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A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

that there is absolutely no reason not to accept it as it is.

But this would not agree with the theory. The whole chapter is attributed to an author who was first called Elohist, and now the Priestly Code, proceeding from a school of priests at Jerusalem after the return from the Exile in the fifth century. This document makes a point never to use the name of Yahveh before Ex 6, when this name was revealed to Moses for the first time. Therefore the word Yahveh cannot have been in the original text of the chapter we consider. It is due to a redactor who introduced it there.¹ The critic does not say what word should have been there instead of Yahveh. Even if it were Elohim, it destroys entirely the sense, and I may say the value of the chapter. Here we learn one of the fundamental truths on which rests the whole

¹ *Bible du Centenaire*. Paris, 1916.

history of Israel. Yahveh says to Abram: I am thy God, and the God of thy posterity after thee. Yahveh, therefore, will be the national God of Israel, as it was said to their ancestor Abram.

According to the critics, Yahveh never said this to Abram; it does not agree with the character given to the Priestly Code, one of the authors who have been carved out of the text. The consequence is that one of the cardinal declarations of Yahveh, which this chapter is intended to record and to convey to future generations, entirely disappears. When later on Moses will say to the Israelites that Yahveh was the God of Abraham, it is a mere mis-statement.

The unprejudiced reader will decide whether, with eminent French historians, he will accept the text literally as it is, or adopt the conclusions of destructive criticism.

In the Study.

Virginitus Puerisque.

A Natural Longing.

'They desire a better country, that is, an heavenly.'—
Heb 11¹⁶.

There was a little home at the edge of a heath which bordered on a corn-field. Although it was not what could be called beautiful, there was the sweetness of nature about it. The winds of heaven played round it from morning till night, and, peeping through the long waving grass that surrounded it like sheltering trees, the mother often looked out on the farmhouse children playing about and gathering wild flowers. But she did not tell her little ones to look, for she was really rather afraid of boys and girls. She gathered her little ones closely together, and whispered tenderly, 'Listen, listen! father sings!'

It was a very small house indeed—there was only one room in it; but it was big enough for love to dwell in. The husband and wife were very like each other in appearance; they were dressed in the same colours, reddish-brown coats edged with white, and buff vests streaked with brown, and the wee mother had delightful soft bits of creamy-white about her; but really one scarcely

noticed their dress, it was so much a part of themselves. Then they had somehow grown to think the same way about things, and that meant thinking very beautifully.

They had neighbours who also lived in one-roomed houses, but no gossiping went on. Our couple kept by themselves; one idea filled their lives, and that idea they shared with no one. How could they tell chattering neighbours that, while they loved their little home, they were constantly longing to go to a better one? The rough grass of which their house was built meant little to them; it just served its purpose. They kept thinking of a home that was all love and joy, and which they had never seen. They were a strange father and mother, for they were just a pair of dreamers.

When the father left home in the morning it was to fly straight up to heaven. This had been a habit of the family from generation to generation, and so people had come to speak of them as the 'skylarks.' The father soared over the little home for a few minutes, as we count time. 'Sweet! sweet! sweet!' he called, so that mother lark heard him, and then he sang a most exquisite song that meant a great deal to her and her babies. Then as he

mounted higher and higher the mother's heart went with him.

'Silly fellow, silly fellow,' laughingly said a thrush who was sitting on the bough of a tree one morning as he passed; 'you forget, you forget; silly fellow, silly fellow.' But the lark went on and on, feeling as if his little body could not contain all his love and joy. He was getting a glimpse into the home he longed for. People crossing the heath heard the lark's song. Some of them spoke about it, others went home thinking or whistling, as the case might be. The farmer had had a bad night worrying over his poor crops. 'I wish that laverock would hold his tongue,' he said, and threw up a stone although he was well aware the singer was far beyond his reach. A lady who had once been a beautiful singer walked with a friend. 'I remember,' she said, 'being told that to be able to sing any great song as it should be sung one must have known a heart-breaking sorrow; but that dear little lark only knows happiness and love.' A boy and girl had been at the farm for milk, and came along carrying their pitchers. The girl suddenly stood up. 'Listen, Jim!' she cried. 'Can you see the wee bird?' The boy looked up. 'A rare singer, Jeannie,' he said. 'It's a laverock.' 'Jim,' said the girl, 'there's something about its singing that makes me feel as great as the highest lady in the land.' 'And you carrying milk-pails?' said Jim contemptuously. 'Yes,' answered Jeannie. 'It's the joy of the birdie that does it. It sings as if it were above all the things one doesn't like down here; its joy is like laughing,' and she laughed; 'you're right, Jim, the lark's a rare singer.'

The boy started off home. 'Jim, is the laverock—the laverock another name for the lark?' asked Jeannie, quite out of breath when she overtook him.

'Of course.'

'Granny made me learn a verse about the laverock just the other day; I can say it, Jim.

Up here the sun sings, but
He only shines there!
Ye ha'ena nae wings, but
Come up on a prayer.¹

That's the laverock speaking, Jim.'

The boy ran off and left her; but he kept thinking of the little verse of poetry all the way home.

¹ George MacDonald, *Poems*, ii. 398.

What is your Pedigree?

'They declared their pedigrees.'—Nu 1¹⁸.

THERE are two long words in our text to-day. What do they mean? What does it mean to declare your pedigree? Well, you declare your pedigree when you tell to what family you belong, who your father and your grandfather are, and who your great-great-great-grandfathers were for as many 'greats' as you know or can remember.

Now Moses, when he had brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, was told to number all the fighting men of twenty years old and upwards; and all these men had to assemble on a certain day before Moses and the heads of the tribes and declare their pedigrees. They had to state to which family they belonged, and to which clan, and to which tribe.

Now I think we all carry about with us three kinds of pedigree which we may declare.

1. And first, *we belong to our own family*. There are two ways of declaring this pedigree—the way of *talking* and the way of *doing*. I knew a small girl once who tried the first way, and a very objectionable small girl she was. She happened to possess one or two titled relations, and she seemed to have the mistaken idea that the more she talked about them the grander she herself became.

Now that is the silly way of declaring your pedigree. There is a much better—the way of *doing*. If you have friends who have distinguished themselves in a right and honourable way, by all means be proud of them. But the best way of all to be proud of them is to try to be worthy of them. And remember that the pedigree that counts for most is the pedigree of character. If you have a father and mother who have bravely and cheerfully, faithfully and honestly, done their duty it is something indeed to be proud of.

There is a fine story told of how a boy declared his pedigree. He was a poor boy and his mother was a widow, but she saw that her boy was clever and she resolved that he should have every chance. So day after day, and year after year, she worked hard washing clothes and scrubbing floors so that she might be able to send her boy to college. And the boy proved worthy. He 'stuck in' and carried everything before him.

When the day of graduation approached he wrote and invited his mother to come to the ceremony. At first she refused, saying that she

had no fine clothes to wear, but her son would take no refusal, and on the graduation day she was there amongst the other mothers watching the successful students receive their degrees. At last it was her son's turn. He went to receive his diploma and the medal he had won. Then he stepped down off the platform and going straight to the place where his mother was sitting he pinned the medal on her shabby old dress, and said, 'That is where it belongs: you worked for it.'

2. And second, we have a national pedigree, *we belong to our own nation*. And that means we can lay claim to all the great men and women of our own country. If we are Scotch we belong to the country of Wallace and Livingstone, the country of Queen Margaret and Flora Macdonald. We are proud of them. We thrill when we read of their brave and good deeds. Yes, but when we lay claim to them we lay claim to a big responsibility. For across the years they call, 'Live worthily, live truly, live bravely.'

3. But last of all, and best of all, *we belong to God*. We are His children, of His pedigree, for He has called us 'sons of God' and He made us in His own image.

The Emperor Tiberius once made a law that any one who carried a particular ring should not go into any wrong place; and once Ian Maclaren, the writer and minister, wrote a letter to a young officer who was in danger of falling into temptation. This is what he said: 'Remember that you are your father's son carrying a good name.'

Let us remember that we are God our Father's sons carrying a good name. Then let that name, like the Emperor Tiberius' ring, keep us from entering any wrong place or from doing anything unworthy. And when we are tempted to do anything that might cast a shadow on that name, let us remember that Jesus is our Elder Brother and that He came down to earth nineteen hundred years ago just to help us all to be true 'sons of God.'

The Christian Year.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

The Essentials.

'Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?'
—Lk 7¹⁹.

The centre of Christianity is not in its statements, but in its realities and experiences. The truth of

Christianity is not to be identified with the statements of its advocates, or any of them, concerning it, or with the explanations that they have offered of its facts, or with the declarations of its creeds, whether special or ecumenical. In all these matters there may be wide and irreconcilable differences. The centre of Christianity is in its realities and experiences. For Christianity to be true is for its realities to be realities, experienceable and experienced. If Christianity is true, it sets forth things that are, in the realm of the soul. It testifies according to truth, concerning the eternal realities.

What is it, then, for Christianity to be true?

1. If Christianity is true, God is the supremely good Being that Jesus declared Him to be. He really is at heart a Father to us men, and our right and normal relation to Him is that of children living at home with the Eternal Goodness. When we live as we ought, we shall find ourselves living as true sons, in loyal family fellowship with the best Being that the heart of man can conceive. These are the facts, if Christianity is true: this is the kind of God that there is, and there is no other. This is the true and real meaning of existence for us men. The world is the world of such a God, holy and gracious, sin-hating and fatherly. Into the world of such a God, and into life with such a meaning, we are all born, if Christianity is true. It is the duty and the privilege of every one of us to be living at home with the absolutely good and holy God, in filial fellowship: and the better we become acquainted with our God, if Christianity is true, the more thoroughly shall we know Him as the perfect and glorious One, in whom all our being finds full rest and satisfaction.

2. Again, if Christianity is true, Jesus Christ is really the gift of God to us men for our spiritual salvation. He really is for us the way and the truth and the life. He finds us astray in moral evil and brings us home. We were forfeiting in a sinful life our privilege of filial life with the Eternal Goodness. He came to us to save us out of our sin; and He does bring us out of our sin, into eternal life with God. He really does stand to us as Saviour. In what He has done for us in His life and death there is a genuine reality, rich in blessing for us and for all men. If Christianity is true, Jesus Christ is God's way to us, and our way to God.

3. If Christianity is true, God is not wholly

outside of us, addressing us from beyond ourselves. We have not told the whole when we have said that in Christ He comes to us and seeks us for our good. It is true also that the living God really dwells in our souls. He is a God within. He convinces us of evil by actual inward influence. He really renews our hearts, working character such as He desires to see in us. He truly communes with us in the secret place of the heart. He teaches truth to the soul of man, by real inward suggestion. If Christianity is true, God comes as near to us as we are to ourselves, and we possess Him as an actual indwelling companion.

4. If Christianity is true, the only right inspiration of life and guide of conduct in all relations is what Jesus said it was—namely, love. The life of sonship toward God is thereby a life of brotherhood toward men. When we live according to love toward our fellows, we do the thing that ought to be, and make of life what life ought to be. When unselfishness and the highest helpful affection form our law of living, then we have struck a chord in the eternal harmony—and all that is dissonant with love is discord to the eternal harmony. This is the spiritual and practical reality, in this world and in any other world that there may be. This is the thing that is. Here is the clue to the significance of our life, here is the keynote of our duty, here is the true method of all our doings. If Christianity is true, God is love, and all men ought to be love, and existence is successful only so far as existence means love.

5. And if Christianity is true, there is for all of us, corresponding to these spiritual realities, a genuine transforming energy. We are not talking of theories, or supposing cases: we are not discussing far off the good that is to be approved and desired but cannot be attained. Here is a genuine might for action. Here dwells the power of God for salvation. The saving agency of Christ is real, and the indwelling Spirit actually does His work. Transformation is an actual experience, a result attained. Character does become changed when these forces have their way. Sin can be conquered, holiness is possible. High virtue is within our reach, and effective power to do good in the needy world can be had. We can be brought to live at home with God in holy and happy fellowship, and to live in helpful love among men. All this has been done, and can be done again.

Let our individual understanding of these reali-

ties be adequate or inadequate, that makes no difference with the facts. Though we had no understanding of them at all, nay, though we were totally ignorant of them, these are the facts: this is the kind of world we have been born into: this is what our existence signifies. Though we should disagree widely in our interpretation of these realities, and should even grow so blind in heart as to forget our brotherhood, and count one another aliens because of our disagreement, still these are the realities, and these are the realities for ever. God is the holy Being with whom we ought to live as children, Christ is the Saviour who seeks to bring us thither, the Holy Spirit is the indwelling Friend, love is the law of life, and the holy victory may be ours.¹

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

The Question.

'Whom say ye that I am?'—Mt 16¹⁵.

From the importance which Jesus attached to this question it is evident that He regarded it as vital. For upon the answer to it would depend the future of His Church and the influence of His Religion. It is clear, then, that the instinct which prompts the abiding question, 'Who is this?' coincides with Christ's own standpoint. It brings us face to face with Him, and compels us to see in Himself the very core and centre of His Religion.

There are three ways of dealing with this question: We may try to avoid it; we may seek to evade it; or we may frankly face it.

(1) It may be said, as indeed it has often been said, that such a question is beside the mark, that the real interest of Jesus Christ is His teaching and example, and that it is of no vital importance to discuss His Personality. This was the common attitude of the older Unitarian School. Emerson spoke of historical Christianity as dwelling with noxious exaggeration on the Person of Jesus. Even so spiritual a teacher as Channing, though he believed Christ to be more than an ordinary human being, said we had no interest in His position in the scale of Existence. Yet if there was exaggeration on the one side, there was depreciation on the other. And all along the centuries the question has continually emerged, 'Who is this?' No attempt to put it aside has ever permanently succeeded.

¹ W. N. Clarke, *What Shall we Think of Christianity?*

A very plausible argument may easily be presented. We may be told that religion has nothing to do with metaphysics, and that to know the precise rank which Christ occupies in the universe cannot be essential to the welfare of humanity, or the salvation of an individual soul. Nor need we pause to dispute such statements, except to remark that they are very generally accompanied by a quite definite assertion of Christ's rank in the order of being. It is characteristic of all such disclaimers to assume or even to assert that His rank is simply on the plane of humanity. The argument is therefore hardly ingenuous, for it gives reasons against a decision, having already pronounced a verdict.

It is vain to suppose that men will be persuaded to cease from showing interest in the Person of Christ by a blunt refusal to entertain the question. For the question has persistently declined to be put aside. At the end of every period of controversy it emerges fresh and definite as ever. Behind every phase of conflicting opinion we hear it again repeated, and the reason is obvious. For whether it be that Christ is set forth as Example or Teacher or Saviour, whether it be that our assent is demanded for His Revelation of God, for His offer of Redemption, or for the assurance of Immortality, the question is morally pertinent and inevitable, 'Who is this?' It is unreasonable as it is certainly unhistorical to say that such a question is beside the mark. We cannot avoid it.

(2) Can we, then, by some subtler process evade it? Without exactly avoiding the question, can we shun a direct issue? It is maintained that we can—that we may leave the question as to Christ's Person and be content, estimating His religious 'value' for us and for the world. I am putting it concisely, but this is substantially the keynote of one of the most influential movements of religious thought within our time; and it is associated with many scholarly names. The main reason for adopting this evasion—I use the word without imputation of motive—is the same as that given for setting the question absolutely aside, the desire to be free of metaphysics. It is pointed out—and with truth—that our main interest is religious. We are more concerned in the salvation of our souls than in the solution of intellectual problems. Therefore, it is argued, we should rest content with Christ as known in His earthly history, and Christ as known in experience, leaving the Christ

of metaphysics in the limbo of dead controversies.

Now, there is wisdom as well as truth in the warning of the school of opinion which calls emphatic attention to the religious 'value' of the Personality of Christ as our first concern. We must not forget that 'the primary message of the gospel is comfort and forgiveness, a sense of Sonship and acceptance, and in no case the resolution of all the problems of thought and existence.' It is certain we cannot be saved merely by correct intellectual propositions. It is certain we cannot thus satisfy the religious instincts. We are more likely to lose God than to find Him, if we try to feed the soul on intellectual abstractions, forgetting the ethical and spiritual kernel of truth which alone can satisfy. It is through the sense of moral and spiritual need that we see God in Jesus Christ; it is because we are sinners that we see in Him a Saviour. It is the barest truth to say that 'God as a Saviour is a reality, for which more experimental evidence can be brought than from the absolute of philosophy.'

Yet the warning of this school of opinion is only valid so far, and beats in vain against the instincts of the human heart and the steadfast resistance of the human mind. The cry against dogma only results in other dogma; the complaint against irrational theologizing gives ground for stronger complaint. The old theology is hustled by the new, yet we are deeper in metaphysics than ever, more than ever entangled in contradictions. Truth to say, we can no more stay the effort to give full intellectual expression of our religious conceptions than we can stay the incoming of the tide. As a reader of modern thought has said, 'the individual consciously or unconsciously will formulate the Christian experience, and, left to himself, will formulate it inadequately. Released from the dogma of the Church, he will react upon and limit the experience.' There is thus no escape from the urgency of the demand involved in the question, 'Who is this?' We can neither avoid nor evade it. We must press onward and inward to the core of Christian experience. The question still remains. We must frankly face it.

(3) Now, it would seem plain that the Christian Church as a whole has proceeded for a long period on a very definite and positive answer to the question. If there be anything in Christianity that we can call Catholic, in the true sense of that

much-abused word, it is the faith of the Church in Christ as the Son of the Living God. And yet, as from the beginning, so in our day, this faith is always being threatened.

Opposed to the answer of the Church, a variety of attempts have been made, but the only logical alternative is the humanitarian answer, which appears to have the advantage of simplicity. It is so much easier to stop short. We seem to leave no tag-ends for thought when we simply accept Christ as a man of unique goodness and unique personal influence. And yet all is not so clear cut as would appear. Great gaps are left in our thinking, and we are driven to place Him so high that ordinary human tests will not suffice. It is historically certain that those who came under His immediate personal influence could not think of Him as merely man like ourselves. It is certain also that modern scholarship, even when it declines to take the final step of recognizing His claims, finds in Him what cannot be judged by ordinary standards. It comes as near as possible to the essential faith of the Church, but stops short, leaving a difficulty greater than any encountered by the faith itself. For when we say that 'in Jesus the divine appeared in as pure a form as it can appear on earth,' have we not reached a point when we must think of Him as neither truly human nor yet truly divine,—a kind of demi-god, which neither history nor philosophy can finally accept, a Christ of whom it has been said, by one who was himself a leader in philosophic thought, that no philosopher who had outgrown the demonism of ancient systems could for a moment acquiesce. While, therefore, the humanitarian answer seems to attract by its apparent simplicity, it often ends in greater confusion of thought.¹

CHRISTMAS.

The Manger and the Throne.

'And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.'—Lk 2⁷.

'His head and his hair were like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.'—Rev 1¹⁴, 16.

These two passages mark respectively the beginning and the end of the story which the New Testament has to tell about Jesus. At first sight one would hardly recognize them as belonging to

¹ A. Wallace Williamson, *The Person of Christ in the Faith of the Church*, pp. 184 ff.

the same story at all; they breathe such different notes. A little child lying in a manger, because the eastern inn could find no room for His mother at her critical hour, and a mystic picture of One who has power written on brow and feet and eyes and lips, what possible similarity is there between the two portrayals? There seems to be no connecting link between them, and yet there is one very obvious connexion. They are linked together in fact. Apart altogether from any explanations which may be offered, men's minds did travel this incredible distance in relation to Jesus. Some who were already living when He was born did, before they died, think about Him after the manner of this Book of the Revelation. The sweep of thought between these two extreme points which carries the mind so far did not take long to accomplish. When the minds of men are in contact with Jesus they have to travel fast and far, and so it comes to pass that the book which tells us about Him commences with a world which can find no room for Him, and closes with a heaven which He fills with His presence.

1. Think of the extraordinary contrast between these two passages which mark its extreme limits.

(1) The first picture conveys all the romance of the Christmas spirit. For centuries the imagination of the world has played about that manger in the courtyard of an eastern inn with the shepherds in the fields near by. Around that theme all our carols have been written, art has dwelt upon the scene, and legend has surrounded it. The very facts have the nature of poetry about them, the kind of poetry which softens the hearts of men. Yet even here the beauty of the Christmas stories springs from a very deep source. There is a great creed, for example, implicit in such a lovely song as Francis Thompson's 'Little Jesus':

Little Jesus, wast Thou shy
Once, and just as small as I?
And what did it feel like to be
Out of heaven and just like me?
Didst Thou sometimes think of there,
And ask where all the angels were?
I should think that I would cry
For my house all made of sky;
I would look about the air
And wonder where my angels were;
And at waking 'twould distress me—
Not an angel there to dress me!

No song like that could be written except with a great creed in the background of the mind. But it is in the background, and the note of our carols and poems is the human note, the picture of weakness and helplessness, the conditions of our human lot, the strange romance of it, the mysterious blendings, the beauty which is always near to the elemental facts of life. Then as the story continues the same thing is true, the facts are near enough to our experience—the growing boy, the first conflict between independence and parental wishes, the carpenter's shop, the slow way in which knowledge accumulates and truth is learned. That is the first chapter in the story, and its note is the familiar and human one.

(2) But what a world of difference when we turn from the first to the last chapter. What relationship can we find between the child of Bethlehem and this mystic figure standing among golden candlesticks, with hair as white as snow, and feet like burnished brass, and eyes of fire, and a voice like the music of falling waters? The one picture expresses the weakness of the human lot, and the other a power which is divine. Yet there is at least this similarity between the two, that both have the spirit of poetry in them. Do not imagine that this later word is to be read too literally. Every feature in the wonderful description is closely related to some discovery which men made about Jesus as they walked the earth in His company. Just as in the simple story of the early days there is a great divine background, so in these later ideas which sometimes seem remote from the Jesus of the Gospels there is a human background. Does not the hair white as snow express men's feeling that Jesus cannot be understood unless the mind goes very far back in time? Are not the feet of fine brass a symbol of the tireless and swift journeyings of love which Jesus took at the bidding of human need? Are not the eyes like a flame of fire, pictured memories of a look which was sometimes like a tender light and sometimes like a blaze, and the voice like the sound of many waters, the recalled music of His speech?

2. Now taking the two extremes, the lowly beginning and the exalted climax, what message have they for us? Let us describe it as the importance of keeping the connexions. What do we mean by that? The thought is very simple and straightforward. When we are thinking of the

human life, of the way in which Christ came into the world, and of the unfolding incidents of His youth and His later ministry, we only see it partially and imperfectly unless there is somewhere in our minds a sense of the divine meaning of it—that these facts do not merely form one little isolated romance of beauty, but that they spring out of the purpose and the love of God and breathe a note which is as true to-day as when the stars looked down on the fields of Bethlehem. The reverse is just as true. When we have before our minds these pictures of a Christ who is enthroned in heaven, majestic and awful, the Saviour and the Judge of men, we are set upon false tracks at once, unless all the time we see the connexion between those pictures and the human story. The images may be different, but Christ does not change with our changing thoughts, and He is the same whether earth or heaven be the stage He walks. That is what we mean by keeping the connexions.

(1) Perhaps the most common danger from which the Christian faith has suffered is that men have tended to isolate one part of the story from another. We think of the two extremes as though they were contradictories. One age loses its sense of the human values, its Christ is shorn of all the qualities which made Him what He was. He is a theological figment in the centre of a vast scheme, splendid perhaps, but not recognizable as having any relationship with the Christ of Nazareth and Galilee. The sense of His human nearness vanishes, and for an answer to that side of human need men turn from Christ to the Virgin and to the saints. But fancy turning from Christ to any saint in the calendar for the spirit of human nearness. There was more of that spirit in Jesus than in all the saints put together, and a Church which has to invoke the saints in order to satisfy the cravings of the heart of man is a Church which has lost her Christ.

(2) Perhaps in our time we are at the other extreme, or at least most of us are. We can see the breadth of Christ's human sympathies, our hearts respond at once to that part of the story, but for the rest we are not sure that we can turn with any confidence to Him to-day. Instead of being lost in the machinery of a theological scheme, He is lost in centuries old, and our modern cry is that of Palgrave's verse:

Comes faint and far Thy voice
From vales of Galilee,
Thy vision fades in ancient shades,
How can we follow Thee?

Now in both these cases what has happened is that the connexions have been lost or obscured. There is a way of losing Christ among the divinities, as history proves, and He has to be disentangled from great conceptions and rediscovered, and the story has to be learned all over again. But there is another way of losing Him, and that is among the humanities, idealizing Him as a figure among His fellows but losing all grasp of Him as a living presence now. Then again He has to be re-discovered, but in another way, the other part of the journey has to be taken until the conviction is born that beyond the veil of things seen there is One who still has fire in His eyes and swift feet and lips of unsilenced music.

This is the Advent message which comes to our hopes and needs to-day. It is of little help for us to sing that Christ came in the days of old until we have dared to make the connexion between His cradle and His throne. In the old days men's hearts sang the song of expectation that Christ was coming, but when He did come they did not recognize Him. It is equally possible to sing that Christ has come, and still to have eyes that are blind to Him in the world of the present. The whole spirit and inspiration of our faith depends upon making the connexion, so that we neither lose Christ amid the clouds nor among the centuries, but on the firm basis of history build our confidence that 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.'

Oh! sense-bound heart and blind,
Is nought but what we see?
Can time undo what once was true?
Can we not follow Thee?¹

—
EPIPHANY.

Prepared.

'Mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared.'—Lk 2³⁰.

There are three passages in the Gospels which speak of what God has prepared for us.

1. The first is in the words of the aged Simeon:

¹ S. M. Berry.

'Mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared' (Lk 2³⁰). 'Salvation' is an often misused word, because it is not always understood that its meaning is derived from the Old Testament. In the Old Testament the thought of salvation nearly always includes that of victory over enemies. We are not saved passively, once for all. Christ by His life, and death, and resurrection did everything, of course, that was necessary to provide salvation for us once for all. But we must throw ourselves into the scheme; we must make the power of His atonement our own; we must work out our own salvation, because it is God that worketh in us. It takes us back to the thought of penitence. When we repent—really repent, not merely recite the words of confession—God does more than wash our guilt away; He offers us fresh power to conquer. Absolution is a loosing from chains. It is cleansing from the past, and more power for the future struggle, that together make up salvation.

2. That is the first thing that God has prepared for the heart that opens the door and takes Him in. And then, when we want to increase that power within us by hungering and thirsting for God, we hear Him say, 'Behold, I have prepared my dinner.' 'Come, for all things are now ready' (Mt 22⁴, Lk 14¹⁷). If any man open the door of his heart, 'I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me' (Rev 3²⁰). Let Christ in, and you will have a feast; and, as we have said, the more you feast, the more you will want. And that is true of the sacramental means that He has given us of eating and drinking the Divine Life. The more we partake of it with real longing, and after the preparation of real penitence, the more we want it, and the more we get from it.

3. Once again, we want salvation and we want an increase of power, not primarily for our own sake but for others. See what has been prepared for us. The sons of Zebedee asked that they might sit the one on Christ's right hand, and the other on His left in His kingdom. But He said, 'To sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give; but it shall be given to those for whom it is prepared by my Father' (Mk 10⁴⁰). God was not going to select two solitary and privileged individuals to live in closest contact with His Son. That glory and delight was for every one for whom it was prepared, every one who would drink of the cup that He drank of, and be

baptized with the baptism that He was baptized with, and ascended with Him in His train of captives, passing through the heavens into heaven itself.

His right hand and left are not two places; they express the spiritual condition of union with Him. He is 'at the right hand of God,' that is, in perfect union with the Father, wielding His power; and those for whom it is prepared are similarly at the right and left hand of Christ, in union with the Son, and wield His power. 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne,

even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne' (Rev 3²¹). They reign with Him, and with Him sway the hearts of men, because they have been crucified with Him, because they continually repent and go on repenting, and continually pray and go on praying, and continually mortify their thoughts and feelings and wishes and impulses, and because they continually hunger and thirst for more and more and more of Him. To them belong His victorious salvation, and His divine feast, and therefore His royal power over men.¹

¹ A. H. McNeile, *He Led Captivity Captive*.

Primitive Christian Literature.

BY THE REVEREND B. P. W. STATHER HUNT, M.A., B.D., WHITBY.

WHAT was the beginning of Christian literature? It is surely unbelievable that in a literary age such as the first century A.D. there were no Christian writings before the earliest epistles. The First Epistle to the Thessalonians, according to Dr. Lock, 'must lie some time between A.D. 49 and 53.' Even if we grant that Galatians was written first, it cannot be more than a year or two earlier at the most, while the earliest possible date for St. Mark is 65, over thirty years after the Ascension. It is impossible to imagine that it was not until after this length of time that any details of our Lord's life and death were committed to writing, or even that it was twenty years before some one, in the person of St. Paul, put his pen to paper to write the earliest Christian work.

Of course no one does believe that 'St. Mark' was the first writing of the 'Gospel' type, but most critics work backwards from our present Gospels to documents such as 'Q,' which existed but a short time before. But even if we knew the exact nature and date of 'Q,' it would only have pushed the problem one stage further back, which still leaves a blank of many years. If it is possible, the better way would be to work forward from the date of the Ascension.

In trying to discover the nature of primitive Christian writings, we must endeavour to work as far as possible from an historical basis. But whence is historical evidence to be drawn? From the one truly historical book of the N.T., the Acts. Here

we get the story of how a few men were given the commission to proclaim the Gospel to the whole world. How did they set about it? How does any man with a lesson to teach set about it? He begins with what is well known by his pupils, and, using that as a foundation, he proceeds to the unknown. What better foundation could the Apostles have than the literature which they possessed in common with their hearers? If we look at the early speeches recorded in the Acts we find that they consist of a string of quotations from the O.T., with a Christian commentary and explanation attached. It is probable, therefore, that we have here a reflexion, if not occasionally even an extract, from the earliest Christian writings. On this hypothesis these writings would consist of a string of 'proof texts,' to which was added a few salient facts in the life of our Lord as being a fulfilment of the prophecies quoted. In this connexion it is interesting to recall that St. Luke tells us how Christ Himself, 'beginning at Moses and all the prophets, expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.' Was St. Luke himself one of the listeners? Did he commit to memory, if not to writing, these 'expositions' of our Lord? In any case the main body of this testimony would immediately be passed on to the other disciples and become the common property of the infant Church. When, then, they were called upon to teach others, of what better method could they think than that through which they