

DAVID CHELLAPPA

Bishop in Madras

THE SAINTS SPEAK



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**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF
ADVANCED STUDY
SIMLA**

Abdul Majid Khan.

THE SAINTS SPEAK²⁻⁹⁻⁶⁰

MEDITATIONS FOR RED-LETTER SAINTS' DAYS

DAVID CHELLAPPA, M.A.

Bishop in Madras

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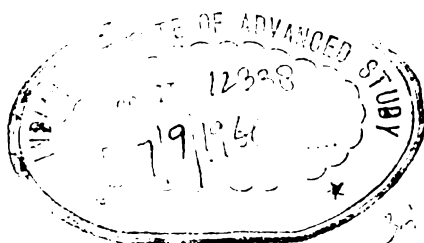
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TO THE MEMORY OF
MY PARENTS IN THE LORD
VEDAKAN DANIEL CHELLAPPA
AND
ELIZABETH CHELLAPPA (*nee* DAVID)
WHO TAUGHT THEIR CHILDREN
TO REVERENCE THE IDEAL OF
CHRISTIAN SANCTITY

Right dear in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints
(Psalm 116:13—Prayer Book Version).

THE SONG OF THE REDEEMED

*Hark! the sound of holy voices,
Chanting at the crystal sea,
Alleluya, Alleluya,
Alleluya, Lord, to thee :
Multitude, which none can number,
Like the stars in glory stands,
Clothed in white apparel, holding
Palms of victory in their hands.*

*Patriarch, and holy Prophet,
Who prepared the way of Christ,
King, Apostle, Saint, Confessor,
Mariyr, and Evangelist,
Saintly Maiden, godly Matron,
Widows who have watched to prayer,
Joined in holy concert, singing
To the Lord of all, are there.*

PREFACE

A critic, it would seem, has at least occasionally to pay the price of his temerity ! Thus, when I ventured to criticize my friend, the late Mr A. N. Sudarisanam, Editor of the *Guardian*, for reproducing devotional articles from English and American periodicals, instead of securing original local contributions, he at once proceeded to place the burden squarely on my shoulders !

After some hesitation and delay, however, I agreed to revise and send in certain sermons which I had preached from time to time, mostly at St Matthias' Church, Vepery, Madras, in connexion with the Red-Letter Saints' Days of the Anglican Kalendar. But the stock soon ran out, and I was obliged to compose fresh articles in order to complete the series. I have also substituted some other fresh ones in the place of these which originally appeared in the *Guardian*. It will thus be seen that the following pages consist partly of sermons, which were *heard*, and partly of devotional articles which were (I hope) *read*.

I have, for the most part, drawn only on the Bible and on Biblical Concordances and Dictionaries, and after nearly twenty years in Holy Orders, I am convinced that there is no better method, particularly for the *immediate* preparation of sermons (as distinguished from the *remote* preparation). I have, however, in certain cases, consulted other sources as well, and on occasion I have not scorned to take a ready-made outline and develop it and fill it in.

The poetical quotations at the foot of each chapter are mostly from Keble's *Christian Year*, which is (alas !) a closed book to many Christians.

It would appear from remarks, made by friends and acquaintances, personally and in letters, that the articles, which appeared in the *Guardian*, were not entirely ignored. I am grateful to Mr Victor Koilpillai, Editor of the *Guardian*, for permitting their reproduction.

In choosing only what are called in the Anglican Church the 'Red-Letter' Saints' Days, I am by no means subscribing to the often unconscious assumption that the Holy Spirit ceased to function with the closure of the Canon. The Christian Church has certainly produced countless saints since the New Testament was completed.

I am, of course, using the word 'saint' in the modern rather than in the New Testament sense. Members of the Reformed Churches, in general, need to have a greater respect for these heroes of our faith who are far more than 'Bible characters'.

In conclusion, I invoke the intercession of the saints on behalf of us, their unworthy successors of the present age, and the blessing of their God and ours upon these pages.

St Paul's High School,
Vepery, Madras.

DAVID CHELLAPPA.

St. Silas, Companion of St Paul.
July 13, 1953.

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1. THE CONVERSION OF SAINT PAUL

(JANUARY 25)

THE TRANSFORMED LIFE

Not I, but Christ liveth in me. (Gal. 2:20)

January 25th is the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul. It is not his birthday, nor is it the anniversary of his martyrdom. In his birth, he was no different from others, and he only found his Saviour long afterwards. His martyrdom too has been equalled by the self-sacrifice of other heroes of the Faith. But what is remarkable about him is his conversion. Humanly speaking, it is difficult to conceive how the Christian Church could have spread so fast without his indefatigable labours. Under his divine Master, to the Apostle goes the credit of propagating the Faith over half of the then civilized world. Well may the Church commemorate this unique occasion of his conversion !

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE CONVERSION

Saul of Tarsus was brought up as a strict Jew and educated at the cosmopolitan City of Tarsus, going thereafter for his 'higher education' to Jerusalem, where he sat at the feet of the famous Rabbi Gamaliel. The more scholarly he grew, the deeper grew his faith, and also grew his faith in his Faith. He therefore viewed, not only with uneasiness, but with positive hostility, the growth of the Christian community within the Jewish Church. He rightly foresaw that one day the branch would become larger than the parent tree, and threaten its very life. We are familiar with the details of how he set about, with his characteristic energy, to root out this new-fangled 'heresy' in the body of his ancient religion and amongst his ancient people. So great was his zeal that he not only persecuted the Christians, but was responsible for the death of many

of them, including the holy Deacon Stephen, the first martyr of the Christian Church, to whose murder he consented, although he did not actually take part in stoning him to death.

It was while he was bound for Damascus on such an errand, that there came to him that tremendous experience at mid-day, blinding his eyes and revealing to him the very Lord Jesus whom he was persecuting, in persecuting His disciples; he had temporarily to lose his physical sight, overwhelmed by the spiritual vision. From that day Saul was a changed man. The conversion was thorough and permanent. As he had hitherto striven *against* Jesus, so he now began to labour *for* Jesus. The evidence of his work, apart from the geographical extension of the Christian community, may be seen not least in the pages of the New Testament between the Fourth Gospel and the Apocalypse. Truly, the conversion of St Paul was an epoch-making event in the life of the universe.

THE CONVERSION, BOTH SUDDEN AND GRADUAL

Was St Paul's conversion sudden or gradual? It must here be noted that, while some have tended to treat with scant respect all claims to sudden conversion, others have gone to the other extreme and have virtually taken the line that no conversion is genuine unless it is sudden,—indeed, even that all conversion is suspect unless it is from extreme wickedness to extreme holiness. Now if one thing is clear in spiritual matters, it is that sinful man cannot lay down blue-prints for the operation of the Holy Spirit, for 'the wind bloweth where it listeth'. One man is converted by a sermon, another by a verse heard, or read in print, a third by a calamity, a fourth by the example of a friend or a relative. One man finds himself suddenly, or finds his Saviour suddenly, or rather, is found by Him; another takes days and months and years, and his progress is so gradual as to be almost imperceptible.

In the case of St Paul, the conversion may be said to have been both sudden and gradual. It was sudden in

the sense that the final turning-point came suddenly and unexpectedly, and in what must be called a supernatural manner. But this does not mean that nothing preceded it, that there had been no preparation for this crisis. This is evident, among other things, from the recorded conversation between the Saviour and the sinner near Damascus. There Jesus pointed out to him that it was 'hard for him to kick against the pricks', that is to say, that he should give up struggling against the light that was being shed on him, that he must abandon the unequal contest between faith in law and faith in grace, between belief in Judaism and belief in Christianity, between conformity to a religion and surrender to a Person. His conversion may be said to have begun at least on the sad day that he witnessed the remarkable spectacle of Stephen's beautiful death—so unlike the death of other human beings. For here, in Stephen, was a man who, within a few years of the Crucifixion, had developed the same attitude towards his enemies as His Master, and who, instead of hating his persecutors and executioners, had prayed for their forgiveness, and laid down his life with perfect calmness and confidence, certain that he was going to meet his Lord in person and live with Him in unending joy and felicity. So then, the conversion of St Paul may be said to have been both sudden and at the same time gradual.

WHY THIS CONVERSION?

What was the conversion due to? All conversion is due both to Divine and to human agencies. There is *first* the Divine grace, but at the same time, there has to be ready the human instrument. The Divine grace was evident in the vision which was vouchsafed to Saul on his way to Damascus. There he saw what can only be described as a divine revelation, but as we have already seen, there was also a human agency at work in the manner of the martyrdom of St Stephen. St Stephen's solitary witness surely played no small part in the change of heart and mind of Saul of Tarsus. Does it not show how the

life or death of one insignificant Christian may make all the difference to the future of the Gospel in a place or in a country? Thus Stephen, as it were, converted Saul, Paul laboured in Rome, Pope Gregory of Rome sent Augustine to England and England's conversion was instrumental in the conversion of many of our forefathers in India! If the witness of Stephen was so potent, how much more potent, both for good and for evil, is the day-to-day witness of every Christian, not only in death, but much more in life? Christians must remember, not only with a sense of encouragement, but with fear and trembling, that their everyday life and conduct, the outlook and activities of the Christian community, the life and example of the Christian Church as a whole, are all the time acting either on behalf of, or in hostility to, the Lord Jesus, consciously or unconsciously. Let the conversion of St Paul, therefore, remind us that all conversion requires divine grace, and also human witness and obedience. Divine grace is not necessarily irresistible, and has to be supplemented by human response. When this truth is realised, we shall remember what great responsibility is placed on us who profess and call ourselves Christians. Are we living to ourselves or to God in Christ?

THE FACT OF CONVERSION

Whether the conversion of St Paul was sudden or gradual, the indisputable fact is that he *was* converted. Sometimes we are asked by enthusiastic Christian brethren whether we are converted or not. There is no more vital question in all the world! Now whether we are in a position to say we are converted suddenly or not, we surely ought to be in a position to say that we *are* converted, changed, transformed. Even Baptism, Confirmation and Ordination cannot take the place of conversion, although they may well coincide. It *is*, alas! possible to go through these Sacraments without repentance, without a change of heart, without personally facing and individually accepting the supreme challenge. Am I converted?

Are you converted ? Are our Church Elders converted ?
Is the Christian community converted ?

THE MARK OF CONVERSION

Now what is the mark of a converted man ? What *was* the mark of St Paul after his conversion ? It was that, instead of being *against* Jesus, or indifferent to Jesus, he was—actively, all the time—*for* Jesus, from the day of that fateful journey to Damascus. The converted man says, like Samuel, to his Lord : ‘ Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth ’ ; whereas the unconverted man, in effect, says : ‘ Listen, Lord, for thy servant speaketh.’ To the converted man, Christ is at the centre and he himself on the circumference, but to the unconverted man, he himself is in the centre and Christ on the circumference. The story is told that, when St Teresa was laughed at because she wanted to build a great orphanage and had but three shillings to begin with, she answered : ‘ With three shillings, Teresa can do nothing, but with God and three shillings, there is nothing that Teresa cannot do !’ The converted man looks upwards, but the unconverted man looks downwards. A pig, it has been pointed out, always goes about looking down on the earth and can only be made to look up when it is laid flat on its back. So the unconverted man has his eyes riveted on the things that perish and can only be brought to look at the things that are unseen (and, therefore, eternal), when he is afflicted ; whereas the converted man, even while he is *in* the world, is not *of* the world. In a word, the converted man is able to claim, with the Apostle, in a way that the unconverted man can never do, in truth and sincerity : ‘ It is no longer I that live, but Christ who liveth in me.’

*As to Thy last Apostle's heart,
Thy lightning glance did then impart
Zeal's never-dying fire,
So teach us on Thy shrine to lay
Our hearts, and let them day by day
Intenser blaze and higher.*

2. THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE
TEMPLE, THE PURIFICATION OF ST MARY
THE VIRGIN, OR CANDLEMAS

(FEBRUARY 2)

A LIGHT TO LIGHTEN

*Mine eyes have seen thy salvation . . . a light to lighten
the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.*

(St Luke 2:30, 32)

What is the usual topic of our conversation outside a Church? The Kingdom of God? What was the usual topic of conversation of the earnest Jews of our Lord's time? It was the coming of the Messiah. They would wistfully ask: 'When and how will the Messiah come? Will he indeed put down injustice and establish justice; abolish sin and replace it by holiness; stamp out wickedness and cause righteousness to flourish; take away sorrow and give joy instead; destroy war and usher in peace?' It was such questions as these that agitated the minds of devout Hebrews like the aged Simeon, who 'waited for the consolation of Israel' and who had been divinely assured that he 'should not taste death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.' And upheld by this promise, he lived an eager life, until one day both he and the Blessed Virgin Mary, independently led by the Holy Spirit, made their way into the Temple, where the Holy Mother, without a word, placed the Divine Babe in the outstretched arms of the aged saint, who spontaneously broke forth into poetry (finding prose a feeble medium), and sang, in ecstatic abandon, the exquisite song that we now call the *Nunc Dimittis*, surely one of the most inspired and inspiring passages in the whole Bible:

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,
according to thy word:

For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

Which thou hast prepared before the face of all
people ;
To be a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory
of thy people Israel.

The blessed Simeon, before ever he had heard a single word, or witnessed a single deed of our Lord, prophesied in this Canticle of the Incarnation three things concerning Him, namely, (i) God's Salvation; (ii) the Glory of God's People; and (iii) a Light to lighten the Gentiles.

(i) SALVATION

Firstly, then, the Babe of Bethlehem is our salvation—my salvation, your salvation, the salvation of all of us and of each of us. Wherefore it is not enough to hail Him, in general terms, as the Saviour of the World. Do you know Him as your personal Saviour? Are you saved? It were little use Jesus being born a thousand times in Bethlehem, unless He be born anew in the hearts of each one of us. Thus, when you sit down to a dinner, it is little comfort to you to know that the pantry is full of food, unless the plate before you is full too. So it is little consolation to know that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the World, unless you have the gladsome knowledge, the joyful certainty, the blessed confidence, that He is the personal Saviour of yourself also. Can you and I claim with truth: Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation?

(ii) GLORY

Secondly, He whom His Mother presented in the Temple, is 'the glory of His people Israel'. The Hebrews, the Chosen People of God, were the Old Israel, but as they refused to recognise the Messiah when He came in a guise different from their preconceptions, their portion has been given to us, Christians of every race, tongue and colour. We are now His Chosen people; the Christian Church is the New Israel. And it is Jesus Christ who is the glory of the New Israel. Without Him the Church

would have no glory; it would just be a common association of sinners who would always remain sinners. For example, when we pass Government House, and see the flag flying aloft, we know that the Governor is in residence, that it is he who confers glory on the building, lifting it above the status of a common house. Do we then permit the Incarnate Son of God to confer, by His Presence, glory on the Church—on our private life as Christians, on our Christian family life, on our Church life, in all its aspects of administration, worship, evangelism, and service, on our public life as Christians? Do the men of the world perceive that the Christian Church is indeed glorious because of Him who alone is her glory? ‘Mine eyes have seen the glory of Thy people, Israel’—Can the Church say this without hypocrisy?

(iii) LIGHT

Thirdly, the holy Simeon saw, with the eagle eyes of a prophet, in the Babe lying in his arms, ‘a light to lighten the Gentiles’—*a light, the light, the only light.* Apart from the sun, the day is dark; apart from the moon, the night is dark; so apart from the Christ, we are all in darkness. Let us never forget this fact, especially in these days when we are tempted to repeat parrot-like that all religions are true, and even to be ashamed of our Faith. If we sincerely believe that there are other lights besides the light which was lighted two thousand years ago in Palestine, we have no right to call ourselves Christians; for Christianity is Christ Himself—not merely the words of Christ. At a Christmas celebration a few years back in a Madras College, when I read St Luke’s account of our Lord’s birth, including the story of Simeon, I was gently found fault with by the Hindu Minister for Education, who happened to be present, for not having read the Sermon on the Mount, which, according to him, represented the core of Christianity. Nothing could be further from the truth! The core of Christianity is not the Sermon on the Mount—it is Christ Himself, Christ as a whole, including His birth,

His life, His teaching, His Beatitudes, His Crucifixion, His Resurrection, His Ascension, the outpouring of His Holy Spirit, and His Body, the Church. You cannot play Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark ! No Christ, no Sermon on the Mount. ' Mine eyes have seen the light to lighten the Gentiles.' Do you believe this ?

THE SECOND COMING

One final note. The blessed Simeon waited for the ' consolation of Israel ' and saw ' the Lord's Christ '—that was the first coming of Christ as a loving Saviour. But our Christian happiness would indeed be incomplete, unless we not only acknowledged Christ as our Salvation, as the glory of the Church, and as the light to lighten the Gentiles, but also looked forward to His Second Coming, as righteous Judge, without fear or hesitation, but with eager welcome and joyful alertness, saying, in the words of the early Christians: ' Maranatha ', ' Come, O Lord, ' ' The Lord is at hand ', ' Come, Lord Jesus ! ' Then, when it is time for us to take our leave of this mundane existence, with all that it has held for us, may we indeed be in a position to make our very own those sublime words, that daring confession, that glorious song of the sage and seer with its confident yet calm claim : ' Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation . . . the glory of Israel, and the light of the Gentiles '.

*Still to the lowly soul
He doth Himself impart,
And for His cradle and His throne
Chooseth the pure in heart.*

3. SAINT MATTHIAS, APOSTLE AND MARTYR

(FEBRUARY 24)

THE HAPPY SUBSTITUTE

From these men . . . must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection. (Acts 1:22)

The best-known men are seldom the best men. Indeed men with long-distance popularity are often found, on closer acquaintance, to have feet of clay. Popularity is seldom the test of worth. To take the example of St Matthias : we know very little indeed about him ; he was not God's first choice for the Apostleship, but was only chosen to fill a vacant place consequent on the tragedy of Judas, God's first choice. Indeed, it is not possible to think of St Matthias without thinking of his predecessor, and without contrasting their destinies.

(i) WHAT MAKES AN APOSTLE ?

As we have said, we know very little about St Matthias, but unless he had been a good man, he would hardly have been chosen for this important office, especially after the original incumbent had proved such a grievous disappointment. There is also a tradition that St Matthias died the death of a martyr. According to St Peter, who made the speech preliminary to the filling up of the vacancy in the College of Apostles, an Apostle must be one who 'having companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, until the same day that He was taken up from us,' would also be 'a witness with us of his resurrection.' In other words, an Apostle's qualification was that he should have a thorough acquaintance with the Master, and should, in particular, be a witness of His resurrection. An Apostle, by his own life of sacrifice and power, of love and spiritual might, must testify to the crucified and risen Lord. It

is not necessary for a Christian today that he should have seen Jesus after the flesh, but it is essential for the Christian, and particularly for one who would be an Apostle, that he should know Jesus, not merely know *about* Jesus ; this knowledge should be borne out by his love of God and man and by his consecrated and victorious life. What makes an Apostle, then, is capacity to bear witness to the Risen Lord.

(ii) GRACE IS NOT IRRESISTIBLE !

We have already said that it is not possible to think of St Matthias without at the same time thinking of Judas. The *call* that they both received was similar, if not identical; it was the nature of their *response* that determined their destiny. Judas saw Love, but failed to respond to it. Matthias saw Love, responded to it, and was thereby enabled to see also Power. The mere fact that they both were confronted with divine grace did not mean that divine grace operated irresistibly in the hearts of both of them, for love is free and cannot be forced : love is voluntary; there is no violence about it. It does not speak in the imperative mood. One may either accept it and attain heaven, or reject it and proceed to hell. There is a doctrine called Universalism, which teaches that all men will ultimately be saved. While one may wish this were true, one must admit at the same time that the teaching of the Scriptures does not endorse this belief. Even love is not omnipotent if it means over-riding or being irresistible. God wills us to love Him, and permits us to refrain from loving Him in return ; but He does not, of course, design or will such a refusal. If a soul *will* destroy itself, even God Himself cannot save that soul. Love unites the soul with God ; refusal to love separates the soul from God and makes for its ultimate disintegration. As we compare St Matthias with Judas, let us take warning that we may either be a St Matthias or a Judas, according to our response to divine love. We are ourselves judging ourselves by the nature of our attitude to God's free offer

of forgiveness and salvation; divine judgment is not arbitrary or merely external. Let us remember, then, that grace is not irresistible, but depends for its fruition, not least on our response. It becomes irresistible to the world, the flesh and the devil, when we cease to resist it and instead permit it to make the Resurrection real in our life, thus resulting in a death unto sin and a life unto righteousness.

(iii) WHAT IS ELECTION ?

We have already seen that God's first choice was Judas, and only His second choice was Matthias, just as God's first choice was the Jews, and only when they disappointed Him, were the Gentiles chosen. What, then, is election ? In this connection, it is well to bear in mind that St Matthias' election took place not after, but before, Pentecost, the gift of the Holy Spirit. For this election lots were cast, a practice which the Church discontinued after Pentecost. There are some who are of the view that the election was premature, and others who hold that the number twelve (symbolizing the Twelve Tribes of Israel) *had* to be made up before the disciples could proceed further; but whatever opinion it may be possible to hold as regards the mode of election, there is no doubt that Matthias, as one who had known Jesus from the baptism of John until His resurrection, was a suitable person to fill the vacant place.

With a view to counteracting mechanical, and even fatalistic, views about God's election, let us remember that an election is always for the fulfilment of the divine will. Men are elected, not for their own sake, but for the sake of others, not to final destiny, but to opportunity. The election is two-sided; there is the Godward side which comes first, and there is the manward side which comes next, but which *must* come, if there is to be an election at all. God has elected us to be His children as He elected St Matthias to be His Apostle. St Matthias accepted the election and 'elected', so to speak, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Do we accept the election, and in our turn elect God to be our Father through Jesus

Christ ? It is always through the elect few that God has chosen to fulfil His purpose for the world, beginning with the call of Abraham in the Old Testament and with the call of the twelve Apostles in the New Testament. First a family, and then a nation are called, the Old Israel first, and then the New Israel. The call is never the result of favouritism, but is based on responsiveness to divine inspiration. The elect body *par excellence* is the Church, One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the Brotherhood of the Baptized, the Communion of Saints, elected not for itself, but for the conversion of the world, through the proclamation of God's love for the world. The Church was made *possible* on the Day of Resurrection, and *real* on the Day of Pentecost ; the gift of the Spirit only made that witness an open and powerful reality.

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament are nothing if not the record of how God constantly elected his servants—individuals and groups—to do His work for Him in this world and to witness to the end, to the Resurrection of His Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. St Matthias was one of this noble company.

*Then fearless walk we forth,
Yet full of trembling, Messengers of God :
Our warrant sure, but doubting of our worth,
By our own shame alike and glory awed.*

*Dread Searcher of the hearts,
Thou who didst seal by Thy descending Dove
Thy servant's choice, O help us in our parts,
Else helpless found, to learn and teach Thy love.*

4. THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, OR LADY DAY

(MARCH 25)

HAIL, MARY !

Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee . . . Blessed art thou among women. . . . My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

(St Luke 1:28, 42, 46, 47)

The 25th day of March is Lady Day, called in the *Book of Common Prayer* the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is thus a day of rejoicing. We might even say that it is, in a sense, a more important day than Christmas Day, for if Christ *was* born, it was not least because Mary the maiden willingly accepted the call to be His Mother. The divine Incarnation may thus be said to have begun on the day that Mary of Nazareth humbly said to the Angel : ' Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it unto me according to Thy word ', or, in other words, ' Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my *body* '. But curiously enough, Lady Day, a day of rejoicing, usually falls during or near the sorrowful season of Lent, which season leads to our Lord's Crucifixion on Good Friday, when He said : ' Father, into Thy hands I commend my *spirit* ', thus, as it were, bringing to an end the course of the Divine Incarnation on earth—that Incarnation which had begun with the Annunciation.

THE LADY OF SORROW AND JOY

But it is entirely fitting that the joyful feast of the Annunciation should occur during or near the sorrowful season of Lent, because she whom we honour today knew both joy and sorrow in her life. We speak of her Seven *Sorrows*, but there are also her Seven *Joys* which are sung, for example, in the ancient carol, *The Seven Joys of Mary*. Joy and sorrow

were mingled in her life as they are, in a smaller measure, in the life of all of us ; or rather, her life was a life of joy *through* sorrow, as her Son's was to be. This thought is well expressed in the two verses of the well-known hymn :

O Joy that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to Thee :
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain,
That morn shall tearless be.

O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from Thee :
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be.

Thus it was a joy to Mary to be informed that she was to have the privilege, unique amongst women, of being the Mother of the Messiah, but this was quickly followed by the sorrow of her dear husband's suspicion, if only temporarily. It was a joy to her to observe her divine Babe being praised by angels, adored by shepherds and worshipped by wise men, but it was a sorrow to have to flee into the strange land of Egypt with the Infant in arms. It was a joy to dedicate the male child at the Temple, but it was a sorrow to be warned by holy Simeon that ' a sword should pierce through her own heart '. It was a joy to hear her son argue winsomely with the doctors of the Temple and to watch Him grow in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and with man, but it was a sorrow to see Him leaving home as a wandering, penniless preacher. It was a joy to see Him change water into wine at Cana, but it was a sorrow to hear the seeming rebuke : ' Woman, what have I to do with thee ? ' It was a joy to see Him heal the sick and perform miracles, but it was a sorrow to see Him persecuted even by the leaders of the Jewish Church. It was a sorrow to see her beloved Son hanging

on the cross, but it was a joy to see His look, to hear His loving words, 'Behold thy son!' and, above all, to know that, on the third day, He had destroyed death and shattered sin. Yea, the Blessed Virgin Mary was indeed a Lady of joy and sorrow, or rather, of joy because of sorrow, thereby prefiguring her Son's own future lot in life.

WORSHIP OF JESUS, HONOUR FOR MARY

It is unfortunate that Mary should have been so generally either deified or under-rated. But indeed, not to hold a right view about the Holy Mother may well be not to hold a right view about her divine Son. Thus Church History shows how often, to disbelieve in the Virgin Birth is ultimately to disbelieve in the Divinity of Christ. True, we must give our *worship* to Jesus, but would it not please the Sacred Heart of Jesus to see us *honour* her who was His Mother on earth? There are at least three reasons why we should honour the Lady Mary.

'MOTHER OF GOD'

In the first place, she has been called the 'Mother of God', that is to say, the Mother of Him whom we worship as our *God*. We may admit that, for the first few centuries, we hear very little about the Mother of Jesus, apart from the few but significant references in the Gospels, but this was perhaps because the early Church was often preoccupied with controversies about the Person of our Lord—as to whether He was God or Man, or both, and if so, how. It may be that only when this question had been finally settled in the Nicene Creed, it became possible for the Church to turn her attention to the Mother of God. While worshipping God as revealed in Jesus Christ, there is nothing inconsistent in honouring the earthly Mother of our God.

MOTHER OF THE SON OF MAN

Secondly, the Blessed Virgin Mary is the Mother of our *Saviour*, who was not only divine, but also human, and

who suffered as Man. His humanity surely played a great part in the work of man's redemption, for His body was the necessary instrument of His suffering. Was it not in the womb of Mother Mary that His Manhood was formed, and was born in the fulness of time, 'for us men, and for our salvation'? While worshipping our Saviour, therefore, let us not fail to honour her from whom He took His human body and soul, with which, together with His Deity, He accomplished man's salvation.

THE QUEEN MOTHER

Thirdly, the Blessed Virgin Mary is the Mother of our *King*. She is, therefore, if we may say so, comparing human things with divine, a Queen herself—the Queen of heaven, under her divine Son. After all, while we render homage to a reigning monarch, his mother (the Queen Mother) also comes in for her share of honour.

Jesus is our King, and He has taught us to pray, 'Our Father, . . . Thy Kingdom come'. His whole message may be summed up in one phrase: 'the Kingdom of God', or 'the Kingdom of heaven'. His Church was established in order to proclaim that Kingdom and to extend its frontiers. The Lordship of Jesus over men is therefore not to be compared to a democracy or to a republic, where the will of the majority, often an unrighteous will, prevails. The Church is rather a Kingdom, and its servants, bishops, priests and laity, are the subjects of the King; their duty it is to wait on the King in humble prayer, ascertain His royal will, to proclaim and with one mind to fulfil it in the world, even if the world defies it, rejects it and inflicts suffering on the sons of the Kingdom.

Jesus is our lawful King, whom we must obey, but let us not neglect the Queen Mother, who on such a day was divinely assured of the birth of the King.

HAIL, MARY !

We may therefore, joining with Gabriel and Elizabeth, accost her thus ! 'Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is

with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.' And having honoured her, let us then proceed to worship the fruit of her womb, the Lord Jesus Christ, in the words of the Holy Mother herself! 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.'

Let us then remember to honour our Mother and His, as we worship Him who is her God, her Saviour and her King, no less than our God, our Saviour, and our King.

*Bless'd is the womb that bare Him—bless'd
The bosom where His lips were pressed!—
But rather bless'd are they
Who hear His word and keep it well,
The living homes where Christ shall dwell,
And never pass away.*

5. SAINT MARK, EVANGELIST

(APRIL 25)

THE MINISTRY OF THE LAITY

Mark . . . is profitable . . . for the Ministry.

(2 Timothy 4:11)

(i) LAY MINISTRY

It is often supposed that the greatest defect of the Church today is the inadequacy of its professional Ministry—inadequacy both in numbers and in quality. While it is true that, for various reasons, recruits for the Ministry are by no means as numerous or as devout or as competent as they might be, it is often forgotten that an even greater need of the Church today, especially in its increasingly democratic set-up, is consecrated and able laymen. In many congregations, apart from the paid

servants of the Church such as catechists and teachers, there are few laymen who are willing or able to support the work of the Church with their voluntary activities. There are plenty of laymen who are anxious to exercise power, to criticise the clergy and, in general, to be busy-bodies, but few men of character who are not partisans, but are willing to serve unostentatiously, and to stand for the right without fear or favour. Of few laity today can it be said that they are profitable to the clergy for the Ministry, as Mark was to Peter and Paul. One of the greatest discoveries of the Church in the present age has been the discovery of the layman, or rather his re-discovery, —the discovery that the word 'layman' in the Bible does not mean an ignorant or uninterested person, but one of the People of God; the discovery that, by the 'Church', is meant not only the clergy, but also the laity; the discovery that the work of the Church is not the business only of the bishops or other clergy, but of God's People as a whole, comprising both clergy and laity with their several functions; the discovery that it is a mistake even to speak of the clergy as full-time workers and of the laity as part-time workers of the Church; for just as a clergyman, when he goes away on a holiday, only takes a holiday from his daily routine but not from God, so in the same way, the layman does not cease to be a worker for God in his office or factory, any more than when he is in Church worshipping God. In fact, the layman has opportunities of reaching men and of influencing areas of life which are denied to the clergy.

Now St Mark, as far as we know, was a layman, and may therefore be taken as the patron saint of the laity. His festival reminds us of the priesthood of the laity and of the value of a faithful lay ministry. The frequency and the sordidness of local Church squabbles drives men often to despair and to long for a kind of authoritarianism similar to secular totalitarianism. This is to forget that the Church in the New Testament is the Body of God's elect; while there are differences of function, such as are

embodied in the office of bishops, priests, deacons and the laity, yet the work of God, as we have already seen, is the business of God's people as a whole and not merely of a hierarchy. 'Every Christian a priest; every Christian a missionary', should be the motto of priests and laymen alike. What greater tribute could one expect from the Master than that conferred on Mark by Paul: 'Mark . . . is profitable . . . for the Ministry'? Let the laity look to their ministry and the priesthood to theirs: the function of the laity is to be profitable to the clergy for the ministry, not to be a stumbling-block and a nuisance.

(ii) THE MINISTRY OF WRITING

St Mark's ministry was not only confined to accompanying the Apostles, St Peter and St Paul, or to serving their needs as their attendant; his was also a ministry of writing, the fruits of which have been left to us in the Gospel known as 'the Gospel according to St Mark'. This Gospel might also be called 'the Gospel according to St Peter', as it is clear that the writer was indebted to his master, St Peter, for a considerable proportion of what is recorded in the Gospel. This is not however to deny that St Mark himself was an eyewitness, as is clear from several passages both in this Gospel and in other parts of the New Testament. The dependence of the Gospels of St Matthew and St Luke on St Mark is a commonplace, but St Mark's Gospel was neglected for a long time, of which there is evidence in the selection of extracts for Gospels on Sundays and Holy days in the *Book of Common Prayer*. It is only in comparatively recent times that it has been recognised as 'historically the most important book ever written'. If our Lord was historically the most important Person that ever walked this planet, it stands to reason that this historical narrative, objectively related, of the experience of an eyewitness, is the most important historical work ever composed on earth. We can never be adequately thankful for writers and speakers like St Mark, who record for our guidance and inspiration their experience of what they

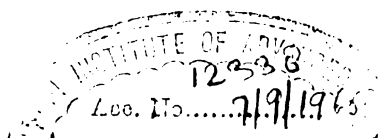
have seen and heard of our Lord. St Mark therefore, in his work as a historical writer, is 'profitable for the Ministry' to all those who have received or are willing to receive the Gospel of peace and freedom.

(iii) THE MINISTRY OF BLOOD

St Mark probably laid down his life as a martyr like his master, St Peter, during the Neronian persecution; if so, his lay witness and his witness as a Gospel-writer was consummated by the manner of his death. It is good for us from time to time to contemplate the manner in which martyrs, both ancient and modern, have faced the prospect as well as the fact of death. Here is one such narrative from the record of the ecclesiastical historian, Eusebius:

We know, at any rate, those of them who were conspicuous in Palestine, and we know also those at Tyre in Phoenicia. Who that saw them was not struck with amazement at the numberless lashes and the steadfastness displayed under them by these truly marvellous champions of godliness; at the conflict with man-eating wild beasts that followed immediately on the lashes; the attacks that then took place of leopards and different kinds of bears, of wild boars and bulls goaded with hot iron; and the marvellous endurance of these noble persons when opposed to each of the wild beasts? We ourselves were present when these things were happening, what time we beheld the present, divine power of our Saviour, Jesus Christ Himself, the Object of their witness, and the clear manifestation of that power to the martyrs.

When we read passages like the above, what do we think about the problem of pain and suffering? For many of us today such pain and suffering—and much less than this—seem to be nothing but arguments against the love and perhaps against the very existence of God, or at any rate against the benevolence of God (as it was in the case of Thomas Hardy); but no such doubts appear to have assailed or, at any rate, to have overcome, the martyrs who



on the contrary, counted it a privilege to be permitted to suffer in this manner, accepting death not patiently, but joyfully, even exultantly. Did perhaps the Christian martyrs possess a secret that we Christians of the twentieth century have lost, or forgotten, or but dimly remember? If we cannot witness by our *life*, how can we witness by our *death*? Many of these martyrs were not bishops or priests, nor even attendants on the Apostles, like St Mark, but ordinary men and women, quiet, humble, unambitious, but prayerful, dedicated with a courage and endurance not of their own.

St Mark's ministry then, was a lay ministry of witness, by life, by writing and by blood. His death, no less than his life and his historical writings, were 'profitable to the Ministry' of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

St Mark is thus a much-needed reminder to us of what the devout and active layman has done in the past and can do in the present for God, living as he does, much more amongst the men of the world than the ordained man. He is a model of the Christian layman who labours for Christ and His Church without expecting honours or even thanks.

At Embertide and at other times, we pray for 'the increase of the sacred Ministry'. An equally urgent prayer surely is for 'an increase of the godly laity'. O for laymen in the Church of God like Mark!

'Mark . . . is profitable . . . for the Ministry.' Are we profitable for the Ministry?—or, on the contrary, perhaps, a positive hindrance?

*O holy mind, for wisdom fit,
Wherein that Life of lives stood writ,
May we through minds of like accord
Show forth the pattern of our Lord.*

*And so may all whose minds are dark
Be led to truth by good Saint Mark,
And after this our earthly strife,
Stand written in the Book of Life.*

6. SAINT PHILIP AND SAINT JAMES

(MAY 1)

IN THE FURTHERANCE OF THE GOSPEL

Two are better than one ; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow : but woe to him that is alone when he falleth ; for he hath not another to help him up. (Eccles. 4:9-10)

St Philip and St James—why this juxtaposition ? what is the connexion ? We do not know. We can only guess. But we may be sure that, as in everything else under God, it is not accidental ; it is providential ; there is no *chance* or *luck* about it. Perhaps the connexion lies in the possibility that, when our Lord sent forth His Apostles two by two, St Philip and St James went forth together, toiled together, sorrowed together, perhaps reaped their harvest together, and died together. If so, their message to us today is primarily one of co-operation—a theme on which St Paul loves to dwell with his constant reference to his ‘fellow-workers’, ‘fellow-labourers’, and so on.

CO-OPERATION

It has been cynically remarked that the best committee is a committee of one, that if you want anything done, you must depend, not on a group, but on an individual. There is no doubt some truth in this statement, as applied to the children of the world, and also as applied to the old times when life was simpler, and, for various reasons, the aristocratic principle held sway, and the many were content to follow the few ; but even amongst the children of the world today, it is being increasingly realised that the most effective and lasting work is done, not by individuals, but by groups. This is certainly true, to a large extent, of any live Christian community.

The value and importance of co-operation, which the association of St Philip and St James brings home to us,

is well expressed in the 9th and 10th verses of Ecclesiastes 4:

‘Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.’

In other words, co-operation is better than isolation; unity is better than disunity; association is better than individualism; fellowship is better than solitude. But why?

As the text says: ‘Because they have a good reward for their labour’. Because the output is better and greater; because the results are much more substantial. But this can only be if the co-operation is real, if it is mutual, if it is *co-operation*. Stanley Jones tells the story of a Negro who bitterly complained that he was expected to do all the ‘co-ing’, with a white colleague doing all the ‘operating’. The Chairman of a certain committee, who fell out with his members, once shouted irritably; ‘I *must* have co-operation; I *insist* on co-operation; I *demand* co-operation!’ That, of course, is not co-operation; it is submission, and although its results may be swift, they are transitory.

The first message of Philip and James then, is that in all work, and certainly in all Christian work, the first requisite is co-operation—working with others under God. But we look in vain for evidence of such fellowship in many Churches. There are Mothers’ Unions, but are they unions or disunions? Ministers often dare not entrust the decoration of the Church at Christmas to members of the congregation for fear of quarrels, but often have to depend on a church bearer. There are Choirs and Servers, who are workers of the Trade Union type, descending even to strikes. There is some co-operation in picnics, excursions, dances and socials, but little in real, sacrificial Christian service. On the other hand, there is often much more co-operation between evil-doers for evil purposes,

so that we find that, even in Church Committees, two evil-doers work more evil than the good done by eight good men, or rather by eight 'goody-goody' men. And even evil men, who do not agree themselves, often co-operate in a common cause—against a good purpose. The impotence of the Church in the world, and the low esteem in which we Christians are held by our neighbours, are partly due to the fact that so much of our goodness is negative, not positive; quiescent, not aggressive; unorganised, not organised; sporadic, not concentrated. Our intentions are sound—but the road to hell is paved with good intentions! Let us then work together in all that is good—in the home, in the school, in the parish and in the world. Co-operate, or perish!

THE FRUIT OF CO-OPERATION

Secondly, our text also reminds us that: 'if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow'. And again: 'Woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.' Co-operation then is not only productive of better results; it is also a source of comfort in distress and in adversity. We not only aid the cause better; we mutually aid each other better. Christians therefore are not only to co-operate for the greater glory of God and the better service of their fellows; but also to find in such co-operation that they are sustained, comforted, encouraged, inspired, uplifted by their fellow-workers, especially when they are handicapped by their sins and failures, or discouraged by the unresponsiveness of those whom they would serve, and temporarily lose a sense of God's abiding presence.

THE CURSE OF 'NON-CO-OPERATION'

We who Sunday by Sunday come to Church, we who partake together of the Body and Blood of Christ in His Body, the Church, we who listen together to the exposition of God's Word, do we co-operate with our fellow-Christians in all good works, remembering that to

ignore a fellow-Christian is to ignore Christ Himself? Am I a source of comfort to those who are in need of such comfort? And am I in a position to turn to others for comfort when I am in need of such comfort? God knows how many of us sorely need spiritual counsel and direction, admonition and sympathy, advice and fellow-feeling, and fail to find it, and consequently go astray. Not a few of us may even be living in sin, known to others or unknown, and would gladly get out of it, if we could, but there is no fellow-Christian who is willing to stretch out a helping hand! There is poverty, distress; there is housing difficulty; there is immorality, secret or open, not only as between unmarried persons, but also between different married persons. There are frequent communicants who are not on speaking terms with other communicants, with the other guests at the King's Table. There are prominent churchpeople who do not control their tongue, in private or in public, with old or young, and who have no feeling for others' feelings, who are lost to all sense of decency in ordinary conversation. There are those who join lustily in hymns which praise the love of God and in prayers which express penitence but who, in season and out of season, make the most malicious and unfounded charges against those whom they dislike or are jealous of. In short, there is much distress, much sorrow, much discouragement, much depression, much sin, much evil, much wickedness. What is the good of our commemorating these Feast Days, if we not only fail to co-operate, but fail to be sources of comfort and joy and spiritual uplift to others; if our fellow-Christians are not sources of comfort and joy and spiritual uplift to us? 'Woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up!'

DO I CO-OPERATE?

I have put a number of straight questions about our Christian life in the Church, about our failure to work with and for others, about our failure to comfort and sym-

pathize with others and to lift them up out of sin and depression, out of doubt and despair, and about our private and public sin. But let us not waste our time trying to guess who else is being meant in each case, and whether the implied criticism was deserved or not. Instead, let us apply each one of these questions to ourselves. As the Tamil saying goes, let us 'place our hand on our chest', examine our conscience, bow our heads, and, like the Publican in the House of God, cry : ' God be merciful to me, a sinner.'

'Two are better than one; because they have good reward for their labour. If they fall, the one will lift up his fellow : but woe to him that is alone when he falleth ; for he hath not another to help him up.'

*Thus souls, by nature pitched too high,
By sufferings plunged too low,
Meet in the Church's middle sky,
Half way 'twixt joy and woe,*

*To practise there the soothing lay
That sorrow best relieves :
Thankful for all God takes away,
Humbled by all He gives.*

(JUNE 11)

THE PEACEMAKER

Barnabas, which is, being interpreted, the son of consolation. (Acts 4:36)

St Barnabas, or rather Josès, to give him his original name, earned from his fellow-Apostles the honourable nickname of 'the son of consolation', which we may interpret as a 'peacemaker', one who makes peace between man and God, and between man and man. The kind of peace he made was not the result of mere worldly tact or diplomacy, but was based on *agape*—the word used by St Paul in I Cor. 13 to denote divine, or Christian, love.

(i) PEACE-MAKING BETWEEN PAUL AND THE CHURCH

He made peace between the new convert, Saul of Tarsus, and the Church which he would fain serve. After Saul's wonderful experience on the way to Damascus, and his return to Jerusalem as a convinced Christian, or rather as a convicted Christian, there was naturally very little enthusiasm for him, but much suspicion of him, on the part of the Church which he had so relentlessly and ruthlessly persecuted with the support of the arm of the law. The poor, bewildered, frightened Christians might well be excused if they could not credit the story of his conversion, but were even afraid of him as a spy. If this attitude of mistrust and suspicion had persisted, the Church might easily have lost its greatest Apostle and the most profound exponent of its faith. It was at such a time that Barnabas stepped in between the new convert and the Christian Church, reconciled the one to the other, and made St Paul accepted by, and acceptable to, the Christian community. Enough for Barnabas that Paul had seen the heavenly vision, and that he was determined to be obedient thereto.

That was the basis of the reconciliation which he effected between the two. It is melancholy to reflect how many good Christian members and ardent workers the Church has lost, because either the Church as a whole, or some of its members, cannot forget the past of certain individuals, and will not remember that, while the saint has a past, the sinner has a future. It was for instance, because, the Church in North Africa took an attitude similar to that of St Barnabas, that it produced an Augustine, Bishop, Saint and Doctor in the Church of God. What the Church needs today, not least, is peacemakers and men of vision like St Barnabas, who will make peace between mutually suspicious elements in the Church.

(ii) PEACE-MAKING BETWEEN THE MOTHER AND THE DAUGHTER CHURCHES

St Barnabas made peace between the Church in Jerusalem and the Church in Antioch. The Church in Jerusalem held, in the affections of Christians, and especially of the Jewish Christians, a place of pride and honour. Indeed, until the destruction of Jerusalem, its influence on the rest of early Christendom was so profound that it was difficult for the Gentile Church to go forward, free of the trammels of the Law which still bound the Jewish Christians of the Mother Church. As an instance of the prestige which the Jerusalem Church enjoyed, and of its lack of imagination towards the daughter Churches, we read in the Acts how, when a flourishing Church grew up at Antioch with Jewish and especially non-Jewish members (the latter of whom naturally could not be expected to have the same reverence for the Law as the former), the Jerusalem Church grew suspicious of this development which threatened to wrench the Christian Church away from its Judaistic moorings. But the Jerusalem Church had the grace not to pronounce a verdict without verifying the facts, and therefore it entrusted to Barnabas the delicate task of visiting the Antioch Church and of reporting to the Jerusalem Church. It must seem rather strange to us that, while

perhaps there were senior Apostles in both Jerusalem and Antioch, it was a comparative novice like Barnabas who was sent upon this important mission. The result of Barnabas' visit was that peace was restored between the Christians of Jerusalem and the new Christians of Antioch, both groups being loyal to the same Lord, although differing in certain other respects. The duty, therefore, of making peace is not less urgent as between Churches than between individuals. We must not, for instance, under-rate the work of the ecumenical movement in the great work of reconciliation that it has undertaken and partly performed, thanks to the grace of God and the work of modern ordained and unordained Barnabas's.

(iii) PEACE-MAKING BETWEEN PAUL AND MARK

St Barnabas made peace between his friends, Paul and Mark. They were fellow-workers in the furtherance of the Gospel and had taken John Mark as their attendant, but it was a hard life, and the young man soon left them. The question then rose as to whether, when Paul and Barnabas went again on their missionary journeys, Mark should accompany them or not. Paul not only had a high standard for himself, but expected a high standard from his companions, and therefore objected to the companionship of Mark. Barnabas, however, was anxious to give Mark a second chance, not to regard him as a permanently fallen man, but to enable him to make good. Paul was firm, but so was Barnabas in his way, and the matter ended by Paul and Barnabas going in different directions, Barnabas with Mark as his colleague. The upshot of this move was not only that the Gospel was preached in more places than if Paul and Barnabas had gone together, but that a new 'Apostle' was added to the Church in the person of Mark, to whom, among other things, we owe the Gospel according to St Mark. Barnabas' trust was not misplaced, and the Church gained another missionary who presently became Paul's friend again.

It is easy to find men and women, in the Christian Church,

who are prepared to condemn a fallen man or woman, and thus unconsciously to prevent him from ever rising to his full stature ; but it needs persons of the calibre of St Barnabas so to understand the mind of the Master as to give a fallen man a second chance, and thus to make peace between colleagues of differing views and temperaments. St Barnabas therefore ultimately made peace between Paul and Mark.

(iv) ST BARNABAS' SECRET

We must not, however, forget the secret of the strength of Barnabas. He was enabled to be a peacemaker because he was ' a good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith '. This was the secret of his strength, and it manifested itself in the splendid result that ' much people was added unto the Lord '. When the Christian Church can number amongst its members clergy and laity who are good men and women full of the Holy Spirit and of faith, one may well expect that much people will be added unto the Lord, but not until then.

O for good men like Barnabas the Levite, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith, who are peacemakers between man and God, between man and man, between the unconverted and the converted, between Christian and non-Christian, between the Church and her sons, between churches and churches, between Christian leaders and the rank and file ! Let us pray that the Church may be blessed with sons of consolation, like the great Josès, surnamed Barnabas.

*O happy spirits, marked by God and man
Their messages of love to bear,
What though long since in Heaven your brows began
The genial amarant wreath to wear,
And in the eternal leisure of calm love
Ye banquet there above,
Yet in your sympathetic heart
We and our earthly griefs may ask and hope a part.*

*Comfort's true sons ! amid the thoughts of down
That strew your pillow of repose,
Sure 'tis one joy to muse how ye unknown
By sweet remembrance soothe our woes,
And how the spark ye lit of heavenly cheer
Lives in our embers here,
Where'er the Cross is borne with smiles,
Or lightened secretly by Love's endearing wiles.*

8. THE NATIVITY OF SAINT JOHN BAPTIST

(JUNE 24)

THE MARTYR-PROPHET

He must increase, but I must decrease. (St John 3:30)

'In the wilderness'—John the Baptist may be said to have been the last prophet of the Old Dispensation and the first prophet of the New Dispensation. It is clear from the Gospel records that the Baptist made a profound impression on all who came in contact with him, rich and poor, great and small, religious and irreligious. Now what was the secret of this remarkable influence? It is well expressed in St Luke 1:80: 'And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit: and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.' In other words, unlike certain present-day Revivalists, who rush into pulpit, or platform, or into print, immediately after their conversion (whether real or imagined), the Baptist continued, alone with God and his soul, in the wilderness, alone with the Alone, far away from the haunts of men and the noise of the world; and it was during this long and quiet communion with God and his soul, that his spiritual power grew into a flame and he was able later to communicate that fire to his hearers. Too well he knew that ceaseless chattering

dissipates spiritual force ; too well he knew that to work is not to pray, unless first to pray is to work. He fasted and prayed before he emerged into the world, and the result was a life of power. Whereas we feast and talk, and the result is a life of weakness and ineffectiveness. If then we Christians would be men and women of power *in the world*, we must first be men and women of prayer *in our private chamber*. For, as St Luke records in 3 : 2 'The word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias *in the wilderness*.' May the word of God come unto us here and now !

' HE MUST INCREASE '

Secondly, one result of this quiet and prolonged self-preparation was that as he saw Jesus' popularity increasing and his own waning, as he observed the diminution in the numbers of his own disciples and the swelling crowds of Jesus' followers, he could say with magnificent self-effacement : 'He must increase, but I must decrease'. He was prepared to sacrifice himself wholly for the sake of Jesus and His cause. He was content to be merely a herald, a forerunner, to do the work of a 'sapper-and-miner' and to retire quietly from the scene when his work of preparation was accomplished, making way for Jesus. But how often we fail to realise that we are not always or necessarily meant to succeed, or to accomplish things, but merely to prepare the way, to make way, even to give way ! Too often we are anxious to take the lead in a good cause, only for the sake of the credit it brings and the power it confers, but are reluctant to carry on as camp-followers under someone else more competent, or at any rate more suitable to assume leadership ; we put self before the cause. Are you and I, then, prepared to take the lower place, to accept the second rank, to be accounted of no importance or of little importance, so long as the work goes on ? Are we prepared to ask for no reward, to demand no recognition, to expect no gratitude, to require no thanks ? It needs the greatness and

the humility of a St John the Baptist to be able to exclaim : ' He must increase, but I must decrease.' ' Teach us, good Lord, to serve Thee as Thou deservest, to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labour and not to ask for any reward, save that of knowing that we do Thy will.'

COURAGE TO BE IN THE MINORITY

Thirdly, St John the Baptist was distinguished by an indomitable courage in the cause of righteousness, a courage that had no thought for praise or blame. He was not afraid of being unpopular for the sake of principle. The Collect for his day bids us pray, not only that we may ' so follow his doctrine and holy life, that we may truly repent according to his preaching,' but also that we may, ' after his example, constantly speak the truth, boldly rebuke vice, and patiently suffer for the truth's sake '. The Baptist, we see, was ready to say the same thing in any company ; fear was foreign to him, and flattery he despised. The holy man never minced his words ! He preached the same doctrine in the royal chapel as in the marketplace, and, if he warned the publicans that they must give up their peculiar sins, he also denounced the immorality of Herod in living with his brother's wife. And he was ready to pay the price of such courage, and *did* pay the price of martyrdom. Today in India, I know of no virtue which Christians, and the Church as a whole, need to remember and practise in a greater measure than the royal virtue of courage, courage to speak the truth—in love and in season ; boldly to rebuke vice—in moderation, and sometimes perhaps only by a silent protest ; and patiently to suffer for the truth's sake. For the Opposition to the Government is a feeble and unintelligent, and not itself an irreproachable one ; the Press is craven or unscrupulous or perverse ; there is wickedness and corruption both in high and in low places ; injustice and violence threaten to become almost the order of the day. In this evil environment, the Christian is constantly challenged, both in his personal

and in his public life, regardless of consequences, to 'dare to be a Daniel, to dare to do the right', to dare to be truthful and honest, just and righteous, to have the moral stamina to be in the right with a small minority, to be bold enough to act according to his conscience and not according to the wishes and practices of the majority, to be a man of character, principle, integrity, to brave calumny and persecution, to endure isolation and misunderstanding, so that Right may be thought, Right may be said, Right may be done; and to remember, in the words of Lowell :

‘ They are slaves who dare not be,
In the right with two or three ’.

Let me conclude with a story of the Bishop St Chrysostom before the Roman Emperor, by way of illustrating the last message of the Baptist. The Emperor threatened to banish him, unless he ceased making his outspoken criticisms. Chrysostom replied : ‘ Thou canst not, for the world is my Father’s house ; thou canst not banish me.’ ‘ But I will slay thee,’ said the Emperor. ‘ Nay, but thou canst not,’ said the noble champion of the Faith again : ‘ for my life is hid with Christ in God.’ ‘ I will take away thy treasures.’ ‘ Nay, but thou canst not,’ was the retort ; ‘ for, in the first place, I have none that thou knowest of. My treasure is in heaven, and my heart is there.’ ‘ But I will drive thee away from man, and thou shalt have no friend left.’ ‘ Nay, and that thou can’st not,’ once more said the faithful witness ; ‘ for I have a Friend in heaven, from whom thou canst not separate me. I defy thee ; there is nothing thou canst do to hurt me.’

*Where is the lore the Baptist taught,
The soul unswerving and the fearless tongue ?
The much-enduring wisdom, sought
By lonely prayer the haunted rocks among ?
Who counts it gain
His light should wane,
So the whole world to Jesus throng ?*

*So glorious let Thy Pastors shine,
 That by their speaking lives the world may learn
 First filial duty, then divine,
 That sons to parents, all to Thee may turn ;
 And ready prove
 In fires of love,
 At sight of Thee, for aye to burn.*

9. SAINT PETER, APOSTLE AND MARTYR

(JUNE 29)

THE ROCK-LIKE APOSTLE

Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church.
 (St Matthew 16:18)

A PROPHECY

'The saint,' it has been said, 'has a *past*, but the sinner has a *future*.' Nicknames given by us refer only to *present* characteristics, whereas the name of Peter—'Rock'—given by our Lord to Simon, referred, not to his present, but to his future condition—not to what he *was*, but, please God, to what he *would be*; it was alike a challenge and a prophecy. At that moment, anybody less rock-like than Simon could hardly be imagined, and we may be sure that the title 'Rock' would have been greeted with derision by his comrades. He was not, of course, lacking in candour, in devotion, in impulsiveness, in generosity, but rock-like he certainly was not. For example, his sudden loss of faith, while walking on the sea with his Master, nearly made him drown. And he would not let his Master face the hardship

of the Cross. He could not keep awake when his Master, who was in desperate need of his prayers, was facing a crisis in his life, and indeed in the life of the Universe. He could not stand the jeering of a young woman, but ingloriously betrayed his Master in His hour of need. What, then, nevertheless, made our Lord prophetically declare : 'Thou art Peter—the Rock' ?

'PETER' BY DIVINE GRACE

When you see clay soil during the rainy season, as it stands in water, it is in a semi-fluid state, but the same soil, after the harvest is over and the dry season has set in, and the rays of the sun have been beating mercilessly on its face all day—the same soil becomes as hard as rock. So it was in the case of Simon. It was not his lofty intentions—they soon went the way of all flesh ; it was not his noble impulses—they were so evanescent ; it was not his laudable resolutions—they so quickly evaporated ; no, it was the grace of God, working through the Holy Spirit, in the recesses of his surrendered soul, that ultimately converted Simon into Peter, and Peter into *Saint* Peter.

IS MAN HIS OWN ARCHITECT ?

But the stupendous and disastrous heresy of the modern age, in spite of its ghastly and repeated failures, is that Man is the Architect of his own fortune. Now what is the result of this mentality ? It is true that nobody wants war, but Man has been impotent to prevent two World Wars in our time, and a third seems to be in embryo. Nobody wants high prices or insufficient food, yet prices soar and food deteriorates in quality and quantity, and still Man persuades himself that things are bound to improve, once education and democracy get a chance. The Christian has no such illusions. He does not despair of Man as do the pessimists, who begin by being optimists for the wrong reason. On the contrary, Christianity proclaims boldly that there is *no* hope for Man except through his rebirth, except by the

transformation of his nature into super-nature—which can only come about by the grace of God. Simons *can* become Peters; Simons *have* become Peters—but only by ceasing to be Simons, under the transforming power of Jesus. There *is* hope even for the worst of us, but not in ourselves; only in God, who is the Beginning and the End.

THAT ROCK WAS CHRIST

But our Lord not only declared Simon to be Peter; He went on to say: 'Upon this rock I will build my Church.' This latter part of the text takes us to the first step in this process of transformation, about which we have so far been thinking. Simon did not begin by saying: 'I *will* be good', and behold, he *was* good! On the contrary, he did not think of himself at all; he simply confessed: 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God', and from that confession flowed everything else. So it cannot be too often pointed out to Christians that Christianity is not the Ten Commandments; it is not the giving of tithes; it is not the keeping of the Jewish Sabbath on the Seventh Day; it is not even the Sermon on the Mount. Christianity is Christ—nothing less; this is the foundation-truth of the Christian Gospel; indeed it *is* the Gospel. If you have not discovered and experienced this saving truth in your heart and soul, nothing can save you, for there is no substitute. But today in India a false patriotism, an irrelevant desire not to contradict, an ill-taught view of Christianity, commits many an unwary Christian to the position that, at bottom, all religions are the same, that all religions are equally good, that all have the same goal—a view which finds no support in the Scriptures.

The ideological climate of India today and the underlying philosophy of our new educational programme, as instanced by our Social Studies Curriculum in schools, leads many a professing Christian teacher to fall into the trap laid for him by the Vedantism of this country, for which the Christian claim is an intolerable assertion of ultimate truth on behalf of one, among the many, forms of *Maya*.

Perhaps I could best illustrate my point by quoting an account of a bus journey, from Bishop Newbigin's book *A South India Diary* :

A prosperous-looking Brahmin begins a mocking imitation of a missionary preaching in Tamil: 'Ah, rascals, dolts, tramps and vagabonds, come to us and we will take you in.' Tamil has no words which really mean 'to save sinners'. Apart from Christ, how could it? The Brahmin has made a good hit, and gets a good laugh for it. I am wondering how to reply when an unexpectedly turns up. A young farmer, sitting on the bench behind, leans forward and tackles the Brahmin. 'I know all your nonsense. "All religions are the same," you say. "All roads lead to God." It is not true. If you want to go somewhere, you have to get into the right bus. If you get into the wrong bus, you get to the wrong place. If you want salvation, you have got to have the religion that gets you there. 'That's Christianity.' The Brahmin was not expecting this, and is silenced. It is quite good fun teasing a missionary, but decidedly less edifying to argue about religion with an obvious outcaste. The farmer tells me his story, how he became a Christian, how he learned to be a good farmer, how he has developed fruit-farming.

'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God', said Simon—'Thou alone!' That was why our Lord was able to proceed: 'Upon this rock I will build my Church.' And that rock was *not* Peter, but Peter's confession of Christ as the Son of the Living God. For 'the Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ, her Lord.' There is no other foundation for the Church; there is no other Name given unto men. That confession was the beginning of the transformation of Simon into Peter. Now, as then, the Christian stands by this confession, or falls from lack of it.

To sum up. 'Thou art Peter'. First, then, every man, woman and child *can* change, can be converted,—but only by yielding himself to God's grace.

But secondly, the initial step in this transformation is to be able to say, with all the heart, with all the soul, with all the mind, and with all the strength : ‘Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.’

And so Christ prophesied that Simon should be Peter, and solemnly affirmed that, on the rock of faith in the Deity of Christ, His Church should be built : ‘Upon this Rock I will build my Church.’

Holy Peter, Apostle and Martyr, pray for us sinners, that we may become saints in the Church of God, even as thou becamest, by the grace of Him, who was Thy Saviour and is ours, who is Lord and Master of us all in the Communion of Saints !

*He loves and weeps—but more than tears
Have seal'd Thy welcome and his love—
One look lives in him, and endears
Crosses and wrongs where'er he rove :*

*That gracious chiding look, Thy call
To win him to himself and Thee,
Sweetening the sorrow of his fall,
Which else were rued too bitterly.*

(JULY 22)

THE TRANSFORMED SINNER

But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness. (Romans 6:22)

In this verse St Paul is addressing his fellow-Christians in the Church in Rome, but his words are equally applicable to all converted sinners, and not least to St Mary Magdalene. If ever there was a sinner made free from sin and become a servant to God, and having fruit unto holiness, that was Mary of Magdala !

WHICH MARY ?

Now ' Mary ' was a very common name for girls amongst the Jews. Thus we have Mary, the Mother of our Lord ; Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus ; another woman, probably a Mary, a ' sinner ', who in the house of Simon the leper poured out an alabaster box of ointment on our Lord's feet ; and Mary of Magdala from whom He had driven out seven evil spirits. The Roman Church identifies Mary of Magdala with Mary of Bethany, which is unfortunate, because Mary of Bethany was a different type of saint, and the Church surely needs not only saints who have been ' sinners ', but also saints who have led what may be called blameless lives. More common than this identification is that of Mary of Magdala with the sinful woman who worshipped Him in the house of Simon the Pharisee, with the costliest treasure at her disposal.

There is no place today in Palestine called Magdala—which is not to be wondered at, in view of the successive invasions, Arab not least, which overran the Holy Land since the days of our Lord ; but there is a Magdala in Ethiopia (otherwise known as Abyssinia), although that is certainly not the place from which Mary of Magdala came.

THE WOMAN IN SOCIETY

Now Mary Magdalene was a woman, yet she was accepted as, in a sense, a disciple of our Lord ; and she has been canonized as a Christian saint, although rather belatedly. Nowadays we take for granted the equality of man and woman, even in a non-Christian country like India, but we fail to realise that this happy fact is due to the impact of western civilization and the influence of the Christian ideals on which that western civilization was once based. But even when I was at school, it was still a common subject for debating societies whether 'female education', as it was called, was necessary or desirable ; it was possible to damage the case for girls' education by quoting a few choice Tamil proverbs ! Until very recently, it was a common sight to see an educated Indian gentleman walk several paces in front of his wife, who would be carrying the baby and the luggage and leading the other children behind. Even in Indian Christian families, family photographs are still taken with the man seated and the woman meekly standing by. There *are* homes where the lady of the house will not sit in the presence of a male guest. But today it is a common sight in buses and trains to see illiterate labourers rising and offering their seats to women of their own class. Even in England, the vote for women is a comparatively recent innovation ; one great University barely tolerated them and another denied them degrees. The recently published biography of Florence Nightingale by Cecil Woodham Smith reveals the tremendous handicaps from which even that dynamic personality suffered through the accident of her sex.

In Judaism also, woman did not enjoy a high place in society or in religious life. One of the prayers that men-folk offered was to thank Jehovah that He had not created them women. Jesus therefore did something revolutionary in accepting the discipleship of a woman in the person of Mary Magdalene, who, having been made free from sin, and become a servant to God, had her fruit unto holiness.

FROM THE STREET

Secondly, if we are right in identifying Mary of Magdala with the former woman of the street, then it is remarkable that a person with such a past should not only have been converted, but become a saint. Even today there is a dual standard of morality for men and women. A young man may indulge in pre-marital excesses, but respectable and devout families will offer him their daughters in marriage, provided he is materially well off; whereas, in the case of a girl, if tempted by a man she makes a slip, she is often condemned for life, and because of society's contempt for her, she often sinks lower and lower until death mercifully comes to release her. It is doubtful whether the Indian Church today would make it possible for a Mary Magdalene to become a Saint. Jesus showed, by His gracious courtesy to Mary Magdalene, and by His reclamation of her, that He had come, as He said, not to save the righteous but sinners, not to coddle saints but to correct and transform sinners, to save them for Himself. Remembering the progress of Mary of Magdala to St Mary Magdalene, we thank God that, through Jesus Christ, every sinner is a potential saint; and we should be grateful that the Church has included Mary of Magdala in her roll of saints.

‘WITH JESUS, WHICH IS FAR BETTER’

Mary of Magdala knew, after her conversion, that the only hope of her future purity lay in close touch with Christ, or otherwise she would become a prey to lustful men and an object of contempt to self-righteous women. She lived her life, therefore, under the shelter of our Lord's influence, ministering to His creature comforts, drawing inspiration from Him, and becoming a new creature in Christ. When troubles came to our Lord, and He was arrested and crucified, all His disciples,—Peter, Thomas and the rest, who prided themselves on being men and had boasted about their loyalty to their Master,—nevertheless deserted Him in His hour of need; but it was Mary Magdalene,

who, with the Mother of our Lord stood by the cross, while the dying Saviour's eyes rested on them and on their look of love and sympathy.

And she had her reward. Our Lord vouchsafed to her the first vision of Himself as Risen Lord, a privilege which was denied even to the Beloved Disciple; she was commissioned to break the joyful news to the brethren. In her meeting with the Risen Lord she learnt a new lesson. Suddenly recognising Him, she was anxious to touch His feet in ecstasy and in adoration, but Jesus gently put her away and taught her to walk, not by sight but by faith, to believe Him, not by touching Him, but by experiencing Him in her heart, to know that He had killed death and extracted the fangs of sin, to learn herself to die unto sin and to rise again unto righteousness.

Mary Magdalene, having been made free from sin and become a servant to God, with her fruit unto holiness, has earned the double title of 'Queen of Penitents' and 'Saint'.

O Almighty God, whose blessed Son did sanctify Mary Magdalene, and called her to be a witness to his resurrection: Mercifully grant that by thy grace we may be healed of all our infirmities, and alway serve thee in the power of his endless life, who with thee and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth, one God, world without end. Amen.

II. SAINT JAMES, APOSTLE AND MARTYR

(JULY 25)

ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE

‘*We are able.*’ (St Matthew 20:22)

HUMAN NATURE *can* BE CHANGED

‘Can you straighten a dog’s tail?’ So runs a well-known Tamil proverb, suggesting that human nature can never be changed, however hard one may try. The idea is a fairly common one all over the world, even among Christians—the idea that men and nations do not change, that they will always remain the same, that, indeed, they *cannot* change. Now it is possible to make out a case for this contention, and books have been written in support of it. But the Christian Faith, founded upon the Son of God, proclaims its conviction that human nature can be changed; the Christian Church was founded in the certainty that human nature can be changed. From the Christian point of view, therefore, the contention that human nature cannot be changed is a fallacy—a fallacy that stands exposed not least by the history of the Christian Church in India; and yet it is amazing how many, even Christians, accept it unquestioningly as Gospel truth, and pass it on as such to others who are equally credulous, unthinking and superficial. The question, then, is: ‘Can our nature be changed—our animal nature, our human nature, into divine nature, into the nature of the sons of God?’ And the unhesitating answer of the Christian Church, as we have seen, is: ‘It can; we are able.’ This is brought home to us by the life and character of the saints and martyrs of the Christian Church in general—both known and unknown—and in particular by that of St James, Apostle and Martyr, the message of whose life, as we see it in the Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles, we shall consider in brief.

THE SON OF THUNDER

James, the son of Zebedee, comes on the scene rather later than Andrew and Simon Peter, or even his own brother, John. Unlike them, however, he does not throw in his lot with the Baptist, but waits until our Lord Himself calls him, and having by now become convinced that Jesus was worthy of his loyalty, he gladly forsakes all and follows Him; his mind is made up and, generally speaking, he does not look back.

This does not mean, however, that all at once he has become a perfect Christian saint, for saintship, in the New Testament sense rather than in the modern sense, does not mean perfection, but consecration; a saint is one who, like his representations in a stained-glass window, lets in light—to himself and to others. It was not for nothing that our Lord nicknamed James ‘son of thunder’—that is to say, a person of an impatient, impetuous, over-zealous and over-bearing temperament, fundamentally different from the patient, persistent, gentle, loving, humble mind of Christ Himself. Thus we find him pressing our Lord to command fire to come down from heaven to consume certain unbelieving Samaritans who had refused to receive them—although we may be pretty certain that James himself must have partly contributed to the situation by his ungracious and high-handed manner towards the outcast Samaritan rustics.

THE PASSION FOR PRIVILEGE

We next find him preferring before the Master a most inopportune, a most inappropriate, in fact, an amazing and unchristlike petition. Inopportune, because it is hardly a week before the Crucifixion, and the shadow of the cross is already upon the Saviour. He had been speaking in solemn tones about the tragic end that was impending and about all that it would mean for Himself, for those whom He loved, and for the Cause—the Kingdom of God. But without listening, without understanding, James and

his brother rush in, egged on by their vain, foolish and ambitious mother, Salome, who begs that, whatever might happen to the others, her two darling boys might be given places of honour in His Kingdom—places superior to those to be occupied by the other disciples, places similar to the exalted offices held by the Roman dignitaries in their Empire over Palestine—that, in other words, they might wear the crown without bearing the cross, that they might enjoy the gain without suffering the pain. The arrogance, the selfishness, the ambition, the inopportuneness, the thoughtlessness, the ludicrousness, of the petition never appears to have struck them at all—and this after years of intimacy with Him who ‘came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many’. Without pausing to think, without waiting to weigh all the consequences involved—the toil, the pain, the suffering, the desolation, the persecution, the dereliction, the solitude of the Christian Way, the hourly disgrace to be endured—he blurts out the self-confident and cocksure answer, ‘We are able’, to our Lord’s question, ‘Are you able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?’—the baptism of pain, the baptism of the cross, the much tribulation through which alone the Christian, always and everywhere, must enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

THE JAMES OF THE GOSPEL

This is the James of the Gospels—James the Apostle—the James before the Crucifixion and indeed for sometime after; no wonder that he deserted Jesus in His hour of need, as also did the other disciples; no wonder that he gave up all hope of Jesus ever rising victorious over sin and death. Those who knew James at the time would doubtless have pointed to this defection as only another instance of the utter futility of trying to change nature. ‘Human nature’, they would have affirmed, with the finality of a High Court Judge, ‘can never be changed; it will always remain the same. We are not able.’ That

is what they would have declared, with complete and 'superior' conviction—'We told you so!'

THE JAMES OF THE ACTS

But, thank God, they have not said the last word, for look at James again after the outpouring of the Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, at Pentecost—James the Martyr, of whom we read in Acts 12: 1-2: 'Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the Church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.' A tremendous lot has happened since that foolish request of his mother Salome more than ten years back—the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, above all, as we have seen, the Descent of the Holy Spirit and the founding of the small but significant Christian Church, and subsequently, the astounding conversion of that doughty Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus. During the interval James has changed, and changed tremendously, so much so, that the powers that be in Jerusalem are getting alarmed about this new sect and about its potentialities. The name of James is mentioned as the ring-leader of this troublesome group; he is therefore arrested, condemned, and gallantly dies the death of a martyr. And as he languishes for a while in Herod's prison-house in Jerusalem, he surely recalls to mind that same scene on the way to Jerusalem, when Jesus put him the counter-question: 'Are you able to drink of my cup, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' And now, in a higher and truer sense than he had dreamt possible, he says, with understanding and with humble and joyful confidence: 'I am able, able to suffer much tribulation, able to continue steadfast in faith, and so to enter into the Kingdom of God'.

Tradition says that such was his conviction, such were his winsome ways, that his chief accuser himself was won over to the Faith, and that, on the way to the place of execution, he begged the Apostle's forgiveness for what he had done. James, we are told, openly embraced him and gave, as his parting message: 'Peace be unto thee'.

And the Apostle and his accuser were executed together, drinking to its dregs the cup the Father had at last given him to drink.

A CHANGED JAMES

A different James, this, from the James we knew, the James who could not brook Samaritan unfriendliness, the James who coveted honour but spurned suffering, the James who wished for privilege but shirked responsibility, the James who said more than he meant, the James who desired the foremost place in Jesus' Kingdom at the expense of others, the James who aspired to enter the Kingdom of God, but without tribulation, the James who, in so many respects, resembles us. This different James is James the Martyr.

Now is this the same James, or is it not? The answer is: the same, and yet not the same. He is still 'the son of thunder', but a son of thunder, not for self, but for Jesus. He is still impetuous, but now impetuous for the Kingdom. He still says, 'I am able', but able because of the Cup of Pain and the Baptism of Fire. He is still proud, but proud of His Master and of serving His Cause. There is a homely English proverb which illustrates the truth of the statement that James was the same and yet different: 'The juice of the ripe apple was the same that was in the green apple, plus two things—sunlight and sun-heat'.

DO YOU BELIEVE YOU CAN CHANGE?

Do you believe that human nature can be changed? Do you now believe that James changed? Remember holy James, Apostle and Martyr, who was changed, or rather, transformed. Are you then prepared, not indeed in your own strength, but in the strength of your crucified Saviour, in the might of your Risen Lord, in the power of the Divine Spirit—are you prepared and able, rather enabled, to drink His Cup, and to receive His Baptism in

the years before you ? Are you willing to be changed and transformed ?

As the sunlight of Jesus shines on your soul, as the sun-heat of Jesus warms your heart, as the Spirit of Jesus expels your sins, and delivers you from the bondage of evil habits, breaking the power of cancelled sin, as the Life-giving Redeemer makes you His dwelling-place and His abode, effecting a transformation of your nature, may you indeed be able, with renewed confidence and with the full knowledge of the Cup and the Baptism that await you, to pray, in the words of the Collect for St James' Day :

Grant, O merciful God, that, as thine holy Apostle, St James, leaving his father and all that he had, without delay was obedient unto the calling of Thy Son Jesus Christ and followed Him, so we, forsaking all worldly and carnal affections, may be evermore ready to follow thy holy commandments ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Sit down and take thy fill of joy
At God's right hand, a bidden guest,
Drink of the cup that cannot cloy,
Eat of the bread that cannot waste.
O great Apostle ! rightly now
Thou readest all thy Saviour meant,
What time His grave yet gentle brow
In sweet reproof on thee was bent.*

12. SAINT BARTHOLOMEW, APOSTLE AND MARTYR

(AUGUST 24)

THE GUILLESS ONE

Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile !

(St John 1:47)

GOD CALLS

August 24th is the Feast of St Bartholomew, Apostle and reputed Martyr. Let the life of the saint be our message for today and from henceforth. What, then, do we know about his life ? In truth, very little ! One popular hymn, feeling impotent in the face of the scanty information available about the saint, has recourse to an acrostic giving the name of the Apostle and extolling the saints in general ! But Bartholomew (whose other name was almost certainly Nathanael), was an Apostle, that is to say, one who was called and sent by God, after having been duly searched by God. Likewise we, as *Christians*, are called by God and sent forth into the world singly and in groups. Our call is from God who knoweth our hearts. So long as we bear this great fact in mind, so long will our life be one of love, and joy, and peace. May Christ therefore be indeed the Head of our house, the unseen Guest at every meal, the invisible Seer of our work at home and abroad, the silent Listener to our every conversation, the ever-present Spectator of our goings-out and comings-in ! We are called by God ; we are sent by God, after having been scanned by Him, as was Nathanael of old.

THE COST OF WITNESS

Secondly, St Bartholomew was a martyr. There is a tradition that it was not Thomas but Bartholomew, who went to India and died the death of a martyr. A martyr is not only one who *dies* for his convictions, if need be, but

one who *lives* for his convictions—a witness. May our life everywhere be one of witness to God, as revealed in our Saviour, Jesus Christ ! Now witnessing is costly. It is so much less troublesome to go with the crowd. But a thing is not necessarily right, just because more and more people—particularly of our own set—say it, or do it, or believe in it. Indeed, it is not too much to say that, in matters of right and wrong, the majority is seldom in the right. It is our duty and privilege, nay, our inescapable obligation and responsibility, as Christians, to be witnesses to the right, whatever the cost, and so to live and work that the minority of those, who are in the right, may ultimately, please God, become the majority. Secondly, then, we are called to be martyrs, that is, witnesses of God for Truth, Right, Love, Harmony, Honesty.

FREEDOM FROM GUILT

Thirdly, it was said by our Lord of Bartholomew : ‘Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile !’ St Bartholomew was guileless ; in other words, he was a plain and unsophisticated, an honest and straightforward man. It should not be our ambition for ourselves to be sought after by all and sundry as persons who are clever, popular, attractive, charming, or sociable, but rather that we should be guileless, plain, unsophisticated, sincere, reliable, trustworthy, open-hearted, friendly, peace-making, because godly, persons. It was surely St Bartholomew’s guilelessness, among other virtues, that qualified him to be an Apostle and Martyr, to be called and sent by God, and to be a witness to his conviction. The Church’s message for to-day is : that, like St Bartholomew, we should

(i) live as though we have been called and sent by God ; and

(ii) act as those chosen to be His unfailing witnesses ; and

(iii) retain, all our life, a certain freedom from guile.

In conclusion, the Church bids us ‘Go forth into the world in peace ; be of good courage ; hold fast that which

is good ; render to no man evil for evil ; strengthen the faint-hearted ; support the weak ; help the afflicted ; honour all men ; love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.'

' Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile ! '

*So still the guileless man is blest,
To him all crooked paths are straight,
Him on his way to endless rest
Fresh, ever-growing strengths await.*

*God's witnesses, a glorious host,
Compass him daily like a cloud ;
Martyrs and seers, the sav'd and lost,
Mercies and judgements cry aloud.*

13. SAINT MATTHEW, APOSTLE, EVANGELIST AND MARTYR

(SEPTEMBER 21)

EVANGELISTS ALL

*Jesus . . . saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose,
and followed him.* (St Matthew 9:9)

As one opens the pages of the New Testament, the first name, of course, that one comes across is that of St Matthew. He is described in the Lectionary by the three letters, 'A.E.M.', that is, Apostle, Evangelist and Martyr. The message, therefore, of his life and work may be summed up alliteratively in three words : Selected—Sent—Suffered.

SELECTED

Firstly, then, he was selected. We are all doubtless familiar with the story of his selection. It came to him as he sat at the receipt of custom, pursuing his remunerative, but not perhaps honourable, and certainly not honoured, occupation. 'Jesus . . . saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.' This does not necessarily mean that his conversion was a sudden one. It *may* have been ; on the other hand, it may well have been that he had previously heard, listened to, met, and talked with, our Lord, and with others about Him, and that, therefore, the call came, so to speak, as the climax of his contact with the Prophet of Nazareth. The really important thing to realise is not that his call came either suddenly or gradually, with or without notice and preparation, but that, when it did come, it found him ready ; that, when the moment for decision arrived, he was prepared to arise and follow.

Thus, as we read the biographies of famous men, as we study the history of progressive nations, we observe how the greatest men and nations have always been those who have had such a sense of vocation, the consciousness of a mission, the conviction that they were called, or rather, called out. If, then, the Christian in India, individually, is to fulfil his function ; if the Christian Church, as a community, is to be true to its purpose, it can only be by a consciousness of such a vocation, by an inescapable conviction of having been chosen and called. Matthew the Publican was selected. We are selected. Every Christian is selected—to be, in a sense, an Apostle, deriving his call from One greater than himself. *You* are selected.

SENT

Secondly, St Matthew was sent—but not immediately. He had first to undergo a period of probation, remaining with his Master, learning from Him small things no less than vital lessons, living with Him, sharing His privations and hardships, His trials and sufferings, obtaining a glimpse

of the Cross and what lay beyond. Now and then, he was sent forth, as were the rest of the Twelve, but he had to come back to report. Even after the Resurrection and the Ascension, he had to wait, holding his peace, along with the other believers, for the descent of the Holy Spirit, to be 'endued with power from on high'. It was only then that he was finally sent. We do not know how he accomplished his mission, apart from the fact that he wrote or compiled a book which we call the 'Gospel according to St Matthew,' apart also from the fact that, before embarking on his new career, he called together his former comrades and fellow-workers, his friends and relatives, to a feast, and explained to them the reason for the momentous, the amazing and apparently eccentric, step that he was about to undertake. From his Gospel, the Gospel of the Son of God, we gather that his primary appeal was to his own people, so as to convince the Jews that Jesus of Nazareth was none other than the foretold Messiah whom they had been expecting for centuries, that the Son of the Carpenter was indeed the Christ that the prophets had foretold. St Matthew was sent. Every Christian is sent, every morning of his life, into the 'world, amongst his fellow-men, to his fellow-men. Do we know, do we remember, that we are sent, as in a sense Evangelists, as bearers of the Gospel, with a message to deliver? *You* are sent.

SUFFERED

Thirdly, St Matthew suffered. He is called a 'martyr' which means a witness, certainly by life, but not necessarily by death. His witness was not to himself, but to his Master. He was entrusted, not with his own honour, but with the honour of his Lord, which he was fearful of sullyng before those for whom he had been selected and sent. And it was to be a witness, not merely of words or of profession but of deed, of practice, and of life and outlook as a whole, in all its varied aspects, at home, on the road, in the counting-house, in the market, in public life, in Church, in contact with all and sundry. Such

witness necessarily brought suffering in its train, for had not He, whose witness he was, said : ' Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you ' ? For Christianity is not a comfortable religion. The Christian life is not a comfortable life. Christian witness is not a comfortable occupation, amongst a comfort-loving generation. The seeker for popularity, the lover of mob applause makes a bad Christian. The reward of real Christian witness in this world is often unpopularity, misunderstanding, loneliness, dislike, persecution, hatred, contempt, malice, isolation, in short, suffering of all kinds. St Matthew suffered. Every Christian must suffer. We must suffer. Are we willing to suffer for the Gospel, for the sake of our Master, for the sake of truth and righteousness, for the sake of our convictions and principles, for the sake of honesty and integrity, in our professional and public life, as a Church and as a community ? *You* must suffer.

Selected — Sent — Suffered.

Vocation — Discipleship — The Cross.

' It was the way the Master went ;
Should not the servãnt tread it still ? '

Jesus saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

*At once he rose, and left his gold ;
His treasure and his heart
Transferr'd, where he shall safe behold
Earth and her idols part ;
While he beside his endless store
Shall sit, and floods unceasing pour
Of Christ's true riches o'er all time and space,
First angel of His Church, first steward of His Grace.*

14. SAINT MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS

(SEPTEMBER 29)

GOD'S MESSENGERS

Their angels do always behold the face of my Father.

(St Matthew 18:10)

We speak of 'St Sepulchre' meaning 'the Holy Sepulchre'; so, in the same way, we speak of 'St Michael' meaning the Holy Michael, for Michael, being an angel, is not a saint in the usual sense, either in the New Testament or in the modern sense, as applied to human beings.

ANGELS AND FAIRIES

There is hardly an article of Christian belief which is less real to Christians in general than that regarding angels, for angels are unconsciously regarded as being somewhat like fairies. In the Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, it is not easy to know when they are spoken of as real entities and when in a figurative sense. Thus, for instance, when, in the portion of Scripture appointed for Michaelmas Day, taken from Revelation 12, we read in the seventh verse that 'There was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not,' it is difficult to conceive how there could be such a conflict in heaven, a place or state which we have been taught to associate with peace unending and bliss unspeakable. And even when we come to the sayings of our Lord, our difficulty is not resolved, because He too is much given to the employment of metaphorical language.

This is not the place to discuss angelology and its place in Christian doctrine, but certain leading characteristics of the angels must be considered. There is no reason why God, who created plants, animals and man, in three living orders on earth, should not also have created angels in the great gap there is between man and God. Philosophically, too, it is capable of justification, and it can be held, for

instance, with Plato, that every created thing has its spiritual counterpart, and certainly with our Lord, that children's 'angels do always behold the face of my Father'.

The belief in angels reminds us of the nearness of the spiritual world and of supernatural activities—both for good and for evil. It is not good for modern man to lose faith in the spiritual world or in supernatural activities, and to regard himself as the sole object of the love and attention of God Almighty. It is, however, remarkable how firmly the word 'angel' has entered into English language and thought, as when we declare ourselves, in a controversy, 'on the side of the angels'.

The word 'angel' itself means a messenger. It is in this sense that 'evangel', the Greek word for Gospel, means good message. The word, therefore, is an apt description of the place of angels, that is to say, as messengers between God and man. They have a part to play towards God ; and they have a part towards man.

(i) GOD AND THE ANGELS

The Bible never questions their existence nor renders a systematic view of their nature or activities. Taking only our Lord's own life, we read how He was surrounded by them from the time of His birth to His Ascension, and at the great crises of His life. On the plains of Bethlehem, they heralded His birth, with their celestial music. They ministered to Him after His fiery trial in the wilderness. In the agony at Gethsemane, an angel stood by Him, unseen by the disciples ; and when He rose from the dead, it was the angels which rolled away the stone and stood guard over the empty tomb. It was an angel who cheered the Apostles when He ascended up to heaven, and assured them of His Return. Our Lord and several of the Apostles speak about the angels and especially of their Ministry.

Having regard to the various allusions to the angels in the Scriptures, we see that they emphasize God's love, God's holiness, God's majesty, God's providence, God's

reign, and also, God's conflict with and victory over evil, as, for instance, in Michael's victory over the dragon. They reflect God's beneficent attitude towards families, as in the case of Gabriel, with his Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary regarding the Divine Incarnation.

Angels, then, are God's messengers, personal beings coming from God to man and going back from man to God, but always subject to Him, although above man. For this reason angels are always portrayed in art in the attitude of worship, to denote that, although they are super-human, yet they are inferior to God and are His creatures. Their worship, we are told, is ceaseless ('they rest not day and night saying: 'Holy, Holy, Holy'); and it is reverent (covering their face and hands and feet with their wings).

(ii) MAN AND THE ANGELS

We have already seen how it was the Archangel Gabriel who conveyed to the Holy Mother the tidings of the birth of her Divine Son. We are told by our Lord that angels rejoice in heaven over the conversion of one sinner on earth, and that, as regards every child, as the text says, he has an angel which always beholds the face of the Father in heaven. Such is their interest in human affairs, that Satan quoted, and Jesus apparently accepted as true, that angels protect God's servants from bodily harm: 'In their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone'. In the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, it was an angel which carried Lazarus into Abraham's bosom. Angels are also to have their share in our Lord's Return; they will be responsible for separating the wheat from the tares. The poet Spenser has well sung this about the Angels:

How oft do they their silver bowers leave
And come to succour us who succour need;
How oft do they with golden pinions cleave
The fluttering skies like flying pursuivant
Among our friends to aid us militant.

For us they fight, they watch and duly ward,
 And light squadrons round about us plant,
 And all for love, and nothing for reward.
 Oh ! why should Heavenly God to man have such
 regard ?

What, then, shall we believe about angels ? In the first place, religion is not a mere 'discordant duet between God and the soul in a spiritual vacuum carefully sterilized of all other spiritual beings,' for there are also angels. But there are *good* angels, and there are *bad* angels. Just as we must not deprive ourselves of the ministry of the good angels on our side, so we must also beware of the bad angels, the evil spirits, spirits which hover around us unknown to us, who are Satan's agents and, therefore, man's foes, just as the good angels are God's messengers and, therefore, man's friends, and thus also Satan's foes.

But it is not enough to believe that angels *exist*; they *live* and move and serve. We must give them our reverence, although not our adoration, and we must try to imitate them in their worship of and obedience to God and in their ministry to Man ; and last of all, we must thank God for them, placing ourselves within the sphere of their guardianship. Let us pray, in the words of the Collect for the Feast of St Michael and all Angels :

Mercifully grant, that as thy holy Angels always do thee service in heaven, so by thy appointment they may succour and defend us on earth.

*Grant, Lord, that when around th' expiring world
 Our seraph guardians wait,
 While on her death-bed, ere to ruin hurl'd,
 She owns Thee, all too late,
 They to their charge may turn, and thankful see
 Thy mark upon us still ;
 Then all together rise, and reign with Thee,
 And all their holy joy o'er contrite hearts fulfil !*

(OCTOBER 18)

HEALTH OF SOUL AND BODY

He sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.
(St Luke 9:2)

Livingstone, the famous missionary and explorer, was fond of saying that God the Father had an only Son, and that He became a Missionary Doctor. Of the great missionary to the Africans it may be truly said, that his whole strenuous life in the heart of that vast continent was one unceasing commentary on the favourite saying of his just quoted, for he conceived his life to consist both of preaching the Kingdom of God and of healing the sick—in body and mind.

THE CONVERSION OF 'DR LUKE'

On October 18, the Christian Church throughout the world commemorates, with pride and with gratitude to God, her greatest missionary doctor, St Luke, Apostle and Evangelist. Now Luke was a young physician practising somewhere perhaps in what is now northern Greece, in one of the densely populated cities of the Roman Empire ; this must have been about twenty years after the crucifixion of our Lord, when as yet the New Testament Scriptures had not seen the light of day. Luke was then a pagan—incidentally, the solitary ex-pagan amongst the Evangelists—and as a pagan physician, he would worship Aesculapius, the god of health, laying at his altar offerings of money, and sacrifices of oxen, sheep and goats, in the manner prescribed by pagan religious custom. His profession took him into different parts of the country, bringing him into intimate contact with all sorts and conditions of men, with rich and poor, with high and low, with learned and unlearned ; and, in the course of his duties, he had occasion to see many a different point of view, many a conflicting

outlook on life, and to hear many a life-story filled with all the poignancy of human sorrow and struggle, of mortal ills and tragedies. But as one who was not only educated, but also of a thoughtful disposition (the two do not always go together !), his mind early became filled with misgivings about a religion whose deities seemed so much less moral than many of their human worshippers ; his conscience revolted at the fantastic stories related of the gods and goddesses.

But just at that time, when his soul was in travail, torn by doubts and difficulties, between natural desires and other-worldly longings, between the Beast and the Angel in man—just then, there appeared on the scene another seeker after Truth—one who had travelled far and wide in the service of Truth, having already, to his infinite relief, discovered it in Him who had proclaimed Himself the Way, the Truth and the Life. That must have been a memorable occasion—that first meeting between the young pagan scholar, physician and man of the world, Luke, and the fiery ex-Pharisee and now Christian Apostle, Paul.

Paul's words, and perhaps not least his own life-story, sank deep into the receptive soul of Luke. ' Love your enemies. Do good to them that hate you. Bless them that curse you. As ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them. Be merciful.—Seek ye not what ye shall eat and what ye shall drink, neither be ye anxious. Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.—God is love.—Come unto me all ye that travail and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you.—Thy sins are forgiven thee. Go in peace.' And not merely what Jesus said or did, but what He was and continued to be.

And when Paul went on to relate the thrilling miracles of bodily and mental healing performed by Jesus of Nazareth, his words to Luke seemed to bear on them the unmistakable stamp of sincerity and of truth. Deep

answered unto deep. At long last Luke gave in, falling in love with the Highest when he saw it. He became an ardent disciple of Christ, determined henceforth to dedicate all his arts of healing and of writing to the service and the glory of his new-found Saviour and Lord. Thus began the Christian career of him who later became famous as the 'Beloved Physician', 'whose praise is in the Gospel'. Already a considerable traveller, Luke now accompanied his *guru*, Paul, in his far-flung missionary journeys, supplementing the latter's work—Paul preaching and Luke healing; of these unique experiences, he has, as we know, left us a record in what is called the *Acts of the Apostles*. And when at last his worn-out master, after a life of incredible toil and suffering, patiently and valiantly borne, was condemned to death by a half-mad Emperor, it was Luke, who, risking his own safety and good name, boldly made his way into the Imperial 'detention house', and comforted the aged Apostle, as he lay in prison deserted by all but a faithful few, facing the prospect of death every moment. 'Only Luke is with me.' Truly, a 'Beloved Physician' !

RELIGION *versus* SCIENCE

There was a time when Religion and Science looked upon each other as rivals, when ministers of religion were jealous of the hold the physician had over the minds of so many of their flock, when doctors regarded the clergy—not always without justification—as well-meaning, perhaps, but rather irrelevant members of society. That was when man's person was neatly pigeon-holed into mind, body and spirit; when it was thought practicable and right to attend to any one of these to the neglect of the others. Small wonder, then, that those who were able to produce 'tangible' results considered themselves, and were looked up to by others, as superior to those who could not; that those whose work could not be measured by precise calculations suffered from a certain inferiority complex. Thus the physician and the priest wrangled

over man to the detriment of man's legitimate integration as a fully-developed personality. In this connexion, I cannot resist quoting a poem of the late Studdert-Kennedy called 'The Psychologist', pointing out the utter futility of the Scientist and the Man of Religion throwing stones at each other.

THE PSYCHOLOGIST

He takes the saint to pieces,
And labels all the parts ;
He tabulates the secrets
Of loyal, loving hearts.

He probes their selfish passion,
And shows exactly why
The martyr goes out singing,
To suffer and to die.

The Beatific Vision
That brings them to their knees,
He smilingly reduces
To infant phantasies.

The Freudian Unconscious
Quite easily explains
The splendour of their sorrows,
The pageant of their pains.

The manifold temptations,
Wherewith the flesh can vex
The saintly soul, are samples
Of Oedipus Complex.

The subtle sex perversion
His eagle glance can tell,
That makes their joyous heaven
The horror of their hell.

His reasoning is perfect,
His proofs are plain as paint ;
He has but one small weakness—
He cannot make a saint.

RELIGION *and* SCIENCE

But as I have tried to point out, Science and Religion, the Priest and the Physician, are not natural enemies ; they are meant to be friends and fellow-workers, who need each other vitally at every step. For many bodily ills, needless to say, are caused by a failure on the part of the individual to recognise his spiritual nature ; and conversely, not a few spiritual maladies, besetting sins, ferocious lusts, uncontrollable tempers, inveterate vices—these often take their origin from physical defects and diseases. For a man, therefore, to be entirely healthy and happy, he needs to effect a proper adjustment, first, to his material environment which may be described as *inferior* to him ; secondly, to his human environment, which is *equal* to him ; and thirdly, to his divine environment, which is *superior* to him. Neither the clergy, therefore, nor the medical profession are in a position to accomplish their task in a thoroughly effective manner, unless they constantly bear in mind, not only the material side, the visible aspect, the temporal needs, but also the spiritual side, the invisible aspect, the eternal needs, of man's complex nature.

‘ GIVE US GOD ! ’

A few years ago, when the present writer had the privilege of ministering to a rural congregation, in a place where medical help even of the most rudimentary kind was non-existent, he used to deplore time and again his lack of medical knowledge, and to feel how inadequate must have been his pastoral efforts, without a corresponding capacity on his part to deal as well with the bodily complaints of his flock. And no doubt, amongst doctors and nurses, there must be not a few who every now and then feel a

similar inadequacy in their own work, as they realise the great difficulty of probing the causes, often deeply hidden in the innermost recesses of a man's spiritual being, of many physical complaints and afflictions generally regarded as incurable. At such times, doubtless, they feel as helpless as once did George Borrow who, in his book *Wild Wales*, records a curious adventure which befell him near Chester in England. He came across some gipsies who insisted on taking him for a minister and talking to him about their souls. At the end of their conversation, they said : ' O sir, give us comfort in some shape or other, either as priest or minister. Give us God ! Give us God ! ' The rest of the story is soon told in Borrow's own words : " I am neither priest nor minister," said I, " and can only say : Lord have mercy upon you ! " Then getting up, I flung the children some money, and departed. " We do not want your money, sir," screamed the woman after me ; " We have plenty of money. Give us God. Give us God." Give us God ! *Give us God !*

' PREACH AND HEAL '

That is the cry, often inarticulate perhaps, but nevertheless real, sometimes deliberately suppressed, but always refusing to be suppressed for long, of many a human soul groping blindly in its quest for peace and joy. Give us God ! For God, we must never forget, even for a moment, is the Creator and Sustainer of life in its entirety, of souls no less than of bodies ; and we cannot with impunity leave Him out of account in either sphere. That is why our Lord commissioned His Apostles, when sending them forth into the world, even as He commissions every one of his followers today, both ' to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick '—in body and mind. May we, ever mindful of this sacred commission, so live in His presence as to remember that those who come in our way in our daily life are not just ' common people ', not merely ' the masses ', or ' cases ', but individual sons and daughters of God who have mortal bodies but immortal souls, human beings

created like ourselves in the divine image, brothers and sisters for whom also Christ died, fellow-sinners with ourselves, to Whom He has sent us 'to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick'.

*But if there be, who follows Paul
As Paul his Lord, in life and death,
Where'er an aching heart may call,
Ready to speed and take no breath ;*

*Whose joy is, to the wandering sheep
To tell of the great Shepherd's Love ;
To learn of mourners while they weep
The music that makes mirth above ;*

*Who makes the Saviour all his theme,
The Gospel all his pride and praise—
Approach : for thou canst feel the gleam
That round the martyr's death-bed plays ;*

*Thou hast an ear for angels' songs,
A breath the Gospel trump to fill,
And taught by thee the Church prolongs
Her hymns of high thanksgiving still.*

16. SAINT SIMON AND SAINT JUDE, APOSTLES

(OCTOBER 28)

FAITHFULNESS IN LIFE AND DEATH

Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.
(Rev. 2:10)

We know very little about Simon and Jude beyond the *fact* that they were both Apostles, and the *probability* that one was older than the other and that they both died for the Faith.

APOSTLES

Firstly, then, they were both Apostles. The Greek word 'Apostle' and the Latin word 'Missionary' both mean the same thing, namely, one who is sent—sent from God to man, to do God's work amongst men, in God's presence. We would do well to remember this, not least when we think of the Christian Ministry, whether of Bishops, Presbyters, or Deacons. They are men, sent from God to man, to do God's work amongst men, in God's presence. They are primarily God's servants, and only secondarily man's servants, for the sake of God—ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God; they are only our servants because we are God's People. But in a wider sense, not only ministers, but all of us, are indeed Apostles and Missionaries, sent from God to man, to do God's work amongst men, in God's presence.

Let us therefore remember, as we rise every morning from our beds, that we rise as Christ's Apostles, that we are every morning sent forth into the world as His Missionaries to men, to be in fact, 'other Christs'; that we represent Him in our home to our servants, in our school or college to our fellow-students, in our offices to our colleagues, and to those who call on us, and to all and sundry on our way to and from our places of work and elsewhere. How much more careful we should be, how

entirely transfigured every activity of ours would be, did we but remember our vocation — to be Apostles and Missionaries, just as much as Simon and Jude were! As Apostles, then, let us not fail to be faithful unto death, and thus to be worthy of the crown of life.

MARTYRS

Simon and Jude were also martyrs. Nowadays we associate the word 'martyr' with the shedding of blood, but that is not its primary or essential meaning. The Greek word 'martyr' merely means witness—whether by life or by death, just as 'saint' in the New Testament merely means Christian, although much more than this usually means in common parlance. Simon and Jude of course, were martyrs, both by their life and by their death; they were faithful unto death, and they obtained the crown of life. Now those who die on the battlefield are said to have made the 'supreme sacrifice', and to them are often applied our Lord's words: 'Greater love hath no *man* than this that a man lay down his life for his *friends*'. (In passing, let us note two words in this verse 'man' (not God), and 'friends' (not enemies).

Some of us also are familiar with the Latin saying: '*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*': 'Sweet and honourable it is to die for one's fatherland'. But while one does not wish to belittle such heroism, it is well to bear two facts in mind in regard to it. For one thing, there is an element of compulsion in connection with most such deaths, while a martyr's death is voluntary and free. Besides, a patriot is applauded by his admiring fellow-countrymen, who form the majority, whereas in the eyes of the world a martyr dies ignominiously, at the hands of his enemies, his friends often forming a despised minority. It will thus be seen that a martyr's sacrifice calls for courage of a higher order. The faithfulness of each is of a different order—of the patriot and of the martyr,—and while the former, in a sense, receives his crown in this world, the latter receives it hereafter.

COURAGE

The most outstanding characteristic, therefore, of a martyr is courage—courage to lose even life itself for the sake of the cause espoused. In the early years of the Christian era in the city of Rome, hundreds of citizens, from the Emperor downwards, constantly delighted to witness the so-called gladiatorial contests between men and men, and between men and beasts. The men were either slaves, convicts, professional gladiators, or Christians ; sometimes there would be women also ; the wild beasts, mostly lions, were kept in starvation for two or three days, so as to render them the more ferocious. On the appointed day, the populace of the ‘Eternal City’ turned up in its thousands to watch human beings shedding their blood while hacking each other to pieces, or human beings being horribly slaughtered or cruelly mangled by wild beasts. Sermons, speeches, writings, prayers, intercessions from Christians and from pagan philosophers, were of no avail ; the Christian Church itself looked on helplessly, until, one day, the call to witness against this inhuman practice, came to the holy Christian monk Telemachus. As the combatants were about to be locked in mortal strife, he suddenly jumped into the pit, and, in an endeavour to separate them and to protest against this savage barbarity, was cut down immediately, amidst the execrations of the infuriated rabble. But the sacrifice was not in vain ; the witness told. There were not a few in the audience who could not forget the gruesome scene ; their consciences were touched ; they became uneasy in mind ; or rather the grace of God worked, and in due course, the gladiatorial contests were finally abandoned, having in the meantime lost much of their appeal. The supreme courage of the holy monk, as he voluntarily jumped into certain disaster and death, ultimately triumphed. Such was also the courage of Simon and Jude and a host of other martyrs in Christian History through the ages, up to the present day. They were indeed faithful unto death, and obtained the crown of life.

THE SECRET OF COURAGE

But what was the secret of this almost incredible courage, of this almost incomprehensible sacrifice? It could not just be belief in a cause, because we know how often belief does not stand the stress of circumstances. It was a belief, but it was more than a belief; it was faith; it was the unshakeable awareness of the ever-abiding presence of their Lord, Master and Comrade, even in the midst of suffering and martyrdom. That *was* why—that *is* why—the death of a Christian saint is always so utterly different from the death of any other person.

Here is an extract about the Palestinian Martyrs from the pages of the ecclesiastical historian Eusebius :

‘In A.D. 308, when the overflow from the Egyptian mines was drafted to those of Palestine, every Christian man, woman and child was, on passing through Caesarea, not only hamstrung, but blinded in one eye—the right eye pierced by a dagger, and the cavity cauterised with red-hot irons. At Phaeonos, in 309, these halt and half-blind convicts founded a Church, and improvised oratories at the mouth of the pits, where they could offer the Holy Sacrifice. The authorities heard of it from their spies; dispersed the Christians; beheaded the aged, burnt alive two bishops, a priest, and a layman.’

But the martyrs had Jesus with them, as certainly as did Simon and Jude; they were faithful even unto death, and they now wear the crown of glory.

Let us not however suppose that all this is ancient history, that the martyr spirit is dead in the Indian Church. The touch of Christ has still its ancient power; no word from Him can fruitless fall. Listen to this story of living martyrdom in a village in South India related by Bishop Newbigin in his book, *A South India Diary* :

‘There is a mass movement among the leather workers’ community in this area, and hundreds have either been baptized or placed under instruction for baptism. They

belong to the lowest social stratum of the villages, and their conversion has been bitterly resented by the Hindu landowners. (It is very hard for the beneficiaries of an ancient social system to endure such revolutionary changes!) 'They that have turned the world upside down have come here also.' These converted leather workers, forsooth, talk about having a school, consort with people much above their station, and altogether behave as if they thought they were God's own children! Moreover, and this is the worst offence, they refuse any longer to smear their foreheads with the sacred ash of Siva. . . . The Christians have been denied access to wells, and have been refused their customary employment. In order to break their resistance, the unprecedented step has been taken of bringing from another village a whole group of Hindu leather workers with their families, and settling them in the village to do the work formerly done by the local leather workers. They have been crushed lower and lower by hunger and despair. Dire threats have been issued as to what will happen if they do not renounce their Christianity by a certain day—a day which is always postponed when it is seen that there is no weakening.

At one moment there was a very serious weakening. Fourteen of the Christian men, driven to dull despair by hunger and unemployment, decided to submit. 'What is the good of it? What's the good of all this misery for the sake of a little bit of ash? Come on, we'll go and put it on.' They went in a body to the Hindu temple, telling the priest of their intention. Two crowds were watching. On one side, between the temple and the outcaste quarters, the Christians who had learned of the defection stood at a distance and watched. On the other side stood the Hindus. The fourteen men stood in a line in front of the temple. The priest went into the dark inner chamber of the temple and came out with the sacred ash to be given to each man. But something had happened in those men's minds. Instead of

holding out their hands to receive it, they simply stood with arms folded. In the stupor of hunger and despair, they had agreed to do this thing, but when it came to the moment, they could not deny their Christ. There was a moment of silence, while they stood on the very brink of apostasy. Then one after another spoke : ' Do what you will ; we cannot do this . ' Together they turned and walked back towards their fellow-Christians. In a moment they were joined by their brethren, and the whole company marched back to the squalid slum which was Christ's outpost in that village, and the priest of Kali stood alone before the temple with the sacred ash still in his hand.'

IN INDIA TODAY

Today in India, is it too much to say that what we Christians individually, what the Christian Church corporately, need most is the spirit of the Martyrs—the courage to witness boldly, by life and, if need arise, by death—courage, not to be ashamed to be in a minority, not to be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, courage to speak and act as Christians at all times, that courage which comes of devotion to a Cause, that courage which comes even more from devotion to a Person, who lives for ever in the hearts of His servants, enabling them to be faithful unto death, and to win the crown of life.

' Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.'

*The Son of God goes forth to war,
A kingly crown to gain ;
His blood-red banner streams afar !
Who follows in His train ?*

*Who best can drink his cup of woe,
Triumphant over pain,
Who patient bears his cross below,
He follows in His train.*

*They met the tyrant's brandish'd steel,
 The lion's gory mane,
 They bowed their necks, the death to feel ;
 Who follows in their train ?*

*O may we tread the sacred road
 That saints and holy Martyrs trod ;
 Wage to the end the glorious strife,
 And win, like them, a crown of life !*

17. ALL SAINTS

(NOVEMBER 1)

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

I believe in the holy Catholic Church, the Communion of saints.
 (Apostles' Creed)

There is an amusing fable that, when Adam first found himself in the Garden of Eden as 'monarch of all he surveyed,' it was a warm summer's day, and he went for a swim in the river. The fishes in the river had, of course, never before set eyes on a human being, so they flocked round him in shoals, and presently Adam—so the story goes—heard peals of laughter, and overheard the fishes pointing to him and remarking to one another in surprise that here was a strange animal, with a body, but no head ! Adam, however, continued to keep his head above water, where it could not be seen, and to let the fishes think what they liked about him.

THE CHURCH ABOVE

Many of us Christians today are perhaps somewhat like those silly fishes of the fable. Too often, when we speak of the Church—even of the Church Universal—we have in mind only our own congregation or denomin-

ation, the Church below, the Church Militant, the Visible Church which, after all, is only a part of the whole Catholic Church; rarely, if ever, are we sufficiently alive to the oneness with us of the Church above, that is, the Church Triumphant, the Church of the spirits of just men made perfect, or of the Church Expectant, the Church of the spirits of just men being made perfect, in the immediate presence of their Head and ours. This is because many of us do not adequately realise the significance of the clause in the Creed: 'I believe in the Communion of saints,' which, as you observe, follows immediately after 'I believe in the holy Catholic Church'.

THE CHURCH IS THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

Now it is important to note that the clause relating to the Communion of saints is not entirely separate from, but is really an expansion of, its predecessor, and may be paraphrased thus: 'I believe in the holy Catholic Church, *which is* the Communion of saints', because it is in the Church as a whole that we are offered the means of grace whereby we may attain Christian sanctity. The word 'Communion' means 'Fellowship,' a partnership, a sharing together, a partaking of God's richest gifts with all His children.

And by 'saints' the New Testament means not only the canonized heroes of our Faith, the spiritual geniuses to whose names we reverently prefix the title 'Saint', but, in fact, all Christians, however insignificant in the world's eyes, all faithful members of the Church, living and departed. We are *all* saints, because we are all destined for holiness; we all have a vocation to sanctity, we are all potentially, although not actually, saints. For saintship does not mean perfection, but consecration; not sinlessness, but dedication, is the title to sainthood. It is in this sense that St Paul addresses his converts and fellow-Christians as the saints which are at Philippi, at Rome, or at Corinth; if he were here today, he would address us also as saints.

UNITY AND CONTINUITY IN CHRIST

The doctrine of the Communion of saints is based on the unity and the continuity in Christ of all those who acknowledge Him as their Master and Redeemer ; it emphasizes the truth that all the redeemed, whether departed or living, are alike in one fellowship, a fellowship which even death itself does not interrupt and cannot sever. In other words, just as you and I are, or ought to be, in fellowship with one another, and (I hope) with all those who call on the name of the Lord Jesus all over the world, so we are all of us in fellowship with those who have gone before us. All Christians, whether present or absent, in the body or out of the body, are brothers and sisters, fellow-members of one great family, united in Christ, as children of one heavenly Father.

THE LITURGY AND THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

Now there are many charges that may legitimately be levelled against the older Churches, but, so far as their liturgies are concerned, they cannot justly be accused of failing to give prominence to the truth of the Communion of saints. For, if you turn to their Service books, you will find particularly the Communion service simply teeming with references to those who are no longer materially accessible to us. Take, for instance, the end of the Prayer for the Church Militant in the Anglican Prayer Book, where we thank God 'for all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear,' and pray for 'grace to follow their good examples'. Do not these words call up a host of inspiring memories ? Do we not think of all the heroes of the past, of whose great deeds and greater lives we have heard, Bede and Wesley in England, Ambrose, Augustine and Luther in Europe, Thomas, Francis Xavier and Sadhu Sundar Singh in India ; and do we not think, with even tenderer thoughts, of our own dear ones who have passed on ? They were not all 'perfect,' but they have been redeemed and they have washed their robes white in the

Blood of the Lamb. They have been made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. They are presented faultless before the Presence of the Eternal. And now they stand—a cloud of witnesses—to watch and to encourage us who have succeeded them on earth.

Or again, turn to the great outburst of praise which follows the Absolution (also in the *Book of Common Prayer*), where the veil that hides the unseen is almost pierced, and we almost seem to hear echoes of spirit voices and the rustling of angel wings : ‘ With angels and arch-angels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious name.’ He or she must indeed be an unimaginative man or woman who is not lifted far above the narrow limits of his dull workaday life, before whom there does not open out a vision of the countless host of heaven. As the Epistle to the Hebrews puts it : ‘ Ye are come . . . unto the city of the living God, . . . and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.’

PRAYERS FOR AND BY THE DEAD

It is partly because men have not yet understood what a wealth of experience there is in store for them in the mysterious fellowship known as the Communion of saints, that they turn to strange cults and creeds, and look for *material communication* rather than for *spiritual communion* with the departed. It is, of course, natural that men, in the face of death, under the stress and strain of bereavement, should long for knowledge of those whom they no longer see, but whom nevertheless they love, and in whom they continue to be profoundly interested. At such times, and indeed at other times as well, we should perhaps definitely encourage the ancient and intensely human, and, we believe, not unscriptural practice of prayers for the dead ; we should also point to the benefits that are bound to accrue to us from the prayers of the saints, one of whose functions, surely, is intercession. One cannot help re-

calling to mind the tender and familiar words that Tennyson puts into the mouth of the dying King Arthur, as he bids farewell to his only surviving knight, Sir Bedivere :

And answer made King Arthur breathing hard :
' My end draws nigh, but thou,
If thou should'st never see my face again,
Pray for my soul.
More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of.'

THE LIVING DEAD

And about the Christian Dead, St John writes : ' I beheld, and lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb.' And that multitude is not a distant, unapproachable company, but they are our friends, our comrades, sympathetic witnesses of our conflict.

O blest communion, fellowship divine !
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine !
Yet all are one in Thee, for all are Thine.

And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,
Steals on the air the distant triumph song,
And hearts are brave again, and arms are strong.

And this ' blest communion,' this ' fellowship divine,' of just men made perfect, is with us now ; they are like spectators in a football match, who do not join in the game, who cannot applaud audibly, but who, nevertheless, watch us in our struggles and pray for us in our temptations, who *can* inspire us when we are depressed, and encourage us when we feel inclined to give up, who say to us every minute : ' Play up, play up, and play the game.'

Let saints on earth in concert sing
With those whose work is done ;
For all the servants of our King
In earth and heaven are one.

One family, we dwell in Him,
One Church, above, beneath ;
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death.

‘ Let us also, therefore, seeing that we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith ’—until we pass on to join the saints on high for ever, and see the King in His glory, in that celestial country, from which there is no return.

‘ I believe in the holy Catholic Church, the Communion of saints.’

*He wants not friends that hath Thy love,
And may converse and walk with Thee,
And with Thy saints here and above,
With whom for ever I must be.*

*In the communion of the saints
Is wisdom, safety and delight ;
And, when my heart declines and faints,
It's raised by their heat and light !*

(NOVEMBER 30)

' CALLED FROM ' AND ' CALLED TO '

I will make you fishers of men. (St Matthew 4:19)

The Feast of St Andrew, which falls on November 30th, gives a start, as it were, to the Christian Year, as the season of Advent begins almost simultaneously. This is but fitting, because St Andrew was the first Missionary.

(i) ' CALLED FROM '

The call of St Andrew to be an Apostle of our Lord was no sudden one, for he had been prepared, unknown to himself. As a disciple of St John the Baptist, who realised that he himself was but a forerunner and a herald, Andrew had been duly prepared for Apostleship in the New Dispensation. Besides this special preparation, there was his general preparation as a devout Jew, the main topic of whose hope was always the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of His Kingdom. And not least, it was during the performance of his daily duties that the call came to him. He had thus allowed himself to be prepared, and he was prepared ; and therefore, when the call came, the response did not lag behind. To us also the call comes from time to time, but often it is not heeded because we have not allowed ourselves to be prepared, and therefore we are not prepared. Unless we are faithful in a little, we shall not be entrusted with much. St Andrew, then, was called while he was conscientiously occupied with his day-to-day work.

(ii) CALLED TO BE A FISHER OF MEN

Our Lord and His Apostles have been compared both to shepherds and to fishers because, like shepherds, they catch with a crook, and like fishers, they catch with a hook. Sometimes the catching is not with a hook, but with

a net ; so a fisher may catch fish singly or in groups. So Christianity attracts men one by one, or sometimes in mass movements. We cannot lay down blue-prints for the operation of the Holy Spirit. St Andrew, a fisherman by profession, was called to be a fisher of men. The vernacular translation is happier because it uses the same word 'catchers of fish' and 'catchers of men'. Every Christian, then, is called to be a fisher of men, either through his personal contacts, or through mass contacts. Dr Laubach's famous slogan is : 'Each one, teach one' ; the Christian's might well be : 'Each one, catch one'. The following story of a British farmer who obeyed the call to be a fisher of men by proxy, as it were, is of interest. It relates to a

'Missionary Hen which Farmer Tidman set aside as his contribution to the mission work of the Church. All the eggs she laid were marked, and the proceeds of their sale were put into the missionary box. The hen immensely enjoyed her important position, and mingled with the other fowls—'the lesser breeds without the law'—with the air of a district visitor. But after a time she died, and this epitaph was inscribed on her tombstone :

Here lies Tidman's Missionary Hen.

Her contribution two pound ten.

Although she's dead, her work goes on,

For she left seven daughters and one son

To carry on the work that she begun.'

St Andrew was a fisher of men, and so should we be.

(iii) CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME

Charity, it has been said, begins at home, although it does not end there ; but it certainly must begin at home. A charity that functioned abroad but was ineffective at home, would be little short of hypocrisy. St Andrew's missionary zeal first expressed itself in the winning over of his brother Peter, and bringing him to the feet of Jesus.

Now nothing is so difficult, and yet in a sense nothing ought to be so easy, as to bring our relatives to the saving knowledge of our Saviour. If, to our physical kinship, there is also added the tie of spiritual kinship, the result, in terms of life-changing, can be well-nigh overwhelming. Our Lord's Forerunner, for instance, was also His cousin. From the way in which our Lord was prepared to call everyone His brother, provided he did God's will, it is clear that He did not set much store by physical ties alone, but in the case of the Beloved Disciple—also possibly a cousin of our Lord—the spiritual bond that was further established resulted in perhaps the most remarkable friendship in the history of the world. It is often said—and rightly—that, if we really loved our Lord, we should long for our relatives and friends to come to a knowledge of Him; it is no less true that if we really loved our relatives and friends, we should long for them to know Him who is dearer than life itself. This is the test of the genuineness and depth of our love. Thirdly, then, the call to Christians to be fishers of men must first be answered in one's domestic circle.

(iv) CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME, BUT . . .

One unmistakable difference between a dead Christian and a live Christian, between a nominal Christian and a genuine Christian, is that the former is content with the idea of worshipping Christ in isolation, whereas the latter is satisfied with nothing less than that the whole world should be saved. In this sense, no Christian congregation can be merely 'Congregationalist'; it must be 'ecumenical' in its outlook. A moment's thought would show how utterly absurd and anti-Christian it is to think of Christianity in terms of a congregation or a 'community' alone, because such a mentality would have made impossible the very local congregation or community to which a particular Christian belongs. Personal work, prayer, financial support and intelligent interest in the missionary work of the Church abroad are not just a Christian's luxuries but

his necessities, indeed the very breath of his nostrils. Here is another story of how a simple countrywoman did her bit for the propagation of the Gospel overseas :—

‘ On one of my missions in the country I was entertained by a good lady, who made money by breeding and selling ducks. She told me that this work was being ruined by rats, who killed the ducks and destroyed their eggs. After taking every wise precaution to rid herself from this curse of rats, she promised God that, if her ducks were protected, she would dedicate the best one to Mission work, and send all the money produced by its eggs and sale to the Society of the Sacred Mission at Kelham. I strongly approved of this, but was constrained to ask where the Community of the Resurrection and its Missions came in ; and without robbing Kelham of its ‘ Dedicated Ducks,’ couldn’t she help our work by setting aside a few ‘ Consecrated Chicks ’ for our work ? This she promptly did, and our ‘ Consecrated Chicks ’ worked hard, and made a useful contribution to our mission work !’

Fourthly, then, in the words of John Wesley, ‘ The whole world, is my parish ’.

(i) We are called to be fishers of men even in the midst of our daily labours ; (ii) We are called to be fishers of men ‘ by hook or by crook ’ ; (iii) We are called to be fishers of men, not only at home, but also abroad.

‘ I will make you fishers of men.’

*First seek thy Saviour out, and dwell
Beneath the shadow of His roof,
Till thou have scann’d His features well,
And known Him for the Christ by proof ;*

*Then, potent with the spell of Heaven,
Go, and thine erring brother gain,
Entice him home to be forgiven,
Till he, too, see his Saviour plain.*

(DECEMBER 21)

THROUGH DOUBT TO DEVOTION

*Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails . . .
I will not believe.* (St. John 20:25)

Nicknames and labels are often notoriously misleading, because they emphasize only one aspect at a time and conceal others ; thus, to call St Thomas 'doubting Thomas' is to forget that the Apostle was pre-eminently 'loyal Thomas'.

DOUBTING THOMAS

The Apostle was certainly a doubter. But doubt, like temptation, is no sin by itself. We are, each one of us, differently constituted, and while faith comes easily to some, like the man who accidentally hit upon a buried treasure while ploughing a field, it may be a laborious process in the case of many others, like the merchant who went far and wide in search of goodly pearls. Let us not, therefore, be alarmed or discouraged, if, for instance, we cannot comprehend the whole of our Faith all at once, if there should be some parts of the Creed which are still enigmas to us after several years of Christian life and experience. After all, this great Apostle and Martyr himself began as a doubter. There is room in the Christian fold for different temperaments, for a St Peter, sanguine, hopeful, self-confident, impulsive ; and equally for a St Thomas, cautious, depressed, nursing his grief, but loyal and devoted to our Lord.

DOUBT AS THE RESULT OF SIN

But while doubt is not necessarily sinful by itself, it may easily be either the result of sin, or the cause of sin. It may be the *result* of sin, if we have not been true to such

light as we have seen, if we have not taken the trouble to practise the ideals in which we believe at present ; if through our indifference to truth, our continued immorality, our constant impurity, our wilful wickedness, or our intellectual pride, we have consequently become alienated from God and His saints, and have gradually lost even that little faith with which we began ; and if, therefore, we are now prevented by our deliberately sinful life from getting rid of our doubts. Doubt, then, may result, if we are not being honest with ourselves, but are doing things that we know to be wrong.

DOUBT AS THE CAUSE OF SIN

Or, on the other hand, doubt may be the *cause* of sin. It may lead to sin, if we are not sufficiently concerned about the truth so as to pursue it relentlessly, whatever the cost ; if we are not sincerely anxious to arrive at a decision ; if, on the contrary, we are quite content to remain suspended, as it were, in a perpetual state of doubt. In other words, do I care about it at all ? Do I genuinely feel that it *does* matter what I believe, and what I do ? Or, am I like jesting Pilate, who asked ‘ What is truth ? ’ and would not wait for an answer, and in the end betrayed the Saviour of mankind ? Doubt, then, may lead to sin, if it is indefinitely maintained, without any consciousness of tension, without any struggle to find the truth, to accept it and to follow it, regardless of consequences. Sin may lead to doubt ; it may lead on from doubt.

There is a true story of a military officer, who had been living an impure life, and went round to the chaplain to argue about religion with him. During their talk the officer said, ‘ Religion is all very well, but you must admit there are difficulties—about the miracles, for instance ’. The chaplain knew the man, his habits and his besetting sin, and, quietly looking him in the face, answered, ‘ Yes, there are some things, I’ll admit, in the Bible that are not very plain, but the seventh commandment is very plain ’. The thrust went home !

ST THOMAS' DOUBT NOT THE RESULT OF SIN

In the case of the Apostle, doubt was not the *result* of sin ; it was not the consequence of evil living. He doubted and his faith wavered, not because his life was questionable ; on the contrary, it was his very zeal for the Kingdom of God, as we may well believe, that made him question the fact of the Resurrection, like the Baptist, who, languishing in prison and seeing his work abruptly terminated, as it seemed, by the forces of evil, was assaulted by doubts as to the Messiahship of Jesus, and asked : ' Art thou He that should come, or look we for another ? '

ST THOMAS' DOUBT NOT THE CAUSE OF SIN

Nor in the case of St Thomas was doubt the *cause* of sin. For he was not content to remain in a state of doubt ; he was desperately eager to find the truth ; he sought it, and found it, perplexity giving place to joyful certainty. And how did he arrive at this state of certainty ? By doing the will of God, by dint of loyalty to his Master, even before he knew him as the Son of God, before ever Jesus stood revealed before him, as ' My Lord and my God '. There is something fine about Thomas' loyalty to Jesus in the days of the latter's unpopularity, as there is about the loyalty of Ittai the Hittite towards King David. David had fallen on evil times ; his favourite son had raised his hand against him, his own people had deserted him. He urged the faithful old warrior, Ittai the Hittite, to leave him, but Ittai answered : ' As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be.' Ittai was a type of Thomas.

LOYAL THOMAS

As a modern ' St Thomas ' says :

' When our Lord, in His time of great popularity, passed through villages and towns that welcomed His coming, and greeted Him as a leader and healer, it was

not hard, in those days, to walk as His friend. But when the clouds gathered, and it was clear that there was an organised attack on Him brewing in Jerusalem, to say then, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him," was an act of real faith and loyalty. This doubting Thomas is a type of many a loving soul that follows Christ, without seeing clearly who Christ is. Thomas, like Ittai, had the love that could persevere in following love even to the death, but he had not faith in the divinity of his Master. Then there came a day when Love stood before him, still wounded, but transfigured in the glory of the Resurrection'.

And, as we know, doubting Thomas emulated his Master in his martyrdom.

' ONE STEP ENOUGH '

We need not see Jesus perfectly clearly, in order to follow Him. Let me remind you of some words in a well-known carol :

' Sire, the night is darker now,
And the wind blows stronger ;
Fails my heart, I know not how ;
I can go no longer.'

' Mark my footsteps, good my page ;
Tread thou in them boldly ;
Thou shalt find the winter's rage
Freeze thy blood less coldly.'

In his master's steps he trod,
Where the snow lay dinted ;
Heat was in the very sod
Which the Saint had printed.

We may not see the whole of Jesus, but only His foot-prints ; we may not know the whole way but only one step at a time, yet that is enough for the present. It will surely

lead us to the haven where we would be. Even when we are in a state of doubt concerning some things, are we prepared to say with St Thomas : ' Let us also go, that we may die with Him ' ?

GLORY THROUGH WOUNDS

One other fact about St Thomas. Let us remember that the glory of the Resurrection was revealed to him through the wounds of Christ. No Resurrection without the Crucifixion ; no Crown without the Cross. When we expect something spectacular, we shall instead be shown something that is painful and humiliating ; for the way of suffering is the way to glory in the case of the Christian disciple, as it was in the case of his Master. That was certainly so with Thomas, Apostle, loyal friend, doubter and Martyr.

It was the way the Master went ;
Should not the servant tread it still ?

We are today living in a sad, dazed, torn, weary, bewildered world. Many things puzzle us ; our hearts and minds and souls are far from clear about many fundamental things. We were taught certain truths in our innocent childhood, when doubt and temptation were unknown to us, but today our hold over some of those truths seems precarious, and we seem to be in grave danger of slipping away from our moorings. But, as Thomas was steadfastly loyal to Jesus, His leader, even before he knew Him as his Risen Lord, so let us cling to Jesus, as our Leader, and He will surely reveal Himself to us, in time, as our Saviour and King, and as the Saviour of the world and King of the nations.

' CLING TO THE ROCK '

Two children were playing in a railway cutting, and as an approaching train whistled to warn them out of the way, the little sister had the presence of mind to catch up

her little brother of three years old, to place him in a cleft of the rock, and to tell him to cling to the rock. Then she ran to the opposite side, and did the same, crying out all the time, 'Cling close to the rock, Johnnie !' He did, and she did, and they were safe.

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.

Many of us, at our Confirmation, must have sung the following words, but their message has perhaps become dim in the intervening years :

O let me see Thy foot-marks,
And in them plant mine own ;
My hope to follow duly
Is in Thy strength alone ;
O guide me, call me, draw me,
Uphold me to the end ;
And then in Heav'n receive me,
My Saviour and my Friend.

*For all thy rankling doubts so sore,
Love thou thy Saviour still,
Him for thy Lord and God adore,
And ever do His will.
Though vexing thoughts may seem to last,
Let not thy soul be quite o'ercast ;—
Soon will He show thee all His wounds, and say,
' Long have I known thy name—know thou My face alway.'*

20. SAINT STEPHEN, THE FIRST MARTYR

(DECEMBER 26)

‘IN LIFE, IN DEATH, O LORD’

Ye shall be witnesses unto me. (Acts 1:8)

The name ‘Stephen’ in its Greek form means ‘a crown’, and this description is appropriate to Stephen for more than one reason. In the first place, he obtained the crown of martyrdom, a prize greatly coveted by many early Christians. Secondly, he himself is a crown, because his festival, falling as it does on the 26th day of December, crowns, so to speak, the Christmas festival. He received a crown; he is himself a crown.

A martyr, of course, is one who is a witness, primarily by his life, and only secondarily by his death, although the word has since come to be applied solely to those who are martyrs by their deaths. St Stephen was a martyr in both senses.

(i) THE WITNESS OF HIS PRAYER LIFE

His witness may be considered under four heads. In the first place, he witnessed to others by his prayer life. We read that, when the moment came for him to leave this world, he saw the heavens opened, and was in intimate conversation with the crucified and ascended Lord. This was surely an unforgettable witness, and indeed, in the providence of God, it was this witness of St Stephen’s vision and prayer, that was chiefly responsible for the conversion of his distinguished persecutor, Saul. As has been well said: ‘If Stephen had not prayed, Paul would not have preached’. Everyone of us Christians is called upon to bear witness to the world around us by our prayer life by a life lived beneath the open heavens, as it were, in daily and hourly contact with the Master whom we acknowledge. Our witness of vision and prayer *can* be blessed by God so as to be the means of attracting to His lotus feet the men

of the world—both those who are indifferent to the Gospel, and those who are openly hostile to the glorious message of freedom and peace. In the first place, then, St Stephen's witness was the witness of his prayer life.

(ii) THE WITNESS OF HIS CHARITY

Secondly, he witnessed by his love towards others. Considering the short interval that had elapsed between our Lord's bodily departure from this world and the martyrdom of this first martyr, Stephen, it is surely amazing how thoroughly and deeply he had entered into the spirit of his Saviour and was able sincerely to repeat Christ's own prayer of forgiveness from the cross: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do'. St Stephen's witness in the love shown towards his enemies is all the more wonderful when we bear in mind that his enemies had borne false witness against him. Now, of all forms of persecution, injustice and cruelty, false witness is the hardest to bear. We can endure almost anything but manifestly false and malicious charges touching the sincerity of our religion or the purity of our honour. It is only too easy, under such persecution, to become embittered, hard-hearted and generally cynical towards mankind. St Stephen's witness was alike the test and the proof of his witness of vision and prayer. Visions are apt to become hallucinations; prayers are apt to be hypocritical, unless they lead to the forgiveness of our enemies, however unjust and cruel, and even diabolical these may be. Secondly, then, St Stephen's witness was a witness of love and forgiveness towards those who bore him malice.

(iii) WITNESS TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Thirdly, this witness was possible because it was at bottom a witness to the Holy Spirit that was in him, the Paraclete who was the mainspring and the inspiration of his courage. He was a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost; his faith and the presence of the Holy Spirit necessarily gave him courage to face anything in life or in

death. Unlike his accusers, he did not resist the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit therefore opened his eyes and enabled him to see the vision of the crucified, risen and ascended Lord, and to witness with a courage that the Holy Spirit alone can give to the believer. The Holy Spirit, then, is not the exclusive monopoly of a select few who have made special progress in Christian piety, but He is the right, the prerogative, and the privilege of every Christian who has been sealed with the name of Christ. It is partly forgetfulness of this elementary fact on the part of many in the Church, that has given rise to such sects as the Pentecostalists. The Church today is called upon corporately—as a body—and individually, through its members, to bear witness to the Holy Spirit who has been given to them, and to exhibit that utter lack of fear or depression in the face of adversity that is always possible for a Spirit-filled Church and believer.

(iv) WITNESS BY HIS DEATH

Finally, St Stephen, as we have seen, bore witness by his death ; many others since his time, in different climes, in different ages, in different parts of the world, from different ranks of society, have followed in his footsteps for the sake of their convictions. For the Christian religion is not a comfortable religion : the Christian Church can never be a popular institution in the sense of conforming to the standards of the world, or of accepting the values of the world, in which it is placed, but which it is intended to redeem. Thus if the Christian Church is silent when it ought to speak ; if it takes the line of least resistance when it ought to be aggressive ; if it consents to evil instead of speaking out boldly ; if it prefers comfort and security to truth and justice ; at such times, the Christian Church has ceased to be true to its function—which is to bear witness to the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, even to the point of shame and death. It is because Christians often treat religion as an aesthetic luxury or a moral sedative that it is accused of being 'the opium of the masses'. The salt

indeed has lost its flavour and is fit for nothing but to be trodden under the feet of men. The Church today may not be called upon—just yet—to face the fierce persecution that the early Church had to face. But what can be more fatal than persecution is an invitation from the world to the Church to share in its good things, and for the Church complacently to accept that invitation. The individual Christian today may not be called upon to face torture or death, though he must be prepared to face shame, misunderstanding, calumny. But what is not less fatal, is for the Christian to become one with, and one of, the world. St Stephen thus bore witness by his death no less than by his life.

When we consider the fourfold witness of St Stephen—by his prayer life, by his love towards his enemies, by the courage born of the Holy Spirit, and above all, by the great sacrifice he finally made, we are called upon to examine ourselves as to whether we also are faithful witnesses in our own generation and in our sphere, for right and against wrong, not merely for peace, but for righteousness, for Christ, and against the world.

‘Ye shall be witnesses unto me.’

*He sees them all—no other view
Could stamp the Saviour’s likeness true,
Or with His love so deep embue*

Man’s sullen heart and gross—

‘Jesu, do Thou my soul receive :’

‘Jesu, do Thou my foes forgive :’

*He who would learn that prayer, must live
Under the holy Cross.*

(DECEMBER 27)

THE MASTER'S INTERPRETER

These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.
(1 St John 1:4)

The incidence of the Feast of St John the Evangelist in Christmas week, on December 27th, has been partly responsible for the inadequate observance of the Festival and the consequent neglect of the message of this saint. (St John the Evangelist must not, of course, be confused with his illustrious predecessor, St John the Baptist, who was the Forerunner of our Lord.)

Let us first consider the message of the saint under two heads :—(i) his evolution from a 'son of thunder' into the 'beloved disciple'; and (ii) his unique interpretation of the Gospel.

(i) FROM 'SON OF THUNDER' INTO 'BELOVED DISCIPLE'

While he was 'Son of Thunder', two characteristics of the Apostle may be noted :

(a) *His unscrupulousness.* There is no other word to describe his attitude, along with his brother James, in wishing for fire and brimstone to descend on the heads of the churlish Samaritan villagers who had refused to receive our Lord and His disciples. Apparently, in order to make the message of Jesus heard, any means was permissible ! Love was to be evoked by a display of force ! The end justified the means ! Herein he showed an utter lack of insight into the mind of his Master.

This temptation, of course, was nothing new. It was one which our Lord Himself had to face in the wilderness, when He refused to strike terror into the hearts of the spectators by jumping down from the pinnacle of the temple. The most glaring instances in Church History of attempts to use force so as to secure conformity are,

of course, the so-called Crusades and the Inquisition. It would, however, be a mistake to suppose that this is a peculiar temptation of any one section of the Church. Reformed Churches, especially certain powerful groups, have not hesitated to resort to pressure of various kinds, financial not least, in order to secure support for their point of view and to obtain power over society and the State. It is a line of action in spiritual matters which succeeds for a time, but in the long run defeats its own end, thus making the last state worse than the first. It is, in fact, both bad Christianity and ultimately bad policy. No wonder that Jesus called John and his brother *Boanerges*, Sons of Thunder. It was a long while before the fires burning in his breast were quenched, and he learnt the meaning of love, as he lay on the Master's breast, and experienced and communicated true joy.

(b) *His selfishness.* In a former chapter, relating to his brother James, we referred to their essential selfishness, goaded by their mother Salome, in asking for seats of honour on either side of our Lord in His kingdom, thereby failing to realise that Jesus' kingdom was a kingdom of love and service, not of power and domination; and that the way to it was not by assertiveness and 'pushfulness', but through suffering and sacrifice, culminating, if need be, in martyrdom. John's request was most selfish and inconsiderate, and showed no appreciation of the feelings either of the Master, who was in a short while to tread the way of the cross, the *via dolorosa*, or of the other ten disciples, who had equal claim to such a reward. But just as John's unscrupulousness was to give place to gentle love, so his selfishness was to give place to undying devotion to his Master and to his brethren. To use the title of one of Dr Weatherhead's books, *The Transforming Friendship*, it was that devoted friendship which transformed the unscrupulous and selfish *Boanerges* into the Beloved Disciple, so that, in the end, he came to understand his Master's mind more profoundly than any one has done since. He was the 'beloved disciple' because he was

prepared to appropriate his Master's love and let it transform him. In return, our Lord made His love known to him more and more. There was special friendship between the Master and the disciple, but it was not at the cost of universal love on the part of the former. We rejoice in the knowledge that the same 'Transforming Friendship' is still open to us, to transform our unscrupulousness and selfishness into devotion and spiritual insight.

(ii) HIS UNIQUE INTERPRETATION OF THE GOSPEL

Even a cursory reading of St John's Gospel (often called the Fourth Gospel) will show how different it is from the other three Gospels (commonly known as the 'Synoptic' Gospels), which mostly present a common view of our Lord. For St John, in writing his Gospel, is not concerned so much with the consecutive or chronological narrative of the events in our Lord's life, as with their interpretation and the exposition of their hidden meaning. For this purpose he only selects a few events, and his comments and discourses are proportionately much longer. He wrote much later than the other evangelists, after a long life spent in ceaseless meditation on this Wonder of wonders, that God became man, or, as he puts it, that 'the Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us'. St John's use of the term *Logos* ('Word') was 'at once the most striking innovation of language within the New Testament itself and also the most profoundly influential upon subsequent thought'. The Evangelist certainly succeeds in 'making our joy full' through this striking innovation of language and in commending the Gospel to the intellect.

Reading the Gospel in conjunction with his three Epistles, we note how St John writes with a profound conviction born of experience, frequently using the words 'we know'. The first sentence of the Gospel alone is inexhaustible in its meaning, and provides food for lifelong thought and meditation. This is the reason why, at the end of the celebration of the Holy Communion—the

Extension of the Incarnation'—many a priest recites the opening verses of St John's Gospel (usually known as the Prologue), meditating on God becoming Man, at first in Bethlehem, and now giving Himself in the Sacrament to His believers. What joy there is in this knowledge—that the *Logos* still tabernacles amongst men !

It would take us too long to dwell on the various characteristics of the Fourth Gospel, but suffice it to say that the Gospel was intended to proclaim that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that we can attain eternal life through belief in His name. Many pagans of his day (as do many non-Christians today in India), held that no Divine contact with matter and humanity was possible, because of the certainty of pollution; but St John taught that, far from this being the case, the *Logos* did become flesh, and the Divine Life entered, assumed and redeemed humanity. (In the wonderful dream of St Paul, it is even destined to redeem the whole of Creation, animate and inanimate.) But besides the contact between God and man in Jesus Christ, the Evangelist also, as we have seen, speaks of Jesus as the *Logos*, the Word or Reason of God, an idea familiar to current Greek thought which regarded the ordered universe as the creation of the divine *Logos*.

What, then, St John did was to attempt, for the intelligentsia of his day, especially for those familiar with Greek philosophy, an interpretation of the Gospel in current philosophical terms. So, through the ages, the Gospel remains essentially the same, but as thought-forms change, the Gospel has to be re-interpreted to successive generations and ages, because otherwise a crust continually forms around religion, ultimately suffocating religion itself.

In India it is not enough to *preach* the Gospel ; we must also *interpret* it. Just as, in teaching arithmetic, we not only teach arithmetic, but we teach arithmetic to particular children, so we not only preach the Gospel, but we preach it to particular persons. In other words, we must inter-

pret the Gospel, while proclaiming it, and for this purpose, some knowledge and insight, both into the mind of the hearers and of their ideologies, is essential. St Paul, it is true, said he was determined to know nothing amongst his hearers save Christ and Him crucified. While this was true in regard to certain local difficulties and squabbles, the Epistles contain indisputable evidence of the trouble he took to probe the minds of his hearers and to speak in terms that they could grasp. The great Bishop Westcott once said that the true interpretation of the Fourth Gospel must come from India, but his generous prophesy still remains unfulfilled. Now there are those in our country who know only the Gospel; and there are those also who know only our people and their ways of thought; but there are few who know both the Gospel and our people sufficiently deeply to interpret the Gospel to India. Some would-be interpreters have unfortunately shown a greater knowledge of philosophic Hinduism than of the essential Gospel message as preached by the evangelists and their successors, the saints of the Church through the ages; and many have proclaimed the Gospel simply by repeating over and over again unmeaning words and phrases in outmoded and alien language. There *are*, of course, risks in the interpretation of the Gospel, but they should not prevent us from making the effort. As St John, in a sense, saved Christianity and made it not only known but also understood by the heathen peoples of his times, so the Indian Church has an obligation to present Christianity to India by making it known and really understood by the people of India. Our joy can never be full—nor can the joy of heaven—until the wise men of India also, like the Magi of old, come to offer their wisdom and devotion and service at His feet.

*The Life, which God's Incarnate Word
Lived here below with men,
Three blest Evangelists record
With Heav'n-inspired pen.*

*John soars on high, beyond the three,
To God the Father's Throne ;
And shows in what deep mystery
The Word with God is One.*

22. THE HOLY INNOCENTS

(DECEMBER 28)

THE MYSTERY OF SUFFERING

I am of the opinion that there is no comparison between the pain of the present time and the glory which we will see in the future.

(Romans 8:18—Basic English N.T.)

Two words are often confused in the English language, namely, 'innocence' and 'ignorance'. Innocence is a state of mind in which, being under temptation to do a wrong thing, one nevertheless resists and overcomes the temptation, and is therefore given credit for being innocent of a particular offence. Ignorance, on the other hand, is refraining from doing a wrong thing when there is no knowledge of, and therefore no inclination towards, that particular temptation. It is no credit to a man to be ignorant, and indeed, in Law ignorance is not accepted as an excuse. When therefore we speak of the 'innocent' children who were mercilessly slaughtered by King Herod, with a view to the elimination of the One Child, we mean not that they were innocent, but really, *ignorant* ; they are only innocent, in the sense that they were killed for no fault of their own.

THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING

The massacre of the innocents raises in an acute form the ancient, yet modern, problem of what is called 'unmerited suffering'. We say that it is *called* 'unmerited suffering', because, if we are right in calling any human suffering

unmerited, we should be equally right in describing as unmerited all the pleasures, benefits and amenities such as, for instance, those furnished by the advance of science which are enjoyed by mankind in common. If we enjoy many things which we have not ourselves earned, so to speak, but which belong to us as members of the great human race, it is but right that sometimes we should undergo suffering which may not be due to any individual fault of ours, but which we cannot avoid because it belongs to human society. That is one explanation of the problem of suffering, but, in the last resort, the Christian must have the courage and the humility to admit that 'I don't know' or 'I cannot explain,' realising that there are some things which we can only see dimly in this world, but which we may hope to see clearly and face to face in the world to come.

It is strange how the Collect for Innocents' Day in the *Book of Common Prayer*, a Collect which goes back to the fifth century, evades this problem, and not only evades it, but even appears to make a statement which is hardly consistent with the love of God as revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ. The Collect runs thus :

O Almighty God, who out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast ordained strength, and madest infants to glorify thee by their deaths : Mortify and kill all vices in us, and so strengthen us by thy grace, that by the innocency of our lives, and constancy of our faith even unto death, we may glorify thy holy name ; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

GOD'S PURPOSE NOT FRUSTRATED BY MAN'S SIN

As someone says : ' God is not glorified by murder, even in our Lord's case, nor by the unwilling, unconscious death of the victims, nor by any frustration of His purpose '. If the above statement is taken to mean that God's purpose was frustrated, that also is not true, because the Divine Child, against whom primarily the massacre was directed, survived the reckless slaughter, and lived to proclaim God's Kingdom, to suffer, to die and to rise again. The massacre took place

only because the wrath of Herod was baffled and, therefore, led him into cruelty as human wrath (like human lust) often does. It is certainly inscrutable to us human beings that the coming of the Christ Child should have brought pain to so many children and to so many mothers. But even the baffled wrath of a human tyrant could not ultimately frustrate God's purpose, which was destined to rise triumphant over the cruelties and the dereliction of Calvary.

CHRISTMAS AND INNOCENTS' DAY

It is perhaps in the fitness of things that the Feast of the Holy Innocents should fall in Christmas week, because it reminds us simultaneously both of the hard facts of life and also of that Christian faith, hope and charity which emerged triumphant in the midst of life's tragedies. Child life thus becomes associated with the Holy Child, and the martyrdom of the little children takes its place with the martyrdom of the great saints of all the ages.

JUVENILE SANCTITY

There is perhaps another reason why we need to be reminded that the coming of the Christ Child brought suffering in its train. The following of Jesus has always meant suffering to people in different parts of the world, in different walks of life, to old and young. Some of us may be familiar with the story of the boy martyrs of Uganda in Africa, on the scene of whose martyrdom stands a large granite cross with the following inscription :

To the glory of God and in memory of the Baganda Martyrs, who chose persecution and cruel death rather than deny their Saviour.

'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to destroy the soul.'

'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.'

HONESTY THE BEST POLICY ?

We often say—and we rightly say—that ‘Honesty is the best policy’. This is true in the long run, and for mankind as a whole, yet we must not believe and act as though righteousness always carried with it the reward of prosperity, especially immediate prosperity, or that the discipleship of Jesus is a bed of roses. God does not promise His children absolute protection against suffering of all kinds, but only that suffering borne for His sake can be overruled for good, if not in this world, at least in the world to come. (For such, honesty is raised far above the level of mere policy.) That is why St Paul comforts his fellow-labourers with the hope: ‘I am of the opinion that there is no comparison between the pain of the present time and the glory which we will see in the future’.

Suffering is the Christian’s lot, of the young no less than of the old. In fact, the cross of suffering is signed upon the innocence of babes at their Baptism itself. We do well therefore, to be reminded again and again, that Christianity, although a religion of glory, is, in reality, a religion of tragedy transfigured into glory, in obedience to God and His purpose, often resisted by man, but never finally frustrated.

OUR CRUELTY TO CHILDREN

The suffering of the Holy Innocents should also awaken in our minds the horror of child-suffering of all kinds, whether directly or indirectly due to us as individuals or as members of society. We ourselves sometimes inflict suffering actively by cruelty due to ungovernable temper, especially towards children other than our own, or—which is not less serious—through over-indulgence towards our own children and reluctance to exercise towards them that firmness and discipline which invariably go with all true love and affection.

Besides recalling to our minds the horror of child-suffering, known to us and unknown, we do well to be sensitive to the sacredness of child life. There are certainly ‘clouds

of glory' which, Wordsworth says, they 'trail' in their journey from heaven to earth in their birth. Unspoiled children sometimes do astound us by their amazing spiritual insight. Thus we remember a child who answered untutored, when asked to whom his house belonged, 'It belongs to God, but He has given it for father and mother and my brothers and sisters and myself to live in'. How often does such innocence and untaught spiritual insight tend to be overladen by the sinfulness, the hard-heartedness and the spiritual indifference of the parents, the teachers and others, at whose feet the child sits to learn and to imitate ! It is no wonder, therefore, that our Lord taught His disciples that the first qualification for membership in the Kingdom of God was childlikeness, and that terrible penalties awaited those who offended one of His 'little ones'.

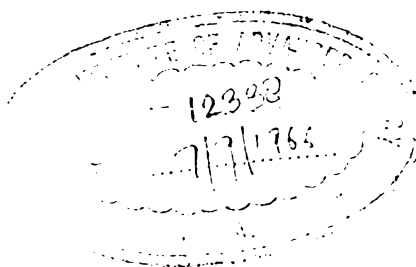
In conclusion, we are unable to explain unmerited suffering, especially the unmerited suffering of little children, but we do know 'that there is no comparison between the pain of the present time and the glory which we will see in the future'.

*Hail, Martyr-flowers, who gleaming forth,
Just on the edge of your brief day,
By Christ's keen foe were swept from earth,
As rosebuds by the whirlwind's sway !*

*Ah ! what avails so dire a doom ?
What boots the stain on Herod's soul ?
The one of many scapes the tomb,
The Christ is gone, unharm'd and whole.*

THE BEATIFIC VISION

After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. . . . These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. (Revelation 7:9-10, 14-17)



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