---

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.

## Virginibus Puerisque.

### Princes All.

'Each one resembled the children of a king.'—Jg $8^{18}$.

HAVE you ever seen a real live prince? And if you have, what did you think of him? Were you very disappointed to find that he wasn't like the princes in the fairy story books or the princes in the pantomimes? These princes, as we all know, are always clad in satin and velvet, and they have hats with long sweeping ostrich plumes, and they wear silk stockings and buckled shoes, and their fingers are flashing with diamond rings, and altogether they look very fine indeed. Yes, but they are only imitation princes after all. Suppose for a moment that our own Prince of Wales in his ordinary clothes walked on to the stage where one of these make-believe princes was acting, do you think any one would have eyes then for the pantomime prince? Not a bit of it! They'd see only the real prince, and they'd be shouting and waving and cheering themselves hoarse in his honour. So you see it takes more than fine clothes to make a prince.

Yes, and it takes more than fine looks too. Of course it would be very convenient if all really great men were tall and handsome and splendid. It would save a lot of trouble if they had bodies to match their greatness. But, as a matter of fact, many of the best and greatest men who have lived have been little men with no looks to boast of. But something was great about them. What was it? Let me tell you in a story.

Many, many years ago while Canada still belonged to France, the King of France sent out as Governor a certain famous general. Now it happened that in those days the Iroquois Indians were allies of the French; and to renew the alliance and greet the new Governor the chief of the tribe and some of his braves came to Quebec. The chief was dressed in his best blanket and feathers and he had a grand speech prepared for the occasion. He had never seen the Governor, but in his speech he praised that gentleman's height and his strength and his imposing appearance, for, like Indians and all savage peoples, he set much store by such things. What was his dismay then when he was shown into the Governor's presence to find that the latter was a very small insignificant-looking man! The chief's wonderful speech which he had so carefully learned up and practised would not fit at all. For a moment he was taken aback—but only for a moment—then, stepping forward and bending gravely, he said, 'Sir, your mind and spirit must be very great indeed if the King of France sends you here with such a little body.'

The Indian chief made an important discovery in that awkward moment. He discovered that a great body does not make a great man, nor a princely body a prince. It takes a princely soul to make a princely prince, and that, by the way, is why our Prince of Wales is so much beloved.

Now some of us think it would be a grand thing to be a prince. I think it would be very hard work, but never mind that! And most of us, especially when we are between seven and seventeen, dream of being great one day. That is a good ambition. But we needn't wait till we grow up to be great. We can begin being great when we are quite little. We can even be true princes and princesses though we never go to court and our fathers and mothers are not entitled to wear crowns.

How are we going to manage that? Let us take a good look at a true prince and see what makes him princely; and then if we copy that we shall be well on the way to being princes ourselves. Well, the chief thing that makes a true prince is *courtesy*. And that word means much more than just politeness, or court manners, or courtliness. It means constant unselfishness. It means always thinking of others first and oneself second. It means being equally considerate of high and low, rich and poor, friend and foe. That's a pretty large order, isn't it? But if we want to be prince-like we'll have to try to carry it out.

Now it isn't so difficult to be courteous to one's superiors or one's equals. Most people are that more or less. But to be courteous to those weaker or less important than themselves some people find extremely difficult. They seem to find it so difficult that they never try it. That's a pity, for they

are merely proving how unprincelike they themselves are. Let me tell you how the Prince of Wales behaves to unimportant people.

Last autumn just before the Prince left for India he was travelling from Balmoral to London. On the platform at Aberdeen station, among the crowd who had come to see the Prince pass, was a ragged little laddie from the slums. He had bare feet, and his jacket had more holes in it than cloth, but he had a heart full of admiration for the Prince, and a mind full of determination to see him. He wormed his way to the front (you boys know how!) and stood stiffly at the salute. As the Prince passed his eye caught the quaint little figure. He carefully returned the salute and called cheerily, 'Hullo, Sonny!' And that little chap will be the Prince's faithful admirer for the rest of his life because the Prince took the trouble to give him a kindly thought and greeting.

Then a true prince is courteous to his enemies. That's the most difficult courtesy of all; but it is the finest. And it reminds me of a story I read the other day. It is a story of the Crusades. You remember how in the long ago ages all the gallant kings and knights in Europe went to the Holy Land to try to drive the Turks out of it, and win back to Christendom the land where Jesus lived and was crucified. Among the great kings who did battle for the Cross was our own Richard Cœur-de-Lion. He was a very gallant and courteous king, but he found on one occasion that he had a very gallant and courteous enemy. It was during the last battle he fought in Palestine. Richard was hard pressed and fighting against desperate odds. His lightning sword was cutting down the Turks, but his horse was getting exhausted, and he knew that sooner or later it would drop under him. Then he would have to fight on foot, and that would mean almost certain defeat. Just when he was in despair there came riding through the press a Turk mounted on a magnificent Arab steed. He dismounted and offered it to Richard saying that the Sultan's brother, Saphadin, had noticed how gallantly the king was fighting and how done his horse was, and he begged his acceptance of that and another equally fine steed so that he might have a mount worthy of his valour and prowess. Don't you think that act of courtesy was rather splendid coming from a heathen Turk?

Now, perhaps you have not noticed the fact, but we have never mentioned the text to-day. But here it is at the end of the sermon instead of at the beginning. You will find it in the eighth chapter of Judges at the eighteenth verse. It is a description by their enemies of the brothers of Gideon, and I hope it will also be a description of each of you. Read it over, and think about it, remembering at the same time the stories I have just told you. And having thought about it well, take it as your motto, 'Each one resembled the children of a king.'

---

### Nothing.

'He . . . hangeth the earth upon nothing.'—Job 26[7].

There is a tradition that on the death of one of Frederick the Great's chaplains a certain preacher seemed unusually eager to secure the vacant post. The king told him to go to the Royal Chapel and preach a sermon on a text that he would find in the pulpit on arrival.

When the preacher arrived there he opened a sealed packet to find it blank! Not a single pen or pencil-mark could be seen anywhere. He cast his eyes over the congregation, and said, 'Brethren, here is Nothing. Blessed is he whom Nothing can annoy, and whom Nothing can make afraid.' Taking the words, 'He . . . hangeth the earth upon nothing,' as a text, he preached a wonderful sermon, and showed how Nothing is the foundation of everything. Then he spoke about the beauty of this earth and how it had come from Nothing. Of course Frederick was wise enough to secure the clever preacher for his chaplain.

Don't we often use the word 'Nothing' without thinking of its meaning. 'What are you doing, Jim?' a governess asked one of her pupils. 'Nothing,' he answered. 'Do it quietly then,' she said.

There are few words in the dictionary that can express so many different ideas. An easy-minded person might say, 'Nothing can annoy me.' Many a contented old woman says to herself, 'Having nothing, I am content,' while many a humble soul is possessed with the thought, 'I am Nothing.'

Certain very religious people became very firmly convinced that it was right for followers of Jesus Christ to have nothing. One, St. Francis, was a soldier. His friends received a letter from him one day in which he said, 'I am thinking of taking

a wife more beautiful, more rich, more pure than you could ever imagine.' That wife was Lady Poverty; and a great Italian painter has represented Francis placing the ring on the finger of his bride. The lady is crowned with roses, but she is arrayed in rags, and her feet are bruised with stones and torn with briars. Francis borrowed a beggar's dress and begged at street corners that he might be able to enter into the secret of poverty, and then he founded an order of monks who followed in his footsteps.

You boys and girls are not in danger of becoming monks; your temptation lies rather in the direction of the Do-Nothings. Once a king reproached his son for his indolence in lying in bed till very late in the morning. 'I find, sir,' said the Prince, 'that however late I rise, the day is long enough for doing nothing.' He was very stupid, for no one ever finds peace or happiness in doing nothing at all. In describing the long weary Arctic night Nansen, in his famous book called *Farthest North*, says: 'Life's peace is said to be found by holy men in the desert. Here indeed is desert enough; *but peace!*—of that I know nothing. I suppose it is the holiness that is lacking.'

Now, the best way to avoid temptation is to keep busy, if not with work, with good, honest sport, for it is still quite true that 'Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do.' Let me tell you how doing Nothing once proved disastrous for an army. When Hannibal led his troops up the Alpine passes, he found that the heights were strongly held by the Romans. Attack would have meant utter failure. But Hannibal watched with eyes that never wandered. One night he discovered that the enemy had no proper outposts. Next night Hannibal led his troops to the heights, and when the Roman general looked out in the morning he found that the tables had been turned upon him.

So, boys and girls, we can never win through the battle of life by doing Nothing; and unless our minds are kept occupied, all sorts of wrong thoughts will possess them. I am reminded of a dear little fellow who had become lame through a fall. He could not walk at all, and had to be wheeled about in a bath-chair. For a time he felt very unhappy; he so wished he could run about like other boys. The doctor advised his mother to get him interested in something. She found that very difficult. But one day sitting by himself in his bath-chair at the door of the seaside cottage to which the family had gone for a month, a sudden feeling of strange happiness came to him. He had been looking through field-glasses. The sea was wonderful, and there were ships passing constantly. He had noticed the ships before, but that day they seemed different. He dreamt about them at night, and next morning as soon as he was dressed he asked to be taken out to 'watch the ships.' Then he wanted to try to paint, and with a box of water-colours given to him in a present he began. He was no longer unhappy; his life seemed full indeed. What if it was a short one? He had helped to make those about him better, by showing them that if the soul is filled with something good—and the sea had spoken to him about God—there is no room for evil.

## The Christian Year.

### Third Sunday in Lent.

#### The Aching of Unsatisfied Capacity.

'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?'—Ps $42^5$.

'Wherefore do ye spend . . . labour for that which satisfieth not?'—Is $55^2$.

Here are two lives, and in each of them there is a gnawing consciousness of unrealized needs. They are very busy, but they have no final satisfaction. They go from one feast to another, but they do not find the vital bread. They never enter any set of material conditions which brings the missing piece, the lacking complement in which they would find their completeness. Things allure, but they leave the gap unfilled. The biggest thing seems as powerless as the smallest thing, and nothing offers a communion which is the home of rest. The soul remains cast down and disquieted. It labours for that which satisfieth not.

Now, if we had been created on smaller design we should be more easily satisfied. If the house of our being were a one-roomed house, and that room a sort of dining-room, we could eat and drink, and the feast would bring contentment. Or if the one room were a sort of workshop, and all our faculties were instruments of business, our work would satisfy our meagre cravings. Or if the single room were a sort of club-house, and our instincts were entirely social, we should find all we need in fraternal communion. Or again, if the one room were a sort of study, we should discover the ministries of satisfaction in science and art and music and literature.

But our life is not a one-roomed house. It is bigger than any one or all of these rooms. Indeed, the figure of a great house with many rooms is altogether inadequate. We are created for certain august relationships, and if these relationships are not perfected, or if they are broken, or if they are only formally recognized, our being aches and is disquieted in the sense of unsatisfied capacity.

But to speak of the stature of our being in terms of relations is also far too abstract and remote. We are born for companionship with a Divine Person. We are purposed for fellowship with the Holy and Almighty God. It is the plan of our life that we should walk and talk with God. We are endowed with profound instincts and yearnings and capacities which are fitted to receive and entertain the Divine Presence. 'He hath set eternity in their hearts.' And these eternal powers are feeling for the eternal as for their vital bread. Offer them the world's feast, and they are hungry still. Offer them the stimulus of ceaseless work, and they are hungry still. Offer them the riches of music and literature and art, and they are hungry still. It is like offering money to some heart that is pining for love. It is like offering an applauding crowd to a minister who is craving for souls. It is like offering stones for bread. These things are not big enough. The soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

And so the real trouble with multitudes of people is that they think too little of themselves rather than too much. They measure themselves on the scale of the inch, and they were created on the scale of the infinite. They regard themselves as children of the moment, when in reality they are children of eternity. And so they never truly live, and they are therefore never at rest. 'Seek ye me, and ye shall live!' And for such people to seek God is like coming out of some small, ill-ventilated, stifling room into the open air. It is like coming out of a closed cabin on to the open deck with the immeasurable above and around us on every side.[1]

---

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

**The Evil Day.**

'Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day,'—Eph $6^{13}$.

1. 'The evil day.' It is not any special point of time to which the Apostle refers, it is the whole period of our earthly pilgrimage. 'The times are evil,' *tempora pessima*, he would urge, as all God's servants, from Jonah to the Baptist, from the Baptist to St. Francis, ever have urged. And, in proportion as our spiritual faculties are alive, we know it to be true; as we stand here to-day, with the world around us, and our own past behind us, we know that it is an 'evil day.'

(1) Life is an evil day because sin is always with us. God help us, if, yielding to any pressure, we are attempting to minimize the extent, or to whitewash the character, of sin. 'When,' wrote Newman, 'a man talks of our natural sin as an infirmity and I as a disease, he as an imperfection and I as a poison, he as making man imperfect, as the angels may be, I as making him the foe of God and an object of God's wrath, here we can come to no argument with each other, but one or other of us must fearfully mistake the Scriptures.' This was in the year 1823; the great teacher was but a young man; it shows us—does it not?—how saints are made.

(2) Even when sin is unrecognized it is with us, and then the day is evil, however fair it seem. A Manchester photographer relates that he once took a photograph of a child who was apparently in good health and had a clear skin. The negative showed the face to be thickly covered with an eruption. Three days afterwards the child was covered with spots due to prickly heat. The camera had detected and photographed the eruption three days before it was visible to the naked eye.

2. But there are in life special evil days. There are times of special assaults from evil. Most of us feel but little the stern reality underlying the metaphor, that the whole Christian life is warfare, but that in that warfare there are crises, seasons of special danger. Whilst all days are days of warfare, there will be, as in some prolonged siege, periods of comparative quiet; and again, days when all the cannon belch at once, and scaling ladders are reared on every side of the fortress. In a long winter there are days sunny and calm followed, as they were preceded, by days when all the winds are let loose at once.

These evil days are ever wont to come on us suddenly; they are heralded by no storm signals and no falling barometer. We may be like soldiers sitting securely round their camp-fire, till all at once bullets begin to fall among them. The

[1] J. H. Jowett, *The Eagle Life*, p. 147 ff.

tiger's roar is the first signal of its leap from the jungle. Our position in the world, our ignorance of the future, the heaped-up magazines of combustibles within, needing only a spark, all lay us open to unexpected assaults, and the temptation comes stealthily, 'as a thief in the night.'

(1) Such times of special danger to Christian character may arise from temporal vicissitudes. Joy and prosperity are as sure to occasion them as are sorrows, for the 'evil day' is that which specially threatens moral and spiritual character, and these may be as much damaged by the bright sunshine of prosperity as by the mid-winter of adversity, just as fierce sunshine may be as fatal as killing frost.

(2) But the evil day is not necessarily a day of outward 'trouble,' though it may be so. It is rather 'a day of temptation,' and such a day may come quite unexpectedly, with no premonitory signal of its approach. We are no doubt exposed to temptation of some kind every day: and our tempters are not always human friends—they may be also superhuman foes. Paul, lifting for a moment a corner of the curtain that hides the invisible world, shows us that our foes are not only 'flesh and blood,' but the 'principalities and powers' of evil, shooting fiery darts of evil suggestion into our soul: and he warns us that our fight with these will not be like a combat at long range, but a close 'wrestling' where entwining arms will seem to hold us in a relentless grip. But there are some days when temptation is more persuasive than on others, appeals more strongly to our self-interest or self-indulgence, comes more disguised under the appearance of good, and finds us in a mood of mind more open to a successful attack.

Recently I looked over some of my old copy-books, written more than fifty years ago, and I am bound to say that, on the whole, they are very creditable. The rising generation pays little heed to penmanship; indeed, we are expected to infer that the more unintelligible the scribble the more complete the culture of the scribbler. In the old days it was different; whatever else the schoolmaster might or might not teach, the pupil was trained to write clearly and even elegantly; a pride of penmanship prevailed that might be revived with advantage. But these exemplary copy-books contain bad pages which it is impossible to overlook. Once or twice, perhaps, in each number occurs a scribbled, blotted, stained, tear-smeared leaf, altogether at variance with the generally fair workmanship; one might almost think that it had been interpolated by a strange hand. These erratic portions are very strange to look at, suggestive of many things. The best of men have similarly bad days, every now and then painfully failing. Workers of all kinds are conscious of seasons when they are far below their true selves, and when their work is weak, irregular, and blundering—the painter's pencil is on strike, the orator's tongue cleaves to the roof of his mouth, the right hand of the artisan misses its cunning; and the higher life is in this respect at least a counterpart of the intellectual life. The diaries of the saints reveal days when they unaccountably break down, and everything goes wrong. The usually pleasant pages are interrupted by unhappy records, by outbursts of temper and murmuring, and sullied by tears of vexation and unbelief.

There are days when a rot of selfishness sets in, marring the magnanimity of the soul; days when in the dubious bout the body gets the upper hand, and the spirit fails to do the things that it would; days when the temper is sour, sulky, sultry; black-letter days, marked by stinginess, uncharitableness, unmercifulness; days when we fall into painful questionings and scepticisms; days in which we are conscious of the failure of high, pure motive; days deeply disturbed and unhappy. We are not at these times what we usually know ourselves to be, not what our friends expect to find us. We are below our best self, decidedly below our average self. In the biographies of Scripture bad days darken lives otherwise bright and blameless; and although in current biographical writing these unlovely times may not always be duly and candidly recorded, yet we are sure that more or less all God's people know the sad and sorrowful moods which surprise as snow in summer. Autobiography, which is a later copy-book, has its pages marked by regretful characters, as the earlier copy-books have their pathetic disfigurations.

(3) Such a day will generally be one in which we find ourselves in some outward difficulty, from which there is suggested an immediate but sinful way of escape; or in some inward depression, leaving quite undefended the weak spots in the citadel of our soul—weak spots which the watchful enemy is quick to seize.

We may be in some tight corner in our worldly affairs, and, just then, a plausible proposal is made to us by which we can get free. It has undoubtedly

a look of fraud and deceit; but we tell our conscience that it will be, at the worst, only a very small and temporary departure from the narrow way of uprightness, and that any harm done by that can easily be repaired. We are tempted to sell our birthright for a mess of pottage; and, under the stress of hunger, we cast our uprightness away. But we cannot sin ourselves out of a difficulty. The sin will only lead to greater difficulty and greater sin. Abraham tried this way of escape from difficulty; so did Isaac; so did David; so did Jonah; so did Peter; but every one of them most miserably failed. John Bunyan reminds us that there are two easy ways of getting round the Hill Difficulty, but the name of the one is Danger, and of the other Destruction, and that the only right and safe way is straight up to the top.

The 'evil day' may have another temptation too, especially if we are discouraged and depressed —a temptation to doubt, to unbelief, and even to despair. This has led many to a suicide's grave: and there may be such a thing as soul-suicide too.

Such days are sometimes due to causes which are physical. We are so fearfully and so wonderfully made, with such subtle interplay of mind and body, that sometimes the surest way to win fresh hope is to go out and take God's medicine of fresh air. It is no accident that John the Baptist's melancholy beset him in the prison cell of Herod. To a child of the desert, nurtured in glorious freedom, it was inevitable that there should be reaction in a prison. 'Art Thou He that should come,' he said, 'or do we look for another? I never doubted Thee, my Lord, out in the wilderness; when the whole heaven was above me and the breeze shook the reeds, I knew for a certainty Thou wert the Christ. But here, in this pestilent and sunless den, what doubts come torturing! Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?' And then Christ answered his doubts with infinite gentleness, and with a praise that in the whole history of the world has been unequalled, because He understood so well what prison must mean to the burning spirit of this child of freedom. I merely suggest, then, that there are times for most of us when what we need is more air, more light, more liberty. There are sinkings of spirit that are almost unavoidable in the cramped and crowded life of a great city. Remember that Jesus understands all that. Do not say God has forgotten to be gracious. It is temporary, physical, well-nigh inevitable; but the time of renewed hope will come again.



---

### Fifth Sunday in Lent.

#### Strong in the Lord.

'Be strong in the Lord.'—Eph $6^{10}$.

What does being strong in the Lord mean? There is no phrase more central for St. Paul than this phrase 'in Christ.' It contains the key of all his teaching. But how many modern Christians could write down clearly what they mean by it? And then 'the power of his might,' or, draw out the Greek words more fully, 'the mastery which belongs to his strength.' What do we mean by 'his strength'? How do we conceive of it as becoming ours? How are we to set out to 'grow strong in the Lord'? If it be admitted that men and women who have discovered and applied the secret have been the saving forces of their generations, that through that same discovery weak characters have time and again been made strong, and leaders produced out of apparent nobodies; if it be the case that unbelievers pass by the secret because believers themselves sometimes seem so vague about it: then surely it is among our first duties to clear our own minds, and so be able to impress on others the scientific reasonableness of it all.

1. There is only one way of understanding Christianity; it is to take it throughout in terms of personality—in the light, that is, of our own experience of ourselves and of our relations with other persons. The central problem of life for each of us is to understand and develop ourselves. In the course of doing so we come upon certain far-reaching facts. One is that the most real things in the world are persons. Persons mean incomparably more to us than things. In education, for instance, the teacher counts for much more than the lesson. And people mean more or less to us, not according to their intrinsic importance, but according as they enter into our lives and we into theirs. People we love, therefore, mean a great deal more to us than any one else, because in their case we feel we have got (as it were) a permanent footing inside them and they inside us: and nothing is so satisfying as that sense of union.

2. And then we learn that it has another side

to it. We set out with the idea of 'developing' ourselves, but all the time we find the chief obstacle to the process is also ourselves. 'Self,' that enemy within which we all know so well, is for ever spoiling our self-development. But one day we discover that we are, almost unconsciously, 'losing' our 'self' in some one else—and lo, in that same experience we have also wonderfully grown and improved. In a word, nothing so develops self as losing it, or rather, the self we set out to develop could never be developed by itself—it is saved by entering into the lives of others, especially by entering deeply into some one other life.

A soldier I travelled with last Wednesday overflowed with enthusiasm for the chaplain of his late battalion in France—a man evidently without a trace of fear, so much so that he would not even wear a tin helmet in the trenches. Sometimes on the way to the front line he would find a lad whose nerve had failed him, stuck by the way. He would talk to him for a few minutes, infecting him with his own courage, and then ask, 'Shall we go on a bit now?' And the lad would jump up and say, 'Yes, sir; I'll go anywhere with you!' He had, as it were, lost himself in his chaplain, and grown strong in his strength; if he could be with him he would be equal to anything.

3. Moral power depends on finding 'the right some one else' and losing ourselves in him. And the great discovery of St. Paul's life was that, for all of us, 'the right some one else' is always available in the person of the ever-present Son of God. All we have to do in order to be strong is to treat Him as the terrified soldier treated the chaplain who came to his help: to let His spirit enter into us, while we take refuge from ourselves in Him. In this simple light from common experience do not St. Paul's words mean more as keys to the process of power? 'Grow strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.' 'I am able for anything in him who makes me strong.' 'Ye are completed in him.' Christianity is not a code but a Person; it is true to the fact we all know from experience that a person you love can do more to make you strong and good than the finest moral code in the universe. The process of power consists in realizing and relying upon His character, and acting upon the conviction of His presence. And because His strength and love are inexhaustible, and His presence can never be taken away, power drawn from Him can never grow less, except we ourselves drop out of touch with Him.[1]

---

SUNDAY BEFORE EASTER.

**Perfection, God's and Man's.**

'Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.'—Mt $5^{48}$.

It must be admitted that at first sight this goal seems utterly beyond our reach. When presented we naturally cry, 'It is high: I cannot attain unto it.' The very name 'God' brings before us one so unutterably great that to think of becoming like Him seems quite beyond our reach. And it must be evident that there are elements in the perfection of God out of such reach.

It is only when His Fatherhood is emphasized as it is by Jesus that there seems any possibility of even approaching such perfection. But then the precept runs: 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as *your Father* which is in heaven is perfect.' And in a father the *imposing* elements of character fall into the background, and only those which allure and constrain are prominent. And if man be indeed, as Jesus asserts, the child—that is, the outcome of the Father's life—then the idea that the child should become like his Father does not seem to belong to the realm of the quite unattainable. But then, this perfection must be regarded as within the limits of this relationship between Father and child, and as excluding in the present order of things, certain realms in the nature of God from the reach of men.

1. *The realm of knowledge.*—This age of ours is, it may be, a little over-elated by the knowledge it has acquired. During the last century, and the opening years of the present one, vast strides have been taken in this respect, in almost every direction, of the earth on which we dwell, and the nature of what we call matter of which it consists; of the life—vegetable, animal, human—which exists upon it; of the worlds of space, their nature, size, distances, and relationship, the one with the other. And not only of the world as it is, but of the world of the past and of the beings which then existed upon it. The secrets of the earth, of the heavens, of life in its various forms, have been to a wonderful extent discovered; and these secrets have not only been discovered, but they have been utilized by science for the benefit and comfort of men.

[1] E. A. Burroughs.

So vast have been the discoveries of the last century that it may be we have become a little too proud of our knowledge. This is not to be wondered at—it is a quite natural elation. It may be that this has led some to the idea that nothing is beyond man's reach. But, great as the knowledge of man has become, what is it to the knowledge of God? Man has been trying to discover how this earth of ours came into being, and up till now his conclusion—or perhaps it should be said his *conjecture*—is that it came out of a fire-mist, or, as a recent American poet has described the genesis:

A fire-mist and a planet—
A crystal and a cell—
A jelly-fish and a saurian,
And caves where cave-men dwell;
Then a sense of law and beauty,
And a face turned from the clod—
Some call it Evolution,
And others call it God.[1]

A not unlikely conjecture—but, after all, only a *conjecture*—of men whose days are so few on a matter which is separated from them by probably millions upon millions of years. Man, a creature who, if he lives a century, is thought a prodigy, is trying to look back over ages upon ages to discover, if he can, how things began to be. But God must have been, in some way or other that we cannot understand, *present* at the beginning of things, if there was ever a beginning. In His nature must be some picture of the origins for which we are blindly groping. What man has to search out as history—written on the earth and humanity—God is conscious of as a beholder or as an experience. From His standpoint, therefore, probably all our discoveries are only approximations to truth. It may be that even those of which science is most sure to-day are only a little farther away from error than those which they displaced. If, side by side, we could see the best that science has done, and the reality in the mind of God, how vast would be the difference! We have only to think of it for a moment to see that it is not along the line of *knowledge* that we can reach the perfection that is in God.

As Owen Feltham says: 'We are all fellow-servants, and we know not how our Grand Master will brook insolences in His family. How darest thou, that art but a piece of earth that heaven has blown into, presume thyself into the impudent usurpation of a majesty unshaken? The top feather of the plume began to give himself airs, and toss his head and look down contemptuously on his fellows. But one of them said, "Peace! we are all of us but feathers; only He that made us a plume was pleased to set thee as the highest."'

[1] W. H. Carruth.

2. *The realm of power.*—In this realm the present age has excelled all previous ones. This is so even when we remember the vast erections of Babylon and Egypt and other lands, which puzzle us to know how they were reared. No previous age has reached such heights of power. Most of the inventions foreseen by the seers of the past have been reached in our day. And some of their visions of the things that should be are very wonderful. In the thirteenth century Roger Bacon wrote—and the passage is literally translated from his works: 'For vessels may be made for navigation without any men to navigate them, so that ships may be borne on under the guidance of a single man with greater speed than if they had been full of sailors. Carriages may also be made so as to be moved without any animal force, with an incalculable impetus.'

After describing glasses, by which all that an enemy did might be discovered at any distance, he adds: 'So also we might make the sun, moon, and stars come down lower here. Contrivances may also be made to walk on the bottom of the sea or rivers without danger to the body. Bridges also may be made across rivers without danger to the body. Machines also for flying may be made, so that a man seated in the middle may turn round a certain mechanism by which artificial wings may beat the air, flying like a bird.' Bacon, however, expresses some doubt as to the latter marvel.

I scarcely know which is the more wonderful—the foreseeing of Roger Bacon of the thirteenth, or the accomplishment in the twentieth century. And, naturally, the age of such accomplishment is not a little proud. That is, perhaps, inevitable. Man's doings in the age in which we now stand are indeed very wonderful. But what are these in comparison with the power which lies in the Divine Nature? With long thinking and tremendous effort, men *do* accomplish great things; but, so far as we can see, the great things of God come about without effort—but, though without effort,

they quite surpass those of men. If Nature be the expression of the Divine Mind, then the thought of that mind can effect what all the efforts of men could not. A change of wind will create a cold which all our fires cannot quite dispel, or so heat the atmosphere that all our fans cannot quite cool. Without apparent effort, the upper air may be so changed that snow descends in such quantity that the land becomes suddenly white; and not till the air grows warmer will its snowy covering be quite cleared. There are things in the Nature of God which seem beyond human reach. To these Jesus did not point us. Indeed, these lay outside the realm in which Jesus Himself moved. His sphere was the moral and spiritual. There, and there alone, was He needed. All others He left severely alone. The perfection to which He summons us, then, is moral and spiritual.

This is clear from the fact that this precept is the centre of a discourse that, from beginning to end, is of that nature, and perhaps even more moral than spiritual—in that it points far more to things to be done than things to be felt.

And this moral sphere is open to us all—the way to perfection of this kind we may all pursue. Were we summoned to perfection of an intellectual kind we might say, 'That way is not for me, for my mind is not strong enough.' Were we summoned to perfection of power, we might reply, 'That way is not for me; my strength is not great enough.' But to the call to a perfection that is *moral* our hearts assure us we can and therefore ought to respond.

> So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
> So near is God to man,
> When Duty whispers low, '*Thou must*,'
> The youth replies, '*I can*.'[1]

In this realm response is harder to some than others. It is easier for some to be saints than for others to be passably decent. Some seem to be born with a strong tendency to good. But then, such goodness is not really so meritorious as goodness won in strife against evil tendencies. A little good in those born of an evil stock is of more merit than great goodness in those with a better parentage. Some, indeed, are born at a great distance from this perfection, and others far on the way to it; but, far or near, we all feel that we can move toward and even take some steps along this road, which is not closed, but ever open to our feet. In this respect, 'Not failure, but low aim, is crime.'

Cannot this be confidently said, that at this moral point God has more in common with man than at any other? May it not be said that God is in men not chiefly intellectually and energetically, He is in them most vitally in a moral and spiritual sense?

That man is the temple of God most really in an ethical and spiritual sense is indicated by the Scripture declaration that he is the Temple of the *Holy Spirit*. And it is quite certain that the bonds which bind us to God most closely are *moral and spiritual*. Indeed, these are the only bonds which really bind men to one another, as the race will sooner or later have to realize if it is not to be brought to an end by international or industrial strife. Man can, therefore, at least *aspire* in a moral and spiritual sense to the perfection of God. That is the only sense in which the Scripture summons us thereto. In other senses Scripture regards God as unreachable, but in this sense we may be nearer to Him than we think, and we may press toward a still greater nearness.

An illustration may render this a little clearer. Here, say, is a father who is head of a vast business, employing thousands of men; and here is his little child. The child knows nothing, is not capable of knowing about his father's affairs or methods—here they are worlds apart; but you may go into that manufacturer's home some evening and find him crawling along the ground playing games with that child. What is the tie that binds that great manufacturer to that little child? Not the bond of knowledge or of power, but of love. There, how close father and child are together! And so we may say:

> Oh! how close the ties that bind
> Spirits to the Eternal Mind!

And that is the message of the Christian gospel—that God and man, separate as to knowledge or power, may be close together in the realm of *love*. So that we are told 'Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.' *Love*, then, can bridge the enormous distance between creature and Creator, even as among creatures it often bridges the great distance between the simplest and the

[1] R. W. Emerson.

profoundest. As Tennyson says of the simple-minded wife mated to one of large knowledge:

Her faith is fixed and cannot move:
She darkly feels him great and wise,
She dwells on him with faithful eyes:
'I cannot understand; I love!'

This call to perfection, then, is not up to the inaccessible heights of *wisdom* or *power*, but to the accessible heights of love which, in Fatherhood, is deepest of all.[1]

---

## Easter Day.

### The Resurrection.

'Who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.'—1 P 1[3].

There are four main aspects in which the Resurrection may be regarded.

1. First, that of the Epistle to the Hebrews. These Hebrew Christians had some reason to fear that the religion of Jesus Christ might be only a phase in the growth of a great religious system, and that it might pass away, as the patriarchal had done before the Levitical, or as the Levitical before Christianity. What security of tenure was there? What assurance that their children might not have to relinquish the Church, as they had been called upon to relinquish the temple? What if, after all, there were the element of transience, the seeds of decay, the little rift of dissolution in this system, of which the name of Jesus was centre and circumference, beginning and end!

Such thoughts were met and for ever dissipated by the argument based on the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus, which attested His perpetual Existence and Priesthood. Four times at least the words are repeated, 'a priest for ever.' Twice the emphasis is laid on the fact that our Lord's priesthood, unlike that of the Levitical priests, is indissoluble and inviolable. They were many in number, because hindered from continuing by reason of death, but He is perfected for evermore and, because He ever liveth, is able to save to the uttermost of time, as well as of space, all who come unto God by Him.

2. The second aspect is that of the Apostle Peter. He is pre-eminently the Apostle of Hope. He bids us be sober, and hope perfectly for the grace to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ, and makes constant allusion to the glorious realities of the unseen and eternal world, on which the Christians of that dark time should set their thoughts. But all his hopes, for himself and his converts, were built on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He blesses God the Father for having begotten them again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. The Hope of the Inheritance was founded on the empty grave. The stone that was rolled away became the corner-stone of the new Temple of Hope.

The traveller in Norway, who comes across homes and hamlets perched on almost inaccessible heights, or shut in by the mighty rampart of mountain ranges, will find no difficulty in imagining a community contained within itself, and oblivious to the existence of a great outer world. To such a society that world might be a subject of speculation, discussion, and argument. The villagers might be accustomed to accompany each other to a certain point on the mountain track, when summoned by an irresistible impulse to ascend it, but none of those who passed that point ever returned. Rumours, guesses, ancient legends might declare that there was a world beyond the mountain barriers to which the road led, and where all who had departed were living a fuller and richer life than before; yet still the information within their reach would be mere surmise. Hope would flicker like the will-o'-the-wisp over the marsh. But supposing that one of their number, whom they had known, went along that path, and after being absent for some days returned, and went often to and fro, declaring that the path led somewhere, that there was a better world on the other side, and that they should meet their beloved once more. Do you not see what a change would come over the people's hopes? No longer shadowy and deceptive, but strong, clear, sure. An anchor so surely fixed as to bear the greatest strain. A light so clear that the shadows of uncertainty must flee away. This is the Apostle Peter's 'living hope.'

3. There is also the aspect presented in the writings of the Apostle Paul. As in respect of death, so of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the Apostle's constant thought is identification. 'Quickened together with Christ and raised up

[1] W. G. Horder, *The God that Jesus saw*.

with him.' 'Raised together with Christ, seek those things which are above.' If we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him. It is his one thought that in the death of Jesus he passed from the old world into the new, and that he was living on the shores of the new world, the world of resurrection and life, the world of which Jesus was King and Lord.

The Apostle, therefore, found in the Lord's resurrection the daily motive and law of his life. He was already regulating his action by the laws of that new kingdom, which was unseen and eternal, and whose laws were laid down by the Lord in His discourses and parables. This makes the difference between the Christian and the man of the world. They are occupied about similar circumstances, but the latter acts on the principles of this world, whose motive is selfishness, and its aim personal aggrandizement; whilst the former deals with every incident as a citizen of the New Jerusalem, and upon the principles of the Sermon on the Mount.

4. Lastly, there is the aspect presented by the Apostle John. Before Christ's resurrection, man thought that night and death were supreme, out of which all things were born, and to which they went. Life might be fair and beautiful, but it was evanescent. Each flower fell before the inevitable scythe, or faded. Each day, whatever the promise of its dawn, died on the edge of the western wave. Each child, however beautiful, passed through maturity into death. And so they fabled the Prometheus, the Laocoon, the fall of Troy. Life was profoundly sad to these people, who tried to solve all problems by their intellect, and imagined that at death life became extinct, like the torches they extinguished at the tombs of their friends. The world, they thought, would become one day a sarcophagus of graves, whilst Erebus and Chaos resumed their ancient sway.

To meet this, it was not enough to affirm that the Son of God lived: it was needful to say also, that He had died, and having tasted the sharpness of death, was living in its further side. It was on this that the Master laid emphasis when He said to the exile of Patmos, 'Fear not; I am the first and the last: and the Living One; and I became dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of death and of Hades.'

The Son of God entered the lists with Death to try the question as to which should be the reigning power in the universe, whether Life or Death, Light or Darkness, Corruption or Immortal Strength and Beauty. They grappled for mastery, each with the other, in the wilderness, on the cross, and in the grave. At first, Death seemed victor. He appeared to triumph over the one Man, as over all other men. The Prince of Life was slain. The hour and power of darkness vaunted their supremacy. And chaos seemed about to spoil the palace of Life. But it was only for a moment. It was not possible that Christ should see corruption, or be holden of death. Life broke from the sheath and hush of death into the rapture of the Easter morn. Death was robbed of its sting, the grave of its victory, and the lord of death of his power to terrify.[1]

[1] F. B. Meyer, *From Calvary to Pentecost.*

# Contributions and Comments.

## Convince or Convict (John xvi. 8).

DR. SWETE discusses this point in the *Last Discourse and Prayer of our Lord*, pp. 116 f., and concludes: 'The Holy Spirit both convinces and convicts, gaining the assent of the understanding, and also bringing home the charge of sin to the heart.' He has also a suggestive note upon the subtle difference in the case of the conjunction in each case 'in that they believe not,' 'by reason of the fact that I go,' 'forasmuch as he has been judged already.'

I should like to offer the following suggestion. First, one bears in mind that the purpose of the discourse is to encourage and comfort, *i.e.* fortify, the hearts of the disciples in view of the tremendous strain and trial that was about to come upon them, that they should not take the natural Jewish view that 'cursed is he who hangeth upon the tree.' Then in the second place, as to the ex-