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thief was the only contemporary Christian, the only one who had the grace not to judge according to the appearance.

It is widely believed, no doubt, that this prophecy of Symeon was of more importance for the mother of our Lord than for us, that it is interesting historically rather than as giving the key to the narrow gate through which we pass to the beauty and joy of Christianity. But if Christ is indeed the door by whom 'if any man enter in, he shall be saved,' then these two verses are really the key to the profitable reading of the New Testament. The Gospels, in which the contemporary situation is portrayed in all its difficulty, come before the Epistles as a warning voice.

Each has first to throw himself back into that situation and ask what he would have thought and done, in order to be ready for any testing crisis, in which facts seem to clash with expectations and presuppositions. We try for the sake of numbers to make Christianity easy for the intellect, and to think that we do God service. But anything distinctively Christian, whether in dogmatics or ethics, whether Church or Bible, is knowable as such by the fact that it can be spoken against with a fair show of reason. And we prepare ourselves for that truth by 'going back to Christ.' And 'going back to Christ' means making ourselves His contemporaries, in order that rightly we may make Him ours.

In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

Amen.

'Amen.'—Rev 22²¹.

THIS is one of the words you hear most frequently in church. It comes at the end of the hymns and prayers, and sometimes the minister says it at the end of his sermon. Did you ever stop to think what the word meant? It is not just a sign that we may open our eyes and raise our heads if we have been praying, or sit down if we have been singing. The word has been put there for a purpose. It means that we really mean and believe all that we have been praying or singing, that we are in earnest.

'Amen' is a very old word. Originally it was an adjective and meant firm, true, steadfast. It was in use in very early times among the Hebrews. When they wished to give their assent to any very solemn statement or command they answered 'Amen.' You remember when King David was dying he sent for Zadok the high priest and Nathan the prophet and Benaiah, captain of his bodyguard, and told them that he wished Solomon to be made king in his stead. Then he gave orders that these three men were to bring Solomon down to Gihon and there crown him king. And Benaiah answered, 'Amen: the Lord God of my lord the king say so too.' That just meant 'Yea, verily, may the God of David grant that this may be so.'

But Benaiah didn't stop at saying 'Amen.' That 'Amen' meant that he had pledged his word to carry out the king's commands. And not only did he carry them out to the letter, but afterwards he stood by Solomon to defend and deliver him from his enemies.

In later times the word 'Amen' was taken into the worship of the Jewish synagogues. It was used by the congregation as a solemn response to the prayers or hymns of praise of the minister. By answering 'Amen,' they made, as it were, all that the minister had said their own, just as if they had prayed the prayers or sung the hymns themselves. Then from the synagogue it was taken into the worship of the Early Christian Church, and so we have it in our church worship to-day.

Do you know that this word 'Amen' was a very frequent word on the lips of Jesus? Unfortunately the men who translated our Bible have tried to turn it into English. When Jesus was about to say something very solemn or very, very important, something that He wanted to assure His hearers was very true, He began by saying, 'Verily, I say unto you.' If you had a Greek New Testament you would see that the word translated 'verily' is just 'Amen.' And when Jesus said, 'Amen, I say unto you,' He meant that because He said it they could count on its being true.

There was once a small boy who was trying to

describe his baby sister to a lady. He wanted to say something specially nice about her, and so he ended, 'She is just an "Amen" baby!' 'And what kind of baby may that be?' asked the lady. 'Well, you see, she holds up her hands so: like the minister does at the blessing.'

Now we want all the boys and girls to be 'Amen' boys and girls. We want them all to be blessings to the world and to God. How can they be that?

1. *By being steadfast and faithful and true, as Jesus was.*

There is a fine story told of William, Prince of Orange, who became William III. of England. When he was invited to come to England he gave written pledges to some of his friends that he would appoint them to office. When he was handing out these pledges, one man who was to hold a very high position refused the paper. 'Your Majesty's word is sufficient,' he said, 'I would not serve a king whose word I could not trust!'

That was fine, wasn't it? And we want people to be able to say the same of you. We want them to be able to say, 'John's word is sufficient. If he has promised to do anything you may count on its being done,' or, 'It must be true, because Mary said so, and you can always trust her word.'

David Livingstone used to say, 'Jesus is a gentleman, and He keeps His word as a gentleman should.' There is nothing grander than to be a follower of Jesus and to be absolutely true and straight in word and deed.

2. And, second, we want you to be 'Amen' boys and girls by *making your lives a response to God's will.*

Away on the shores of the Adriatic there is a beautiful custom practised among the fisher folk.

When the boats have put out to sea in the evening and are lying far out beside the nets, the wives and friends of the fishermen steal down to the seashore and sing the first verse of one of their favourite hymns. The music of their voices is carried far across the still waters till it reaches the fishermen at their work. Then the men take up the words of the second verse and back across the water steals the sound of the melody. And the women hearing the echo of their own song, go home satisfied that their friends are safe.

Boys and girls, are you responding to the music of God's voice? Are your lives in tune with His? They will never produce the true melody until they are. He is calling you now. Will you answer with a glad 'Amen'?

Winding Stairs.

'They went up by winding stairs.'—1 K 6^o.

Did you ever try this catch? Ask your friends to describe a spiral staircase. You will find that nine out of ten will make a sort of imaginary curl in the air with their first finger and exclaim, 'Oh, it's like this.' The tenth person may say, 'A spiral staircase! Why, it winds like a corkscrew.'

Well, whether we describe it by making an imaginary curl or by comparing it to a corkscrew, at least we all know a winding stair when we see it. Some of us have got one in our house, and we hear a great deal about the turns when it comes to spring-cleaning. Then mother sighs and says, 'If only our staircase had landings! But I'll have to get a man to lay the carpet because of those horrid turns.'

Now, turns in a stair may be very annoying when it comes to laying a carpet, but they can be very fascinating too—especially if the stair be like those found in the keep of some old grey castle. Have you ever climbed a stair like that? All its steps are stone. They are worn hollow in the centre with the tramp of long-gone feet. There is no hand-rail to hold on by, and the turns are so many that by the time you reach the top you are not only breathless but dizzy. But the climb is worth while. For you never know what surprise the next turn may bring you. Every now and again, perhaps, you pass a long narrow slit in the thick outer wall, and through it you get a peep at what lies around the castle. Then, quite suddenly, the stair arrives at the top, and you find yourself out on the ramparts with a fresh breeze blowing and a new world at your feet. North, south, east, and west lies a wonderful view. The fields look like a piece of green and gold patchwork. The river is a winding ribbon of silver. The houses of the village half a mile away look like toy models, and the people are so many flies. The hills in the distance are a shadowy purple, and the horizon shimmers an enchanted land. Can this wonderful new world be the same everyday place where you eat and sleep and go to school?

Now these winding stairs and that view from the top make me think of something. What? Well, before I tell you, let me ask you a question. How do you picture time? When you think of this year, do you think of it as a bit of straight road lying in front of you? And is next year a farther-off bit of the same straight road? And are all the years following a very, very long straight road stretching away out of sight?

Or do you think of a year as a circle—each month being a twelfth of the circle, like the hours on the face of a clock? And do you imagine yourself going every year round that same circle—January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December—coming back to January again, and starting off once more on the same round?

To my mind, neither of these ideas is so good or so true as the idea of our text. Time is *not* a straight road, and it is *not* an ordinary circle. It is a winding staircase, an ascending circle. Every year doesn't bring us back to exactly the same spot. It brings us to the same spot higher up. Every year finds us taller, or heavier, or older, or wiser than the last. Why, the whole world is ascending a vast spiral staircase!

A very clever Scotch professor was lecturing lately to the children of London, and he told them marvellous tales of how the world and the animals in it came to be as they are. He told them how lizards tried to grow wings, and so by and by developed, with the aid of feathers, into birds. Each year brought the tiniest change. You couldn't really see it. But it went on through the centuries till, in a million years or so, the lizard could dart through the air—a graceful bird.

And the same professor told how, to-day, in far Australia, a certain quaint little lizard with a ruff round its neck is trying hard to walk on its two hind legs. It isn't managing very well yet, but perhaps a million years after this its descendants will be so accustomed to walk on two legs that they will never dream they once ran on four. And then we shall have a new kind of two-legged animal.

You see the world is always moving on and up. It is always making progress in an upward direction; and that's the only progress worth making. If this time next year doesn't find us a little wiser, a little kinder, a little more loving, a little more like Jesus, our great pattern—then we are stopping the pro-

gress of the world. We are merely walking round a circle; we are not climbing our winding stair. And it is only if we climb that we shall reach the view. It is only by toiling up the circling steps that we shall get the reward at the top. I wonder what that reward will be? The lizard who tried to grow wings ended by achieving the power of flight; the climber who mounts the castle stair has a vision of a new world. Who knows what splendid visions and what glorious possibilities are awaiting us at the top of the winding stairs of time, if we but climb faithfully and well?

The Christian Year.

PALM SUNDAY.

Duty.

'How am I straitened till it be accomplished!'—Lk 12⁵⁰.

How did the religious sense and the moral sense stand related to each other in the workings of Christ's inner consciousness? The question does not admit of a complete answer, for Christ gives us only occasional glimpses into the realm of His own inner experience. But it is noticeable that whenever He does so the same kind of phraseology is used. When, for instance, a centurion supported his petition on behalf of his sick servant by the plea, 'I also [I, like you,] am a man under authority,' notice Christ's rejoinder: 'Behold, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.' 'This man has shown that he possesses the capacity of spiritual discernment'—for faith in the New Testament is above all else capacity of spiritual discernment—in a unique degree; he, a Gentile, has penetrated to My life's inmost secret more completely than any even of My own compatriots and chosen followers.' In other words, Christ recognizes in the exclamation of this Roman soldier an echo of the deepest strain in His own inner experience. He thus declares Himself to be primarily and essentially a man under authority, living in the conscious and constant presence of One who has a right to say to Him, 'Go,' or 'Come,' or 'Do this or that,' in terms which cannot be ignored or evaded. This is the master-strain of His self-revelations.

1. Even in early boyhood we find the sense of compelling obligation asserting itself in a decisive manner. 'Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?' So He answers His mother

when she rebuked Him for an act of apparent inconsiderateness. *Must*: already He recognizes His relationship to a personal Power above Him whose claims are absolute and indefeasible. He shows surprise that any other claims, even those of His earthly parent, should be placed in competition with these. The same note is struck in such ejaculations as 'I came not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me'; 'For this purpose am I sent'; 'I have a baptism to be baptized with; and I am straitened till it is accomplished!' And we hear it ringing with agonized intensity when in Getsemane the shadow of the Cross begins to encircle Him, and though His flesh shrinks in anticipation of the ordeal, and pleads piteously for deliverance, the main stream of His life's purpose goes on unchecked and unabated—'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: yet not my will, but thine, be done.' So Christ unfolds His inmost self to us in glimpses brief but quite distinct. He reveals Himself as before all else a Man under Authority, the willing servant of One above Him whose claims for obedience are absolute and all-inclusive.

2. Now let us turn to our own inner experience and see what there is in it which corresponds to this ultimate consciousness of Christ. Among the many inner voices which claim our attention and seek to determine our conduct there is one, and only one, which speaks in accents of authority. Sense whispers, 'Follow me, and I will give you rapturous pleasure and delight.' Ambition cries, 'Follow me, and I will bestow on you wealth and place and power.' Intellect pleads, 'Follow me, and I will unravel for you the secrets of the universe.' Emotion calls, 'Follow me, and I will open up for you the rich treasures of beauty in shape and colour and sound.' But behind all these another voice is heard speaking in accents very different and making a very different claim. 'I bear in my hands no gifts,' it cries; 'I offer you no rewards. But you must follow me. For I am the rightful monarch of your soul, and at the peril of that soul you must render me the fealty which is my due.' It is the voice of conscience which speaks thus, and the path to which it points is that of duty-doing. 'At all costs and at all hazards,' it declares, 'that path must be pursued.' The man who listens to this voice and recognizes the rightfulness of this claim accepts Christ's self-description as his own. He declares himself to be funda-

mentally and essentially a man under authority; he acknowledges his consciousness of relationship to some compelling power to whose behests his complete allegiance is due.¹

EASTER DAY.

Back to Christ.

'I am he that liveth.'—Rev 1¹⁸.

When we ask for the true power of our Christian religion we are to look for it most certainly in Christ Himself, in Christ as He is offered to us in the gospel; but no less in Christ as He has manifested His influence in history, in Christ as He has influenced human lives, in Christ not dead but risen and at the right hand of God, in Christ glorified and exalted, who is not only the Way to the Father but the Truth and the Life. The return to Christ is not merely a painful and weary process of historical analysis that we may see Him as He was in the streets and lanes of Palestine.

What, after all, is it to you or me to have our imagination quickened by vivid descriptions of Jesus as He lived in Palestine, to know the geography of the Holy Land, to realize the kind of house in which He lived? What have we really gained of moral or spiritual value when, as has been said, 'the scenery of the Lake of Gennesareth has become as vivid to' our 'imagination as the scenery of Windermere, and the snows of Hermon as the snows of the Alps'? Are we any nearer to Christ as He is? Do we know Him any better than Philip, to whom He said, 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?'—Is this the kind of knowledge in which the Apostles found power and light and peace? Every word of their testimony points us elsewhere. Not 'until his earthly life had been transfigured and interpreted by his resurrection from the dead,' not until He 'was declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection of the dead'—not till then did they really see Jesus. And then Thomas, speaking for himself, spoke for all when he said in the Upper Room, 'My Lord and my God.' The true wonder and power of our Lord's earthly life remain unknown until His Divinity becomes as real to us as His humanity, and we see in Him the glory of the Eternal.

It is a deep truth of our religion that 'whosoever

¹ W. H. Carnegie, *Personal Religion and Politics*.

willeth to do his will shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.' The return to Christ is by faith and obedience, by penitence and love, through faith to fuller knowledge, through increasing knowledge to deeper love, by the simple submission that brings the childlike mind and a deepening consciousness of that spiritual presence which, though we may not yet reach so great a height, enabled St. Paul to say, 'To me to live is Christ.' So true is it that 'Jesus Christ can never be the soul's master upon the single basis of historical proof. The walls of space and time and circumstance must fall back that to an ever-present, ever-living Lord' we may yield a full and glad obedience.¹

LOW SUNDAY.

The Risen Presence.

'It is the Lord.'—Jn 21⁷.

Let us use some of the Resurrection stories to illustrate the age-long and everyday experience of Christ's Presence with those who love Him enough to wish for it as a permanent and abiding possession.

1. There are one or two issues in which the varied stories agree. For instance, the disciples did not always recognize their Master at once. Mary supposed He was the gardener, and did not pierce the veil till He spoke; Cleopas and his fellow-traveller walking the Emmaus Road mistook Him for a lone stranger in Jerusalem and did not realize who their companion had been till He had gone; when the disciples were together in Jerusalem and Jesus appeared they were terrified and affrighted and supposed that they saw a ghost; nor in Galilee when He stood on the shore of Lake Tiberias did they at once know Him—He might have been a fish merchant, an idle spectator—but the sharp insight of love discerned, 'It is the Lord.'

The reason for this doubtless lies in the fact that they did not expect Him and therefore were unprepared: they were not looking for Him though they longed for Him. It is a witness to their integrity and good faith. The fact, however, is suggestive. He may be with us though we are not aware of it, present but unrecognized. Many things may hide Him. Weeping like Mary's; occupation with perplexed and sad memories like

¹ A. Wallace Williamson, *The Person of Christ in the Faith of the Church*.

Cleopas'; the mystery of life and death and resurrection; the business of our life—ten thousand things may blind our hearts so that we forget He is near, yet He may be present all the while. Suddenly we wake from our unconsciousness and cry, 'It is the Lord, and we knew him not.'

'Tis only when they spring to heaven, that
angels

Reveal themselves to you: they sit all day
Beside you, and lie down all night by you
Who care not for their presence, muse and
sleep,
And all at once they leave you, and you know
them!

If you say this and think that Jesus comes and goes, is near and then again is afar, is with you and then leaves you—if you think this, you are speaking of yourself, not of Jesus. It is within the heart that the alteration occurs: not in Him, for He is always there and here and everywhere. As well might a man draw his curtains, shut his door, and sitting in darkness say the sun never shines.

2. Another glance at this group of stories shows that Christ is present and therefore active. He does not abide inactive, a mere onlooker and spectator. He is there to bless. He heals Mary's sore heart, He illuminates the ignorant and makes their hearts glow with assurance. He makes His presence a living, palpitating reality. He commissions, He directs the destiny of His apostles. His love is a passion to perfect those whom He loves. He cannot leave His children as orphans, He must let out His heart's love upon them. And He will adapt Himself to every case with the skill of wisest physician, make an infallible diagnosis and know exactly what remedies to apply. Think with what sure knowledge Peter was treated, think of Paul and John! Think how kindly and wisely each was disciplined for the tasks allotted to him. The Presence is often silent, but it is the silence of a pair of friends and lovers when speech seems to be unnecessary and superfluous, when heart is so near to heart that words seem impertinent and useless. But not inactive, for all the inner world of conscience, emotion, and thought is fully awake in such high hours of visitation. It is not the silence of inactivity nor of indifference, but the silence of love resting in the presence of loved ones. He will rest ('be silent,' R. V. marg.) in His love (Zeph 3¹⁷).

Then again the silence is broken and the heart hears the still small voice which can speak in 'a comfortable voice.' There is what Brother Lawrence calls 'a silent converse with God.'

Bushnell illustrates from his own experience the two aspects:

'I never so saw God, never had He come so broadly, clearly out. He has not spoken to me, but He has done what is more. There has been nothing debatable to speak of, but an infinite easiness and universal presentation to thought, as it were by revelation.' 'I fell into a habit years ago of talking with God, and it became so natural, that in all my open spaces I do it without thought. I talk myself to sleep at night, and open the morning talking, as it were. It is not supplication, or ejaculation, or adoration, but a friendly way of contemplation and intercourse.' 'I do nothing but simply talk with God, taking small draughts, but oh, how strengthening and sweet! from the word of God, singing song of praise without sound.'¹

3. A third conclusion can be drawn from the Resurrection stories: Christ's Presence is independent of the occupation of men: He appeared to Mary when she was broken-hearted with grief, to Cleopas and his fellow-traveller as they journeyed, to the disciples in the upper room or gathering place, to Peter and his six fellow-fishermen, to the disciples gathered on the mountain. We try to draw frontiers in our lives and mark some consecrated and some unconsecrated ground, but His Presence with His disciples in those primitive stories reveals that He is with men everywhere. He knows no place, no time, where or when He cannot be with His own. We sit and weep, and He is there: we journey, and He journeys with us: we meet in fellowship, and He is in the midst; we go on the round of commonplace duties and business, and His Presence lies at the centre of the commonplace.

The world sadly needs a complete reversal of its theory of work. Men work for money by which to buy the necessities of life or the luxuries to make life comfortable: but this is rank materialism, sordid and mean. Others work as they recognize a higher call to serve the community, and in shop or business are in a true sense public servants as much as the man who is in the pay of the State. Others recognize the call to labour for the work's

¹ *Life*, p. 516.

own sake: within them is an energy they cannot resist, they are born creators: men like William Morris, who loved to create beauty and things of permanent worth. But the man who realizes that Christ's presence is every day with him can find a motive and an impulse higher than all these. The commonplace becomes the consecrated task, for he is in touch with Him whose Presence lightens every task. His work becomes his prayer.

Where the many toil and suffer

There am I among mine own:

Where the tired workman sleepeth

There am I with him alone.

Never more thou needest seek Me,

I am with thee every-where:

Raise the stone and thou shalt find Me,

Cleave the wood and I am there.

4. A fourth aspect of Christ's Presence lies in these stories of the Risen Master. He is present with the Individual and with the Group. He was manifest to Mary, Peter, James, Paul, when they were alone, and He was also manifest to them and others when they were gathered together. To be in or to be outside the fellowship of His followers is not to cut oneself off from His Presence. He met His disciples when they thought all was lost and were in despair; He met them when they doubted and hesitated; He met them to give them fresh confirmation of the tasks He wished them to accomplish; He roused them from dull apathy to triumphant zeal. He gave them the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. As they separated on their varied errands He was with each, confirming the word with signs and victories.

For illustration, take the case of one who died in 1920, the 'loneliest woman in Africa,' Christina Forsyth. For thirty years this white woman lived in a village of black, heathen people, seeking to win them for Christ. 'Mrs. Forsyth is a marvellous woman, living all alone like that: it is wonderful what some people will do for a hobby,' was the comment of a fellow white woman, a trader's wife. When Mrs. Forsyth was asked if she never found the isolation and loneliness oppressive, she quietly replied, 'I am never alone,' for as her biographer adds, 'Her Master was very real and close to her: He was her intimate companion and counsellor.'²

Or take the remarkable story of Rev. A. E. Glover, *A Thousand Miles of Miracle*, when he,

² *Life*, p. 169.

his wife, two children, and Miss Gates, a fellow-worker, in his far distant Chinese Inland Station, escaped from the Boxers in 1900. At one point they were crowded into a filthy apartment, weary with days of travelling under charge of soldiers, when their death was determined; the keeper tried to poison them by burning a drug through the night: as morning broke a vast crowd gathered clamouring for their death, when, as they prayed, a torrential storm of rain swept over the town, scattered the crowd, and gave them a further chance of escape. 'Oh, I cannot tell you, dear reader; the words "God is a very present help in trouble" became a living, great reality to us in that moment of doom. In so marvellous a manifestation of His love, we found a true manifestation of Himself. His "very presence" could not have been more real to us in the prison-room if we had seen Him with our eyes.'¹

5. Another hint from this group of Resurrection stories comes when we note that twice Luke reports that Jesus interpreted or opened their minds that they might understand the Scriptures, *i.e.* the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms. From this we deduce that somehow or other the Presence of Christ is in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, for the threefold division covers the Jewish method of naming their sacred writings.

How much we would give to have Christ's expositions of the Old Testament, for He was their truest commentator. And yet we have some of His expositions scattered through the Gospels, which reveal how deeply He had studied them, how He passed beyond the letter to the spirit: how freely He discarded inherited and traditional interpretations and set forth the truth. In one place He showed how they fell short, by taking negative commands and turning them into positive, affirming that not action but motive is the supreme test. He used them for His own defence in the hour of His temptation; He quoted them as He died.* And He taught that they bore witness to Himself, and He helped His disciples in those Resurrection interviews to see how they bore upon His own death and resurrection. How He showed,

¹ P. 252; cf. *Saahu Sunder Singh*, p. 84. Herded in prison with all sorts of evil characters at Ilom, he wrote, June 7th, 1914: 'Christ's presence has turned my prison into a blessed heaven; what then will it do in heaven hereafter?'

what He said, are matters for ever lost to us: what He said we are left to conjecture.

The Spirit of Christ which was in the prophets still makes the pages vivid with power as they are read to-day in the light of the Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection of Him to whom they did point. The pages are bright with the rays that foretell the rising of the sun whose light floods all the New Testament. Every saint bears witness to the incomparable power of the Old and New Testament as the supreme standard by which to realize the living reality of the Risen and Ascended Lord. The devotional service that these writings, so scattered in origin and separated in date of composition, can render and have rendered in the past makes them absolutely indispensable and unique. The Spirit of Christ breathes through them: and as we read them He Himself draws near. Among the greatest books of the world, the Bible awakens the heart and conscience of mankind as no other does: there is none like it. In its pages and through its influence men have found Jesus Christ to be an ever-abiding Presence, challenging their love and claiming their allegiance. And when that great discovery has been made the Bible is read in a new light, the mere letter is forgotten in the knowledge of the Spirit which breathes through it; it is a door into the Presence Chamber of the King.²

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Glorying in the Cross.

* But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world.—Gal 6¹⁴.

The words are used with a polemic intention, yet such is their inherent magic, their indissoluble connexion with a larger context, that the argumentative leader and his irritating opponents disappear. We are out on the deeps of God. The ephemeral has receded, and we are left face to face with the tremendous fact that for Paul, the whilom Pharisee, who had never seen Jesus in the flesh, there was but one thing wherein to glory—His Cross; and that this glorying of his set the world on fire from end to end.

1. It was not in his own cross that St. Paul gloried. We can understand him better when he speaks of glorying in tribulation, but the thought

² E. J. Ives, *The Ever Present Christ*.

of exultation in a cross not our own is becoming increasingly foreign to us. In glorying in the Cross of Jesus Christ, the great Apostle exulted, not primarily in the Cross as a symbol of service, but in the Cross that creates penitence by revealing man's sin as seen in the light of a Love so great that humiliation is sweetened with gratitude and self-contempt glorified with adoring wonder, as we gaze into its depth. It is impossible to over-emphasize the importance of service, but it is quite easy to lay a false emphasis upon it. Much of our present-day teaching is almost hysterical in its exaggerated stress upon the need for utilizing the passion for service, and in its reiterated warnings against repelling men by calling them to repentance. In support of such a view, the story of Christ's call to His first disciples is twisted out of its elucidating context. We are told that Jesus, in calling the Galilean fishermen from their nets, summoned them to a stirring enterprise, a glorious adventure, making no conditions except willingness to serve, imposing no test save that of loyalty. But the facts will not bear construing in the light of this modern convention. Behind them lies the ministry of John the Baptist—a ministry which Jesus acknowledged, making its message of repentance the text of His early preaching.

Unless we recover the note of repentance and penitence, our religion will become but another form of moral sentiment and social service, and thus cease to be a religion—a force that creates moral sentiment and inspires social service. And we can only recover it by rediscovering the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. The Christian who has begun in penitence and ended at the Cross can to-day appeal to his neighbours, for whom religion merely means 'doing one's bit,' with a confidence which was impossible before. 'I, too,' he might say, 'want to serve. But then I want to be quite sure that I am bringing my best to my service. I feel I dare not bring to it a soul choked with its own prejudices and predilections, a will poisoned and warped by subtle self-seeking, a spirit obsessed by its faulty aspirations and ideals—by that good, in fact, which is the enemy of the best. I want to bring a crucified life—a spirit that is dead to self and alive to God—to the saving of society.'

Much futile discussion has centred round the old, deep question of what it means to be crucified with Christ, and whether, indeed, such an idea is

not entirely alien to a gospel of life abundant. The reconciliation of self-sacrifice and self-realization is at all times a difficult matter. Both clearly have their place in Christianity.

In contending that Christianity stands, not for the suppression, but for the intensifying, of life we need first to be quite sure as to the kind of life which Christianity aims at. Briefly, it is a life that presupposes a death—a life that is not merely a purified and perfected edition of man's natural life, but a new birth, or rather a resurrection. This resurrection is not a negation of the natural life. In it every worthy characteristic of that life is preserved and transfigured; yet, in its totality, it is not a renovation, but a new creation, life remade from its centre. As the late Archdeacon Wilberforce phrased it, 'Christianity is not an old-Adam renovation society.' Jesus is the Resurrection before He is the Life, and there is no resurrection without a dying.

To be crucified with Christ is to enter upon a life continents removed from the bleak existence of the self-regarding ascetic. It also is a discipline, it also involves a long and exacting process; but it is a discipline informed by a great spiritual impulse, a spontaneous movement of the soul. There is no thought of self-improvement, only of coming into closer contact with the great Lover of men, and sharing in some small measure His pain and sore travail, His intentions and expectations.

In a certain village there lived a wealthy lady, who suddenly decided to leave her fine old house and live for a whole year in the most ill-conditioned cottage on her estate, taking the place of an old woman who had lived and died there, using her broken old furniture, living on the coarse, scanty fare that had supported the old woman's life, wearing clothes as old and threadbare as hers had been, working all day at mending nets and other ill-paid jobs. Her neighbours were naturally 'puzzled, some concluding that she wished to expiate a secret crime, others that she had become a Roman Catholic and was working out a cruel penance imposed on her by the priest, others that she was a harmless lunatic. But the truth was quite simple. Her soul had suddenly awakened, and she had realized with horror that she was a selfish, unsympathetic woman, narrow in mind and heart, who could not even think herself into the position of the poor folk who were her tenants and

neighbours. It came to her that sympathy and love were the only things worth having; and when, with all her trying, she could not break down the barrier, she went down to live in the old cottage with the leaking roof and the rotten floor, feeling

that no amount of discomfort and privation mattered, if only she could get to the hearts of her neighbours by understanding them from the inside.¹

¹ E. Herman, *Christianity in the New Age*.

The Spirit of Early Judaism.

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Contrasts within the Post-Exilic Age.

WE have dealt with the contrast between the pre-exilic and the post-exilic age: now let us look at the contrasts which abound within the post-exilic age itself. For though it is common to suppose that the heavy hand of the priest lay upon its life, in point of fact its literature exhibits a refreshing variety of opinion and attitude. No wooden orthodoxy holds the field unchallenged. Whether the liberal thinkers were welcomed by the leaders of the Church or not, they certainly claimed and heroically asserted their right to freedom of thought, and it is to the credit of the later Church that she accepted within her canon of Holy Scripture—though clearly sometimes with modifications which blunted the edge of their heresy—books like Job, which contained utterances, or like Ecclesiastes, which were pervaded by a spirit that challenged, where it did not deny, much that was dear to the orthodox heart. What could the original genius who gave us the Book of Job have thought, for example, of the pious Chronicler? With what horror would the Chronicler have read the daring and to him impious challenges of Job, or studied the cold-blooded scepticism and pessimism of Ecclesiastes! Probably the fact that Ecclesiastes found a place in the canon at all is a testimony to its popularity: it represented a mood which all the pieties of the orthodox Church could do nothing to dissipate, and had simply to accept, correcting it, as best it could, by gentle touches here and there.

(i.) ATTITUDE TO THE WORLD-ORDER.

These daring thinkers may have been in part provoked into their heresies by the kind of faith which they saw to animate some of the men who

determined the opinions and controlled the fortunes of the Church—a faith which must have seemed to them lacking in imagination and in due respect for facts. Of this type the Chronicler may be taken as a fair specimen. Like the writer of Job he is a religious man, but, unlike him, he finds no perplexities in the moral world, but everywhere a precise and mechanical correspondence between character and destiny. Not only is piety rewarded by prosperity, but prosperity presupposes piety. The most pious kings have the most soldiers. David has over a million and a half, Jehoshaphat over a million, while Rehoboam has only 180,000. Manasseh's long reign of fifty-five years—a stumbling-block on the Chronicler's theory—has to be accounted for by his repentance (2 Ch 33^{11ff.}). Religious explanations are everywhere assigned for facts. Josiah's defeat and death, for example, are the penalty of his disobedience to the Word of God which came to him through the Egyptian king (2 Ch 35^{21ff.}). So Uzziah's leprosy is the divine punishment of his pride in presuming to offer incense despite the protests of the priests (2 Ch 26^{16ff.}). What would the writer of Job 21 have thought of such a facile theodicy? But it is not only that the Chronicler sees God as the immediate arbiter of human destiny, whose rewards and punishments are swift and just and sure: he has no hesitation in coercing recalcitrant facts into line with his theory. In 1 S 28⁶ it is implicitly said that Saul earnestly sought to discover the divine will: in 1 Ch 10¹⁴ this is roundly denied—he did not inquire of Jehovah. In 1 K 9¹¹⁻¹⁴ Solomon gives Hiram cities in return for the loan of money, whereas in 2 Ch 8² it is Hiram who gives Solomon the cities. The Chronicler tells us that Jehoshaphat of Judah joined with Ahaziah of