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ence of an orderly nexus, a vertebral column to the body of the later collection called *Testimonies*. We think we have shown that it is His method, as well as His matter, that is being followed by the early Christian believers. The conclusion would be even more certain, if we could believe, as many critics are disposed to do, that some corpus of testimonies was actually in existence *before* Jesus'

own day. Such a collection would probably be more justly described as pro-Messianic, rather than anti-judaic. There was, however, room for some hostility to conventional Judaism even on the part of those who were looking for the Consolation of Israel; and, certainly, from such a nucleus as has been suggested, the evolution of the later grouping of *Testimonies* would be natural and easy.

In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

But that's real.¹

'Hath made us kings.'—Rev 1^o.

THE other day when you were so dreadfully late, and breakfast was quite cold, and Mother was quite ratty, and when you did get up at last you had a horrid morning, and no time to wash more than the centre of your face, and the back settlements behind your ears got never a lick, tumbled your clothes on anyhow, bolted your food, had to sprint for it to school, arrived there hot and sticky, yet were late after all, and got lines for it too—what was it all about? Why did you do it? What were you thinking of as you lay on and on in bed? 'Oh,' you say, 'I was pretending.' Yes, I know, and I know something more too. If I weren't a minister, and if the people weren't listening, I think I could bet you sixpence that I could guess what you were pretending to be. Let's try. You were a general, and there was a big battle raging, and things were going badly till you dashed up the roads as far as you could in your great car, and then ran among the troops, and the news spread everywhere that the commander-in-chief was there himself, and the men rallied, and there was a wonderful victory. Was that it? No! Then, I am off it. But of course I get three shots! We didn't agree about that, but there are always three allowed. Well then, you were a traveller in the heart of Africa, with lions' eyes like balls of fire staring at you quite close out of the jungles, and apes hanging from the trees above you, and writhing snakes, and horrid little pigmy men who kept shooting poisoned arrows; one of them went through your hat. That

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

it? No, again! Then my last chance. You were a pirate, whose ship had just reached your treasure island, away down in the sunny southern seas, where the water is as blue as the sky is; and inside where the surf is tumbling on the coral it is as still as a mirror; and you could see the fish darting about far down, and the yellow sand at the bottom, and the skeleton of a man drowned long ago with a red cap beside it. That it? No! Ah well, then, if I weren't a minister, and if the people weren't listening, I might give you that sixpence. Of course I am only chaffing. Betting is a silly mug's game; and only a bit of an ass takes shares in it. But what were you pretending? I was a king, you say. Oh, but come now, that's not fair! You said pretending: and that's real. You are a king. What? Didn't you know? That's queer. Here is a fellow who doesn't know he is a king, and giggles when I tell him, as if I were trying to be funny. It would be awkward if King George forgot he was a king, thought he was just a private man, went out strolling, and the ministers with papers to sign looking everywhere for him, and messengers scouring the whole city; and if when they found him he waved them away;—'Nonsense, I am no king. Let me alone.' That would be a bit awkward. But you are just like that. You don't rule over England or Scotland or France, but you have a wonderful country called your life; and you can make it a rich land or else a very poor one, and it all depends on you. 'George, be a king,' his mother used to say constantly to George III. when he was young. 'George, be a king.' And you must be a king. For you are one. The Bible says so here. You must be generous and live in a big handsome way, a king's way. 'This is far too much for me

to receive,' a man once said to Alexander the Great. 'Perhaps it is,' answered the king, 'but it is not too big for me to give.' You too must be a king. It would do all right for an ordinary boy—ah! but you're not an ordinary boy, you are a king. And it won't do at all for you to sulk and say, 'It's a great shame,' or 'I will go, but I just hate you.' Be a king, be big and generous and do things in a handsome way. 'George, be a king,' and you must be unselfish as kings have to be. For a king works long, long hours. Did you think he just lolled about? Not likely. Isn't Dad the head of your house? (though I once knew an old lady who, when they said that of her husband used to add, 'And I'm the neck that turns him'). Isn't Dad the head? And Dad works far longer than you do. While God, says Christ, God never takes a holiday at all, works all the week-ends, and all Sunday, all the night and all the day, and every night and every day, still thinking out some new thing for us while we ourselves are all asleep. 'George, be a king.' And a king doesn't quarrel. To quarrel, says a wise man, is just to be equal to the other fellow; but to forgive is to be greater, for it is a king's part to pardon. Oh! you say, if that's the way of it, I don't want it, not one bit. But, whether you want it or do not, you are a king, and you must rule your subjects, or else there will be a dreadful time. Once in France a king didn't do well, and the people surged out of the slums and broke into the palace and took the king, and by and by cut off his head! You have noisy subjects hidden away in the slums of your heart, always ready to make some disturbance if you let them; your passions they are called, that is, your temper and your sulks and greediness and selfishness and crabbedness and crossness, and a whole crowd more, a horrid-looking lot. You'll have to rule them, or else there is going to be trouble. Don't let them jostle you about like that; tell them that you are king; make them keep order, put them down when they want to make riot and confusion. You remember Wat Tyler who led thirty thousand men in a rebellion. And how the king, who was only a boy, rode in among them, all alone! 'What are you doing following that fellow?' he said, 'I'm your real leader, follow me.' And they did. You're king. Well, act as king, and keep the peace there in that life of yours. And if you don't know how to do it, go to Jesus Christ, the kingliest of kings, the most splendid of monarchs, with the greatest and most glorious kingdom of

them all by far, and He will teach you all about it.

Recharging.¹

'He restoreth my soul.'—Ps 23³.

I was listening-in one night lately, with an excellent valve set, and everything was going well. The valves glowed, and the invisible waves of ether brought me splendid music and beautiful voices. I settled down to enjoy myself for the evening.

Suddenly the valves dimmed their brightness and the music faded into a mere whisper, and my programme had come to an untimely end.

Of course all you wireless experts know at once what had happened. You can talk quite familiarly about variable grid-leaks and condensers and reactions and anodes and cathodes, and a whole bagful of mysteries that your fathers regard with respect and awful veneration as things too high for them. But you know, and already you have said in your minds, 'accumulator run down.' Yes! that was the fatal trouble.

What is an accumulator? Well, it is a thing that accumulates. It accumulates electric current. It makes the valves glow and do their work to choose the right sort of electrons and reject the wrong sort, and make the messages that the waves bring such that we can hear and enjoy them.

There are two things about an accumulator. One is that it dries up. Evaporation steals from it and brings down the level, and it must be filled up with pure distilled water. The other is that it runs down; and then it must be linked up with the power that is the light of our city, and recharged. And we know it is charged when it fizzes and bubbles as if it were boiling.

I think our souls are a kind of accumulators. They get dried up. The air of this world sucks the sweetness out of them, and the level sinks lower and lower.

We must keep up the level by filling our mind with the pure water of the word of God; by reading our Bible and pouring the thought of God and the truth of God into our minds. That will keep up the high level of our thinking and never allow our thoughts to sink down to levels that are base and unworthy.

Our souls, too, get run down. We talk of our bodies being 'run down,' but we forget the same

¹ By the Reverend Stuart Robertson, M.A., Glasgow.

thing happens to our souls. Life makes big demands on our love and our patience and our sympathy and faithfulness, and the soul gets exhausted, and would come to the standstill of utter emptiness if we couldn't get them recharged.

That is what we are doing when we pray to be helped, and when we go to church and wait in worship on our God. We are recharging the accumulator. We are touching the power of the Spirit of God, giving Him opportunity to restore our souls and to fill us with His Spirit.

And it's the same with the soul as with the accumulator: we know the one is charged with electric current when it begins to fizz, and we know a Christian is filled with the Spirit of God when he begins to fizz. Well, St. Paul doesn't say 'fizz,' but he says 'fervent,' which means 'boiling,' and it's the same thing.

I know people are less careful about recharging their souls than about recharging their accumulators. I know, because if it were not so there would be more Christians that 'fizz': more fervour, more religion at boiling-point, with the steam up to do God's service.

Boys and girls, I don't need to tell you to watch your accumulators. But I do need to tell you to watch your souls. So when next you trudge off to get the accumulator recharged, be thinking about the other thing too: you need to have the level of your thoughts kept up to the level of Jesus Christ, you need to have your souls recharged and filled with His Spirit, so that they shall not fail.

Do these things. Be constant in worship and prayer, and your soul will be wise to choose the voice of God from among the many voices of the world, and your heart will glow to hear His voice.

The Christian Year.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

The Omnipresence of God.

'Whither shall I flee from thy presence?'—Ps 139⁷.

The omnipresence of God is that glorious attribute of the Divine Nature on which we are to meditate. When you try to do it, you cannot limit the presence of God to any one place on earth, or in heaven: no, nor to all places on earth and in heaven, taken together. The whole universality and immensity of all things, created and uncreated, is all one and the same mystery of Godliness. All created things—

the most firm and stable—would instantly stagger and reel back, and dissolve into their original nothingness and annihilation, if Almighty God withheld His all-upholding hand from them for one moment. The pillars of the earth are His, and it is He who has established the world on its strong foundations. From a grain of sand on the seashore, up to all the endless systems of suns and stars in the heavens; from those creatures of God that are too small for the eye of man to see them, up to the choirs of Cherubim and Seraphim before the throne—to our ears they all unite and rejoice to sing—'In him we live, and move, and have our being.' 'For, of him, and through him, and to him, are all things.'

And then, if anything could add to the awe and the wonder of all that, it would be this other all-transcending truth—that He who is everywhere is also wholly everywhere. Now that Almighty God is wholly, and is continually, with every one of us in all the completeness, and in all the totality, of His Godhead—what an absolutely bewildering thought is that! Were we but able to receive it—we have our God, and the whole of our God, as much with us as if we had been Adam, new from the hand of God, and walking alone with the whole presence of God among the trees of the garden. There is a certain far-off image and adumbration of all that even among ourselves.

A mother's love is not portioned and poured out according to the number of her sons and her daughters. Every one of her children has all her mother's presence with them, all her heart, all her thoughts, all her solicitude, all her prayers. Till, wheresoever she has a child, that child of hers can adopt the words of the great Psalm, and can say to his mother: 'Whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. . . . If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.' Only—she might forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb: yet will I not forget thee.

But to come from God the Father to God the Son. What is this that God the Son here says to His disciples, and through them to us? 'Lo,' He says, 'I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.' And that, be it well remarked, just after He had said this also: 'I ascend to my

Father.' And this: 'I go to prepare a place for you.' And this: 'It is expedient for you that I go away.' And this: 'If ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I said, I go unto the Father.' And then, with all that, He actually says this self-contradictory-looking word—'Lo, I am with you alway, to the end of the world. Amen.'

And this is 'the truth as it is in Jesus.' This, that ever since His Incarnation, ever since His birth of Mary, our Lord has possessed the nature of man, in addition to, and in everlasting incorporation with, the Divine Nature. And thus it is that He sometimes speaks, and acts, in His Divine Nature: and sometimes, again, in His human nature. Sometimes as pure Son of God, and sometimes as pure Son of Man. As God the Son, He is with His disciples, and with us everywhere, and wholly everywhere, and to the end of the world. Whereas, as He is man, He is no longer with His disciples, but is with His Father, and with the holy angels, and with the glorified souls of His saints in heaven.

While His heavenly glory now and for ever endows His human nature to all its fullness; and perfects His human nature to every possible perfection; and crowns His human nature with every possible honour and reward; at the same time, all His heavenly glory does not remove, or in any way obliterate, or break down, so much as one of the true borders and boundaries of His human nature. His Divinity does not in heaven, any more than on earth, extinguish, or in any way impair, His real and true and ever-abiding humanity. He is now, and He will for ever remain, God and man in 'two distinct natures and one person for ever.'

To all eternity, and amid all His surpassing glory, we shall never need to say with Mary Magdalene: 'They have taken away my Lord out of my knowledge, out of my sight, and out of my presence, and I know not in what light inaccessible they have again hid him!' For, to all eternity, He will remain among us and one of us, the Man Christ Jesus, the Lamb as He had been slain. Only, for ever crowned with the whole glory of God, as He is alone worthy to be so crowned. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!

And then, again, there is this: 'There are three Persons in the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.' That is to say, the Three Divine Persons are wholly everywhere. Sometimes turn to God the Father,

and say to Him—Father, I have sinned. Sometimes say to Him—Our Father which art in heaven. Sometimes, again, say—Father, glorify Thy name. And sometimes say—Father of mercies, and God of all comforts. And, sometimes, just look up and say—Abba, Father!

Then again, while not turning away one moment from the Father, turn toward the Son and say: 'Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee.' And again:

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.

And then at another time, and indeed continually, look up and salute the descending Comforter, and say:

Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove,
My sinful maladies remove:
Be Thou my guard, be Thou my guide,
O'er every thought and step preside.

For they are 'the same in substance, equal in power and glory.'

But there is one thing to remember. God is present, and is wholly present, only to him who believes that. Our belief does not indeed cause God to be; and our unbelief does not cause Him not to be. Only, this is His nature and our nature, that He is to each one of us just according as we believe Him to be. If we choose, we can say with the fool—'There is no God.' Or, if we choose, we can say with the saint—There is nothing else in the whole world but God and my own soul. Believe in God and in His presence with you, and His presence is immediately and wholly with you as it was with David in the Psalms, and with Jesus Christ in the Gospels, and with Paul in the Epistles. Have faith in God, and in your own souls.¹

And now three thoughts about this universal presence.

1. The universal presence is an *arresting* thought. There is nothing on earth, when we are tempted sorely, so quietly arresting as a presence.

You remember the story, says Dr. G. H. Morrison of Glasgow, of Frederick Robertson of Brighton; how in Brighton there was a certain shopkeeper who had a portrait of Robertson in his back-shop. And whenever he was tempted to a mean thing he

¹ A. Whyte, *With Mercy and with Judgment*, 3.

went and looked for an instant at the photograph, and then the sorry thing became impossible.

Linnæus, the greatest botanist who ever lived, cherished an open heart for God in everything. Over his study door these words were written, *Numen adest, vivite innocui*. And what they mean is this: Live innocently; do not sully hand or heart to-day: *numen adest*—Deity is present.

2. The universal presence is a *sustaining* thought. Professor Henry Drummond used to tell about a student in the examination-hall. It was an examination of a decisive nature, which would largely determine the young fellow's career. And every now and again out of his pocket he took something, and gave a glance at it, and then as quietly slipped it back again. The examiner had his suspicions roused. He stole up quietly for observation. And he saw—scribbled notes? No, what he saw was not scribbled notes. It was a portrait of some one very dear, who would be dearer still in coming days when, for better or for worse through life's long battle, the two had become one before the altar. It was not enough that he should have God-speed. He felt he needed something more than that. He felt he needed, just what we all need, the sustaining power of a loving presence.

3. The universal presence is a *uniting* power. Do you ask how a presence can unite? Well, that is not very difficult to answer. Here are a father and mother who have grown estranged. Does the presence of a child never unite them? Did you never hear of them becoming one again through that little living thing? It is so with the presence of a common friend. It is so with the presence of a common God. Separated by a thousand leagues from one another, we are all one in Him. God who is there and here and yet is one—God who is everywhere and yet our Father—is the only real meeting-ground for mortals.¹

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Supreme Deprivation.

'Take not thy holy spirit from me.'—Ps 51¹¹.

There is no clearly marked sequence of ideas in the Fifty-first Psalm. What impresses us, as we read its verses, is the absence of plan and order. The psalmist is not intent on producing an artistically balanced and carefully finished poem. Like the swirling waters of a stream in high flood, wave

¹ G. H. Morrison, *The Wind on the Heath*, 181.

overtaking and mingling with wave, the thoughts and emotions of the penitent's heart pour themselves forth in confusion. 'An extreme emergency,' says Professor A. B. Davidson, 'does, no doubt, sometimes give something like a supernatural balance and calmness to the mind, but many times the agitation betrays itself in the abrupt and fragmentary character of the exclamations.' The anguish of this psalmist is undisguised by any 'supernatural' self-control. Acknowledgments of guilt, cries for forgiveness, promises of gratitude, and vows of obedience in the future surge up and break into one another. In a series of disjointed ejaculations the soul of a suppliant, exercised by contrition, is revealed.

There is a peculiarity about v.¹¹ which, though obvious enough, may perhaps escape notice. It contains two petitions, and these, unlike all the other petitions in the psalm, are negative in form. What is passionately urged is not that something should be done, but that something should not be done. Deliverance from a possible tragic separation from God is earnestly sought for. That alarming experience is represented under two aspects. On the one hand, the psalmist recoils from the idea of his being excluded from the Divine Presence, expelled from the secret place of the Most High. 'Cast me not away from thy presence.' On the other hand, he dreads the possibility of God's leaving him, withdrawing Himself from the fellowship which has hitherto subsisted between them. 'Take not thy holy spirit from me.'

The petitions are ultimately one, inasmuch as they both contemplate with despair the breaking up of a highly prized communion. But the stand-points, from which they describe the coming to pass of that mournful event, are different. With regard to the first form which the prayer takes, Sir Richard Baker says, 'God indeed hath a presence of being, and this is everywhere. And He hath a presence of power, and this is everywhere. But He hath a presence of grace and favour, and this is not everywhere. This is the presence which I so much long to keep, which I so much fear to lose.'

Let us concentrate our attention, however, on the second form. The language employed is quite adequate to express the deepened meaning which New Testament teaching imparts to it.

1. Consider, in the first place, *the magnitude of the loss which is deprecated in the words of our text*—'Take not thy holy spirit from me.' Think of some

of the deprivations to which human beings are exposed in this world.

There is the loss of worldly possessions, of sight, and the loss of life itself. Think of the state of mind of people when they are told, or when they begin to realize for themselves, that they have not long to live. In most circumstances it is a painful announcement to be entrusted with. News of this kind has to be 'broken,' as we say—given in fragments and not as a whole. In most circumstances it is a sad discovery to make.

Our hopes and fears
Start up alarm'd, and o'er life's narrow verge
Look down.

Only the few whose sufferings are very terrible, or whose infirmities are very burdensome, or whose faith is very bright, express a keen desire to be gone. The many, unreconciled or reconciled but partially to the great change that awaits them, cling to life and cry to be spared. 'Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.' People are exposed to many sore deprivations, but grievous as they are they are not for a moment to be compared with that which is contemplated in the prayer of the psalmist—'Take not thy holy spirit from me.'

2. Consider, in the second place, *what is entailed in this supreme loss*, to give some of the disastrous results in experience of His withdrawing His gracious influence.

To begin with, there is the inability to appreciate goodness and purity, and to respond sympathetically to everything that is tender and unselfish and innocent. He is not to be envied who has forfeited the capacity of being touched to the finer issues of his nature.

Again, a sensitive conscience bespeaks the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. But when no revulsions of feeling occur against the idea of our choosing the baser alternative, when we have accustomed ourselves to the fact of evil in our own life and in the world, and are past the stage of shuddering at it and vehemently opposing it—then we are strangers to the company of that sacred Guest whose presence inspires the heart with holy detestation of sin.

Once more, there is an utterly secular state of mind and heart into which men and women can only too easily settle down. It may be induced in various ways—by ambition, by yielding to care, by the neglect of religious exercises and habits of devotion. The higher affinities, in which our nature

seeks to express itself, are crushed. No value is attached to that conscious relationship to God which it is man's privilege to take advantage of.

Only that which appeals to the senses, which can be seen and touched, only what ultimately is material, is regarded as important. And so a human life, charged with infinite promise, becomes impoverished in its desires, stunted in its attainments, shrunken in its aims and outlook.

3. Consider, in the last place, *the spirit in which this prayer of the psalmist's should be uttered*.

On the one hand, it is to be offered up in fear. That, against the happening of which the petition makes entreaty, is a real possibility. We know it to be so. Therefore we ought to be alarmed, lest in our case it becomes an actuality. Not because God is an arbitrary Being, who does according to the counsel of His Own Will, ought we to cherish this feeling; but because sin grieves Him. His withdrawal of Himself is never a capricious action. He cannot dwell with evil.

On the other hand, the prayer is to be offered up in humble assurance. We know of no other province except the soul of man, in which the Holy Spirit exercises His secret functions. There may be other regions, there may be other intelligent natures differently constituted from ourselves, in which He carries on His hidden and noiseless work. But all that is revealed to us is, that the gracious office which He fulfils is that of regenerating mankind, of applying and giving effect in humanity to the redemptive purpose of God declared in the life and obedience, the Passion and death, of Jesus Christ. Is it likely then that He will forsake a human life willingly, abandon His saving ministry in the case of even one individual? Not unless His overtures and entreaties are steadily rejected, not unless through obdurate indifference and sullen impenitence the ear is stopped to His voice and the door of the heart is closed against His entrance. He bears with us long, and is ever faithful to His task. He is God, and not a man that He should be turned aside from His purpose. The interest in us that binds Him to His gracious work is the interest of everlasting Love.

Spirit of purity and grace,
Our weakness, pitying, see;
O make our hearts Thy dwelling-place,
And worthier Thee.¹

¹ A. B. Macaulay, *The Word of the Cross*, 46.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Lack of Interest in the Quest.

'None of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?'—
Jn 16^s.

It was strange that man's natural instinct of curiosity in the world to come should have been silenced. But, for the time, it was over-mastered by a great sorrow. The prospect of the loss of Him who was everything to them kept the disciples dumb. Sorrow had filled their heart. But in a few days this had passed. And all the questionings which, for a moment, had been thrust aside, found their complete satisfaction in the amazing joy of the Resurrection. The other life was now with them. And they never lost the consciousness of it. It became the background of their lives, the inspiration of all their thinking. And it spread to others.

For some centuries this consciousness lingered on, but when the world began its fatal inroads into the heart of the Church it began to fade away. The shock of the Fall of Rome gave a fresh impetus to its reconsideration, and Augustine's 'City of God' revived interest in it. But again it faded away. Then the Mohammedan invasions led men like St. Bernard to sing its praises, and Heaven was again a power on earth. Again materialism blotted it out, and then Dante, by his great gifts of imagination, poetry, wisdom, and philosophy, not only restored the old setting to life, but marvellously enriched it, and peopled it with living characters. He himself had visited it. He had passed through the dark blackness of hell, through the twilight of Purgatory into the full blaze of the light of Heaven. It is ever thus; when the glory of Christ and His Kingdom is dimmed by the predominance of the earthly interests of mankind, men are raised up to draw attention to it. So in England's national distress and seventeenth-century indifference, John Milton and John Bunyan forced upon the attention of an unwilling world the greatness and magnificence of the spiritual kingdom that lies about us.

And so again in our own time, when science, politics, and commerce had led men to concentrate their attention on this life as though none other existed, the whole fabric of civilization which we had thought so stable was shaken to its foundations. Universal losses called the attention of every one to the great question of another life. Where have our men gone to?

In the séance, in automatic writing, in spiritual-

istic photography, men have searched for such evidences of the life after death as may quicken the imagination. And now they are reading with avidity what Sir O. Lodge in England and M. Camille Flammarion in France can tell us. And it was only natural that, with this feeling of curiosity, quickened by stories of so-called appearances, some one should dramatize these secret experiences in order that the average man may see for himself what he may expect when he passes through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. So the world has gone in its crowds to see the play *Outward Bound*. There is the phantom ship, the ship of destiny; they see human souls that have left the earth and are on the way to another world. Not only are the spectators unaware that they have died, but they themselves only discover the fact with difficulty. They are the same in dress, feature, and character as they were before. They gossip, slander, and drink as though they were crossing the Atlantic. Their destiny is decided by the Examiner, a clergyman of a light and jovial disposition. He allots them their positions very much as a magistrate would in police-court cases. They pass to circumstances much like our own. This, then, in popular opinion—for the play won a great success—is the end of the mysterious drama of life.

It is avowedly modern. 'None of you asketh *Me*,' though it is true that 'no one hath ascended into heaven save he which came down from heaven, even the Son of Man who is in heaven.' No one, therefore, can know but Christ. But they have passed over all He has said and constructed a new world out of their own imagination. His world differs from theirs, not only in its spiritual character, but in three important features which are necessary if men's aspirations are to be satisfied. They are these: Wonder, Progress, Fellowship.

1. *Wonder*. There is an old saying attributed to our Lord which bids us 'look with wonder at that which is before' us. This, which is the great characteristic of child life which our Lord tells us we must attain if we are to see the Kingdom of Heaven, is always stimulated by Him in His teaching. He not only tells us of the 'many mansions,' 'the cities,' 'the right hand and the left' reserved for those for whom it is prepared; not only of the closer intimacy of the union of the married, like that of the angels, spirit with spirit; of the intuition that takes the place of the knowledge which vanisheth away; but He fills the whole picture with

the Presence of God. Heaven is just this 'going to the Father.' It is always dominated by a Person. And so vivid is this realisation that He taught one of His chief friends to contrast the present with the future in this one regard only—the Vision of God. Life's greatest romance has been well described as the discovery of God. Here He remains hidden. We seek and we do not find. Or we find and then it is lost again. We are always being baffled, sometimes coming so near and then finding ourselves so far off. 'But let not him that seeketh cease till he find, and he that findeth shall wonder.' For a time will come, must come, when He will be manifested, and when He is manifested we shall see Him as He is.

Does it bring terror or joy? That depends on the character of him who sees it. To a St. Augustine its glory fascinates. He writes: 'Suppose we heard Him without any intermediary at all—just now we reached out and with one flash of thought touched the Eternal Wisdom that abides above all. Suppose this endured, and all other far inferior modes of vision were taken away, and that alone were to ravish the beholder and absorb him and plunge him into mystic joy, might not eternal life be like this moment of comprehension for which we sighed? Is not this the meaning of "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord"?'

2. *Progress.* Wonder, awestruck wonder, must be the first emotion, then the certainty of progress. The vision compels that. The great gulf fixed between the past and the future which Lazarus saw, and the immense impassable space which separated him from Dives! This represents the separation from the whole circle of the world's temptations. That is gone for ever. Sin is impossible. Darkness no longer exists. All the elements which impede progress here are absent there. The great gulf separates—there lies the assurance that all that is of earth is left behind for ever; never again to hinder, or press down, or weary. Progress is assured on and on through an endless eternity.

3. *Fellowship.* This is furthered by fellowship. Solitude necessarily leads to deterioration. We can only go forward through association with others. Left to ourselves, we go back. So Christ's picture emphasizes the fellowship that belongs to God's people. Lazarus is in 'Abraham's bosom'; the traveller is at last in the bosom of his family; the pilgrim is at home. But not the home of the mixed crowd; not the society of strangers who

may envy or slander or stand aloof in distant pride; not the fellowship with the indifferent or careless; but the home of the friendly, the interested, the good, the perfect.

Life is a great adventure, with an amazing prospect which may be gained or lost at the end. A man may say it is better to put aside such thoughts altogether. When the great adventure is over we shall see what we shall see. Why trouble our minds with what may never happen? The answer is, We cannot avoid it. Death comes nearer every day. And nothing is seen in its right proportion except as we see it in the light of that fact and what follows after. It is true we know not in precise terms what we shall be, but we know we shall be like Him, like Him in His glorious freedom, His wide embracing fellowship, and His adoring love of the Father. More we cannot wish for; better it is not possible to imagine. And it is when we give our minds to these high thoughts that we see earth and the things of earth in their right proportion.

On, then, with our Divine Leader. Do not be led astray from the path by unauthorized declarations of what men have seen and heard elsewhere. The highest has been shown us, and we must needs love it when we see it. Do we hesitate? ¹

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

God the Revealer.

'The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever.'—Dt 29²⁹ (R.V.).

Just because we have a spiritual nature we attribute a nature of the same kind to God. We think of Him as Spirit, that is, as essentially creative. From what we see around us, or find within us, we infer that God is a Being of such a kind that He possesses qualities which are in some measure really akin to the spiritual qualities which we know that we ourselves have. Thus we are led to think of God as revealing Himself, or expressing Himself, in what He has created. Human beings express themselves by word and act. The artist reveals himself in his pictures; the engineer reveals himself in the bridge he makes; our daily conduct at home is an expression of our character. But just as our self-expression is not always equally complete, and we 'put more of ourselves' into some

¹ G. H. S. Walpole, *The Undiscovered Country and the Way to It*, 3.

actions than we do into others, so there are degrees in the self-revelation of God. The ascending scale of evolution is an ascending scale in the self-expression of God. The world of inorganic matter tells us something about God, but you learn more about Him from a rose than you do from a stone, for the rose has life and the charm of beauty. With each stage of advance new qualities appear, and these throw increasing light upon the nature of God. With man the revelation takes on a yet richer meaning, for then emerge the spiritual characteristics—moral reason, conscience, love and the like—which we believe most clearly express the Divine nature. Hence human personality is the best index to the character of God, when it is taken at its highest as it reaches out after spiritual ideals.

Now it is part of God's nature to express Himself. His action in creating a universe, in making man, in redeeming man, in giving a special revelation to the Hebrew race, was not arbitrary, but was the expression of His inmost Being.

If we study the nature of God as that is set forth in the Bible we shall see how self-expression belongs to the very heart of His Being. Let us take three great words and briefly consider them—Creation, Revelation, Redemption.

1. *Creation.* 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' Why did He create? We cannot, of course, really answer the question, but it is not enough to say that He just chose to create. That makes His action arbitrary. Surely He created because He needed a universe to be the expression of His nature and purpose. It is His nature to go out of Himself in creating, to call into being worlds and systems of worlds which may reflect His glory and afford a field for His activity. Now, if that is so, it would appear that we must think of creation as an eternal act. In other words, there was never a time when God had not a universe as the medium of His self-expression. Our solar system had a beginning and will have an ending; but why should there not have been an unending succession of universes?

It is difficult to think of God beginning to create at a certain moment of time. What moved Him to create then? If He needed then a universe, must He not always have needed one? To many the thought of unending creation is very helpful. It seems to throw some light on the problem of the vastness of the stellar universe. Why are there vast spaces, these millions of suns in all stages of

development? The mind reels at these immensities, and we wonder sometimes whether the history of our petty planet has the significance which we give it. The more closely we can relate creation to the nature of God, seeing in it a necessitated self-expression of His Being, the more sure can we be that the little world on which we live has come from the very depths of that Being.

2. *Revelation.* To reveal Himself belongs equally to the nature of God. 'Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour,' cries the unknown prophet of the exile (Is 45¹⁶), and 'It is the glory of God to conceal a thing,' says the Book of Proverbs (25²). But the expressions are merely reminders that God's ways cannot be completely fathomed by men, and that there are mysteries of His Being which baffle us. They serve to bring out more clearly the fact that we have some sure knowledge of God, which is ours because He has revealed Himself. If the process of creation has resulted in the appearance of persons with the capacity for knowing God and the desire to know Him and enter into fellowship with Him, it is not unreasonable to assume that God would wish to reveal Himself to beings who share His own spiritual nature. One of the characteristics of spirit is that it is essentially self-revealing. A spirit is active towards its environment, and its activity is most intense and most full of meaning when its environment consists of other spirits. The Christian believes that God's purpose in creating was the formation of a kingdom of moral and spiritual personalities with whom He might hold fellowship. But in order that such a purpose might be carried out it was necessary that God should reveal Himself to the members of this kingdom. The Bible, at any rate, has no doubt about the matter. It claims to be the record of a special revelation given gradually to a chosen people. It pictures God as communicating truth to man, educating him, unfolding to him His own character, and doing all this not capriciously, but because He was of such a nature that He must do it.

How was it that, alone among contemporary nations, the Hebrews reached the conception of God found in the prophets, which is the basis of all our modern theism? Their own religious writers unhesitatingly spoke of a special revelation which was given to their race. 'The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever.'

'The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a

peculiar people unto himself, above all the peoples that are upon the face of the earth' (Dt 7⁶). And how are we to explain Jesus Christ and His abiding influence, and His appearance on the field of history in close connexion with the spiritual movement which had preceded Him, if we refuse to make use of the idea of revelation ?

3. *Redemption.* Here, surely, we have the best illustration of the truth that the activities of God proceed from His character by what we may paradoxically call a free necessity. The thought of God as Redeemer rests upon the deeper thought of Him as Love. In the Old Testament, particularly in such prophets as Hosea, Jeremiah, and Second Isaiah, love and tenderness—the love which forgives and the tenderness which yearns over human failure—are portrayed as qualities which belong essentially to God. But it was Jesus Christ who taught that love was the supreme characteristic of God. He was a Father, and He had all a Father's love and care for His human children.

Now what does love mean ? We forget that at its best it is a passion of self-sacrifice, a power which makes for fellowship, the highest expression of a personality which seeks to find fulfilment for itself in multiplying ties of spiritual relationship with other personalities. Love is an energy of self-giving. In its very nature it is redemptive, for it seeks the highest good of others. Love ceases to be love if it is not active ; sacrifice and self-surrender are the very breath of its life.

The vine from every living limb bleeds wine ;
Is it the poorer for that spirit shed ?
The drunkard and the wanton drink thereof :
Are they the richer for that gift's excess ?
Measure thy life by loss instead of gain,
Not by the wine drunk, but the wine poured forth.
For love's strength standeth in love's sacrifice,
And whoso suffers most hath most to give.

If God is Love then, must He not of necessity be a Redeemer ? His love goes out of itself in creation ; to make a universe that He may pour out His love upon it belongs to His very Being. But His is a Holy love ; and so when man misuses his freedom and sin infects humanity with its poison, God sets on foot a redemptive process, which culminates in the Cross of Christ, where Christianity bids us see the Divine love going to the extreme of self-sacrifice, that men may be won back to fellowship with their Father. The Cross was no afterthought on the

part of God, a desperate remedy to retrieve a ruined world. The Cross represents the heart of God. In His life there is always a cross, for an Eternal Love must 'move ever within the circle of self-sacrifice. 'Love's strength standeth in love's sacrifice.'

Such a thought of God as we have been considering has many results for our practical life of duty and prayer and service, which may be summarized in some such way as the following. 'God wants to make Himself known to me, to give Himself to me. He is seeking to enter into close relationship with me. It is His nature to do this. What remains for me to do, is to fit myself to receive all that I can of His fullness, and to make myself a channel through which His life may flow into me, and pass through me into others. What am I doing to hinder this self-giving of God from being effective either in myself or in the world ? Am I in any way thwarting the Divine purpose ?'¹

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Emphasis.

'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.'—Mt 23²³.

This text suggests to us a thought about life. It is itself an illustration of a principle in life—the need of preserving a proper proportion between one thing and another, and the danger of losing this sense of proportion.

This was one great complaint of Christ against the Pharisees. They made much of the things that were little and trivial, and they 'omitted,' left out altogether, the 'weightier matters.' They would 'strain out the gnat.' When they were pouring wine into a cup, they would pour it through a cloth of fine texture and so strain out the unclean midge—and swallow the camel. They would 'tithe mint and anise and cummin,' garden produce that was hardly worth noticing. They would be scrupulous and exact about such minutiae, and sin against justice and love. Christ rebukes them in the text. He says—Don't you see that some things are great and some are little ?

It is a question of proportion—of perspective. As in a good picture, everything finds its place, nothing bulks bigger in the eye than it really is. Or it is a question of emphasis. You know that, in

¹ V. F. Storr, *The Living God*, 70.

good reading and speaking, the weight of the voice must come upon the words according to the sense and meaning of the passage.

How true this is of life! For good living, as for good reading and speaking, it is a question of emphasis. To make life beautiful, to bring out its meaning and dignity and purpose, you must put the emphasis on the right things. And you may make life trivial, ridiculous, miserable, sinful, by placing the emphasis on the wrong things. Keep the big things big and let the little things be little—that is the secret of a strong and happy life.

Now, if there is any one who can teach us the true emphasis in life, it is Christ.

His whole controversy with the Pharisees turned upon this. It was a question of emphasis. The Pharisees put the emphasis on the outside of things—Christ on what is within. They put the emphasis on the ritual—He on the spirit. Christ did not trouble Himself about the tithing of mint, the washing of hands and cups, the wearing of the proper garment. He wanted to change the hearts of men, to renew them in the spirit of their minds. And what was ‘holiness’ to a Pharisee to Him was mere trifling.

Perhaps if we would sum up in one word the lesson of Christ and the New Testament, it would be this. Put the emphasis on eternity rather than on time—on the eternal things rather than on the things which pass and perish.

It is a safe and reasonable test of the importance of things—How do they last? And when this life of ours is laid against the background of eternity, things are brought out in their true proportions.

The greatest Scotsman of last century was Thomas Chalmers. His life was divided into two parts by a great religious experience. And looking back upon his earlier days, when he was a brilliant student, and confessing the keen interest of such study and strenuous work, he said: ‘Ah! but I had forgotten two magnitudes’—he was great in mathematics, and he said, ‘two magnitudes—the littleness of time and the greatness of eternity.’

It is Christ who keeps us right here. He is the great teacher of proportion, of emphasis in the things of life. We can learn no greater lesson than to measure things as He did. Can we not see that nothing is more striking about Him than His standard of values? Is He not saying continually to the world, ‘My thoughts are not your thoughts’? What did He live for? What did He prize?

What did He count supremely worth having? Therefore think of Him; try all your judgments by Him; live beside Him.

Yes, live beside Him. For is it not also true that, in determining what things are to be important to us, a great deal depends on the company we keep? If we want to live wisely, we must live with the wise, for the companion of fools is soon foolish too. We are mightily influenced by the society that is about us.

Christ is our teacher then, and there are three points we should remember.

1. We should put the emphasis on the things we believe. There is the same mixture in us all of faith and unbelief; but this is the true prayer—‘Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.’ Put forward the faith; put it first; put the emphasis there—‘Lord, I believe.’

This is where many go wrong. They emphasize their doubts; and that is not inspiring. What do we believe? However elementary, however simple, lay the emphasis there. Dwell upon it; live upon it; and it will come to more and more.

2. Again, put the emphasis on the bright side rather than the dark side.

There is always a bright side if you can only see it. For the Christian man, believing in God and the great words which Christ has spoken to us, there is always a bright side, always a better reason for being in a good mood than for being in a bad mood. ‘Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Still trust in God.’

3. Lastly, let us put the emphasis on what we can give rather than on what we can get, on the things of others rather than on our own things.

This is the very mind of Christ, and we are taking our lesson in emphasis from Him. He emptied Himself, gave all He had, gave Himself for us. And who can tell the misery and the poverty of our life, because we invert the emphasis of Christ, and are consumed with a passion for getting and gathering rather than for giving—consumed by a concern about our own things and thoughtless of the things of others?

What is this but to place the emphasis on the three great Christian graces—Faith and Hope and Love—these three? And while we emphasize them all, let us place the emphasis again and again and yet again upon the last. For the greatest of these, and the greatest thing in God’s world, is Love.¹

¹ J. Rutherford, *The Seer’s House*, 227.