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In the Study.

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR.

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

FAITH IN GOD.

'Have faith in God.'—Mk 11²².

BUT how? There are three directions in which we may go to find faith in God.

1. THE INTELLECTUAL.—We may speculate and reason and argue about God. But the intellectual way we shall find inadequate, because God, the ultimate fact of which we are in search, is not evolved at the end of a process of reasoning in mere 'quod erat demonstrandum' fashion. The intellectual faculties of reasoning and logic have, of course, their most important place, but they are only valid in co-operation with other faculties of observation and apprehension which the intellectual method, followed exclusively, does not call into play. You cannot argue a man into belief in God. You cannot arrive at God's character, even if you can prove His existence, merely by the sequence of logical demonstrations.

It always seems to me that all these subjects are beyond our faculties. Theism and atheism are to me both philosophically inconceivable; that is, I cannot conceive the world without a Creator, and I cannot of myself form any conception of a Creator of the world. *Faith* must come in in some shape, and it seems to me that there is often just as much faith of a kind in the unbeliever as in the believer. Neither can prove his case mathematically.¹

2. THE SCIENTIFIC.—The scientific we shall find inadequate, because by itself the study of nature cannot lead us to the knowledge of a God who answers the questions of the heart and satisfies its craving. Nature shows us law in every nook and cranny of the Universe, but it cannot reveal a God of personal love. To be strictly scientific in the accepted sense of the term is to be strictly agnostic. Science has its legitimate field and its legitimate methods, although, like the theologian at whom he so often girds, the scientist is not without his prejudices and his narrow dogmatism. He is to be respected when he speaks according to what he knows. His knowledge is at least something more learned by man about God. Unless we are to

¹ *The Life and Letters of Edward A. Freeman*, ii. 444.

fall into an ancient fallacy and exclude God from His universe, we must regard every fact of science as a fresh revelation of His creative activity and power. Nevertheless, scientific knowledge lies on a plane different from that on which the knowledge we seek is to be found.

The fact that radium emits heat without apparent diminution in bulk, or that there are magnetic streams radiating from the sun, and disturbing our magnetic needles at regular intervals, or even the biological fact of our descent from the anthropoid apes and all that this descent implies, cannot help a man to resist a present temptation, or to face death with Christian confidence and hope. Science by itself is, and must always remain, powerless to give us a God who will draw out the tendrils of the human heart towards Himself.²

3. THE PERSONAL.—We are bound to fall back on experience. Does the intellectual evidence, such as it is, for a controlling mind in the universe, does the practical evidence, such as it is, of coherence and purpose in Nature, unite with any evidence of personal experience which permits us to add the dynamic formula 'God is Love'? In both cases the answer of contemporary experience and of history is unquestionably *Yes*, it does. Then where is this revelation? In unnumbered human lives. Martyrs and saints, famous in story, plain men and women whose memory no illuminated Acta Sanctorum has rescued from oblivion, whose chronicles are the tales of mean streets, unite in an uninterrupted witness which flows forward, a broadening stream of testimony through the years and the centuries.

But there is only one spring adequate in volume, altogether pure and inexhaustible, a spring which upon a time broke forth in the hills of Galilee and now flows continually in the heart of man. The test of living power in actual experience points to one Divine Human life in history, as the supreme revelation of God. That life is the life of Jesus Christ. That life interprets all other lives governed by its spirit, that life has brought with it a view of God which, although it does not explain the mystery of being, makes our individual striving intelligible, and gives the Divine sanction to all that is pure, holy, and unselfish. It identifies the highest love we know in man with the character and

² *John Wilhelm Rountree: Essays and Addresses.*

purpose of the eternal governing power of the universe.¹

Tennyson taught us to rely mainly for the support of our faith in the revelation God had given of Himself to man; especially in the *power to love*. Speaking of his own faith in God, he says:

I found Him not in world or sun,
Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye;
Nor through the questions men may try,
The petty cobwebs we have spun:

If e'er when faith had fallen asleep,
I heard a voice 'believe no more'
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep;

A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath, the *heart*
Stood up and answered 'I have felt.'

And Tennyson goes on to tell us that it was after he had found God in direct intercourse with his own spirit that he came to realize how through nature He was moulding mankind:

Then was I as a child that cries,
But crying knows his father near;

And what I am beheld again
WHAT IS, and no man understands;
And out of darkness came the hands
That reach through nature moulding men.

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.

THE PEACE OF GOD.

'Let the peace of God rule in your hearts.'—Col 3¹⁵.

It is easy to talk of peace; it is easier to write about it. Is it easy to possess it, in the light of the perfectly common day, and of perfectly real trial? No, just as the call to surrender and to trust, seeing Him that is invisible, in this visible world of sin, is so far from easy to obey that no man can do it but by the Holy Ghost. But also yes, because the Holy Ghost is able to 'make all grace abound towards us,' that we may quite simply surrender, and quite simply trust. Yes, because He is able to glorify Jesus Christ to us, to present Him to us so that He is indeed a living, bright Reality to us. Peace is easy when the almighty Reason is full in our spiritual sight.

1. Our peace is *in Christ*. We remember how

¹ John Wilhelm Rowntree: *Essays and Addresses*.

emphatically and loftily, as one of the very key-notes of His last discourse, our Lord has spoken to us, in them, of 'dwelling in Him' as the prerogative and the duty of every Christian. We are in Him as in an atmosphere. In Him our true lives are rooted as a tree in the soil. We are in Him as a branch in the vine, in Him as the members in a body, in Him as the residents in a house. We are in Him by simple faith, by the trust that rests all upon Him, by the love that finds all in Him, by the obedience that does all for Him. And it is only when we are 'in Christ' that we rest, and realize peace. All else brings distraction. Even delights trouble. The world may give excitement, the world may give vulgar and fleeting joys, the world may give stimulus to much that is good and true in us, but there is only one thing that gives peace, and that is that our hearts should dwell in the Fortress, and should ever be surrounded by Jesus Christ.

From the terrors of conscience, from the distractions of business, from the chill of failure, from the sting of oppression, men hear Him calling them, and—here is the marvel—they obey His call. Take the simplest of Christian hymns, and listen how multitudes in the centres of our sceptical civilization, of all ages, types, degrees of culture, modes of thinking, pour into them the intensest conviction, taking up and making their own the great words of St. Paul:

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
'Come unto Me, and rest:
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon My breast.'
I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary and worn and sad:
I found in Him a resting-place,
And He has made me glad.

2. Great has been the effect of Christ's promise, 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.' It has established the word 'Peace' in the heart of the Church as expressing the ideal character of Christian happiness and the rightful condition of believers. 'Grace and peace' become keynotes of the Apostolic teaching, and are for ever united in all prayer and benediction. Peace represents a restful, satisfying state, an essential condition for more exalted experiences, being itself of more solid value than them all. If it be asked in what it consists, we may perhaps rightly distinguish its constituent parts, as the peace of conscience, the peace of character, and the peace of trust.

(1) There is peace in a conscience relieved from

guilt, reconciled to God, and restored to its rightful supremacy.

(2) There is peace in a character brought into order and harmony, in which the disquieting power of worldly and carnal lusts, of pride, of selfishness, of evil tempers and unworthy feelings, has given place to the reign of nobler principles and purer affections.

(3) Finally, there is peace in that trust and confidence in God which casts all care upon Him, simply relies upon His promises, leaves all things in His hand, and is sure that He does all things well. If these be elements of peace, each one of them is the gift of Christ; for from Him they all proceed, and in Him are found.¹

Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.

THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL.

'For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.'—1 Jn 3^o.

Christian men are to be kindly affectioned one towards another in brotherly love: in honour preferring one another—which is easier to say than to do. They are to refrain from rendering evil for evil, and to learn under provocation to be self-controlled. They are to be in charity with all men, and so far as it lies within their own power (for it takes two to make peace, as it takes two to make a quarrel) they are to live peaceably with all men. Wrath and clamour, lying and evil-speaking, back-biting and slandering, are all of the devil, devilish. Contrary to the Christian ideals of truthfulness, love, and humility are the works of the devil, which may be summed up under the three headings of lying, hatred, and pride.

1. LYING.—The devil is described in the New Testament as 'a liar and the father thereof.' A Christian is to be true and just in all his dealings, abhorring crookedness: for the essence of lying is not inexactitude in speech, but deceitfulness of intention. Christian veracity means honesty, straightforwardness, and sincerity in deed as well as in word. A writer of fiction is not a liar: to improve in the telling an anecdote or a story is not necessarily to deceive others in any culpable sense; and moralists have from time to time discussed the question whether there may not be circumstances in which to tell a verbal lie is even a moral

¹ T. D. Bernard, *The Central Teaching of Jesus Christ*.

duty—e.g. in order to prevent a murderer or a madman from discovering the whereabouts of his intended victim. But casuistical problems of this kind do not very frequently arise, and in all ordinary circumstances strict literal veracity is the right course to pursue.

It follows that just as every lie is of the devil, so all truth, of whatever kind, is of God. The Lord is a God of Knowledge, and every form of intellectual timidity and obscurantism is contrary to godliness. There can never be any opposition between scientific and religious truth, since both equally proceed from God. The Christian Church is ideally a society of free-thinkers, that is, of men who freely think, and the genuine Christian tradition has always been to promote learning and freedom of inquiry. It is worth remembering that the oldest and most justly venerable of the Universities of Europe are without exception in their origin ecclesiastical foundations. If the love of truth and the spirit of freedom which inspired their inception have at particular epochs in their history been temporarily obscured, if there is much in the ecclesiasticism both of the past and of the present which is reactionary in tendency and spirit, at least there have never been lacking protesting voices, and the authentic spirit of the Gospel tells always upon the other side. 'Ye shall know the truth,' says a New Testament writer, 'and the truth shall make you free.'

2. HATRED.—In the second place, hatred is of the devil, and love is of Christ: the Christian is to love even his enemies. In a time of war, that is to say, whenever actual enemies exist, the natural man discovers in such an ideal only an immoral sentimentalism, and the doctrinaire pacifist occasionally uses language which gives colour to the charge. But Christianity has nothing in common with sentimentalism, and Christian love is no merely sentimental affection which ignores the reality of evil or explains away the wrongfulness of wrong. In order to love his enemies it is not necessary for a Christian to pretend that they are not really hostile, to make excuses for things that are inexcusable, or to be blind to the moral issues which may be at stake. It has rightly been pointed out that 'Love your enemies' means 'Want them to be your friends: want them to alter, so that friendship between you and them may become possible.' More generally what is meant is that the Christian man is by the grace of God

to conquer the instinct of hatred and the spirit of revenge within his own heart, to be willing to serve others (his enemies included) at cost to himself in accordance with the will of God, to desire on behalf of all men (his enemies included) the realization of their true good. For wrongdoers chastisement may be the truest kindness. To allow a man, or a nation, to pursue an evil purpose unchecked would be no real act of love even towards the nation or the individual concerned. To offer opposition, if necessary by force, may in certain circumstances be a plain duty. That which we are to love, in those whose immediate aspect and character is both unlovely and unlovable, is not what they are, but what they are capable of becoming. We are to love that element in them which is capable of redemption, the true spiritual image of God in man, which can never be totally effaced. We are to remember that for them also the Son of God was crucified, that we also have need of forgiveness, and that 'God commendeth His own love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.'

3. PRIDE.—The third great manifestation of the spirit and temper which is of the devil, devilish, is pride, which by Christian writers upon these subjects is commonly regarded as the deadliest of the so-called 'deadly sins,' on the ground that it logically involves the assertion of a false claim to be independent of God, and is therefore fatal in principle to the religious life. Pagan systems of morality distinguish between false pride, the foolish conceit of the man who claims for himself virtues and capacities which he does not in fact possess, and proper pride, the entirely just appreciation by a man of his own merits and accomplishments at neither more nor less than their true value. The Christian ideal of humility is apt from this point of view to appear either slavish or insincere. The issue between Christian and pagan morals here depends upon the truth or falsehood of the Christian doctrine of God and of His relation to man. Once let a man take seriously the avowal that 'It is] he that hath made us, and not we ourselves,' once let him grant the position that his life belongs to God and not to himself, and concur in the judgment of spiritual experience that whatever is good in him is the result not of his own efforts in independence of his Maker, but of the Divine Spirit operative within him, and it becomes obvious

that 'boasting'—as St. Paul expresses it—'is excluded.'¹

Septuagesima.

FOUR SQUARE.

'And the city lieth foursquare.'—Rev 21¹⁶.

A city that lieth foursquare is surely somewhat heavy and its space cramped. There is not enough of the out-of-doors about it. High walls and measured spaces do not seem consonant with freedom. Even our physical life rebels against anything suggesting confinement. A sky above us any lower than the blue dome which is our generous covering would be unbearable. A few days of fog and cloud teach us that. It is essential that we should always have the consciousness that boundlessness stretches upward, above and beyond anything that limits or confines. There can be no lid on either the world or heaven.

If there is a touch of timelessness in man, there is also a touch of spacelessness. Consequently, when we try to get vision of the consummation of God's purposes, there must be eternity and infinity to satisfy us. It is only those who have become so engrossed in short views of life as, for the time being, to be blind to anything else, who do not find the need of some sense of God's mighty purpose as a daily support. Even with them there is that undercurrent of immortality which lends its aid when they are least conscious of it. The man who has the most tedious job can do it with zest if he is able to realize that it is an important part of a great scheme. On the other hand, those who are given large responsibilities can rise no higher than a mechanical fulfilment of them unless the inspiring force comes from an out-of-door conception of life.

But the City that lieth foursquare is not cramped or confined. The symbol is the opposite of exclusiveness or restriction. It is completeness and symmetry. *

1. The City that lieth foursquare is the home of an ordered society, big enough for redeemed mankind, for it is complete and whole with the completeness and holiness of God. The kingdom of God is the measure of the City. This kingdom is so humble and lowly that it can be and is within us. It is so comprehensive that it can contain mankind, and yet there is room. The capacity for

¹ A. E. J. Rawlinson, *Religious Reality*.

sight is so great in one human soul that we can hold within ourselves the world that holds us. Perhaps this very fact is a testimony to the greatness of the kingdom of God—certainly it bears witness to the fitness of that kingdom for us.

One of the just demands that the human heart urges is that the ultimate abode of men should be thoroughly human. By that I mean that every feature of the life shall respond to the expectation of every feature of our nature in its highest development. So the social aspect of Heaven is symbolized by the great multitude which no man could number. Men move up thither, with, as it would seem and as we would expect, the acuteness of self-consciousness worn down by a corporate consciousness which transcends our experience because of its vastness and its unity. The self-giving element rushes through the whole, vertically and horizontally, in full and pure stream. Racial and national characteristics and achievement are seen there, and lend special value to the whole. In other words, there is there all that which on earth we are trying to bring about in national life and in our scheme for a league of nations forming a commonwealth of mankind. Magnitude and order, according to Aristotle, make beauty. So that in Heaven there will be the satisfaction, according to the philosopher's definition, of a beauty which we yearn for, but which is out of reach because of the smallness of earth's population at any one time, even supposing we were able to secure order among those who were here.¹

2. The City that lieth foursquare is a great social reality. Its white company is composed of all mankind, since the first man, who have set their course thither and made it their deliberate and reiterated choice. In them history suddenly springs full-fledged into present life. It is no longer a tortuous procession winding through the vale of time, but a compact society, unified by a common motive, enjoying a fellowship of limitless extent and unmeasured richness. The commonwealth of mankind is a fact that is the most towering of all realities after God Himself. Not a passing pageant like the nations of earth, it is permanent, for the city hath foundations builded of God. God has not stumbled in His purpose. The eccentricities and limitations of time have not blocked Him in His onward march with His children folded to His breast. They are all there in the unnumbered throng. Not one of them is lost or misplaced.

The wonderful thing is that this marvellous society is man's handiwork in close co-operation with God's. We are building it to-day as the men of yesterday built; each our share and portion.

¹ C. H. Brent, *The Mount of Vision*.

For an ye heard a music, like snow
They are building still, seeing the city is built
To music, therefore never built at all,
And therefore built for ever.

3. The society in the City is both of heaven and of earth. For the link that binds earth to heaven is organic, vital, and intimate. The 'here' is the 'there' in the process of becoming. All that vast multitude which composes the majority of the race from the beginning has been able to reach the goal only by the way we are now treading. When they went to the City that lieth foursquare, they did not lose any of the fragrance in which life on earth is rich, but carried it with them. The tie that binds us together is the tie of a common lot lived out with a common purpose, which purpose still animates both those who are there and those who are here. There memories of the past are quickened rather than dimmed by timelessness, for all their 'then' is in their 'now.' What direct efforts they are making for our edification and encouragement, to what extent an individual hand there touches a life here, does not appear. But the self-giving of the whole rushes earthward through generous arteries, and gives us nourishment and cheer. We are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses—not idle observers but sympathetic brethren.

There is a query to-day as to whether, except in mystical fashion, there can be inter-communion between ourselves and our friends yonder. Love chafes under the discipline of silence, and seeks to break its bars. Psychic phenomena are being called in to lend their aid and to produce voices of comfort. They are studied and employed in the name of science, and must be scientifically judged. They can be said to emanate from the spirit world only by ignoring the more probable hypothesis that they are the self-induced utterances of our own desires, stored memories, and thought transference, evoked from that subconscious life which is an established fact of science. Until they are excluded from all possibility of finding their explanation in this or any other cause, it is an unwarranted conclusion to attribute them to disembodied spirits. As phenomena opening up a new sphere for psychological study they are interesting. As means of communicating with the world of spirits they are doubtful, perilous, and unprofitable.²

Sexagesima.

THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE.

'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.'—Gn 3¹⁶.

In every sincere and earnest life, there comes a time in which a man finds out his sin, finds that

² C. H. Brent, *The Mount of Vision*.

the problem of his life is complicated with the fact of moral evil. Innocence is gone, and lies behind him for ever. He has sinned. He is a sinner. What is to come of it? Oh, what a hush and a suspense falls on a life at that discovery! The wanton act of sin has evidently started long trains of consequences, so very much longer than the sinner knew. He listens for the remote reverberations of his wickedness; and to him there comes really the same word of God: "I will put enmity between you and your sin. It shall bruise your heel; but you shall bruise its head." This is the prospect that opens before the man waiting to know what will become of him now that he has sinned—perpetual conflict with his sin, cruel wounds and pain and hindrance inflicted by his sin on him, and ultimate triumph over his sin by the grace of God, if he will have it.

1. The battle with sin is both without and within. First it is *without*—with the sins of the world around us. Here we must guard against thinking of sin as a mistake, or as an inconvenience. If we do we shall stand in great danger, first, of compromising with it, and second, of using low and even sinful methods of opposing it. But if we think of sin as a frightful wrong in itself, a blot and curse in the universe of God, we shall grow at once absolutely intolerant of it, and at the same time watchfully anxious about the nature of the weapons which we shall use to fight it with. How often has even the Christian Church fought sin with sin! How often has the selfishness which looked to an eternal luxury and privilege in heaven, been arrayed against the selfishness which was hungry for meat, or thirsty for drink, here upon the earth! How often has insincere profession been offered as the medicine for doubt! How many men have been transformed from cold indifference to hot partisanship, and thereby seemed to have been made religious! How many revivals have been sensational and superficial and demoralizing! Only when we see sin as God sees it, only then can we be sure of using no weapons that are not divine for its removal. Only when pity for it joins with horror at it in our hearts, as they join in the heart of God, each keeping the other strong and pure, only then can we go out to meet it with a perfect determination, bound never to lay down our arms so long as there is any sin left in the world; and at the same time, with an absolute conviction that no impatience to rid the world of

sin must tempt us for a moment to use any means for its destruction which are not pure and just; an absolute conviction that it is better that sin should be left master of the field, than that it should be fought with sin.

How full of faith the man must be who sees a giant evil stalking through the land, ruling human lives by the million, and knows how by some act or policy which is not true and sound and pure he might arrest that evil, and save precious lives, and yet withhold his hand and says, 'I cannot.' The time comes when, without a hesitation or misgiving, the soldier of God sees that he may strike, and may call every good power to witness that he does right in striking. Then men who called him coward because he would not strike at the wrong time, stand by in amazement as they see him harvesting the field with every great sweep of his unhesitating arm. For now he is a true Sir Galahad.

His strength is not the strength of ten
Because his heart is pure.

The general holds his army till the right moment for launching them upon the foe. It is heroism to stand still and wait under fire as truly as it is heroism by and by to rush upon the guns of the enemy. It is disobedience and weakness to be self-willed and fight wrongly, as truly as it is to run away and refuse to fight at all.

It was the fairy of the place,
Moving within a little light,
Who touched with dim and shadowy grace
The conflict at its fever height.

It seemed to whisper 'Quietness,'
Then quietly itself was gone:
Yet echoes of its mute caress
Were with me as the years went on.

It was the warrior within
Who called 'Awake, prepare for fight:
Yet lose not memory in the din:
Make of thy gentleness thy might:

'Make of thy silence, words to shake
The long-enthroned kings of earth:
Make of thy will the force to break
Their towers of wantonness and mirth.'

It was the wise all-seeing soul
Who counselled neither war nor peace:
'Only be thou thyself that goal
In which the wars of time shall cease.'¹

2. But the battle with sin is also within. If the battle with the sins of the world is hard, that is a harder battle which goes on in a man's own soul, his battle with his own sins. To know first of all and deepest of all, that that battle which goes on within us is God's battle is of supreme importance.

¹ A. E., *Collected Poems*, 46.

What are your sins? What is your selfishness, your untruthfulness, your cruelty? Is it something which hurts and hinders you? Indeed it is. But beyond that it is something which usurps a kingdom which belongs to God. It is His enemy. And every movement of your conscience, every sense of usurpation and of incongruity, is not merely the revolt of your own outraged soul. It is also the claim of the true King upon his Kingdom. It is the sound of the monarch's trumpet summoning the rebellious castle to surrender. Believe this, and what a dignity enters into the moral struggle of our life. It is no mere restless fermentation, the disturbed nature out of harmony with itself. It is God, with the great moral gravitation of universal righteousness, dragging this stray and wayward atom back into Himself.

But if the battle be God's battle, then it must be fought only with God's weapons. That must follow in our struggles with our sins as well as in our struggles with the world. You want to get rid of your selfishness. You must not kill it with the sword of another selfishness, which thenceforth shall rule in its place. Have we not all known men who in their youth were profligate and reckless? They flung the gold of health, and purity, and good esteem into the mire of licentiousness. By and by they saw how foolish and how fatal all that was. They were killing themselves with this which they called life. Then they reformed. They took care of their health. They nursed their reputation. They grew even to be very patterns of propriety. The town has no such censors of wickedness to-day as they are. They are as uncharitable as they once were unscrupulous. And they are just as selfish to-day as they were twenty years ago when they were living in the furious indulgence of their appetites. They have killed one selfishness with the sword of another selfishness. It is the old story of the Book of Kings. Sennacherib king of Assyria is slain by his sons, as he is worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god. And Esarhaddon his son reigns in his stead. And so the Assyrian despotism goes on still!

There is something better than that. It is possible to bring down to the earth the perfect standards of the heavens, to stop thinking about safety and comfort and salvation altogether, and to be splendidly inspired with the consciousness that we are soldiers under God; to think of our own sins not as the things which are going to condemn

us to eternal torture, but as the enemies of Him, the hindrances that stand in the way of His victorious designs; to see their badness not in their consequences, but in their nature, not in their quantity but in their quality; and so to bring to bear upon the very least of them the intense hatred and intolerance which the very nature of sin must always excite in him who has attained a true passion for holiness.¹

He passed in the light of the sun,
In the path that the many tread,
And his work, like theirs, was done
For the sake of his daily bread;
But he carried a sword, and, one by one,
Out there in the common light of the sun,
The sins of his life fell dead.

His feet never found the way
That leads to the porch of fame,
But he strove to live each day
With a conscience void of blame;
And he carried a cross whose shadow lay
Over every step of his lowly way,
And he treasured its splendid shame.

So life was a long, hard fight—
For the wrong was ever there,
And the cross ne'er out of sight,
The cross of a grey world's care;
But right through the day to the failing light
He carried the cross and fought the fight,
Great-hearted to do and bear.

Night fell—and the sword was sheathed,
And the cross of life laid down,
And into his ear was breathed
A whisper of fair renown;
And the nameless victor was glory-wreathed,
For the Voice that said, 'Let thy sword be sheathed,'
Said also, 'And take thy crown.'²

Virginitibus Puerisque.

I.

FEBRUARY.

Doxologies.

'The Lord is good.'—Nahum 1¹.

Away in Africa boys and girls have occasionally to take long cart journeys. After two or three hours the horses need a rest and a feed. We are told that on all the main roads there are suitable places marked off for what are called *outs pans* or *unyoking places*. The tired beasts know well

¹ P. Brooks, *Twenty Sermons*.

² P. C. Ainsworth, *Poems and Sonnets*.

when one of these comes in sight. They love being taken out of their harness and loosed from the cart. Don't you see them enjoying the roll on the ground, the long deep drink, and the bundles of good forage? If they could speak, I can imagine one of them saying something like, 'This is real good. If ever there was a lucky beast, I'm one. I've a good master who gives me the best of everything. Going over that bit of road was nothing. Hurrah!' In their own way they sing a doxology.

1. Life is really a journey. And most of you have already discovered that certain bits of the road may seem very long and tiresome. I wonder if you have ever given the outspans a thought. Springtime is one of them. On a bright morning in February, all creation seems to be raising its voice in thankfulness. The flowers are not awake yet, but it is as if on every side there were joyous cries of 'We are coming! We are coming!' The buds on the currant bushes are ready to burst, the bulbs are letting us know that they have been alive all through the winter. If our hearing were only a little more acute we should, by listening, be able to hear them getting ready to hoist their flag of welcome to spring. And the thrushes sing, oh, so beautifully. You have stopped to listen to a thrush singing many a time. Haven't you? It makes you want to shout. You feel glad and you cannot do anything but make a noise. There are many beautiful sounds in the world that none of us can imitate.

2. And it is right that you should shout if you feel like it. A boy's whoop of joy may be a real doxology. The brave young airman, Captain Ball, used to speak of the irresistible impulse to sing when above the clouds, and a flying comrade wrote:

. . . In joy that on these flashing wings
I cleave the skies—O! let them fret—
Now know I why the skylark sings
Untrammelled in the boundless air—
For mine it is bliss to share.

And listen to what Wordsworth says:

All the earth is gay;
Land and sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every beast keep holiday;—
Thou Child of Joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts,
thou happy Shepherd-boy!

Oh evil day! if I were sullen
While Earth herself is adorning.

3. Some very good elderly people, however, don't feel inclined to sing their doxology in spring. They rather sing it when they think of their friends. Tennyson, in talking to a friend said, 'I believe in God, not from what I see in Nature, but from what I find in man.' And he added, 'In Nature I see the Maker; I believe in His goodness from what I find in my own breast.' He loved God, for in one of his short poems he spoke of Him as:

'My Father, and my Brother, and my God!'

Don't you think it wonderful that people have sung doxologies even when they were dying? The other day I read of a very good man saying to his brother just before he passed away, 'Kiss me, Richard, God is good.'

4. But you are in the spring of life, and on this February morning all creation is praising God. You can join in the praise. We do not want you to shout on the way home from church, but I shall read you a little bit of a prayer. You know that some prayers begin with thanking God. This one does, and it is only the doxology part that I give you. Try to remember it, especially the last little bit:

God who created me
Nimble and light of limb,
In the elements free,
To run, to ride, to swim:
Not when the sense is dim,
But now from the heart of joy,
I would remember Him:
Take the thanks of a boy.

I shall repeat the last three lines very slowly:

But now from the heart of joy,
I would remember Him:
Take the thanks of a boy.

When you go out into the air, think of them. To-morrow repeat them again, and the next day too, for these wise elderly people of whom I told you had God's goodness for the burden of their song. The prophet Nahum was very Jewish, and expressed most things differently from what we should do. But the four words of the little doxology are in our language—in your language, *The Lord is good.*

Measuring Lines.

'A man with a measuring line.'—Zech. 2¹.

The other day when I was walking along a country road I saw two men carrying what looked

like a huge tape measure. They laid it down on the ground, stretched it tight, and then the man who was in front made a little jotting in a notebook.

I daresay you have often seen men doing the same thing, and you know that they are road surveyors whose business it is to measure the roads and see that they are kept in good order. Now measuring lines are very important things, we couldn't very well get along without them. So to-day I want to talk to you about these lines—how and when to use them.

There are three different kinds of things we try to measure.

1. First of all, there are *the things we can measure*. And these are usually the things we *ought* to measure. We can measure money, and we ought to do that from time to time to make sure that we are not spending more than we have, to make sure also that we are not spending too much on ourselves and giving too little away. We can measure our food, and mother knows what that means when sugar is rationed and she has to count every spoonful that goes into your tea. We can measure our time. If we are going in for an examination and have just an hour and a half to answer the paper, we can set aside so much time for each question. These are all things that we can measure and that it is wise to measure.

2. But, secondly, there are *the things it is difficult to measure*, and they are the things that we often measure wrong. Because, you see, we are so apt to measure people and things by what they look like instead of by what they are. Perhaps you will understand better if I tell you a story which I heard lately.

In a certain country district there lived a lonely farmer whom everybody thought very mean. He would give away nothing he could keep. When he was asked for a contribution for any charitable object he either gave nothing at all or a very shabby subscription. His clothes were worn and threadbare. He starved himself and he even starved his land. So by and by his acquaintances left him alone, and he lived his solitary life, year in, year out, with no one to care very much what happened to him.

Then one day his story leaked out. The farmer had once had a very dear friend who had done him a great wrong. They had drifted apart and the friend had married. After some years the friend died, and it came to the ears of the farmer

that he had died very poor. He had died very poor and had left a family of young children penniless and orphaned, for the mother had died previously. So, for the sake of the old friendship, the farmer took upon himself the bringing up of these children. He fed them, he clothed them, he educated them, until they were ready to go out into the world and earn their own living. But to do this he had to pinch and starve himself, for he was not a rich man. And when his acquaintances heard the story they were thoroughly ashamed, for the man they had counted mean was the most generous in the whole district.

So, boys and girls, be very, very careful with your measuring line when you apply it to other people. Try to get beyond the mere surface. Don't jump to the conclusion that people are mean because they have few pennies to give away. Don't imagine that people are ill-natured because they have spoken a sharp word to you. Perhaps they have some big worry to try their temper that you know nothing about. Don't conclude that people are tiresome when perhaps they are just tired. And remember, too, that it isn't always those who speak the biggest that do the most; it isn't always those who smile the sweetest that are the most sincere; it isn't always those who wear the finest clothes that have the noblest hearts.

I read a sort of fable the other day. It told how an angel was sent down to a certain village with a measuring rod. His business was to measure the people in the village and to crown as king or queen the one who came up to the required standard. He measured the minister, the schoolmaster, the squire, and many other well-known people, but they all failed to reach the standard. Then at last he picked out of the crowd a poor, shabby little woman. Nobody had ever thought very much about her, but they knew that she was always trying to do kind things and to help those who were in trouble. She alone of all that village reached the required measure, and there, before them all, the angel crowned her queen.

3. But lastly there are some things we *can't measure*, and these are usually the best things of all. Did you ever try to measure happiness? Did you ever try to measure your mother's love? Did you ever try to measure God's love? Ah, some people have tried to do that. They have measured God's love by the measure of their own miserable little hearts, and they have made it less than the love

of men. But God's love is immeasurable. It is deeper than the ocean, and wider than the universe, and higher than the heavens. It is underneath us, and round about us, and over us. It is so big and wide and tender that we can only begin to realize the least bit of what it is like.

Boys and girls, have you begun to realize what God's love is? Have you ever begun to think about it? Have you let a little bit of it into your hearts and into your lives? If you haven't done it yet, don't wait any longer. Do it now.

The Amethyst.

'The twelfth, amethyst.'—Rev. 21¹⁰.

Our precious stone for February is the last in the third great list mentioned in the Bible, it is the twelfth foundation-stone of the New Jerusalem—the amethyst. It is also the ninth stone of the high priest's breastplate. It is the birth-stone for February, so the boys and girls whose birthday is in February can listen hard.

There is one remarkable thing about the amethyst. All the other stones mentioned in the Bible have been argued about by scholars, and articles have been written saying that the Hebrew word used for the stone did not mean that stone but another. But nobody has ever had any doubt about the amethyst. All are agreed that the amethyst is just the amethyst—true to its name from the very beginning.

I need not describe an amethyst to you. You know it just as well as I do. Indeed, very possibly some of the girls present have an amethyst brooch or an amethyst pendant, for an amethyst is a stone often worn by young people. There are a great many amethysts in the world, and they are not so costly as some of the other precious stones. That is why we often see them. But though the amethyst may be inexpensive, it is none the less lovely, and it has always been prized for its exquisite colour. It was used as a gem by the ancient Egyptians, and our own forefathers knew it also, for amethyst beads have been found in old Anglo-Saxon graves in England.

The stone is a form of crystal, and it is found in Russia, India, Ceylon, and South America. It is also found in this country, but the home specimens are not so valuable as those from abroad.

The Hebrew word for amethyst meant 'dreams,' for it was supposed that the amethyst brought to

its owner sleep. The Greek word is the word we use. It means 'not intoxicated,' because the Greeks believed that the amethyst prevented drunkenness. They even thought that if wine were drunk out of an amethyst cup it could not harm the drinker. The amethyst, you see, was the symbol for sobriety. To the Eastern it was also the symbol for firm friendship.

Now what has the amethyst to say to us? The onyx said, 'Choose the best Engraver.' I think the amethyst says, 'Be loyal.'

1. It is the symbol of sobriety, and as such it says, *Be loyal to yourself*. What does being loyal to ourselves mean? It just means doing nothing unworthy of the self that God gave us. It means not hurting our body with over-eating or over-drinking or over-working or over-amusing. It means not abusing God's gift in any way. It means not condescending to soil our soul with low ideas, or unclean words, or mean actions. In a word it means being true to the best that is in us.

2. The amethyst is the symbol of friendship. As such it says, *Be loyal to others*. The first necessity of friendship is loyalty. If you are not loyal you are no friend. You are an enemy. Those who run down their friends behind their back are beneath contempt. Nobody wants their society—we can't call it their *friendship*. A friend is one who is loyal through thick and thin, who sticks to you and believes in you whatever others may say.

A little boy was once asked to describe a friend, and he gave the best description I know. He said, 'A friend is a chap what sticks to you even after he has found you out.' That is the kind of friend to have, and the kind of friend to be.

3. The amethyst is purple—the royal colour—and it is known as the 'soldier's stone.' As such it says, *Be loyal to your king*. If we wear the king's colours we must be his man, his at all costs. We must be loyal not only in name. We must be ready to prove our loyalty.

When the French were invading Russia at the beginning of last century they arrived at a small village. All the inhabitants had fled save one peasant—a woodman, judging from the axe in his belt. The officer in command of the French troops ordered the man to be shot. The soldiers raised their muskets and prepared to fire, but the peasant coolly looked down the barrels of the guns and never flinched. The officer was so struck

with the man's courage that he commanded the firing party to lower their muskets, and spare the prisoner's life. 'But,' said he, 'we shall put a mark upon him.' They made a branding-iron red-hot and placed it on the peasant's hand. When they removed it something was left there. 'What is that?' asked the woodman. 'That,' said the officer, 'is an N. for Napoleon. You belong to him now.' The man turned, placed the branded hand on a solid place, took his axe from his belt, and with one stroke severed the hand from his arm. 'There now!' cried he, 'there is not one bit of me that does not belong to the Czar.' That man was truly loyal. He preferred to lose his hand rather than be branded a traitor to his country. He was willing to give his hand for his king.

How much are we willing to give for our country? And how deep does our loyalty go? We are ready to climb the lamp-post or scale the wall to see the procession, and we shout ourselves hoarser than most, and sing 'God save the King' till we feel thrills like little trickles of cold water running down our back. But that kind of loyalty is only skin-deep. The loyalty that is ready to sacrifice everything if need be is the true loyalty.

4. But the amethyst has one more message for us. It says, *Be loyal to your Heavenly King.* Boys and girls, that kind of loyalty sometimes costs more than loyalty to your earthly king. You will find when you grow up and go out into the world that it will often be very very difficult not to be disloyal. When your companions taunt you about your religion, when they laugh you to scorn and call you coward because you will not join them in some scheme which you know to be wrong, then is the time to set your teeth and say to yourself, 'No matter what happens I will be loyal, I will, I will, I will.' And *you will.* There's no doubt about it.

There is a beautiful fancy which I came across the other day. It tells what becomes of the gold of the corn and the purple of the heather when the summer is over, and the grain is garnered, and the bloom of the heather faded. The gold and the purple are not lost although we see them no more. The angels have taken them to build the golden streets and the amethyst walls of the City of God. And one day, if we are loyal to the King of Heaven, we shall find again in His Heavenly City the gold and the purple which we loved and lost on earth.

Faith and Facts.

BY EDWARD GRUBB, M.A., CROYDON.

IF Faith is correctly described as 'the proving of things not seen'—or the response of our whole inner man to God—what is its relation to belief in the truth of the Gospel story? Can our interpretation of the records of what is alleged to have happened centuries ago affect our lives here and now? Have any facts in history a real significance for Faith? Clearly the Christian religion is vitally related to what are held to be the historical facts of the personality, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This involves it in a special difficulty, which was ably stated many years ago by the late Professor T. H. Green, who had been led, by the New Testament criticism of Strauss and others, to a negative conclusion in regard to some at least of these 'facts.' He wrote:

'The faith which is supposed to be demanded of us as Christians involves two elements which, to say the least, are wholly different: on the one

side, a certain intellectual assent which, if the propositions assented to concerned any other events than those purporting to convey a Divine revelation, we should say could make no difference to the heart or spirit or character—call it what we will—which is alone of absolute value in a man; on the other side, a certain attitude or disposition which belongs distinctively to this "inner man," and gives us our worth as moral or spiritual beings. The deepening of the conception of Faith in the Lutheran theology only brings this discrepancy into clearer relief. The more strongly we insist that Faith is a personal and conscious relation of the man to God, forming the principle of a new life, not perhaps observable by others, but which the man's own conscience recognizes, the more awkward becomes its dependence on events believed to have happened in the past. The evidence for their having happened may be