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In the Study.

Virginitus Puerisque.

Birthdays of Good Men and Women.

'The love of Christ constraineth us.'—2 Co 5¹⁴.

THIS month I have been thinking of two birthdays. One was that of a Man—the greatest that ever lived in this world. The other was the birthday of a very good woman whose whole life was bound up in His.

The woman's life was bound up in His because she loved Him; and she spent her whole life trying to become like Him. She was born in a humble home in the town of Aberdeen one December day long ago. Her parents named her Mary. From the time that she was a very little girl her mother kept speaking to her about the wonderful One whose birthday was kept in the same month as her own. Mary heard about Him too at the Sunday school and at church.

She needed a friend. When she was quite young—younger than some of you—her father lost his situation in Aberdeen through drink. It was a sad time for the mother. One can picture her going about her household duties hoping against hope that better days would come; and when at last she grew weary with waiting, the father and the tired mother with their children, Mary among the number, set out for Dundee. Mary was the second eldest of seven, so you can imagine what the party of travellers looked like. It turned out a hard and somewhat hopeless struggle in Dundee. Delicate though the mother was, it was not long before even she had to go out to one of the factories in order to keep up the house, and when only eleven years old Mary was sent to earn her living. Such a little girl could only be what was called a half-timer; that is to say, she worked at the factory half the day, and went to school the other half. But she was clever, and of course she soon grew older. Before long she was a skilled and well-paid worker. Then, her hours were from six in the morning to six at night. All the time she kept thinking and thinking. She was conscious that she did not know much. Like David Livingstone, the great missionary, she carried a book with her to the factory, laid it open at her loom, and glanced at it in her free moments. She even read on her way to and from her work.

But though the home was a sad one, Mary always returned to it sure of her mother's love. The two loved each other all the more that they shared a sorrow with each other; and we may be sure that they never ceased to read and speak to each other about the Friend who became Mary's great pattern.

Thinking about Him, Mary forgot her sorrow, for her heart became full of sunshine. As she meditated upon all He had done for sinful men and women, and remembered His goodness to her mother and herself, she felt she could not do enough for Him. She became a mission Sunday school teacher. Later, she decided to be a missionary and offered herself for the work. Her offer was accepted, and she was sent out to Old Calabar on the west coast of Africa. There she showed how like her great Master she had really become. Her devotion to the savage people among whom she found herself was wonderful. She knew her Master loved them and their little children; and every one who has read Mary Slessor's *Life* knows what she did for the natives and for the little black babies of Calabar. It would be impossible for me to tell you how her gentle influence worked upon the people. Of one place she went to she wrote, 'I am going to a new tribe up country, a fierce, cruel people. Every one tells me they will kill me, but I don't fear any hurt.' Of course she told her Friend everything. 'My great consolation is in prayer,' she added in the letter. Patient almost beyond human endurance amidst all the horrors of savage life, she gained the love of those people who were like untrained children of the slums, but a thousand times more trying.

Occasionally Mary felt homesick. At Christmas, when some of her missionary friends came about her, memories of the old days and her home in Scotland floated through her mind. Do you wonder? But she was happy all the same. Once when she had had a specially delightful Christmas day and she felt her heart overflowing with love to her Master and to those about her, she said, 'Wasn't it good of my Father to give me such a treat?'

Doubtless she thought of the humble home at

Bethlehem where Jesus, her Master, was born. Mary Slessor's religion was one of love. She did not care for great learning. The one book never away from her was the Bible, and when she taught the young people hymns they were simple—just such hymns as you like. I know one Christmas hymn that she would have listened to with pleasure. It is a prayer. I shall read it to you :

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where
He lay—
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes.
But little Lord Jesus no crying He makes.
I love Thee, Lord Jesus! look down from the
sky,
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay
Close by me for ever and love me, I pray ;
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,
And fit us for Heaven, to live with Thee there.¹

The poor savages among whom she lived came to regard her not merely as a great Christian ; they thought of her as a mother. 'Do not cry, do not cry,' said one of the native women when Mary was taken from them. 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow ; Ma was a great blessing.' That might be considered humble testimony to her worth, but the Governor-General of Nigeria spoke of Mary Slessor as a heroine.

Let me read to you the closing words of the official notice of her death. 'Miss Slessor has died, as she herself wished, on the scene of her labours, but her memory will live long in the hearts of her friends, native and European, in Nigeria.'

So Mary Slessor really died a rich woman ; although the little box sent home after her death contained only a few much-faded articles, there came with it a large packet of letters. These were from Government officials, missionaries, the mothers and sisters of the mission boys and little children. They revealed where her treasures on earth were stored—in the hearts whose love she had won.

She could not help being a missionary. She

¹ Martin Luther, 'Cradle Hymn.'

gave of her best to 'the Friend she loved.' To begin life with a great love in your heart means that when the call comes, you too will be ready to give of your best.

The love of Jesus Christ—what will not that make you do? Perhaps it will make you go to tell others of what He can do for them.

The First Christmas Gift.

'They offered unto him gifts.'—Mt 2¹¹.

The happy Christmas-time has come round once more, and for the past few weeks there have been little under-currents of excitement in our homes. There have been wonderful mysterious secrets, strange whisperings behind doors, and swift hidings of little bits of work when mother came suddenly and unexpectedly into the room. And there has been much guessing, too, as to what Santa Claus will put into our stockings on Christmas morning.

Now if Jesus Christ had not come down to earth there would have been no Christmas presents. We give each other presents at Christmas-time because it is Jesus' birthday. Long ago the Wise Men brought Him gifts and laid them beside His cradle. But Jesus is no longer the Babe in Bethlehem. So instead of giving Him presents we give them to each other. And we know that when we are making other people happy we are making Him happy too.

I want to talk to you for a little about the Wise Men and their offering.

1. Who were these Wise Men? We really do not know. Out of the mysterious East they came, and into it they disappeared again. Some people say they were three kings who came to pay homage to the King of the Jews, and there is a wonderful legend of how in their old age they were converted to Christianity by the Apostle Thomas. The legend tells us that they went as missionaries to savage tribes, that they were put to death by them, and that, long afterwards, a Frankish king took their bones home with him and buried them in his cathedral at Cologne. But all we really know is that they were Wise Men and that they came out of the East to see Jesus. And that was the very best thing they could have done.

2. But what of the presents the Wise Men brought? Some people have found a special meaning in these three gifts. They say that the

gold was an offering to a King, and the frankincense an offering to God, while the myrrh was a gift for Christ's burial and foretold His death :

Gold a monarch to declare,
Frankincense that God is there,
Myrrh to tell the heavier tale
Of His death and funeral.

Perhaps people have got that idea from the purposes for which frankincense and myrrh were used.

Frankincense is a kind of gum or resin which is got from an Indian tree by slitting the bark. It was mixed with other things to make incense, and this incense was poured upon the offerings which were offered up to God in the Temple and was burned along with them. So the sweet odour of the frankincense rose to God with the prayers of the priests.

Myrrh is also a gum procured from a tree. It is a spice and was used as a perfume, and also in burying the dead. You remember how Nicodemus brought myrrh with him when he came to bury the body of Jesus.

Now I have said that Jesus is no longer a Babe in Bethlehem, and so we give each other presents instead of giving them to Him. But there are some gifts we can still bring to Jesus, gifts that He longs to have.

(1) We can bring Him *gold*. Gold stands for the most precious things. And what is the most precious thing we have. I think it is just our lives. So we can give our lives to Christ's service. We can help to fight the evil that is in the world and in our own hearts. We can help to make the earth better, and sweeter, and brighter. We can use the talents God has given us to make other people happier and wiser. And when we are doing this we are giving Jesus a gift more precious than gold.

(2) We can bring Christ *frankincense*. I think frankincense stands for prayers. And this is an offering Jesus dearly loves. When He was on earth He loved to have the little children gather round His knees, He loved to listen to what they said. And He still loves to gather them round His knees and to listen when they speak to Him.

(3) We can bring Him *myrrh*. Myrrh is used to purify and preserve, and so I think it stands for the things that are purest and most lasting. And what is the thing that is purest and most lasting? I think it is just the love and devotion of our

hearts. For love has conquered sin and death, and lives for ever and ever.

There is a beautiful legend which tells how a little girl in Bethlehem took Jesus a Christmas present. She had heard the story of the Wise Men who had come from far to see the Baby King. And she, too, longed to go and see Him. But she could not visit a king without taking an offering with her, and she had nothing to offer, for she was very, very poor. So she went out with her little bare feet and crept up close to the inn where the Baby was sleeping. And as she stood there in the cold snow she wept because she had nothing to give Him. Then as she wept, out of the snow grew a beautiful white flower whose petals were flushed with pink. It was the first Christmas rose. And the little girl heard a soft voice speaking to her. It was the voice of an angel, and it asked her why she was so sad. She told Him that she longed to see the Baby King and that she had nothing to offer him. Then the angel showed her the beautiful flower that had blossomed at her feet. He bade her pluck it and carry it to the King; and he told her that the beautiful white flower was her pure desire, and the pink flush her heart's love for the Baby.

And that is the gift that Jesus values more than any other—the gift of our love. We may have nothing else to give Him, but if we bring Him that He is content. It is a poor, shabby, little gift at the best, but He does not think it poor or mean. He prizes it above all others, and He glorifies it and makes it beautiful and pure.

The Wise Men came from far to see Jesus, but we have no distance to go to give Him our offering, for He is here in our midst to-day. Just think how glad He will be to tell the angels who sang at His birth, 'I have received the very best Christmas present to-day, for a little child has given Me himself.'

Coral.

'They traded with . . . coral.'—Ezk 27¹⁶.

Here is December, the last month of the year, and it brings us to the last stone in our imaginary talisman. What do you think I have chosen as the last jewel? Why, the very first gem that a child wears—one that I expect most of you knew by sight before you knew it by name—I mean the coral. It used to be the fashion to give babies a

bit of coral to bite on, so that it might help their teeth to cut the gum, and one of the nicest presents for a baby girl is supposed to be a string of coral beads.

Well, I can't tell if you have any corals of your own, but if not, very likely some of your little friends have a string, and at any rate you know corals when you see them. Do you know their story too? It is a sea story—and as wonderful as any fairy tale.

Long, long ago people used to be very puzzled about coral. They thought it was a flower of the sea, but how it came to be so hard they could not tell. The fishermen who brought it up in their nets from the bottom of the ocean said that was easily explained. The coral was soft so long as it was under water, but the moment it reached the air it turned hard as a rock.

But there was one man who wasn't satisfied with that explanation, so he hired a diver to go down and examine the coral at the bottom of the sea. The diver came up and reported that the coral was every bit as hard there as it was above water. When the good man heard this he was so anxious to see if it were true that he actually went down himself to prove it.

Nowadays, thanks to him and all the other wise folk who have studied the subject, we know that the coral is not a flower. It is the skeleton of a little sea animal called a polyp. When it is born this little animal is like a soft pear-shaped piece of jelly. But it doesn't remain long like that. It fastens on to some object on the floor of the ocean—a stone, a bottle, a bit of wrecked ship, or even a cannon ball. Then it begins to grow and harden and spread itself. It draws out of the water carbonate of lime—the stuff of which the oyster makes the pearl—and from the carbonate it grows its bones or frame. It first spreads into a dome shape like an orange cut in half, then it shoots out one little horn after another, till there is a perfect rosette of horns or branches growing from the dome, or foot, as it is called.

But there are corals of other shapes besides the rosette. There are some which look like huge sponges, only you had better not try to wash your face with them! There are others which are fan-shaped, and still others which grow like a set of organ pipes. Some have long branches like the branches of a tree, others still are not unlike a large cauliflower. And you should just see the

colours!—green, white, red, pink, yellow, and black. They make the bed of the ocean look like a gorgeous garden.

Those of you who are fond of stories about pirates, and the South Seas, and treasure trove, have often read of coral islands. Well, these coral islands have all been built by the industrious little coral polyps. Though they are so tiny they have built a reef of 1000 miles in extent along the north-east coast of Australia.

The red and pink gem coral does not come from the South Seas. It is found in the Mediterranean, chiefly off the coasts of Sicily and Corsica. It is taken to Italy and cut and polished there. Some of it is made into round beads, some into oval beads, some of it is left like tiny branches. The larger pieces are cut into cameos for rings or brooches, and the largest pieces of all are made into ornaments, such as umbrella handles. One very curious ornament is made oftener than any other. It is a coral hand. The Italians and the Spaniards and many other races believe that if they wear this little coral hand it will act as a charm to keep away evil. They say that a coral talisman will ward off what they call 'the evil eye.'

That reminds me of the story of an old lady who lived in London during the air raids. She was talking to an officer home from the front who had seen how a bomb could pass through storey after storey of a building and then blow it sky high. The officer asked her if she were nervous. 'Not in the least!' she replied. 'You see I am quite safe, I have put a tarpaulin awning over my house.'

The coral has as much power to protect any one from evil as that tarpaulin awning had to protect the poor old lady's house from bombs.

But, boys and girls, those who believe in things like coral charms are right in this—we do need something to protect us against evil. We need a talisman very badly on our way through this world. We shall meet evil time and again, and as we grow older we shall have many a grim fight with it. What is going to help us? No coral hand, no lucky black cat, no woolly mascot will aid us in that struggle. There is only one talisman that will be of any use, and that is Christ in the heart. If we wear that talisman no evil can befall us. Christ will help us in every battle against what is wrong.

We have had many messages from the different jewels throughout the year, but no message is more

important than the message of the coral: 'Wear the only true talisman.' If we do that all the virtues that the other jewels spoke of will come easily to us.

The Christian Year.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

The Need of Redemption.

'The whole creation groaneth and travaileth . . . waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.'—Ro 8^{22, 23}.

The redemptive character of the Christian religion is our great hope, especially when we compare it with other principles of reconstruction. Therein, in this redemptive character, lies the dynamic energy of Christianity. A redemptive system is a system which postulates, first, that the present condition of things is evil; and, secondly, that this evil is not to be remedied from within, but that a remedy from without is forthcoming.

William James, who certainly was not a Christian, defined the essence of all religion as, first, the sense that something is wrong; and secondly, that this wrong can be put right by making the necessary adjustments with the higher powers. I am not sure that all religion can be got into that formula, but certainly redemptive religion can.¹

There is a shallow optimism which thinks that the world will come right without redemption. The war has put an end to that optimism. Certain notions once popular have been destroyed by it. The intellectual baggage for life's cabin passage, which a little while ago did duty, has been torpedoed.

1. First and foremost, men have learned the reality of evil. Men used to say that evil was ignorance, or that it was imperfection, or arrested development, or the survival of animal instinct, or even that it was mere illusion, the inevitable error of a limited and partial view, but that from the point of view of God there was no such thing as evil. Now the world has seen it in 'all the naked horror of the truth.' Evil is the chosen idol of a will self-absorbed and worshipping its own fancies. Other errors this age may make and will make. All kinds of different schemes for salvation it may embrace. One thing it will not do: it will not deny that salvation in some form is a need of the world; nor will it assert that evil is an illusion, a

¹ J. N. Figgis, *Hopes for English Religion*.

tremor of the imagination. The world knows evil and feels it, as it has not for generations. It suspects it for what it is—love turned the wrong way.

2. Secondly, the notion of progress—progress automatic and inevitable—has gone. There is a right sense in which we can talk of human progress: there certainly is. Yet the war with an enemy, more fiendish and brutal and treacherous than the worst days of barbarism, has shown how false is that idea of the last age, that the world gets better of itself, like a child growing in its sleep. Tennyson bade men 'move upward, working out the beast, and let the ape and tiger die.' Such appeals ring false now because the ape and tiger are so far preferable to the 'All Highest,' and still more so to the intellectual apologists of his scheme. For the remarkable thing is, as the French Ambassador pointed out in speaking of *la barbarie pédante*, not a certain amount of barbarous action—presumably that takes place in all war—but the intellectual backing which such actions have had, and the definite command on the part of the highest authorities among the enemy.

3. Thirdly, and closely connected with the last point, even more patently false than the doctrine of natural goodness and inevitable progress, is the doctrine that all necessary amelioration can be effected by culture. Education increases the power of a nation or an individual to manipulate the world. A man knows more and knows better what he wants. He has more command of the means to attain his wants. He has learned the self-control needful to wait and to set aside subsidiary aims; but a man does not, because he is educated, necessarily have nobler aims than others, and he may be more and not less conscienceless. Germany has shown us with less of grace and refinement what Europe in the fifteenth century learned from some of the Renaissance princes and popes.²

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

The Fact of Redemption.

'The whole creation groaneth and travaileth . . . waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.'—Ro 8^{22, 23}.

This is the ground of hope for the Christian religion: the world not only needs but feels the

² J. N. Figgis, *Ibid.*

need of redemption; it does not always use the word. But if we are to realize this hope, we must fulfil certain conditions.

1. First of all, this redemptive character of the Christian faith must not be slurred over; to use technical language, the theology of grace must be emphasized, the sense that it is not of him that willeth, or him that runneth, but God from whom comes all help and power—the picture of the gospel as light to a world in darkness, or, more accurately, a spar to a man drowning in a rough sea, and not merely the thought of religion as the guarantee of man's own higher thought, or the sanction of honourable living, or of social piety. It is that, but it is much more than that. What the world needs is help; it feels that it cannot help itself alone, and if it can only believe it is ready to recognize that power from beyond which shall tell us that 'our warfare is accomplished, our sin is pardoned.'

People are afraid sometimes to talk about the forgiveness of sins, but it is what we all want now. In the last age the Atonement was not denied; it was taken for granted. Conversion, definite conversion, very often was denied. Men thought of the Incarnation as the central truth, and that if they concentrated upon that all the rest would follow. Unfortunately, what has followed this thrusting aside of the Atonement has been an increasing hesitation about the worship of Jesus as Lord. Make people think of Jesus as Saviour, and they will soon worship Him as Lord. Make Him only the Lord of all good life, and they will begin to think of Him merely as the embodiment of the moral ideal, and gradually, almost without knowing it, to lose sight of His transcendent nature. It is Jesus as our Saviour who always wins men, and always will do, except the virtuous few, the 'moral gentlemen,' upon whom Dr. Forsyth casts scorn. But what men need is 'that strange Man upon the Cross,' God supreme, not in power, but in humility and suffering and submission. 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.'

2. Along with the Cross, we must emphasize the unique character of our religion. Sometimes we hear that the war has shown the bankruptcy of the Christian Church. That is nonsense. What it has shown is the bankruptcy of all other ways of life. Ever since the Renaissance people have been excluding Christianity from any influence on

public life, or intellectual ideals. Christendom was a fact in the Middle Ages; now it is no more than a geographical expression, if it be so much. The war was provoked by the universal prevalence, in industrial no less than in international relations, of ideals and methods which not even its enemies would call Christian; and so it has proved the death of all hopes for the world based upon pure naturalism.

3. Lastly, the Alexandrian age of English religion has closed—the period dominated by Westcott; that method of assimilation and culture (the same sort of motive that inspired Clement of Alexandria and others of the Greek fathers) has come to an end. It did a very valuable work, but we have passed that stage. The growth of influential systems of thought and inspirers of action which not only deny creeds but repudiate Christian ideals of life has forced upon us the realization of our distinctness, our unique quality as Christians. All high ideals ultimately have their sanction in the Christian Church, and without that support will soon decay; just in the same way as the ancient world on its better side was feeling after a system of life only fulfilled in completeness by the gospel. But we must not take these things as the measure of our aim. In the same way the philosophy of the Cross of Christ was precisely the same as the philosophy that we see now fulfilled so wonderfully in the sacrifice of those who died for us at the Front. But although it is the same, it is a great deal more, and bigger.

Frank paganism is now proclaimed by some; others throw scorn upon every object of Christian reverence, even the character of our Lord. It is clear that we must realize our own unique position; we must present our Faith as desirable because it is different from other things, and not in spite of the fact. Too many people have been inclined to argue that there can be no harm in accepting Christianity, because it is just the same as all high moral ideals. We want its distinct beauty and colour, and that is what the world wants, though some will reject it. To that end we need more and more to feed upon the Bible.

That is the great help for us in England. The Bible is not so well known or read as it used to be, apart from students. The great tradition, the atmosphere of Scripture, is still with the masses. Quotations still are made quite naturally. This is more so, I think, with the great masses of men than it is with the most highly educated. But if we are to bring out these qualities, the redemptive, the apocalyptic, the unique nature of the Catholic religion, we need more and more to dwell upon the words and the pictures of Scripture; not upon any summary of the philosophy of religion or the ideals of Christianity, but the pictures of

Jesus in the Gospels, or that wonderful picture of the heart and mind of that great human being St. Paul, or the sublime, almost unearthly vision of St. John. It is often the best hope for any one who is in doubt about his faith to get him to read the First Epistle of St. John.¹

EPIPHANY.

Jesus the Saviour.

'Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.'—Ac 4¹².

Truth is exclusive, it denies and shuts out its opposite. The greater the truth, the greater the realm in which it refuses rivalry. So Christ, as Saviour, stands alone; there can be no rivalry in functions so august and supreme. We do not ignore other gracious ministries that are the gift of culture and civilization; there are other voices that tell us much about God; but when it comes to that Fatherhood which is conscious and blessed salvation, Christ stands alone. He is more than all others, above all others. He alone is the way, and to abide in Him is to dwell in God.

Read the story of the sainthood of any age, and it always has this feature—intensity of faith that is narrow and sometimes cruel; it is jealous for its Lord and for its version of His gospel, but at the same time its delight is to serve through sacrifice and hideous suffering and loss that it may heal the sick, save the erring, and rescue the poorest. It is a paradox of history that the narrow faith most often goes with the open heart.

1. It was this exclusiveness of the gospel in which its offence in large part consisted. Even the Jew might have been persuaded to accept Jesus as a Rabbi, teaching a way to God; and the Gentiles in that syncretistic age would have welcomed with acclamation such a teacher among the multitude of their other masters. But neither Jesus nor His followers would accept such an assignment. He and they alike claimed for Him the sole empire over salvation and would brook no fellow by His side.

The teachers of apostolic days never placed Jesus alongside the world's teachers and prophets as though they would claim for Him a place in the shining circle of the world's elect souls. They claimed for Him, not a place, but the place. He stood alone. The only fellowship they knew was that which gathered round His feet. This was always their message, distinctive and clear. They confronted an

age which believed in bringing all the gods together, and in tolerating them all, and to that temper of mind they said, There is no other name but that of Jesus whereby we must be saved. Search the New Testament from end to end, and you will not find a hint of compromise about the supremacy and uniqueness of Jesus.²

2. The modern mind, however, shrinks almost instinctively from the saying, 'There is none other.' We regard it as belonging more to certain exclusive types of religious life than to the main stream of Christian opinion. It is heard from the lips of preachers who make the gospel an aggressive attack upon the individual soul, threatening pains and penalties unless it is received. Naturally the truths of the New Testament become remote and unreal when they are associated in our minds with little sections of religious thought and life for which on general grounds we have but little liking.

The age in which we live has toleration for one of its watchwords. Men no longer cast us to the lions when we proclaim Jesus the only Saviour the world can know, His name the only name under heaven given among men wherein they must be saved. But the world of to-day endures with no more real patience than that older world two thousand years ago the arrogance of such lofty claims. This is, above all others that have preceded it, the day of eager and appreciative study of other faiths; and equally with the others that have preceded it, the day of indifference, if not hostility, to the high claims of Jesus.

There is a circumstance in the movement now going on at Benares which is well worth our notice here. It had been the usual practice of European teachers to ignore all Hindoo philosophy, to tell the natives that they had no science of their own, and then to invite them to begin from the beginning in European method.

There was something very unconciliatory, almost insulting, in thus treating a people who knew how to calculate the stars in ages when our own ancestors were painting themselves blue, and worshipping the oak and the mistletoe in the forest with the most barbarous and inhuman rites. Dr. Ballantyne has, I am told, pursued a very different process. He first went to school to the pundits, and then asked the pundits to come to school to him. He learned all their science, and sounded all their philosophy; and then, taking them up at the point where they could go no further, he opened to them regions beyond, and led them forward to the light of truth.³

² S. M. Berry, in *Problems of To-morrow, Social, Moral, and Religious*, 135.

³ *Memorials of the Life and Letters of Major-General Sir Herbert B. Edwardes, K.C.B., K.C.S.I.*, i, 305.

¹ J. N. Figgis, *Hopes for English Religion*.

3. In one particular would we emphasize the influence of the present. We are being forced back upon the enormous power for good or evil stored up in every real belief. It was only in a world where belief seemed to be a theoretical thing that men could say, 'It doesn't matter what you believe.' We see differently now, because there are beliefs abroad in the world which are fast making a wilderness of civilization. Ideas are the pathways, sometimes slow and tortuous pathways, to actions.

Sometimes men have taught 'belief in the Name' as a formal thing, as though a man could repeat a word as a sign that his soul is saved. The truth is infinitely larger and greater than that. It violates every instinct of reason to imagine that the real division among men lies between those who take upon themselves the Name of Jesus and those who neglect to do so. The real division lies between those who look to Jesus as the standard of living, as giving to the world the truth about God and about the life and duty of man, and those who accept another standard. We believe that this faith can be both preached and practised without a hint of intolerance. There is a light of God which is given to all men; there is a work of God in all the religions of the world; there is a Providence who does not limit Himself by the bounds of our narrow doctrines. But there is a Christ who is the one Light and Life of men. Every gleam in the world is a reflexion of His light, and only in the Christian revelation of the Word made flesh is there an answer to what the souls of all men are reaching out to attain.

When Sir Joshua Reynolds delivered, many years ago, in the city of London, a series of addresses or lectures on art, he took four statues, known as night, morning, noon, midnight, the four seasons of the day—the middle of the night, the middle of the day, the dawning of the morning and the sunset of the evening. Marvellous statues they are. He took those four statues for a whole course of lectures in London, and when he was through he closed in this manner. He said, 'And now, gentlemen, I have lectured to you during this entire season, and I beg now, in the close of this lecture, to bring before you one name only, the name of Michael Angelo.'¹

Is the Christ for us the Name above all others? Is there that urgency in our own personal devotion and adoration? Do we bring the fire and passion of that belief into our praise and prayer and service? The great and victorious life is the Christ-filled life. There is no other secret. It is the secret for which the world is waiting and longing. Let us keep it

burning in our hearts and at our altars so that we may be ready when the darkness passes from the earth and the dawn of a new day is at hand.²

FIRST SUNDAY OF THE EPIPHANY.

What shall we do?

'Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him.'—Ac 2²⁷⁻³⁹.

1. If Peter's sermon is given substantially as he delivered it, we cannot but note the courage with which he, who had declared 'I know not the man,' proclaims that God had made Him 'both Lord and Christ'; and this in the city in which He had so recently been condemned to death as a malefactor. The Jewish rulers had shown no signs of remorse for their action, and the rancour with which they had pursued the Master was likely to be exercised against His followers. Yet there is no shrinking on Peter's part. If all had ended in the Crucifixion, if there had been no Resurrection, his conduct is inexplicable. And again we are struck with his grasp of Biblical truth. We know what Peter had been but seven weeks before. Now he has grasped the Divine purpose in history, and sees that the ages are not unrelated days, but are all one in the scheme of God. The fisherman might know the letter of the Scriptures; but whence came this insight into their spirit? The only possible explanation lies in the fact that between his past and this speech comes the Pentecostal gift.

2. The Jews that listened to the sermon were for the most part sincerely religious. They had come from far-off lands to worship at the temple in Jerusalem, and they loved the Scriptures to which Peter appealed for proofs that Jesus was the Christ. They were deeply impressed. As they listened, the hearts of stone turned to hearts of flesh and were pricked to the quick with the stinging sense of sin. Though many of them cannot have had any direct share in the death of Jesus, yet they felt that what their own people had

² S. M. Berry, in *Problems of To-morrow, Social, Moral, and Religious*, 144.

¹ J. K. Maclean, *Dr. Pierson and his Message*, 230.

done, and they themselves had approved, was something to be ashamed of. There was a general cry of distress, 'What shall we do?'

Peter was ready with his answer. He called them to repentance and to testimony, to open confession of Jesus Christ by baptism.

The beginning of the spiritual life seems just to consist in a consciousness of complete failure, and that consciousness ever grows deeper. This is well illustrated in Browning's account of Caponsacchi; from the time when Pompilia's smile first 'glowed' upon him, and set him—

Thinking how my life
Had shaken under me,—broke short indeed
And showed the gap 'twixt what is, what should
be,—
And into what abysm the soul may slip.

3. Then comes the gentle and tender word: 'For the promise is unto you and to your children.' How gentle Peter could be. When you heard Him in thunder-tones, saying, 'Repent!' you said, 'Harsh man; austere preacher.' Now, when the people are in a right state of mind, and really want to know what to do, having told them what to do, he breathes upon them the very benediction of God. He says, 'There is a promise for you;

there is grace in store for you.' When God spake some of His tenderest words you were in His heart at the time, and your children were there. The promise is yours. Come and take it, and even on earth be almost in heaven!

4. 'Make disciples of all the nations by baptism' are the words of our Lord. 'Be baptized, every one of you, for the promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off,' is St. Peter's application of this passage. St. Peter's language admits of various interpretations. Like much of Scripture, the speaker, when uttering these words meant probably one thing, while the words themselves mean something much wider, more catholic and universal. When Peter spake thus he proclaimed the world-wide character of Christianity, just as when he quoted the prophet Joel's language he declared the mission of the Comforter in its most catholic aspect, embracing Gentiles as well as Jews. 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.' But St. Peter never thought of the full scope of his words. He meant, doubtless, that the promise of pardon, and acceptance, and citizenship in the heavenly kingdom was to those Jews that were present in Jerusalem, and to their children, and to all of the Jews of the dispersion scattered afar off among the Gentiles.

Thirty Years of New Testament Criticism.

BY PROFESSOR THE REVEREND JAMES MOFFATT, D.LITT., D.D., GLASGOW.

IN 1889, when the first volume of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES appeared, Dr. Westcott had just issued his commentary on Hebrews. Westcott's interests were not in the Old Testament, but he declared that he thought it 'likely that study will be concentrated on the Old Testament in the coming generation.' That anticipation was partly, but only partly, realized. The recent publication of *Lux Mundi* had set afire the controversy over the Higher Criticism which blazed round the Old Testament. Canon Driver's great contribution, in his *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, which came out in 1891, accentuated the interest, and had the rare merit of stimulating popular intelligence and at the same time of indicating fresh lines of research. But it was not

long before the critical issues were recognized to have a bearing upon the New Testament as well. Dr. Gore's famous essay in *Lux Mundi*, upon 'Inspiration,' made this inevitable by asserting that the words of Jesus could not be taken as foreclosing certain critical views, e.g. about the 110th Psalm. Such an admission roused Canon Liddon's dismay and wrath, but it had a more lasting effect. For a time the fascination of Old Testament literary and historical research absorbed most students of the Bible in this country. Then the range of interest widened, it was realized that the Tübingen school had raised real issues, and the New Testament writings became involved. For nearly thirty years they have been the subject of persistent, minute, and