all choirs can render that music worthily. The climax of Handel's *Messiah* is the great musician's rendering of the New Song: 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.' It needs must have the best and biggest chorus

to make it go as it should go. Out of the 'multitude which no man can number' that chorus must be gathered together to sing the Song in the ears of God.

You and I may put our whole duty in life into this form: that we have to learn to sing that Song in tune, with the harmony of the heart, so as to sing without discord before God; that we have to learn it by teaching it—for that is the best way of learning anything in the world—and by practising it day by day and all day long, until at last the time shall come when all our choirs shall meet in the presence of the Almighty Lord above to sing for ever 'unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins in His blood.'

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