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truth in that conviction, which recurs in varying forms, that man can cooperate with these Realities, and the better his conception of them, the more effective and permanent the result of his activities? If the Great War may be regarded as the conflict between truer and falser conceptions of the nature of the Universe, we shall only be deceiving ourselves if we think that there are not other false conceptions. All our efforts to spread our

'culture,' to reform peoples, or in any way to further the progress of humanity, imply at bottom particular theories of the Universe and the Ultimate Realities; hence it would seem only self-evident that a consciously held view on these vital questions must be the precondition of our success.¹

¹ For an attempt to work out the data of religion on the lines indicated above, the writer may be permitted to refer to his article 'Religion' in the new volume of the *E. R. E.*

In the Study.

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR.

FOR the Sundays in Advent, consider the purpose of Christ in coming into the world.

- I. To fulfil the Law and the Prophets—Mt 5¹⁷.
- II. To give His life a Ransom—Mt 20²⁸.
- III. To offer abundant Life—Jn 10¹⁰.
- IV. To witness for the Truth—Jn 18³⁷.

Advent Sunday.

'Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.'—Mt 5¹⁷.

LITERATURE.—Phillips Brooks, *Twenty Sermons*, 1886; L. Campbell, *Some Aspects of the Christian Ideal*, 1877; J. Stuart Holden, *The Confidence of Faith*, 1916; J. Cynddylan Jones, *Studies in the Gospel according to St. Matthew*, 1888; F. G. Peabody, *Mornings in the College Chapel*, 1st Ser., 1896; W. Scott Palmer, *The Ladder of Reality*, 1915; E. F. Russell, *Father Stanton's Last Sermons in St. Alban's, Holborn*, 1915; D. Swing, *Truths for To-day*, L., 1874; W. Temple, *Church and Nation*, 1915; J. M. Wilson, *God's Progressive Revelations of Himself to Men*, 1916.

It has been well said that he who would speak to the times must speak from Eternity. The only satisfying interpretation of life is that which we get when we stand upon the hills of God, where by the side of Christ we are able to see things in their true proportion and perspective. Unaided and unelevated vision is bound to be mistaken. It is only in His light that we see light. And nothing is more needed to-day than that we should look out upon life, not as an insoluble mystery, and upon its happenings, not as a hopeless tangle, but as the expression of the everlasting nature of God. That Christ once came, declaring fully and finally the principles and the purpose of the Divine Government, makes it possible so to regard life,

even in its most troublous days, without fear or panic. To attempt, however, to understand its changing experiences apart from Him is sheer folly and hopeless darkness. Christ has not only the keys of death and hell, but of Life also. He openeth, and no man can shut. He shutteth, and no man can open.

1. Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfil. A great many people still think that Jesus came to destroy. The religious life appears to them a life of giving up things. Renunciation seems the Christian motto. The religious person forsakes his passions, denies his tastes, mortifies his body, and then is holy. But Jesus always answers that He comes not to destroy, but to fill full; not to preach the renunciation of capacity, but the consecration of capacity.

(1) Here is your body, with all its vigorous life. It is a part of your religion to fill out your body. It is the temple of God, to be kept clean for His indwelling. Not the ascetic man, but the athletic man is the physical representative of the Christian life. Here is your mind, with all the intellectual pursuits which engross you. Many people suppose that the scholar's life is in antagonism to the interests of religion. But religion comes not to destroy the intellectual life. It wants not an empty mind but a full one. The perils of this age come not from scholars, but from smatterers; not from those who know much, but from those who think they 'know it all.'

(2) Under modern unbelief the life of man daily becomes narrower. The belief in a God and the attendant worship of Him, with all its trust, and hope, and virtue, has occupied a vast space in human life; and when to this we add the kindred ideas of heaven and endless existence, we have a vast world of thought and sentiment, which, when taken away from the heart, must leave life narrow indeed. But thus exactly does the criticism of to-day narrow life and transform it from a stream that widens into an ocean into a little thread which runs between some chemical action and a grave. Modern criticism seems a pursuit of the infinitely little, a

search for the microscopic atom, not only of man's body, but of his virtue and hope. Reason being just as powerful for the Christian's God as against Him, the scales should be easily turned in the Christian's favour by the weight of those positive actions, and duties, and pleasures, and hopes, with which it occupies the soul. It fills the human life to overflowing.

2. Christ came to fulfil the Old Testament. The connexion between the Old Testament and the New is not merely one of type and antitype. The real connexion between them is of a deeper kind, which is expounded in the Sermon on the Mount. The separate commandments in the old law might all be deduced from the one law of love: only they forbade, while love inspires; they prescribed actions, love is an inward principle; they were limited and subject to exception, love is infinite, universal, and eternal. Hence, when Christ proclaimed the absoluteness of the law or spirit of love, He was not destroying the essence of the Mosaic law. He gave free course to the eternal thought of which that law had been the local and temporary expression, so that the living water that was for the healing of the nations, but had been artificially confined for the supposed benefit of the chosen people, might well forth afresh and inexhaustibly, and be found enough for the supply of the whole world.

(1) The first point that will occur to every one is the stress Christ laid on motive and thought, as compared with result and action. He forbade not murder only but anger; not adultery only, but the impure thought. These are, of course, mere illustrations. It is not possible to exaggerate the importance of this complete alteration of the sphere of righteousness from actions to thought, from deeds to disposition; this discovery of a new standard by which to judge oneself. It was a revolution in morals. We may keep all the ten Commandments and a hundred more, and yet be hard, unkind, impure, jealous, mean, selfish, complacent—a Pharisee in fact—without a trace of the Christian character. Christ gave a new and far higher standard, by making the test not our action, but our real selves.

(2) The next point, perhaps, should be given as the lifting of the moral above the ceremonial. The religious Jew at the time of Christ was one who carefully observed the law and its traditional additions, as interpreted by the great Rabbis. These regulations governed conduct in curious detail. They prescribed, for example, with a degree of minuteness almost incredible, how often, and when, and precisely how, vessels and hands were to be washed; when fingers in washing were to be held with the tips up, and when to be held down; and precisely what made persons, or foods, or places unclean, and for how long, and how they were to be purified. Now Christ saw that, however great their value might have been as discipline in the past—and that no one would deny—they had now become relatively unimportant. He saw that they were now

obscuring and misleading men's thoughts of God and righteousness. And He said so. Therefore the religious people thought Him irreligious and a blasphemer, and brought about His death. But from that religious world Christ, and His Apostles after Him, appealed to the revelation of the God of righteousness, even then latent in the heart of the whole world, Jew and Gentile, and He appealed not in vain. *Securus judicat orbis.* We do well to remember that the judgment of the outside world on religion, a rough-and-ready judgment it may be, but just and final, turns on one point only—they judge it by its fruits. 'Does it make men good?' Temples and priests, dignity and wealth, learning and privilege, count for little or nothing in that final court. 'Does your religion make men good? Yes or no.' And the world said of early Christian teaching that it made men good, and of Pharisaism that it did not. It is by that test that the world judges the Church to-day.

(3) One other point. Christ showed that the true service of God demands not only our abstaining from doing wrong, in the hope of saving our own souls, but actively in every way doing right. We are answerable for the good we neglect to do, as well as for the evil that we do. In this lies a broad distinction between Christ's teaching and all that went before it. The Old Testament defines duties by 'Thou shalt not.' Christ by 'Thou shalt.' We infringe Old Testament laws when we do things we ought not to have done; we infringe the law of Christ when we leave undone the things that we ought to have done; judgment, condemnation, is prefaced in the Old Testament case by the words 'inasmuch as ye did wrong'; in the New Testament by the words 'inasmuch as ye did not do right.'

This was more than the discovery of a new field for conduct, a new test of rightness. It did for morals what Copernicus and Kepler and Newton combined did for astronomy. It altered the centre, the point of view. It determined the future development of religion. It disclosed the master-principle, the ruling force that gives unity to the whole. That master-principle is that God is our loving Father, and that all we are brethren in Him; and that only by showing love like His can we be true men, true servants and children of God, worthy of the life of our Father in us, and that life is love.

3. If this is a worthy and dependable interpretation of Christ, there should be a growing approximation to Him in the lives of His people. Our influence must be directed, not toward destruction, but fulfilment. For we are here to represent Him, and to carry on His work. That there is much to be destroyed in the lives of those among whom we serve is obvious. But it can only be effected by Christ's own method. What is most needed in those around us is not the destructive word of condemnation, so much as the encouraging spirit of comradeship. The beginnings of goodness, of reverence, and of drawing to God have often been destroyed by the un-Christlikeness of those whose duty it was to mani-

fest His Spirit. On the other hand, the warm sympathy which He ever showed toward even the feeblest desires after God, and which encouraged and stimulated the most unlikely in their endeavours, has often guided and saved despairing hearts when manifested through His followers. And it is for this ministry on the part of us all that these days call. We can do more for those around us in their need, for the Church in her feebleness, and for the nation in its moral want, by our own endeavour to live Christ, than by anything else. Here is service for all who name His Name. There is no worthier aim on the part of those to whom other service is impossible than is expressed by the man who said :

Let me live in a house by the side of the road
Where the race of men go by—
Men that are good, and men that are bad,
As good and as bad as I.
I would not sit in the scorner's seat,
Nor hurl the cynic's ban ;
Let me live in a house by the side of the road,
And be a friend to man.

Second Sunday in Advent.

'Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.'—Mt 20²⁸.

LITERATURE.—W. F. Anderson in *Drew Sermons*, 1910; A. Connell, *The Endless Quest*, 1914; B. Davies, *How to Complete our Lives*, 1916; W. S. Hackett, *The Land of your Sojournings*, 1911; H. P. Hughes, *Ethical Christianity*, 1892; H. P. Liddon, *Advent in St. Paul's*, 1891; J. R. Miller, *The Touch of Christ*, 1917; H. C. G. Moule, *Prayers and Promises*, 1896; W. H. Murray, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, 1879; A. Pym, *Divine Humanity*, 1917; C. J. Ridgeway, *The King and His Kingdom*, 1906; J. Wells, *Christ in the Present Age*, 1903.

'I have heard it said that that faithful servant of God, the late Professor Scholefield, of Cambridge, could never get through the Nicene Creed at his Communion Table in St. Michael's Church without an audible faltering when he said the words, 'Who for us men and our salvation came down from heaven.' Mr. Scholefield's character was the opposite of demonstrative and emotional. His manner, not his heart, was somewhat reserved and cold. But he lived near Christ, and meditated closely and deeply upon redeeming love.'¹

This is one of the most familiar, most wonderful,

¹ Bishop H. C. G. Moule.

most far-reaching statements of that redeeming love.

See how it is linked to the Law and the Prophets. The Psalm says, 'Lo, I come'; the Gospel says, 'I came'; the Epistle repeats the Psalm, 'Lo, I come.' What is the purpose in the foreground of the eternal thought as it is indicated in the Psalm, declared in the Gospel, and explained in the Epistle? Is it to sum up Humanity under a new Head? Is it to 'redeem by Incarnation'? The express purpose is, to do the work which 'sacrifice and offering,' as offered under the Law, could never do. It is that the Incarnate might 'put away sins by the sacrifice of himself.' Such, if the Epistle to the Hebrews is our guide, was the ruling purpose in the divine self-consecration. The Self-Consecrator had in view above all things His death, His sacrifice, His blessed expiatory work. 'He took part of flesh and blood,' with His brethren, 'that by means of death he might destroy him that had the power of death.'

1. Now, first, here is both Humiliation and Exaltation.

(1) It speaks of the pain, and yet joy, of an untold Humiliation; of the Lord's being 'made in all things like unto us, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest, to make reconciliation for the sins of his people.' It speaks of His divinely willing consent to take upon Him the sinless limitations of manhood; to experience as Man what was meant by growth; what it was to weep, and to wonder; what it was to say, 'Thy will be done,' not only in the light of the heaven of heavens, but under the olives of Gethsemane; what it was to cry to Him whose will He was eternally content to do, 'Why hast thou forsaken me?' and to commit His out-going human Spirit into His hands in death:

(2) It was because His death had in it elements of self-sacrifice and far-reaching service immeasurably greater than any of which patriots or martyrs are capable, that God has 'highly exalted him,' and given Him 'the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow.' Jesus, once the Carpenter of Nazareth, is King of kings and Lord of lords to-day because His services and His sacrifices are the greatest, that is the kingliest, of all. Even His own position at the summit of the great social hierarchy of His kingdom is not determined by caprice or by favouritism. It is His by merit.

It is His because He 'came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.'

That extraordinarily gifted mystic and poet, William Blake, in his book on Jerusalem has a plate of the Crucifixion. The atmosphere is sombre, save for one thin ray of sunshine that reveals Christ on the Cross, and at the foot of the Cross, not the fainting mother, not the beloved disciple, not the Centurion or Joseph of Arimathea, but a solitary human figure of undistinguishable type, with outstretched arms, gazing upwards to the Christ. It is the very daring of genius, which in the moment of His supreme weakness sets the world with its wistful, passionate gesture of appeal in the presence of the Sufferer. And yet, perhaps, it is neither genius nor daring which accomplished so bold an utterance of sacred art, but simple understanding of our Lord's own mind.

2. Next, here is both Service and Sacrifice.

(1) 'The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.' Yes, this is the summing up of the life this King came to live among men, and of the way in which He sought to win a Kingdom. It is His own statement of what He came to do, and how He came to do it. 'The Son of man came not to be a master, but to be a servant.' It is true not only of the first beginnings of His reign on earth, when He was the despised and rejected of men, but all through. 'As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.' It is the text which He proclaims in stable and cottage and workshop, in the homes where men live and the streets where they gather, on the Cross of shame on which the King dies and the Throne of glory at the Father's Right Hand on which He is seated, as He still ministers to His people; 'He ever liveth to make intercession for them.'

(2) All true service is sacrifice. It is even vicarious sacrifice. But this is more. Think of a noble-minded Christian mother of a wicked son. She feels his sins more than she could have felt them had they been her own, for her saintliness has given her the deepest moral insight and the keenest sensibility. We cannot gauge the intensity of her pangs of vicarious shame. At last she dies from the very same cause to which many distinguished physicians ascribe the death of Christ—the breaking of the heart under overwhelming spiritual agony. Can we venture to believe that that mother's sufferings are of the same kind as Christ's? We must remember that Scripture does not speak generally of Christ's

sufferings, but specifically of His death. We must then compare the death of the mother with the death of Christ. But the mother is not a sinless sufferer; she is not a voluntary sufferer; she does not foresee and accept her sufferings; she never dreams that her death will have any redemptive virtue whatever; she suffers only for the sin of one, while Christ suffered for the sin of the world. She knows that no mother can by any means redeem her son, nor give to God a ransom for him (1's 49⁷). She would be shocked if any one were to tell her that by the vicarious merit of her death she would achieve the remission of all her son's sins, and make him a child of God and an heir of glory.

3. It is sacrifice and service both in Life and in Death.

(1) Jesus appeared on earth as One who dared all for His great mission. He dared the annoyance and alienation of relatives and friends; He dared the opposition of the religion of His day; He dared to run counter to the only hopes that seemed to keep some spark of courage alive in His own subject race. He dared to face the gathering hatred and narrowing path that led to rejection and death; He dared the most utter loneliness of spirit, the loneliness that comes when nobody understands. He could say as none else, 'I have trod the wine-press alone.'

(2) He suffered unto death, even the death of the Cross. He gave His strength and energy, every treasure of His personality. For a moment He seemed to surrender that which made all other sacrifices possible, His calm faith in His Father; for what else means the cry, 'Why hast thou forsaken me'?

If, then, He had His strange attraction and compelling power when He walked in lowly fashion as a man, and could only give hints and prophecies of His great mission, what will the result be when the sacrificial element is released and runs out into all His activities? What new meanings are to be compressed within His pity for the hungry, His compassion for the sick, His sympathy for the sinful? What new link is formed with peoples that lie outside the Jewish tradition? Calvary is the convergence and the release of the whole love of God, and we can detect the thrill of glad assurance in the final command, 'Go and preach the gospel to every creature,' for there is no problem to baffle Him, there is no need, personal, social, or racial, which He is not adequate to meet. The Father hath delivered all things into His hands; He will draw all men unto Him.

Third Sunday in Advent.

'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.' In 10th.

LITERATURE. N. Butler, in *University of Chicago Sermons*, 1915; J. N. Figgis, *The Fellowship of the Mystery*, 1914; T. Monod, *The Gift and the Life*, 1912; G. H. Morrison, *The Afterglow of God*, 1912; W. C. E. Newbolt, in *The Contemporary Pulpit*, 2nd Ser. iv., 1800; J. Ritson, *Life: The Most Wonderful Thing in the World*; J. K. Swinburne, *The Glory of the Life Laid Down*, 1916.

What is the most wonderful thing in the world? Ask one of the peasants of an inland village what is the most wonderful thing he has ever seen. 'A motor car,' is his reply. Then he sees a flying-machine and the motor car takes a second place. But neither a motor car nor a flying-machine is the most wonderful thing in the world. We are apt to be impressed by the big things of the world—the great mountain, the mighty river. But the humblest weed that grows in the garden is more wonderful than the greatest mountain; the tiniest animalcule that disports itself in a drop of water is more marvellous than the mighty river; it has life, and life is the most wonderful thing in the world. This wonderful thing assumes myriads of different forms, but may be seen at its highest in man. Not, however, because he possesses a wonderful physical life, or a still more wonderful intellectual life, but because he may be dowered with a higher life still—life spiritual, life kindred with the life of God. Possessed of this life his manhood is crowned.

This was the great message of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sum up His gospel in a single word, and that one word is Life. Get at the heart of all He had to teach, and life is nestling against that heart. One thought determines every other thought; one fact interprets and arranges everything, and that one fact, so dominant and regal, is the deep fact of life. Deeper than faith, for faith is but a name, unless it issue from a heart that lives; deeper than love, though God Himself be love, for without life love would be impossible. Life is the rich compendium of the gospel, and the sweet epitome of its good news, and the word that gathers into its embrace the music and the ministry of Christ. 'The words that I speak unto you,' He said, 'they are spirit, and they are life.' 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.' 'I am the way, the truth, the life.'

'I am the resurrection and the life.' All that He came to teach—all that He was—is summed and centred in that little word.

1. There are two ways in which men have endeavoured to have abundance of life and to live it. The first is by Self-realization. This method of life dominated Christendom for two hundred and fifty years, even to the middle of the nineteenth century. At first it glorified the Individual. The Perfection of the Individual, this was its goal. This was the watchword of the intellectual and political leaders of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. But it took its rise in the early sixteenth century, in the movement known as the Revival of Learning. At this distance, it looks like an inevitable reaction from the Middle Ages. During that time the individual had little chance from either Church or State. It has even been said that during the Middle Ages Church and State conspired to deprive the individual of his rights. Probably that is not wholly true, if it be interpreted to mean that the leaders of the Church and State, with a perfectly clear conception of what was really due the individual, deliberately planned to defraud him of his rights. No doubt the most sagacious and influential leaders of the time saw clearly how much personal liberty might safely be entrusted to the masses of the people. Yet it seems certain that there was on the part of the leaders in Church and State a good deal of selfish and wicked exploitation of the helpless many by the powerful few. But that was sure to end. Little by little the masses of the people acquired wealth and power and privilege, and at last, after the darkness of ecclesiastical suppression, and after the darkness of political tyranny and oppression, the people threw off the authority of a blind Church leading the blind, and of a selfish nobility knowing no rights but its own desires, and asserted that no one may stand between a man and his God nor between the individual and his rights—and we have the revolution in France, rationalism in England, and in Germany the splendid humanism of Kant and of Goethe, Heine and Schiller. The glory and splendour of life were for every man and woman. This ideal expressed itself, in the realm of culture, in the term 'self-realization'; and in the realm of religion, in the expression 'the salvation of the individual soul.'

2. But this desire for self-realization has proved to be unworkable. Claiming perfect freedom for

the individual, it has landed the individual in selfishness. Not merely Christian morals, but all sense of social discipline is being overruled by the eager self-will of our day and the passion for material enjoyment among the wealthier classes. The desire to escape from the past and to live only in the moment is very imperious, and, with the decay of the sanctions of Puritanism, has become widespread. Poets do but express what is a very prevalent desire in lines such as these of Mr. Sturge-Moore :

Of men the least bound is the roving seaman
Who hires himself to merchantman or pirate
For single voyages, stays where he may please,
Lives his purse empty in a dozen ports,
And ne'er obeys the ghost of what once was !
His laugh chimes readily ; his kiss, no symbol
Of aught to come, but cordial, eager, hot,
Leaves his to-morrow free. With him for comrade
Each day shall be enough, and what is good
Enjoyed, and what is evil borne or cursed.

Fulness of life is impossible except in obedience to the maxim, 'whosoever will lose his life shall save it.' Take the simplest lesson, universally inculcated by the common judgment of mankind, and a prime necessity of physical existence in undeveloped civilizations. Courage in bodily matters, the knightly ideal, means not merely that since pain is inevitable it must be endured, but that literally we are to try to 'grin and bear it.' 'Never,' we are all told, 'can you get the most, the best, out of life, if you will not suffer hardships and face dangers.' In primitive societies this is taught by necessity. In a highly complex civilization some may be artificially sheltered, and of these some, to their undying regret, may escape learning the lesson in youth ; for all that, few will doubt that to make the best of even bodily life some use must be made of the maxim that lies at the root of all Christian discipline. Not merely is no other condition safe ; it is not, in the long run, so full of joy.

The man of the world finds the joy and duty and end of life in its increase of his own resources. The Christian teaching finds that joy and duty and end, not in getting, but in giving life. 'I came,' says Jesus, not to secure more life for myself, but 'that they may have life.' 'He that findeth his life shall lose it ; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.' 'Death worketh in us,' says the Apostle Paul, 'but life in you.' The triune formula of joy, duty, and end, according to the Christian teaching, is discovered in the communicative and self-propagating nature of spiritual power. What is the joy of life? It is the discovery of the capacity

to inspire life. And what is the duty of life? It is not acquisition, but service. And what is the end of life, or, in the language of the New Testament, its crown? It is not a crown of gold, or gems, which one may wear on his own head ; it is, as the Book of Revelation says, 'a crown of life.'

the increase of capacity, the enrichment of opportunity, the chance to be of use, the power to say with Jesus Christ : 'I give unto them eternal life.'

3. Now the opportunity of self-denial is found in Social Service. Still holding to the notion that one is to make the most of himself, we come to see that we do and can make the most of this world and of ourselves, not by ourselves, but only in relation to others. Our studies in psychology, history, and the science of society, as well as our practical experience of life, have taught that there is no such thing as an unrelated human being. If you could find an unrelated being, he would not be human. If you deprive a man of human relations, you destroy him. It is a scientific discovery that we live the abundant life not as individuals but in relation to others.

It is never to be forgotten that this social idea of life, so familiar to us, is the Christian idea of life. It is the direct fruit of Christianity and of Christianity alone. Others, no doubt, before Christ had caught the idea, but He alone made it vital. It has pervaded no civilization save Christian civilization. It is the spirit of Christ dominant among men that has, for us, utterly changed the position of woman, the care and education of children, the treatment of criminals, and the care of the insane ; that has brought about the liberation of slaves, the modern organization and administration of charity, the reform of society. To ruin modern life, you have only to take out of it what Christ has contributed to it. The twentieth-century social ideal is the Christian ideal.

4. Thus we return to Christ the Giver of life. And we notice two things.

(1) What He came to give was His own possession. All life comes from antecedent life. Science as yet knows no such thing as spontaneous generation. The inorganic does not become organic till the organic bends down and communicates to it the germs of life. The higher must bend down and touch the lower ere it can possess the potencies of life. That is precisely what Jesus said in regard to the spiritual realm. 'Except a man be born again he cannot enter the Kingdom of God'—the Kingdom of Life. But, thank God, the Higher did condescend to the lower ! 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,' the highest life. Man unregenerate is spiritually dead. All we can say is

that he has the capacity for life. There must be communicated to him the mysterious energy of a new life. He, who is the Life, comes into the soul and endows it with the highest life, and the man becomes in the truest sense a living soul.

(2) This means that Christ is more than an example. The power to live must first oppose itself to those forces of death which make true life so terribly difficult. Man was wounded, humanity was stricken, his heart's blood was ebbing away through the wounds. Jesus Christ had to meet a foe who for centuries had expended his force on human nature. The combat is a long one, the chastisement is severe, He cuts long and deep. 'He restoreth my soul,' again and again by the exercise of His healing blow. But there is more than love and sacrifice here—it is the knowledge of the skilled Physician who goes deeper than the few striking symptoms, and prescribes for something more than the local affection.

Fourth Sunday in Advent.

'To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.'—In 1837.

LITERATURE.—D. G. Burrell, *The Spirit of the Age*, 1895; J. Cuckson, *Faith and Fellowship*, 1897; W. Hornby (ed.), *Teachings of Christ and the Apostles*, 1916; J. B. Johnston, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 1875; W. J. Knox Little, *The Witness of the Passion*, 1884; D. M. McIntyre, *Life in His Name*, 1909; N. Porter, *Fifteen Years in the Chapel of Yale College*, 1888.

The annual return of the Festival of Christmas invites us once more to a consideration of the nature and mission of Him whose birth we celebrate. Who was Jesus Christ? The question is not one to which any intelligent man can afford to be indifferent, or to which he has no definite answer, for upon the answer we give to this question depends the quality of our discipleship. Christ is Christianity; and without clear views of His character and person, our moral and religious life must be unstable, as a house that is built upon sand.

In the text we have His own answer. He is a witness, He says. He came into the world to be a witness for the truth. But what is Truth? It is reality as opposed to fallacy or delusion. We must remember that there is a wide difference between truth and veracity: the latter implies a

correspondence between our words and our thoughts, the former between thoughts and facts, realities. Veracity is said to be the virtue of the Anglo-Saxon race, and perhaps justly; but is truth? Jesus came not only to speak the truth, but to be a witness for it, that is to say, to be the truth. As He directly said, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life.'

1. He is the truth about God. It is not without deep significance that Christ is thus characterized as the Word. As language is the medium through which we understand one another, so Christ is the articulate speech of God. He is God's Word to men. If we would wish to understand God, we must look on Jesus Christ; on Christ living, dying and triumphing over death. In Him we behold all the divine attributes, and through Him we make the acquaintance of God.

The desire to know God has been, and still is, the most passionate longing of the human race. It is an unsatisfied desire, which grows stronger the more it is fed. Civilization does not outgrow it, and barbarism cannot wholly efface it. It is one of the most urgent and universal of human desires, and in every age of the world men have appeared, who have made the better knowledge and love of God the dominating purpose of their lives. Each generation of prophets has added something higher and better to the thought of God, and with each new revelation has come a purer and loftier service. In Jesus Christ mankind received its perfect and complete unfolding of the divine character. Beyond His thought of the immanent and universal Father we cannot go. That would seem to be the absolute truth and reality of God, which succeeding ages may realize more fully and adequately, but to which they can hardly be expected to add anything. When Philip made his singular request to Jesus, 'Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us,' the answer he received was explicit and final, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.'

If we ask how He is the truth about God, the answer is:

(1) In His Person. Pascal affirms, with his accustomed sententiousness, that 'too much truth dazzles the mind.' The glory of the invisible God is tempered to our dim sight by the veil of flesh. We gaze with steady eyes on Jesus and behold His glory—glory as of the Only-begotten from the Father.

(2) In His Character. The character of the invisible and omnipresent Deity, whom no eye can fully see, and no life can adequately express, who is without an equal in wisdom and power and goodness, is focused, as it were, in the character of Jesus. And the character of Jesus, as the incomparable revealer of God, is something real, palpable,

apprehensible to us, which does not merely tell us what God is, and what man's idea of Him should be, but puts us in the spiritual presence of the Father, and makes us feel the brightness of His glory and the reality of His life and love.

(3) In His *Knowledge*. His knowledge of God was pure, perfect, immediate. It was too intimate, too direct, too constant, to be described by so tentative a term as 'belief.' He knew God, He did not merely believe in Him. His life was so completely lived in God that the ordinary rational processes, by which men seek to justify to themselves or others a truth of which they are never quite certain, were not necessary in His case. They did not even occur to Him. His life was so unquestionably and completely in accord with God that absolute dependence on His Father, resignation to the divine will, submission to the heavenly purpose, were normal and natural. He did not speculate about God, or shape His trust into definitions and logical statements, but simply revealed the Father, and men felt that His knowledge was intimate and final. His soul was so penetrated, possessed, quickened, by the consciousness of His sonship, that doubt and fear and care and pain did not disturb the calm serenity of His life in God.

2. But in the second place, Christ is the truth about *Man*. Christianity not only furnishes us with the highest and most perfect thought of God and of His providence conceivable, but it also gives us the best idea, whether attained or attainable, of the nature and duty of man. It is unique in its perfect thought of God. It is superlative in its idea of man. Neither science, nor art, nor philosophy, nor poetry, can improve in any degree upon the revelation of Jesus Christ as to the nature and destiny of man. The best history of the world for nearly two thousand years is the story of human effort to grasp that revelation and grow up into it. It is the religion of humanity in a sense in which no other cult can be regarded. Look at mankind from any standpoint that you choose, and there is no other idea that is at all comparable in clearness, fulness, and beauty with the conception of Jesus as to man in his relation to God and to his fellows. It lies at the basis of life in the individual, the family, the Church, and the nation. That God is our Father is the highest thought to which we can hope to attain; and that we are His sons, heirs and joint-heirs with Christ, is a correlative truth not to be surpassed in worth and

significance. Jesus discerned in every soul, even the worst, a God-related element, on the ground of which every sinner under heaven can say, 'I will arise and go to my Father.'

3. In the third place, Christ is the truth about the *Kingdom of God*.

(1) He bore witness to the truth that it was the design of God to establish a kingdom in the hearts of men. In the Old Testament, indeed, the idea of God as a king was often presented, and the minds of the Jews were familiar with it. Accordingly, when John the Baptist appeared, he said, 'The kingdom' (that is, the reign) 'of God is at hand'; but how different was the notion, entertained by the people, regarding the kingdom, from the truth which was taught respecting it by the Saviour! When the multitude, greatly impressed by the miracles which He performed, attempted by force to make Him a King, they thought of such kings as were then, or had been before, in the world. Their notion was that of a king like Herod, or the Roman Cæsars, or—if their thoughts went back, as is not unlikely, to the illustrious times of their own history—a king like David, or Solomon, or Jehoshaphat, or Judas Maccabeus, a king who would aim at worldly conquests, and accomplish his objects by the force of arms. The idea of a spiritual kingdom—of God's reigning in the minds and hearts of men, commanding, rewarding, punishing, securing obedience without carnal weapons—seems never to have entered into their minds.

(2) He bore witness to the truth, that the foundation of this kingdom was to be laid in His own obedience unto death. For a person to die, and especially to die upon a cross, after being tried and condemned as an impostor, a blasphemer, and seditious person, seemed to be the least likely way of obtaining a kingdom, and so thought both the friends and enemies of Jesus. The hearts of the disciples sank when the thought dawned upon them of His dying in pain and infamy; and the chief priests and elders supposed that, by putting Him to death on the cross, they had for ever crushed His claims to be recognized as the Messiah. But His thoughts were not as their thoughts, and His ways were not as their ways. From the very beginning, His soul was, to some extent at least, impressed with the necessity of His dying in the room of men, and of His rising to the throne by the cross. It was at an early period of His

ministry that He spake the mysterious words, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,' and it was at an early period also that, in His conversation with Nicodemus, He said, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.'

(3) He also bore witness to the truth that faith in His obedience is the essential requisite to the enjoyment of the immunities of His kingdom. By believing a lie man fell, and by believing truth he was to be raised again; by believing Satan's false promises, and disbelieving God's true promises, ruin came upon man, and it was by believing God's true promises, and ceasing to believe Satan's false promises, that eternal life was to be obtained. The fall was by questioning and insulting, and the restoration was to be by admitting and honouring, the veracity of God. As the blessing of pardon was a thing of sovereign goodness—of free and unmerited kindness—God might have given it as He saw fit, but surely there is unspeakable wisdom shown in His giving it in this way, as it is virtually an assertion on the one part, and an acknowledgment on the other, that from the first God had been in the right and man in the wrong.

(4) And He bore witness to the truth, that the immunities of His kingdom were freely offered to men of all countries and times. The Jews were for many centuries separated from the rest of the world, and they imagined that it would always be so. Even the apostles and other early disciples stumbled when Peter preached the gospel to Cornelius, and when Paul proclaimed the breaking down of the 'middle-wall of partition.' Yet in preaching and acting as they did, Peter and Paul were but opening up the great and gracious words of the Master. Did He not say, 'Many shall come from the east and from the west, and the north and the south, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven'? Did He not commend the faith of the Syro-Phenician woman, and tell of the water of life to the woman of Samaria? Did He not say to His disciples, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature'—even that gospel which He Himself preached when He said, 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'; 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink'; 'Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out'?

O Love! O Life! Our faith and sight
Thy presence maketh one;
As through transfigured clouds of white
We trace the noon-day sun.

So, to our mortal eyes subdued,
Flesh-veiled, but not concealed,
We know in Thee the Fatherhood
And heart of God revealed.

Virginibus Puerisque.

I.

Christmas 1918.

'He hath put a new song in my mouth.'—Ps 40².

THERE was great news at the breakfast-table the other morning. A wire had come that Charlie was coming home on leave. Katie was very proud of her soldier brother. He was big and strong, and although he kept teasing her all the time she liked it. She had missed him 'ever so much.' And she went off to school singing all the way. I cannot tell you the words of her song; but whatever they were they meant,

'Charlie's coming home; Charlie's coming home.
A new song had been put into Katie's mouth.

1. Thousands of years ago prophets saw empire ruined, and they looked on desolate places where fine cities had been. They knew that all this had happened because the people had forgotten God. Those prophets saw but one little corner of the world. What would they have thought if they had been alive to-day? Well, they thought and prayed, and looked far into the future. 'Away on the horizon,' as we say, some of them saw a new and bright star rising. It appeared to them as a herald of peace to the whole world. They could not help feeling joyful; they could not help singing. Some of their songs are in the Bible; they are very beautiful.

2. But peace did not come so long as those prophets lived. You boys and girls think that the clock of time moves slowly, don't you? From one Christmas to another seems very long. But God's clock moves more slowly still. One of the prophets even became weary from waiting, and cried, 'O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear.'

The Prince of Peace they had been looking for did come, however.

'What means that star,' the Shepherds said,
 'That brightens through the rocky glen?'
 And angels, answering overhead,
 Sang, 'Peace on earth, good-will to men!'

I believe the shepherds sang too; a new song had been put into their mouths.

3. Christmas bells are ringing once more. You are glad: we are all glad. But although all these long years Christian people have sung of peace, peace as you boys and girls understand it has never really come. There has been joy because Jesus Christ was born, but nations have hated one another, and there have been wars that have meant suffering, death, and sorrow.

'Tis nineteen hundred years and more
 Since those sweet oracles were dumb;
 We wait for Him, like them of yore;
 Alas, He seems so slow to come!

4. This year the Christmas joy that your fathers and mothers are feeling is a different joy from what they have ever felt before. Sadness and triumph are both in it. They are sad because they miss young faces from the family table; they rejoice because they believe that at last they are within sight of the time when there shall be no more wars or fighting, and that their braye boys—your big brothers—have had a share in bringing about the reign of peace. God has put a new song in the mouths of your fathers and mothers.

5. No one has greater reason to sing the new song than boys and girls. The world in which peace is to reign is yours. There is a legend that when Jesus was born the sun danced in the sky, the aged trees straightened themselves, put on leaves, and sent forth the fragrance of blossoms. These are but symbols of what takes place in our hearts when Christmas comes round. At an institution for the blind the children had a Christmas tree given to them. They were very happy, they shouted for joy, they danced up and down, and they crowded about and hugged each other in rapture. They felt like singing a new song indeed. And in your Christmas joy I hope you will not forget about the Prince of Peace promised so long ago. By your loving unselfishness you may play your own little part in starting the spirit that is to rule the new year.

¹ *The Poetical Works of James Russell Lowell*, 491.

All round about our feet shall shine
 A light like that the wise men saw,
 If we our loving wills incline
 To that sweet Life which is the Law.

So shall we learn to understand
 The simple faith of shepherds then,
 And, clasping kindly, hand in hand,
 Sing, 'Peace on earth, good-will to men!'

And they who do their souls no wrong,
 But keep at eve the faith of morn,
 Shall daily hear the angel-song,
 'To-day the Prince of Peace is born!'²

II.

Gems amid Stones.

'A bag of gems in a heap of stones.'—Pr 26⁶.

That was a queer place for gems, was it not? You would expect to find them in the treasure-chamber of a king, or hidden in some safe corner in a house, or, if you lived in fairyland, you might search for them in a magic cave. But who would look for gems in a heap of stones by the roadside? And yet there they were, all safely tied up in a bag. Perhaps somebody laid them down and forgot about them, or perhaps they were hidden in a hurry, and then their owner died and the secret of their hiding-place died with him. We do not know, but there they were, and when I came upon them in the Book of Proverbs they gave me two messages for the boys and girls. Would you like to know these messages?

1. Well, first they told me not to forget to *look for the gems amid the stones*. What does that mean? Of course it doesn't mean that you are to pull down every heap of stones you meet on a country roadside and that you are to expect to find a bag of jewels among them. No, it means that you are to look for beauty among things that seem plain and ugly; that you are to look for brightness among things that seem dull or disagreeable; that you are to look for goodness amid things that seem unattractive or even worthless.

You are to *look for beauty among the things that seem ugly and plain*. Once a gentleman was walking on the shores of Westmoreland. He was accompanied by an old, old man who had lived there all his days. And as they walked along the

² *The Poetical Works of James Russell Lowell*, 492.

visitor complained of the blackness and ugliness of the beach at that part. But the old man only smiled. 'Have you ever stooped down, sir?' he asked. And when the stranger stooped, he saw that what had before seemed a black mass was crowded with thousands upon thousands of exquisite little shells. Have you found the shells amidst the pebbles, boys and girls? Have you looked for the gems amidst the stones? Have you used the eyes God gave you to discover all the marvels with which He has crowded this wonderful world of His? You are missing some of the best things in life if you have not.

And then you are to *look for brightness among the things that seem dull or disagreeable*. There is a story which tells how two little girls were taken to a strange garden and left there to play. Before long one of them ran to find her mother,—'The garden is a horrid place,' she grumbled, 'every rose-tree has cruel thorns upon it.' By and by the other child came,—'Mother,' she cried, 'the garden is *such* a lovely place; every thorn bush has beautiful roses growing on it.'

Boys and girls, look for the roses among the thorns. Life isn't going to be all fun. Troubles will come as well as joys. The thorns will prick and tear sometimes, and our hands will bleed. But keep a brave heart. There are roses amidst the thorns, and we owe it to ourselves and to those around us to remember the roses. And if we do that, the thorns will seem worth while and the roses will be all the sweeter because of them.

Once more, you are to *look for goodness amidst things that seem unattractive or even worthless*. There are some people we know, about whom there doesn't seem to be anything nice. They are stupid, or dull, or cross, or even unkind and spiteful. There are other people who seem to be out and out bad, and we feel we can't like them however much we try.

Well, remember that somewhere amidst the heap of stones the jewels are shining. Somewhere, perhaps, that unattractive person has a mother who loves him just as much as your mother loves you. The Prodigal Son in the parable did not seem worth much, and yet his father never left off caring for him. And God never leaves off caring for the worst of us. He sees the jewels amidst the stones, and He is able to make them sparkle and glisten in the light of His presence.

So look for the jewels amidst the stones, boys

and girls. There is never a heap of stones without its gem. There is never any one so bad but has some good in him. And if you look for the gem perhaps you will be the means of helping it to shine in the glorious light of day.

2. I have only a minute left for the other message of the jewels, but I must not leave it out. For the second thing they told me was *not to throw away my gems on a heap of stones*. And what does that mean? Well, it just means that you and I are not to throw away things that are valuable on things that are worthless. We are not to waste our energies on trifles; we are not to waste our minds in reading bad books; we are not to waste our friendship on bad companions.

And, boys and girls, there is one priceless jewel you each possess. It is your life here on earth. What are you going to do with it? Are you going to cut it and polish it and make it gloriously worth while? Or are you going to throw it away on a heap of stones? Are you going to make the very best of it so that it may make the world brighter and better? Or are you going to waste it on your own selfish aims or on things that are base and unworthy? The gem is yours, boys and girls, yours to use as you will, but it is yours only once. If you want to guard it safely and use it well, then you must give it into God's keeping. He will watch over it and give it a brighter radiance every day, until at last it is fit to adorn His heavenly crown.

III.

A Good Day.

'A day of gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor.'—Est 9^{19, 22}.

What do you call a good day? I wonder. Do you ever say to yourself as you snuggle under the blankets at night, 'Well, this has been a good day anyway?' I think I could guess what has made your day a good day. More than likely it has been a day when delightful things have happened to you. Perhaps you have got a present of something you have been longing for, perhaps you have been treated to a circus or a menagerie, perhaps you have made a fine score at cricket, perhaps you have won a prize that you have worked hard to get, perhaps—but there's no need to add more—there are hundreds of jolly

things in the world that may have made it a good day for you.

Why was it a good day for the people in our text? I can tell you. It was a good day because God had delivered them out of terrible danger, and made them victorious over their enemies. If things had gone as they had been planned not one of these people would have been alive on that good day. They would all have been dead on the day before; for that was the danger they had escaped—the danger of losing their lives.

They were Jews—these people—but not Jews living in their own land; they were living in the land of Persia. The king of that land had listened to evil tales which were not true, and had been persuaded by a man called Haman, who hated the Jews, that they were a wicked, troublesome lot; and that the sooner the king got rid of them all the better. The king, unfortunately, was rather a foolish man, who gave orders first and thought afterwards, so he immediately ordered that all the Jews should be put to death on a certain day. It was a large order, and a terrible one too.

But there was one who determined that if she could help it that order should not be carried out. She was a Jewess, and her name was Esther, and she was also the king's wife. He was very fond of her, but he was such a great king that even she dare not approach him until he sent for her. If she went to him without being sent for she risked her life. But Esther thought only of her people and that made her brave, so she went to the king, and she showed him how wicked and false Haman's stories had been, and the king repented of the order he had given, and was so angry with Haman that he condemned him to death.

Now the difficulty in Persia was that once a law had been made, it could never be unmade. If the king had once said, 'Kill the Jews,' he couldn't say, 'Do not kill the Jews.' However, the king hit upon a plan. He issued an order that all the Jews should be allowed to defend themselves when attacked; and when the dreaded day arrived the Jews were ready, and instead of being slain, they slew their enemies. Then the day after they rested and feasted and were glad. They made that day a good day, a day of rejoicing, and of sending presents to one another, and of giving

presents to the poor. That is how it was a good day for the Jews.

And it is still a good day for the Jews in every land, for in memory of that great deliverance the Jews still keep what they call the feast of *Purim*. It is a sort of Jewish Christmas day, for, alas! the Jews do not keep Christmas day as we do.

Now I think we might copy these old Jews in their idea of a good day. You see, God first made it a good day for them; and then they made it a good day for others. When God gives us a good day, why should we not pass on some of the goodness to others? Let us give away some of the joy that comes our way. Let us share our happiness. Instead of making us less happy it will make us even happier.

Boys and girls, it is like this. God gives us everything, and we can't show our gratitude to Him in the same way as we can show it to other people. We can't give God something in return. Of course we can give Him our love, and He wants that most of all, but I am speaking rather of some real thing, some token, and we can't give that to God. No, but we can give it to somebody else who needs it, and that is what God wishes us to do. Giving it to that somebody we are really giving it to Him. There are plenty of somebodies who have got neither happy homes, nor jolly presents, nor nice food, nor warm clothing. God loves us to remember these somebodies when the good day comes our way.

I think God would be very pleased if we were all like the little girl I read of the other day. She and her brothers and sisters were promised a monthly allowance of pocket-money. She was a very tiny tot, so her allowance was to be only a halfpenny a month. But a halfpenny seemed a huge sum to the little maid, and she was so overjoyed that she got it changed at once for two farthings. Then she ran through to her father's study, and said, 'Daddy, I'm very rich now, and I'm going to allow you a farthing a month, and here is your December farthing!'

If God gives us the halfpennies, let us try to give away the farthings. If He gives us a good and happy day, let us try to make it a good and happy day for others. If we do that we shall find that it is not only a good, but, what is better, a perfect day.