Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:

https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology

https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb

PayPal https://paypal.me/robbradshaw

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

therefore, only speak of the Eucharistic cup, the cup of the *Qiddūsh* lying outside the actual Institution of the Eucharist.

E.

It now remains to refer to Professor Box's theory regarding the relationship of the Eucharist to the *Qiddūsh*. A full discussion of his article on the 'Jewish Antecedents of the Eucharist' in the *Journal of Theological Studies* for April 1902, in the light of what has been said in the present paper, would require a separate article of some length. So only a few remarks on this part of the subject will be offered here. If the facts stated and the reasoning advanced above should be found to carry conviction, Dr. Box's position must clearly be regarded as no longer tenable. He has either, with the majority of scholars, held vv.$^{19b-20}$ in St. Luke to be an interpolation, or has not given weight to the fact that the words of Institution were not spoken by our Lord in connexion with the first cup, but the second. It is to be hoped, therefore, that he will now find it necessary to reconsider his view on this important matter, and that he will finally come to the conclusion that all that can be said with regard to the *Qiddūsh* is that it was a preliminary to the cup of the Institution, and not in any sense identical with it.

In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

A Deep Sea Voyage.[1]

'The way of a ship in the midst of the sea.'—Pr 30^{19}.

HAVE you ever seen what's called a shooting star, a meteor flashing through the sky? And do you know that this old world of ours that seems so stodgy and solid is dashing along all the time at just about that pace? We'll have to get up fairly early, you and I, and sprint hard all day long, if we are not going to be left behind, out of things and old-fashioned, for always the earth is rushing into something new and exciting. A while ago it was wireless, but already that's beginning to get stale. You have had your set for months, and that's a long time nowadays. We must have something new again. Well, there is something new, a wonderful thing, the Gyro Compass. Have you heard of that? It's like this. When a ship goes out to sea it must have all kinds of people on board, if it is to have a chance of reaching port upon the other side. There must be a captain, a mate, engineer, stokers, and heaps more. But one man must never be forgotten, and that is the man to steer, to set the course and keep the ship steady to it. It's difficult to steer: it takes brains and skill and experience: and even the best man should not be kept at it too long. For it's so tiring. If you or I tried it, we would make the sorriest mess of things: we would lose knots and knots and hours and hours. It needs a first-rate man. And yet now they have found an instrument to do it for them, which can set and keep the course just splendidly. When the waves try to slap the ship out of its track, it won't let them: when the winds want to drive it from its course this compass brings it round again. And it does it far, far better than any man can do. It has been tried right across the Atlantic; and the captain says that, though he has had the cleverest seamen to steer for him, none of them could do it anything like as well as the Gyro Compass does.

Well, there's something for you and me to think about, and I'll tell you why. How long ago is it since a certain dainty ship was launched? How old are you? That will tell us. Seven. Well, seven years ago a bonnie little boat was launched. It took the water splendidly; and every one was pleased, and then of course they named it. What was your boat called? They did a very cruel thing to mine, poor thing. For they went and named it the 'Arthur.' And it's dreadfully hard not to be a bit milksoppy if you've got a name like that. If you are another Arthur, well, we'll have to stick in and work hard, you and I, to make any kind of show at all. But probably you have a decent name, like Tom or Mary or Jack. Anyhow

[1] By the Reverend A. J. Gossip, M.A., Aberdeen.

the boat was launched and named, and when they were putting in the engines and fitting it out, they used to say what a fine boat this is; I hope it has a clever steersman, it would be such a pity if it were wrecked and thrown away. And you're the steersman. Isn't that exciting? Yes, but very dangerous. For it's so hard to steer, and the seas are all so full of rocks and reefs and deadly currents. The other day in school you fairly lost your temper, made the most disgraceful row. You very nearly piled your boat up on the rocks that time, where the breakers might have torn it all to pieces! Or at home the other night when you felt so inclined to be ratty and short and selfish, and didn't care one bit what you said or what you did, you touched the bottom that time. You got off again, thank goodness; but didn't you feel the thud, thud, and hear the scraping and the bumping. You'll have to take care or you will throw away your ship. It's so difficult to bring it through, and fogs come down and puzzle us and we get lost and go all wrong. Far better use the Gyro Compass. For you've got one, you know. God, you see, is so much cleverer and wiser than we are. We are all so excited over wireless; the other night we were listening to Pittsburg, 3600 miles away, heard a band playing 'Highland Laddie' and a lot of other things, but that is nothing. God has given us a wireless we have always had that carries how much farther, that amazing wireless we call prayer. And now we are so puzzled over this wonderful Gyro Compass: and yet God never sent a boy or girl into the world that was not fitted out with one, only we used to call it conscience. You know what I mean, that strange thing inside us that tells us what we ought to do, and how we ought to go, that when the waves of passion try to slap us out of our course won't let them, and when the howling winds of temptation blow about us catching away our breath and driving us who knows where, always tries to bring us round again to the true track. It will steer you far, far better than you can. Try it this week, make up your mind you're going to do what this wonderful Gyro Compass tells you, and to go just where it wants, and you'll be like that captain. At the end of the week you'll be saying, I never had one anything like so happy, I never ran so true and straight, I never shaped and kept so good a course, I wouldn't go back to the old way of it, not for anything. The Gyro Compass every time for me.

Tests.[1]

'When he hath been approved.'—Ja 1^{12}.

Most of the world's work comes sooner or later to a place of testing. No good firm ever allows its products to pass out into service until they have passed some high standard test. That is true of things so far apart as ships and seeds, of automobiles and coins. When I lived near the mouth of the Clyde in Scotland, there was opposite my window, some miles out, what was called the Measured Mile test. It was the place of testing for the great liners. I saw the famous *Olympic*, after her launching, steaming along that Measured Mile—the engineers putting her under the severest possible strain, to see if she was fit. Any serious flaw involves a return to the shipbuilding yard, which means disappointment and loss of revenue, but better that than some ignored flaw endangering hundreds of lives in mid-Atlantic.

Not long ago I passed by a motor works. By the side of the engineer's shop was a hill, with a rough, narrow, steep road. It was, I discovered, the place of testing. No car was passed out of those works until it had climbed that gradient on high gear. To the uninitiated a run on the ordinary roads at hand might have seemed sufficient. It was not sufficient for those makers. They put every car on to a gradient it would hardly, if ever, meet. As I passed a car was being tested. It got a little way and stopped. The driver tried again, and slowly it crept up the hill and won its freedom.

The most interesting scene of testing I have witnessed was, however, in the Mint. Every nation has its Mint, its place where money is made, where silver or gold or copper or nickel is melted and cut and stamped. In ancient times the making of coins was a religious act. The Roman Mint, for instance, was in the Temple of Juno, and the coins bore an image of one of the gods. Coinage is no longer in that sense a religious act. But it is a very solemn act. I, at least, found it impressive. It is no easy thing to become a coin.

The Mint I happened to visit was in London, near the famous Tower of London. A guide met me, a guide with a bunch of keys. He examined my permit and took me in charge. He never left me. He carefully locked each door behind us as we passed from one department to another. Possibly he thought the piles of gold and silver

[1] By the Reverend F. C. Hoggarth, Whalley.

might prove too big a temptation for me! The bullion is first rolled into flat sheets of metal of perfectly uniform thickness. Out of these sheets, the coin pieces are punched out. In the old days in England, people used to chip bits off the edges of coins, so that they grew smaller and smaller as they passed from hand to hand. And in time one almost needed a microscope to see the coin. That, of course, was long ago. Now the edges of coins are 'milled.' They are no longer smooth. The purpose of the grooved edge is to prevent chipping. Before any coin passes out into currency it has a whole series of tests. It has to satisfy tests as to its degree of 'fineness,' as to colour and shape and soundness and weight. Only coins of 'approved' character are passed on. Those found wanting in character at any stage are fired out as unfit for the kingdom of coinage. Back they go to the furnace, to be melted down again and start once more on their way.

The tests for soundness and weight were strangely fascinating and impressive. The place of testing for the former was known as the 'ringing department.' On entering the room there was a succession of rapid metallic sounds. At a small anvil sat a workman. He was ringing the coins on the iron, with almost lightning speed. Any cracked coin he fired out. No coin wanting the true ring passes into currency. From the 'ringing' room, the coins passed to the 'weighing' room. On a dozen or more long tables were a number of balances, enclosed in glass cases, air-proof and dust-proof. There the coins were being weighed, silently and automatically. No hand put them on the scales. They stepped on by themselves, one by one, each so timed as to step on the moment its predecessor stepped off. There was no loitering, nor any bustling. They came down tubes, a ceaseless procession for the testing. Not all took the same route after the test. All depended on whether they had satisfied the test. Any coins that proved too light or too heavy had their own exit tube, and the machinery saw that they took that way back, not forward. Only those within the limit of weight tolerance passed on. One or two coins in every hundred, I was told, fail in the test.

That room reminded me of the judgment scene pictured by the ancient Egyptians—'the weighing of the heart after death, in the hall of Double Truth.' A strange idea of theirs—a weighing room for hearts—a place of testing to which everybody came, at the end. Whatever the testing may be at the end, there are certainly testings by the way. In a sense every day is a day of judgment. For us also there are Measured Mile tests, ringing rooms and weighing rooms, places where our true character is revealed and where secret flaws are made known. The great testing hours set their seal or otherwise on the work of everyday. If we are faithful there, not shirking the disagreeable or covering up negligence, we need not fear when the test comes. In that hour we shall be amongst the approved.

The Christian Year.

Trinity Sunday.

The God to whom we Pray.

By Professor W. M. Macgregor, D.D.[1]

'Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel, I will be hath sent me unto you. . . . Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel, Jehovah, the God of your fathers, hath sent me unto you.'—Ex $3^{14.\ 15}$.

Grammarians tell us that this great name of God ought to be translated not as a present but as a future, not as 'I am' but 'I will be,' and this is not to be dismissed as one of the teasing modern changes with which some undevout scholars have impoverished the Book. That great master in experimental theology, Rabbi Duncan, says bluntly, '"I am that I am" is really "I will become what I will become." So in due time He was made flesh; but He did not tell Moses that it was to be flesh.' Mere grammarians have not always been of much service in edification, but in this case, clearly, they become ministers of faith by giving us a noble and cheering thought of God.

In most languages the names by which God is known are obscure in their meaning, but this one is radiantly clear. 'I will be'—I am going to be something to you, to do something for you; what you have seen in the past is not the limit of My bounty, it is only the beginning. And thus the name is almost equivalent to 'The Coming One'; it is a word of hope and promise without any touch of reservation. Through all the vicissitudes of our mortal life—the joys of it, and the labours, and the perils, and the escapes, the people who know His name may still be sure of Him; and even of the last necessities it is written, 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee.'

[1] *United Free Church Sermons*, 123.

But if we start thus, reading the Name as a promise, the question at once arises as to the reception which we are to give it. God to His creatures may say, 'I will be,' but if they seek nothing from Him, looking to the earth and not to Him for succour, His word is spoken in vain. A promise without reserve is put at our disposal in this Name—men and brethren, what wisdom or boldness are we showing in our response?

1. Now first of all, *experience* should help us in our answer, for, as our text reminds us, the God who is to be is the God also of the past, the Lord God of our fathers.

Israel was facing a fresh adventure, but by no means with an empty mind. Even in their slave cabins in Egypt the older folks had rehearsed the story of their forebears. It was not wholly clean or noble, but running through it like a golden thread was a record of Divine interpositions. It is no wonder that Israel, looking doubtfully along the unknown way, should ask this first of God, that He should be to them what so gloriously He had been to their fathers. Surely He would not be less to those who seemed to need Him more.

We have a wealthier record to fall back upon than theirs—a New Testament as well as an Old, and both are marked by the same Divine urgency of giving. When prophets were needed in the old time, it is said that God *rose up early* and sent them; and of Jesus it is justly said by Augustine that 'He tarried not, but ran.' He was a spendthrift in life, with no desire to stint or hoard. It warmed His heart to see the woman break the flask so that the treasure of fragrance was expended in an hour, for that was His own way. When He gave it was without reserve; 'having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them to the uttermost.' When we thus recall the gospel story and see God in every detail of it, we may well take courage, for the future is inhabited by the same God, and it is sure to match the past. 'If he spared not his own Son, surely with him he will also give us all things freely.'

Many of us have recollections more individual than these. In Scotland we have seen days of revival, 'when there was mid-sea and the mighty things.' Then the eternal things came up before men and looked near, and a universal compulsion of human souls seemed not wholly out of reach. Unlikely people were transformed, and the most obstinate obstructions gave way. Some of us have experienced in ourselves great hours, when the dross seemed burned away, and the nobler stuff for a while ran clear. Even poor creatures amongst us have had seasons of uplifting and light and nearness. And thus when God's name—'I will be'—is proclaimed, our answers might be prompt: 'Amen, Lord, be what thou hast been! . . .'

2. But experience alone is not a sufficient guide, it needs to be supplemented by the thought of need. Merely to ask for yesterday back again might show a grave misunderstanding of to-day. For life does change its face, and brings conditions we had never dreamed of; and if we ask for nothing but what we have had, we may be like Arctic travellers pushing south into new zones of weather, but sticking obstinately to the furs which served them on the ice-fields. 'The God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob'—it is a glorious record; but to-day we are in the brick-fields, under the lash, our natures growing baser through base uses, whilst sullenness and revenge corrode our spirits. Some new gift is surely needed. Experience may assure us that God has much in store for men; but need, imperious and individual, must come in to teach us what to pray for.

This matching of hope with need is always clear in the temper of the Hebrew prophets. They were convinced that in God's fullness there was provision for every need which could arise, and therefore, in picturing the Coming One, they did not simply repeat the dreams and demands of those who had gone before. To-day has its rights as much as yesterday, they felt; and God, who cares for us and who sees the differences between day and day, will meet the new necessities. So whilst they all looked for a Coming One, they did not all conceive Him with the same features or the same offices. In days of misrule He was appealed to as the righteous Judge; in days of foreign oppression He was looked to as Conqueror and Deliverer; when the channels of communication were clogged, they conceived of Him as a Prophet like Moses, one of themselves. . . .

We must be not less bold in making our requests match our needs. God has not made all times or all men after one pattern. He might have fashioned creatures fairer or more gifted than we; but something in our peculiarity tempted Him, and we are here with needs and cravings all our own. 'The heart knows its own bitterness, and a stranger

intermeddleth not with its joy.' Even when we have companions in distress, each is yet conscious of something distinctive in his conditions; and therefore, if we are wise, we shall never be content with borrowed petitions which might be used alike by anybody. Rather we ought to say, 'Here, Lord, is this trouble which is making life hard for me, reveal Thyself in it for Thy name's sake. Give me, not anybody's grace, but that which meets my own condition.' This may sound audacious, but it is an audacity which the very name of God—'I will be'—encourages. . . .

3. But experience and need, even when taken together, do not exhaust the fullness of God, and we must call in *faith* to guide us in our prayer, for He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we ask or think.

Paul strains the resource of his vocabulary, inventing words, doing violence to grammar, heaping comparatives upon superlatives in order to express the amazements he had seen in Christ, but still the fact outgoes him. 'To me it was granted as a favour that among the nations I should proclaim the glad tidings of the untracked riches of Christ.' And Paul's Christ is our Christ also, so we are not meant to be hampered in our expectations. He who rightly knows the Lord is like one swimming in the mid-Atlantic, far beyond the fear of striking a hand against the shore of either coast. There is room in Christ for wide expansions, and therefore in thought and prayer we must always keep an ample margin. Much of God's wonder has reached us by report, and there is much which our urgent needs suggest; but beyond both there lie still mightier things, and in our petitions we must leave room for the unexpected. There are duties unattempted, promises unexplored, comforts unimagined, victories undreamed of, and thus, in its form, the redemptive Name is left vague and uncompleted. That He will be is declared, but *what* He will be is unexpressed. 'It is a great silence, with contents immeasurable, blessedness unspeakable; for what else can He be than God?' In good days and in evil, in work and in weakness, in prosperity and in fear—He will yet more fully declare Himself. For He, the Lord, has said, 'I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you.'

Brethren, having such a God we do not lose heart. In the name of our God we shake out our banners and we face the coming days with hope.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

God is Love.

'God is love.'—1 Jn $4^{8.16}$.

1. Every one seems to know what love means, though no one finds it easy to define it. Its distinctive element is a feeling which is described as affection, tenderness, or devotion. Like other feelings, it urges to action of some sort, and its joy passes into pain if it is prevented from finding practical outlets. The things which it seeks to do or to get done fall into two classes, one of which is marked by the absence of all thoughts of self, while the other involves very strong claims on behalf of the self. On the one hand, love is an impulse to give—to do everything in our power, and at whatever cost, which will promote the true well-being and happiness of those to whom we are linked by the bonds of the heart. On the other hand, it is an impulse to appropriate, to annex, retain, and secure in some effective fashion the presence and the responsive affection of those for whom it has learned to care. It is written that it is more blessed to give than to receive. The paradox of love is that it is equally concerned to enrich itself and to deny itself—that it is as imperious in its demand to possess as it is generous in its desire to bestow. The glory and the strength of the Christian religion is the brief creed that 'Christ is love.'

2. In Scripture the life of the family is used as yielding rich symbols of the love of God. The prophets of the Old Testament, and in particular Hosea, saw in the love of a deep-hearted husband for an erring wife a worthy image of the love of God for Israel, and also a clue to His dealings with His people. In the teaching of Jesus the name of father was preferred to that of husband and lord, doubtless because He desired to lay the emphasis on the love of God towards individuals, and the idea of fatherhood in the nature of the case is charged with more evident meaning for every member of the human family.

3. But even fatherhood and motherhood at their best fall short of a full reflection of the Divine love. It is when we look on the character and life of Jesus Christ that we are taught to say without reservation—he that hath seen Him hath seen the Father, hath looked into the heart of the Eternal, and divined the purposes that are rooted in His love. The love of Christ was a deep and constant

tenderness. Its intensity was shown in tears and prayers, in labours and sufferings, and last of all in the death of the Cross. It had the note of constancy — 'having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.' It was also so wide in its sweep that it could be called all-embracing. We observe next the manifold forms in which His love sought to utter itself by blessing and bestowing. His sympathy was as broad as the distress of the human lot, and it is written that He went about continually doing good. His beneficence took its chief guidance and direction from His knowledge that the worst element in the tragedy of human lives is sin, and that man's chiefest want is the need of God. The chief end of His ministry accordingly was to enrich men with spiritual blessing. But He did not make light of the secondary things which the human mind is inclined to reckon as the first. Hunger and weariness, sickness and infirmity, the anxieties of the fearful, the pangs of the sufferer, the desolation of the bereaved—all made their compelling appeal to His sympathy and their claim on the extraordinary powers which encircled, and which were at the behest of, the sinless Son of God. He at least touched every form of human sorrow, and did whatsoever a love might do which was utterly self-forgetting as well as holy and wise.

And further, the appropriating instinct of love asserted itself with startling peremptoriness in the mission of Jesus. He claimed the souls of men as in a real sense His peculiar possession. He desired to have them as His own by many ties—by trust in Himself and faith in His gospel, by a process of refashioning after His own likeness, by obedience to His laws, by subordination to His purposes, by preparation for the continuance of His work. No earthly tie was to be so strong as that which bound them to Him. No sacrifice was too great to be demanded for His sake and the gospel. He asked to be loved more than father and mother, and to be called not only their friend but their Master and Lord.[1]

4. But how may we be persuaded of this gospel that God is Love? Two main reasons are given in the Scripture. One is that it was convincingly proclaimed by God's gift of Christ—'He that spared not his own Son,' says St. Paul, 'but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?'

[1] W. P. Paterson, *In the Day of the Muster*, 116.

The second reason is that the love of God is a fact which can be experienced. George Bowen, in 'Love Revealed,' says: 'He takes extraordinary liberties with us. Believing in His love and having our own particular conception of what love is, we settle in our minds that a certain contingency can never by any possibility be allowed to come to pass. Against everything else we prepare—not against that. We feel that it would be an unpardonable outrage to His most holy nature to suppose for a moment that He should suffer that contingency to come to pass. And yet that is the very thing that He brings to pass. We had boasted of the love of Jesus among our neighbours and told them that He would not suffer our brother Lazarus to die, but would assuredly come and restore him to health; and lo! Lazarus dies and is buried, and it is much if our sense of the love of Jesus be not buried with him. He takes, what seem to us, frightful liberties with our sensibilities and with our trust.'

It might have been expected that the doctrine 'God is love' would commend itself to a class of favoured persons who had enjoyed the shelter and comfort of an earthly Paradise, and that it would break down with those who were made to taste the bitterness of human experience. But it has not been so. The chief witnesses to the truth have been those who, to all outward appearance, had least reason for believing it. The doctrine of the love of God is our inheritance from Him who was spoken of as a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, who endured the unspeakable agony and shame of the death upon the Cross, and who said in the last agony, 'Father, into thy hand I commend my spirit.' The doctrine of the love of God passed on to St. Paul who, after making mention that he had endured every form of suffering that springs from the seeming cruelty of the order of things, as well as of man's inhumanity to man, could fling out the confident challenge, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? The same experience has been repeated in later times by many of the greatest sufferers, who have known, not only that God loveth though He chasteneth, but also that He chasteneth because He loveth. It is possible for most of us to find enough in our experience to warrant us in believing that we have to do with a loving God; and if we make an initial venture of faith, and proceed on the theory that we are embraced in His loving purpose, the theory

will be found to stand the test of facts, and our faith will grow to more and more.

5. 'We ought to love one another.' Let us not forget there is no proof of the love of God more powerful and convincing than to see it mirrored in a noble human life. 'I remember once,' says Dr. Mackintosh Mackay,[1] 'walking on the banks of a broad, and at that point a beautiful canal. The trees rose high on the opposite bank, and as it was a quiet winter's day, they were exquisitely reflected in the still water. It was wonderful and beautiful to see how perfect the reflection was. It was a "double picture, tree and shadow." But what was even more striking was this; the shadow was more beautiful than the tree. Perhaps because it was winter. The naked branches had not put on their summer glory, and their delicate traceries were all the more beautifully silhouetted in the watery mirror at my feet. At all events it was so. The reflection was more impressive than the reality.

'As I was musing over it, an old text came into my mind, "We all, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image." This is winter time with Jesus! He is not manifest yet. "Our Lord is now rejected and by the world unknown." Preaching often leaves a dull impression on the gospel-hardened hearer. Even the Holy Sacrament too often leaves us little impressed. But there is one thing that never fails to tell on the heart. It is to see the love of God in Christ reflected in a life that has been made beautiful by its image imprinted there.'

And all who dwell in love dwell in God. 'If we love one another, God abideth in us.' Love's indwelling is God's indwelling. This is William Blake's thought in the poem 'The Divine Image':

To Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,
All pray in their distress,
And to these virtues of delight
Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,
Is God our Father dear;
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,
Is man, his child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart;
Pity, a human face;
And Love, the human form divine;
And Peace, the human dress.

Then every man, of every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine:
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.

And all must love the human form,
In heathen, Turk, or Jew,
Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell,
There God is dwelling too.

[1] *Words of This Life*, 105.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Perils of the Middle Passage.

'O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years,
In the midst of the years make it known.'—Hab 3^2.

A good many scholars deny that this beautiful lyric was written by Habakkuk at all. They say that it is post-exilic, while Habakkuk is supposed to have lived and prophesied at a time when the kingdom of Judah was still standing. We will not go into the question of authorship, nor into the question of the circumstances under which the song was written. In the text the 'midst of the years' refers to the middle time of a nation's history. Here we are not going to apply it to that, but to the middle time of the individual life, treating the text as a prayer which those in the middle passage of life may well offer for themselves: 'O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make it known.'

Ministers are continually preaching sermons to the young. Every Sunday most of us take care to speak a few words to the children. Sometimes we try to speak words of comfort and good hope to the old. But sermons to the 'middle-aged' are few and far between.

And yet the middle-aged form the largest element in our congregations, and of all the people who need sympathy and prayer, the people in the 'middle passage' need it most. Possibly the dangers that beset youth are the more obvious and dramatic, and that is very likely why preachers are so constantly preaching special sermons to the young. The dangers that beset the middle-aged are more secret and subtle, and not so manifestly shameful, but they are none the less fatal to the soul, and they are all the more perilous because they work so secretly and so insidiously. Our most deadly foe is not the Knight of the Morning Star, but the Knight of the Noonday Sun.

The sin our Lord appeared to fear the most was the sin of avarice. It has been often remarked that Christ did not fear sins of passion half so much as He did the love of gain. Now avarice is not a sin of youth but of middle life. The ghastliest failures in the New Testament were the failures of men in middle life. Take two illustrations. Judas apparently had come through the perils of youth unscathed. He had, as men say, no stain upon his character; but somehow and somewhen he allowed the love of money and the love of power to enter into his heart. And when he saw that his Lord would gratify neither of them, when he saw his discipleship was going to bring him neither wealth nor great place, he committed the crime of history, and sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver. It was a tragic shipwreck Judas made of his life.

And the same thing may be said of Demas. Demas was no longer a young man; he had been for some years a fellow-labourer with the Apostle Paul. He had come off victor over the Knight of the Morning Star, but he collapsed before the attack of the Knight of the Noonday Sun. 'Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.'

What are the special dangers of the middle passage?

1. *Loss of Idealism.*—Youth is a time when we dream dreams and see visions. 'Wait till I'm a man,' J. M. Barrie as a small boy used to say to his mother, 'and you shall lie on feathers.' As a mere boy he dreamed of conquering the world and winning comfort for her he loved the best. But it is not every man that succeeds as Barrie did. Most of us find the conquest of the world a harder thing than we thought. The ideals we cherished prove hard of realization. And so it comes about that by the time we have reached the midst of our years many of us have given up our dreams. We abandon our quests; we surrender our ideals; we 'thicken on our lees.'

The Pegasus of youth has become a cab-horse by middle-age. 'He was born a man and died a grocer' is the bitter and biting epitaph written on a grave-stone in a Paris churchyard. And the same tragic deterioration has taken place in many of us. We began by being men—with outlook and vision and broad horizons, and we have ended by being grocers, drapers, lawyers, mechanics. We started by resolving we were going to live, and now we are content with making a living. People may talk of this as worldly wisdom, but it is really the death of the soul.

2. *Loss of Faith.*—And another peril of the middle period is that of loss of faith, born of the disillusionments and disappointments of which life is full. Childhood is a happy time, because it is such a trustful time. The child has a sort of instinctive faith in the goodness of everybody. He looks at every one through the beautiful spectacles of his own guileless and innocent soul. And old age again, while not so innocently trustful as childhood, usually becomes mellow and gentle in judgment. Taught by experience, the old judge leniently and speak kindly. Knowing all, they are almost ready to forgive all. But in between childhood and old age comes the middle period, full of disappointment and disillusionment, when men are apt to become hard and cynical and scornful to the ruin of their soul.

For it must be admitted that life is full of disappointment and disillusionment. The youth, carefully guarded in his country home, scarcely knows what life is or what human nature is. But he finds it out when he is cast on his own resources, and the finding out not unusually embitters a man for life. He finds, for instance, that men are not always honourable and true. He finds business life full of all sorts of crooked ways. He finds men, whom he regarded as his friends, are not above tricking him and over-reaching him. And life is full of that sort of thing. And it shatters faith in human nature. It makes men bitter, cynical, scornful.

You can see this cynical and scornful temper reproduced in the literature of our day. It is the disillusioned, middle-aged view of the world that modern literature takes. It is a bitter, blear-eyed, faithless view to take. And, at bottom, it is as false as it is faithless. It is the cynicism of the disillusioned. It is the peculiar peril of middle life. Cynicism always argues loss of faith. And when a man has lost faith in his fellows he is well on the way to losing faith in God. And when faith is lost and honour dies the man is dead.

3. *Loss of the Eternal.*—And another peril of middle life is this—the loss of the sense of the eternal. There are things incident to the middle period of life that tend to make us lay up treasure on earth and forget all about the treasure in heaven. In childhood, on the other hand, the spiritual

and eternal seem strangely near. Heaven, God, the white-robed angels are wonderfully real and near to the child. And when old age comes, once again eternal things become vivid and clear. A man finds that he has to 'slow down' and 'slacken off.' His powers are not what once they were; and the mere decay of strength reminds him that this is not his rest.

And then, further, as a man lives to get old, he finds that one by one his friends and acquaintances are removed from his side. As he follows one after the other to the grave, he finds it increasingly difficult to forget eternity. The danger of forgetting the unseen and eternal is the special and peculiar peril of the middle period. As we get on to middle-age responsibilities accumulate, and the time of leisure becomes less and less. We become so engrossed and absorbed in the demands of business that we have scarcely time to think of anything else. And this is specially true in these days of fierce competition.

The mere pressure of life brings this peril with it—the peril of materializing life and starving the soul. But that is not all. This urgent, insistent world tends not only to engross our time, it tends also to absorb our souls. In the fierce struggle for bread-and-butter we begin to think that bread-and-butter is the only thing worth having. Immersed in the world as we are, we begin to think the world's prizes are the only prizes worth winning. We lay all the stress upon 'goods.' We pay no heed to the eternal riches. That is the great peril of middle life—materialism. It was by a sure instinct that John Bunyan set Vanity Fair about midway in Christian's journey.

And the corroding materialism of middle-age is more deadly to the soul than the hot passions of youth. It is more deadly, because its peril is not recognized and no shame is attached to it. Sins of passion Society has agreed to brand as shameful, and that very brand of shame attached to them acts as a warning against them. But love of the world, absorption in the pursuit of its wealth and power is reckoned no disgrace. It rather counts to a man's credit, and therein lies its deadlier menace.

That is why this prayer of Habakkuk's is one those of us who are in the middle period need perpetually to offer: 'O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years; in the midst of the years make it known.' God alone, a vivid sense of God, can deliver us from stagnation and cynicism and love of the world. That is why those of us who are in the very midst of life's responsibilities, who feel the pressure of its crowding cares, who are plunged into the very vortex of its business, need to snatch at every opportunity of bringing ourselves face to face with God. Where there is no vision the people perish. But if only we make the Most High our habitation we need not be afraid of the arrow that flieth by day, nor of the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor of the destruction that wasteth at noonday.[1]

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Weights of God.

'By him actions are weighed.'—1 Sam 2^3.

The words in the R.V. margin are 'Though actions be not weighed (by God).' The two translations, then, are seemingly contradictory. But there is really no contradictory thought involved. It is a mere matter of emphasis.

Hannah's God discriminates accurately. He weighs. He knows to the nicety of a balance the intrinsic value of human conduct, and the whole value or moral worth of a given human life. The real worth of all human action He weighs. But so too does the world. The world's biggest boast is this very accomplishment. The world has been busy at its work in Elkanah's home for these long years, and now it flatters itself that it knows accurately the value and worth of every soul under his roof. Elkanah himself, a highly estimable citizen, who goes most regularly once a year to Shiloh, and owes no man anything. Peninnah, his wife, princess of house-wives and best of mothers, she is weighed, approved of, and esteemed as an ideal mother in Israel—applauded when she does the scantiest right, and of what wrong and evil there may be in her heart, would it not be most uncharitable to take notice? But when the world sees Hannah the despised in tears, it regards her as a useless, silly woman; and when it finds her shaken, with broken heart, kneeling in the temple of the Lord her God, she is drunk with wine, it says. The world is for ever busy weighing human beings. It sees floating accidental surface things which it calls actions, and it judges them; but such actions God weighs not. God weighs

[1] J. D. Jones, *The Gospel of the Sovereignty*, 301.

actions only so far as they represent the real heart-worship of a man. He looks not to the appearance of the countenance, nor to the mere externals of actions. Its springs—these alone are of interest to Him, and in terms of these only does He measure all human conduct.[1]

1. There are many paradoxes in the Christian life, and the first is that in the start of it we must not rely on our actions. Mercy, not merit. Dr. Rendel Harris in his new book 'As Pants the Hart' uses this illustration. 'It is recorded that when Raphael died, the picture of the Transfiguration which now hangs in the Vatican was carried before his bier—as much as to say, "The man who is coming after, is the man who painted this." Now it is not only the picture of largest dimensions among all those he ever painted, but it is also the grandest in its sublimity of conception and in its exquisite execution. Make way for Raphael! Here comes the artist of the Transfiguration: he rests from his labours, and his works do precede him!

'Had it really been possible, however, for the great work of art to precede the great artist in his exodus to the unseen, we can imagine that objections might have been raised. The watchers at the celestial gates might have protested that they desired to see the man first, and the picture afterwards: and their objection would have been sustained on Evangelical grounds. They might have explained that they were bound by the rule, "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me," and that, consequently, neither Raphael nor any other artist can come to the Father by Raphael. Then we hear St. Peter from the gate inquiring what all the pother is about over this latest funeral. "What is it? A picture?" "Yes, a very big picture." "Too big for this narrow gate," says St. Peter, "but let me see it. The Transfiguration—and very well sketched too, with the portraits as if from life. My own portrait, in a state of slumber: yes, I was asleep part of the time, and only half-awake the rest of the time. But tell me, what about yourself? Have you any right on this holy mountain? You can paint the Transfiguration—but have you yourself been transfigured? Take away the picture and talk to us of the reality, Signor Sanzio." Plainly the picture might block the artist's way, and all the more effectively because it was so big.'

2. What weighs heavy in God's scale, then, is 'personality, not achievement.' We are apt to measure things by their size and not by their weight. We too often prefer the things which make the most show. We admire big things, and we are not deeply concerned with their essential content. And so we appreciate the Pharisee's loud-sounding offering more than the widow's mite. But God weighs our offerings in His own spiritual scales, to see what spiritual significance there is in them. He weighs our money-gifts to ascertain their weight of sacrifice. And so it comes to pass that the widow's mite wins His praise rather than the rich man's abundance. He weighs our prayers to see what weight of holy desire there is in them. Prayers may be very long and very empty, and in the scales of God they are as light as the lightest chaff. In our prayers it is desire that weighs heavily, and penitence, and humility, and serious purpose of amendment. In our intercessions it is our self-forgetfulness that wins the favour of the Lord—our sacrifice in thoughtfulness, our true sympathy, the burden of our brother's need.

It is the spiritual and the sacrificial which truly count in all things. Without these everything is light as vanity, however imposing the display it makes in the eyes of the world.

'Thou didst well, it was in thine heart.' Here is the Lord weighing an inner desire. David yearns to build a temple, and the yearning is not to be realized. But the gracious Lord puts the longing into His scales, and it is found to have the weight of a perfected act. God does not wait for material creations, and then measure the value of our life by visible results. Our hungers are the vital part of our character, and a discerning judgment will estimate their force and intensity. 'Blessed are they that hunger!' God weighs the inner things, the yearnings, the prayings, and the dreams. We measure only finished accomplishments. We revel in the dimensions of the temple which is built. God weighs the desire for a temple that was never built, and in His gracious judgment it has all the solidity of a temple made with hands.[2]

[1] K. A. Macleay, *The Never Changing Creed*, 99.

[2] J. H. Jowett, *The Eagle Life*, 44.