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of course. But that was not the question which He was asked. And that was not the question which He answered.

How then do we read in St. Mark's Gospel that the Pharisees simply asked Him, 'Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?' It is quite possible that the Pharisees put it that way. But if they did they could only mean 'put her away for every cause.' For there was no dispute or doubt about a man's right to divorce his wife for adultery. It may be that St. Mark gives the question in an abbreviated form; it is much more probable that he gives it in the form in which it was actually asked, for the Pharisees would take it for granted that Jesus understood. It is also probable that St. Matthew added 'for every cause' to prevent his Gentile readers from misunderstanding.

Since therefore—this is Archdeacon CHARLES'S conclusion—'since, therefore, our Lord's state-

ments on divorce condemned only those who put away their wives on inadequate grounds, and since these statements explicitly in Matthew and implicitly in Mark admit the right of divorce on the ground of adultery, it follows that there is no justification whatever in Christ's teaching for the attitude assumed by a large body of ecclesiastics who, at the present day, deny the right of divorce in the case of adultery, and the right of subsequent remarriage to the guiltless person, and, in the case of such remarriage, refuse such persons Communion—in other words, excommunicate them. Of these ecclesiastics, who lord it so mercilessly over the heritage committed to them, we may say, with the Old Testament prophet that by their misrepresentations, unconscious for the most part, "they have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom God hath not made sad," and that, like their forerunners in the New Testament, they are making void the teaching of Christ by their traditions.'

The Minister's Message for To-day as inspired by the New Testament.

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IN the last resort, the New Testament message for to-day is just the message for yesterday and for to-morrow. We heard more than enough, probably, three years since about everything being different after the war. Without paradox or perversity, it may be argued that everything rather is the same. The war has not changed the nature of God or the moral law; it has not created sin; and the longing for immortality which it released into thrilling expression had been there, latently, all the time. We are not discovering man's need or God's gospel, but only returning to them. And yet out of that infinite reality which we call the Gospel, each generation, each period of crisis, inevitably makes its own selection. Out of the great organ note of redeeming Love, the present-day Christian ear is catching certain undertones

and overtones—lifting them into prominence, valuing them afresh. All I can hope to do now is to mention one or two of these in the belief that they have a special timeliness, a palpable suitability to our position. The only general remark that need be made is that the New Testament is, at bottom, the most hopeful book ever written; so that the man who preaches pessimism to-day, or disseminates it by his talk, is badly out of line with the Apostles.

This, too, may be added—that if a message is to help men, it must be capable of being described as doctrinal. 'No preaching,' said Phillips Brooks, a fairly good judge, 'ever had any strong power that was not the preaching of doctrine.' What we are discussing is a *message*—not hints, or rumours, or even aspiring ideals, but great affirmations that

proclaim what God has done and what therefore we can trust and live by.

I.

The groundwork of the message is this—that *something has happened*, something great, unprecedented, Divine, something which people mean when they utter the name 'Jesus.' Right through the Gospels and Epistles you can follow the bright track of that persuasion. Their uppermost feeling was that now that Jesus had been here, the world could never again be as it had been before. Jesus Himself felt that, and said so. He knew that in Him God had visited and redeemed His people. Hence a new age, a happier and better era, had now begun. 'Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear,' He said: they see and hear things which prophets and saints had longed for, and had missed. The Kingdom of God was upon them, and now men were called to enter, and were entering. St. Paul and St. John repeat this certainty. 'God sent forth His Son'; 'old things are passed away'; 'we know that the Son of God is come, and has given us a knowledge of Him that is true.' Supernatural redemptive powers, they feel, are out in search of man. Jesus, mighty to save, had not been there before, and He was there now.

What is it that gives the Roman Church its steady power over millions? I remember meeting Dr. Denney in 1912, and he said, 'I've just got back from Berlin. In church after church I found fifty or a hundred people, then I crossed the street to Roman Catholic churches and found them full—full of men.' How do you explain that? For myself I have not the least doubt that the reason, in large part, is this, that under all accretions of superstition and of distaste for truth the Roman Church has stuck to the purely religious conviction that here in this world there is to be had such a thing as Divine salvation, a supernatural Redeemer who can heal and feed the soul. Whatever may be said of its theology, in its worship and preaching it has not dissolved Christ in general principles. And if our line is to go down far enough, if it is to touch the fingers of captives sunk and manacled in the prison-house of sheer unrelenting fate and raise them to breathe God's air beneath His sky, we must proclaim the miraculous gospel. We must tell people that things happened in Christ,

and through Him are happening still, which nothing but God's boundless power can account for. Every mission worker is familiar with these things. But they occur elsewhere too. During the war I called on a delicate woman, all of whose three boys had been swept away in a few weeks, and as we parted on the door-step her last words were, 'The Lord is very kind.' That is supernatural religion.

II.

Another element in the message is the Fatherhood of God with the Cross at its heart. Protestant Christendom is running no greater risk at the moment than an amiable conception of the Fatherhood. Opinions may differ as to the cause of this. Possibly it is the aftermath of queer non-Christian views of God that circulated during the war, or it may be that modern love of comfort has corrupted even the loftiest Christian idea and we like to have everything pleasant about us, even our conceptions of God. Anyhow, one feels now and then that very little would send us back to the genial, sedate, uninspired Rationalism of the eighteenth century, for which Christianity was an 'agreed measure.' But the Fatherhood disclosed in the New Testament is Fatherhood with Calvary as its token. 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself,' 'God so loved the world that He gave His Son'—we all know the texts and have all wondered over their sheer irreducible minimum of meaning, as they put vicarious suffering for the guilty right in the centre of God's life. That is the New Testament message at its height. What we are shown in the Gospels is not merely Jesus as a sublime or impressive person: always and everywhere He is engaged in a work, He is doing something, He is travelling on to death for men. So too in the Epistles, what we find is not just any kind of faith, the attitude of people more or less persuaded, rather inclined to think God is good; on the contrary, it is a passionate response to the redemptive passion of God in Christ, and a deep devotion set on fire by that. The first point in Christian religion, if the New Testament is any guide, is not to do something for Jesus Christ, but to let Him do something for us. That is how He put it. 'The Son of man came not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom.'

Before 1914 some of us were growing shy of talking in sermons about the redeeming sacrifice

of Christ. It seemed a primitive, uncouth kind of phrase, out of keeping somehow with the predominating desire to have everything in religion quite ethical. We were in search of a better terminology. Then all at once a curious thing happened. The army went out, and instantly the very phrases which had sounded outworn and antiquated leapt to our tongue when we spoke of the soldiers and what they were enduring for us. It was the simplest, the most natural thing in the world to talk of *their sacrifice*. As one conservative writer put it, and he was no jingo: 'We live because they die, we are redeemed by their precious blood.' It was an irrepressible instinct. Yes, and that instinct goes still deeper in religion; it has power over our thought of God more profoundly even than over our thoughts of man. It is in the New Testament, and it must be in our preaching. God forbid I should say that no genuine faith can be awakened by any other sort of preaching; yet there are degrees of truth and adequacy, and if we are to stir in our contemporaries the gratitude and penitence which have upon them most distinctively the elemental Christian mark, and are richest in Christian impulse, we must declare such a Fatherhood as men only perceive as they stand, or kneel, there before the Cross. St. Paul said to the Corinthians that he resolved to know nothing among them but Jesus Christ—and there we have followed him as we could. But he went on—'and Him crucified'; and for an age which has had its notions of sacrificial love tragically deepened, the secret is in these three words. The Son is the Father's living portrait, and both Son and Father are best understood in the death for sinners.

Quaerens me sedisti lassus;
Redemisti crucem passus;
Tantus labor non sit cassus.

But the Father in whom Jesus believed was Power equally with Love. That is why on reflexion we can see that certain current ideas regarding 'a finite God,' while they may seem to prompt moving and energetic preaching, become, if they are taken seriously and no longer as didactic hyperboles, the most self-defeating of mistakes. To think of God the Father as very much like ourselves, in difficulties, at least half ignorant of the future, a baffled struggler for whom the upshot of the struggle is most precariously uncertain, is to

make God, as a major observed to his padre, 'a rather pitiful being.' In His presence commiseration might easily become a temper more fitting than worship. There is nothing an easy-going world needs more to get back into its religious attitude than *awe*; but the representations of the Father I have just alluded to will scarcely help us there. When will men learn that they *must* not try to be wiser than the greatest Bible thoughts, and that Jesus knew best? Could we give men a bigger faith by preaching a smaller God?

III.

The message must also speak of the power of the Spirit. Two incidents recur to me at this point. Some years ago I was talking to a busy doctor who was a religious man, when he said with a kind of abrupt vehemence: 'If I were a minister, do you know what I'd preach? The Holy Spirit.' Later, a noted philosopher remarked to me: 'I hear people preach all kinds of things, only not the Spirit; yet there's more need for that than for anything else.' This may sound extreme; in a sense it is so, for of course the man who is preaching about Christ in the heart, as a power energizing in the will, may really be preaching the Spirit without ever using the word. Yet cannot we understand what is meant when we recollect our own experience, as we wait in the vestry, just before going into the pulpit? There can hardly be a sincere man who, as he stood and prayed there, has not felt an overwhelming thirst for the Spirit's presence. The burden is more than he can bear: he has to persuade men to be reconciled to God, or to forgive injuries, and even the desire to do these things he knows perfectly well he cannot propel into people's minds. Nothing will happen except as Divine power enters his words, and gives them momentum. He not merely feels this; he feels that the Spirit's enabling power is literally there for him to take.

Now we invariably preach with greater effect truths which we have discovered in our private life. Here is the thought of unseen power available for weak men in the Holy Spirit. It is a central fibre in the message of the New Testament, and never was it more required than at the present hour. In the first century we can see the opening of the springs. 'Ye shall receive power' is the promise, and the echo of testimony is 'I can do all things.'

There was a Divine overcoming energy; these apostolic men were in contact with it, and an exuberance of life resulted.

How often as we preach it comes home to us that what people most need is not additional ideas, but elastic power and mounting life! Probably the worst know more than the best are practising. It has to be proclaimed that the triumphant powers of the Spirit are all about them, ready to flood in by the opened channel. There are men in our congregations struggling with evil habit who are weak only because they believe they are weak; there are women languid with neurasthenia and needless mental fatigue and depression; and to such people, and countless others, it is very life from the dead to be assured that they may possess this ample energy of the Spirit. To receive it will cleanse leprous souls, giving them back self-control, for no degrading habit can be named from which immediate and permanent victory cannot be had by one who will lay hold upon the present might of a loving God. To receive it will impart to the nervous and dejected 'that harmony and peace of mind and confidence of soul which is needed to bring health and power.' In the same higher dynamic lies the cure for the comparative impotence of the Church—that is, of ourselves. As in New Testament days, the possession of a Spirit-filled life, always, means glad fearlessness—the most infectious emotion in the world.

IV.

Finally, we must declare the revolutionary character of the gospel. And this needs not so much to be published in special addresses as to form the steadfast background of all we say. The God who touches and saves men in Jesus Christ is not

'the God of things as they are,' but the God who sits upon the throne and says, 'Behold, I make all things new.' New primarily in the individual—granted, but how far can that be carried except as things are new also in society? The drunkard may be converted, but what about his children so long as the public-houses are there to breed young drunkards? The poor slut may by the gospel's power become a thrifty and careful mother, yet her family may perish in the insanitary slum or be corrupted by insufficient house-room. We can never be satisfied, as Christians or preachers, with a social order that produces moral wrecks or poisonously embitters human minds faster than they can be cured. It is our business, accordingly, to see that on this subject the whole body of Church people gets a thoroughly bad and restless conscience.

In the New Testament we are confronted, above all, with Christ; and of Christ it has been pointedly observed the other day that 'if half that is said of Bolshevism is true, He would not have been a Bolshevik; but He was a revolutionary.' He wanted change, and He died to bring it about.' What He had to say to men was not just what had been said 'of old time,' but something very different. His message of the Kingdom of God, with righteousness as the substance of its life and order, included the corporate regeneration of society. Hence it will not do for us, who have drunk in His words of life, to sit back timidly or comfortably and say concerning the social order as it is, 'Well, it will last our time.' We have to present Christ's gospel to our fellow-men as containing the only adequate motive and ideal for the continuous reforming work, prompted by the Holy Spirit, of promoting the search for new truth, the brotherhood of men, and the eager fulfilment of the Divine Father's interest in others.

Literature.

NILE AND JORDAN.

It is very easy for a man to throw away the right and title that he has to authority by simply under-rating himself. The Rev. G. A. Frank Knight, M.A., F.R.S.E., has written a book on the archaeological and historical inter-relations between Egypt

and Canaan, and in the preface he says: 'The object of this book is to trace the various links which united these two contiguous territories, from the earliest times till the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. It is a long story, covering at least seven millenniums, and crowded with detail. The mere collecting of the facts, scattered over more than