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

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

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

In the Study.

Eli.

'Because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.'—1 S 3^{13}.

Eli the high priest of Israel was descended from Ithamar the younger of the sons of Aaron. How the younger line of Ithamar came to be substituted for the elder line of Eleazar, we do not know. Eli would seem to have succeeded Abishua, of the older line of Eleazar; and there must have been some occurrence, involving failure on the part of Eleazar's descendants, and special favour towards the descendants of Ithamar, to account for an arrangement which violated the hereditary law that governed the transmission of the priesthood.

In the person of Eli were united for the first time in the history of Israel the two offices of high priest and judge. He is stated to have judged Israel forty years (1 S 4^{18}). Great things seem to have been expected of him, for if ever the office had a chance of fitting itself to the Theocracy and becoming the permanent form by which the Theocracy was to be worked, it was now when the civil and ecclesiastical power met in one man, and when personal merit and hereditary standing seemed to be combined in a single person. Eli is an interesting study, if only as an example of how a really good man may prove a failure.

I.

A Two-sided Character.

Eli had a good side and a bad side.

1. Look at his good side first. There was an entire absence of envy in him. He furthered Samuel's advancement and assisted it to his own detriment. Eli was the one in Israel to whom, naturally, a revelation should have come. God's priest and God's judge, to whom so fitly as to him could God send a message? But another is preferred: the inspiration comes to Samuel, and Eli is superseded and disgraced. Besides this, every conceivable circumstance of bitterness is added to his humiliation—God's message for all Israel comes to a boy: to one who had been Eli's pupil, to one beneath him, who had performed servile offices for him. This was the bitter cup put into his hand to drink. And Eli himself assisted Samuel to attain this dignity. He it was who perceived 'that God had called the child.' He did not say in petulance—'Then, let this favoured child find out for himself all he has to do, I will leave him to himself.' Eli meekly told him to go back to his place, instructed him how he was to accept the revelation, and appropriate it: 'Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth.' He conducted his rival to the presence chamber which by himself he could not find, and left him there with the King, to be invested with the order which has been stripped off himself.

It is a proverb, 'Humility comes through humiliations.' To make an act of humility might cost nothing. Mortifications from others do cost.[1]

(1) Eli's perception that it was God who spoke to Samuel must have had a pang in it. It is not easy for the old to recognize that the young hear God's voice more clearly than they, or for the superior to be glad when he is passed over and new truth dawns on the inferior. But, if there was any such feeling, it is silenced with beautiful self-abnegation, and he tells the wondering child the meaning of the voice and the answer he must make.

It may be that Eli had not forgotten the little injustice he had inadvertently done to Hannah, when he mistook her unwonted fervency in prayer for a sign of intoxication. How promptly and eagerly he accepted her explanation, and hastened to relieve her wounded spirit: 'No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord.' 'Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace; and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him. And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.' Thus he turned her weeping into joy.

(2) Eli resolved to know the whole truth. He would not have Samuel leave out anything, out of regard to his feelings. He must know the whole, however painful it may be. He has learned to reverence God's truth, and cannot bear the idea of not knowing all. And Samuel, who did not wish to tell him anything, is now constrained to tell

[1] *Spiritual Letters of Edward Bouverie Pusey*, 316.

him the whole. He 'told him every whit, and hid nothing from him.' He did not shun to declare to him the whole counsel of God.

(3) He was resigned to the will of God. Looking at this aspect of Eli's character, we feel a reverence for the old man. When he was told that his house would be rooted up, that both his sons should die on one day, that the judgment of the Lord had set in against him and his successors, what did he say? He was nearly a hundred years old; his eyes were dim; for forty years he had maintained a position of supremacy. Men cannot easily throw away the traditions and the social consequence of so long-continued an elevation. Yet when the old man heard his doom, he said, 'It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.' How many of us could have shown the same submissiveness, the same religious homage, under circumstances so terrible? An earthquake shaking the foundations of your house—a storm-cloud pouring out its flood upon your inheritance! Yet Eli was no vengeful priest in that hour; he was no mere self-seeker in that terrible day. Even then, when the foundations were rocking under his feet, and all the surroundings of his life were full of tempestuous and devouring elements, he said, with an old man's tremulous pathos, 'It is the Lord'—equal to, 'Let God be true, and every man a liar; He is sovereign, I am servant; whatsoever the Judge of the whole earth doeth shall be done in righteousness.'

'It is the Lord.' The highest religion could say no more. What more can there be than surrender to the Will of God? In that one brave sentence you forget all Eli's vacillation. Free from envy, earnest, humbly submissive—that is the bright side of Eli's character, and the side least known or thought of.[1]

Resignation is too often conceived to be merely a submission, not unattended with complaint, to what we have no power to avoid. But it is less than the whole of a work of a Christian. Your full triumph as far as that particular occasion of duty is concerned will be to find that you not merely repress inward tendencies to murmur—but that you would not if you could alter what in any matter God has plainly willed. . . . Here is the great work of religion; here is the path through which sanctity is attained, the highest sanctity; and yet it is a path evidently to be traced in the course of our daily duties.[2]

2. Greater prominence is given in the Bible to the other side of Eli's character.

(1) Our attention is turned to the gross wickedness and scandalous behaviour of Eli's sons. There are many dark pictures in the history of Israel in the time of the Judges—pictures of idolatry, pictures of lust, pictures of treachery, pictures of bloodshed; but there is none more awful than the picture of the high priest's family at Shiloh. In the other cases members of the nation had become grossly wicked; but in this case it is the salt that has lost its savour—it is those who should have led the people in the ways of God that have become the ringleaders of the devil's army. Hophni and Phinehas take their places in that unhonoured band where the names of Alexander Borgia and many a high ecclesiastic of the Middle Ages send forth their stinking savour.

Eli knew what was going on and dealt with the state of things in the worst possible way. He spoke against it, but he did not act against it. 'I hear,' he said to his sons, 'of your evil dealings from all this people. Ye make the Lord's people to transgress.' The scandal went on. When the ark was sent to the camp, it was accompanied by Hophni and Phinehas. And every Israelite knew that, if Hophni continued to hold his present position, he would at no distant date sit in the seat of Aaron. Eli only talked to his sons; and we can understand how he may have persuaded himself that this was enough: that instead of making a painful resolution, it was better to leave matters alone. If he were to do more, was there not a risk that he might forfeit the little influence over the young men that still remained to him? Would not harsh treatment defeat its object, by making them desperate? Might they not attribute the most judicial severity to mere personal annoyance? If, after speaking to them, he left them alone, they would think over his words. Anyhow, they would soon be older; and as they grew older they would, he may have hoped, grow more sensible; they would see the imprudence and impropriety as well as the graver aspects of their conduct; they would anticipate the need for action on their father's part by a reformation of manners which would hush the murmurs and allay the discontent of Israel. And even if this could not be calculated on very securely, something might occur to give a new turn to their occupations; in any case, it might be better to wait and see whether matters would not in some way right themselves.

How this sin of Eli's, in his treatment of his sons, commenced, we cannot tell; probably in

[1] F. W. Robertson, *Sermons*, 4th ser., 10.

[2] J. Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, i. 216.

their early childhood, when their evil dispositions began to show themselves, and he spared the rod and withheld correction. What his sin was, is very precisely pointed out;—'he restrained them not.' Doubtless he taught them; surely he prayed for them; he certainly exhibited to them the example of a holy and blameless life;—but he restrained them not. At first, he might have restrained them with, comparatively, a very gentle hand: a firm voice, a decided look, might have been enough; a few instances of patient, persevering determination, with an absence of all angry passion provoking them to wrath, might have taught the little rebels how hopeless it was to think of making their father yield to them; judicious kindness, not being bitter against them, would have made them feel the relief and gladness of yielding to him; and thereafter he might have guided them with his eye. Failing at that first stage to form in them the habit of obedience, Eli's task became of course more difficult as his sons grew in strength and stature, as well as in force of will. The waywardness and impetuosity of early youth, succeeding to the insubordination of spoiled and fondled childhood, presented a stouter aspect of resistance or defiance.

Self-government with tenderness—here you have the condition of all authority over children. The child must discover in us no passion, no weakness of which he can make use; he must feel himself powerless to deceive or to trouble us; then he will recognize in us his natural superiors, and he will attach a special value to our kindness, because he will respect it.[1]

The rod produces an effect which terminates in itself. A child is afraid of being whipped, and gets his task, and there's an end on't.[2]

(2) It is true that Eli was a decrepit old man, from whom much vigour of action could not have been expected. But even if he was old and decrepit when the actual state of things first burst on his view, there was enough of the awful in the conduct of his sons to have roused him to unwonted activity. David was old and decrepit, lying feebly at the edge of death, when word was brought to him that Adonijah had been proclaimed king in place of Solomon, for whom he had destined the throne. But there was enough of the startling in this intelligence to bring back a portion of its youthful fire to David's heart, and set him to devise the most vigorous measures to prevent the mischief that was so ready to be perpetrated. Fancy King David sending a meek message to Adonijah—'Nay, my son, it is not on your head but on Solomon's that my crown is to rest; go home, my son, and do nothing more in a course hurtful to yourself and hurtful to your people.' But it was this foolish and most inefficient course that Eli took with his sons. Had he acted as he should have acted at the beginning, matters would never have come to such a flagrant pass. But when the state of things became so terrible, there was but one course that should have been thought of. When the wickedness of the acting priests was so outrageous that men abhorred the offering of the Lord, the father ought to have been sunk in the high priest; the men who had so dishonoured their office should have been driven from the place, and the very remembrance of the crime they had committed should have been obliterated by the holy lives and holy service of better men. It was inexcusable in Eli to allow them to remain. If he had had a right sense of his office he would never for one moment have allowed the interest of his family to outweigh the claims of God.

For what were the interests of his sons compared with the credit of the national worship? What mattered it that the sudden stroke would fall on them with startling violence? If it did not lead to their repentance and salvation it would at least save the national religion from degradation, and it would thus bring benefit to tens of thousands in the land. All this Eli did not regard. He could not bring himself to be harsh to his own sons. He could not bear that they should be disgraced and degraded. He would satisfy himself with a mild remonstrance, notwithstanding that every day's new disgrace was heaped on the sanctuary, and new encouragement given to others to practise wickedness, by the very men who should have been foremost in honouring God, and sensitive to every breath that would tarnish His name.

I should almost dare to say there are five generous men to one just man. The beauty of justice is the beauty of simple form; the beauty of generosity is heightened with colour and every accessory. The passions will often ally themselves with generosity, but they always tend to divert from justice. The man who strongly loves justice must love it for its own sake, and such a love makes of itself a character of a simple grandeur to which it is hard to find an equal.[3]

[1] *Amiel's Journal*, 35.
[2] Johnson.
[3] J. Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, ii. 640.

(3) 'The best things when corrupted become the worst.' It is thus with official positions such as were held by the priests of old. Their positions were an hereditary right, and their duties consisted largely of a prescribed routine of services. It was required, however, that their personal character should accord with their sacred work (Mal 2^7); and their influence was great for good or evil. Whilst they reflected in their character and conduct the moral condition of the times, they also contributed in no small degree to produce it. The sons of Eli employed their high office not for the welfare of men and the glory of God, but for their own selfish and corrupt purposes, and afford an example of 'great and instructive wickedness.' They were unspiritual men, and practically infidel. And they were such notwithstanding the instructions they received, the opportunities they possessed, and the services they rendered. Although the servants of God, 'they knew not God,' and were 'without excuse.' Not satisfied with the liberal portions of the peace offerings which were legally assigned to them (the breast and shoulder), they claimed other and larger portions, to which they were not entitled, and robbed the people for the gratification of their own appetites. What they would have fiercely denounced in others they deemed venial offences in privileged men like themselves. It was required by the Levitical law that the fat should be burnt on the altar before the offering was divided between the priest and the offerer; but instead of doing this, the priest sent his servant beforehand to demand his portion with the fat, that it might be better fitted for roasting than boiling, which was not to his taste. He thus appropriated to his private use what belonged to the Lord, and 'robbed God' of His due.

(4) Eli's feebleness arose out of original temperament. His feelings were all good: his acts were all wrong. In sentiment Eli might always be trusted: in action he was for ever false, because he was a weak, vacillating man. Therefore his virtues were all of a negative character. He was forgiving to his sons, because unable to feel strongly the viciousness of sin; free from jealousy, because he had no keen affections; submissive, because too indolent to feel rebellious. Before we praise a man for his excellences, we must be quite sure that they do not rise out of so many defects. No thanks to a proud man that he is not vain. No credit to a man without love that he is not jealous: he has not strength enough for passion.

All history overrates such men. Men like Eli ruin families by instability, produce revolutions, die well when only passive courage is wanted, and are reckoned martyrs. They live like children, and die like heroes. Deeply true to nature and exceedingly instructive is this history of Eli. It is quite natural that such men should suffer well. For if only their minds are made up for them by inevitable circumstances, they can submit. When people come to Eli and say, 'You should reprove your sons,' he can do it after a fashion; when it is said to him, 'You must die,' he can make up his mind to die: but this is not *taking* up the cross.

There was one peculiarity in Goethe's nature, namely, a singular hesitation in adopting any decisive course of action—singular, in a man so resolute and imperious when once his decision had been made. This is the weakness of imaginative men. However strong the volition, when once it is set going, there is in men of active intellects, and especially in men of imaginative, apprehensive intellects, a fluctuation of motives keeping the volition in abeyance, which practically amounts to weakness; and is only distinguished from weakness by the strength of the volition when let loose. Goethe, who was aware of this peculiarity, used to attribute it to his never having been placed in circumstances which required prompt resolutions, and to his not having educated his will; but I believe the cause lay much deeper, lying in the nature of psychological actions, not in the accidents of education.[1]

(5) There can be no more fatal guide to a man setting out in life than the instinct which chooses what is agreeable, and avoids everything that is harsh and difficult. Many a graceful, amiable, and well-intentioned youth has thus reached an end of infamy. The character which shrinks from all collision with other men, which cannot face obloquy, which shrinks from inflicting pain, not because it hurts other people so much as because it shakes one's own nerves, which does all in its power to preserve the belief that this life is before all else for comfort and pleasure—this character is one of the most dangerous that wanders over this earth, dangerous for itself and dangerous for others also. Its apparent gentleness and goodness in the beginning arise mainly from the gaiety and good spirits of youth, and from the desire to stand well with everybody, which very desire will ultimately entangle him with sin, and devastate his life. There are times in most lives when the current of circumstances sets strongly towards sin, and when

[1] G. H. Lewes, *The Life of Goethe*, 492.

a man will certainly sin if his rule of life has been to avoid all that is painful, and to choose what will for the time give him security and ease. The life of such a man, however promising it seems in youth, becomes weighted and entangled by a constantly accumulating burden of difficulties and sorrowful remembrances, and unavailing regrets, until at last he is, like Eli, almost glad to hear that what he has so long seen must be a losing game is over, and that his doom is imminent.

There was a man to whom I was very near, so that I could see a great deal of his life, who made almost every one fond of him, for he was young and clever and beautiful, and his manners to all were gentle and kind. I believe, when I first knew him, he never thought of anything cruel or base. But because he tried to slip away from everything that was unpleasant, and cared for nothing else so much as his own safety, he came at last to commit some of the basest deeds—such as make men infamous. He denied his father, and left him to misery; he betrayed every trust that was reposed in him, that he might keep himself safe and get rich and prosperous. Yet calamity overtook him.[1]

II.

Divine Discipline.

1. We see in this story, the terribleness of God's displeasure. 'I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. . . . I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth. . . . I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.'

In a great battle, fought with the Philistines, the Israelites were defeated with the loss of about four thousand men. It was a serious blow, and produced deep searchings of heart among the elders. 'Wherefore,' said they, 'hath the Lord smitten us to-day before the Philistines?' In their perplexity, they resolved to fetch the Ark of the Covenant out of Shiloh, thinking that, by some magic influence, it would help them to retrieve their fortunes in the field. Hophni and Phinehas joined in this impious freak, and we may suppose that Eli himself gave his sanction. It often happens that the most profane persons are the most superstitious; those who live in habitual forgetfulness of God are apt to lay great store by omens, witchcraft, and even paltry charms; and to these misguided men the Ark of the Covenant meant little more than that. But they soon discovered that the symbol of the Divine presence was of no avail, when the reality was withdrawn.

[1] George Eliot, *Romola*, ii. 388.

Dragging the ark thither only removed God farther away. We need not be too hard upon these people; for the natural disposition of us all is to trust to the externals of worship, and to put a punctilious attention to these in the place of a true cleaving of heart to the God who dwells near us, and is in us and on our side, if we cling to Him with penitent love. Even God-appointed symbols become snares.

It was on March 21st, 1877, that, being full of St. Benedict as portrayed by Montalembert, and also in a peculiarly hopeless state about my own reform, straight in the teeth of my Protestant conscience, I prayed to the Saint, if perchance he might hear or help. I had really no faith in what I was doing, but clutched as a drowning man will at a straw. As well as I can remember I was reading Compline (as I did then at my night prayers) and had stopped in the middle of a psalm, by way of distraction, to make this experiment. I resumed in due course at the words: 'Quoniam in me speravit, liberabo eum; protegam eum quoniam cognovit nomen meum; clamabit ad me et ego exaudiam eum; cum ipso sum in tribulatione, eripiam eum et glorificabo eum,' etc. etc. I have lived on that, and two or three similar coincidences ever since.[2]

2. Is there in poetry or drama a more vivid and pathetic passage than the closing verses of this narrative, which tell of the panting messenger and the old blind Eli? 'Eben-ezer' cannot have been very far from Shiloh, for the fugitive had seen the end of the fight, and reached the city before night. He came with the signs of mourning, and, as it would appear from v.[18], passed the old man at the gate without pausing, and burst into the city with his heavy tidings. One can almost hear the shrill shrieks of wrath and despair which first told Eli that something was wrong. Blind and unwieldy and heavy-hearted, he sat by the gate to which the news would first come; but yet he is the last to hear—perhaps because all shrank from telling him, perhaps because in the confusion no one remembered him. Only after he had asked the meaning of the tumult, of which his foreboding heart and conscience told him the meaning before it was spoken, is the messenger brought to the man to whom he should have gone first. How touchingly the story pauses, even at this crisis, to paint the poor old man! A stronger word is used to describe his blindness than in 1 S 3^2, as the

[2] *Autobiography and Life of George Tyrrell*, i. 122.

Revised Version shows. His fixed eyeballs were sightless now; and there he sat, dreading and longing to hear. The fugitive's account of himself is shameless in its avowal of his cowardice, and prepares Eli for the worst. But note how he speaks gently and with a certain dignity, crushing down his anxiety—'How went the matter, my son?' Then, with no merciful circumlocution or veiling, out comes the whole dismal story.

The Divine symbol, with its overshadowing cherubim and its sacred light, into which year by year Eli had gone alone to sprinkle the blood of atonement on the mercy-seat, and where he had solemnly transacted with God on behalf of the people, was in an enemy's hands! The ark, that no Canaanite or Amalekite had ever touched, on which no Midianite or Ammonite had ever laid his polluted finger, which had remained safe and sure in Israel's custody through all the perils of their journeys and all the storms of battle, was now torn from their grasp! And there perishes with it all the hope of Israel, and all the sacred service which was associated with it; and Israel is a widowed, desolate, godless people, without hope and without God in the world; and all this has come because they dragged it away from its place, and these two sons of Eli's, now gone to their account, encouraged the profanation!

3. Of the utter ruin of Eli's household we need not speak. The priesthood passes away from his family; the government is upon other shoulders; his seed are a beggared race. The last incident recorded concerning his children is most profoundly touching; it is the birth of his grandson, the child of his son Phinehas. The unhappy mother hears of her husband Phinehas, fallen in the disastrous fight; and of her father-in-law Eli, suddenly dead. She cannot stand the shock. She bows her head, and the pangs of premature travail are upon her. The women about her say, 'Fear not; for thou hast born a son.' But there is no joy for her because a man-child is born into the world. She is a godly woman, broken-hearted by the sin and fate of an ungodly husband. She is like-minded with her husband's godly father, Eli. When the women tell her of the son she has born, 'she answered not, neither did she regard it.' But with her dying breath she named the child 'Ichabod'; for she said 'the glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken.'

The whole house of Eli is a ruin: the priesthood degraded; the nation defeated; the ark taken; and, amid the wreck, his own family broken up, and the sole survivor launched on the stream of time with an ominous name, and under a heavy curse. And all this in connexion with one of the meekest and holiest of the saints of God! It is a terrible lesson. And in keeping with it is the lesson taught by the melancholy notice of his own decease.

When the law of moral consequences is recognized as fixed and absolute, the hope to escape from it would be as great madness as to resist the law of gravitation. George Eliot's best known expression of this law is in *Romola*: 'Our deeds are like our children that are born to us; they live and act apart from our own will. Nay, children may be strangled, but deeds never: they have an indestructible life both in and out of our own consciousness.' This is the old Buddhist doctrine of Karma. St. Paul had put it still more briefly: 'Be not deceived: God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.'[1]

Virginibus Puerisque.

Birthdays of Good Men and Women

'And turning to the disciples, he said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see.'—Lk 10[23].

There are many lovely homes in England, but few so beautiful as that in which Alfred Tennyson was born on a summer day in 1809. He was one of a large family—there were twelve children altogether—and the father was rector of a village church in Lincolnshire.

The Tennyson boys and girls had a very happy time. The boys were specially fond of games. But books were really their chief amusement; when the leaves were off the trees and the winds blew and the trees swayed and cracked they would tell each other stories. Alfred was the best of them all at romancing. One story of his lasted for months; it was called 'The Old Horse.'

Alfred loved his mother very dearly. From her he inherited his love of animals and his pity for 'wounded things.' She was a very religious woman. Long afterwards when he had become a great man, he said, 'She was the beautifulest thing that God Almighty ever made.'

You have, I feel sure, heard people speak of certain boys and girls as having an ear for music. When he was just a wee fellow—five years old—Alfred Tennyson heard music in the wind. A storm was sweeping through the Rectory garden;

[1] C. Gardner, *The Inner Life of George Eliot*, 117.

he ran from the house stretching out his little arms and crying,

'I hear a voice that's speaking in the wind.'

No wonder that he began to love poetry early. He heard music in the words of it. His brother Charles, who was rather older, did the same. When they were fifteen and seventeen years of age, they together issued a volume of poems, and Charles told afterwards how on the afternoon of its publication he and Alfred hired a carriage with some of the money earned, drove to their favourite seashore and shared their triumph with the wind and the waves.

You boys and girls know what it is to form a friendship apart from your brothers and sisters. Well, the Tennyson brothers went to Trinity College, Cambridge, to study, and there Alfred found a great friend in a fellow-student whose name was Arthur Hallam. He was very clever indeed and good as well. One meets boys, and girls too, who can never bring themselves to be enthusiastic over the work of a companion, or to listen in a good spirit when any friend tells them their faults.

Arthur Hallam looked up to Tennyson as to an older brother, yet he was his critic. He could praise his friend's work or he could condemn it, and all the time the two loved each other even as David and Jonathan did.

Arthur Hallam died when he was twenty-two. Tennyson felt very very sad, but through constantly remembering that he was loved by his friend a new thought was born in his mind. That thought grew until by and by Death did not any longer mean to him separation from his beloved friend, but rather the gate to a higher and better life that was nearer to Arthur Hallam because nearer to God.

He wrote down his thoughts in a great poem called *In Memoriam*. That poem not only crowned him a king among poets, it spoke of God's love to those who could not always feel sure about it. Grown men and women spoke to each other of the new and brighter outlook. It was like seeing a halo of light where the gloom of death used to be. And so Tennyson became not merely a poet, but, through the love of a friend, the preacher of a gospel of gladness.

Many of you here know him only as the poet who wrote 'The May Queen.' It is a touching story told in words that make music: you want to hear it again and again. You almost feel that you know the little May Queen, who came to be sure of God's love when she was very very ill. Tennyson loved her, he loved all little children, and had the heart of a child himself. When he was quite an old man he was made a Peer. Henceforth he was known as Lord Tennyson; but at eighty years of age the Peer remained the little child. We know that from a beautiful little poem he wrote then. He was thinking about death, for he was feeble and tired. But he was not afraid. The child's trusting heart was always there—don't you recognize it?

> I hope to see my Pilot face to face
> When I have crost the bar.

He was afraid his son would not quite understand who the 'Pilot' was, so he explained Him as being 'That Divine and Unseen who is always guiding us'; who is guiding you, boys and girls.

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;
For, tho' from out our bourne of time and place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

When you read or sing 'Crossing the Bar,' you will feel that the writer of it was a friend of yours—will you not?

'People, be Dood.'

'Who went about doing good.'—Ac 10^{38}.

Some of the boys and girls here know the name of John Ruskin. You know that he was a great writer and teacher of last century, and that the things he wrote were wise and beautiful and noble. Now I want to tell you about the first sermon John Ruskin ever preached. How old do you think he was when he preached it? Just three years! And what do you think he said?—'People, be dood. If you are dood, Dod will love you. If you are

not dood, Dod will not love you. People, be dood.'

Well, Ruskin was not much more than a baby then, and he didn't understand one of the most wonderful facts—that God loves us even when we are naughty, that He loves us all the time. Nevertheless I think it was very good advice that baby Ruskin gave, 'People be good'; and so I am going to say to you to-day, 'People, be good; boys and girls, be good.'

But what does being good mean? There have been many different ideas about that. Once upon a time men thought that to be good they must shut themselves away from the world. And some of them lived as hermits in dens and caves of the mountains and gave themselves up to fasting and reading holy books and saying long prayers. That was not Jesus' way. We read of His going apart into a desert place to pray, but that was only that He might talk with His Father and renew His strength for the work God had given Him to do. Jesus' way of being good was doing good. Our text tells us that He 'went about doing good'—not just thinking about it, or talking about it, but *doing* it. And so the best way to *be* good is to *do* good.

The other day I read a story about a father who was going from home for a short time, and as he was taking leave of his small son he said, 'Good-bye; be good.' 'Right-o, Father,' replied the small boy. A few days later father returned from his travels and his first question was, 'Well, Tommy, have you been a good boy?' 'Oh yes, Father,' was Tommy's prompt reply. But father had once been a boy himself, so he thought he would inquire a little further into matters. 'Well now, Tommy, did you do as your mother bade you?' Tommy was a truthful small boy, so he owned up that he hadn't always. 'And were you kind to Alec?' (Alec was the small brother.) 'Well, one day he made me awful mad and I struck him.' 'Then how do you make out that you were good?' 'Well, you see, one day I heard another boy say a bad word and I smacked him on the mouth.'

Tommy's father was wiser the next time he went from home. Instead of telling his son to be good, this is what he said, 'Do what your mother tells you, be kind to your small brother, speak the truth, and play fair.' That is the kind of thing that doing good means.

You know the world is made up of a great many different kinds of people, in fact there are about as many different kinds as there are people, but if we judge people by their deeds, I think there are four main classes.

1. First there are those who go about *doing harm*. I hope none of you belong to that class, for there are a few boys and girls in it as well as grown-ups. Wherever these people go they have a bad influence. If they get into a school, the whole tone of the school is lowered. If there are any such in your school don't have anything to do with them. You can be quite agreeable to them, but don't make them your chums or listen to their talk.

2. And then there are those who go about the world *doing mischief*. They are not intentionally bad these people. Very often they just mean to have a little fun. And so long as the mischief doesn't hurt others, there isn't much harm in it. But mischief has an unfortunate way of hurting others in a way we never thought of. For the mischievous people are generally the thoughtless people. Now I'm not going to mention the different kinds of mischief, because you know them just as well as I do, and if I happened to mention a particular kind you hadn't thought of, you might want to go and try it straight away. But I just want to say this. If you do wish a little fun and nonsense, try to choose the kind that doesn't hurt other people.

3. The third kind of people go about the world *doing nothing*. I don't mean to say that they are absolutely idle. Some of them are very busy indeed. Some are very busy making money, others are very busy enjoying themselves. But for all that they do to make the world better or happier or more beautiful, they might just as well not have lived.

There was a Roman Emperor once called Titus. And if he did not right some wrong or do some good thing each day he used to say to his courtiers, 'Alas! I have lost a day.'

Titus was only a heathen, but I think he might have put to shame many people who live in Christian lands. Don't be a 'do-nothing.' God sends us each day as a beautiful gift, and we must see to it that we make good use of it. What are you doing with your gift?

4. But lastly, there are the people who go about *doing good*. That was what Jesus did, and if we want to learn how to do good we must look to Him.

What kind of good did Jesus do? He made sick people well, He made sad people glad, He made bad people good. We can help to make sick people well, by being kind to them when they are ill, and by giving our pennies to the hospitals where the sick people are cared for. We can help to make sad people glad by a smile or a word or a loving look. We can help to make bad people good. How did Jesus do it? By being good Himself, by believing the best about them, and by loving them. And we can help to make people good in the same way—by living a beautiful life, by believing the best about others, and by loving them.

God has a big work to do in the world, and every little kind and helpful and unselfish and loving thing you do helps it on. Wouldn't you like to be God's helpers?

Somebody did a golden deed:
Somebody proved a friend in need:
Somebody sang a beautiful song:
Somebody smiled the whole day long:
Somebody thought, ''Tis sweet to live':
Somebody said, 'I'm glad to give':
Somebody fought a brave, good fight:
Somebody loved to help the right:
Was that somebody you?

Hidden Rocks.

'Hidden rocks.'—Jude 12.

What is the greatest treat when you are on holiday at the seaside? Paddling? No; better than that! Building sand castles? No; more exciting than that! Swimming? No; even jollier than that! What, then? Why, going for a row in a boat, of course! That is 'top hole' as you boys say, especially if you are allowed to steer for a bit, or take an oar occasionally. If you add to these joys the joy of dangling a line over the side of the boat and catching fish to fry for tea, you will agree with me that an outing like that is hard to beat. When you go for such a row I have a piece of advice to give you, and it is this. Take an old sailor man with you. Why? For two very good reasons—the first of which is that if you want to fish he will show you the best fishing ground; the second, that he will keep you clear of our text. Our text, like strong currents, is one of the dangers of going for a row on a coast you do not know. If you wish to find out what that danger is turn up the Revised Version of the Bible at the second last book, the Epistle of Jude. In the twelfth verse you will find two words, 'hidden rocks,' and in these two words you have both the text and the danger.

Any sailor will tell you that hidden rocks are one of the worst dangers of an unknown coast. Sometimes you can tell that they are there from the white line of foam which breaks over them, and at very low tide you may see their black tops showing above water. Sometimes the water is perfectly calm and smiling above them, and there is no sign to tell you that they are beneath. But if the sun be shining and the water clear, lean over the side of the boat and you will catch a glimpse of their dark forms. You will notice that some are sharp and jagged like the teeth of a saw, others are rounded or covered with a thick coat of seaweed; but you feel that though they may look different they are all capable of knocking a very nasty hole in the bottom of your frail boat. Sometimes the channel between their hungry teeth is so narrow that the boat has to be steered very carefully to get you safely through. You are not so keen on holding the tiller then; you are only too thankful to hand it over to some one who knows the passage.

Boys and girls, the sea is not the only place where we find hidden rocks. We find them in everyday life; and the rocks we find there are even more dangerous than those to be found in the ocean. Strange to say, too, the hidden rocks of life, like the hidden rocks of the sea, are of two kinds. The first show a path of white above them. They hoist a danger signal. But the second are so hidden that we cannot tell they are there till suddenly one day a flash of light reveals them to us.

1. Now, for the first kind—those that hoist a danger signal. These are, I think, the wrong things that we know quite well we should not do, yet straightway go and do them. We know that they are dangerous, but we deliberately run our little boat on to them. What would you say of a sailor who steered straight for the foam that marked a hidden reef? You would call him either mad, or foolish, or both. Well, when you know a thing is wrong and yet do it, let me assure you you are equally mad and foolish.

Of course I know that often it is more difficult

to steer away from the rocks than to steer to them. People who want you to do wrong have a peculiarly maddening way of daring you to do it, and hinting that you are a coward if you refuse. When you come across such people, remember this. It is more splendid to be a moral hero than a merely physical hero. It is more splendid to turn a deaf ear to taunts and refuse to do what conscience whispers to be wrong, than it is to yield to mockings. Conscience is the foam on the hidden rock, and if we disregard it we deserve shipwreck. To run headlong into danger or temptation is no sign of bravery.

A gentleman once wished to engage a coachman. He had a number of applications from good men. How do you think he chose among them? He took them all to a certain road which lay between a hill on the right side, and a precipice on the left; and he asked each in turn how close to the edge of the precipice he could drive. One man said he thought he could drive within a foot, another said within nine inches, and a third was certain he could drive within six inches. The last man said, 'I should keep as far from the edge as I possibly could,' and the gentleman promptly engaged him.

2. What about the second kind of hidden rocks? I think these are like the many things we do every day without realizing that they are wrong. They lie hidden so deep in our heart and are so well concealed that we never suspect their existence; and just because we don't know of them, just because they hoist no danger signal, they are all the more dangerous. Lots of us would be tremendously surprised if we saw how selfish we were. We always thought that was just standing up for our rights. We should be surprised, and shocked too, to learn that we were mean and greedy. We always imagined we were just taking our share of the good things of life. Then others of us would be astonished to find that we were spiteful and revengeful, we had always thought that was merely paying people back in their own coin. Perhaps a few of us had been thinking ourselves perfect and patting our own backs and despising others, but we called that self-respect and did not think how hideous a fault it was. Boys and girls, look into your hearts to-day. Ask God to flash some of His own light into their darkness and discover to you their hidden faults.

Then, having discovered them, set about getting rid of them with His help. You know what is done to dangerous rocks in a harbour channel. They are blasted out with gunpowder. That is what we must do with the hidden rocks in our heart. We must blast them out; and we must ask God to help us to do it, for we shall never get rid of them without His aid.

The Christian Year.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Preacher as Prophet.

'Whom shall I send?'—Is 6^{8}.

Those truths about God, those thoughts about life, which are to interpret men to themselves and God to men—how does the prophet attain to them? The answer, implied in the very name of prophet, is that he receives them from God. But let us look into this answer and see what it means. For there is a danger of superstition here, and of much loose and indefinite thinking. There is nothing magical in the reception of God's word by the prophet. In His communications with men, God uses regular and ascertainable means of imparting His message to them. Of course there are occasional exceptions to all such rules as this—eccentricities of inspiration, some of which may be quite beyond our power of explaining or analysing. But the normal process is clear. A man begins with *experience and study*; out of these rise *visions* of certain truths which are specially direct and certain; finally, these truths grow more and more imperative in their demand that he shall proclaim them, and that is the preacher's *call*.

1. *Experience.*—In order to be a true prophet, the preacher must know God and find out the truth about life, not by hearsay, but in his own experience. It is for his own soul that he must first find interpretations. He must drink deep draughts of life, living intensely and strenuously. Some prophets have written the message that they sent forth in their own hearts' blood, and no message has ever been or will ever be very convincing that has not a dash of the prophet's blood upon it. Behind every prophet's preaching there lies his wilderness, where he has fought alone with devils and been aware of the presence of both wild beasts and angels. There he must have wrestled with doubt until his thinking grew clear and articu-

late; he must have fought for character against temptation. So when he comes forth to men, he must ever seem to meet them as one who is fighting their battle on ground where he has won his own.

2. Along with experience there must be *study*, especially in an age like this, when the preacher's task is to interpret God and life to men who are reading widely for themselves. The message given to a preaching man is not a spontaneous and independent revelation, which would be identically the same whether he had read anything or not. Only extremists will tell you that the preacher ought simply to depend upon the guidance of the Spirit at the moment, and that diligence in preparation is incompatible with the prophetic ideal. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Every book read will contribute to the message, and become part of the inspiration of the Spirit. The opposite view corresponds exactly to that of the plenary and *verbatim* inspiration of the Scriptures in its crudest form, the relation between the Spirit and the man whom He inspires being simply that of flute-player and flute. The prophets of the Bible used for their prophesying every means of education available in their times and circumstances. Each of them was the child of the past as he knew it, and his knowledge of it, and of all else that he knew, can be traced in the things which he said. The modern study of the developing consciousness of Jesus is founded upon the presupposition that the same principle applies to the utterances even of the Saviour Himself. The fact is that there is no such phenomenon as a prophet receiving a message which is not affected, and so far limited, by his own knowledge acquired in ordinary ways. God does not give us revelations regarding matters of fact which our own study ought to give us; but if we shall be at pains to acquire knowledge, God will show us its bearings and its use. Study is not only compatible with prophetic utterance: it is absolutely essential to it. He who would aspire to the high office of the prophet must serve his apprenticeship as a humble and faithful student.

3. *Vision.* — Experience and study are not enough. Neither the man of experience nor the man of books is necessarily a prophet. There must be a selection among the various ideas and impulses gathered in these two ways—a selection not made voluntarily by the preacher, but made *in* him by a higher Power. Of all his varied gatherings, some will become different from the rest—more inevitable, more urgent. 'The first thing that is necessary in an orator,' says Hichens, 'if he is to be successful with an audience, is confidence in himself, a conviction that he has something to say which is worth saying, which has to be said.' This confidence will be found to attach itself not to the whole of any man's discourse, but to a certain part of it which includes only the man's enthusiastic convictions. These detach themselves from the rest of his opinions, and become a kind of intuitive and brilliant group of certainties, which form the core or nucleus of his thinking. Such groups may well come under the name of vision, for the note of them is their certainty and directness of truth. Regarding these, John Bunyan writes: 'I could not be contented with saying, "I believe and am sure"; methought I was more than sure.'

4. There is one thing more in the full equipment of the prophet, and that is his *call.* Vision by itself does not constitute a call. A man may find certain groups of ideas rise within him to such brilliance as to assume the absolute mastery over his life, and to become 'the light of all his seeing,' and yet he may feel no call to proclaim those ideas to others. A vision becomes a call only when there comes upon the man who has received it a passionate desire to impart it to others. It is when vision becomes imperative, when a man must either speak out or break his heart, when he cannot be content with holding convictions but must strive to make them the convictions of others, that his call has come.[1]

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Lift up your Eyes.

'Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.'—Jn 4^{35}.

The vision that floats before me is a vast synthesis of all the experience which the human race has ever had or ever will have had.

1. First, we must have full trust in reason to verify and define the facts of that experience. The Agnostic is out of court, whether he calls himself a Christian or something else. We shall want everything that philosophy can tell us of the working of the divine within us, the whole teaching of science about its working in the world, the

[1] J. Kelman, *The War and Preaching*.

most searching criticism to unravel its course in history; and we shall need the highest of culture to throw over all the divine charm of grace and beauty.

2. But this is not enough: no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. No one man born in sin can reach the many-sided fulness of truth. We need a deeper social science to set our relations to each other in a fuller light of truth, and to shape our society more after the dim outline of that kingdom of God which every Theist must believe in, though he may not call it by a Christian name.

3. But this again is not enough. As no one man can cover the divine expanse of truth, so neither can any one nation. After all the advances we boast of in our civilization, we have inherited by far the largest part of it from the past. History was old when the Pyramids were built, Greece and Israel already stand on the platform of an ancient civilization, and every generation has added to the august tradition which is now the common heritage of cultured nations. But Asia must help us too. It is impossible that the new-born energy of Japan should never have anything better to teach us than the mere craft of war. The ancient wisdom of India may well have a new career before it, now that we ourselves have made for ever vain her immemorial barriers of the Indus and the desert. More than this, I can well believe that some of the noblest work of a not distant future may come from peoples on whose ancestors we ourselves look down as proudly as of old imperial Rome looked down upon our own.

4. Can we stop here? Is not all this enough? Certainly it is not. All this may be vast and grand; but all this as yet is dead. We may have philosophy and science, criticism and culture in perfection, and a finely organized society too, and still have no life in us. But where shall the spark of life be found? The deep saith, It is not in me; the sea saith, It is not with me: yet it is found in the land of the living. Now you must not mistake me if I tell you what it is. The spark of life is mysticism. I do not mean the follies and worse than follies which bear the name, but the conviction, acted on if not expressed, that a true communion with the divine is given to all that purify themselves with all the force of heart and soul and mind. If there is a man without a touch of this mystic faith, that man is dead while he liveth; for there can be no personal religion, and therefore no true religion, without something of it. Its most definite form is the Christian—he that hath this hope in God purifieth himself as the Man of Nazareth was pure. But it may be quite as real when it is much less definite than this, or not even consciously expressed at all. Those of us who believe in a true light whose ever-present coming into the world lighteth every man, are beyond all others bound to confess that every work which is done on the face of the wide earth for love or duty is as truly communion with God as the Supper of the Lord itself can be, from the Three Hundred in the pass to the child in the slums who gives his last penny to one that needs it more than he does. Here is the secret of the knowledge of God. One common duty done with a true heart will teach more of it than any amount of learning. And it is just the common duties that teach more of it than the great victories. The Man of Nazareth showed His knowledge of men as well as of things divine when He gave us to understand that it is a greater work to give the cup of cold water than to raise the dead. And in these 'greater works' there can be no distinction of race and rank, of age and sex, of learned and simple, and least of all of Christian and pagan. The Church of the first-born which are written in heaven is not limited by election or formal conversion, or even by the Christian name. Its doors are open to all that seek and follow truth, for, as Hort would say, every thought of the heart which is in any sense unworthy is first of all untrue.

Many years ago it was my fortune to spend a Sunday in the great and ancient city of Lyons. Towards evening we climbed the height of Fourvières. A glorious historic site was at our feet, with memories reaching backward to the Council which smote the Hohenstaufen Empire into ruins, and backward still to the time when the threescore states and five of Gaul came year by year to render thanks to heaven for the blessings of the Roman peace. They told us that we could see the Alps. But I looked vainly into the mists that were gathering over the broad plain beyond the meeting of the rivers. 'Look higher': and there they were. High in the air above, the last rays of sunshine lighted up those glorious domes of rosy snow, full seventy miles away. Like those mountains is the revelation of God in history and in your own life. You will not find it in the mists of selfishness and cherished sin. Lift up your hearts, and you will see it looking down on you. But it is not the setting sun which lights the Church of God, the Church of all that love and follow truth. It is the light of the morning, the light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.[1]

[1] H. M. Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, ii. 325.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Character of the Kingdom.

'The kingdom of God is at hand.'—Mk 1^{15}.

Jesus presented the idea of the Kingdom in various aspects and in different forms, but withal there was a remarkable unity running through all His teachings.

1. He represents the Kingdom of God as primarily a *subjective state of the individual.* He laid decided stress on its personal and spiritual aspects. He declared, 'The Kingdom of God is within you'; and again, 'the pure in heart shall see God.' The Kingdom comprises the moral principles and emotions. In so far as it was established in the person of its members, it was invisible and spiritual. The ruling thought in His mind was that the Kingdom was first a present and spiritual realm. He was to rule within the sphere of human impulses, desires, and affections. He was to hold court in the human heart. The internal thoughts and affections were to be the seat of His throne. Personal loyalty was the ground of obedience. He was to rule through an experience born of personal affection. His will was not to be enforced through magistrates and rulers, but through a consciousness of His presence acting in the life of the individual. His subjects were to do right from the love of right. Their acts of justice and mercy were to be illumined with the light of love so that the law of righteousness should become to them the perfect law of liberty. The conscious nearness of the personality of God as a living, working force in human affairs would awaken in His followers a new centre of interest and hope. It would enable them to find rapture of soul in His service. His Kingdom in this sense was one of cheer and gladness.

2. Jesus likewise applied the term Kingdom of God to a *present objective in society* as well as to the interior spiritual reality for the individual. He taught broad, general principles which were applicable to different circumstances and to different ages. They were to find adequate expression in every sphere of human activity. The implication of His teachings is that the individual is to attain perfection in and through the perfection of society. The Kingdom is to begin in the individual mind and heart and then grow until it embraces the universal interests of all mankind. It is primarily a spiritual Kingdom but having physical aspects. The material world is the arena of its conflicts and triumphs. In so far as His ideals and spirit dominate human institutions and interpenetrate the various forms of the associated and complex life of the community they become part of His Kingdom. The Home, the Church, and the State are included in its extent.

3. The Kingdom is to be *realized in this world.* The simple and comprehensive petition, 'Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven,' which Jesus taught, upholds the lofty ideals of the Kingdom to be realized in this world. Its whole import shows that it is thoroughly human. In His opening address He says, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' He speaks of it as coming nigh unto His hearers who did not conceive of it as an abstract ideal but rather as a living reality. They were to consider it a present fact and a present opportunity confronting every man. It was to be this world illumined and morally crowned. At His coming the Kingdom began to be realized. He did not confine His teaching to represent the Kingdom as something beyond the clouds that was to be postponed to the future world, but it was to be realized in fact. It was a Kingdom of right relations among men established here and now but progressively realized.

4. Jesus also presents the Kingdom under the *aspect of a future event.* Many of His statements corresponded with the popular conception of the day that the Kingdom was to be inaugurated by a future crisis. The apocalyptic aspect of the Kingdom is taught in a series of parables recorded in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew. These parables indicate that they are to have their climax in the final results. The fact that Jesus represents the Kingdom of God as a future apocalyptic event does not conflict with His previous social teaching. It is both a present and a future event. The Kingdom begins in the individual heart and then manifests itself as a vital force in upbuilding the Kingdom in the earth, and finally reaches its culmination in the future and eternal Kingdom. The earth is to be the place of the perfected Kingdom, but not the whole of it. The millennium will come by the increased dominance of Christ's quiet and persistent influence until the whole human family is under His control. The Kingdom, like the grain of mustard seed, begins imperceptibly and through its unobtrusive and continuous influence in society, grows until it becomes a conquering power

in the world and finally reaches a state of heavenly perfection.[1]

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Revolutionary Christ.

'Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time . . . but I say unto you.'—Mt 5^{21}.

There are three ways in which Christ made a revolution in the thought and life of His contemporaries.

1. In their ideas about right and wrong. And in two ways.

(1) He relaxed none of the old prohibitions of the Ten Commandments, He 'fulfilled' them; that is, He developed them and added to them in more ways than one. For example, the old law took the form, 'Thou shalt not.' He added, 'Thou shalt.' Now, have we quite realized what a very great step this was in the moral and religious education of the world? 'Thou shalt not'—'Don't do this,' 'Don't do that,' is the law of the nursery, as every one remembers. It is always reminding the child of its naughtiness. It marks a great advance for any one when his eyes are opened to see that a far higher rule of life consists in 'Thou shalts.' This reminds every child of its capacity for goodness. That is the appeal which brings out all that is best in every one. See what it is doing to-day for Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. It is one of the open secrets of a public school. It is the 'Thou shalt,' for the good of the house and the school, that makes a man out of a child. Think what the adoption of 'Thou shalt' as the motto of life, in place of the old repressive 'Thou shalt not,' has done for girls and women during the war. 'Thou shalt,' with an appeal to principle, is the education of individuality, of independent thought. It is spiritual emancipation. It gives free play for the Divine in manhood and womanhood to express itself. It puts religion far above the plane of fear, and lifts it to the plane of love. It marks an immense advance.

(2) But Christ developed the old standard of morality in another direction. In addition to forbidding the wrong act He forbade the wrong thought. It was not the crime, which the law can deal with, that came first with Him, but the sin, the wrongness in thought, that came first. That development revolutionized our standard of judging ourselves. It demands holiness instead of respectability. And respectability is a very different thing from holiness. Again, I do not say that we have learnt the lesson; but we know that we must learn it if we live in the spirit of Christ. This difference also points to a more spiritual thought of God, a loftier theology introduced by Christ.

2. Another revolution which Christ made was in the idea of worship of God. This is less familiar, because few of us have enough detailed knowledge of what the authorized national worship of God was like in Christ's day, even among the Jews, to realize what a revolution it was that Christ wrought. We get in the Gospels a few glimpses of Jewish worship: we read a few allusions to sacrifices going on in the Temple—killing animals as a mode of approaching God; a few allusions to rules about the Sabbath, rubbing ears of corn in one's hands being unlawful, for example; about clean and unclean foods; about washing hands and cups and similar trifles as religious duties.

But most of us do not know enough of all this to realize that this was the authorized conception of the service due to God; that the professional teachers had relegated to a secondary place the grand words of the old prophets; and that they had reverted to childish and almost heathen conceptions of God. It is a ceaseless danger. Routine and externals are so easy a religion; spiritual effort is so hard.

Now, put side by side with this our Lord's teaching. He does not undervalue the discipline of careful and reverent obedience. 'These things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone'; and 'the other' were the weightier matters of the law, judgment and mercy and faith and the love of God. What must we infer from this startling contrast? Must it not be that Christ had a wholly different thought of God from theirs? Was it not because of this difference that He taught that the service of God must be different from theirs? That is the only possible conclusion.

3. There is a third difference in Christ's teaching, the difference in attitude towards our fellowmen. Christ declared that respect, mutual service, brotherhood, love, ought to take the place of indifference and competition and strife for mastery. When He said, 'So it shall not be among you,' He announced a new social, industrial, political,

[1] J. M. Barker, *The Social Gospel and the New Era*, 6.

international, practical principle of infinite importance, of which the world is only beginning now to see the possibilities. This also plainly shows Christ's thought of God as a life and Spirit, inspiring every human soul, and therefore demanding for every human soul our respect and reverence and love. We shall never wish to recur to the old elementary morality, the old sacrificial worship, the old hostile relations of men and nations to one another. As little ought we to wish to cling to the old thought of God from which they sprang.[1]

[1] J. M. Wilson, *Christ's Thought of God.*

The Use of Sign and Symbol in Worship.[1]

By the Reverend H. J. Wotherspoon, D.D., Edinburgh.

In the life of the Spirit, worship is an important element; and in worship symbolism is probably more or less necessary, and is presumably in some measure serviceable. In that aspect—of edification and of assistance to devotion, and not in the æsthetic or antiquarian—I propose to consider the subject assigned to me. Worship is communion with God. Public worship is also communion of man with man, involving, therefore, the psychology of the group. Is it, as such, helped by the use of sign and symbol? Can we by such use reach better expression towards God, or realize better a common consciousness in Divine things? Can we thereby find a greater joy, or obtain a closer fellowship with one another? That is, I take it, our question, and when it is put in that broad way, the answer would, I think, with all due precaution and qualification, be necessarily in the affirmative, and the question would remain a question rather of degree.

Certain distinctions might be necessary:—we must not confuse symbolism with ritual, or with ceremony, or with ornament. Ritual has to do with *rite*—and a rite is an act of Divine service (such as, *e.g.*, marriage or confirmation), and it may include the use of symbol, or it may not. Ceremony, again, relates entirely to the manner of doing things, which must be done somehow, and may be better done in a manner agreed. Ornament, on the other hand, is an attempt at beauty, generally unsuccessful. Ornament may of course be symbolic—for example, we may, very inappropriately, paint the cross on floor tiles, to be trodden under foot: but the symbolism has nothing to do with beauty, and decoration has no necessary connexion with symbolism.

[1] An address delivered at Aberdeen, September 19, 1919.

The criterion of symbolism is significance, and its significance is its whole value, which is more likely to lose by elaboration than to gain. Two bits of stick are tied together and set on a grave mound in France—there you have the symbol complete, and it means more thus than the marble which the Director of Graves may by and by substitute for it. *Sunt lacrimae rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt.*

One should distinguish, too, between the symbol and the sign. The rude cross on the soldier's grave is a symbol—the dinted helmet which lies on the mound below it is not a symbol, but a sign. Both of them 'touch the mind,' but in different ways. The symbol is metaphorical—the sign is factual; the symbol implies something abstract—the sign reminds of something that has happened or that is true. In marriage, for example, the ring is a symbol—of perpetuity and fidelity: the grasping of hands is a sign, *de presenti*, of the covenant then made. The cross is a symbol of sacrifice, the crucifix is not a symbol, but a sign—it reminds of the actuality of the Atonement, that Christ bore our sins actually thus on the gibbet. A symbol signifies—a sign shows. A sacrament does both.

As for the legitimacy of symbol: its philosophic background is in the nature of things and in our constitution. '*The invisible things of God*,' says the Apostle, '*are from the creation of the world clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.*' Everywhere the material is expressive of the spiritual. The Divine thought repeats itself in more speeches than one, and on more planes than one; so the spiritual is echoed and repeated in the physical. '*Things made*,' are expressive of truths. Nature is one vast symbolism — the Universe is sacramental — it is the