

A roll such as our Epistle would be first written on was made by pasting several sheets of papyrus together, by the edges. 'In a papyrus roll,' writes Dr. George Milligan in his interesting volume *Here and There Among the Papyri*, p. 50, 'the opening and closing leaves would naturally be those most handled, and consequently those most likely to be mutilated or broken off.' Streeter makes the same remark in *The Four Gospels*, p. 338, 'The two ends of a roll would always be the most exposed to damage; the beginning ran the greater risk, but, in a book rolled from both ends, the conclusion was not safe.' We have a clear case of the loss of a concluding passage at the end of Mark's Gospel. Would it not have been very easy for this Epistle to have had its last page become detached and for what was meant to be an echo of the author's announcement of his purpose, giving a pleasant sense of revolving completion—recall, for example, what Keats has at the beginning and the end of his *Eve of St. Agnes*—would it not have been easy for that echoing statement of his object to be joined to the opening one, especially if the latter, originally a part of the first segment of the roll which had become worn, was already a separate fragment? The reference in the concluding

verse to the world passing away may account for the united whole being placed before 2¹⁸, which alludes to the last hour. There is, however, no visible connexion between the context and the opening verse of the passage in question.

If the objection be offered that it is unlikely that John's mind should work according to a plan and according to logical connexions, the answer can be made that his writing in the Gospel, assuming common authorship, shows the same adherence to patterns. The central sections of the Gospel take the following form: first, a Jewish feast is mentioned; then an account is given of a mighty work of Jesus having a clear reference to some feature or ceremony of the festival; and finally there is presented a discourse or declaration also having relation to the feast (see B. W. Bacon, *Jesus and Paul*, 219 f.). And as Dr. Percy Gardner has pointed out, in Jesus' conversations with Nicodemus, with the woman of Samaria, and with the Jews at Capernaum, there can be distinguished the following design: (a) the occasion; (b) the thesis; (c) the misunderstanding; and (d) the development (*The Ephesian Gospel*, 112 f.). John's mind did work according to plan.

Entre Nous.

'There being a crowd in the place.'

'We live preoccupied lives, cluttered up, overfull, from which some of the loveliest things are commonly crowded out.'

In Dr. Weymouth's translation of the Gospel according to John occurs this verse: "Jesus had passed out unnoticed, there being a crowd in the place." He was jostled out of their attention by a throng. We commonly picture the rejection of Christ in the dramatic terms of the Cross. They cruelly crucified Him. But to-day we are thinking not about the Cross but about the crowd as the way of rejecting Him. We do not easily imagine ourselves crucifying Christ. At any rate, that language would be figurative. We would not really do it. But crowding Him out is not figurative.

That is literal. We do that all the time. Christ and the supreme values He stands for are lost in the traffic. They pass out unnoticed, there being a crowd in the place.

In one of Arnold Bennett's novels there is a character, a woman of the extreme modern type, who, to the surprise of her friends, began to read Shakespeare and the Bible as a diversion. One day in the forty-sixth Psalm she ran on these words: "Be still, and know that I am God." She did not know what the words meant, but she was strangely impressed. She talked to her friends about it, and they too said that they did not know what the words meant, but they felt a mysterious impressiveness, some magic of the style, perhaps a deep serenity in the idea, as though a voice from another

world spoke to their hectic lives. They got no further with the matter. They never did understand what the words meant, but once in a while they spoke together about them, and wondered why it was that even when they repeated them the words seemed great: "Be still, and know that I am God." Arnold Bennett told the truth about some of us there, and about wide areas of our modern life. The loveliest things—quiet hours of inspiration when the visitations of the Divine have opportunity, the hours when the Over-Soul lays its hand upon the soul—pass out unnoticed in a crowd.'¹

Relative Distinctions.

'Tyranny is not war. It is peace, but it is a peace which has nothing to do with the peace of the Kingdom of God. It is a peace which results from one will establishing a complete dominion over other wills and reducing them to acquiescence. One of the most terrible consequences of a confused religious absolutism is that it is forced to condone such tyranny as that of Germany in Czechoslovakia and Poland. It usually does this by insisting that the tyranny is no worse than that which is practised in the so-called democratic nations. Whatever may be the moral ambiguities of the so-called democratic nations, and however serious may be their failure to conform perfectly to their democratic ideals, it is sheer moral perversity to equate the inconsistencies of a democratic civilization with the brutalities which modern tyrannical States practise. If we cannot make a distinction here, there are no historical distinctions which have any value. All the distinctions upon which the fate of civilization has turned in the history of mankind have been just such relative distinctions. . . .

'At the present moment the secular Press [in America] sees the realities in Europe more clearly, and assesses the issues more justly, than the religious Press, in as far as the latter is confused by absolutist and perfectionist illusions. Could anything be more confusing than a religious absolutism which

accuses the Christian churches of belligerent nations of "placing Christ in uniform"; that is, of giving unqualified religious sanction to relative political objectives, while it is itself engaged in the most uncritical identification of Gospel perfectionism with the morally dubious and mixed motives of political neutrality?'²

Colonies.

'The political map of the world is the result of "nature," of race, of conquest, of sin in many forms, and only in a small degree of justice. It is idle to ask whether it is just that the British should have held Gibraltar or Malta as abstract questions of strict right. We cannot reconsider all the conquests and annexations of the past; we cannot unravel the twisted skein of history. But we can ask whether the British Empire to-day is unjustly wronging any of its members or those countries that lie outside it, and we can raise the question whether in the interests of justice and a permanent settlement the British Empire should be willing to make some sacrifices beyond those incurred in war. . . .

'The British people has no right to hold any colonies except upon the principle that they be held and administered primarily for the benefit of their inhabitants. This principle has been consciously adopted by the British Government, though its application still leaves much to be desired. But, if colonies are to be held for the benefit not primarily of the holders but of the inhabitants, there is no obvious advantage in holding colonies at all. Even were the British Empire willing, no justice would be served by a handing round of colonies to other powers; but, if the principle of the responsibility of the older civilizations towards the younger were fully accepted, it would be fair that all "colonies" should be administered by an international civil service. Some solution along these lines would be warmly supported by many British Christians and does not seem beyond the bounds of practical politics.'³

¹ H. E. Fosdick in *The Christian World*, 11th March.

² N. Micklem, *May God Defend the Right*, 149 f.

Antagonism to Science?

Dr. T. Howard Somervell, L.M.S. missionary at Neyyoor, Travancore, writes in his new book, *Knife and Life in India*: 'the material kind of science, when divorced from God or from spiritual values, has led the world to the brink of self-annihilation, and has evolved the pessimistic religion of Humanism. That is apparently the best it can do in the world of religion! Its text is "to-morrow we die," to which some people have very reasonably added, "Let us eat and drink."

'There is surely only one way by which the world can be saved—by the science of the soul; by the principles of Christ who alone has seen clearly, serenely, searchingly, the way to bring men to God and to make the best of themselves.

'This way is not antagonistic to science—it simply fills in the biggest of the gaps which science has left out. So far from being antagonistic, it is possible—in fact, it is now my daily task—to use science itself as the chief way in which the way of Christ can be interpreted to men. By using the results of the labours of those who for centuries have been engaged in medical and surgical research, it is the privilege of the medical missionary to introduce to his patients in the most practical way possible the love of God as it has been revealed by the life of Christ.'

'The Spirit lifted me up.'

'One day when I was standing on the harbour quay at St. Helier in Jersey, watching the loading of boats with their cargoes of new potatoes, the deep boom of a ship's siren drew my notice to a huge cargo steamer slowly nosing her way through the narrow piers of the harbour entrance. . . . Normally ships of that size would wait outside the harbour till the tide had risen.

'But no, the captain was going to risk it. The fact is he knew that if he waited, the delay at the height of the potato season would make a big difference in the price his cargo would fetch in the London market.

'Slowly the huge hull crept through the narrow entrance and then began to turn to come alongside the quay. All was going well and preparations

were being made to receive her, when suddenly the clang, clang, clang-clang of the captain's telegraph to the engine-room signalled "Reverse!" Then followed a heavy throbbing and the propellers' feverish thrashing of the water, churning up black mud from the harbour bottom. She had run aground!

'Quickly hawsers were cast ashore, and caught by ready hands were hitched to whirling capstans, pulling the ship with all the might of powerful machinery. Meanwhile her engines throbbed still more violently, all in the effort to free her, but in vain; nothing would shift her, she was fast in the mud.

'Some time after the turn of the tide, I returned to find the water steadily creeping inch by inch up her black-sided hull. There was no need *now* for violent and feverish action, for she was afloat, her huge hull was no longer fast on the mud. There she was moving steadily and freely towards the quayside.

'Who would dream that such a power was in that gently-rising water of the tide?

'The Spirit of God, like the silent, unseen power of the tide, can set us free and lift us up to a higher and nobler level of life—if we will receive Him.

'Plainly the tide could not lift the ship, if the harbour were closed against its inflowing. And plainly the Spirit of God cannot lift our lives if He cannot find entrance to them. Every morning open your hearts by prayer to the Holy Spirit's incoming.'

This is an extract from a Whitsuntide talk to children by the Rev. H. L. Picken. It is taken from a collection of his addresses just published by the Epworth Press—*Solid Sunshine* (3s. net)—commended in a Foreword by Principal Lofthouse. It is a pleasure to note that it was in the pages of this magazine that half a dozen of the addresses first saw the light.