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## In the Study.

### Virginibus Puerisque.

#### A Visit to a Picture House.

'That ye may be sincere.'—Ph 1<sup>10</sup>.

ARE you fond of the Picture House? Rather, you say. You just love to settle down in the cosy chair in the dark, and forget all about maths. and Latin verbs, and get carried far away to the ends of the earth, among Red Indians and Mexicans, and galloping horses, and men with rifles cracking, and terribly exciting things, till all at once the lights go up and you waken up to be yourself again. Well, there's a splendid picture house that is always open; and there's no price to pay; not even half-price. You can go in when you like, and sit as long as you care, and the programme doesn't ever begin over again, runs on and on, and always new. Would you care to come? Well! what's the name of the picture house that you like best. This one is called the Dictionary. Ach! you say; I thought it was a real one. And so it is. It is just full of splendid pictures for those with eyes to see. Take that word 'astonished.' Shut your eyes, and think out what it means, until you see it all. There's a knot of travellers in a wild country, no shelter anywhere, and look how black the sky has grown! and what a pelt of rain! Look at it coming down in bucketfuls. You see one of them has run under that tree, it's rather drier there. But ah! did you see that?—that blinding flash of lightning. Why, it has struck the tree, and the man too. To be astonished is to be thunder-struck.

Quite a good film, isn't it?

Or turn the pages; here's a word you often use—'companion.' And here's the new film beginning to run. This time it's a barracks, and there are soldiers everywhere, rough fellows, old and scarred, that have been through many a scrap and many an adventure. Among them is a young lad newly joined, a raw recruit, looking a bit out of it and far from home, and shy. But, you see that? There's a decent fellow who has made up to him, and is showing him the ropes, what to do, and not to do; and you see he is taking out a hunk of bread and is halving it with the youngster. That's what a companion means, one who shares his bread with you. And that's the picture there.

Or do you know the word 'trivial.' It means petty, or little, or small. Look, here's a good film coming! There's a woman going marketing; how she bustles along; she's in a desperate hurry, wants to get back to her baby and her washing and her house. You see she has reached the cross-roads where three streets meet; she's crossing; she has met another woman coming up one of the other roads; she stands still, both of them do. They've begun to talk; they put down their baskets; they stand a long, long time with their heads and tongues going hard. Why, here's a third one coming up the third road, and she stops too, and she speaks just as much as the others: nod, nod, nod, go the three heads; chatter, chatter, chatter, go the three tongues; and it's all about nothing. Trivial means chatter about nothing at the cross-roads.

It's a good picture house, and here is a good picture! You know that word 'sincere.' It means honest, or thorough, or without sham and pretence. But first of all it meant 'without wax,' *sine cera* in the Latin. And what is the picture there? I think this is a funny one. There's a man eating honey, and he likes it, that's plain. But what's wrong? His face is all twisted; he's got hold of something horrid; he's calling for water to put away the taste. Some honey has a wax that is very bitter, and if you come upon a bit of that it's nasty. And 'sincere' is without wax, is honey-through and through. So a sincere boy means one who is honest altogether, who is all the real thing, who has no lumps of horridness in him, now and then, and here and there; no untruths at times, no bad tempers, no ill humours that flame out unexpectedly, no falsehoods to get out of scrapes. My honey is sincere, the old shopman used, perhaps, to say. There is no bitter wax in it. I wonder can your Father make that boast of you? My boy and my girl are sincere, have no nastinesses mingling with the nice things in them.

But others think that is not really the picture here at all. Go to another picture house, and when sincere is put on you won't see that one about the honey but this other one instead. The word sincere means without wax. Both the Greeks and the Romans used a word like that. And

there's a Greek word for sincere that means tested by the sun. And what's the picture there? Long ago folk were very fond of statues; they had them in their churches, they had them in their houses, they had them in their gardens, they had them everywhere. And some people couldn't afford very dear and expensive ones. And so the makers of them had a cheaper kind. They weren't bad. To look at them you would say they were as good every bit as the dearer ones. But these really weren't as good as they looked—were made of a poor stone, with little cracks, and small flaws, and discoloured bits in it. And what they did was to chip out these ugly pieces of the stone, and then fill up the holes and cracks with wax just the same colour as the marble, and when it was all finished it seemed splendid. People looked at it and said, There's a fine statue! I wish I could buy it! Why, how cheap it is! I can afford it! And they bought it, and were very proud of it. But when they put it in their garden and a hot day came, the sun melted the wax, and the cracks showed.

And sometimes a great statue by a famous sculptor got chipped and broken a little bit. And the owner put wax in it and stood it in a shady corner where the sun never reached it, and no one knew.

But when he died the statue might go to the market to be sold, and somebody would buy it and be proud to have so glorious a statue made by such a famous artist, but when he put it in his garden the sun showed the cracks when the hidden wax melted away. It wasn't genuine, not through and through; it wasn't sincere. And so when people bought a statue they would say, I'll take it if it is sincere, if there's no wax about it.

Well, what about you? You look a nice girl and a straight, clean boy. But I wonder if you really are all that you look. Mother and Father believe in you, but, I wonder, did you go to bed just when you promised them you would, or did you wait up till you had read on to the chapter's end, and kept telling yourself it's all right, the old clock must have gone fast? I wonder were you asleep when Mother went round; or had you been having a pillow fight five seconds before? Perhaps Mother thought—though she said nothing—that you looked a little bit too innocent and sleepy, that your pillow was very crushed and rumply, went away a wee bit sore at heart because her boy

could try to deceive her. I wonder if there are no cracks, no wax, no pretence, no sham. I wonder lots of things.

When people write a letter they end up 'Yours sincerely.' That means, This is an honest letter, everything in it is quite true, you can depend on it. If it weren't so there could be no business, for we couldn't trust each other. Remember you are writing a long letter; every day you add another sentence—for it is your life. And every night can you sign it 'Yours sincerely,' and your name? Can you say everything that I have said, and everything that I have done, and all my work, and all my thoughts and all my words to-day have been honest, true, above-board, sincere, with no wax or sham in them?

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#### Have you a Receiving Set?

'Here am I; for thou didst call me.'—1 Sam. 3<sup>d</sup>.

Has Dad been telling you about the newest things in wireless—about those queer messages that come without wires and poles? I think it's rather like when you shy a stone into a pool, and the eddies go rippling out and out until they reach the bank all round. And so when people speak, they send out waves into the air, and the wise men catch them, tap them, translate them back into words again. And now they are going to give people a Receiving Set; and every night they are going to flash out from 5 to 11 those messages that they have caught, and sitting in your house you will be able to hear a singer in Edinburgh, or a speaker in London, hear whether your particular favourite among the football or the cricket teams has lost or won, though it was playing far away.

It's a queer thing, isn't it, that these messages are flashing about everywhere. But we don't hear, because we have no Receiving Set.

Yes, but there are far more wonderful messages flying about. Always God is speaking, telling us what to do, or showing us the way to do it, helping us when we are in a fix, calling out to us, when we are tempted, to be brave and true. And the churches are just the centres where they catch and pick up these messages, and 'broadcast' them, fling them out again for every one to hear. And some do hear, but some don't, because they have no Receiving Set. You know the bonnie story of old Eli in the Temple lying fast asleep and hearing

nothing: and Samuel, the little lad who couldn't help hearing a voice that talked to him quite plainly; how the old man at first was puzzled about it, said it was all nonsense, that there was nothing to be heard, but by and by saw what it meant. God was speaking, and the boy had a Receiving Set, and so could hear; while he himself had none, or had lost his, or broken it.

Wouldn't it be splendid to have a Receiving Set, to hear God speak to us! Well, you can have it, if you like. It costs nothing at all. Ask God your Father for it and He'll love to give it you. And we can't get it any other way. It's a wonderful present, but He never grudges anything, will give you even this. And the Receiving Set with which we hear God is called Faith. That bores you, doesn't it? When the man in the pulpit begins talking about faith, you just stop listening; are far away, at school, or in the playing field, or in the country wandering again up the stream where you caught your biggest trout; but mother is listening with all her ears. She is interested in His Wireless. She wants to hear God speak, she thinks the faith that makes it possible is the most wonderful and splendid thing in all the world, far more wonderful than electricity, or radium, or anything else. Don't you think you would like one of these sets? Wouldn't you care to hear the messages from God coming through? What kind of things does God say? Well, here's one He keeps sending through. If you had a Receiving Set you would hear this. You know how difficult it is to stand up to things, not to sulk, not to grow grumpy in a losing game, how hard to be true when you are in a hole. If you had a Receiving Set at such times you would hear God sending this message, Hold on, don't give in, all Heaven is hurrying to help you. I remember lying in a Pill Box up behind Passchendale out in the War, when a tremendous barrage was let loose on us, hours of it. The Pill Box was hit, and hit again, it shook like a jelly, and all the candles were blown out, and still the shells came on; until at last the colonel ordered the adjutant to phone back to Brigade Headquarters to get the British guns turned on. By and by, back came the word that the message had been sent back to the gunners, a little longer and word came along the wire that they had got it and were getting ready. Cheer up, they said, we'll settle them for you. A little longer, and far and far away came the dull

boom of guns, and the shells went whistling and screaming over us. And then one felt far better. Before, we had felt lonely and cut off there with the enemy doing much as he liked with us, but that message told us we were not alone, had the whole British Empire at our back, and so, if you had a Receiving Set and listened when you are tempted, you would find out that you aren't just a small boy or girl left all alone to stand up to your tempter, but that you have God behind you. 'Cheer up,' He says, 'don't give in, I'll settle it for you,' and with that His guns begin to fire, and the enemy is silenced.

### *The Christian Year.*

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

#### **Christianity and Politics.**

'As free, and not using your freedom for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.'—  
I P 2<sup>16</sup>, 17.

Christianity has very much to do with the great principles of political and social questions. You will not, indeed, as a rule, find its teaching expressly and formally directed to national life at all. For the stock examples of patriotism and love of freedom we still quote the worthies of ancient Greece and Rome. For the Scriptural examples of deep love of country and loyalty to its head, we still turn to the pages of the Old Testament, as in the cry, 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.' 'O pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee.' But this results partly from the circumstances under which the New Testament was written, partly from the great ideas which it had to enunciate. If we look to circumstances, we observe that, when the Gospel was first preached, it was addressed to those who, under the universal despotism of Rome, had lost all opportunity of free national life. If we look to what is of infinitely more consequence—the essential spirit and glory of the Gospel—we see that it has to deal with universal and eternal principles, identified with no forms of social and political life, able to rule and inspire all, yet bound up essentially with none. But yet, under the sway of these principles, the nation has become what in the first days it was not—the unit of human Society. The national life in every Christian

country has developed itself with a singular intensity of power; and the fire of patriotism and loyalty has burnt all the more brightly, because the Gospel has broken down the barriers which seemed to guard, but tended to choke it, and has let in upon it the free air of heaven. The power of the Gospel has always been directed to give life to great universal principles, leaving them to work for themselves in all their natural spheres of action, whether the family, the nation, or the race.

Is this not so in the case before us? The three great requisites for political life are the love of freedom, the spirit of loyalty, and the enthusiasm of brotherhood, or patriotism. See with what singular simplicity and vividness these are brought out to us in the words of the text!

1. *The spirit of freedom*—‘as free, and not using liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.’ Note here the true spirit of freedom in the assertion of our own rights and liberty of action, not for ‘maliciousness’—not (that is) for our own selfish purposes, or even for the wantonness of reckless exercise; but ‘for the service of God,’ that is, for the glorious privilege of fellow-working with Him, and in that fellowship of following the Lord Jesus Christ, by devotion to the happiness and goodness of His creatures. What could better describe the social and political aspect of freedom, as it is concerned not with our own individual work in life, but with the part which we are called upon to take in the great life of our nation? It is, indeed, thus only that it can be preserved; thus only can it be a blessing to the world. If once an individual, a class, a nation, which has been made free, either in an indolent or cowardly tameness cares not to assert its freedom, or in a spirit of maliciousness asserts it simply as a means of wealth and ease, of glory and power, then has it fallen from its birthright of glorious liberty; and history confirms the sentence of Holy Scripture, that it shall be, as it deserves to be, ‘a servant of servants,’ a slave of slaves.

2. *The spirit of loyalty*—‘Fear God. Honour the king.’ The two principles seldom are, never ought to be, separate. If the king is honoured, being himself a mere man, it must be because God is feared; because (in the grand words of the Old Testament) the king is ‘the Lord’s anointed,’ or (as the New Testament more philosophically extends the idea) ‘the powers that be are ordained as vicegerents of God.’ Never, of course, can they

be absolute vicegerents. There is to us but one Supreme King, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. All other authorities, whether in Church or State, are simply His imperfect representatives. But yet they are true vicegerents. They act under limitations, which they may not pass, under laws which are based on right, and not on arbitrary will; so fulfilling the purpose of God’s Providence; so bearing a large share of the burden of humanity. Therefore, they claim at our hands, for His sake, true loyalty; which implies (be it remembered) not only obedience but reverence, not only duty but love. It is impossible not to remind ourselves that to us, far more than to those whom St. Peter addressed, that precept should come home. For he wrote to men who were living under a foreign despotism, wielding as its sceptre a ruthless sword. He wrote at a time when that sceptre was swayed by a Nero, with hands soon to be deeply stained, through mere cruelty and slanderous recklessness, with Christian blood. We have a rule over us, which is, in the truest sense, representative of the free life of the people; and that peaceful and righteous rule is at this moment invested, by the unanimous testimony of all, with the sacredness of deep personal reverence. Well, indeed, is it for us. For never can a country prosper, unless the chief authority be hedged round with reverence. Never will it greatly prosper, if that reverence be untinged by some glow of love.

3. But beyond freedom and loyalty there is *the spirit of brotherhood*. ‘Honour all men’—give (that is) to all, high and low, the respect, the consideration, the rights which are their due. In these words we trace the spirit of humility and forbearance, deference and respect for others, which limits the self-assertion of the strong individual, or the overwhelming majority. ‘Love the brotherhood’—in these words breathes the spirit of enthusiastic self-sacrifice for the whole community, which counts self as a little thing, which esteems it a joy and a privilege to live and to die for all.

It is true that these commands are not confined to the body politic. The first extends far beyond it, to the whole race of man. The second looks especially to the brotherhood of the Christian Church, of which one essential characteristic is that it is Catholic or Universal, co-extensive in capacity and promise with all humanity. Nor shall we fail to discover that this truth is of great

significance, in preventing that absolute absorption in social and political interests which degrades our own highest humanity, and that idolatry of patriotism to one single country which may easily become inhuman to others. But, nevertheless, the principles of this deference and self-sacrifice must apply, in its right measure and degree, to every community of which we are members; and certainly in no doubtful application to the nation, especially if it be a free nation and therefore a true brotherhood. We cannot call Christianity a religion of equality. For equality is a dangerously ambiguous word; in one sense it is a sacred and priceless truth; and in another it is an unnatural and impossible figment. But the other two names of the famous triad it certainly may assume. It is unquestionably a religion of liberty and fraternity; yet a liberty restrained and tempered by loyalty; a fraternity recognizing one Almighty Father, and so reverencing all who bear mission from Him. There can hardly be nobler elements of the true political life. They can hardly be more plainly taught, more vividly enforced, than in the pages of the New Testament. How, therefore, if we are Christians indeed, can we fail to rekindle at the altar of our Christianity the undying fire of high social and political aspiration?

#### NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

##### The Temptations of Middle Life.

'In the midst of the years.'—Hab 3<sup>d</sup>.

What are the temptations that especially assail the middle-aged?

1. One of the most obvious is the hardening of the mental tissue. It is a familiar saying that a man is as old as his arteries. When these begin to harden old age is at hand, and death is not far behind. And there is an intellectual sclerosis that is the forerunner of intellectual death. And just as a wise man will seek by wise means to ward off the physical peril, so it is the duty of those who have passed the mid-time of their years to watch against the stiffening of their mental joints, to keep their minds hospitable to new ideas. We are not called to make our own all the new thoughts of a new time; we are called to meet them with understanding and with charity, and to resist the temptation through sheer inertia to throw ourselves unthinkingly on the side of things as they are. I can recall no better illustration of how

this may be done than the late Dr. John Shaw Banks. I was not one of his students, nor was I ever personally intimate with him. If one may judge from his writings, his natural leanings were all towards the older, more conservative schools of thought. Yet I never listened to him without feeling that behind the rather ungainly manner of his speech there lay a hospitality of soul that was truly regal. He kept his intellectual sympathies alive and alert to the last, and so perpetually was the miracle of renewal wrought in him that when he died, over eighty years of age though he was, the younger ministers of his Church felt that they had lost in him, not only a father, but a brother.

2. Another temptation of middle life is to yield to the spirit of weariness. In part, of course, it is due to causes that are beyond our control. As life goes on we tire more easily, the fire burns less brightly. It was said of Adam Clarke that his heart to the last leapt up when he beheld a rainbow in the sky. But most men are not so fortunate; they have to confess themselves powerless against the years. And sometimes our weariness springs from disappointed hopes. Once we thought the prize was to be ours; now we know that, here at least, we shall never be crowned. When we set out on the journey we expected to go far; now we know that the top of the road has been reached, and that for the rest of the way it will dip steadily towards the twilight and the darkness. Why, then, should we concern ourselves? Toil and trouble, trouble and toil—what is the good of it all? There are few men, I suppose, in their fifties who have not known that evil mood.

3. And then close behind weariness comes cynicism, the temper of the man who has persuaded himself of what Mrs. Humphry Ward calls 'the uselessness of utterance, the futility of enthusiasm, the inaccessibility of the ideal, the practical absurdity of trying to realise any of the mind's inward dreams.' That is the cynical temper, and we know how it works. It has not only put out its own fire, but it has its bucket of water always handy for the fire of another. Above all it loves to frown down the generous enthusiasms of eager youth: 'Ah! so I thought when I was your age.' Of all evil spirits that can possess a man I wonder if that is not the damnablest. And middle age in the pulpit may fall its victim as readily as middle age in the pew. A youth leaves college all aglow with splendid ambitions to set a

wrong world right; but at fifty the vision has faded; he is content to let things take their course, sure that he at least can do nothing to mend them. And so you get that deadly paralysis in which routine is maintained only by force of habit—the abomination of desolation in the Church of the living God. It was that kind of thing in other walks of life that led Dr. Osler to declare that a man was ‘too old at forty,’ and that after sixty he should be quietly put away. But there is no need that these things should be. Even in the midst of the years it is still possible to be gaining new interests and forming new ties; we may still refuse to faint or be discouraged; so that even when the end comes it may find us, like Gladstone and Booth and Clifford, still dreaming our dreams and seeing our visions, and in the strength of them doing many wondrous works.<sup>1</sup>

#### TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

##### The Race of Life.

‘Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith.’—Heb 12<sup>1, 2</sup>.

This passage presents to our imaginations a scene which was familiar to the people of that age, and especially to those who had been present at the great games of Greece or had heard them described. The games always included a foot race; and a foot race then was very much what it is now. The competitors were obliged to put themselves in training. Strict temperance was indispensable for any one who hoped to do well in the race. When the hour came, the course was cleared, and the eager spectators placed themselves where they thought they would best be able to watch the runners. These presented themselves at the starting-point, stripped of all but the lightest and least cumbersome clothing. They saw before them the goal for which they were to make. When they were started, they aimed at going as directly as they could towards the goal, and they were stimulated by the shouts of the spectators to put forth their utmost efforts.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews the writer compares himself and his fellow-Christians to these runners in a race. They were compassed about,

<sup>1</sup> G. Jackson, *Reasonable Religion*, p. 47 ff.

he says, by a great cloud of witnesses. He means by witnesses persons who bore witness to the faithfulness of God. He has been giving examples of faith, which he takes from the Old Testament Scriptures. All the faithful men of Jewish history had been bearing witness in various ways to the God in whom they believed—each being ready to say at the end of his life to those around him, ‘Let one more attest, I have lived, seen God’s hand through a lifetime, and all was for best.’ They were so many as to form a multitude like a cloud. A life of faith and service is like a foot-race in this, that we must cast off, for our spiritual effort, whatever would hamper our running. The sin which so easily besets us, or clings round us, must be laid aside. And further, as the eyes of runners are fixed on the goal, so for our spiritual course there is an object on which we ought to keep our eyes fixed. Christians are to look to Jesus, the author and perfecter of their faith. In one point the Christian life does *not* resemble a race. We do not want to outstrip and defeat one another: a part of our success, on the contrary, consists in our becoming more able to help one another. The points of resemblance to which our attention is called are these—(1) that we are encouraged by a multitude of our fellow-men, (2) that we have to rid ourselves of what would cumber and hinder us, (3) that we have a course marked out along which we are to run, and (4) that there is an object on which our eyes are to be fixed.

1. Consider with how much greater force an appeal might now be made to a cloud of witnesses. The Israelite was reminded of Abraham and Moses, of David and Samuel, and the prophets; but we have the testimony of Peter and Paul and John, of Stephen and Polycarp and Ignatius. And think what a mass of testimony has been accumulating since those first days! The time would fail us, it would be indeed an endless task, to name the bright examples of Christian faith and heroism—those innumerable stars which make up the milky way of Christian history. We all have the New Testament in our hands; but that volume only covers a generation or two of the Church when it was at its smallest. From each one of the eighteen centuries which have followed the first may be culled records of Christian men and women who for some reason or other have become prominent in the Church, down to those of our own day. Have we not also had the happiness of knowing

personally some good Christians, whose lives were obscure, perhaps, and attracted little observation beyond their own circle, but were manifestly guided and sustained by faith in Christ and the Father? All the steadfast and patient Christians that have ever lived have left their testimony behind them, to be an encouragement and stimulus to others, to point the way, to move us to shame, to assure us that we shall do well to believe and to live like them. Take the hint to value Christian biographies, and to consider reverently the work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope, which may be seen in the lives of good Christians.

2. Encouraged by these witnesses, we are called upon to lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us. What are the things of which we are to strip ourselves? Anything and everything which would hamper and impede us in the race we are to run. All who have said, 'It is our business to become as holy as possible,' have said rightly: but some in many ages have gone on to say wrongly, what was not said by the first followers of Christ, 'In order to cultivate holiness, we must withdraw ourselves from the world, and rid ourselves of the cares and temptations of family life, of industrial pursuits, of social intercourse.' No, these are not to be renounced: they form part of ourselves, and are rather our flesh and blood than clothes which we put on. The real impediments to be got rid of are sinful dispositions and habits. These things are injurious to our fellow-men and the world in which we live, as well as to ourselves; these cling round the inner man, as wet garments round the swimmer, and prevent him from putting forth his energies. Let the inner man be free and vigorous, and in good training, and he need not fear roughness of the ground or any outward thing that may put itself in his way.

3. There is a race set before us. For each of us there is a course marked out by authority. So far as events are concerned, no one can foresee what his life is to be. The things that happen to us are often very different from what we might have expected. But the principles of the Christian life are sufficiently laid down for us. The essential duties and virtues are the same for all. We all have to be honest, upright, truthful; masters of our appetites and passions; considerate and forbearing, kindly and helpful towards all: and every Christian is to find the way and the power to

fulfil these duties by accepting from God the forgiveness of his sins, and believing in Christ and the Father, and rendering himself up in grateful obedience to the Divine will. This is the running for which sin will fatally impede us. The aim of each must be, in familiar words, to do his duty in that state of life to which it shall please God to call him. Whether God shall call him to be married or to be single, to be a parent or to be childless, to serve an employer or to employ others, to work with his hands or with his head—in every state the Christian is to be loyal and diligent, fulfilling cheerfully as unto Christ the obligations of every condition. That is the race set before us.

4. And at every step of the onward course the loyal Christian will see the Lord Jesus Christ before him. We are to run with our eyes on 'Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.' We advance from faith unto faith. It is through Jesus the Son of God that we are persuaded to believe in the Father; by continually studying Him we are drawn into more assured trust, into more and more unreserved and satisfying surrender. The teachers of the first Christians, whose exhortations we read in the New Testament, had to be always thinking of them as undergoing or as likely to undergo persecution. In order that they might endure it patiently and with enthusiasm, they were bidden to look upon Jesus the Sufferer. If Jesus had suffered, why—they were bidden to ask themselves—should not *they* suffer? And if He had suffered on His way to a throne and a crown, might they not hope that, if they suffered with Him as His faithful followers and witnesses, they would also share His glory? There are sufferings now, trials small and great, continuous hardships, here and there overwhelming afflictions: but on the whole—so much has human life been bettered—we have to think of ourselves as more in danger from pleasure than from pain; and, this being the case, we have sometimes to change the key of the New Testament exhortations. Let those who have a happy or a very endurable life before them look no less unto Jesus, that they may be drawn by a powerful magnetism out of levity and frivolity, out of worldly ambition, out of illegitimate self-indulgence, out of careless or cowardly acquiescence in evil. Let them look unto Jesus, as unto the Lord to whom they hope to come nearer and nearer, in whose hand are the true leading-strings of the world, whose mind is



the law of all genuine progress. Christians have perhaps been too much in the habit of looking back to Jesus. He is in the past, certainly: a most touching figure, whether we bring Him to mind as the Babe of Bethlehem, or as the victim of malice and cruelty on the Cross; a commanding figure, when we listen to Him speaking to His followers or the multitudes or His persecutors with heavenly authority. But He is before us also, and the future should be illuminated to us by the grace and truth which shine triumphantly from Him.

We see by the glad light,  
And breathe the sweet air, of futurity;  
And so we live, or else we have no life.

It is our privilege to go forward in hope of the glory of God, to labour to bring both ourselves and the bit of the world around us into more thorough subjection to Christ.

#### TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

##### The Secret.

'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.'—  
Ps 25<sup>14</sup>.

The religious life—faith in God, the habitual consciousness of His presence, and the power of prayer or communion with Him—has a secret of its own. And it is a secret of a kind very hard indeed to reveal to anybody who seems to be without it. This natural reserve about religion also exists in relation to other things. All non-material pursuits have their secret too. Persons who are not addicted to intellectual habits may not easily perceive the delight of any one of them. Art too has its secret. And although music in some way or other is understood and cared for by more people than any other single branch of art, or by a larger number of people perhaps than any one branch of intellectual activity; yet there are intricacies of harmony and of orchestration presenting an extraordinary charm to those who understand them, but having no meaning whatever to the uninitiated. You cannot explain the beauty and the interest of that wonderful five-fugued chorus of Sebastian Bach to a person who cannot read music. It would be true then to say of it that its secret is with them that understand it, or that have been moved by it. The limitations of the individual understanding, or of the capacity for study, are somewhat sharply defined in several

subjects. Even if we had the capacity, life would be too short to master everything about them which has an interest for us. Religion, however, unlike any branch of art or any single department of the intellectual life, does from its very nature concern every human being, and is capable, to use a rather hackneyed phrase, of appealing to anybody. And yet, with all its universal concern and its unlimited appeal, it nevertheless has its secret. It not merely has its secret, but it is strangely distinguished by that very feature.

1. A secret sometimes means darkness, a closed door, something which is impenetrable, and therefore unlikely to be proved by language. But in the sense in which the Psalmist is understood to use the word, darkness is certainly not the meaning of it. It would seem to be used rather in the sense in which one might speak of the secret of some rare friendship. Two persons may be drawn together by an unspeakable tie of sympathy and affection. There is an affinity between them. Their opinions and their creed may be different, and they may have no tie of blood, and yet they have been drawn together through a long series of years, almost a lifetime, in a way that is not very common even among near relations. The secret of such a friendship is understood by themselves, and perhaps by no one else. 'What can he or she find in so-and-so to care so very much about?' the casual onlooker might remark. Yet it is a friendship which abides through all manner of changes in the conditions of either of them. The real secret in that case is of course love, whatever may have been the incidents or the accidents which first prompted the friendship.

2. But it is not often that we can find a true and tried friend into whose willing ear and sympathetic heart we can tell our deepest secrets, whether of joy or sorrow. We are not sufficiently acquainted with the carrying capacity of some of our friends; and whether in some way or other they may not damp our joys by some discordant criticism of their cause, or whether they may not deepen our sorrow by some incongruous flippancy. It is because true friends are so rare amongst our fellow-mortals that we are drawn into the warm sympathy and eternal security of the friendship of God, by whom the secrets of our hopes and fears, our joys and sorrows, are received with a father's tenderness, and kept to our honour and

well-being. What we commit to His trust, He is both able and willing to keep.

Confidence begets confidence, and the first to repose that confidence must be the weaker and the less wise. We are quick to detect, in the approaches of our bosom friend, that he is ready to congratulate us in our joys and condole with us in our sorrows; the disposition to receive our confidence and to deserve it is there, and we know it will not fail us. It is so with the Friend of all friends; if one diligently observes His coming—His approaches to us—they may soon discover that there are no pure joys in life and no real sorrows that are not His approaches, and that to observe them, respond to them, and open our heart, in the confidence of waiting and worshipping children, is to win His confidence in return.

'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them His *friendship*' (R.V. margin). It is this covenanting friendship which shows the human tendencies and tenderness in the character of the Divine Father, and seals, in outflowing love and compassion, His relationship with His children. He has many friends, even bosom friends, amongst His children—why should not all be?—and shows Himself friendly, speaking to them His words, disclosing His secret, and revealing His covenant.

#### TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

##### God's Abundance.

'Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.'—Eph 3<sup>20</sup>.

This man Paul excelled in many things, and in few things more than in letter-writing. All his epistles are remarkable; some of them are wonderful. One of the greatest marvels about them is this—that of all his letters the most spiritual, the most elevated and joyous, the most heart-touching and delightful are those which he wrote either while he was in a prison or had the gaoler's chain upon his arm. It seems as though when the gates of brass were shut around him the gates of gold were specially opened above him. It seems as though, when the keys of the gaoler locked him in, He who had the master-key at His girdle opened the door to let him out—out into the freedom and sunshine of those who, independent of circumstances, can walk and talk with God. Paul the prisoner becomes Paul the

prince of preachers and teachers, and his royalty impresses every page. Strange, is it not, that the chain upon his arm adds a charm to his pen? Now, if you were to ask him for an explanation of this strange scene—if you were to say, 'How is it, Paul, that you are so completely king of your surroundings—that the features of a prison take the graces of a palace—that a cheery song, worthy of a bright landscape and a blue sky, can be sung in the gloom of an iron cage? How is it?' I think that his answer would be, 'God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all I ask or think.' That grand truth inspired his soul, and took full possession of him, and so his heart and his hand kept time to the same beat. The pulse stroke and the pen stroke went in pairs; and if ever letter was written by a human hand that had an inspired human heart behind it, it is this transcendent epistle indited behind prison bars. It was Paul's lifelong joy to announce everywhere that the salvation of Jesus was free to all the world, and that the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile was broken down; and so he travelled everywhere, along all the European and Asiatic highways, offering to everybody, gentle and simple, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

1. Had the apostle only said that God is able to do all that we *ask*, his statement would have been enough to give us confidence in prayer. But it is a much more assuring thing to be told that God is able to do all we *think*. We may be limited in our asking by various causes. Timidity may cause us to limit our requests. Inability to embody our desires in words may prevent our asking the things we should like to receive. We can think them, but we cannot give expression to our thoughts so as to convert them into prayers. But here we are told that what things we can think, we are justified in expecting, for God is able to do not only all we ask but all we think. And this we may say confidently, that if our thoughts are in the line of the Spirit's teaching—if we think what is good, what is gracious, what is glorious, what is fitted to shed lustre on the Divine perfections, and to make them appear glorious in the eyes of God's creatures, what is fitted to minister to the blessedness and the true dignity of His chosen ones—we cannot think what is too great or too good for God to do, for He is able to do *all* that we ask or think.

2. But this is not all that the apostle says. The

Lord is not only able to do all that we ask or think, but *above* all, in excess of all, beyond all. Higher than our highest thought, His power to do reaches. Higher than the highest thought of any of His creatures. Paul's discursive, soaring mind, in its wide and lofty flights, may see wonderful things, things which it is not lawful for him to utter, because they so much surpass our present imaginings that they might shake our faith, if not becloud our reason. John's eagle *eye*, purged by pain, strengthened by devout meditations in the solitude of Patmos, lighted up by Divine inspiration, may see apocalyptic splendours which dazzle us by their brightness and their glory. But neither Paul's nor John's thinking can equal the Divine power to do. He is able to do above all that either Paul or John can ask or think.

3. Nor is it a bare surpassing even, to which the apostle testifies, as if God's power rose just above our thinking, and scarcely more; overtopping, but barely overtopping it. God's power is thus not nearly matched by man's thinking. 'He is able to do *abundantly* above all that we ask or think.' But even this is not all. Paul has a yet stronger word by which he gives intensity to all the others. Abundantly is not enough for him; there is something even beyond abundance. 'God is able to

do *exceeding* abundantly.' Further than this language cannot go. He might repeat himself, but he could scarcely intensify, even by repetition, what he has here said: 'Exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think.'

Sir Robert Ball tells us that the sun could heat and light two thousand million worlds like ours. Suppose a man to be left eight million pounds, and of that eight million to spend a penny wisely, but to waste and throw away all the rest, you would say of all the extravagant people you had ever heard of, he was the most spendthrift and extravagant. Well, Sir Robert Ball tells us that if eight million pounds' worth of heat emanated from the sun, we would not be able to secure and make use of on this earth more than the value of a pennyworth. There are other planets which use it, of course, but when every allowance is made for what they consume, there cannot be a doubt that by far the greater quantity of the heat and light given out by the sun is apparently wasted. It isn't needed in this world. Yet God made the universe on this tremendously liberal scale. Nothing is too great or too good for the man He has made. He withholds nothing from us—not even His Son—that He may show His love for us.

## The Early Amorite King Humbaba.

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It is generally understood that in certain Aryan lands gods became men. Many scholars maintain that the same has occurred with the Semites. They have said that Nimrod, the patriarchs, and many other Biblical characters were originally deities; that Etana, Lugal Marda, Tammuz, Gilgamesh, and many other Babylonian rulers had also descended from the realms of mythology. Fortunately clay tablets, which are not as perishable as skins and papyrus, have recently furnished us with the material whereby some of these so-called deities are restored to their places in dynastic lists, and whereby it is possible to assert that it cannot be proved that gods ever became mortals in the Semitic world. The order must be exactly reversed. While anthropomorphic ideas are attributed to the deities, we have no instance of a Semitic god

becoming a man. Perhaps it will be found that even more of the gods of Persia and India, who became mortals, had originally been human beings.

Etana has recently been restored to his place as a ruler in the earliest known dynasty, where he is called a 'shepherd.' The unpublished text in the Pierpont Morgan Library Collection, which figures in what follows, calls him 'king.' Lugal Marda, Tammuz, Gilgamesh, and other rulers who had been deities, are now known to have been kings. From what follows, Humbaba, the despot with whom Gilgamesh fought, proves also to have been a human being, and to have been one of the earliest kings of the country later called Amurru, or the land of the Amorites. As a result there follow far-reaching and important conclusions as regards the early history and culture of this land.