

## The Bible Lesson

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First Sunday after Trinity, June 10th, 1917.

Subject:

Our Lord and St. Thomas—St. John, 20: 24-31.

IT should be a great help to us to know that our Lord's Apostles were men of such varied character. The Gospels bring before us the individuality of these men. They all (with one great exception) had love and loyalty to Jesus. That was their common ground, but in many ways each showed his own individuality of character and thought. We should not expect or desire that all Christians shall be alike—like peas in a pod. "There are diversities of gifts" and diversities of temperament as well. This fact, which is to be found in a study of the character of any of the Apostles, is particularly illustrated by St. Thomas.

1. **St. Thomas looked at the dark side of things.** We generally say such kind things about an optimist that we have little patience with one who is not optimistic in his outlook. Yet a splendid character of love, loyalty and devotion lay behind the quiet, reflective, unoptimistic attitude of this Apostle. This is shown, in St. John 11: 16, when Jesus was about to return to Judea on account of the death of Lazarus, and the disciples were afraid of Jewish hostility, Thomas said, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." On the first Easter Day St. Thomas was not with the other disciples when Jesus came to them (vs. 24). The events of the Crucifixion were such that one like St. Thomas desired to be alone. Others might find help and sympathy in one another's company, but St. Thomas was not like the rest. Solitude seemed to be what he desired. He missed much by this attitude, but still we like to think of him as he was.

2. **St. Thomas wanted proof of the Resurrection.** There is no doubt he was wrong in not accepting the evidence of the other Apostles. They were good and loyal to their Lord and St. Thomas should have received their testimony. He felt, however, that it was too good to be true and declared that he would not believe without some positive demonstration.

This attitude of his mind has been of value to the Church because it shows that the Apostles were not credulous persons easily misled by their hopes. The fact is that none of the Apostles expected the immediate resurrection of the Lord. They were only convinced after their eyes had seen. St. Thomas is the most outstanding example of this attitude of mind. The Lord graciously offered him the very proofs that he demanded. Yet when he saw the Lord and heard His voice he felt that he did not need them. "My Lord and my God," expressed his satisfaction and his devotion. "He believed because the fact which was too good to hope for became too certain to reject."

3. **St. Thomas' triumph of Faith.** Through misgivings and doubt to a triumphant faith is the end which this Apostle reaches. The loftiest view of our Lord given in the Gospels is the end that he attains. He "became not faithless but believing," and the attainment of that faith in Jesus as Lord and God seems to St. John a fitting close for this Gospel. It is the climax of that progress of faith which St. John traces throughout the Gospel.

4. **A new Beatitude.** This is a blessing which we share. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." "This last and greatest of the Beatitudes is the peculiar heritage of the later Church," Westcott. There must have been many who did not see the risen Lord at His first appearances on Easter Day and of these some believed. Their happiness lay in the fact that at once they were in sympathy with the facts of the unseen order. St. Peter (1 St. Peter 1: 8) dwells on the thought of this blessedness which is ours.

5. **The close and purpose of St. John's Record.** Verse 30 tells us that it was not St. John's purpose to write a Life of Christ. It is a Gospel, not a biography, which he gives us. Many signs have been pointed out. Life, and Light, and Love have been exemplified and the progress of Faith in Jesus as the Son of God has been traced. The purpose of it all (vs. 31) is that his readers may believe and have life. In his first epistle (1 St. John 5: 13) this same purpose is set forth.

### LESSONS.

1. There are all kinds of people in God's Church. The Gospel is not intended to destroy

our individuality, but to improve our character and to bring us into the life of Faith.

2. Honest doubt is not sin, but obstinate refusal to consider God's way of making Truth known to us is sinful.

3. The presence of Jesus, personal experience of Him, and the convicting power of the Holy Spirit will drive away our doubts.

4. Blessedness lies in being in sympathy with God and God's order in the world. Faith is instinctive where there is sympathy with God.

5. Loyalty and love such as St. Thomas had are better than an unthinking optimism. Love and loyalty in the end will triumph.

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## NEW BOOKS

### Much Ado About Peter.

By Jean Webster, author of "Daddy Long Legs," "Dear Enemy," etc. Hodder and Stoughton, Toronto. (249 pp.; \$1.25 net.)

Anyone who has read one of Jean Webster's stories will want to read all. Vivacious dialogue, well-used dialect, rapid plot, well-defined characters and good descriptions are the elements of one of her best stories of love in the drawing-room and in the kitchen of an English country home. Peter, the groom, is the man of the book. He wins his own prize, the housemaid. Then curiously enough by his sagacity he saves his master from losing his. The book has reached a second edition.

### An Alabaster Box.

By Mary E. Wilkins Freeman and Florence Morse Kingsley. McClelland, Goodchild and Stewart, Toronto. (311 pp.; \$1.50 net.)

A primitive village, so true to type that it might be anywhere, with some deserted mills, plus the usual stock in trade, is the scene of a story that is an admirable portrayal of the folly, greed and grudge-bearing of a small-centre of life. The deserted mills are constant reminders of the perfidy of the village capitalist, who is spending some years in prison. Lydia Orr, a new-comer who spends money in quixotic fashion, is the puzzle of the book. The author will answer her own puzzle. The book is a leisurely story that makes pleasant reading with no distress of pathos or intensity.

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### "EVEN AS I."

It is in the Upper Room, and the Kingly Traveler is taking leave of those who have journeyed with Him, for presently He must go alone over the darkest way that the foot of traveler ever trod. He will see them again, but He is thinking of the interval and of the other parting at Olivet. They will be missing Him. The garish day will menace. The shadow and the deep darkness will assail. Burdens will be heavy, battles fierce, temptations subtle, conflicts sore, but they that are clad in white walk safely, and He is saying, He is saying: "Ye are to love, even as I."

For the unloving, the sun is chill, the garden has neither fragrance nor beauty, the fog blots out the stars, but they that love live in another land. He is saying: "Ye are to love, even as I."

They who come to each new hour and place to be ministered unto will find even the ministries offered them dull and tasteless. They who fare forth to minister shall see arid deserts blossom, shall find a path bright with the smile and song of those whom they have blessed, shall strive to lift the world, and feel the thrill and wonder of it, as little by little it moves into the light. He is saying: "Ye are to minister, even as I."

But if the way seems lonely and the night be long, if they that love them shall slumber while those who plot against them keep watch, then let them know that the Father loves, loves and slumbers not, loves with that four-square love that passes knowledge. He is saying, "Ye are loved of the Father, even as I."—Bishop Wilson.

N.B.—If your copy of the Canadian Churchman does not reach you regularly, we shall be grateful if you will let us know.

## From Week to Week

### Spectator's Discussion of Topics of Interest to Churchmen.

A GRAVE crisis has arisen in the political life of this Dominion. The Prime Minister has publicly announced his intention of introducing a bill that will make military service compulsory, and immediately the most populous province but one shows signs of opposing it even with armed resistance. And not only does a province express its disapproval, but certain elements of labour and various minor sections of the citizenship of the country are pouring in their objections to any form of compulsion. The situation is full of the gravest danger unless handled with great wisdom, promptitude and determination. The friends of conscription in the Province of Quebec have no opportunity to affirm their faith or display their enthusiasm because they have no leaders to stand up before them and give voice to their sentiments. It would appear to be self-evident that if the Government has no French-Canadian minister or member to stand up in the presence of his compatriots and calmly but forcefully lay our country's necessities and our citizens' duty before them, it is in an unenviable position. Do the French-Canadian members of Sir Robert Borden's Cabinet believe in conscription as it is proposed? If they do, why are they not rallying the friends of conscription to their aid and discussing with the citizens of Quebec at every important centre the great crisis that is ours, and considering the only just way of meeting it? Are they afraid of losing their political influence through failure? Surely if the men at the front are daily offering their lives on our behalf the men who take some risk in regard to their political standing are no great objects of sympathy. It is a time when such risks should be demanded. The Province of Quebec, as we have said on former occasions, has never had a fair chance to form an opinion on our obligations in this war because so-called political leaders have never attempted to lead. Mr. Blondin probably is the nearest approach to an exception, but his efforts came late in the struggle. If the Church of Quebec, or the political leaders of Quebec had seriously faced the problem the situation would be entirely different. The people could be convinced, but those who ought to do the convincing were either unconvinced themselves or lacking in courage.

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To face this extremely critical situation it will be necessary to know just what is the objection to military service in this war, on the part of our French-Canadian neighbours. It has been hinted that the increased influence of their race and church is looked for through the slaughter of English-speaking citizens and the safety of our more cautious fellow-citizens who quietly stay at home. That may be set aside as too cold-blooded, yes, and too foolish, for a moment's consideration. The growth of power of any section of Canadians in the future will not be based on a failure to sustain Canada at a moment when everything pointed to destruction. French-Canadians are not fools and they know better than to look for prestige through treachery to their fellow-citizens. It has been suggested that the French-Canadian is not convinced that Canada is in real danger else he would step forward and do his share. The French-Canadian has more to lose from the point of view of his ideals and race than any other element among Canadians, and if he were really at heart convinced that everything he holds dear were about to be taken from him then he would gird on his armour and fight. The fact is, it is said, that while the French-Canadian knows the danger, he is satisfied that others will do the fighting, and hence he need not worry. Whatever might have been believed about the safety of Canada in this world-war up to a few months ago, now that the United States has grasped the sword as the only sure method of preserving national integrity, it is difficult to see how any Canadian can for a moment further live in a fool's paradise. And what is more, if he thinks he is going to achieve greatness by a policy of waiting for others to do his fighting then he is surely doomed to disappointment. The real desire of our French-Canadian friend is that Canada should be an entity of itself unrelated to any other country in the world. He feels that our imperial relationship is dragging us into imperial wars that are of no interest to us and of no value. If he does not advocate direct independence the effect of his position leads directly to that objective. Independence is a