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putting Thouless's argument is to say that religious truth roots the great values of life, truth, beauty and goodness, in reality, and that unless this is valid the universe is a chaos. Very likely this way of putting the matter would make Thouless draw his foot back again in alarm. But if it is more general or more philosophical (in the narrow sense) it is none the less true. If I am asked to live for goodness, truth, or beauty, I want to know if these things are big enough to claim my loyalty, that is to say, real enough. And this means: Are they rooted in the ultimate truth of things? It is quite true the mind *does* crave for harmony in the universe. But it is infinitely more likely that this is because the universe is meant to satisfy this deep instinct than that the unity of things is a mere figment of the rationalizing tendency of the mind.

There is something infinitely pathetic in the New Psychology when it comes face to face with the question: What are you going to offer to humanity in place of the religious truth which is a pure creation of the mind without any 'objective' reality? What is the hope of the world? The only things our new science can offer are an extension of the herd instinct until it becomes as wide as humanity, and a development of the tender feeling which is rooted in human nature. This is a melancholy prospect. For there is absolutely no reason whatever to suppose the herd instinct will spread and become more general. Experience is all the other way. It separates men into groups which fight each other and hate each other. The herd instinct creates employers and employed, German and French, conservatives and radicals. It shows no tendency to produce a brotherhood of humanity, because there is nothing in it to produce such a great fellowship. That is a pure creation of religion, and is possible only when God is believed in as the Universal Father.

As to the growth of a tender feeling in human beings, there is no ground at all for believing this to be in any but a limited and sectional way characteristic of human nature. It is found in the family, but it is notorious that family feeling may exist with the most intense selfishness and exclusiveness, and we have no reason to think that the tenderness within the family will spread so as to include those who are strangers, but rather the opposite. The spiritual bankruptcy which these reflexions point to in the New Psychology is no proof of the truth of religious experience. But at any rate such a consideration will make us look carefully at the credentials of a system which (so far as religious truth is concerned) may be purely destructive, and can offer nothing to take the place of what, after all, has been the foster-nurse of all that has been great in the life of man.

In the Study.

A Prayer.

Merciful God, Thou kind and loving Father, we thank Thee that Thou hast created us, that in Jesus Christ Thou hast redeemed us, and that by Thy Holy Spirit Thou hast called us into Thy fellowship and service. We thank Thee with all our heart for the kindness which Thou hast bestowed upon us during the time that is past. Thou hast protected us from danger to body and soul; Thou hast enriched us with blessings beyond our knowledge; and with much patience Thou hast borne with our faults.

We are not worthy of all the mercy which Thou hast shown to us, and we pray with hearty repentance for pardon of any evil we have done, and of our constant misuse of Thy grace. Enter not into judgment with Thy servants, but let Thy compassion in Jesus Christ wash us from all our guilt.

O Thou who art the Keeper of Israel, Thou who neither slumberest nor sleepest, be Thou the Guardian of our lives. We commend to Thy gracious care our bodies and our spirits, our possessions and our powers, our waking and sleeping, our life and death. Cover us with Thy hand, and keep us from all evil and from every fear. O Lord, our hope is in Thee; let Thy love be our shield, and guard us unto life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

Virginibus Puerisque.

Passing.[1]

'Ready to distribute.'—1 Ti 6^{18}.

That means sharing things, passing on our good things, playing the game together and not each for his own hand.

I heard a missionary speaker once tell of the most remarkable football team he had ever seen. It was at Beyrout, I think, and was organized by a young Scottish missionary. The centre forward was an Armenian, the forwards on either wing were Turks. There were a couple of Jews, a negro, a Copt, and a few other odds and ends; a mixture like the Tower of Babel, of nations that usually hated each other and did each other all the harm they could. Yet they were all playing in one football team, brought together by the power of Jesus.

The missionary said he was told that the most difficult thing to teach these men was to pass to each other. Every one was keen to dart down the field and score the goal himself; and when their teacher had got a man to understand that he must play, not for himself, but for the team, when he had taught him to pass, he knew he had done a great thing not only for the team, but for that man's own life.

Now that is just what St. Paul means when he says Christians must be 'ready to distribute.' They must learn to pass.

Our world in Europe is to-day in a terrible mess because every nation is playing its own game. They are fixed on their own plans. They want to mend the trouble in their own way. They want to score the goals and gather the glory single-handed. This won't do in football and it won't do in the big game of life; and things will never be right until each nation forgets itself and denies itself, and all pull together for the good of all.

In our own nation we see the same thing. We were one nation in the War, pulling together like one team, all ready to give up something of our own for the sake of the nation. That is how we got on and won the War.

Now we are all at sixes and sevens. Miners, engineers, employers, workmen, each determined on his own score, and nobody scoring at all for that very reason. It isn't a team when every player is playing on his own and won't pass to the next man, and we aren't a nation to-day. We are just a lot of jostling people, not playing the game, not 'ready to distribute.'

This is the secret of life for every one of us. The great lesson is to learn to pass. If you have comfort, it isn't yours only. Pass it on. There are others who are being starved on the wing because you don't pass to them. They lose heart and interest and fall out of the game discouraged. Pass on your comfort, your friendship, your money, pass out and play the game for the team. This is the spirit of our Master. It is what He did; and being a Christian means just this, being 'ready to distribute.'

Look farther than our own nation. We have good news to give, the news of the love of God that Jesus Christ brought. That isn't our own for ourselves only. There are thousands in the world who know nothing about it. It's for them too. We have got to pass it on. That is what we call Foreign Missions. I call it just playing the game. These heathen people are being starved of what they have a right to and a great need of, because so many Christians at home say they don't believe in Foreign Missions, or, while they say they believe, give so little and show so little interest that it is plain they don't really believe at all.

God wants us all to be one, playing like a team for His kingdom, all the nations together for God, all the people in each nation together for God, all for each and each for all. We are fond of the words 'my' and 'mine,' but when Jesus taught us to pray He left these words out, and told us to say 'our'—*Our* Father, *our* daily bread, *our* sins, *our* temptations. 'Ready to distribute,' says St. Paul, 'bear one another's burdens,' 'share in all good things,' 'members of each other,' playing the game together under our Captain, Christ.

If we come to Him, the first lesson He will teach us, the hardest to learn, the most worth learning for it is the key to a happy life, will be to learn to pass.

[1] By the Reverend Stuart Robertson, M.A., Glasgow.

Smudges.[2]

'Saved; yet so as by fire.'—1 Co 3^{15}.

Have you ever noticed, what one can see now and then, a black smudge on the skin of an orange, sometimes faint and sometimes darker, that you can wipe away, or that comes off upon your fingers? And do you know how it comes there? A friend of mine, who has a great fruit farm at the other side

[2] By the Reverend A. J. Gossip, M.A., Aberdeen.

of the world, once told me about it. It's like this. They have a beautiful climate yonder, sunny and bright and hot, but once in a while, just when the oranges are beginning to ripen, there comes a touch of frost at night. And that would mean the ruin of the whole crop for the year. So they have to guard against it somehow, and what they do is this. Whenever the evening sets in cold, and they think frost is coming, they put long rows of twinkling little oil lamps, one under each orange bush, and that keeps the air warm enough to save the fruit. But, as you who live in the country know, oil lamps can be dreadfully smoky (can't they ?), and that's where the smudge came from. It is quite a good orange, it may be sweet enough, but it was almost lost. The frost came, and it was just saved. It was saved only by fire, and there's the mark on it still. And most of us have got marks and smudges like that upon us too. Not on our hands and faces ! Mother, of course, would never allow that ! Every time you are in a hurry and scamp your washing, though it looks all right to you, she always sees that there is something wrong, a tide mark left up on your forehead, or down on your neck. And she won't have soiled hands when you sit down at table.

No, but the marks on us are deeper in, are on our heart and mind and soul. Between you and me, you really are a fairly idle little rascal, aren't you ? Take that practising of yours ! How you try to wriggle out of it, and what scores of excuses you can make ! And even when you are at last pinned down to the piano with whole twenty minutes to go, you don't try much, now do you ? You twiddle at this, and give it up ; and take to something else, and rattle through it till you come to a hard bit. And, 'Bother, I can't do it, anyway time must be up.' And off you rush to the clock, and your face falls. 'Only ten minutes !' And back again, but by and by, well, it must be over now ; and off to the clock again. 'Only twelve minutes !' Why, it must have stopped ! No ! Well, at any rate it's a wee bit past the twelve, we'll call it thirteen. And you crawl once more to the piano, and your eyes light on the maker's name, and London. That sets you dreaming. 'I wish I were in London, to see the Tower, and the Zoo, and all the rest of it.' And then you waken up and off to the clock. Time's up, and that's finished ! Yet you haven't really practised, not one little bit. And by and by when you grow up one piece of you won't have grown up at all ! You'll be able to talk, that bit has grown all right ; and to walk, that bit has grown ; but not to play music, that bit of you will be still a baby that can't do anything. And all your life you will carry the ugly smudge of that stupid idleness of yours.

And there are other marks deeper in yet, away in on our souls. You can rub off the smudge on an orange, but these have to stand. For living life is like an examination where there is no rubbing out allowed. If you put down a silly thing, you can say later, that is all wrong, and do it better, but it all has to go in. Every time that you get huffy, or fly into a passion, remember that that makes a smoky mark upon your soul, and it doesn't come off. There is a man in the Bible called Mark, a splendid man, to whom we owe the Second Gospel and many another thing. But once when he was young he grew afraid of what they had to face, and left Paul, and went home. Afterwards he became very brave and daring, and feared nothing ; and we know that, and are proud of him. And yet that old smudge of cowardice hasn't come out ; and when people hear of him they think, 'Ah, that's the man who ran away.' Then there is Peter, Jesus' greatest friend, a glorious, lovable, brave man, yet once he faltered and failed through fear, that night when he was standing in the shadow where the leaping flames of the great fires in the courtyard wouldn't throw any light on his face and betray him to the soldiers, and a pert girl found him out, and when he had to speak, his accent gave him away, and he grew frightened and lied. And still, in spite of all the noble things he did before and after, when people hear of him they think, 'That is the man who denied Jesus, said he didn't know Him, failed his friend.' The smudge, even after all these years, has not rubbed off. Or even if people do forget about it and don't see it, the man himself knows and he sees it. Who remembers that Paul, the great Christian, was once Saul who harried and killed Christ's folk ? Ah ! but Paul always remembered. He hated that mark upon his soul, which blackened him and burned into him, and would not come off. He was saved, but the smoky smudge was there.

Keep yourselves clean. For temper and selfishness are not things that you can wipe off, and so an end of them : they are more like a hideous accident that leaves results that never pass. Suppose a stupid fellow, let us say a miner down in the workings underground where there is gas at times and it is dangerous and no light must ever be lit, took a

craving for a smoke, struck a match, and there came a dreadful explosion, his mates would hurry to his help, they always do, would say, 'Poor Bill has been doing something foolish, but foolish or no we must get him out.' And they would do it. But at best he would be all maimed and scarred and lame for life. He would be saved, but only as by fire. And all his days he would go sore and limping, and perhaps on crutches, all for that one minute's foolishness. So you take care, look at the orange and remember that our smudges don't come off, and so make up your minds that there is going to be no temper and no selfishness for you.

The Christian Year.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Free Gift of God.

'For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.'—Ro 6^{23}.

The New Testament doctrine of grace obviously depends upon its doctrine of sin. In the gospel of Jesus Christ the way of overcoming and destroying sin is revealed, but this way is valid and necessary only if the teaching of Jesus and His apostles concerning the nature of sin is essentially true.

There is in modern times a departure from the evangel of the Cross, and we find that the denial of the great message of atoning grace is partly produced by, and partly creative of, a fundamentally different conception of sin. Those who teach a more superficial method of human redemption naturally give a more superficial meaning to sin. In the evolution-gospel sin is only the 'necessary shadow of the good.' The entrance of so-called sin into the world, if it is to be called a fall at all, must be called a 'fall upwards.' We have a somewhat similar conception of sin in the 'natural divinity' theology—sin is but an accident, man is incapable of essential wrongdoing, for his nature is essentially divine. Sin does not touch the essence of human life. How little, then, can it be a cosmic disaster? And how little can it need the intervention of Divine self-sacrifice to avert the ruin? Of course a man may lie and thieve and murder and wallow in unmentionable wickedness; but the thing is not fundamentally serious. It is only a holy divinity falling into an error of judgment.

Let us pass from these follies to the gospel of the Son of God, which teaches that human sin is the essential and complete failure and disaster of the human spirit, so that nothing less than the Divine intervention in a specific work of redemption could save men from ruin.

1. *Sin is fundamentally fatal.*—'The wages of sin is death.'

The term 'wages' is here introduced in order to bring in the contrast of the next clause. As sin pays its servants the earned meed of death, so God gives men in Jesus Christ the free and unearned gift of eternal life. In the twenty-first verse the form of statement is different: 'For the end of those things is death.' The meaning clearly is, that sin is radical disaster. It inflicts death upon man's essential life. It is fundamentally fatal.

In man's deepest consciousness of sin, it is known to be essential antagonism to God. The Son of Man did not know it in Himself, but He knew it clearly and fully in others, and He declared its nature to be satanic, the essence of diabolical opposition to God and truth. Man may wrong his fellow-man, but it is in its opposition to the life of God that the act becomes sin. Hence the truly profound and awful consciousness of the penitential cry: 'Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.'

Sin is continuously destructive of moral fibre. Sin can be seen eating away the moral substance and fibre of life as clearly as a ravaging disease can be seen eating away the tissue and strength of the physical constitution. In the light of this fact the philosophy of sin as a 'fall upwards,' and the representation of it as a blundering effort to find God, are alike convicted of foolishness and of a refusal to look the grave facts of life honestly in the face.

The end of such a process is evident: 'The end of those things is death.' It is impossible to expound in its fullness the meaning of this 'death.' The possible references and relations of this terrible word to man's future existence have raised many controversies. Over some of these relations a dark cloud hangs, and eschatology gleams darkly from behind the veiling of God. Yet we can see and know enough to make sin appear exceedingly terrible. For this 'death', compared with physical death, is as the soul compared with the body. It is death preying on man's deepest nature, on his eternal being.

2. *God overcomes the fatal power of sin* by the free gift of eternal life.

Since sin reigns in man, and sin is the power of death, the God of redemption comes to man with the free gift of corresponding life. This cannot come as wages or as reward, for it is the first step in the overcoming of sin, and this step must be taken by the grace of God. The message of the grace of God makes appeal to that element in man which has got at the seat of power in the natural man, and is working out its ravages, little by little overcoming the natural tendencies towards good. Man can be saved from himself only by accepting the gift of all-conquering spiritual life from God.

But what is this eternal life? It is important to notice that it is not the negation of death, not, as it has often been regarded, something stored away for us in the heavens. It is a positive power by which a man is recreated, the vital incoming of new spiritual life into the human spirit. No doubt the reference of the glorious words, 'eternal life,' passes onwards into unknown meanings and developments of glory in the everlasting prospect of the saints of God; but those unimaginable glories depend upon the vital meaning which eternal life has for us here and now. Life is not an arrangement, but a power. The life eternal is not something to be received in another world, but the spiritual might which is to conquer our sin at the present time. For the spiritual and the eternal are one. The life which is given in the atonement of the Son of God is the entrance of the life of the God of redemption to take supreme command of our being. 'This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.'

God's gift of life is the beginning of new power, and therefore a call to noblest effort. Although eternal life can come only as God's free gift, yet, having come, it introduces a test of service in which the prospect of a final reward is not absent. The life itself cannot be other than a free gift, but the working out of that life into its final form of glory depends in no small measure upon our faithfulness. The warning comes to the negligent disciple, 'Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.' Happy the man who can say at last, 'I laboured more abundantly than they all. Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.' [1]

[1] J. Thomas, *The Mysteries of Grace*, 144.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Modern Prophets.

'And Moses said unto him, Art thou jealous for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!'—Nu 11^{29}.

We read a great deal in the Old Testament about priests and prophets. They were the two leading officials in Old Testament times. The priests carried the needs of the people up to God. The prophets carried God's message down to the people. We often think of the prophets as if they were simply foretellers of the future, but as a matter of fact that was not their principal function. Their principal duty was to make known the will of God to the people. They received the message from God in various ways: sometimes in a dream, sometimes in a waking vision, sometimes through thoughts arising in their own hearts. But they knew that it was a message from God however it came, and they delivered it to the people with the authoritative words, 'Thus saith the Lord.'

Now, when Christ rose from the dead the priest and the prophet as separate officials came to an end. When the veil of the Temple was rent in twain, every worshipper had direct access to God. He had just as much right to enter the Holy of Holies as the priest had. And when the day of Pentecost arrived, and the Holy Spirit sat like a tongue of fire upon the head of every person gathered in the Upper Room, all received the gift of prophecy. From that time every follower of Christ is a priest, and every follower of Christ is a prophet. On that day there was fulfilled the wish of Moses, which is contained in our text, when he said, 'Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets.'

We are all prophets now! All the Lord's people are. That means, then, that every one of us has to receive God's message and to tell it.

1. *We have to receive God's message.* In other words, we have to learn God's will. How are we to do that? The prophets of Old Testament times received it in dreams and visions. But that is not the way He speaks to us to-day. Of course, it may be that occasionally God declares His will to us in some such abnormal way as that, but it is certainly only in very rare cases—much rarer, perhaps, than we are apt to think.

The Jews asked for signs and wonders. 'Now

when Herod saw Jesus he was exceeding glad, for he hoped to see a sign.' It was a restless curiosity, itching for the sensation of some novel entertainment; it was not the desire of a faint and weary heart hungering for bread. And Jesus answered him nothing. An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign. They seek to get evidence of the future life through merely human agencies and physical sensations, when such evidence is to be obtained only by the trusting, loving heart. They want a loud voice from the other world to tell them what lies beyond the veil, and it is not surprising that there comes back to their ears only a foolish echo of their own voice.

> And not for signs in heaven above
> Or earth below they look,
> Who know with John His smile of love,
> With Peter His rebuke.
>
> In joy of inward peace, or sense
> Of sorrow over sin,
> He is His own best evidence,
> His witness is within.

In order to know the will of God there are two essential things.

The first is *faith in God*; that is to say, we believe that God is righteous; anything like injustice, or cruelty, or contempt—anything of that kind is abomination to Him. The will of God is declared to us by rousing within us an abhorrence of these things, and a determination that as far as in us lies we will help to put an end to them. Examples readily occur. A man who is cruel to children or to dumb animals is not a prophet of God; he has not learned God's will. No more is a man who seeks to enslave other men—whatever form the slavery takes; it may be compelling them to work for unreasonable wages, or it may be enticing them to some vice.

The second thing is that we must have *hope for men*. We must believe in God first of all, and then we must believe in men. One of the most striking sentences in all the Bible is a sentence consisting of three words in the First Epistle of Peter, 'Honour all men.' It expresses the difference between Christianity and other religions. Could a Jew do that? How he hated the Samaritan! Could a Hindu do that? How he despises the outcasts! But do we do it? Edna Lyall, whose stories are perhaps not much read to-day, describes one of her characters in this way. Carlo had the rare and enviable gift of seeing people as they might have been under happier circumstances, and the still rarer gift of treating them as such. The life of Christ was full of this kind of hopefulness for men. So hope for men is also essential if we are to be prophets. If we believe in God and believe in men, we shall certainly know God's will.

2. When we have learned God's will, then *we have to deliver it*. The prophet would not have been a true prophet if he had kept it to himself. Do we shrink from making God's will known to others? The prophet often shrinks from the duty of delivering his message. Jeremiah pleaded that he was an inexperienced man. 'I am a child,' he said. Jonah ran away. When he was told to go to Nineveh he took ship in the opposite direction to Tarshish. And yet no one knew the will of God better than Jonah. 'I know that thou art a gracious God,' he said, 'full of compassion, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.' Surely that was a knowledge that no man could keep to himself, and yet Jonah felt he would rather go anywhere than to Nineveh to declare God's will. He would rather die than do it. You remember his words: 'O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.' Of course we are not all sent to preach, as Jonah was. But if we are not sent to preach we are at least sent to talk. We can surely imitate that poor woman of Samaria, who went home and told her neighbours what Christ had said to her. It is a strange thing, when you come to think of it, that people who are bent upon attaining the same end in life—truth, goodness, and purity—should never give the slightest indication to each other in words that this is so; never allude in the presence of their best and dearest friends to that which is their chief hope and highest interest. We are all called to be prophets—not one here or there. We are all in the pulpit, for that matter. For Christ has broken down the professional barriers between priest and people. The worshippers are no longer expected to stand outside in the temple courts; they can pass into the Most Holy Place itself.

But religious conversation must, above all, be real; there must be no humbug about it—no hypocrisy, exaggeration, unreality. And there are some things in religion that are not for common talk, which a delicate, sensitive mind will no more

thrust into a conversation than it will the heart's deepest affections.

But if we cannot always talk about God, if it is sometimes inadvisable to do so—still there is one thing we can always do—one thing in which we can never go wrong. We can be prophets in our lives. And other people looking at us will confess that we have been with Jesus. The signs will be so evident.

Ninth Sunday after Trinity.

The Unrighteous Steward.

'And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when it shall fail, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles.'—Lk 16^{9}.

This verse is offered as the explanation of one of the darkest of our Lord's parables, and many feel that, instead of clearing it up, the interpretation only adds to the obscurity. But the thought in the verse is further explained by the verses which follow: 'He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much: and he that is unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?'

If, as seems certain, these verses contain the key-thought of the parable, its drift will be essentially similar to the story of the talents which we have in Mt 25^{14-30}, and that of the pounds in Lk $19^{11-13.\ 15-26}$. The real point of the teaching will be that the faithful and diligent use of lower gifts affords the training which will fit men to receive higher privileges.

There are two special thoughts in this parable. They are the need of *foresight* in the Christian life, and the *value and right use of money*.

1. *Foresight.* The difficulty of the parable is that the steward in the story was not faithful, and was (apparently) commended for his dishonesty. Why is this character given to him? The answer will probably be found in a careful study of the principles on which our Lord's parables are constructed. They are (if we may say so) works of unconscious art, in each of which there is the unity that comes of a central conception. This key-thought is thrown into the strongest possible relief by the choice of the details, which are so selected as to give it the greatest possible prominence. For instance, in Lk 18^{1-8} the judge, though representing in some sense the Heavenly Father, is depicted as an unjust, careless man. Why? Just in order to show that the perseverance of the poor widow, in the face of such difficulties, was all the more commendable. And so in this parable of the Unrighteous Steward it is the foresight, not the dishonesty, of the steward that is commended by his lord. It would be rash to say that the story could not have been so constructed as to bring out a man's foresight without making him dishonest (the story may be based upon an actual occurrence with which Jesus and His disciples were familiar); but this at least can be said, that if the man had been honest there would have been other qualities than his apparent generosity to commend him to his master's debtors, and the need for a special exercise of foresight would not have been so great. He makes friends with them by relieving them of part of their debts, in order that when he had lost his employment they might receive him into their houses.[1]

2. The foresight will lead to a *right use of wealth.* The parable teaches that material wealth is not to be rejected or despised as unclean, but to be so used as to promote the highest ends. Here is a wholesome corrective to that one-sided view, based upon such passages as our Lord's words to the rich young man, that, by the Christian, wealth is neither to be used nor possessed at all, but parted with altogether. The teaching is certainly in harmony with our Lord's practice; for He had a number of well-to-do people among His followers whom He never commanded, it would appear, literally to abandon their property.

The fact that the words 'of unrighteousness' are added after mammon or riches (for mammon is only a Syriac word for riches) affords some difficulty. But probably it is as compared with the true riches that the riches of this world are called 'the mammon of unrighteousness.' What are the true riches? Those that will stay with you; those that will not fail you. Hear St. Augustine as to these: 'You have houses and lands and servants. I blame them not—you have inherited them, or you may have justly acquired them. But true riches these are not. If you call these riches, you will lose them; and if you set your heart upon them, you will perish with them. Lose, that thou be not lost. Give, that thou mayest gain.' Give, this is the teaching. There is a special message here for to-day. The

[1] Edward Grubb, *The Personality of God*, 107.

war to a large extent swept away materialism. The money standard was no longer the determinant of life. Our riches were, to some extent at least, consecrated. And now, to-day, we are in danger of forgetting our ideal of a reconstructed land with opportunities for all. What is the remedy? It is to bring home to our minds the lesson of the right use of wealth which is taught by Christ in this parable. Christ calls us, not to repudiate money as evil, but to use it only as a means to good—to consecrate our wealth. He calls us, in the words of the text, to make to ourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Christ as Mediator.

'For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all.'—1 Ti 2^5.

The commentators tell us that the actual word 'mediator' is to be found only in this passage; but the idea of mediation runs right through the Bible. The Old Testament is full of mediation. There is a great deal said about the ministry of angels in the older books of the Bible. They were 'mediators,' 'go-betweens,' between God and men. And not angels only, but men also were called to this high office and mission. Moses, for instance, was the mediator between God and the people of Israel; he pleaded in the name of the people with God; he spoke as the representative and mouthpiece of God to the people. And not Moses only, but all priests and prophets were mediators, or at any rate it is true to say there was a mediatorial element in all their work and service. But all these mediators were imperfect, and their mediatorial service but partial. Paul brushes them all aside, as if they were scarcely worth reckoning, and fastens our attention exclusively on Christ, 'there is one mediator between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus.'

What exactly is meant by the word 'mediator'? The Greek word *mesitēs*, which is here translated 'mediator,' means literally 'one who stands in the middle.' But he is one who stands in the middle for the purpose of drawing two together in a pact or covenant, or else (and here we touch the very marrow of the Pauline use of the word) he is one who stands in the middle in order to bring about a reconciliation where there has been division or enmity.

Could any title better describe the work of Christ than this word 'mediator'? He is the great Middle-man, drawing estranged parties together into concord and peace. Throughout the centuries He has been busy at His reconciling work, filling up gulfs of distrust and hate, bridging great chasms of difference, pulling down middle walls of partition and everywhere making peace. In every sphere He has been carrying on His mediatorial activities—in the individual soul, on the field of history, between man and God. And the hope for the individual and for the world lies here—that He has not abdicated His functions. The Middle-man is still at His work. And He will not cease from it till our peace shall be like a river and our righteousness like the waves of the sea.

There are three great spheres within which Christ carries on His mediatorial work:

1. He is *Mediator between God and man.* This is the sphere within which Christ does His mightiest mediating work, and in that sphere He stands alone. The very fact that a mediator was necessary proceeds on the assumption that man was sundered far from God. About this fact there can be no dispute. All life and experience bear it out.

There are two main causes of alienation from God—ignorance and sin. Let us look first at the fact that multitudes are *separated from God by sheer ignorance.* That is the condition of the pagan world at this very moment. That was the condition of the entire world before Christ came. By its wisdom it knew not God. It could only grope after God if haply it might feel after Him and find Him. And to that wandering and alienated world Christ came, as the Mediator between God and men. The Gnostics were conscious of the vast distance that separated Almighty God from mortal man, and they tried to bridge the gulf by imagining that there was an almost endless chain of spiritual beings, the first link in the chain being only a little lower than God, the second a little lower than the first, other successive links descending in spiritual excellence by subtle shades and gradations until a being was reached who was only a little better than man. That was how the Gnostic tried to mediate by these endless genealogies of his. Paul, perhaps, has these Gnostic speculations in his mind in this

passage. He brushes them contemptuously aside. For the multitudinous æons of Gnosticism he substitutes the One Mediator, the man Christ Jesus.

This is the prophetic aspect of Christ's mediatorial work. He brought God and man together by revealing to men the character of God in His own words and life. And in this respect He is the One Mediator. If Jesus was not the Revelation of God, if He was not Himself God manifest in the flesh, then God is still a God who hides Himself. Apart from Jesus we have no right to speak of God as Father. History does not reveal 'the Father.' Nature does not reveal 'the Father.' 'No man cometh to the Father but by me.' That is our Lord's own imperious and challenging claim. Leave Christ out of account, and God will be a God afar off, and we shall be back in the night of ignorance and fear. It is in Jesus that we cease to wander in some far country; we become members of the family of God, and receive the spirit of sonship by which we cry 'Abba, Father.'

Second, there is *the separation caused by sin*, and that is the separation which Paul has in his mind in the text. Sin always results in fear and estrangement. Here is how St. Paul describes the condition of the Colossians. 'You,' he writes, 'being in time past alienated, and enemies in your mind in your evil works.' Alienated, separate, strangers, enemies! No words could set forth more vividly a complete severance. And the estrangement is mutual. Sin alienates man from God, but it also alienates God from man. Sin grieves God, it offends God, it alienates God. Listen to words like these: 'God is angry with the wicked every day.' 'The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous; the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.' 'The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.' We must write a new Bible, we must for ever get rid of the words anger, wrath, consuming fire, from the descriptions of God's attitude towards men, if we are to maintain the position that alienation is only on one side.

And so, as the estrangement is twofold, the reconciliation must be twofold. Yes, Christ reconciled man to God by His Cross. In the Cross God stoops to the very death to rescue and save those who had rebelled against Him. And the vision of that mighty love changes alienation and hate into passionate devotion. We are reconciled to God by the death of His Son.

But Christ also reconciled God to man. And this also He did 'by giving Himself a ransom.' That God Himself provided the ransom makes no difference to the fact that the ransom had to be paid before man could be set free. That God Himself was 'in Christ reconciling' makes no difference to the fact that the reconciliation had to be made before God could bestow on man His forgiving and restoring grace. And Christ, again, was the Middle-man. In the Cross He represented God to man, revealing Him as a God of infinite and uttermost love; in that same Cross He represented man to God; He offered to God the sacrifice of perfect obedience, and, by bearing in His own Person the pain and penalty of sin, confessed in man's name that God's law was holy, just, and good.

2. Christ is the *Mediator between a man and his own conscience.* Sin does more than create a breach between man and God. It creates a breach between man and his own better and truer self. Sin means civil war, a divided and distracted heart; and a divided and distracted heart means misery and pain. Read the description of the civil war in that tragic seventh chapter of Romans. 'The good which I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I practise.' 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind.' 'Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?' Jesus, by blotting out a man's sins, reconciles him with his better self.

3. And, in the last place, Christ is the great *Mediator between man and man.* He has stood in many a gap in the course of the centuries and closed it up. He has mediated between individuals. What marvels of reconciliation He has accomplished! Think of this simple fact—simple but tremendous in its significance—in the circle of Christ's disciples there was at one and the same time Matthew the publican and Simon the zealot—Matthew the Jew, who had entered the pay of the Roman government, and Simon, to whom every such Jew was a renegade! But Christ laid one hand on Matthew and another on Simon, and in Him the Jewish patriot and the Roman servant became friends. And when we think of the mighty achievements already wrought by Him, we can believe that before the end of the day all separations will be brought to an end, and brotherhood will

become a blessed fact, and peace and goodwill our abiding possession.

But the special message of the text for to-day is that Christ has mediated among nations and that in the long-run all national jealousies and suspicions and hates will go down before Him. There is but one mediator between nation and nation, and that is the man Christ Jesus; and He shall mediate until war shall no more be named amongst us.[1]

When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendours fling,
And the whole world give back the song
Which now the angels sing.

[1] J. D. Jones, *The Hope of the Gospel*, 299.

The Apocryphal Gospels.

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II.

From the second to the fifth century, or even later, Apocryphal Gospels were very numerous, as is manifest from what has come down to us, and from the mention of other items by various writers. But what has come down to us is so miscellaneous, and (in the main) so fragmentary, that classification is not easy.

Various methods have been suggested. The simplest seems to be that which is based upon the *Period covered by their contents.*

Those which treat of (I.) *the Birth and Infancy of Jesus;* (II.) *His whole Life to the Resurrection;* (III.) *His Passion and Resurrection.*

I. (*a*) The first in this class (in more ways than one) is the *Protevangel of James* (*Protevangelium Jacobi*). It is very early in origin, and is comparatively free from details which shock one. It maintains the absolute virginity of Mary, and it was evidently widely read and liked. Lipsius and others have remarked that it exhibits an extraordinary mixture of intimate knowledge and gross ignorance of Jewish thought and custom, showing that the legends of which it is composed come from various sources. It contains the following account of the death of Zacharias, father of the Baptist.

Herod wished to kill John with the other infants; and Elisabeth tried to hide him. She cried: 'O mountain of God, receive mother and child'; and the mountain was cleft and received her. Herod ordered Zacharias to surrender his son. He refused, and was murdered in the Temple. When he did not come out to give the usual blessing, a priest at last ventured to go in, and he saw blood beside the altar. A voice said: 'Zacharias has been murdered, and his blood shall not be wiped up till his avenger comes.' The priest went out and brought other priests in. Then the panellings (*τὰ φατνώματα*) of the Temple wailed, and the priests rent their garments from top to bottom. His body they found not; but they found his blood turned to stone.

(*b*) *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, a title given to it by Tischendorf. The first seventeen chapters treat of Mary from her birth to the birth of Christ. At the age of three she was mature. The birth of Christ took place in a cave. Only angels were present, and He was able to stand as soon as He was born. Salome, the midwife, would not believe in the miraculous birth until she had made examination herself. Her hand was withered, and remained withered, until she adored the Child and touched His clothing. When He was moved into the stable, the ox and the ass adored Him, in fulfilment of Is 1[3]. The star was the largest that had ever been seen.

The next seven chapters treat of the stay in Egypt, and have some pleasing features.

The concluding portion (26–42) deals with the return to Palestine, and attributes shocking miracles to the Child Jesus, who several times strikes other boys dead for interfering with His play, and thus provokes the wrath of the populace. Mary beseeches Him to behave otherwise. 'He, not wishing to grieve His mother, kicked the hinder parts of the dead boy, and said to him: Rise, thou son of iniquity.' The dead boy rose up and went away. And then Jesus *with a word* restores the playthings for injuring which He had killed