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RELIGION
AND ENGLISH SOCIETY

Two Addresses

JOHN NEVILLE FICGIS

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Religion
and
English Society

TWO ADDRESSES

DELIVERED AT A CONFERENCE HELD IN LONDON
NOVEMBER 9TH AND 10TH, 1910

BY

JOHN NEVILLE FIGGIS, Litt.D.

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HONORARY FELLOW OF S. CATHARINE'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

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P R E F A C E

THE pages which follow were not written for publication. They were read at a small conference held in London at the beginning of November, and at the desire of some who heard them are here made generally available. I have not thought it well to remove all traces of their original character as spoken to a small body of Christian people. The situation which they endeavour to elucidate is indicated by the following extract from the letter of summons (not written by me):—

“The religious and moral condition of English Society has become a matter for serious consideration. It is scarcely too much to say that English Society is ceasing to be Christian. There is no very widespread revolt from Christianity, but there is a great deal of indifference to the claims of religion, and a great deal of uncertainty as to the trustworthiness of the Christian tradition. There is an uneasy feeling in many who are incapable of giving it expression that the researches of scientific men and of Biblical critics have produced results adverse to the Christian Faith. Discussions concerning the freedom of the will and the problems of heredity have weakened the sense of personal responsibility

and of personal sinfulness. On all sides there is a silent relaxation of Christian effort.

“At the same time the relation of English Society to the Church is being weakened by the invasion of a large foreign element only partly Christian and wholly alien to the traditions of English Christianity. Occasional attendance at Morning Prayer and Sermon in some country place constitutes the only connection of very many people with the Church of which they are nominal members.

“Happily a strong desire is growing up for information and explanations which such ministries do not usually furnish. It seems probable that a united effort to reconsider the claims of the Christian Church and the responsibilities of its members would just now meet with considerable attention.

“As a preliminary to such an effort it is proposed that a few people shall meet in November and try to arrive at an estimate of the situation.”

To make things clearer I have added in an Appendix a sermon on the same topic, preached last summer in All Saints', Margaret Street. For more detailed accounts of the general condition I would refer readers to the sermons which are being delivered by the Vicar of All Saints', and appearing weekly in the *Church Times*. I only wish that these pages partook of the same fineness of touch, and that I had a tithe of Mr. Mackay's power to light up the subject.

Further, although the situation is grave—and that was the ground of our meeting—I trust that nothing here written carries any note of despair. Never,

I believe, were there more signs of hope. But the hope is not that of bringing back things to the condition of universal conformity. Our hopes will only be realised when we give up, as I have heard it put, "playing at being a majority." Still less would I wish these pages to appear as anything like a wail either about English society or education. Alike in our public schools and colleges and in our social life there is a core of vital religion and a soundness which are the despairing admiration of many on the Continent. The task before God's Church in this land, as it is grander, is also more possible, than that before any other part of Christendom. Only we must realise what it is. In a far greater degree than is elsewhere the case has the Church of England retained the allegiance and even the affection of the educated classes. I do not think that she has retained them entirely, or that we are not feeling that stress which is everywhere apparent. If I did, I should not have written. But I do think that upon us is laid the burden, heavy, but still to be borne, of finding some synthesis between "the faith that was once delivered to the saints" and all that is of enduring worth in the modern world. In a different sense from that common, ours is indeed a *via media*. The Church of Rome, on its official side, has adopted the policy of sitting on the safety-valve; while the modernists on the whole are guides rather stimulating than safe. "Liberal" Protestantism, as the more candid observers (like Professor Burkitt) are now admitting, is bankrupt. The older Evangelical view, unrivalled for its individual sincerity and its hold on the Cross,

has always suffered from a lack of the corporate vision, while it leaned for support on a view of the Bible which is daily becoming more untenable. There are indeed not wanting signs, that all those, whose hold on the supernatural is real, are being drawn together. This *rapprochement*, however, cannot mean the surrender of any one vital element in our Catholic heritage. A solemn duty is laid upon us of the English Church, for whom the sacramental gift and the Evangelical faith are alike integral parts of one living religion—the duty of bringing forth from the treasure-house of the Spirit things new and old. It is in the hope of setting this duty in a clearer light that these addresses are published.

J. N. F.

HOUSE OF THE RESURRECTION,
MIRFIELD, *Advent*, 1910.

I

THE INTELLECTUAL CRISIS

I

THE INTELLECTUAL CRISIS

English parents are failing to teach their children the Faith owing to a loss of confidence in the truth of Christian dogma.

This decay of confidence is due to vague impressions they have received as to the results of Biblical criticism, the conclusions of physical science, and the light thrown by the comparative study of religions on the origins of Christianity.

In fact, English vagueness which once made for conservatism now assists the general collapse.

We meet to discuss remedies.

We are not now considering the self-conscious agnostic.

Religion must be presented so as to be interesting. Much of the evil lies in a survival of the eighteenth-century spirit.

Proposals about definite instruction.

I

THE INTELLECTUAL CRISIS

THE late Mr. E. H. Cooper, the author of the *Twentieth Century Child*, discoursed once upon the religious condition of nurseries. He lamented the appalling ignorance under which the modern child lived, and spoke of faith as "dying, dying" for lack of teachers, and told one story of a sick child looking to him for help, as she could find elsewhere no understanding sympathy—hiding some religious book under her pillow until she recognised who her visitor was, and then saying, "It's only you." He pictures hundreds of small boys and girls growing up with every other avenue of life opened and this shut, children "clothed in scarlet and other delights," craving for a sympathy which is denied them. He went on to lament that the clergy, so zealous for Church teaching in elementary schools, were blind, or acted as though they were blind, to a far greater evil than undenominationalism—the dry rot in the religious education of the rich. Mr. Cooper knew his *monde*, and I do not think he exaggerated. He was not sentimental, and was not looking for any priggish or hysterical emotion. Nor was he alone. The teachers of youth often complain that the sons of nominal Church people

come to them quite untaught. We are not here to discuss religious education in the ordinary sense, yet it is well to begin with the children, for there is the root of the trouble. Why are they untaught? Certainly not through their own fault, at least in the earlier stages. *An untaught child means unteaching parents.* It is of this phenomenon that we seek the cause. Here again it is not all due to irreligion or indifference or selfishness. I had better say that I leave out of account the children alike of convinced agnostics and of definite keen Christians; these will inevitably be untaught on the one hand and taught on the other. *Non ragionam di lor.* Our problem concerns that mass of people who have not severed the bonds which bind them to the Church, who expect their sons and daughters to be baptized and confirmed, married and buried, with the full rights of membership. Why is their teaching so much inferior to that fifty years back? I think we must admit that the cause lies deeper than mere laxity. There have in all times been many Churchmen whose allegiance was nominal, or (shall we say?) public rather than personal, yet they were at pains to teach, or see that their children were taught, the elements of the Faith. The nominality of their Churchmanship is no explanation. I believe that the cause is not all to their discredit, and that it is to be found in the prevailing intellectual atmosphere. The people whom we are thinking of are not unbelievers, but they have a vague notion that the foundations are rotten, or at least are not sufficiently secure for them to act with any

vigour. This hesitancy, which is the note of a time of intellectual unrest, operates with especial force on the more passive members of the Church. It kills the *élan* of religion, and makes people wonder whether it is worth while. What we have to face is the vague suspicion abroad among people who will not grasp the nettle of doubt. This suspicion indeed is probably more potent than positive unbelief. I hope that I do not exaggerate. Indeed, I would rather understate the case. But it would not be honest to treat of these topics and leave out of account this general lassitude, any more than it is in regard to the question of ordinands at Oxford and Cambridge. Men and women of the world have awakened, or are awakening, "from their dogmatic slumber," and the hold on tradition, which in the past kept things even, has weakened. People will not take things for granted as they did, and in their perplexity they are apt to leave it all alone in cases where there is no strong personal feeling in favour of religion. Besides, in this matter it is the mothers that count, and it is they who are feeling the stress, as they have not done for generations. The decay of conventional belief has gone on *pari passu* with a development of women's education, which has made more difference than we know, and the very suddenness of the change has thrown people off their balance. Perhaps women have less than men of the vague subconsciousness which is content to wait and trust to things coming right, though they cannot reconcile them. They thought that all was clear and certain, and if it is not so, as

they are now told, they feel lost. Confronted with denials of things that seem to them integral to the faith, they are apt to lose foothold. Add to this the constant intercourse with people of any religious body, or of none, so that your next-door neighbour at a dinner-party may turn out to be a Theosophist, a Christian Scientist, an Agnostic, a Buddhist, or a Positivist, anything rather than a devout communicant, and it at once becomes clear that you are no longer in face of the conditions which made it natural and a matter of course for people to teach their children. Teaching in the old days was very largely Biblical, and now that the world is hearing about Old Testament criticism, no wonder that people have doubts about using the "Peep of Day" and "Line upon Line." Our troubles are very similar to what happened some time ago in Newcastle. There was an anti-Christian campaign among the working-men carried on (I think) by Mr. J. M. Robertson and Mr. Blatchford. It had a great success, for the reason that the audience had been brought up on the inerrancy of Scripture, and when they heard that this notion had been given up by scholars they felt that the ground beneath them had crumbled, and so fell a prey to the infidel attack. I suppose that the Old Testament has ceased to be a serious difficulty for any of us here. Indeed we wish it were. Harassed by Schweitzer and the Apocalyptic problem, distracted by criticisms of the Gospel narrative and discussions of our Lord's consciousness, we sigh for the halcyon days when the Old Testament was the main trouble

and *Lux Mundi* was thought a dangerous book, when it seemed as though, if you could only give up the Old Testament, you had nothing to bother about in regard to the New, because Lightfoot and Westcott and Hort had settled the Germans for ever. What we have to do, then, in this matter is only to bring others to the point where we ourselves were long ago; and probably an added boldness, happily already beginning, in treating of the early narratives would be one remedy in this matter. We have in fact to help folks over a difficult stile which we ourselves have crossed, so that in this respect the trouble is not so bad as it seems. We must remember that there are still many laymen and more women to whom doubts thrown on the Genesis story or the books of Jonah or Daniel seem to be a reflection on the Creed. We need, too, more care in the teaching we disseminate. I remember once reading an article in a widely disseminated Church magazine which began somewhat like this: "Either the Bible is true, or it is not true. If it be true, it can be proved to be true; and if it be untrue, it can be proved to be untrue." You could hardly have a larger number of false statements or more fallacious reasoning in a couple of sentences. And the editor of that paper did more harm than he knew in allowing such stuff to be inserted. However, I suppose in this matter we are all agreed, that the Bible must be taught in such a way that there shall be no shock to faith when the ordinary critical results become known. The popularity of such a book as Dr. Foakes-Jackson's *History of the*

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Hebrews is evidence that this duty is beginning to be recognised. Still more pertinent is such a book as my brother Cyril Bickersteth's *Letters to a Godson*. But perhaps the most needful thing of all is to get back to the Catechism and its methods as the starting-point.

If this were all, our task would be easy. But it is not all. There is the enormous influence, which is still almost only beginning, of the doctrine of development. I am not now thinking of the purely materialist theory. It is doubt or suspense that we are considering, and not denial. It is the reaction of evolution in regard to a historical religion that is so far-reaching. It makes people treat it as an episode. The God of our fathers is not our God just because He was the God of our fathers. You will remember that York Powell, the Regius Professor of History in Oxford, quotes something that Stevenson said: "If I wanted a religion of my own I could make a much better one than this Hebrew Christianity"; and York Powell says this seemed an extremely wise and historical view to take. He expressed what is really the condition of mind of many people. The Christian faith, like the Mediæval Church, belongs to the boyhood or perhaps the girlhood of the race, and we are men and women. Religion has done with its growing pains, and people are apt to treat the Christian tradition as one of them. That is what lies at the bottom of much new theology, and it weakens all reliance on the Creeds, the Church, and the Bible. People imbued with the passion of modernity, so far from being

desirous to tread the old ways, are crying for new ones. They are mad to be up to date. Perhaps—indeed certainly—the common ignorance of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Church as a growing society, added to a hardness of statement on the orthodox side, may have also repelled some and prevented them seeing inside Christianity all that seems to them to be demanded by the categories of modern thought. All this is quite inarticulate and sub-conscious, *but it becomes articulate when the task of teaching children looms before them*, and it helps to sap their energies. Comparative religion, sprawling over the magazines, adds fuel to the flame. Its results—if it has any—are not known, but enough is surmised to make men suspect all that is unique in the claims of Christianity. If added to this they have met clergymen who have struck them as ignorant or unaware of what is going on, they are even more disinclined for definite teaching. Perhaps they are more convinced than ever before of the universality of the religious spirit, but they take a broad and tolerant view of what they consider as mere clerical religion. They will try to bring up their children as Churchmen and gentlemen, but at the same time they have a notion of catholicity which helps them to treat all definite doctrine as provincial. This process is also enhanced by the vagueness of the English mind. That extraordinary quality which once was a bulwark of conservatism is now acting the other way. Mr. Frederic Harrison tells us of a man who, when asked to define his belief in God, replied

that he supposed "there was a sort of a something," and this has probably been the faith of many laymen in every age. In times of tranquillity, when there was little religious competition, that did not prevent—indeed it assisted—the normal paterfamilias to allow or require his children to be trained, but he did not go really beyond the Northern Farmer. "Aa coomed to church, and aa said what aa thyot aa ought to have said, and aa coomed away." What I mean is this. In the old days this vagueness inclined people to a general conformity. Nowadays there are plenty of alternatives in educated society, and the English vagueness, enhanced by the notion of a universal religious sentiment, as revealed by Comparative Religion, tends to make people regard definite Christian teaching as merely a form of the religious spirit which has nothing in it supernatural or authoritative. Hence arises an indifference to all genuine religious knowledge and something like hostility to the claims of the Church. Vagueness of feeling made in fact at one time for passive acceptance of the prevailing system; now it makes for a supercilious tolerance, which often approaches intolerance of all systems. The nominal Churchman has become a practical undenominationalist.

Stronger than all other influences is that of literature. We might almost say that the modern world awoke one morning to find itself anti-Christian. With not very numerous exceptions the great names of literature and art in Europe since the time of Voltaire have not been Christian. How much of

religion there is in modern art you can see at any picture show. Our novels, our plays, our essays (to say nothing of poetry and philosophy) all show what a very small proportion of our more educated population is Christian in spirit. An age enamoured of M. Anatole France or Mr. H. G. Wells cannot continue its adhesion to ancient standards without question. Whichever way we look we see the presence of crisis alike in civilisation and religion. Unfortunately, owing to the week-end habit, on what is in the Church the business-day of the week, the majority of the laymen we consider here are away from the centres where the crisis is felt, and their needs might be intelligently considered. Despite the motor car there is an immense gulf between the town and the country, and the village church is less likely to be able to cope with the problem than of old. In the country there has been no outward change; the Church still comes before the people as the "happy establishment," and the eighteenth century renews its russet youth. You remember how Major Pendennis speaks of singing in church as "having a dooced fine effect from the family pew." That spirit reigns still unconquered, nor does it work wholly for bad; yet the last thing which such people would think of is living by the sacraments.

However, that is really the only hope, if we really desire to effect anything. The people I am thinking of are "the children of fire," in Mr. Whiteing's phrase, and they will either take religion strong or they won't take it at all. It is not

a mere decorated natural religion—its rôle in the eyes of many—that is needed, but a redemptive, supernatural, electric force, a new life; and it is only in this way that the Gospel can appeal to-day—not as an added luxury to an existence already well-ordered, but as a crashing, catastrophic force—“the kingdom of heaven is to the violent.” If we are to bring religion to the motor car world, to the rich as well as the poor, we must see that it is arresting. There are parts of the country where people like their religion dull, and they get it. But the people we are thinking of do not. I think the problems in the east and the west end in this way are very similar. One of our greatest needs is the artistic treatment of religious topics. Our academic apologists, polite and superior, are well qualified to deal with the learned world, but they are not democratic enough, and suffer from a certain quality I can only call portentosity. They have somehow a feeling that good writing and humour are of diabolic origin. And we want above all those two qualities. I am sure of that. Despite his faults, Mr. G. K. Chesterton is our best ally, for he comes into the open and has no fear. Of course no conference will give us what we want most—a novelist, some one who will do for us what Mrs. Wilfrid Ward does for the Romans, or a poet like Francis Thompson. I am convinced that the “House of Prayer” of Miss Florence Converse is far more powerful than much erudition.

Then I wish people could club together and make a really good “inside” for parish magazines. You know how they are described in “Red Pottage.”

Why should the clergy go on distributing literature which nothing on earth would induce them to read themselves? A really good "inside" might help many people, for the condition I have described is not peculiar to one class. You will find it among girls in shops, or clerks in banks, as well as in the homes of the rich. It must be remembered that you want a parish magazine which could be read by all classes, and must therefore contain what all would find interesting. Perhaps something could be done in that way, though it would be very difficult. Indeed I think that *The Sign*, and a new paper called *The Country Town*, are evidence of distinct advance, and also of a sense of the need I indicated. I think, as a rule, we do not want to see the pulpit occupied with apologetic sermons. In days when that was done the results were not such as to make us desire to see them repeated. But in view of the week-end habit, some other day than Sunday might be chosen during certain special terms, such as Lent or Advent, for courses of instruction. The real need is for us to see that we are in a time of crisis, and I am mainly thinking of laymen, and as laymen men need to realise the function of the Church and their position as members of a corporate teaching body. The work is infinitely difficult and delicate. We must avoid mere vague sentiment about religious instruction on the one hand, and on the other we must avoid unwarranted verbalism. All theologians are aware that in applying terms to God there must always be very much of figure. We must make large reserves

in the spirit of reverent agnosticism. Unfortunately some of those who have stood out most for definite teaching (a teaching so greatly needed) have not seen this, and have not done it, and have repelled many devout laymen by hardness or familiarity, which I can only call vulgar. This has now become a very great danger, as some of the details they have insisted upon have been found incorrect, and the faith of many is shaken. First, then, we want an apologetic that shall be interesting and well written, which shall show the beauty as well as the truth of the Christian faith and Church; liberal in its openness to modern currents, but standing a little apart from them all, and vitally organic with the historic life of the Church. Secondly, we want some systems of instruction which shall be definite and sacramental, at once thorough and attractive, and yet alive to the symbolic and provisional nature of every word we say; for we must always remember the great truth of the words of an early Franciscan: "All things that can be thought or seen or told or handled are as nothing in comparison with those things that can neither be thought nor seen nor told nor handled."

II

THE PRACTICAL PROBLEM

II

THE PRACTICAL PROBLEM

The materialism of modern life. The fusion of Christian and non-Christian society. The effects of great wealth and modern developments. Life as mere amusement. Indiscipline. Laxity. The week-end.

The Church must appeal to high motives. There must be no more respectable religion. There must be a religion of sacrifice, of heroism, of strong social bonds. *Cf.* Church in the Roman Empire.

Grounds for hope lie in the modern desire for freedom and for self-development. The Christian Faith when shown in vivid activity meets the desire for zest in life.

Our duties. Distinctness. Laymen's religion, not priests'. Family Prayers. Sunday. Economy. Charity. Retreats. United Prayer.

II

THE PRACTICAL PROBLEM

I SHOULD like to ask you, first of all, to try and avoid any misconceptions. I am not trying to discuss definitely questions of religious education, save quite incidentally. It merely seemed to me that the way to get at the general condition was to consider it from the point of view of the children and their teaching, as we did yesterday, and then there are some further points which we have taken, or may take to-day, in relation to the child or youth, as the illustration of what is really true over the whole world under review. I think that we must consider the question from the point of view not merely of the individual, but of the family as a unit of society, for it is the family as a religious unit of society which has broken down. Then, again, we are discussing people who are occupied not in making but in spending money, and their psychological condition, since they have all the needs of life supplied, is more analogous to that of children than among the industrial classes; but I did not mean to confine the subject to the religious education of children of the richer classes.

Even more acute than intellectual distress is the practical problem. The severity of the conflict, as

Eucken declares, between Christianity and modern civilisation, has only now begun to display itself. Naturally it is most apparent among the triumphant classes whom we are considering, "the conquerors" of Mr. Masterman's analysis. Entrenched like the ancient world in material security, living upon the brilliant surface of a civilisation whose underside is hideous, they feel more and more the contrast between the kingdom of earthly power of which they are the inheritors, and that strength which is "made perfect in weakness." If and in so far as they are resolute to enjoy the much goods laid in store for them, they deliberately resign their birth-right in a Kingdom not of this world. This is the fact that we face, the increasing unreality which seems to attach to the other world in an age intoxicated with the sense of this. Twenty years ago, or more, Mr. Gladstone lamented "that the seen is gaining slowly on the unseen." Perhaps we should alter "slowly" into "rapidly," otherwise the dictum holds. A Scottish bishop complained to me that boys come back from school charming Pagans and nothing more. That paganisation is not all due to insufficient teaching ardour and earnestness in the masters, for these have increased. It is due to the great part played in modern life by delocalised, irresponsible wealth. This has organised for itself a world of interests which occupies every energy without reference to anything beyond.

Perhaps it is also increased by the numbers of things which people are expected to know. We have largely destroyed the idea of education and sub-

stituted that of information ; and as people are expected to know about many things, there is no leisure for the spirit. There is so much to do and think about, that unless we have "got religion" in the old sense, it has no meaning. The old conventional religious ordinances have lost their hold. Their strength is the strength of an earlier day, and relates to a world in which life was less breathless, and that is why it keeps up, in some degree, in the country. It is not unbelief, but the sense of remoteness in Christianity, its lack of relation to all the other meanings of life, that is at the bottom of this. In the American phrase, "they have no use for religion," and they cannot fit it in, and without a revolution in their lives it is not to be desired that they should. Perhaps the cardinal error is the doctrine that selfish amusement may be the main directing purpose of life. So long as boys and girls are encouraged by example to think of amusement as their main object, they cannot profess any real allegiance to Christ, unless they are hopelessly muddle-headed. When I say amusement, I do not mean money-making, because we are now considering those who spend and not those who make money ; though, of course, the passion for display and for mere pleasure leads to an increased need for the means of it all, and increasing lack of scruple as to how these means are acquired. This state of things has grown more acute of late. The increased number of *rentiers*, the divorce of people from the sources of their wealth, and the vast accumulation of riches with the influx of America into Europe, have led to a

mentalité which thinks nothing about money except the spending of it. In the old days the life of a country gentleman was a profession, as Mr. Trevelyan describes so vividly; it may have been overpaid, but it had very important duties, and Queen Elizabeth took care that he did them. A great nobleman not only had his own duties to his own tenants, but had also an important place in the State. This has gone, or is going. It is—speaking very much in the rough—it is *prosperity, not feudalism in any of its forms* that we are considering. Within the last two centuries there has grown up a very large class, neither one thing nor the other, except by caprice, whose one notion is to spend all they can get out of inherited wealth, of whom many have no notion of religion or of morality except as forbidding certain baser pleasures. This has also largely affected the two older classes, and tends to make them throw the management of property into the hands of agents, and just live on the proceeds. There is a danger, too, that such people may be led to treat even their religion as a personal luxury, and there is too much of this in London. All this seems to me largely at the root of that paganisation of life which you deplore and condemn, and it can only be remedied by the teaching that leisure is not a boon but a vocation. More urgent than all the problems of poverty seems to me the problem of wealth, and we cannot leave it aside to-day. I am not discussing the social question, as it is called, or propounding an economic reconstruction, or suggesting that the rich should cut the Gordian knot by selling all that they have

and giving to the poor ; though I believe that part of our difficulties would be solved if more of the really rich were to hear and obey the call to renunciation, and I believe that they will. But since we are trying to think of the things which appear daily, and analyse the causes of the present distress, I cannot leave out the fundamental truth, so frequently emphasised by our Saviour, that riches, if not a bar, are at least a hindrance to entering the Kingdom of God. It must be so. It is true of every kind of riches, of all gifts intellectual and material. The more ground you have for satisfaction around you the more likely you are to trust in them and to find your home on the earth, and the more will you be disinclined to look beyond or to seek rest in a faith which has no meaning if it be not supernatural and other-worldly. Our first thought, I believe, should be one of gratitude that so many have left us. People often seem to be regretting the number of the lapsed ; but I always feel more inclined to regret that the Church is so big, than to be sorry that so many have frankly given up a profession which is at variance with the whole structure of their lives. Therefore, I think, in what we are considering, we must not expect or desire to win them all back or to rule society. In the future we shall be few, but intense. Christians are to be the salt of the earth, the leaven, and the sooner they give up trying to be the whole lump the better. It is better that the Church should be small but real, than that it should be what a well-known statesman called, "the Church of the upper

and middle classes," dispensing bounty to the others, treated as a sort of preserve into which the poor come now and then, like working men to look round our well-swept cathedrals with all the "nice" people living in the precincts. In spite of the enormous work done in the slums, and in spite of London altogether, it seems to me to be the case that in vast tracts of the country the Church is regarded as the possession of the wealthier classes. It is to be used by the poor, but it is the possession of the rich; and this has contributed to bring about that confusion between the Church and the world, so admirably described by Canon Hobhouse in his Bampton Lectures. Moreover, most of you are aware of the fact, which was pointed out in the original paper which summoned you here, that society has enjoyed a large invasion of many who are neither hereditary nor nominal Christians. The conventions of a society so formed are now taken for granted by numbers of Church people. They bring up their children without any notion that things ought to be different for them from what they are to other people; that they ought to spend any less time or money on their personal pleasures or clothes or amusements. "We are taught to be selfish, and told not to be," I heard a young officer say once. The outer habits of distinction are gone; grace before meals is out of fashion; family prayers are a rarity; no one keeps Sunday in the old way. Is it any wonder that boys and girls grow up in ignorance or contempt of the Church as a living reality, a growing society of

which they are organic elements as they are members of a school or college? I consider that this evil is produced more in the homes than anywhere else. A few services and even regular private prayers are not sufficient to maintain this sense of the corporate unity in Christ when the whole orientation of life is different. What do you suppose the average congregation thinks when told they are "a peculiar people, and a royal priesthood"?

Now we will go further. With the increase of riches and the Americanisation of society (by this I mean a world living apart from the sources of the money which the owners have nothing to do but spend) there has come a waywardness and indiscipline, and all restraints are resented. Morality is treated as bourgeois. We can witness the results in the discussions now going on about divorce.¹ Moreover, the organisation of life on this basis takes people from their earliest years out of all contact with the struggling classes, and blinds them to the darker problems of the city. In consequence there is less sympathy between the classes and less mutual understanding than in the old days between peasant and lord. I think probably most people who have to do with undergraduates would say that in some cases this is one difficulty with regard to Ordination. So many boys come from the suburbs and have nothing whatever to do with any outside their own class except the servants and the shopkeepers, and this gives

¹ I omitted deliberately certain darker sides of the moral questions. These are indicated in Mr. Mackay's sermon in the *Church Times* for November 25th.

them a totally different outlook of the mind from that of the son of a country squire who has been accustomed from his childhood to know every one in the village and now and again to play cricket with all the village boys. It is easier for the latter to look forward to a parson's life than for the other. Many boys and young men with great powers of sympathy have never so much as dreamt about the urgent problems of the poor; the slum topic, if they have ever heard of it, has never touched their imagination. You will find men with a hardness and almost a cruelty of temper which has grown out of mere ignorance in regard to all sorts of things which concern three-quarters of the population of the country. They are kept apart from it all. *This has got to end.* If religion is to be brought home to the present generation, it must come in a form which fires the imagination. As a fact, nowadays it presents itself as a sort of glorified policeman, bidding them keep off the grass, and not as "the strange Man upon the Cross" calling men to the most weird of all knight-errandries. Here again it is clear that nothing but a supernatural and sacrificial faith will have any appeal. The call to be Christ's is like the call to St. Paul: "How great things he must suffer for My Name's sake." We must put the suffering and the greatness alike before men, and if this be for the fall, it will also be for the rising again of many in our Israel. For although there is much to appal, there is also much to attract in the world we are considering, and in spite of anything which may appear to the con-

trary, the last thing I would like to suggest is anything like pessimism. How many young men or beautiful women there are

“ Whose lives are turning, turning
 In mazes of heat and sound ;
 But for peace their souls are yearning,”—

the peace that comes only one way. Of how many would it not be true that Jesus looking upon them loves them? The passion for pleasure even has its good side, so far as it makes one do things which are worth doing and not merely what pays. We see this daily in the pursuit of games and in war and politics. So far as the youth of England goes we have a great leverage in the instinct of chivalry and the willingness and desire to take risks and suffer because it is base, mean, and selfish to skulk. Even people imbued with the ethics of Nietzsche are nearer to the Kingdom of God than men stricken with the gold fever, because he teaches you to be noble for its own sake. These people have made their exodus from the industrial Houndsditch, and it is true that they are now in Byepath Meadow, and that hard by is the Castle of Giant Despair, and thence, perhaps, we may hope to catch them yet with the pilgrim's hope. You remember the words of George Herbert :—

“ When God at first made Man,
 Having a glass of blessings standing by,
 Let us, He said, pour on him all we can,
 Let the World's riches which dispersed be
 Contract into a span.

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So strength first made a way,
Then beauty flowed ; then riches, honour, pleasure.
At last God made a stay,
Perceiving that alone of all His treasure
Rest in the bottom lay.

For if I should, said He,
Bestow this jewel also on my creature,
He would adore my gifts instead of Me,
And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature,
So both should losers be.

Yet let him keep the rest,
But keep it with surrounding restlessness ;
Let him be rich and weary, that at least,
If goodness lead him not, yet restlessness
May toss him to My breast."

This is the picture of our world—rich and weary, and ere long the weariness will bring many to Him.

What is the one really successful thing in English education, and I think it is successful, for, when all is said, our public school system is better than any other? Is it not just this appeal to the instinct of chivalry, heroism and adventure on which all that the average boy remembers from his schooldays is really based? This and the corporate appeal? Is not the Boy Scout movement a proof of the universal appeal that can be made in this way? It is to this that we must appeal, and show that when "the Son of God goes forth to war" the fight is keener, and the blows may be harder, but the quest is more wonderful than any El Dorado quest of earth. We must not tell either children or parents that it is a small thing to

serve Christ, or that religion greases the wheels of life, or that it does not make any difference to call yourself a Churchman. To do this, to "let them down easily," is what some have been trying to do, and it is partly the cause of our present difficulty. No sane father would tell a boy, "You are going to school and you will never be hurt, and if you are, I will take you away." A bigger boy would say, "You are sure to be hurt, and you won't like it, but you must learn to take the rough with the smooth." The call to courage, the charm of risks, the loathsomeness of shirking are things which boys are told all the world over, and it is this which attracts to Christ, for all our efforts after manliness lead us to the Cross at last.

It is of absolute importance, as I said earlier, that our appeal for Christ should be made not merely to individuals, but made in the name of the Church. On the whole you do fire the imagination of boys and girls in one form or another with the notion of *esprit de corps*. English people are never individual in the way that Frenchmen are. They are always members of some association, or school, or regiment, or club, and religion will never appeal to them unless it takes the same form. It is the Catholic Church alone which has the hope of the future for that reason. You cannot even develop your personality without society, but this is not all. It is to these two things, the spirit of chivalry and the notion of corporate claim, higher than individual interest, that we owe the success of our education,

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and it is to these two instincts both bidding us rise above ourselves, that the Church appeals.

We have another ground of hope; that very indisciplinability of the day, while it makes men disinclined to a religion which is mere morality, makes them open to a personal and passionate faith. Religion as a code, a dogma, a system will not appeal, but it does appeal as "the living flame of Love," and other things will come in its train. So, again, with men's cry for freedom and self-development, and women's too, which is so potent to-day. These things may make impossible the cold moralities of the past or the bleakness of Puritanism, but they are no bar to the Catholic spirit—the soul of all romance. Religion answers this cry as nothing else does, and there alone is service a perfect freedom—*cui servire est regnare*. I think that in these regards we are better off than we know, if only we resist the temptation to water down the Faith of the Cross. If we are to do anything with the mass of nominal Churchmen, we must teach and we must live the Faith that Christianity is a big thing, and that nothing else makes such demands on a living soul, or gives men such rich experience. If we do that, and are not afraid, then many more will take the Cross and bear it perhaps better than we imagined, and even the pagans may be astounded. Surely it has been part of the failure of our Church that it has not appealed to the heroic and corporate, but has kept its standard low, and brought about the condition we consider here. If only we make sufficient demands upon

men there is latent zeal enough to change the face of England. Intellectually, then, there is the romance of the supernatural, and practically there is the call of the Cross, the friendship of Jesus, and the corporate appeal—the membership in a living society. These are what are going to appeal to men, not a watered-down sentiment or a dragooned respectability.

But how? But how are we to begin? I suppose if we knew this we should not be here.

First of all we must begin at our homes. We must make more effort to emphasise that difference which is nearly obliterated between Christian and non-Christian homes. I hope it does not seem old-fashioned to say that a very different use of Sunday from that now common would be of great service, and I must say that without any prejudice I have come a good way back to the old-fashioned notion about Sunday books and Sunday reading. Even now there are certain things I would try not to read on Sunday. I do not mean necessarily that I draw the line between religious and non-religious books, but there should be something different. Then there might be more regularity in prayers, more adherence to Church rules about fasting, anything almost to mark a difference. We smile now at the exclusiveness and narrowness of the old-fashioned evangelicals, but they did succeed in realising a much greater difference between the Church and the world. We must insist more upon what station demands, and not what it allows. There should be greater teaching as to charity and economy—more freedom

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in speech, so long as we avoid priggishness; though I think we English are nearly all priggish from our fear of priggishness. These things may all help, and you will think of others for yourselves. The average undergraduate has no notion that he should ever deny himself anything that he wants in order to give to a charity. Most people start giving after they have satisfied all their own desires. As one speaker said yesterday, we need more freedom in speech. I also think that those (I am speaking to laymen) who use it should be readier to speak about Confession. I believe half the trouble with men arises from sins at the back of their minds, which they cannot get rid of. Many want to come back to religion; but there are sins behind, and they either do not know about Confession, or else dislike it, and so they tend to treat the Church as the haunt of good people and not (what it is) as the home of sinners.

Then, perhaps, since I am speaking to people who are all agreed, I might suggest what I believe will have more effect than anything else, that we might have some simple bond to keep us together, some short prayers—not more than could be printed on a postcard—to be said every day for the object with which we have met here, asking that God will bless our hopes to make men know Jesus, asking Him that He will teach us to welcome the new ways in which His Spirit is coming.

For He *is* coming. The thoughts of man are returning once more to the God who made him. Even the unrest and selfishness which we see around

is proof of that need of peace which is only in Him. I have said that I am not pessimistic. I believe that we are in the midst of a revival greater perhaps than any known to Christendom. It will absorb all our schemes or sweep them in its current. It will be far greater and more incalculable than anything we have ever dreamt of. It will lead us by strange ways, and through paths that we know not of. We can but set out in faith like Abraham, "not knowing whither he went."

O Lord, from whom all good things do come; grant to us Thy humble servants, that by Thy holy inspiration we may think those things that be good, and by Thy merciful guiding may perform the same through our Lord Jesus Christ.

A P P E N D I X

“SEPARATED UNTO THE GOSPEL OF GOD”

(Romans i. 1)

*A Sermon preached on the morning of the Tenth Sunday after
Trinity, 1910, in All Saints', Margaret Street*

ONE of the most shining qualities of St. Paul's writings is their self-revealing note. St. Paul never writes to develop a theory as such. He is no scientific theologian, deducing from given premises an elaborate system by logical acumen. Even this epistle to the Romans is wrung from him by a practical problem; and here, as elsewhere, he helps the subject and us, because he is not thinking out a system so much as giving words to his own experience. This phrase, "Separated unto the Gospel of God," is an instance of this. It puts, as by a quick electric light, the accumulated effects of that strange, blinding vision on the road to Damascus. It had, indeed, separated him, taken him away from all his old moorings, making him burn what he had adored, and adore what he had wished to burn; it had taken him from his family and friends, his teachers and his peers, and left him alone; from a leader of his nation, "in the swim," as we should say, of all its ecclesiastical life, it had made him a preacher of a despised superstition, an outcast, a heretic, a dissenter from the dominant and popular cult, the offscouring of all things, partaker in very truth of His sufferings who hung upon the Cross. Daily, hourly, was the contrast between what he was and what he might have been borne

in upon him. And though, doubtless, in the human sense there was much to cheer, and in the Church his gifts of statesmanship found a field in reality wider in ordering the new life than any open to him before ; still, there was ever present this sense of separation, of cut-offness, and, so far as his feelings went, it must always have been a torment. He could never forget that he was separated.

But neither could he escape the thought of that for which this great wrench had come into his life, it was "unto the Gospel of God"; to carry into a world which was indeed lying in the evil one, whose principles were having their logical result, as he set forth in the burning sentences at the close of this chapter, and generating every kind of intellectual vagary and moral corruption. Into that world the Church was to plunge, separated, exclusive, intolerant, and to redeem from immediate destruction a society which, already, was beginning to suffer from creeping paralysis. We all know the wonderful triumphs of the early Church, and we sing the lauds of those who paid that price without which these triumphs could have been achieved. It is not of that theme, except indirectly, that I desire to speak to you. These things were written for our learning ; upon us, on whom the ends of the world are come, is laid the duty, the honour, and the terror, yes, the terror, of applying the same principles to the society of our day, a society in some respects like that dying world to which St. Paul's message brought life. Is it not a world which has forgotten God ? or, worse, has turned its back upon God ? For what do we see around us ? What are the facts which meet us in our newspapers, our magazines, our novels, our poets, not of course in all, but in sufficient volume for all to see them, and to destroy all self-complacent optimism ?

Is it not more and more evident that Christian principles are ceasing, even in name, to be the governing principles of the national life ? Whether you take religion in practice,

or the thought and culture of men, or the Christian notions about morals or self-sacrifice or self, the answer is the same. There may be, here and there, sections of people untouched by the prevailing currents; there may be others, like this church, fully alive to them, and preserving faith and sacramental life as an oasis. But, speaking on the whole, is it not plain to all who have eyes to see that Christianity has ceased to be the nation's ideal in the sense that you can assume without asking further that your neighbour is a Christian, even in name? It is not that any other definite system has replaced it. We live in a time of unparalleled intellectual anarchy, when "every man does that which is right in his own eyes," and no generally accepted canons can be admitted. We have every kind of ism and no-ism—followers of Nietzsche rejecting every kind of morality which appeals to sympathy, and treating love and pity as weakness; followers of Mrs. Eddy, carrying to an unreasonable extreme the undoubted fact of the power of spirit over matter; followers of the New Theology in one of its many phases, which hopes to combine out of Christian sentiment and cosmic emotion a sort of Pantheistic panacea, which shall have the appeal of Christianity without its sting—religion with its claws drawn. Atheists, Agnostics, the Theistic Church are all united in this, that they repudiate what we understand by the Christian faith; and, in many cases, regard our whole notion of morals as baseless. Then, in this, as in all ages, there are many practical materialists for whom this visible world is all, whose aims and practice are assuredly Pagan, though the Paganism varies in respect of its partaking of the wholesome or unwholesome variety, and we see how near the Church is to that condition in which it was born, except for those circumstances which make its task tenfold harder, the survival in common speech of certain assumptions dating from the time when to be a Christian and to be an Englishman were the same thing,



and to be an Englishman and to be a Churchman were all but universal.

Now, I ask you, if the facts are there, and if blindness to the sun in daylight can alone make it appear as though they were not, what is our task as a Church, and yours and mine as its members? There is no point in mere vapouring about facts, or drawing glowing pictures of evil; the business of the Church is taking the world as it is, accepting the special form in which, in any age, evil clothes itself, to find therein her material, and to turn men from the power of Satan unto God.

Is it not clear that upon us is laid, under present conditions, the duty of realising once more and showing forth to the world the truth of our being "separated," set apart, a city on a hill, not to be hid, something *distinct* in aim and purpose, leading a different life from the world at large, hallowed by alien sanctions, looking to an end beyond the present?

Depend upon it, we shall have to come to this, for it is being forced upon us. People to whom Christ is nothing or else an enemy—yes, an enemy—are not going on much longer professing an allegiance which they privately repudiate. The present movement about divorce is only one of many indications of the tendency. Mr. Lathbury said, some years ago, that the Church of England had ceased in any real sense to be the Church of the governing classes, though there are still many of them who are her devoted servants. You in this church, perhaps, think this all superfluous; you do not suffer from that disastrous confusion of the Church and the world which is common in the country. You do not confuse the Christian faith with a general sense of what is decent; you are Catholics, real, not conventional; Catholics not only in believing that God's praise should be as little unworthy as may be, but Catholics in penitence, in almsgiving, in fasting. But I doubt whether

any of us realise sufficiently that the friendship of the world is enmity with God. We may talk now and then of the Church as a separate society, but we act very much as if it were the same. Is there any of us present who would not be more disturbed by being told he had done something ungentlemanly than something un-Christian ?

What I mean is that, as a Church, we *shall have to suffer*. The world is very tolerant of distinctions so long as they are distinctions without a difference. Men will endure almost any kind of doctrine or conduct, provided it does not actually condemn them, or attempt to convince them of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Remember it is as the *bride of Christ*, His fellow-sufferer, that the Church has its distinction. *If* we want men to realise our presence as a body of strangers and pilgrims alien in standard, other-worldly in basis, and hidden in its vital reality, we can do so.

I say, if we want this result we can have it—if we really want it. But we must pay the price ; we cannot eat our cake and have it ; we cannot run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. If we are to have the overwhelming triumph, the more abundant life, the fulness of joy, of which Jesus spoke, we must remember that it is only as sorrowful that we are always rejoicing, only as mortified, *dead*, dying daily, that we can share the risen life ; that, while we have as our Master One who overcame the world, it is in that world that we shall have tribulation before we realise the conquest. By all means realise the distinctness of the Christian society, proclaim the separation of Church from the world, defend the Catholic body from those who would confuse her with a federalised sectarianism—do this, but only do it if you are ready to suffer, to be laughed at, disliked, perhaps persecuted ; if you are not, don't talk of Churchmanship, but go away and do something else. And if we need to do this corporately, if we are to lay down the pride of

Empire and the power of establishment, and rate social influence far lower than we have done in the past, we need even more closely to ask ourselves personally the question : What do I mean when I speak of myself as "separated unto the Gospel" ? Am I, indeed, being crucified with Christ ? What difference does it make to me that I am a member of this wonderful company, the general assembly and Church of the firstborn ? Do I get and do I spend my income differently from my neighbour over the way, who calls himself an agnostic or something else ? I think some of the talk about social reform has done harm. It is directing many people's minds to the gigantic evils of Western civilisation, evils so gigantic that but few see any way to cure them, and those few must wait years before anything can be done, while their minds are diverted from the more practical question of what they are doing with their own opportunities. How are their dependents treated ? What are their relations to servants ? How many of your servants are allowed to break down by overwork and want of proper rest ? A Christian master or mistress ought to be totally different to one who is not, nor are we to suppose that we are to dress as well, or have as expensive amusements, or as many holidays as those who are not Christians. Nothing of the sort. We ought to be different, not merely in almsgiving, but in every detail of our expenditure ; whereas most devout communicants appear to think their alms ought only to begin after they have done and paid for everything, which they say you must do "because everybody does." Many of them have little or no conscience about debts. And then, what about him who kneels with you in church ? Is he in any real sense a brother ? How many of you would shake hands or like to meet him ?

My friends, as I said earlier, there was once a world lying in wickedness, hostile and contemptuous of the Christian faith, and, after a bitter struggle, it succumbed, and the

finest of the Pagans died with the cry, *Vicisti Galilæ!* How was that done? What spirit achieved so unexpected a conquest? for, at the bottom of every great conquest, there is a spirit, a new life, good or evil. Listen to the experience of one who saw the beginning and foresaw the close of that Armageddon:—

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

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