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clusions, and gives further illustrations of their application to the exegesis of the text. He also deals with the question of sources rather than a source for these chapters, in connexion with which Torrey's theory is likely to be criticized. He concludes that 'if the whole of Acts 1-15³⁶ has been taken over literally from a single Aramaic document, then all the arguments based on the arrangement, structure, and arrangement of material remain as they were before.'

In the *American Journal of Theology*, of January 1919, will be found a further article by Professor Torrey, in which he deals with these criticisms, and widens out his study of the Acts into an interesting examination of some of the presuppositions which have for many years past governed much treatment

of the subject. Here again he does good service in pricking a number of hypercritical bubbles. He makes great fun of the suggestion that because Luke was Paul's friend and companion in travel he must have shared his views. 'It would be quite possible, on the evidence of our sources, to argue that Luke had some distaste, not only for theology in general, but also for Paul's in particular.' For the verdict on his main contention as to the Aramaic origin of Acts 1-15 we must wait until the experts in that language have said their say; meanwhile, so cautious a scholar as B. W. Bacon gives his opinion that 'Torrey's earlier demonstration (the term is not too strong) is now supplemented by equally cogent proof that Acts 1-15³⁵ is a translation from the Aramaic.'

In the Study.

Virginitus Puerisque.

Birthdays of Good Men and Women.

'The way of the just is uprightness.'—Pr 26⁷.

NATIONS, like boys and girls, become united through admiring and loving the same people. Sometimes they only discover their mutual love when the loved one dies. We were friends with America before she came to help us in the Great War. We not only thought of her as a near relative, we had shaken hands over the grave of President Lincoln.

1. It is about this great man I want to speak to you. He was so great that it is difficult to say the things that will give you anything like a true estimate of him.

He was born in Harden County, Kentucky, on the 9th of February 1809. His home was a rough cabin made of logs and clay, with a bed, a few three-legged stools, a log table, a pot, a kettle, and a few tin cooking vessels, for furniture.

The mother was a remarkable woman. She was delicate, rather sad, and very sensitive, but a heroine in her own way. She was a God-fearing woman, and exercised a great influence over her boy Abe, as he was called. Unfortunately she died when he was only nine.

You can remember things that happened when you were that age, can't you? Abe never forgot his mother. Rough and ungainly he turned out

to be when he was a grown lad, but his heart was soft and tender. Long afterwards, when he had become President of the United States, he said, 'All that I am, or ever hope to be, I owe to my sainted mother.'

Abe gathered a little library together in the log cabin. The books in it were *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Life of Washington*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and the *Bible*—a capital selection, surely. He learned to write by taking pieces of burnt sticks from the fire, and practising on the end of chopped logs. But he was very full of mischief. A neighbour for whom he did odd jobs said Abe was 'lazy, very lazy. He was always reading, scribbling, and such like.' And Abe himself knew that he was lazy. One can tell that from what he once wrote in a copy-book:

Abraham Lincoln, his hand and pen,
He will be good, but God knows when.

2. One day he heard a long word of which he did not know the meaning. It was the word 'demonstrate.' He went to a boy friend and asked him the meaning of it. The boy said he did not know, but he had seen it in a book called Euclid. Well, Abe succeeded in getting a copy of the book, and committed the whole of it to memory. You boys and girls may know nothing of Euclid, but those who had their schooldays

twenty or thirty years ago will understand how a knowledge of Euclid helped Lincoln to be clear and convincing in his statements, to be, in fact, logical.

All the time there was deep down in Abraham Lincoln's heart the desire to love and serve God. His mother had striven to foster this desire when he was a little boy. She taught him that God was always near, seeing him, and loving him, even when he did wrong. He made promises in those days—promises to God and to his mother that he would be good, and strive to serve the Master she served and loved. When he was quite a man and had taken up the question of Temperance Reform in America, he said, 'I made a solemn promise to my mother before her death that I would never use intoxicating drink as a beverage, and I consider that pledge as binding to-day as it was the day I gave it.'

But Abraham Lincoln found he could not keep his promises without prayer. With his sense of right, united to his great ability, he would have been a strong man among his fellows; but when in his difficulties he felt his own weakness and took refuge in praying to his Heavenly Father, he became Abraham Lincoln the great Christian.

3. He had to travel a long and rough road between the log cabin and the President's chair. He lived the life of a labouring man; became clerk, storekeeper, advocate, senator in succession, and then President. How slavery came to be abolished during his term of office is a long story. It is difficult indeed to say when he first came into contact with it. But we are told that when on a trip down the Mississippi he witnessed some of its horrors, 'he was silent, and looked very bad.' At another time he attended a slave market. Turning to his companions beside him, he said, 'Boys, let us get away from this. If ever I get a chance to hit that thing I will hit it hard.' And he did.

He had to fight not only the wrong itself, but the crooked ways of some of his opponents. 'Douglas does not care whether slavery is voted, up or down,' said Lincoln, 'but God cares, Humanity cares, and I care, and by God's help I shall not fail.'

When he spoke in public on the subject he said the sort of thing that went home. Clever and sane men would yield to his influence, swayed by his eloquence like corn in the wind. He could do anything with his audience. They would get up and yell and cheer like wild Indians. Listen,

boys and girls, to the closing words of one of his great speeches. I know you will understand them, for you have had the education of the Great War. 'Neither let us be slandered from our duty by false accusations against us, nor frightened from it by menaces of destruction to the Government, nor of dungeons to ourselves. *Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it.*'¹

When his hour of triumph came and the slave was made free, Abraham Lincoln, America's greatest President, fell by the hand of the assassin. But his spirit still lives—'his soul goes marching on.'

The common people especially had loved him. They mourned him as a father. To the negroes his passing was a great blow. 'Massa,' said an old darkey who was a barber, 'I can't shave you this morning. I dun know jes' what it is, but somethin' has gone wrong with Massa Linkum.' And war-worn veterans of the great Civil War broke down and sobbed like children when they learned that their great captain was dead.

In the midst of a great tumult in New York—50,000 men were in the streets—a voice rang out 'Fellow citizens! Clouds and darkness are round about Him. His pavilion is dark waters and thick clouds of the sky. Justice and judgment are the habitations of His throne. Fellow citizens! God reigns.'

So the torch of Lincoln was passed on, for the speaker was General Garfield, who afterwards became President.

And you boys and girls can endeavour to do your part in the world as he did his, by making one of his great mottoes yours:

I am nothing, but truth is everything.

Child of the boundless prairie, son of the virgin soil,

Heir to the bearing of burdens, brother to them that toil;

God and nature together shaped him to lead in the van,

In the stress of her wildest weather, when the Nation needed a Man.

Swift slip the years from their tether, centuries pass like a breath,

Only some lives are immortal, challenging darkness and death.

¹ J. A. Sharp, *Abraham Lincoln*, 106.

Hewn from the stuff of the martyrs, write on
the star-dust his name,
Glowing, untarnished, transcendent, high on the
records of Fame.¹

Mirrors.

'A mirror.'—James 1²³.

The text to-day is one you all know. Perhaps the girls know it better than the boys, but I think the boys may have seen something like it occasionally. The girls use it to help them tie up their curls and put their hats on straight, the boys to flash light in somebody's face on a sunny day. Well now, I have almost told you the name of it. Yes, it is a mirror.

You will find the text in the first chapter of James, the twenty-third verse. The mirrors St. James knew were not very like ours. In those days they had no glass mirrors such as we have. Instead they used thin plates of polished metal. Generally these were of bronze, but some of the finest were of silver. You may imagine it was not quite so easy to get a clear reflexion of yourself in one of these as in the nice glass mirrors you have at home.

1. Now we all carry a mirror about with us—you, and I, and everybody else. It is called the mirror of the soul; and in that mirror we receive the reflexion of the things and the people and the happenings with which we are surrounded. We may not realize that we are carrying these reflexions, but other people see them in us. If you are very much in a friend's company you begin to adopt his way of speaking, his little tricks of manner, his habits, and thoughts, and ideas. Very likely you are not aware of it, but other people notice it.

Once the errand boys in a certain part of London began to whistle out of tune. At last somebody discovered that the bells of Westminster were slightly out of tune. Something had gone wrong with the chimes and there was discord in them. The boys did not know there was anything the matter with the peals and quite unconsciously they had copied them. And so you will copy the people you are most with, and you will borrow your thoughts very much from the books you read—almost without knowing it.

So you see it matters very much what kind of

¹ M. E. Sangster.

company we keep, and what kind of books we read, and what kind of games we play. And the strange thing about these magic mirrors of ours is that the younger we are the brighter they are, and the clearer and stronger are the reflexions. Therefore where we take our mirrors matters much more when we are young than when we are older. Let us try to carry them always where they will reflect the things that are beautiful and true. For the things they once reflect they go on reflecting to the last.

2. But when we are thinking about our own mirrors we must remember that other people are carrying mirrors too, and as we cannot help receiving reflexions in our mirrors, so we cannot help casting reflexions in theirs. We cannot help influencing other people any more than they can help influencing us. Your younger brothers and sisters, your companions at school, even your fathers and mothers are carrying your reflexions every day. Do you know the sad story of the small boy who lost the naughty word. Here it is as told by himself:

I lost a very little word
Only the other day;
A very naughty little word
I had not meant to say.
If only it were really lost,
I should not mind a bit;
I think I should deserve a prize
For really losing it.

But then it wasn't really lost
When from my lips it flew;
My little brother picked it up,
And now he says it too.
Mamma said that the worst would be
I could not get it back;
But the worst of it now seems to me
I'm always on its track.

Mamma is sad; papa looks grieved;
Johnnie has said it twice:
Of course it is no use for me
To tell him it's not nice.
When you lose other things, they're lost:
But lose a naughty word,
And for every time 'twas heard before
Now twenty times 'tis heard.

If it were only really lost,
 Oh, then I should be glad;
 I let it fall so carelessly
 The day that I got mad.
 Lose other things, you never seem
 To come upon their track;
 But lose a naughty little word,
 It's always coming back.

Whether we like it or not other people pick up our words and our ways and copy them. What kind of reflexion are you casting?

3. Most boys and girls have heard of radium and some of them may have seen it. Radium is a marvellous element that has been discovered within very recent years. It produces heat and light, and its rays of light are so strong that they can penetrate quite easily through steel or other metals. One of the most wonderful things about the light of radium is that it is reflective. If you shut up a small quantity of radium in a card-board box for a short time and then take it out, the box will continue to give forth rays of radium for some weeks.

Now there is one place we must not forget to take our mirrors, and that is into the presence of Jesus the Light of the World. If we take them to Him, He will shine upon them with a perfect radiance. Then we shall reflect that light, and help to bring brightness and gladness into the world.

How to be Sorry.

'Rend your heart, and not your garments.'—Joel 2¹³.

'Rend your heart, and not your garments.' That sounds strange advice! Some of you know plenty about rending your garments, and I expect mother knows more than plenty about mending them. But that doesn't explain the text. What did the prophet Joel mean when he advised people to tear their hearts, and not their clothes?

Well, in the East they have lots of customs which we think strange, just as in the West we have lots of customs which an Eastern would consider strange. One of these ancient customs was to tear or rend the clothes to show grief, horror, or dismay. It must have been rather an expensive way of showing grief, you think. Yes, it does sound rather wasteful to our ears, but then we look at things with different eyes, and to the

Jews it was a way of proving how deeply they were moved.

Then, if it was a usual custom to show grief in this way, why did the prophet tell the people to rend their heart instead of their garments? And what did he mean by 'rending their hearts'? To understand we must go back a little.

The people of Judah to whom the prophet spoke had been going through a terrible experience. They had been visited by a plague of locusts, and the corn and the vines and the fruit-trees had been eaten bare, so that there was left no food for either man or beast. To add to the horror of it all a drought had accompanied the plague, and the rivers had dried up and the ground had become burnt like a brick. It was very terrible: but Joel told the people of Judah that they deserved it all. God had sent the plague and the drought to punish them for their sins. And Joel pleaded with them to repent of these sins—not merely outwardly, by rending their garments as a sign of grief, but inwardly, by being sorry in their hearts. He urged them to turn to God with penitent hearts, and God, he said, would pardon their sins, and perhaps remove the plague.

It seems to me that often when we say we are sorry we are merely rending our garments instead of our hearts. We are sorry to all outward appearance, but we don't care a bit at heart. We say, 'Oh, sorry!' in an off-hand sort of way, and we are really anything but sorry.

Once I knew a little girl whose elder sister had snatched away from her her favourite doll. She was a fond mother, and she didn't stop to argue the matter. She hit her sister a hard blow, and nurse caught her doing it. Nurse didn't ask who was to blame, she vigorously shook the doll's mother, set her in the corner with her face to the wall, and told her to stay there till she was sorry. Half an hour passed and nurse asked if she were sorry now. 'No!' was the decided reply, 'I'm not.' At the end of another half-hour nurse repeated the question, and still dolly's mama said, 'No.' 'Ah, well!' said nurse, 'if you won't apologize, and say you are sorry, you must just remain where you are.' 'Oh!' said the mite, 'I'll say *I apologize*, if you like, but I won't say *I'm sorry*, for I'm still glad I did it.'

That little woman was perfectly sincere and truthful. She knew the difference between *saying she was sorry*, and *feeling sorry*, and she would not

tell a lie even to get out of an uncomfortable corner. She wouldn't pretend what she didn't feel.

I'm afraid many people are content with pretending. But I don't want you to be one of those. I want you to be sorry with your heart as well as with your tongue. Being sorry with the tongue is only 'rending the garment,' but being sorry with the heart is 'rending the heart.'

Now I think you'll find that what we mostly have to be sorry for is one of two things: either saying or doing something to wound another, or persisting in some bad habit or fault.

1. *We have to be sorry for hurting some one.* How are we to be heart sorry for that? We are heart sorry when we not only apologize for the wrong but try to make up for it in some way, try to pay back in kindness an unkindness. Grown-up people call this 'reparation,' and it is a good name, for it means repairing as far as possible the damage you have done. And don't be content with a little reparation. Try how big a one you can make.

2. *We have to be heart sorry for our bad habits,* such as laziness or untruthfulness or selfishness or hot temper—any fault, in fact, that we know is wrong and yet persist in. And how are we to be sorry for a bad habit? Why, by stopping it! It's no use feeling a pang of sorrow at the moment and saying, 'I'll not do it again,' and then doing it the very next opportunity.

A gentleman once asked in a Sunday School in America what was meant by the word 'repentance.' A little boy raised his hand, 'Please, sir, being sorry for your sins.' A little girl also raised her hand. 'Well,' said the gentleman turning to her, 'what do you say?' 'Please, sir, it's being sorry enough to quit.'

Yes, that's it! Repentance is being sorry enough to quit, to stop doing the wrong, and to try with all your might and main never to do it again.

I won't promise you that it will be easy. In fact, I can tell you that it will often be extremely difficult. But then the difficult things in life are the things best worth doing. And I'll tell you this for your encouragement—the oftener you succeed, the easier you'll find it. So brace yourself, and go ahead.

The Christian Year.

QUINQUAGESIMA.

Emotion.

'They lifted up their voice and wept again, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave unto her.'—Ruth 1¹⁴.

There is a contrast between these girls. Both of them wept, for they had come to an end, and the chapter which was closing had brought marriage to them, and love, and hope, and bitter loss. Orpah kissed Naomi, for a girl likes to be kind, and the older woman had been a friend; yet having kissed her, she turned her face towards Moab.

If we widen out the question beyond the single case, we may recognize in the story two types of religion, of which only one has any value. Confessedly others than Orpah remain outside, mere Moabites to the end, whilst Ruth and hosts of companions with exactly the same amount of native disability are found within—and gloriously within. What accounts for so sharp a contrast? Both women were moved, but Orpah had nothing else than emotion, which expended itself in tears and embraces, whilst in Ruth the emotion had energy enough to carry her life and will along with it. Jesus warns us that 'not every one who saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven': like Orpah, it may be with a tearful face they turn away, and yet they remain outside. And what excludes them is not some churlishness or narrowness in God, it is the lack of serious purpose in themselves; for a will and hunger after God will open any door, it will master any exclusion.

The difference may become clearer as we study these types.

1. There is a kind of *religion which, practically, is without emotion.* Of this we have no example in the story, though in the world it is exceedingly common. Those who content themselves with it are often sober and diligent men, loyal to their word and faithful to their wives, and not forgetful of their Church. But in their religion there is no uplifting power; it is of the earth, and is fitted for inhabitants of this world. But the kingdom of God, as Jesus preached it, is more than a kingdom of virtuous earth; in its beginnings, it was the creation of His love and passion, and it was offered

to men, without condition, as to immortal creatures who have the larger part of their existence beyond the confines of this world. If we are to be citizens of it, we must have wings to lift us, that we may look down on life as He did, viewing its concerns *sub specie aeternitatis*, as they appear from the standpoint of eternity. Matthew Arnold defined religion as 'morality touched with emotion,' thus acknowledging that an element of this sort is indispensable; but the morality is not only touched with emotion, it is coloured and made glorious by it. And if in any man religion attains its end, that must be because it is inhabited by love and wonder, and the desire of things above.

2. There is a religion which is mere emotion. This is Orpah's type, in which what is lacking is will and persistence. Many people do not realize the shallowness of their own feeling. They 'pay themselves with words,' as the French say, finding a becoming phrase so satisfying that they ask for nothing more. In a sense, we all know that words are no sufficient indication of feeling. Goneril and Regan, King Lear's heartless daughters, were profuse in their professions of devotion, whilst Cordelia, who was willing to give her life for her father, was utterly awkward and stinted in speech:

I cannot heave

My heart into my mouth: I love your majesty
According to my bond, nor more nor less.

We do not need Shakespeare to tell us this; and yet in religion, and even in social life, we continue to delude ourselves, accepting the passing sentiment or the fit expression of it as if it were a full discharge of every debt. Jesus warns men that it is possible to come to the end of life with that delusion still unbroken: 'Have we not preached in Thy name, and in Thy name cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works?' And the claim is not disputed, for emotion, while it lasts, may carry people far: yet the answer is given from the Throne, 'I never knew you,' and thus they are outsiders still. What is most pitiful is that a man may, by his emotion, awaken a lasting interest in others and yet lose it in himself. 'The match which kindled the fire in the morning lies half consumed on the ribs in the afternoon': the fire of faith and love burns on in other hearts, when in the man himself it has

died out. Having preached to others, he becomes a castaway.

Richard Steele, the essayist, wrote one morning to his wife after a racking night, 'Dear Prue, sober or not I am ever yours, R. S.,' and there is no doubt that, for the moment, he meant what he said. But the fact was that, sober or not, he was not ever hers. He might return to her, but it required no very commanding interest to catch his mind away elsewhere, whilst poor Prue had to wait suspicious and indignant at home. A great deal of religion is of this quality, fugitive and volatile: 'O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?' cries God, 'for thy goodness is like the morning mist which quickly disappears'; and we cannot wonder that it should remain without effect.

3. But there is also a religion compact of emotion and purpose. This is Ruth's type, and to it all barriers are withdrawn, and the outcast passes in unchallenged to take her place with the family of God. Ruth can have known little of what lay in front of her. If she spoke Hebrew, it was no doubt stumblingly and with an accent; and in all the peculiarities of Hebrew life and usage which parted Bethlehem from Moab she would blunder often and have to make appeal for patience. Most of all, in religion and its practices she was barely at the threshold, only she had a mind that took her past the threshold and prepared her for anything that might be involved in being Hebrew now and not Moabite. And that steady casting of her vote on the nobler side secured her entrance, and, in God's mercy, it secures an entrance still.

To those who are halting at the door, well inclined to Christ's way, and yet undecided, and to those within the door whose task it should be to welcome and encourage, there is admonition even in the minor detail of the story. It is fine to see how promptly Ruth was taken at her word, and not held in some middle stage of probation. In Israel the name of Moabite was a grave burden of disadvantage, and odious tales were told of the origin of the tribes which sprang from Lot. But nothing of this suspicion and dislike appears in the talk of the village gossips. 'All the town knoweth that thou art a virtuous woman' (iii. 11) was their report of her, and to Naomi they said (iv. 15), 'Thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee, is better to thee than seven sons.' It is very pretty. In that jealously exclusive people she was not kept at arm's length; and in their tradition she sits enthroned, though she was born an outcast beyond recovery. She is a mother in Israel, mother of David, mother of Jesus the Christ, so gloriously has she entered within the pale, because with heart and will she sought for it.¹

¹ W. M. Macgregor, *Repentance unto Life*, 196.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

Offences.

'Woe unto the world because of occasions of stumbling! for it must needs be that the occasions come; but woe to that man through whom the occasion cometh! And if thy hand or thy foot causeth thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee: it is good for thee to enter into life maimed or halt, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into the eternal fire. And if thine eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is good for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into the hell of fire.'—Mt 18⁷⁻⁹.

The injunctions of our Saviour in regard to self-sacrifice are not difficult to understand if people approach them intelligently. Those who know Christ are confident that He did not advocate self-mutilation for its own sake or preach the impoverishment of life. If ever Christ asks men to deny themselves it is in order that more completely their true nature may be enlarged. If ever He bids men to 'cut off' or 'pluck out' a faculty, it is not for useless sacrifice, but in order that the main ends of life may be secured. It is manifest that three dangers of the soul to which our Lord made reference in this passage of St. Matthew's Gospel are inimical to the main ends of life.

1. 'The offence of the hand' to which our Lord drew attention may be described in less pictorial phrase as *over-practicalness*. It can hardly be questioned that the finer elements of human nature are constantly subject to harm from the excessive development of practical activity. Man's destiny is to labour, and the curse on Cain was probably a blessing. But man was made for something more than labour. If a merchant tells you that he has been so absorbed with business that the worry of it has been with him from morning to night, and he has had no time for reading or thoughtfulness, or even for the society of his family, and on Sundays he has been too tired to go to church, and has spent most of the day in bed, you can hardly help asking him, Is it worth while? Does it pay? Would you not be better to 'cut off' some of this activity and try to be your own man and, as the French say, 'make your soul'? If one meets a woman whose life is one long harassing anxiety over domestic cares and housekeeping and social duties, it is permissible to ask, Were you made for that? Surely intelligence was not given merely to be starved, and a woman's nature is too finely dowered if she was intended only to be a frivolous

plaything or a domestic drudge. Powers of reason and imagination and feeling and insight and faith and hope and love seem wasted on the man or woman who is only a machine. A man has more to do than conduct his business. A woman has more to do than to look after her home and her children. They have minds to cultivate, affections to develop, character to train for heaven.

'You were always a good man of business,' said Scrooge to the Ghost in Dickens' *Christmas Books*. 'Business!' cried the Ghost, 'mankind was my business, the common welfare was my business; the dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business.' If a man does not learn that sooner, he learns it when he comes to die.

2. Our Lord proceeded to indicate another risk of the highest life. He called it 'the offence of the foot'—a hard ambition and the determination at all hazards to 'get on.' Of course the opposite extreme of sluggishness finds no countenance in our Lord's teaching: it is severely rebuked by the Parable of the Talents, in which the man who kept his one talent in a napkin was denounced as a 'wicked and slothful servant.' In one of Edmund Burke's earliest speeches he explained the motives that animated him in seeking to be elected to the House of Commons: 'I wish to be a member of Parliament and to have my share of doing good and resisting evil.' That was surely a noble ambition, and there is a glow of fire in Disraeli's appeal to an audience of young men at Manchester: 'Young men, I bid you to aspire.' Legitimate anxiety for advancement, especially when the motive is service rather than personal distinction, is nowhere discouraged by the Word of God. 'If a man desire the office of a bishop,' said St. Paul, 'he desireth a good work.' Such forecasts of the future in hope and emulation are the spring of youthful enterprise. The dream of 'getting on' is an innocent and stimulating dream. But there can be no worse enemy of the finer qualities of the nature than a fierce and self-regarding ambition. The man whose every action is prompted by a far-sighted vision of his own advantage or promotion: the woman to whom social position and the acquaintance of people of rank and fashion are more important than old friendships or simple kindly offices of affection—they are bartering the best of life for an unholy worship of success. The climbers, the jostlers, the greedy claimants of place and honour, are among the most contemptible of

mankind. It is they to whom our Lord referred when He spoke of the offence of the foot. 'Cut it off,' was His sharp, swift remedy.

If ambition is hardening your heart, get rid of the ambition. 'By that sin,' said Cardinal Wolsey, 'fell the angels; how can man, then, the image of his Maker, hope to win by it?' Courtesy loses all its charm if it is suspected that a man is only courteous because he is afraid of making an enemy or losing a possible helper in his upward career. Sympathy and kindness are discounted if a sinister motive of prospective gain is discovered behind them. All the sweet wells of life are poisoned by undue ambition. The truth is that no honour worth having is worth seeking. If distinction and the regard of our fellows and the outward rewards of diligent public service do not come to a man as a spontaneous tribute of his fellow-citizens or fellow-Churchmen to disinterested merit, they lose whatever value they might contain.

3. The third sin of which our Lord spoke might be given the colloquial name of *Knowingness*. It is the offence of the man whose eyes are so sharp that he detects the flaws in every honourable character and the unworthy motives below every virtuous act. 'I am nothing,' said Iago, one of the most villainous characters in all literature, 'if I am not critical.' 'Every man has his price,' said the English politician, Walpole. 'Every woman is at heart a rake,' said Byron. That is the judgment on human nature which the very clever observers make. It is the offence of the eye. 'Once, when I was young,' such a man would tell you, 'I was simple and gullible. I believed in disinterested friendship and a pure passion of love. I was credulous enough to fancy that people might like me for myself, and might serve me without dreaming of a return. I know better now. David said in his haste that "all men are liars." I am ready to repeat it at my leisure.' Such is the unholy verdict of the man with the sharp eyes. In his judgment there is an unworthy motive under every apparently generous deed: mere prejudice under patriotism; vanity under benevolence; a selfish pride of possession under a woman's virtue; the hope of heaven even under a pretended love to God. It is just about the worst sign of any man that he should come to think and speak like that. Indeed, it is the devil's sin. For what does the word 'devil,' 'diabolus,' mean but the accuser—the slanderer of God and man?

It is recorded of our Lord Jesus that 'He knew what was in man.' Man's true nature was visible to Him. But there were no words of scorn on those tender lips; no 'fierce indignation' tore His heart as it tore the gloomy heart of the satirist Swift. The eye was gentle with which the Lord Jesus

looked on the men and women of His day. He knew how much of divine potentiality lay behind those imperfect lives. And let a sorrow come to us, and we too are amazed to discover how kind people can be, how warm are hearts that we had fancied frigid and self-contained. Let us really need friendship at a pinch, and all that is best in the people we know leaps up to the requirement. Is a kindly judgement or the scorn of the satirist the truer estimate of human worth? If thine eye, O clever man of the world, be thus offending thee—if you who boast about having seen life (though it is really death you have seen) have no longer a generous estimate of your fellows and no longer a belief in friendship or love—bethink you that you are mistaken. You are not ungenerous only, you are unjust. Pluck out that eye of knowingness—that clever, cynical, devilish spirit of mistrust. Learn to be like your Lord again, the Lord of love; and pray for the spirit of a little child.¹

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

Ashes.

'To give unto them beauty for ashes.'—Is 61^o.

In the Gospel according to Isaiah, there are many metaphors of striking beauty and prophetic tenderness; among them there is not one more arresting and appealing than the lovely little sentence which forms the text. It opens up a symbolism as rich as it is tender, full of instruction, and leading to the very heart of the Eternal. If we find the meaning of the words, we shall get close to the sheltering wounds of the Son of God, and feel the throb of the Infinite love.

In the Old Testament ashes represent four things.

1. First, and perhaps most of all, they are the symbol of human frailty. You remember the sentence which Abraham used in speaking to God, 'I am but dust and ashes.' In those words he spoke for the race. There is a frailty from which there is no escape, and of which there is no conquering. In the service by the grave, in the words of committal there is the phrase, 'ashes to ashes.' It is fitly used as a confession of weakness. Man's greatness at times seems to march to the very heavens; he rises as on eagle wings into the white light of the throne; yet his frailty makes him akin to the ashes and the dust. His thought soars upwards and onwards: it knows no bounds. It explores the unknown, yet by his frailty he is bound as by a chain. So many links of liberty—and then no more. Our frailty holds us at every point; while we know something of greatness and glory,

¹ R. H. Fisher, *The Outside of the Inside*.

we are conscious of the ashes—the final symbol of life, ashes blown by the winds into little heaps to be scattered again. We sometimes think we are strong as the gods, but a sudden twinge of pain tells the story of our frailty.

2. The symbol stands for humiliation. Mordecai, in the Book of Esther, is represented sitting in the gate, humbled, brought down to the dust. When he approached the Queen he went in ashes, and Esther took upon herself the symbols of humiliation. Jonah speaks to the disappointed monarch, sitting amid the ashes. We read of the kings who placed ashes upon their heads to depict that they had been brought low. Humiliation is not now indicated by the same symbols. We do not publish our defeat as men used to do, but it is none the less real. No man thinks deeply without frequently being humbled, and made to realize the humiliation of his limitations. We see so far, and beyond there is the mist, through which no eye can carry us. The feeling that throbs in one's heart craves expression. The little child on mother's bosom seeks in some way to acknowledge the caress that is so soft and sweet, but the little one has no language except a croon or a crow that is without intelligence. Mother's heart may interpret it, but it has no place in the dictionary. Our speech at its best is an attempt to express the inexpressible. We do not get beyond the crooning and crowing. When all has been said, we are conscious that we have not quite expressed what we felt. You never said your best things; you never will; and the consciousness of failure is humiliation.

3. The ashes symbolized in the Old Testament grief. Job, when he could not cry any more, sat down amid the ashes. It told the tale of his sorrow that was too great for words. The women who had lost everything sprinkled ashes on the threshold of the home. They told of the desolation and the emptiness within. The home had become a prison; the presence which was the light of love had gone; the music had died away in silence. Death had swallowed up life, and the ashes interpreted the grief.

Anne Brontë tells the story of a broken heart in some lines of a hymn. Anne was the sister who tried to keep a smiling face, though the pain was always in her limbs. She brought gladness to the heart of her clever sister Charlotte. While her limbs were so contracted, and hands so deformed that she could scarcely hold a pen, she wrote those words:

I hoped that with the brave and strong,
My portioned task might lie:
To toil amid the busy throng,
With purpose pure and high:
But God has fixed another part,
And He has fixed it well;
I said so with my breaking heart,
When first this trouble fell.

They ought not to be sung. They are the agonized cry of the soul, the symbol of grief.¹

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

Beauty.

'Beauty for ashes.'—Is 61³.

In the Revised Version of the Scriptures, the word 'beauty' gives place to the word 'garland.' George Adam Smith translates it by the term 'crown.' They are all near the truth, but do not quite express it. It has beauty as a garland of flowers, and the garland represents the crown or, better, the flowers about the head of the one in authority. In 1 Ch 20², there is the story of David coming back with a garland upon his head, with the crown, the beauty that marked him as the victor, as the man of power in battle. He was acclaimed the one in authority. Power was in his hands; he wore the garland; upon him rested the beauty. Paul speaks of the believers who were his joy, his crown—the garland representative of gladness. In the Roman feasts every guest wore a twist of flowers about the head. When Caesar called the guests to his table, the first thing was to place a garland upon each as the sign of joy and festivity. God gives a garland of gladness. He makes our hearts joyful by His presence. The normal note of the Christian life is joy. It is just as much a command to 'Rejoice in the Lord' as 'Thou shalt not steal.' Beauty stands for reward. In 1 Cor 9²⁴, St. Paul speaks of those who run to obtain the crown. He speaks of the incorruptible crown that is laid up for those who follow the Christ and are faithful. In the Book of Revelation there is frequent use of the crown as the symbol of final victory. Let us see a message in the metaphor.

1. We are all conscious of our weakness. This is the glad tidings, that God gives power to the frail. There is weakness that is the prophecy of strength, a frailty that is the indication of a greater power than that born of our common nature. God

¹ J. C. Carlile, *Vision and Vocation*, 174.

is might, and worketh in us mightily to accomplish His will. It is 'not by might or by power, but by my Spirit,' saith the Lord. There comes a time when all our human force can avail nothing, and we turn not to knock or seek, but to ask, and we receive. They that wait upon the Lord shall change their strength. Their strength that was weakness is laid aside, and they receive strength that does not fail. When one realizes the meaning of dust and ashes, one is very near to the Divine secret. The world is greatly indebted to people who were physically weak. One of the paradoxes of life is that so frequently strength is derived from a broken reed—that the strong guiding intellect is in a body so frail that it is hardly capable of effort. The treasure of God is often in earthen vessels, sometimes in broken vessels. There was one who said: 'When I am weak, then I am strong'; he knew the Divine secret.

2. It is a great thing to know the secret place where God gives beauty for ashes. It is hard by the Cross, where love is revealed in suffering. Do not hesitate to bring all your grief to Him. I think He loves to lift the heavy load. It is a great saying of St. Augustine that 'God is happiness; not simply true, but Truth; not only beautiful, but Beauty—and in Him, from Him, and through Him all things are happy and true and lovely which are so at all.' As we enter into communion with the Divine Lord, joy fills the soul, and the outstanding characteristic of the faithful is their deep abounding joy.

I have found a joy in sorrow
A secret balm for pain—

is the experience of those who sincerely seek the upward way. Following Christ is not simply a series of renunciations. It is delight in the practice of His presence. We need not pity the early saints in their trials, terrible as they were. They went through the world with a song in their heart. They had received the Master's gift of joy. As we read their story, its strange note, so unlike the familiar representations of the saints, there is an answering echo in our hearts like the waking of a long-forgotten melody: 'Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through

his poverty might be rich.' There is the treasure of His grace waiting for us: beauty for ashes.

In Canterbury Cathedral there is Beckett's tomb, over which there used to be a shrine to which many pilgrims went. The shrine was approached by a flight of steps. The religious came up upon their knees, following an ancient custom. It sometimes happened that among the pilgrims would be some who walked up the steps, and came boldly to the shrine, but they did not receive the benediction. The old priests were very careful only to give the blessing to those who were upon their knees. The custom may have been nothing more than the growth of a superstition, but it points a moral. The blessing is for the lowly. It will come to us while we are upon our knees. Perhaps God does not use some gifted men because they are not lowly enough. Not many great, not many wise, have been called to the higher stations of service. He delights to take the base things of the earth to confound the mighty, to lift up the lowly, and to give honour to the humble.

3. If it be true that there is no rose without its thorn, it is equally true that there is no thorn without its rose. In grief the sweetest joys are born. The promise does not mean that God will take away the grief and give joy in place of it, but rather that in the very heart of the grief itself there is a joy infinitely greater than sorrow; that in the cup of bitterness there is something else that changes its nature. 'It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.' It is better that the heart should be broken than that it should remain simply a piece of flesh like the heart of an ox; the very wound may be the opening of the fountain of a purer joy and a truer life than was known. Whatever temple success may build, there will always need to be hard by a little Gothic chapel for sorrowing souls.

On the human side, all life ends in defeat. The strongest must come to the dust and ashes at last. No poetry can make the grave other than the grave. It is the place where the defeated are laid out of sight. Life begins with frailty and ends in defeat. If we be not more than human we are less than we suppose. Life goes out in darkness, and the strongest is broken as the surf upon the sea. But thank God it is true that in the place of defeat we may find victory. There is beauty for ashes. Where we see failure, we shall behold success; where we see oblivion, God rings up the curtain. It is not the end, but the opening of another chapter. What in this life is called death, in the life beyond is known as birth; and when we behold it from the other side, we shall not say, 'So-and-so has died,' but 'has been born into life.' That is the message of the metaphor.¹

¹ J. C. Carlile, *Vision and Vocation*.