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Editorial

The Worth of Human Life

THE game is worth the candle. Life is worth the living. At the first Christmastide when human life was shown in its true dignity, it gathered a meaning which rose above the cynicism and despair of the age. Childhood, youth and manhood were lived in worth-while terms. As the Gospel of God became known it has not been necessary for men of the Christian era to imagine an ideal and example. We have both in the incarnate life of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST.

Not in some imaginary place was this life revealing the true dignity of human life. It was lived with real people, in a real home, in a real village. In other words, Jesus lived in just the surroundings which we find so imperfect that we blame on them the most of our failures and sins. Jesus passed as the son of a village carpenter, not at all a poor man, for the carpenter received about five times the wages of a labourer. In some Syrian villages the carpenters were next in prominence with landed folk and rich men. Working at a trade which would amply supply His frugal needs, contribute to the support of the home and leave something, no doubt, for the exercise of benevolence, Jesus stayed in the home at Nazareth until He approached His thirtieth year—the time of ripening manhood.

How humiliating it is for many of us to realize that we show our frayed edges of nerves and temper most of all in that sacred ground, the home. We let loose the tongue which taunts and stings, we forget the graces of speech and conduct. To strangers we show what we would like to be. To our own we show what we are. Unfortunately it is at home in our unguarded hours that we are developing the basic elements of our personality. Sooner or later the crust of conventionality will break. Although Jesus lived in imperfect surroundings just as we, He grew in favour with both God and man. There was so little of the obtrusive and assertive about Him that when He began to preach the people said: "Isn't this the carpenter's son?", although they bore witness to the words of grace that He spoke.

Handicapped by our limitations in work and position is the excuse we are constantly giving to ourselves and others for our continual shortcomings. You know the usual line of complaints: "Misunderstood by our friends, slandered by our enemies, born just a bit too late or a bit too early, anyway the times are out of joint." Did it ever strike you that those are the things our Lord had to contend against? He was misunderstood by His friends, called "a devil" by His enemies, accused of laxity in religion. He came to a nation which had an inadequate idea of God and His ways, and in spite of it all He held on to the Will of God for Him—a perfect life manifesting the love of God.

Not in the easy places was that Love most clearly manifested, but in the hard places, the places of strictest limitation, of fiercest enmity, of grossest misunderstanding. How that transfigures our life and how utterly contrary to our

conception of life. To see in the very difficulties of our position, in our very temptations, our chances for rendering notable service to God. Here is the light on dark places, the grief and tribulations. Not complaints but an answering challenge to self and conditions will be the response of the man who has seen the true dignity of human life in Christ.

A life crowded with service is the ideal of any man with red blood in his veins. Life at the high-water mark of service was shown in our Saviour. He never refused an appeal for help and He sought out those who needed help. He did not save Himself for the spectacular service which would be in the eye of the public. It made no difference whether it were a man in an upper room, a woman on a well curb, or a crowd on the hillside or lake shore, He gave to each occasion His best. He realized human life as the most precious gift of God, and its complete satisfaction only in company with God.

You can tell what kind of a man you are dealing with when you watch his attitude to those who are in no position to demand or command his attention. Observe Jesus' attitude to the out-cast and the taxgatherer. He won them. The perfection of life as He portrayed it was a winning thing. Holiness as the Pharisees portrayed it was a forbidding thing. Christ never despaired of any man He met. He never taught that man was utterly depraved and altogether removed from righteousness. He felt that there was something in man to which the love of God could appeal.

A success, would you call the Incarnate life of Christ? He won no prosperity, no popularity. Judged by the tests of our every-day world His life was a failure. Yet it was such a failure that it judges the successes of our world and exposes their emptiness. Christ's earthly life was the true success. He served even to sacrifice. He revealed God to us, He was the way to the Father, by the life which He lived and the death which He died.

A half-heathen idea that Christianity is an accident insurance policy still hangs around some people's minds. The Jews in Jesus' time had that idea. They told Him about the men who were killed by the accident at Siloam, and evidently expected Him to admit that these men were killed on account of their sins. Jesus never said that any man who loved the Father and was obedient to His will would be guaranteed immunity from the changes and chances of this mortal life. To quote at once one supreme instance: Jesus lived in perfect accord with the Father, yet He was exposed to temptation, slander, maltreatment, and death.

This leads us to the true view of life. Not *what* but *how* is the test of life. It is in the incarnation that we see Life in perfection, at its highest, fullest terms. The imperfectness of its environment but served to bring out its true dignity.

"Hee professed alwayes to love and seeke Peace: and it was his usuall Preface in his Treaties, that when Christ came into the world, Peace was sung, and when Hee went out of the world, Peace was bequeathed."

Bacon's Henry VII.

The Christian Year

(THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS)

Let us go even to Bethlehem.

THE shepherds rejoiced, and well they might. They saw God reconciled. The Child had come to open a channel for the outflow of His love towards His exiled sons and daughters. The Father and the children long sundered, are drawn together again.

Far behind them they saw faith satisfied. Holy men and women of old, century after century, were looking and waiting for the Child. He was the Centre of their hopes, the Desire of their souls. They greeted Him from afar. And now their trust was rewarded.

Deep within them they saw a heart at rest. They carried about a nature, diseased, hopeless to recover itself, wearied with going to many physicians. But the Child was to be the Lord their Healer. He would forgive their infirmities. He would end their quest. He would redeem their lives from destruction.

Once before they saw heaven filled with guests. The Child was to open the gates of pearl. In the New Jerusalem they would gather, as at the Passover they had gathered at the old Jerusalem, but how infinitely more countless and how infinitely more blessed.

Do I rejoice with the shepherds of the Judean fields? There were many who did not. For

"Men of grave and moral word,
With consciences defiled,
Said, 'Let the old truth still be heard;
We want no Child.'"

Better will it be for me to rank myself with the babes than with the wise and prudent.

An Appeal for the Near East

The Bishop of Toronto has sent out to his Clergy a Pastoral Letter with regard to a communication from the Archbishops both of England and Canada, urging that an appeal be made on Sunday next, the 28th (Holy Innocents' Day), for contributions in aid of the famine-stricken areas in the Near East, and especially for children. The Pope is interesting himself in the matter, as also are the Free Churches of England, and the same laudable object is being taken up in the Churches of the United States. The following extract is from a letter in the American Press over the signature of ex-President Taft and others:—

"Another little child has shrivelled up and died;

"The mother, creeping back, gaunt and cold, from the desert, has put down the thin little bones with those that strew the road, so-many-miles, and has sunk beside them.

"Only a little child, and a mother, out on the bleak Armenian road—but what is that Vision hovering there—and what is that Voice the cold winds bear to the ears of our souls,—'I was hungry and ye gave me no meat, I was naked and ye clothed me not?'"

Surely, no more suitable way of commemorating the Birthday of the Christ Child can present itself than this opportunity of relieving the want, and thus saving the lives of "these little ones" for whom He became Incarnate.