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In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

Rising Time.[1]

'It is high time for you to awake out of sleep.'—Ro 13^{11} (R.V.).

So we're all back again, you and I, making a new start! Holidays are over; you're at school again, are in a new class, perhaps have a new teacher, certainly are getting new books. For every time you come home you keep shouting for Mother to tell her you must get down town for yet another couple, till how you are to carry them all I can't see. Well, it's a fine thing a new start. Oh, I know you are sorry that the holidays are over, would love to have another day or two at the deep pool up the burn where the big thumper is you nearly caught, yet didn't. It makes you quite cross to think of him flicking his tail yonder still and your rod put away! And you could do with another round over the course. Fancy them playing to-morrow across the stream at the 6th, the lucky beggars, and you here far away! Well, that's all done for you and me. And yet it's a fine thing a new start, there is something thrilly and exciting about it. It's like a football match just after the kick-off, when it's really begun and anything may happen now; or like being lined up for a race, leaning forward tense and eager with your teeth set and your fists clenched, waiting for the pistol's crack. Yes, it's fine. Partly because it gives us a new chance. Perhaps we haven't been doing extra well, and this comes along like the second innings in a cricket match. Do you remember when you played in a real match how you talked and talked about it, and Mother had to go along to watch you, and the very first ball—an easy one too—you spooned up softly and had to trail away back for a blob? How silly you felt! But all your side were quickly trundled out, and so you got a second innings, and when you went in again you said to yourself, 'I'll just have to do something this time.' And you did knock them about a bit. Or, it's like the change of ends at half-time at football. I remember seeing Scotland playing Wales, oh, heaps of years ago (no, not quite before the Norman Conquest, but just about that time), and in the first half Scotland could do nothing right, and Wales scored time on time, and every one thought it was all over. But after change of ends something happened; it wasn't the wind, for there was no wind, and it wasn't the ground, for it was quite level; but somehow they came again and scored all kinds of ways, and ran out easy winners, with the crowd shouting themselves hoarse over a side that seemed clean beaten but rallied with a new chance.

And you are feeling that too. The exercises you have put in so far this term have been beautiful. Because you're still at the first pages of the new books. And you're trying hard. Yes, it's a fine thing a new start. So let us see we make a good one, and stick to it, and keep it up. For up till now parts of us have been asleep. That's what has been wrong. The other day Mother came up in the morning when you were dreadfully drowsy, and said, 'You've been sleeping for ten hours (or twelve hours was it?), surely that's enough.' Ten hours! Why parts of you have been fast asleep for years and years and years! Your brain perhaps. You remember, in *Alice in Wonderland*, how annoyed the March hare and the mad hatter got with the dormouse because at the tea-party it was always falling over. It would begin to speak and trail and stop. Fast asleep again! Or they would start talking to it, and before they got well begun over it would go, till they took and stuck it head first in the teapot to waken it up! That's what your teacher would like to do with you! For your brain is always falling fast asleep, won't waken up. She tells you something, and you forget about it; she makes it plainer and you aren't attending. She tries once more and you let it slip as soon as heard. Your brain's asleep. But you can waken it. There was once a snail in the British Museum that had been there for long enough, with a ticket and under a glass case; and one day suddenly it began to crawl about, ticket and all! It had wakened up at last. And there was another, so a wise man tells us, that wakened up to find that all its sisters and brothers and friends, all snails of that kind were dead long ago, and it was left alone! But it did waken in the end. And so it is with flowers. All over Scotland there are banks of foxgloves here and there, where none ever used to be before. And they say

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

it's because the woods were cut during the war and the seeds in the soil that couldn't spring up with the trees above them shutting out the sunshine from them, seeds that no one knew were there, because they had been lying asleep for years and years and years, have taken their chance now and wakened up, for all the trees are gone. And over in France at one place they have found the ground all covered with a flower that doesn't grow in France, only in Italy. How is it there? Well, they remembered that the Romans once had a camp just there long ago. Perhaps they brought the seeds with them somehow. But it's so long since they were there, thousands of years. And then they called to mind another thing, that there had always been woods there, and they were cut, and others sprang up slowly and then they were cut, and this, time after time; and every time, they think, that the seeds got their chance they wakened up and flowered and sowed themselves, till the trees got too high for them again, and they fell asleep and waited. Yes, but they were only sleeping and not dead; look, they have wakened up again once more, are flowering yonder, everywhere! And your brain isn't dead; it's only sleeping. But surely it is high time you were rousing it. Cut down the laziness, and the I-can't-be-bothered-ness, and the Oh-I-don't-care-ness, and give it a new start, and it too will waken up and flower.

And there are other bits of us that need wakening too. You know what an alarm clock is, how it goes off with a whiz and a bang. I once knew one that used to go on playing 'Home Sweet Home' until the sleepiest person couldn't stand it, but had to get up and stop it, or go off his head! And we've a horrid one, that no nice mind could have thought out, and that no very nice mind, so I think, would have wanted to buy! It's a real terror, so they tell me. But I never hear it, sleep on through it all! And God gave us a splendid alarm clock. It too goes off with a whir and a bang; it cries out 'Stop!' and 'Don't!' quite loud and clear. But do you ever hear it? Or are you far too sleepy? The other day when you told a bit of a tarrididdle it cried out to you, that conscience of yours, yet you never seemed to notice. The other night when you didn't go off to bed as soon as you had promised Mother that you would, but waited for another round, and then one more, you never heard it whirring all the time. We're fast asleep that bit of us, or at least terribly drowsy. That is what's been wrong and we must waken up. For it's high time.

And there's one more part still, and that is our soul. The brain is the bit we think with, but the soul is the part that we are nice with, and good with, and unselfish with, and all the splendid things. And how is your soul? Mine is just dreadfully sleepy. We get so many chances, don't we, of being kind and big-hearted and thoughtful for others, and we just let them slip. There's that new boy, feeling very out of it, been in your class for some weeks now, and you never noticed that you might be decent to him. And so in a dozen things. We're fast asleep, the soul bit of us, and we must waken up. Well, you know it's not one bit of good, when Mother comes in in the morning, to say I'll be up in a minute. Long before the minute's over you are snoring. No, no, there is no way except making a leap for it clean out of bed! And so, off with clothes and jump for it! Let's make a good new start, and make it now, and keep it up! For indeed the gong's been going a long while, and it's past rising time. We'll need to hurry, can't put off one second more.

The Field of the Cloth of Gold.[1]

'Thou crownest the year with thy goodness.'—Ps 65^{11}.

Some years ago I was walking with friends in the north of France. It was Easter Monday. We were in the open country, not even a village was in sight, only a few widely separated farmhouses. All around us were fields, not divided by hedges as they are in England, and mostly of bare brown earth. 'We are on historic ground,' said one of my companions, 'this was the site of the Field of the Cloth of Gold.'

At once we thought of the history lessons at school. Some of you who are good at examinations may remember that in the year 1520 Henry VIII. crossed over to France to meet the French king. A great number of guests were present, many 'lords and ladies gay.' The purpose of the kings was to strengthen the friendship between their two countries, but their chief concern seemed to be who should spend the most money, and outdo each other in splendour. So magnificent were the decorations, and the robes of the royal families and their guests, that the event is known in history as the 'Field of the Cloth of Gold.'

[1] By the Reverend Robert A. Cock, Rhondda.

I expect most of you girls and boys, when reading this story of Henry VIII., asked the same question that the poet Southey makes little Peterkin ask his grandfather about the Battle of Blenheim: 'What good came of it at last?' and got the same answer, 'Why, that I cannot tell!'

On several occasions during the next six months I saw that field and each time it had changed its appearance. On my last visit the brown acres were covered with yellow wheat, and to quote from a beautiful harvest hymn:

> The rich autumnal glory
> Decked the fields in Cloth of Gold.

What a difference between the two scenes.

In 1520 this field of Picardy was covered with tents. Kings were there wearing their crowns, and lords and ladies in their many coloured robes and attended by gorgeous retinues. But God's field of the Cloth of Gold—the cornfield—is much more wonderful, beautiful, and useful. He is there, the King, in the midst of it all, for without Him there could be no harvest. Does the Psalmist not say that it is God who prepares the corn and crowns the year with His goodness, so the harvest is produced by Him. Of course He has a large number of servants to work for Him. There are the men who prepare the soil by removing the stones and weeds, the ploughmen, sowers, and reapers. Besides the work of those helpers there is that done by the sun and moon, wind, rain, and dew; and even by the frost and snow, for without their help and that of the powers in the soil there can be no harvest.

Each grain of wheat has its tent—the husk you remove when you rub the ears of corn between your hands. I imagine some of you children saying, we understand that the King, His servants, and tents are on the harvest field, but where is the crown? Our text gives the answer. The harvest is the crown!

God's goodness comes to us at all times during the year, but when the harvest is ripe, that, says the Psalmist, is God placing the crown on His work—Nature's coronation.

No good came from the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520—it was a waste of time and money. In God's Golden Field there is no waste, and great good comes by means of it, because it is one of His ways of answering our prayer—'Give us this day our daily bread.' There has been no Field of the Cloth of Gold such as Henry and Francis arranged since 1520, but up to that time and every year since in every part of the world God's 'Golden Fields' are found, for every year is crowned with His goodness.

The Christian Year.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Seeing the Invisible.

'And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.'—2 K 6^{17}.

1. *Faith is* essentially *a special kind of seeing*, and it is certainly according to reason to believe that which we see. Just as the microscope enables us to see animalculæ, the telescope stars, and the spectroscope chemical elements; so the senses enable us to see the facts of the material world, reasoning discloses the meaning and relation of these and other facts, and faith perceives spiritual facts as directly and as trustworthily as the senses perceive their own different objects. But reason, so far from contradicting, really includes all three processes. To believe what we really perceive is surely reasonable, whether we perceive it through a brass tube or through spiritual vision. There is no real contradiction anywhere. It is simply a matter of eyes trained and open, and proper methods for the particular kind of vision desired.

2. We may now pass to the momentous question, *What is there for faith to see?* Emerson has written, 'Crossing a bare common, in snow puddles, at twilight, under a clouded sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrence of special good fortune, I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration. I have been glad even to the brink of tears.' In this remarkable experience there may, or may not, have been the consciousness of detailed belief in definite spiritual facts, but there certainly is the strong assurance of a spiritual world everywhere pressing in upon us on our way through this material world—a spiritual world that has power to change the experience of life and enrich it with higher meanings until it becomes a new world altogether.

The text presents a typical instance of such revelation, expressed in brilliantly picturesque incident. Just at the moment when the material world was closing in upon him, with all the pomp and circumstance of Oriental warfare, Gehazi sud-

denly perceived a spiritual guard that was more than a match for the forces of the enemy.

3. What can we gather from the story as to the *conditions of faith's vision*? It seems to have something to do with companionship. Had it not been for Elisha, there would have been little chance of Gehazi's seeing the spiritual guard upon the hill. But a man like Elisha is a centre of very strange and potent forces, and those whose good fortune it is to overhear the prayers of such a man may expect to see strange visions. If a man's faith be dim or feeble, it is wise for him to cultivate the friendship of those who are familiar with the spiritual world. They who have the freedom of that world are a generous race, and love to lead their friends across its border. Their mastery of spiritual forces is employed oftener for the sake of others than for themselves. Even books, in which we have high converse with the spirits of the authors, will help us in this quest.

Yet, after all that is said, it remains true that in faith we have to see with our own eyes and not with those of even the dearest friend or most revered teacher. These can but lead us to the viewpoint, but we must see for ourselves and not by another's vision. Borrowed faith is useless in any great emergency, and John Bunyan was never better advised than when his friend, Mr. Gifford, counselled him to 'take no truth upon trust.' The great demand of life is for each man to be himself, and that maxim applies as fully to faith as it does to character.

What, then, is the condition of faith which a man must fulfil within himself? What are the moral grounds of faith? We ask that question anxiously, and remember such exacting precepts as that of Jesus when He said, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' But when we turn back to the story we find that this man Gehazi was rather a poor character. Frankly, we may all be profoundly thankful for Gehazi's delinquencies. They encourage us to believe that faith is not the preserve of a moral aristocracy, nor its vision the exclusive privilege of spiritual genius. It cannot even be claimed for the prophet's servant that he was in any deep sympathy with spiritual things.

One thing only is manifest, and that is the strength of his interest and desire. It was a moment of mortal danger, and, like many another man, he turned to spiritual aid as a last resort, when there was nothing else to turn to. Fortunately for most of us, it would seem that even that is enough. The prodigal had spent all, and was at the lowest bottom of his fortunes, when he turned to the memory of his father's house. It is not a noble way of finding deliverance, but it is an effective one, and any way is better than not finding it at all.[1]

4. The *consequence of this vision* is that courage is begotten. Think of the steadfast courage and triumphant devotion of those who have dwelt in the vision of the unseen. The timid, the wavering, and the doubting are not found within their ranks. The mountain to be climbed may seem to be dark and grim, but to the eye of their spirit it flames with light. The warrior may appear to be defenceless against his foes, but the eye of their spirit discerns the chariots of fire that circle him round. It is written of Moses that 'he endured as seeing him who is invisible,' or, as Dr. Moffatt translates it, 'Like one who saw the King invisible, he never flinched.' And when we read the story of those who have led humanity on with dauntless courage and unwavering faith and quenchless hope, we find that they all merit the same epitaph—'They saw the King invisible, and never flinched.' Walking in the light of the vision they cried to their comrades, 'Fear not,' and themselves were unafraid.[2]

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

God's Failures.

'And Jesus answering said, Were not the ten cleansed? but where are the nine? Were there none found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger?'—Lk $17^{17f.}$.

The strangest feature of this incident is our Lord's unprotesting acceptance of the situation. One alone returns, while nine go their ungrateful way: and He leaves it there. And, as Jesus did, God manifestly does every day. He sets right no visible defection by outward correction, and works no change of heart or direction of will by miraculous power. Day by day He makes His appeal of goodness; and when that fails, He accepts failure. This is the problem we have to consider.

1. God fails with signal mercies chiefly because He fails with the common experiences.

Even as an isolated lapse of an otherwise grateful humanity, this incident would be a painful revelation of the possibilities of human nature. Yet this ingratitude was no unique experience for Jesus, and

[1] J. Kelman, *Salted with Fire*, 119 ff.

[2] H. M. Hughes, *Faith and Progress*, 74.

He does not seem to have thought it exceptional in God's experience of His children.

Personal application to ourselves we should all resent. We may have been blind to many blessings when they were veiled by familiarity or by slow realization, but is it conceivable that a deliverance, impressive by its greatness, its suddenness, its transforming effect, would not stir our hearts to their depths?

But while we may reasonably be confident of showing better manners, can we be equally sure of feeling deeper gratitude? Before we can be quite sure that in our inmost heart it would be otherwise with us, try to imagine the actual thoughts of these Jews. As disfigurement fell from their faces, and renewed vigour surged through their veins, and hope soared aloft from its grave, they saw themselves once again amid all the interests, activities, and ambitions of their old lives. But, at the thought of home, consider how it would flash upon them that their old life might not be waiting. At the thought everything would be blotted from their minds except the need of haste to claim their place in the land of the living before time had wholly filled it with the interests of others.

If self-regard rightly holds the place they gave it, they had reason for attending to business first and gratitude afterwards. Are we sure that it is the place we think wrong? A failure which springs from blindness to life's constant possibilities can be escaped only by those for whom life is no routine pursuit of self-regarding ends.

Nor need we suppose a very poor type of self-regard, or thoughts mean and wholly material. Self-regarding possession is not necessarily selfish possession. With restoration to life and hope the love of wife and child would surge up in their hearts anew, and an immense desire would flame before each one to witness the joy in his home as he came back to it from his 'charnel cave.' And, around their own households, they would see the homesteads of their neighbours and the cheerful, bustling, friendly world in which they might once again play their part.

If there is to be a return to God in great deliverances there must be a habitual returning to Him to give glory for the common mercies, not as a mere matter of custom or form, but as the impulse of heartfelt gratitude.

Think of the abiding wonder of earth and air, and 'the human face divine,' and home and kindred, and the joy of living and thought and aspiration, and of the greatest marvel of all, that for us they are common and continuous. If, for this, we have never returned to give glory to God, is it not a fond illusion to suppose that any deliverance in the world would be signal enough to stir our gratitude, or any experience poignant enough to 'stab our spirits broad awake'?

2. God fails with life because He fails with the common religion.

All the nine who went away were Jews; the only one who returned was a Samaritan. The position of the Jew in religion was truly privileged. As soon as these Jews heard the injunction, 'Go, shew yourselves to the priest,' all their pride of religious caste blazed up in them. They did exactly what Jesus told them to do. In spite of their hurry to go home, they would go round about by the road of ceremonial purification. They obeyed to the letter, but it was the letter which the prompting of true gratitude made the Samaritan disregard.

Even with this supreme manifestation of Himself, God may fail. Jesus Himself can be turned from being a vision to our own insight, an inspiration to our own devotion, an appeal to our own hearts, a victory for our own lives, into the supreme sanction of formulas, the supreme enslavement to institutions, the supreme imposition of rules and ceremonies.

3. God fails with religion because He fails with the common intercourse.

While the Jews obeyed the letter, the Samaritan disobeyed, being prompted of his own heart and led by the spirit which makes alive. As he turned, they could not fail to see him; and, as he shouted his praise, they could not fail to hear him. But from the moment they were healed, the one thought of his companions was how he might henceforth be to them an utter stranger. And that shows what thoughts had been associated with him all the time.

Here now was a providential way of escape, without harsh explanation or painful parting. The Samaritan had turned back, and the whole affair could be settled simply by hurrying on.

Suppose, instead, that he had become their first care, that no prejudice could have come between them any more and no change have divided their fellowship, and we cannot imagine them failing to see the Father in their Deliverer. But their haste to be rid of the Samaritan showed that he was associated in their minds only with sad and bitter

thoughts, thoughts to be escaped, not cherished. In the last resort, God failed with all He appointed both of distress and of deliverance, because He failed with the ministry of this Samaritan.

Books, even the Bible, and forms of worship, even the highest, and organized societies, even the purest, are not religion, but only aids to religion. To receive the Lord, we must receive those He sends; to visit Him, we must visit His sick and captive disciples. Above all, to know freely His mind and what it reveals of the perfection of our Father in Heaven, we must deal as He does, not only with the imperfect, but with the unthankful and evil.

4. Jesus constantly accepted the verdict of man's ingratitude, yet He never was in any way discouraged by it. He went on as before, revealing the Father, pleading by word and deed, giving Himself unreservedly for those who rejected Him, living for them, and, in the end, dying for them.

That death, commending God's love to us while we were yet sinners, is the highest manifestation of the heart of God this world affords; and we may not rashly assume that there could be anything, even in another life, which could set it in a clearer light.

A benefit unacknowledged is so often turned to bitterness that we can easily imagine the nine among those who shouted loudest 'Crucify him! Crucify him!' to the Master. But what if we were to think of them as among those who on the Day of Pentecost were pricked in their hearts, and who cried out to the disciples as they had never done to the Master, 'Brethren, what shall we do?' and all because the appeal, which, though it had made them bitter, they never could live down, was just the memory of their benefactor sorrowful but unremonstrating! And when shall we say that possibility is exhausted?

At all events this is the only kind of success with which God will be satisfied. On it He stakes everything, and, till He wins it, He is content to accept failure without any thought of replacing it by any form of compelling assent.[1]

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Sin of Worry.

'Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.'—Mt 6^{31}.

Persons proceed to base strange theses upon this command. As, that Jesus decries thrift; or that He denounces a sane anxiety and forethought in circumstances of stress; or even that He had no sympathy with working men, who, through lack of private means and the possibility of unemployment, require to take a good deal of thought for the morrow.

Of course, this is the apotheosis of absurdity in interpretation. To insure either your life, or your son's life, to arrange for a small something to fall in at sixty-five, or to be a member of a Friendly Society, is manifestly sane. And that which is sane is not, as a rule, the contradictory of the teaching of Scripture.

It is a case of mistranslation. The Revised Version annihilates the difficulty. In the Revised Version we read, *Be not anxious about the morrow.* Indeed, quite a number of our perplexities vanish under the touch of the revisers. In the Greek of Mt 6^{34} and Ph 4^{6}, the word is μεριμνήσητε, which is derived from μέριμνα, a care, which again comes from μέρος, a part or division. Therefore the text runs, Be not care*ful* (full of care) about to-morrow, or, better still, *Be not distracted about to-morrow.*

The fact is, that in this epigrammatic set of sayings, Jesus is attacking a particular type of life-cowardice, which is displayed at least as definitely by those who have much as by those who have little or nothing. He is suggesting a remedy for it, and is teaching the reasonableness, through faith, of adopting that remedy.

It is the case that the future, at a time, makes us all scared, and thus affects our present. When the future is playing that trick with us, Jesus tells us to dwell in the present—that is to say, in the present duty, or in the present possible sphere of activity—and leave agitatings on that which we cannot for the moment, or perhaps for ever, affect. We are to do our best with that which is now before us, and leave the rest to God. It is most reasonable so to do. For the future (which we cannot affect) is in the hands of a Father; and a Father may be trusted for good.

1. If we are to understand these words of Christ, we must first appreciate the mood against which He is implicitly inveighing. It is very queer how differently many of us eye the future from the past. Some kindly hand veils the sunless days of long ago. Life, as most of us look back on it, looks wondrous good to have lived. But when we turn our eyes forwards, the view is strangely altered. Over all there is the veil of the unknown, and such dim

[1] J. Oman, *The Paradox of the World*, 139 ff.

shapes as appear faintly through it are curiously alarming. While most of us would reject the first portion of the utterance of Ferishtah's pupil, many of us, in some moods, would assent to the second :

. . . Life, from birth to death,
Means—either looking back on harm escaped,
Or looking forward to that harm's return
With tenfold power of harming. Black, not White,
Never the whole consummate quietude
Life should be, troubled by no fear !

What is it which causes the fear ?

In the first place there is *the certainty of temptation.* We can look back on 'harm escaped' and harm not escaped in this region. And alas ! we know that the most potent of the soul's enemies is not yet dead. Even those promptings to wrong which we thought we had beneath our feet raise their snaky heads again within us. So far, we have escaped from the worse condemnations. But life is, in Stevenson's phrase, 'always a field of battle, never a bed of roses.' The old struggle has to go on. For the moment there is safety. We stand on a little isle of security. But before us there is the shadow of continual strife ; years of it ; new forms of it ; strange, testing battles.

Further, there is *the sheer burden of work.* Now, this must come very differently to different men, according to temperament and according to the type of their work. But in all cases, if the far view be taken, there must at times be a sense of its burden.

Then there is *the certainty of what Jesus frankly calls 'evil.'* Monetary anxiety will come ; business perplexities ; family troubles ; failure in many enterprises ; sickness ; and at the end, death. Some of these are certain ; all are probable. Slowly they are crowding round men as they advance through life. At a stage soon reached, the exhilarations are dead. Thereafter, he may have some joy, but he is certain of much sorrow. What wonder that, as the facts of the future touch the imagination, there is a most definite, and most undesirable, taking of thought for that gloomy morrow ? And all this attitude is greatly emphasized by temperament. Some are born expecting much. Others expect little from the beginning ; and bitterly sometimes they tell us that they are not disappointed. To them the future is a menace ; and inevitably the thought of it impoverishes the present power, not only to enjoy God's manifest goodness, but to do effectively His work.

2. Now, to us in any such mood, Jesus gives advice. 'Take no thought for the morrow,' He says, 'live in the present.' It is certainly curious advice to come from Him.

But, on the most surface meaning, it is sound. Clearly, to anticipate trouble doubles it, and halves present usefulness. Of course, evil will come. The direst possibilities are possible. But, at any rate, thinking will not improve the prospect. Nor does it improve the present. Hence, it is advisable to avoid dwelling on unpleasantnesses, when dwelling on them does no good but only harm.

But, of course, the appeal of Jesus is not a crude appeal to mere common sense. That would be a most hard-hearted way of treating a depressed man. His teaching is of a very different sort. It contains within it two suggestions, one explicit and one implicit.

We are not to think of the morrow ? Yes, but we are not to think of nothing. Instead of to-morrow, let us think of to-day. And, mark you, to-day is not in the least alarming. Here you are, in fair health, with a reasonable livelihood, and with a home and a circle of friends. No, life is not so bad to-day. Moreover, and more important, temptations are masterable to-day. In most cases, and at any given moment, temptations are masterable. It is imagination, extending them into the future, that gives them their fearful force. To-day life can be lived, and work can be done. Taken, as it were, in small doses, the thing can be managed. But it is in little sections that life is given us to live. This is the grand principle that is behind this advice. When it does come, to-morrow will be as simple, yea, though it bring grief, as to-day. For God is in both.

Ah ! there is the centre of our trouble. How easily we forget God ! But we are in God's hands. It is to that great, central fact that Christ takes us. It is there, in the supreme thought of God, that He leaves us. As Christian folk we must not forget the great fact of God. We are to fulfil the great condition (it is in our choice), 'seek ye first . . . righteousness.' If we do this we shall know that life itself is an infinitely larger thing than the externals of life. The men and women who have touched this life of humanity powerfully and helpfully have always been such as brought the facts of life into the right perspective, counting life too high and beautiful a thing to waste itself in overmuch

thought about its mere incidents. Christ's language is the language of One who speaks simply, as to children; but it is very grand. 'Shall he not much more clothe you? . . . Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need.' We are in God's hands. Our times, our work, our heart's beloveds—all are in God's hands.[1]

The Christian is not an orphan in an unfriendly universe. He is a child of the God who feeds the birds and clothes the flowers, making each the subject of His solicitude. It has been estimated, taking as a basis the quantity known to be necessary for their sustenance, that no millionaire on earth could feed God's birds one day. But God feeds them every day, and is no whit poorer at night. 'Now,' says Christ, in effect, 'that is what the Christian's Father does for flowers and birds. Will He not do as much for His dear children?'

We are in God's hands. And Jesus is the measure, to our minds, of God. We may leave all, surely, to a heart like the Lord's!

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Challenge of the Harvest.

'Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.'—Ec 11[1].

This cryptic saying conveys very little to our Western minds. It looks the maddest of mad acts to cast bread upon the waters in the hope of finding it later on. A dweller in the East would understand it. It is the method of sowing rice, for instance, on the banks of a river like the Nile. When the river is at the flood and the banks are covered with muddy water, the farmer goes out with his bag of rice and scatters it over the surface. It sinks and germinates, and later on, when the weary months are past, the rice fields are covered with harvest. That is the picture the writer is showing us. He is stating in his own way the law of sowing and reaping.

The people to whom he was writing lived by this yearly practice of faith. It was the lesson which every harvest brought to mind. As he ponders it, it comes to him that this is a universal law which will apply to a dozen other things besides a rice harvest. It is a great far-reaching principle that runs through the whole universe, both natural and spiritual.

There are two things here on which it is worth our while to think for a little as we thank God for the harvest.

The first is that if we want to live *we must be willing to take the risk of death.* 'Cast thy bread upon the waters'—that is the method of perpetuating life. It looks so like an act of startling folly. But the sheer truth is that only by this kind of waste can people live at all. If there were no grain sown in the spring-time there would be a starving world before another year was out. The truth is, the world has to commit every year an act of self-denying faith in order to live.

The second thing which this wise man takes his stand upon is a principle which has never yet been broken on a world-scale—that the *universe will respond to the act of faith.* There have been districts here and there in the world where for one reason or another the rains have failed and the crops have not come to fruit. But it has never happened on the scale of the world. Does not this suggest that God means us to live together as His children on a world-scale of mutual dependence? Can we not trace, even here, the principle of a true internationalism?

The principle that we can only preserve our life by taking the risk of death is universal. Jesus took it up and gave it fresh currency. 'He that loseth his life shall find it.'

Let us think of its application in one or two directions.

1. It holds in the matter of love for others and the service through which love finds expression. We can keep love alive in our hearts only as we are willing to spend it, to risk it—even, as it might seem, to waste it. Every one has his little fund of affection which is expended on his family or circle of friends. But what says Jesus? Widen your circle; cast your bread upon the waters. 'If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye?' Lengthen your range. 'Love your enemies, and pray for them that despitefully use you.' If life is to grow richer in the interests and affections which are its real treasure, there is no other way but to sink roots of sympathy and unselfish interest around us, though it may be at the cost of our own strength and vitality.

2. Let us take a still wider outlook. Is not this a call to the world? We have come into a world where God is going to demand of us, more and more, the overcoming of all barriers between nations, and a larger international sympathy. There will be

[1] J. R. P. Sclater, *The Enterprise of Life*, 224 ff.

times when this will mean a very literal casting of our bread upon the waters. America did it in the case of the Boxer trouble in China, when she refused the indemnity and bade the Chinese spend it on education.

3. Most of all this is a call to the Church in relation to her gospel. Our love and insight into the truth of Christ can grow only as we are seeking to spread it. When the disciples in the early Church were scattered abroad preaching the word, they were not only enlarging the borders of the Kingdom—they were enlarging their own knowledge of Christ. There are sides of the gospel we can never know till we sacrifice something to publish it. It is in the act of self-giving—the very strain of it, the very wasting of the bread of our strength and substance to enlighten others—that Christ is revealed to ourselves.

And have not other races something to teach us of Christ which we of the West have never known? Is there not something in the revelation of Christ and His grace and power which we cannot know until 'all flesh shall see it together'?

But this act of trust and adventure of self-giving to which life calls us on every hand, and especially in the law of sowing and reaping, is no mere automatic principle. We have learned something if we have learned it, but even so we may be only mechanics, at the best, blind to the deeper meaning of life. God asks more of us than this. He seeks to help us make of it the medium of a fellowship with Him. For what do we trust when we trust nature? Surely it is no blind principle merely, but God Himself, the Father, calling for that faith in the very need of our lives, and giving us response to it in the yellow corn that is the assurance of another year of life. And what do we trust, when we venture on what we call goodwill, but the loving power of the Father, seeking through that very faith to work in the hearts of all His children and cast out fear and lovelessness? And what do we do who send out our love into unpromising places, but 'dig a fountain down to God' who is in all His children, so that from these deep wells He rises, the Living Water, into our own lives? Nothing has done its work for us till it has brought us to Him, and Him to us, so that life's commonplace traffic becomes the symbol of a loving fellowship, in a world which is our Father's house.[1]

[1] James Reid, in *Harvest Thanksgiving Sermons*, 143.

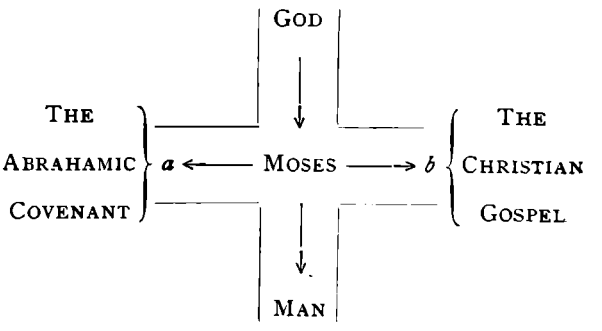
Contributions and Comments.

Galatians iii. 20.

'A mediator is not of one, but God is one.'

THE fact that this verse stands to-day after nineteen centuries without an interpretation which carries conviction is the outstanding miracle in the history of exegesis. It is not the only passage which awaits correct explanation and translation (the Second Epistle to the Corinthians is full of such passages), but there is no passage which has challenged, as this has, the curiosity, industry, and ingenuity of all the commentators of Christendom. The reason for this is not that in these simple words there is anything specially intriguing, but that a misinterpretation of the word μεσίτης has invested the passage with theological significance far in excess of that which it actually possesses. Is it too much to hope that a little clear thinking will set this matter right once for all?

The reader is requested to examine the following diagram:



He will observe at once that Moses occupies a central place:

1. Between God and man.
2. Between Abraham and Christ.

To which of these two relationships is the Apostle alluding?