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The unaccountable man

The Unaccountable Man

# The Unaccountable Man



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## THE UNACCOUNTABLE MAN

“What manner of man is this?”—Mark 4, 21.

An old proverb says, “The secret of Messiah is the secret of man”; that is, To come face to face with Christ is to solve all the problems of life. The Church has made an historic blunder in addressing herself so exclusively to dogmatic apologetics rather than to the personal Christ and to all the truths of religion as radiating from him. For Christianity is distinguished from all other religions by the fact that it has no life apart from him who breathed his personality into it. If the memory of Sakya Muni were blotted out, the Three Baskets of Buddhism would still remain. If the name of Confucius were obliterated, his multitudinous followers would still cherish the Analects. But Christ is identical with Christianity; he is its head, its throbbing heart, its all in all.

The question of questions, therefore, is not “What think ye of Christianity?” but “What think ye of Christ?” There seems to be a disposition in some quarters to ignore the personal factor and retain the ethical system: but this is as impossible as it would be to keep the sunlight and reject the sun. For, in the last reduction, there is nothing in Christianity but Christ.

A calm discussion of this question touching the personality of Christ can lead to one conclusion only, as we shall presently see. The disciples, on the road to that conclusion, happened on many surprises and startling denouements. They had reason to suppose that they knew something of Jesus, being on terms of closest intimacy with him, yet now and then a truth fell from his lips, so new, so bold and illuminating, that they looked into each other's faces with questioning amaze. Or perhaps it was a miracle,—the cleansing of a leper or the stilling of a tempest,—which moved them to cry, "What manner of man is this?"

I. As we pursue this inquiry *we shall find ourselves for a while on common ground.* All thoughtful men are agreed that Jesus was a wonderful man.

Observe his singular *Purity of Character.* His life in Nazareth, a town notorious for vice, was like the shining of a solitary star in a dark sky. Thirty-odd years he walked among enemies eager to criticize, yet they found "no fault in him at all." All through the centuries a derisive finger has been pointed at Christians for their moral defections, but never at Christ. He is universally conceded to have been an upright man.

*His extraordinary Wisdom,* also, is matter of common fame. He had a singular insight into the doctrines of the spiritual life. He laid a bold hand on great problems, and unfolded them to the understanding of simple folk. The common people heard him gladly. The religionists of his time knowing him to be untaught and untraveled, asked, "Whence has this man this wisdom?" A significant comment on his teaching was, "Never man spake like this man."

On one occasion a learned doctor of divinity called upon him and said frankly, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God."

There is a like consensus as to *his Power*. He wrought miracles, having power over nature, over disease and over the minds of men. He said to Matthew at the receipt of customs, and to the fishermen of Gennesaret, "Follow me," and, for some strange reason, they rose up and followed him.

But his *Benignity* was most remarkable of all. The law of kindness was in his heart. His life is recorded in a brief monograph, "He went about doing good." Most philanthropists are content with helping "God's poor," but he was gracious also toward that ill-deserving multitude known as the "Devil's poor." He had a kind word on occasion for thieves and Magdalenes; his ministry was fitly concluded in the prayer which he offered for his own murderers. Put yourself in his place; the death-anguish upon him, gangrene burning in his wounds, sorrow breaking his heart; yet thus he prayed, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

All are agreed, I say, up to this point; that he was the best, the wisest, the mightiest, the most magnanimous of men. The words with which the infidel Renan concludes his "*Vie de Jésus*" will express an almost universal conviction; "Whatever may be the surprises for the future, Jesus will never be surpassed. His worship will grow young without ceasing; his legend will call forth tears without end; his sufferings will melt the noblest hearts; all ages will proclaim, that, among the sons of men, there is none born greater than Jesus."

II. *But there is an Unknown Factor here*; like the "x" in an algebraic problem, which must somehow be reduced to known terms.

Let us return to a consideration of his personal Purity. Here is the singular fact: it represented not sin at its minimum, but absolute freedom from sin. His challenge was, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" and the response of his official judge was, "I find no fault in him at all." It is obvious that sinlessness places him wholly outside the circle of human life. For "there is no difference, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." He was not, therefore, *primus inter pares*. He stood solitary and alone in his integrity. It is not enough to say, he was the best of sinful men. He was better than the best of men.

We observe, also, a singular quality in his Wisdom. All other teachers have announced their message with a "Thus saith the Lord"; he never. He taught "as one having authority and not as the scribes." His word was, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." He made himself the court of last appeal: "Ye have heard how it was said by them of old time thus and so, but I say unto you." Who is this that presumes to set himself against all courts and assemblies, all traditions and formularies and precedents? Down come the schools of philosophy! Down come the temples of antiquity before his *ipse dixit!* Emerson says, "Here is the miracle, that Jesus spake from within." He himself was authority; as he said, "I am the truth." An attitude like this is not to be accounted for on the ground that he was merely the wisest of men.

So with reference to his exercise of Power. This also was of himself alone. All other miracle-workers must say, "In the name of God"; he never. On one occasion a leper came pleading, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." How did he meet that challenge? "I will! Be thou clean!" Thus all his wonders were wrought. To the dumb he said, "*Ephphatha!*" To the dead, "*Talitha cumi!*" There is no appeal to a superior source of power; it is, "Damsel, I say unto thee, arise!" Here evidently was something beyond the experience of common exorcists and thaumaturgists. He was more than the mightiest of men.

And again as to his Benignity. He represents himself as having come from somewhere *on a mission*. He has "business" in hand. The healing of a few sick people, the raising of the dead, the calming of the stormy sea, were merely episodes along his way. He passes on, with his face set steadfastly toward the Cross; and here he reaches the fulfillment of his mission. In the article of death he cries, "It is finished!" *What* was finished? That question must be answered if you would arrive at any reasonable conclusion respecting the Christ. You must explain that long journey of beneficence and the Cross at the journey's end. It is pitifully inadequate to say, "He was the most magnanimous of men."

In one of Domenichino's pictures the dead Christ is represented hanging on the Cross in the gathering shadows of the night; and a solitary angel, with a look of infinite perplexity, is touching the points of the thorny crown. Aye, there is the center of the great problem; and the angels desire to look into it.



III. We come now to *the Testimony of Christ Himself*. It needs scarcely be said that all who go so far as to concede that Jesus was the best, wisest, mightiest and most magnanimous of men, will of course be willing to give due weight to his own statement. He alone can solve the problem as to his personality. Let us observe how he does it.

To begin with, he formally repudiates all praise accorded to mere human Goodness. He will have none of it. A young ruler prostrated himself before him, saying, "Good rabbi, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" and Jesus answered, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God." Now this was either a confession of personal sin,—which is incredible, since everywhere else he makes the opposite claim— or else it was a clear declaration that his righteousness was nothing short of the holiness of God.

He makes a similar claim as to his Wisdom. "My doctrine is not mine," he says, "but his that sent me." And again: "Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; the Father which dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." And again: I have not spoken of myself, but the Father which sent me, he gave me commandment what I should say." And again, in his sacerdotal prayer: "I have given them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me." In all such statements—and they are more than fifty—there is a plain reference to his mysterious union with the Father. All

along his teaching we come upon intimations of a silent partnership with God.

And the same is true of his extraordinary Power. He speaks of his miracles as wrought not merely through the power of God resting upon him, but by his own Godhood. In all his working there are signs of an infinite reserve, like the depths of the sea. We note the rolling waves and tossing billows, but far beneath are unfathomable depths, infinite possibilities of power, never seen by mortal eyes.

He has somewhat to say also of his Philanthropy. His mission is explained in unmistakable terms. He tells us of his pre-existence as God's fellow from the beginning; and of his setting out in the fullness of time to redeem the world from sin. We are left in no doubt as to the method by which he proposed to accomplish it. In controversial circles we sometimes hear of "theories of the atonement." Christ leaves no room for any theory of the atonement; he tells us everything: "God so loved the world," he says, "that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." He informs us that all the events of his earthly sojourn are in fulfillment of prophecy, saying; "Thus it is written, and thus it behoveth me to do." He gives us the *rationale* of the atonement in these words; "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

At the beginning of this argument we stood on common ground. Where do we stand now? One thing is perfectly clear; Jesus was what he declared

himself to be, *or else he was not a good man*. His claim was expressed in unequivocal words: as when the high priest said to him, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of the living God," and he answered, "Thou hast said it!"

The enemies of Jesus, in order to accomplish his death, laid many things to his charge. He was accused of sedition; but that fell through. He was accused of refusing to pay tribute to Cæsar; that also came to naught. He was accused of putting himself forward as a rival claimant to the throne; that too was thrown out of court. All that was left of the indictment was this: "He maketh himself equal with God." And it was under this charge that he was sentenced to the cross. Why did he not deny the accusation? He might have saved himself with a word; but he never uttered it. *He died for making himself equal with God*. Is it not obvious therefore, to every thoughtful man, that the common ground of which we spoke awhile ago is untenable? Is it not clear that *Jesus was either more or less than the best of men?*

The original question calls for an answer. The issues of eternity flow out of it. If Christ was what he claimed to be, he is worthy of all adoration and service; if not, he should be frankly repudiated; since by no stretch of the imagination can he be regarded as merely a good man.

It is the part of wisdom to solve this problem, and without delay. Let us look at Jesus, fairly, face to face. Let us follow him through his life as recorded in the Gospels, listening to his teachings

and beholding his wonderful works, until we come to the cross. There let us witness the great tragedy with minds open to conviction. The Centurion who had charge of the crucifixion of Jesus, saw him during the mortal hours of his anguish: and when all was over he felt constrained to say, "Verily this was a righteous man!" But that did not satisfy him. His conscience was busy; and the last word had not been uttered yet. As he turned and rode down, from the scene of the tragedy to Jerusalem, where the evening lamps were now kindling, he turned and looked backward. The dark effigy of the cross was yonder against the sky; and he spoke again, "Verily this was the son of God!"

We have, besides the Gospels, the light of history to guide us. The Christ who was crucified has been walking through the centuries, teaching and working wonders. The world grows better and brighter by the power of his truth and under the luminous shadow of his cross. If he were to appear to-day, my friend, in person before you, lifting his pierced hands, as in the presence of doubting Thomas in the upper room, what would you say? You must in all reason, fall before him as Thomas did, saying, "My Lord and my God!"

## THE BEATIFIC VISION

"I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up."—Isaiah 6, 1.

This was "in the year that king Uzziah died," that is, in the afterglow of Jewish history. It is written of Uzziah that "he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, save only that the high places were not removed." But there is a world of sad meaning in this "save only"; it stamps him as a well-meaning but weak man. We are not surprised to learn that he had an overweening sense of his own importance; since weakness and conceit go usually hand in hand. For pride and presumption he was smitten with leprosy, so that he must needs "dwell in a several house." A leper king; a people laden with iniquity; the high places blazing with sacrifices in honor of Baal and Astarte; the kingdom rushing fast to ruin. These were the circumstances of Isaiah's time.

Is it strange that his heart sank within him? He saw the awful cataclysm drawing near, and felt himself impotent to avert it. The sins of the people laid on him a burden beyond what he was able to bear. "The daughter of Zion," he mourned, "is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city!" In vain did he exhort to repentance: "Ah sinful nation, why should

ye be stricken any more? The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores. Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well!" It was the voice of one crying in the wilderness; there was none that would heed his agonized warning.

Then the vision came: "*I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim; each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory. And the foundations of the thresholds were moved at the voice, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts! Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he touched my mouth with it and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me.*"

What influence had this vision on the life and character of Isaiah? for it cannot be imagined that such an event could be without definite result.

I. *He was enabled, by this Vision, to read and interpret more clearly the Signs of the Times.* This is the

mark of a true prophet, to know the meaning of current events. Any man can behold the skies red and lowering; but to look beyond and see God regnant, this is genuine clairvoyance. The clew of history is a clear perception of the fact that the hearts of kings are in the hand of God, and that he maketh the wrath of men to praise him.

As a rule reformers are a melancholy folk. They dwell amid the confused noise of battle and are blind to the outcome. The smoke must lift; the vision must appear; they must for their encouragement behold the King high and lifted up.

There was Moses,—a mighty reformer,—whose vehemence bore him on to precipitate the issue of the time. An exile in the Desert of Midian, in sullen despondency he awaited the vision. It came at the burning bush; “and the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people and I am come down to deliver them. Go thou, and say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you!”—Elijah also was a great reformer; but terrified by the threats of Jezebel, he fled to the wilderness and “requested for himself that he might die.” And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, “What doest thou here, Elijah?” He answered, “I have been very jealous for the Lord the God of Hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, have thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life.” Then the Lord passed by in earthquake, tempest and fire; and after the fire came a still, small voice. And the voice said, “Go, return!” And never again did Elijah shrink from service, because he knew the Lord



was with him.—A like vision came to Daniel in Babylon. Well might he mourn for the afflictions of his people, coming in successive companies, loaded with chains, through the gates of the pagan city. But he beheld in a vision of the night; and lo! a lion, a bear, a leopard and a nondescript beast with iron feet. The great world powers, in these similitudes, passed before him; and after them the throne was set in heaven and the Ancient of Days took his place upon it; “and there was given unto him dominion and glory and a kingdom; that all the peoples, and nations and languages should serve him.” All fear was dispelled by the multitudinous voices crying, “His Kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and all dominions shall serve and obey him!”—John, the last survivor of the apostles, was a lonely exile in Patmos. The thought that, beyond the waters girding his dreary home, his brethren were suffering the pains of bitter persecution while he had neither part nor lot with them, must have grieved him to the heart. But hope and courage revived when he saw the Lord walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks and saying, “I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore and have the keys of hell and of death!”

No, no, friends of the kingdom, the Lord has not forgotten. All things are going right. Up with your hearts! The rivers go round and round, but they all flow into the sea. The darkest clouds are far this side of heaven, where in calm majesty the King sitteth upon his throne. In the dark days of the Reformation when Luther was a prisoner in Erfurt, he was wont to quicken his faith and revive his courage by sing-



ing the Forty-sixth Psalm: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."

II. *We note another effect of Isaiah's vision in a just apprehension of himself and of his normal relation to affairs.* "Know thyself" is a wise saying; but self-knowledge comes rather from the upward than from the inward look. It always accompanies the vision of God.

The tendency of our time is to magnify man and minimize God. "There is a generation, oh, how lofty are their eyes and their eyelids are lifted up." We have lost in great measure the reverence for sacred things. We make no scruple of intruding upon the divine Oracles or of suggesting to God how he might better have addressed us; so true is it that "fools rush in where angels fear to tread." We take great liberties with the Holy Name and with God's Holy Day. We have schemes of our own for the reformation of the world. We discuss sociological problems with a grave air of wisdom; as if the whole campaign had not been divinely marked out for us in the words, "Go, evangelize." We thrust God aside, usurp his prerogatives and assume all responsibility for the management of affairs. It is as Æsop said: the fly on the chariot-wheel claims the adulations which are offered to the king in the chariot. It is to be feared that our arrogance will yield to nothing but a voice from the throne and an unveiling of the ineffable glory.

Our littleness must be impressed upon us; and how

better than by a just comparison of ourselves with God? This was the lesson that came to David at the summit of his greatness, when he climbed the winding stairway to his housetop and looked on the overarching dome: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, what is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" What are we, indeed, that God should take us into the reckoning at all? What are we that we should be permitted to participate with him in the work of his kingdom? I am one of some hundreds of millions of infinitesimals who inhabit a world which is one of some hundreds of millions of worlds floating in infinite space. At the center sits God upon his throne, high and lifted up. His kingdom is over all. How a man dwindles and shrinks in the comparison!

"Great God, how infinite art Thou!  
 What worthless worms are we!  
 Let the whole world of creatures bow,  
 And pay their praise to Thee."

But there is another solemn consideration; to wit, our sinfulness. Infinitely inferior to God by nature, we are by our sins immeasurably farther removed from him. It was meet that Isaiah, in view of the ineffable glory, should cry, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and mine eyes have seen the King!" He spoke of his lips particularly, because he had been commissioned as a witness. He now perceived that he was not worthy to even name God, much less to serve him.

He was appalled by the cry, "Holy! holy! holy!" God dwelleth in light unapproachable. The heavens are not clean in his sight. He is of purer eyes than

to behold iniquity. Angels and archangels veil their faces before him. All his attributes are expressed in Holiness, as all the colors of the rainbow are combined in the white solar ray. It would be strange if such a vision did not throw our sins into bold relief, if it did not wring from us the confession, "Woe is me!" For our iniquities have separated between us and our God, and our sins have hid his face from us.

How, under such circumstances, can we address ourselves to our appointed tasks? The sense of unfitness overwhelms us; for our eyes have seen the King. Even the pagans debar the unclean from the altars. *Procul, procul abeste, profani!* Æneas, returning from the wars, bade his aged father to offer the sacrifices; "I am unworthy," he said; "my hands are defiled with blood."

III. *The vision of Isaiah was still further effective in qualifying him for service.* This is the meaning of the living coal. "And the seraph said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me."

The living coal is significant of cleansing and quickening. On the one hand, it symbolizes the power of the blood which "cleanseth from all sin." On the other, it corresponds to those lambent tongues of fire which rested on the foreheads of the apostles in the Pentecostal miracle. It takes both the cleansing and the quickening to fit a man for service.

He who has seen the vision and felt the touch of the flaming coal is prepared for service. Saul on his way to Damascus saw a great light and heard a voice

saying, "I am Jesus." That changed the whole tenor of his life. He had thought he was doing God's service as an inquisitor; but, blinded by this blazing light, he cried, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He recognized the King and was ready for service in the kingdom; thenceforth the love of Christ constrained him.

But what is all this to us? May we also have a vision of the Glory? Is it not written, "No man hath seen God at any time?" How indeed can a man expect to look on the midday sun with undazzled eyes? None can see the essential God and live. His servants shall see his face hereafter, but surely not with fleshly eyes.

But it is also written, "The only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Christ is the exegesis of God. All the theophanies of the Old Testament were but foregleams or adumbrations of Christ. The Lord with whom Adam walked in the cool of the day in Paradise was none other than Christ.—The Lord who appeared to Abraham at eventide, giving him the assurance of the covenant, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," was likewise Christ.—He it was who wrestled with Jacob at Peniel until the break of day!

"I know Thee, Saviour, who Thou art,  
 Jesus, the feeble sinner's Friend;  
 Nor wilt Thou with the night depart,  
 But stay and love me to the end.  
 Thy mercies never shall remove,  
 Thy nature and Thy name is Love."

—It was Christ who appeared to Moses hiding

in the cleft of the rock, revealing himself in the rustle of his garments as he passed by, proclaiming himself "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious."—It was Christ who, as the Angel of the Covenant, went before the children of Israel in the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, and who spoke to them out of the mysterious Shekinah hovering above the golden cover of the ark.—It was Christ who appeared to Ezekiel in the Valley of Dry Bones, saying, "Come from the four winds, O Breath, and breathe upon these bones and they shall live?"—It was Christ who appeared to Gideon as he threshed wheat by the winepress, saying, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor. Go in this thy might and save Israel; have not I sent thee?"

We are justified in saying that God makes no sufficient revelation of himself to mortal man except in the beauty of the face of his beloved Son. Philip said to Jesus, "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us?" The Master replied, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me?"

This is life eternal, to know God and to know him in Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. We seek no higher vision. We can have no greater uplift than thus to behold him. God's throne is on Calvary for us; to behold him there, in his supreme work of self-denial for his sinful creatures, is to enter into life. [It was such an experience as this that brought John

Newton to his better self. He had spent his energies in riotous living, giving free course to all his baser passions, until at length, with the roar of a mighty tempest about him, he knelt in the hold of a pirate-ship and cried aloud for mercy. Here is the record:

“In evil long I took delight,  
Unawed by shame or fear,  
Till a new object struck my sight  
And stopped my wild career.”

The “new object,” by which his character was transformed, was a vision of Jesus on the cross.

“I saw one hanging on a tree  
In agonies and blood,  
Who fixed his languid eyes on me  
As near his cross I stood.  
  
Sure never to my latest breath  
Can I forget that look;  
It seemed to charge me with his death  
Though not a word he spoke.  
  
Alas ! I knew not what I did,  
My tears were all in vain ;  
Where should my trembling soul be hid  
For I my Lord had slain ?”

He was in despair; he moaned like Jonah in the belly of hell; he felt the awful abandonment of outer darkness in a profound conviction of sin. The holy God had appeared to him, and he lay as one dead. Then the seraph came with the living coal and touched his lips.

“A second look he gave, which said,  
‘I freely all forgive ;  
This blood is for thy ransom paid,  
I die that thou mayest live !’”

A similar vision is possible to every man. It is the look toward Calvary that reveals God in his truth and holiness, his justice and love. This is the vision that casts us down and lifts us up again, that convicts and converts, that reveals our unworthiness and endues us with supernatural power for service. This is the vision that opens the door of spiritual life.

I have been reading a remarkable book, called "The Ten Theophanies," by the Rev. Dr. Baker of Georgia. His name is not unfamiliar in the annals of lighter literature. As his life was wearing to its close, he felt a consuming desire to publish, for the benefit of thoughtful people, his view of the Unveilings of God. The book, written with a hand growing feebler and feebler, was finished in full view of heaven. This is its conclusion: "Try to bring nome to yourself, if you can, that this Friend—God yet man, man yet God—is as near to you this hour as he was to Adam in Eden, as lovingly near in the unlimited prime, plentitude and power of his everlasting youth. He who tries to write these lines cannot see them for happy tears; he trembles unable to contain, yet wholly unable to express the thought—Immanuel, God with us! Only the large language used by the saints in light may express that consciousness of an ever-present Lord, which ceases at last to be a mere belief, and striking as into the very arteries and veins, the bone and brain, becomes part of the circulation and constitution of the believer!—And now, awaiting the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, to "the Blessed and Only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who only hath Immortality, dwelling in the Light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath

seen, nor can see; to Him be Honor and Power Everlasting!" The labor of life was finished; the pen dropped from the tremulous fingers; a new theophany burst upon the writer's soul. He was in the presence of the beatific Vision; at home with God!



## WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT HEAVEN

"After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither and I will show thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the Spirit: and, behold, . . ."—Rev. 4, 1, 2.

All that we surely know of the life beyond the grave is by revelation; and even this leaves much unsolved. An impenetrable veil hangs before the Holiest of All. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered in the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

Let us be thankful, therefore, for the opening of this window into heaven. It cheered the soul of the dreamer in Patmos; it has been a source of unspeakable comfort to pilgrims ever since; for the window which was opened to John was left open for us. "He that sat upon the throne said, Write: for these words are true and faithful." The visions of the Apocalypse were accordingly placed on record; so that all who believe the Scriptures are enabled to say, *Thus far we know.*

It is vain to speculate about the unseen world: it is worse than vain to pry into the state secrets of Jehovah. We may speak with assurance only so far as we have a "sure word of prophecy." Let us, therefore, to the Law and the Testimony. What are the facts revealed to us concerning heaven?

I. ~~It is a place, a definite locality.~~ To say that

heaven is a <sup>only part of</sup> moral state or character is meaningless. There is no such thing as abstract character. The beginnings of the kingdom are indeed "within you"; but patriotism is a barren ideality except as it suggests a country to dwell in. We localize heaven by intuition; ask a child where it is and he will point upward; since all better things, the sunlight, air and morning dews, come down from above. It means simply that heaven is a better place than earth. There were some among the fathers who believed that heaven was ~~probably in Alcyone of the Pleiades, that being regarded as the central star of the universal system.~~ All this is <sup>only a conjecture</sup> conjecture; the most that we can say being that heaven is somewhere, though we are unable to point towards it with certainty.

The terms which are used in Scripture to characterize heaven are such as point to definite locality. It is spoken of as a house: "In my Father's house are many mansions"; as a paradise, a garden, "where grow such sweet and pleasant flowers as nowhere else are seen"; as a city "which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God"; as a country where "sweet fields beyond the swelling flood stand dressed in living green." Not more real was Palestine to Moses, when from the top of Pisgah he looked upon its fertile valleys and green mountain-slopes, than is the heaven that awaits us in the hereafter.

**H.** *It is a place of infinite beauty.* "And the city had twelve gates; every several gate was of one pearl; and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. Its foundations were garnished with all manner of precious stones: jasper and sapphire; chalcedony and emerald; sardonyx, sardius

and chrysolite; beryl, topaz, chrysoprasus, jacinth and amethyst." A friend tells me that on a recent visit to the studio of one of our most distinguished American artists he found him, with a Bible open before him, engaged in arranging squares of colored glass. "I have made a singular discovery," he said; "these are the precious stones in the foundation of the New Jerusalem, and when placed in the order described in the vision they form a perfect harmony of color. Were a convention of artists called to produce a perfect color-scheme, they could not improve upon it."

It need scarcely be said that the figures of the Apocalypse are not to be taken literally. In these exuberant metaphors the utmost strain is put upon the possibilities of human language to convey the thought of surpassing splendor. The very name of the city, "The New Jerusalem," is suggestive; since Jerusalem was "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth." The Christian sings:

O mother dear, Jerusalem,  
 When shall I come to thee?  
 When shall my sorrows have an end?  
 Thy joys when shall I see?  
 Thy walls are made of precious stone,  
 Thy bulwarks diamond-square,  
 Thy gates are all of orient pearl:  
 O God, if I were there!

III. *It is a holy place.* Its beauty is distinctively "the beauty of holiness." On its throne sits the ineffable God, in whose sight the heavens are unclean, and before whom angels and archangels veil their faces. The arches of the city ring with the song, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts!" A

glimpse toward this exceeding glory moved Isaiah to cry, "Woe is me! for I am a man of unclean lips, and mine eyes have seen the King!" All unholiness is of necessity shut out, for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." (see *about #2*)

*II* ~~IV. It is a place full of sinners saved by grace.~~ "I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and with palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God! And one of the elders said unto me, 'What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?' And I said unto him, 'Sir, thou knowest.' And he said, 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'" Of all that multitude not one has earned his place by personal merit, but all come thither through the cleansing of the blood and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. Off with the rags of self-righteousness, and on with the wedding robe of fine linen clean and white! "Jesus, thy blood and righteousness my beauty are, my glorious dress." All who enter there are written in the Lamb's Book of Life; sinners all and saved by grace. Abraham is there, who saw Christ afar off; Isaiah is there, his lips purged by the living coal; Peter is there, restored to favor by his Saviour's look; the Magdalene is there, and the penitent thief; all washed in <sup>the</sup> ~~the fountain filled with blood.~~ *the* The song of heaven has in it naught of self-adulation. The eyes of the adoring multitude are all turned toward the Lamb for sinners slain; and they sing, "Worthy art thou to *as heard of*

receive power and riches and strength, honor and glory and blessing; for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us by thy blood and hast made us kings and priests unto our God."

*you would not be saved*  
 V. *It is a populous place.* To the man who asked of Jesus, "Are there few that be saved?" he made no immediate reply, declining to pay tribute to mere curiosity; but only said, "Strive to enter in." The question however is answered elsewhere and abundantly in Scripture. "I beheld a great multitude," says John, "whom no man could number, out of every nation and kindred and people and tribe;" and again, "they shall come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." One-half of the entire population of our globe dies before reaching the age of maturity; and of children Christ said, "In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father." The promise made to Messiah was that his seed should be "as the stars of heaven." The number of those who, through the centuries, have espoused the religion of Christ is an ever-increasing multitude, so that there are now on earth some hundreds of millions of people who call themselves after his name. The twelve gates of the New Jerusalem, open continually, are thronged with newcomers who, as they cross the threshold, break into singing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!"

~~V. It is a busy place.~~  
 VI. *It is a busy place.* Let us not think of heaven as an elysium of indolence, where angels and saints triumphant sit upon clouds with golden harps in their hands, having no occupation but sacred song. God has indeed prepared a rest for his people; but

*as  
 Simon has*

“rest is not quitting the busy career; rest is the fitting of self to its sphere.”

~~When Adam was placed in Paradise he was~~ <sup>had intended</sup> ~~ordered to “dress and keep it.”~~ Labor <sup>to be</sup> is a blessing, a delight. The unhappiest of mortals is he who has nothing to do. It is sin that has robbed labor of its joy. Out of the curse came the edict, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.” In heaven there will be no drudgery; no tired eyes, no aching back, no weary limbs. We shall work without worry. There will be no discomfort in toil, no burdens beyond our strength, no anxiety about keeping the wolf from the door.

It would be a pleasing exercise of the imagination to describe the tasks of the redeemed in traversing the fields of infinite space, from world to world, with energies incalculably increased, and unhampered by human limitations. But we may not venture into such conjecture; let it suffice to say that great enterprises await us in that larger sphere of action. It is written, “His servants shall serve him.” Here we try and fail, and at evening fall upon our knees to lament our shortcomings: but there we shall ever do our best and utmost; and our wage will be the Master’s word, “Well done.”

The tasks assigned us will be according to our capacity. Our faithfulness in present service will be the measure of our future <sup>usefulness</sup> promotion. Our good works, while they cannot earn an entrance into heaven, will determine our <sup>position</sup> standing there. All loyal <sup>work</sup> service in this present life is preparation for usefulness hereafter. This is the meaning of the Parable of the Pounds. To the servant whose one pound

had gained him ten the Lord said, "Well done, good servant; because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities"; and to another whose one pound had gained him five he said, "Be thou also over five cities." And by this thought we are stimulated to present effort. For every truth we grasp here and now helps us on to richer acquisitions of knowledge; every duty we discharge fits us for ~~promotion to~~ larger tasks. (see next 3)

VII. *It is a neighborly place.* The children sing, "There is a happy land far, far away." We may indeed be far from the redeemed, but they are very near to us, since they are no longer subject to the limitations of space. We are assured that the hosts of heaven know what is happening on earth and take a sympathetic interest in our welfare. The visitation of angels was a frequent occurrence under the Old Economy; and if now such visits are few and far between, it is because the clear revelation of the divine will in the completed Scriptures has superseded them. It is certain that Moses and Elias knew what was occurring on earth, else how could they have come to the Mount of Transfiguration to converse with Christ as to "the decease which he was presently to accomplish at Jerusalem"? One of them had been dead fifteen hundred and the other a thousand years, yet they were profoundly concerned in his atoning work. During the bitter hours of the Crucifixion there were legions of angels hovering near. They came to roll away the stone from Christ's sepulcher; and at his ascension they thronged his chariot-wheels to bear him aloft to his throne.

It is pleasant to reflect that our friends translated



to glory are not unmindful of us. "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister unto them which are heirs of salvation?" We cannot, indeed, communicate with them, but there is abundant reason to believe that they are permitted to minister to us. We are so afraid of the puerile follies of "Spiritualism," that we have gone to the other extreme and almost abandoned the sweet doctrine of guardian angels. It is an unspeakable comfort to the bereaved to feel assured that their friends who have crossed over to the better country are not regardless of their griefs and strivings, and that they are permitted to help in ways unknown to us. (see spirit 3)

IV A, VIII. ~~It is a homelike place.~~ The Lord said, "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you." He would have said "home," but unfortunately there was no word for home in the Greek or Aramaic tongue.

What makes a home? Not beautiful furnishings and adornments, but friends and kinsfolk. Home would be a dreary place were it not for the interchange of love. All the songs and hallelujahs of heaven could not satisfy our longings if we were not to know each other there.

In one of the masterpieces of German art the heavens are covered with clouds, which, on closer view, resolve themselves into faces. This is a true parable; there are many familiar faces in the heavens above us. Those who have gone before keep their identity and memory is unimpaired. Death does not disrupt the soul. Wherefore, we do not sorrow as others that are without hope. There is a day coming when we shall clasp hands with those from whom death



has briefly parted us. "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." O blessed day, when we shall meet our beloved in the general assembly of the firstborn! The Scriptures permit no doubt: they answer to the longing of our hearts. The words of Charles Kingsley commend themselves to our common sense: "All I can say is, if I do not love my wife in heaven as well as I do here, then is there neither resurrection of my body nor of my soul but of some other, and I shall not be I." *freedom (all the)*

*B* ~~IX. It is a happy place.~~ There shall be no sin there. All the misery of this world comes from sin. No swords would be crossed in battle were it not for sin. There would be no desolate homes, no breaking hearts, were it not for sin. But sin shall have no place in heaven. And there shall be no night there, nor gathering of shadows. And there shall be no more sea; no restless tossing of the soul in longing for "the tender grace of a day that is dead." And there shall be no death there; no weeping at bed-sides, ~~no crape on the door~~, no hearse rumbling through the streets. And there shall be no tears. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto fountains of living waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

The happiness of heaven is set forth under the figure of a great banquet; "the marriage supper of the Lamb." The redeemed shall sit down at the table with him. ~~And there will be music and merry-making.~~ It is written, "In thy presence is fulness

of joy, and at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore."

*see sect. 4.*

C. ~~X. It is Christ's own place.~~ All the glory of heaven centers in him. "And I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." He sits upon a throne high and lifted up, having upon his vesture and his thigh a name written, "King of kings and Lord of lords." And he is the very Christ who walked among men, the same yesterday, to-day and forever. "And I beheld and, lo, in the midst of the throne a Lamb as it had been slain." This means that he retains the marks of his great sacrifice. The redeemed will know him by these *stigmata*. "And one shall say to him, What are these wounds in thy hands? Then shall he say unto them, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." We shall behold him face to face; and we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. His sacramental prayer will be fully answered: "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

D. ~~XI. It is an eternal place.~~ "And they shall go out no more forever." The disciples who caught a momentary glimpse of Christ's glory on the Mount of Transfiguration said, "Lord, let us make here three tabernacles." They longed to abide in his beatific presence; but this could not be. The glory vanished and the sweet communion was broken up. The record of the last interview of Jesus with his disciples

closes with the words, "Arise, let us go hence." All the meetings of earth close in like manner. On the seashore at Miletus the elders of Ephesus met Paul in brief converse, then watched the ship that carried him out of their sight, and "wept because they should see his face no more." But there will be no farewells in heaven. Our inheritance there is incorruptible and undefiled and fadeth not away. The names that are written in the Book of Life shall never be blotted out.

" 'Forever with the Lord!'

Amen, so let it be!

Life from the dead is in that word;

'Tis immortality."

*Conclusion*  
~~XII. It is an attainable place.~~ The way is pointed out. The Italians have a proverb, "All roads lead to Rome"; but there is one road only that leads to heaven. Isaiah spoke of it: "An highway shall be there and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness; the wayfaring man though a fool shall not err therein." And Christ spoke of it: "Thomas saith, 'Lord, we know not whither thou goest and how can we know the way?' And Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.'" It is the old way, the plain way, the royal way of the cross; all others are vain and misleading. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is death." Let us make no mistake. "He—and he only—that believeth in the Son hath everlasting life."

The question of supreme importance for everyone is this, "Am I in that way?" The beginning of a journey is in taking the first step. The first step

heavenward is in accepting Christ as the Saviour. That done, we may read our title clear to mansions in the skies.

As Christian in the Pilgrim's Progress drew near to the Heavenly City, he saw the gates opened to receive others. "I looked in after them," he says, "and, behold, the city shone like the sun; the streets also were paved with gold, and in them walked many who had crowns on their heads and palms in their hands and golden harps to sing praises withal. There were also some that had wings, and they answered one another without intermission, saying, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord!' And after that they shut up the gates; which, when I had seen, *I wished myself among them.*" If you also, my friend, wish to be among them, take the hand of the Lord of Salvation and let him lead you on through the duties and responsibilities of life, and up the steeps and over the rough places, and at last through the gates into the city.

## “WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?”

What is written in the law? How readest thou?—Luke 10, 26.

Our Lord was preaching in Jerusalem at the Feast of Dedication when a certain lawyer “stood up and tempted him (that is, endeavored to entrap him), saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” The lawyers of that time were biblical experts, and this query was one of their familiar catch-questions. Christ’s answer was instant and conclusive, “What is written in the law? How readest thou?” In all likelihood he pointed, as he spoke, to the phylactery on the questioner’s forearm or forehead, in which was written the compendium of the law. And Jesus said, “This do, and thou shalt live;” that is, the sum total of duty is to keep the Law.

I do not propose to inquire here as to the possibility of perfect obedience. The cross is God’s solution of that problem. But the important point is this, and it forms the proposition of my discourse: *The Moral Law as set forth in the Scriptures is the fundamental and perpetual standard of personal conduct for all the children of men.*

A book has recently been published, entitled “In His Steps,” which has met with an unparalleled

circulation throughout the Christian world. The story runs on this wise: A pastor, Henry Maxwell, created a profound sensation in his parish by gathering certain of his congregation about him and pledging them to determine all of their conduct by this standard: “What would Jesus do?” One of the parties to this covenant was a merchant, who, in the application of this rule, proceeded to place himself in right relations with his patrons and employees. Another was a choir-singer, who declined an engagement with a theatrical troupe and an eligible offer of marriage in pursuance of what she deemed to be “the probable action of Jesus.” Still another was the editor of a daily newspaper, who stopped his Sunday issue, cut off all objectionable advertisements and renounced political partisanship for a like reason. And still another was a young heiress of the parish who gave up her luxurious habits, devoted half her fortune to the endowment of the moral newspaper and the remainder to the founding of social settlements and similar plans for the betterment of the condition of the poor. The pastor himself abandoned his usual method of pulpit ministrations, devoted his energies to the denunciation of municipal evils such as the saloon and bad politics, addressed himself to the solution of sociological problems, and ended by resigning his pastorate and going down to live in the slums and labor in behalf of the poor and degraded. It need scarcely be said that this mode of procedure created a great sensation and ultimately turned the city upside down, or rather, let us say, right side up. If realized, it must indeed always and everywhere have similar results in the necessity of the case.

I desire to emphasize, with all possible urgency, what seems to be the main purpose of this book; namely, the Duty of Imitating Christ, or “following in his steps.” At the same time it should be pointed out that this of itself is a partial and inadequate statement of “the whole duty of man.”

*First: the Scriptures go further.* Do not they say, then, that we are to imitate Christ? Yes. “For hereunto are ye called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that ye should follow in his steps.” And again, “He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” And again, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” But the question is one of emphasis, or of the relative importance of things. There is not a word in the teachings of Jesus or in Scripture to contravene this proposition: that *the standard by which every Christian life is to be regulated in general and in particular is the Moral Law.* When the lawyer asked of Jesus what he should do that he might inherit eternal life, the Master referred him to that statement: and in this he was consistent with all his teaching and with the entire trend of the word of God.

In the Scriptures are two great ethical symbols, in which is embodied our whole duty. One of these is the Decalogue, which was written on tables of stone to indicate that it was to be of perpetual force. How could it be otherwise, since by common consent the Moral Law, as contained in the Ten Commandments, was interwoven with the brain and sinew of the human constitution before it was inscribed on the



tables of stone? Its ordinances can never be abrogated until there is a radical transformation in the physical and moral structure of the race.

The other ethical symbol is the Sermon on the Mount, which was not given as a substitute for the Decalogue but as our Lord's exposition of it. “Think not,” he said, “that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets; I am come not to destroy but to fulfill; for, verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” The Ceremonial Law was wholly fulfilled in Christ; since all its rites and ceremonies, its lustrations and sacrifices pointed forward to Messiah and found their consummation and completion in him. But as to the Moral Law, our Lord himself referred its fulfillment to the conscience of every man. He reiterated its precepts one by one, adding the emphasis of his personal authority in a most searching analysis, and made them binding forever on the hearts and consciences of those who honor and serve him.

In between the two great symbols stands Christ himself, as a living illustration and exemplar of this perfection. *Ecce Homo!* He stands solitary and alone, the one man in history who is as good as the Law. We are to follow him, preeminently in his obedience to its precepts. To inquire “What would Jesus do?” is to get an immediate answer “He would do right;” in other words, he would do what the Law requires.

*Second: “The new definition of discipleship,” as stated in this book, seems to take matters out of the hands of Christ himself in so far as it remands to a subordinate place not a*



*few of the truths which he declared to be of supreme importance.*

It will be profitable, just here, to inquire as to the real relation which Christ sustains to his people. And fortunately there is no possibility of doubt or peradventure. His teaching is clear.

(1) He stands to us, at the outset, in the relation of a Priest. He came to offer himself, as a whole burnt-offering, on Calvary in expiation of sin. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It is a singular fact that in the book referred to there is no reference to this expiatory sacrifice. The saving power of the gospel seems to be located in the imitation of the virtues of Christ. In point of fact, that has never saved any man. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;" and "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." The very beginning of the Christian life is in the apprehension of this truth. "This is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent." The reverend Henry Maxwell, in his preaching in his own parish and in the slums, while dwelling constantly on the importance of following in Christ's steps, is not represented as declaring to sinners the vital importance of looking to Christ crucified as their deliverer from the shame and bondage and penalty of sin.

(2) He is also our Prophet; as such he instructs us in the great verities of the spiritual life. His word as our Prophet must be ultimate. We find, however, that in his teaching there is a constant reference to

the Scriptures as the inspired setting of the Moral Law. But this is not made to appear in the pages of “In His Steps.” We note this as another singular omission, in view of the fact that Christ so consistently referred his hearers to the Word.—While we are inquiring as to the probable conduct of Jesus it may not be impertinent to ask, Would he have written a book of three hundred pages and wholly ignored the authority of Holy Writ? To him the Scriptures were “law” and “truth.” He made them the rule of his own action, as when in the Wilderness he met the Adversary with the words, “It is written.” He never, in any wise, reflected upon the veracity or trustworthiness of the Scriptures; on the other hand, he said, “Search them; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and these are they which testify of me.” We shall best manifest our love to him as our Prophet by receiving his teaching in this and in every other particular as Yea and Amen; and anything less than this is not to follow “in his steps.”

(3) He is also our King. He came to set up a spiritual kingdom on earth. Its foundations were laid on Calvary in his blood. Its great commission is, “Go ye, evangelize.” The purpose of Christ was to save the whole man. He cared for the body, healing the sick and relieving common necessities. But, above all things, he sought the welfare of the immortal soul. It must have been so, since our physical life is but an handbreadth, while the life of the soul is forever and ever. The words of Jesus, “Follow me,” have reference preeminently to the setting up of his spiritual kingdom in the deliverance of the world from sin. But in Henry Maxwell’s gospel the

emphasis is certainly placed on physical conditions. We are urged to follow Christ in the healing of the sick and the clothing of the naked, in effecting right relations between capital and labor and in the general improvement of the present order. I repeat, this is involved in the great mission of Christ, but it is not the matter of supreme moment; and to make it so is to disturb the right proportion of things. It is important that we should promote the temporal comfort of our fellow men as far as possible; but the tremendous problem still remains, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?"

I say, therefore, that the proposed rule of action falls short of the teaching of Christ. A truly Christo-centric life is one that embraces not a mere segment, but the great circle of his doctrine. It accepts Christ as an atoning Priest, an infallible Prophet and a supreme King; it vindicates its sincerity by accepting his sacrifice, receiving his teaching as ultimate and engaging in the service of his kingdom along the lines which he has marked out.

*Third: The rule proposed as the supreme standard of Christian conduct does not relieve the situation, since it is precisely as impracticable as obedience to the Moral Law.*

(1) Its criterion is this: "What would Jesus do, if he were in our place?" But is such a change of circumstances in all cases possible? One tremendous fact is overlooked, to wit, the divinity of Christ. If he were only a holy man, the rule of *mutatis mutandis* might well apply. So far forth, there is probably no Unitarian who would not be willing to accept this

rule; for even those who reject the Godhood of Jesus, his atonement and his infallible teaching, are willing to admit that he was a most exemplary man. But this is not enough. He was more than man; he was also “very God of very God.” And that fact qualifies the entire proposition. He was always buttressed by his omnipotent holiness. We are urged to follow him everywhere; above all to follow him in his sufferings. We are told that we must “go with him to Gethsemane.” Yet he himself, on entering the Garden, said to his three companions: “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here and watch with me;” then going a little farther he drank in solitude the purple cup of vicarious pain. Let no man intrude upon that awful anguish which was the divine expiation of the world’s sin. “I am hungry for suffering!” cries Henry Maxwell; yet suffering of itself is profitless; and the extremity of the vicarious pain of Jesus is certainly not to be shared by any mortal man. Is it not written, “I have trodden the wine-press alone and of the people there was none with me”?

(2) Still further, the proposed rule refers the whole question of morals to personal opinion. “The only right standard for everyone is the probable action of Jesus.” In other words, there is no rigid standard whatever. The book tells of a certain man in the employ of a railway company who by mistake opened a letter intended for the superintendent of the road, in which he found evidence of systematic violation of the Interstate Commerce Laws. The question now arose, What should he do in these premises? He decided that, under the circum-

stances, Jesus would file information against the company, which he proceeded to do. It would appear to some of us, probably, that Jesus would not have taken advantage of information coming to him in that way. The question might better have been referred to an old ordinance which reads, "Thou shalt not steal." But what would become of society if personal opinion were thus allowed to supplant all formal rules and regulations; or if it were left to every man to determine his conduct by supposing what Jesus would do? Here is a broad margin surely for ethical latitudinarianism. How much better to hew to the line and do right! Is not the man who keeps the Law sure of following Christ?

On the second page of the volume, "In His Steps," we find this legend:

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by  
CHARLES M. SHELDON

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The question arises, What would Christ have done under these circumstances? Would he have copyrighted a book which was intended solely for the betterment of men? Would he have restricted its influence with this *caveat*, "All rights reserved"? In our opinion, he would have made its truths as free as air, since he himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." I do not mention this, however, by way of criticising the book or its author, but simply to set forth the folly of referring an ethical question to mere individual opinion. In fact this leaves us no constant or trustworthy standard at all.

The Moral Law is rigid and unvarying. There is

no mistaking its prescript. It leaves nothing to the imagination. It is like our standard of weights and measures. A grocer is not left to decide for himself how much sugar there shall be in a pound, since there is in Washington a cube of platinum weighing precisely sixteen ounces which lays an imperative command upon him. No man who sells fabrics by measure is permitted to use his judgment as to the number of inches in a yard; there is a standard which settles the matter definitely for him. So are our civil laws. A man at court is not permitted to measure his guilt or innocence by any such plea as, “I thought thus and so,” but is judged by the code. The only opinion which a man can be allowed to hold is that the law is good, and he must adjust his life to it.

*Fourth: The rule proposed may easily be so misunderstood as to be grievous and mischievous in its operation.* It may be grievous in leading to unnecessary perplexity and in many cases to utter discouragement. Not that the standard is too high; for it is as difficult to keep the Law as it is to imitate Christ; but in case of failure, it alone cannot satisfy the sinner’s need. And failure there is bound to be. For no man ever yet brought “the bottom of his life up to the top of his light.” He who undertakes to imitate Christ as a perfect man is certain to fall short; and he is left to despair unless he has learned that Jesus is more than an exemplary man.

The rule proposed may easily be mischievous also in its mistaken application. To this source we refer the rise of the Barefoot Friars: who said, “Christ was a poor man; he had not where to lay his head; there-

fore, we will consecrate ourselves to perpetual poverty." The advocates of an uneducated ministry reason thus: "Since Jesus was a man of limited culture, why should we resort to Theological Seminaries?" A man engaged in the honest trade of a carpenter says, "At thirty years of age my fellow-craftsman Jesus locked the door of his shop and went forth to devote himself to the preaching of the Kingdom: his circumstances and mine are similar; why should I not follow him?" The Flagellants are "hungry to suffer," because Christ was a sufferer; and you may see them in Mexico in solemn procession, bearing crosses, with blood streaming from their wounds. A celibate clergy is justified by the celibacy of Jesus. There are fanatical "communities" to be found in many portions of our country where "the probable action of Jesus" is the only rule. So-called "Christian Scientists," who, while ignoring the divinity of Christ and his redemption from sin, regard him as a compassionate healer, will tell you that they are trying to follow in his steps. What does all this mean? It means that the letter killeth and the Spirit maketh alive. It means that we are not to press a duty beyond the limits of possibility or of common sense. It means that in the last reduction, duty is not a matter of mere opinion but of obedience to holy law.

Let us close where we began, with a word of caution. The question is not as to the importance of following Christ, but as to the validity and binding force of the Moral Law. To insist upon this is not to call for any lowering of the standard or to deprecate the imitation of Christ. On the contrary it bids



us aim at perfection, and it does this in precise accordance with the teachings of Christ himself.

The order as laid down in Scripture is this: *first*, the Law; *second*, in default of obedience to that Law, a resort to Christ for pardon; and *third*, the “bringing into captivity of every thought to the obedience of Christ.” At this point, the supreme obligation is to please him and follow in his steps.

It is written that a young man came to Jesus, saying, “Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” And Jesus said, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” And he saith unto him, “Which?” Jesus answered, “Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” The young man said, “All these have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?” It was to meet this desperate “lack” that Jesus said, “Go, part with everything, and come and follow me.” In other words the Law, by revealing to this young man his sin, must as a schoolmaster lead him to Christ, in whom he was to receive the pardon of his sins. That done, thenceforth and forevermore his duty was to follow in Christ’s steps.

Our life is not simply in doing, but in being; and character is measured by one’s conformity to Christ as Christ conformed to law. It will be quite safe to ask under all circumstances, “What would please my Lord and Master?” or, “What would he have me to do?” This is the Pauline rule: “For this cause we do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all



wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." We shall gain nothing in our devotion to Christ by ignoring that majestic Law which he not only exemplified in his own character but constantly exalted as the unchangeable standard of human living. The example of Jesus is not to be regarded as a substitute for the Moral Law but as its vital interpretation; and obeying that, we shall indeed be following in his steps.

## THE POTTER AND THE CLAY.

“I went down to the potter’s house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.”—Jer. 18, 3-6.

The truth here set forth is easily misinterpreted. We shall be helped to a right understanding of it by a comparative exegesis. The metaphor of the Potter and the Clay is found in three other portions of Scripture, as follows:—

Job 10, 8, 9. “Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about; yet thou dost destroy me. Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay; and wilt thou bring me into dust again?” (There is an obvious reference here to the creation of man. Gen. 2, 7.)

Isaiah 45, 5-9. “I am the LORD, and there is none else; there is no God beside me; I girded thee, though thou hast not known me; that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things. Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it. Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?” (A rebuke is administered to the Israelites, who murmured because their deliverance was to come from Cyrus, an alien of a despised race.)

Romans 9, 20-26. “O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the

vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God." (Paul is explaining the reprobation of the stubborn and incorrigible Jews and the calling of the Gentiles to the privileges of the kingdom of Christ.)

The figure here used is one of the oldest of metaphors, as pottery itself is among the most ancient of arts. At this day, in the Orient, where the old order changeth not, you may find the potter at his work just as Jeremiah found him. He places a formless lump of clay on a horizontal wheel; with his foot on a treadle he sets it in motion; the mass having assumed a conical shape, he thrusts his thumb into the top of it, widens the opening by the deft pressure of his fingers, and carefully manipulates it into any desired shape. It would be hard to find a figure which should more aptly characterize the Lord's relation to the creatures of his hand. "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? O man, who art thou that repliest against God?"

The primary reference is to God's dealings with Israel, the favored nation. A man and a nation differ in this: a man lives forever; therefore his reckoning laps over into eternity, his account cannot be balanced without reference to the Judgment day. But a nation has no immortality; it lives only in time; therefore its judgment must be here and now. God deals with nations, therefore, by the rule of exact retribution. And he is a sure paymaster. It was because the Jews did not realize this that they lost their peculiar opportunity and sinned away forever their day of grace.

“The Lord is governor among the nations.” He is the potter and they the clay. “The king’s heart is in his hand as the rivers of water.” The nation or kingdom that will not serve him shall perish. “His mills grind slow, but they grind woe.” Here is a lesson for France; the God who notes the sparrow’s fall will surely not overlook a great judicial wrong though it be perpetrated on the humblest of men. Here is a lesson for England also, at this moment, when her multitudinous armies are marching forth against Oom Paul; Christian against Christian; the strong against the weak. “*Faustrecht*” is not righteousness. God is Arbiter; hence the race is not always to the swift nor the battle to the strong. The Recessional, which only yesterday was on every lip, is in little favor now. Yet this is the moment to recall and emphasize it:

“God of our fathers, known of old—  
 Lord of our far-flung battle line—  
 Beneath whose awful hand we hold  
 Dominion over palm and pine—  
 Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
 Lest we forget—lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies—  
 The Captains and the Kings depart—  
 Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,  
 An humble and a contrite heart.  
 Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
 Lest we forget—lest we forget!

Far-called our navies melt away—  
 On dune and headland sinks the fire—  
 Lo, all our pomp of yesterday  
 Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!  
 Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,  
 Lest we forget—lest we forget!

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose  
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe—  
Such boasting as the Gentiles use,  
Or lesser breeds without the Law—  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget !”

And here is a lesson for America as well. We may not withhold our hands from the responsibility involved in new possessions fallen to our lot as the result of a righteous war: but it behooves us as a nation to deal justly with our humblest wards as in the sight of God. To abandon our recent acquisitions to their own incompetency, to their former masters or to the tender mercies of those carnivorous birds familiarly known as “the Great Powers,” would be flagrant cowardice indeed; more blameworthy still would it be to withhold from them the benignant blessings of justice and freedom which God has so graciously bestowed upon us.

The most casual reader of history can hardly be unmoved as he beholds the splendid ruins of thrones and dynasties strewn along the pathway of the centuries. What are these sherds that litter the earth? Rome, Babylon, Assyria, Egypt; their glory is in the dust. Proud and recalcitrant, they forgot God; and he broke and scattered them along the way.

But the individual application of this metaphor is what immediately concerns us. God deals not with the race *en masse*, but man by man. A singular mark of his greatness is this distributive administration of justice. He calleth us by name. The humblest is not beneath his notice. The Lord said to Nathaniel, “I saw thee when thou wast under the fig-tree.”

*Our first lesson* is this; *God is sovereign*. He has a property right in us and claims an indisputable right to do whatsoever he will with his own. We may resent this, but we cannot confute it. Let the proposition be stated in its harshest form: Suppose God were a despot regardless of justice and heedless of mercy (though, blessed be his name, the very opposite is true), his irresistible power and incontestable authority over us hold good.

The flagrant sin of our time is irreverence. We are accustomed to take great liberties with God. There are some who decline to recognize him even as Creator; for what need of the potter if the wheel revolves automatically and the clay shapes itself? There is also a practical denial of God's providence; for are we not the architects of our own fortunes here and hereafter? Is not our life a joint product of heredity and environment? And is not character our own handiwork? The divine part in salvation is, in like manner, reduced to the minimum. "Work out your own salvation" is the exhortation of our time. The philosophy most in favor is that of La Place, who, when Napoleon remonstrated, "I find no mention of God in your system," replied, "We have ruled God out; we have no need of him." But meanwhile the Potter sits at the wheel yesterday, to-day and forever the same; and wise men perceive that he is still sovereign over all. "Work out your own salvation" indeed, but with an infinite hope and expectancy, since "it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure."

Let it be repeated, therefore, with emphasis that, if there be a God, his power is infinite and his

authority absolute. The Potter may do with the clay what he will. He may fashion it as he pleases, into a pot for carrying ashes from beneath the altar, a bowl for holding frankincense or a chalice to be filled with sacramental wine. It is for him to say which it shall be. The question at this point is purely one of prerogative. We shall presently see how the exercise of this prerogative is conditioned by the laws of the divine being. But if he were a despot, as cruel as hundred-handed Siva, he would still be absolute and there would be no replying to him. The Infinite and Absolute, who created the world and all things therein by his fiat, has indisputable power to shape that world at his pleasure or sweep it out of existence with a breath of his nostrils. His scepter is indeed a right scepter. He ruleth in equity, and the judgments of his throne are truth and righteousness altogether; but quite apart from that consideration he is sole potentate of the universe, and may do whatsoever he will with his own.

*Our second lesson* is this: *The Clay has rights which the Potter respects.* It is a proverb that "no figure of speech must be made to go on all-fours." There is a point at which all analogies fail. Man is as clay, indeed, in the hands of God. But under those shaping hands he assumes a form which gives him a peculiar claim upon God.

We are animate clay. The fable of Pygmalion is realized in us. The sculptor breathes upon his handiwork and, behold, it is a living soul! It is written, "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him." Thus the potter is also a Father; the clay becomes a Man; vast possibilities

are before him. As out of the whirl of the potter's wheel comes a thing of beauty, so character is evolved from the vicissitudes of life. God calls the living clay, "My Son"; and the son thinks the Father's thoughts after him. He is now a son of God "and it doth not yet appear what he shall be."

We are also normal clay; that is, in the process of our shaping under the hands of the potter, we are endowed with law. And the laws of our being are the very same that center in God. Truth, justice and holiness emanate from him as sunlight from the sun; truth, justice and holiness are likewise the high conditions of our life. And the Potter is ever conditioned by this fact in his dealings with us. He is bound—and none the less so because self-bound—to respect the laws of our being. Thus it is written, "To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the Most High, the Lord approveth not"; and again, "I drew them with the cords of a man."

Furthermore, we are sovereign clay; and this by virtue of our kinship with the sovereign Potter. We alone of all his creatures have power to defy him. To his word "Thou shalt," we may reply, "I will not," and take the consequences. We were intended to be vessels of honor; but, if so disposed, we may thwart this beneficent purpose and bring to naught the Potter's plan. We must choose for ourselves. Not merely the freedom of choice but its necessity is upon us; and herein are the issues of eternal life and death. God points us to righteousness, saying, "This is the way; walk ye in it"; but we are free to turn aside into another way of which it is written, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but



the end thereof are the ways of death." God would have all men to be saved; but a man can be lost if he insist upon it.

By the laws of our being, which we share with God, he is prevented from putting an undue constraint upon us. Should we persist in sin and stubbornly refuse his overtures of mercy, he can only lament, "O Ephraim, how shall I make thee as Admah and Zeboim? My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. How shall I give thee up?" Or, as he did over the Holy City, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" The vessel is not made for reprobation, but if it refuses to meet the noble ends of its being, if all fashioning and refashioning be vain, the potter has no alternative but to break it into potsherds and scatter it.

Our third lesson is this; *The Potter stoops to reason with the Clay*. Let it be observed that this is wholly gratuitous. The Scriptures are God's Apology; in which he condescends to unfold and elucidate his dealings with men. He has the power to act without an accounting, and so he often does. Not all his secrets are revealed to us.

"Deep in unfathomable mines  
Of never-failing skill,  
He treasures up His bright designs  
And works His sovereign will.  
Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
And scan His work in vain;  
God is His own Interpreter,  
And He will make it plain."

A veil hangs before the Holy of Holies; but,

though we may not enter, we know that behind that veil is the Ark of the Covenant, and over that is a mercy-seat sprinkled with blood. And from that secret place comes a voice, "I am the LORD, the LORD God merciful and gracious; longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth!"

He has power to command also without explaining. Who are we that we should reply against God? His word is ultimate. *Dictum, factum!* His law went forth from Sinai with the sound of a trumpet, waxing louder and louder. A boundary was drawn round the base of the mountain and the people were admonished not to break through the bounds. If one of their cattle passed the limit, it must be stoned or thrust through with a dart. The mountain was enveloped in clouds, from which issued lightnings and thunder. So terrible was the sight that the people "did exceedingly fear and quake"; and they said to Moses, "Speak thou with us and we will hear; but let not God speak with us lest we die!" This manifestation of his authority from Sinai might have concluded God's dealings with us. But great is his condescension: "We are not come unto the mount that burned with fire, nor unto blackness and darkness and tempest; but we are come unto Mount Zion and unto the City of the living God, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant." The gospel is the complement of the law; it is God's own exposition of the law. And Calvary speaks thus: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live."

It follows irrefutably that God must save us as he will. He makes no more imposing exhibition of his sovereignty than in his "sovereign grace;" to wit, he "so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life." Faith is the condition which a sovereign God has been pleased to affix to his unspeakable gift of life. He has distinctly admonished us that we shall be saved only by a vital and appropriating faith in the sacrifice of his only-begotten and well-beloved Son.

And now, before leaving the Potter's House, there are two facts to be emphasized: One is, that the Potter is doing his best with the clay. He means well by every one of us. Are we helping or hindering him? Blessed is the man who has come into sympathy with the purposes of a gracious God. The greatest of uninspired writers has said,

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will."

But Jeremiah goes further in saying that God not only shapes, but reshapes again and again, in the hope of producing a vessel of honor out of the plastic clay. "The vessel was marred in the hand of the potter, so he made it again another vessel as seemed good" to him. This is the meaning of providence. God is making all things work together for our good. If prosperity will not shape us aright, the heavy hand of adversity must refashion us. And only when all efforts fail by reason of our perverseness, and the clay has been stiffened by the furnace-fire into an uncouth and useless shape, is it broken into potsherds.

The other fact is this: God's great purpose in the recovery of our world from its bondage of sin is bound to be ultimately accomplished. The potter is at the wheel. This is the philosophy of history. This is the logic of events. All lines are converging toward one glorious consummation, "the restitution of all things." The authority of God as he has manifested himself in the gospel of Christ, shall be recognized from the river unto the ends of the earth. The LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice! The king who with bleeding feet ascended his throne on Calvary shall yet see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. He shall have the heathen for his inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. "All's well that ends well." The tabernacle of God shall be among men; and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them and be their God.

## THE PERFECT LAW OF LIBERTY

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.”  
—Gal. 5, 1.

“He that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord’s freeman.”  
—I. Cor. 7, 22.

“But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty and continueth therein, shall be blessed in his deed.”—James 1, 25.

These passages of Scripture are of special interest as bearing on the true significance of freedom. In the first we have an intimation that the followers of Christ are in the enjoyment of a peculiar sort of freedom. In the second we have a noteworthy paradox; to wit, the servant of the Lord is a free man. In the third occurs a strange antithesis, “the perfect law of liberty”; the common understanding being that law and liberty are diverse if not contradictory terms.

Madame Roland on her way to the guillotine is said to have paused before a statue of Freedom and exclaimed: “O Freedom, how many crimes are perpetrated in thy sacred name!” Nor was this without reason; for the French Revolution was going on. Never were souls and bodies more hopelessly enslaved than during that Reign of Terror, when, between the 10th of June and the 27th of July, no less than fourteen hundred victims laid their “whimpering heads” under the “Maiden’s” ax. And all in Freedom’s name! The dead-walls of Paris were placarded

meanwhile with the legend, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." At the root of the matter lay a misunderstanding as to the definition of liberty. What is liberty? An escape from law, exemption from restraint, deliverance from obligation? Is that it? *Nay; to be free is to move without let or hindrance within one's proper sphere.*

A truant boy is not free, however he may seem to be enjoying himself in the fields; he is free only when addressing himself to the tasks assigned to him. A prisoner who has broken his bars is in the bondage of a law stronger than locks and bolts, a fact betrayed in his furtive glance and guarded step. A sensualist giving himself up to the indulgence of his appetites is a slave of habit, lashed with a whip of scorpions. The man who rejects all truth lying beyond the circumscription of his senses will tell you that he is a freethinker; but, indeed, he is the thrall of prejudice, ready to believe anything but a "Thus saith the Lord," and usually possessed of a very hydrophobia against truth and against those who receive it. Lawlessness is not freedom. He only is a freeman whom the truth makes free.

Let us repeat our definition; *Freedom is unfettered action in one's proper sphere.* The freest man that ever lived was Jesus Christ. He had no superior and was under the domination of no laws except such as emanated from himself; he was free because he was absolutely true to his place. He lived and moved with perfect ease along the pathway of right. Such ease of movement is due to constraint rather than to its absence. There is no liberty except under law. A ship "sails free" only when she keeps her course.

Thus we hear Christ saying, ever and anon, "I must," and, "It must needs be." The pathway of his life had been marked out and he moved calmly and easily over it.

I. *He was bound to fulfil his destiny as outlined in the Word of God.* "All things must be fulfilled," he said, "which are written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning me." (Luke 24, 44.)

His journey through the world from Bethlehem to Calvary had been planned from all eternity. He was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." The events of his earthly life and ministry run through Scripture like a golden thread; his birth, doctrine, miracles, death, burial, resurrection from the dead, all these and much beside, in detail and particular. And along the roadway thus prepared for him, he scrupulously pursued his way.

At the outset of his ministry he entered the synagogue at Nazareth, and opening the Book at the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord," he said, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." On his memorable journey through Cæsarea-Philippi, as on other occasions, he opened the Scriptures unto his disciples, "showing how he must suffer many things and be killed and be raised again the third day." On the night of his arrest, when Peter would have defended

him, Jesus said, "Put up again thy sword into its place: Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?" So onward he went to his cross, swerving not a hair's breadth from the line of prophecy until he cried, "It is finished!" He had reached his destination; he had fulfilled to the last jot and tittle that which had been written concerning him.

And how does this apply to us? Our destiny also is in the Scriptures. Here are our Sibylline leaves. We were in God's mind when he indited his Word. "All Scripture," it is said, is given by inspiration of God, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." This means that God's Word is a definite rule of conduct for every right-thinking man, to the end that he shall walk in the way of righteousness and of eternal life.

The old soothsayers of the Orient use the rock-crystal in telling fortunes; affirming that he who looks intently into it may see himself, dimly outlined at the first but growing clearer and clearer. The Bible is our rock-crystal. To search the Scriptures is to find our lives projected there. God has declared therein his purpose concerning us. To turn aside from that prescription is to pass under the bondage of sin. Our freedom is in ready compliance; our happiness, in making God's Word ultimate, saying, "Thus it is written of me."

II. *Our Lord was also under the domination of Duty.* He reproved his disciples on the way to Emmaus, after his crucifixion, saying, "O fools and slow of heart



to believe all that the prophets have spoken; ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?" (Luke 24, 25.)

He was under the control of that tremendous word "ought." The ethical imperative ruled him. To the ordinance of the Word, "Thou shalt," his conscience answered without hesitation, "I must!"

He spoke of himself as having been "sent" by the Father upon a definite errand. He said, when a mere boy, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" later on, "I must work the work of him that sent me"; and again, "I have a baptism that I must be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" He was loyal to his conscience. Enough for him that any course of conduct was right; that ended all questioning. The objective point of his temptation in the wilderness was to turn him aside from duty; but he was unmoved. His followers would have bestowed upon him the crown of Israel; but inasmuch as Duty pointed to Calvary, he "departed again into a mountain himself alone." The path was plain before him: therefore he set his face steadfastly toward the cross and tarried not by the way.

The application is clear. I have a conscience, an inward monitor of duty. It is indeed perverted by sin; it may be seared by wrong habit as with a hot iron; it may be blinded and silenced by persistent disregard; but God stands ready to correct it. He who relies on conscience alone will go astray; but conscience *plus* prayer *plus* God's word is an infallible guide (James 1, 5). As a watchmaker adjusts a chronometer, so God regulates the individual conscience if we desire it.

Then the line of duty is plain before us. And this is the pathway of the Lord's free man. When Captain Clark took "The Oregon" out of the Golden Gate, he had a letter of sealed instructions as to the vessel's course. He would have betrayed his own manhood had he said, "I will not be dictated to; this man-of-war shall become a rover of the sea." He felt no chafing of bonds in meeting the behest of Duty, but sailed by compass and quadrant around the Horn to Santiago. Such is the life of a true man. He is freest in being and doing what God through conscience bids him be and do.

III. *Moreover Christ was obedient to the Demands of Human Need.* He had heard, from his high place, the cry of suffering men. "Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me), to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10, 7). In other words, the appeal of humanity laid a stern necessity upon him.

It is written that once, when he desired to reach Galilee, "he must needs go through Samaria." The shorter and more familiar road was by the caravan route along the Jordan, but he was bound to go through Samaria because, at the well of Sychar, a sinful woman was waiting to receive the water of life. For a like reason he must needs go to Gethsemane, where the purple cup of anguish awaited him. "O my Father, if it be possible," he prayed, "let this cup pass from me!" But inasmuch as the suffering race could be helped in no other way, he added, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, thy will be done!" So to the very end the cry for help was ringing in his ears. He must be "lifted up" to answer it; for "as Moses lifted up

the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

And again, what is the application? The very atmosphere about us is vibrant with cries of suffering. The necessity that was laid upon Christ is, according to the measure of our ability, laid also upon us. In his name we are to do good as we have opportunity unto all men. In his name we are to lift all burdens, break all chains and bid the oppressed go free. In his name we are to proclaim the great sacrifice for sin. We must: there is no alternative; by all the claims of fallen humanity, this "must needs be." It was in such a spirit that Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is me if I preach not the gospel." To pursue any other course is to be false to our social relations. The most joyous liberty is that of the Christian philanthropist. A cynic is a bondman. He who lives for himself is bound hand and foot with adamant. O let me not be held in leash when the thirst-stricken world is appealing to me! I have heard the murmur of waters gushing from the Rock smitten at Calvary: let me run to cry, "Salvation's free!"

IV. *Still further, Christ was under constraint by reason of His Own Nature.* It is written, "God is love"; and Christ was the fulness of the Godhead bodily. He was an equal participant with his Father in the benevolence that projected the salvation of the children of men.

In one of Plato's conversations with Socrates, the latter is represented as saying, "It may be that the

gods can forgive sin; but I do not see how it is possible, since I cannot perceive why they ought to." It is true that God is under the domination of no authority higher than himself; but it is true also that the laws of his own being place an eternal necessity upon him. He is a law unto himself; and He is love. The incarnation, the atonement, the triumph over death, the outpouring of the Spirit, the onward march of events in the setting up of the kingdom of truth and righteousness; all these are in evidence to prove that God manifest in Christ is true to himself. These things must needs be since Christ is God.

Here is the problem to be solved: "How shall God be just and the justifier of the ungodly?" The fact of repentance on the sinner's part does not make it possible for God in justice to forgive him. No more does the sinner's reformation, since the turning over a new leaf does not blot out the record of the past. "Though thou wash thee with nitre and take much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord." Nor is restitution or expiation enough. A hundred years ago an old man was seen standing bareheaded in the market-place of Uttoxeter, his face twitching with emotion. It was Dr. Samuel Johnson, who sought in this manner to atone for an act of boyish disobedience. Fifty years before, he had been asked by his father to tend the bookstall for an hour, but pride rebelled and he would not. He now sought to expiate that sin; but the reparation was obviously inadequate. Punishment does not blot out offense or change character. Hell itself cannot expiate sin. Fire cannot burn it out. The indictment is still against us.

What remains, then? Nothing but Calvary. The love of God suggests the cross. His only-begotten Son comes to be our Daysman that by him we may be reconciled with the Father through a complete satisfaction of the offended law. So it is written, "He took away the handwriting that was against us and nailed it to his cross." In his death he crucified our guilt; and it died.

Once more, the application. How does Christ's example at this point affect us? Are we not also sons of God, made in his likeness? Is not the only-begotten One our Elder-brother? The love which is characteristic of the divine nature was implanted in us before the Fall; and in regeneration it must return to us. "To thine own self be true." I cannot be true to myself, certainly not true to myself as a follower of Christ, if I do not enter into fellowship with him, so far forth as the limitations of my being permit, in his great sacrifice for the deliverance of men. Here is the significance of his words, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." We cannot bear Christ's cross, but we can bear our own, which is like it; that is, we can enter into sympathetic co-operation with him in his work of salvation. Thus Paul writes: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

It thus appears that our truest freedom is found in closest imitation of Christ and union with him. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." The happiest man in the world, because the freest,

is he who follows most closely in Christ's steps; who finds himself working most easily within the boundaries of his own nature. His is the freedom of perfect adjustment to perfect law. And whosoever is thus "called in the Lord is the Lord's free man."

To live otherwise is to be in bonds; and it means unhappiness here and hereafter. The case of Jean Valjean has been aptly used as an illustration of the soul's freedom. He had made his escape from the galleys and, while in concealment, learned that an old man, who resembled him, had been arrested in his stead and was awaiting trial. Now came the great conflict: should Valjean confess his identity and return to chains? He shut himself up in his room and reasoned with himself. The man under arrest was old and decrepit; his suffering could only be for a little while. As for himself, who would care for his ward Fantine were he to return to the galleys? At length he decided that the self-sacrifice must not be made. "Just there," says Victor Hugo, "he heard an internal burst of laughter!" It was the laughter of the soul at itself; the hideous laughter of the man's baser self in triumph over right and justice. But the decision brought no comfort. Valjean was free, and yet in the grip of conscience and in the insufferable bondage of fear. He was free, yet sensible of having passed into captivity under sin. At length his better self made protest; he entered the courtroom and revealed his identity: "I am Jean Valjean!" "Then," says Victor Hugo, "it was as if a great light were shining there!" In dooming himself to the bondage of the galleys, he had entered into the freedom of a son of God. And it is ever thus.

Defiance of law is self-enslavement. To do right is to be free. There is "a perfect law of liberty"; and whosoever continueth therein shall be blessed in deed. The perfect law of liberty is in the Spirit of the Lord. Let us stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free; for this is "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

## THE PRIVILEGE OF THE STRONG

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one please his neighbor for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself."—Romans 15, 1-3.

In the life and teaching of Jesus a new form was given to the principle of Love. It is scarcely fair to say, as Uhlhorn does, that "the world before Christ was a world without love." Love was in the world, indeed, but as a vagrant and desultory force, needing to be organized and regulated before it could regenerate society. It is significant that in the ethics of Aristotle no mention is made of charity in the catalogue of virtues. Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another." In like manner we speak of electricity as a new form of energy. The atmosphere has always been surcharged with electricity; but to what purpose? In the clouds of heaven it sported like a herd of wild horses until Franklin came to lasso and Edison to harness it. So love was always among men; no home nor hamlet was without it; but it remained for Christ to give it living form and effectiveness. He laid down the Golden Rule as the basis of right conduct; and ordained that mutual love should be the sign of recognition among his people, saying, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." This was a new application of an



old principle, by which the world is ultimately to be brought back to God.

*On the lower levels of life we observe the operation of a totally different law; namely, the Survival of the Fittest.* Here is a continual struggle for life. If you plant a rose tree in the shadow of an oleander, the rose tree will die and the oleander will flourish and fatten on its life. The weak succumbs to the strong. The grip of the strangler is upon all feeble plants in field and forest. And the same holds true of animal life. Wolves rend in pieces a wounded member of their pack. The lion devours the lamb, and grows stronger by absorbing the strength of the vanquished. This is brute selfishness; and the lower orders know no higher law.

*As we ascend into the province of human affairs, we should expect to find a better law.* The familiar lines of Watts,

Let dogs delight to bark and bite,  
For God hath made them so;  
Let bears and lions growl and fight,  
For 'tis their nature to,

are the expression of a reasonable hope, since man was created in the likeness of a gracious God. In fact, however, we find the same selfish principle prevailing here as among the lower orders of life.

The Survival of the Fittest has ever been the determining factor in international affairs. The weaker nations have gone down, one by one, devoured by the strong, until in our time there is a concentration of authority in a voracious group known as The Great Powers. War is the process by which their supremacy has been accomplished and is being kept

up. "War is hell," said General Sherman; but what of it? The monopoly must be maintained. Will you appeal to arbitration? Arbitration will work only when war is inexpedient; that is, when both parties to the controversy are afraid to fight. Until then we shall continue to see, from time to time, the disappearance of small principalities from the map of the world. At this moment the Republic of the Transvaal is serving forth the feast. The great Carnivora are gathered in waiting. A fortnight ago a voice was lifted in the House of Commons to inquire the cause of the war. The questioner should have known that war requires no cause. "Thou wilt quarrel with a man," said Romeo, "for cracking nuts, having no other reason than because thou hast hazel eyes." Cause or no cause, there must be blood so long as there is lust of power. The weak must die; the "Fittest" only can be permitted to live. And thus they gather about the Transvaal—beasts like those which Daniel saw in his vision—the Lion, the Russian Bear, the black Eagle of the War Lord and the double-headed Vulture of Austria, waiting to divide the spoil. The strong must wax fat on the carcass of the weak. Let the drums beat and the cannon roar; let fleets furrow the sea and armies traverse the earth. Might makes right. The strong must grow stronger by forcing the weaker to the wall.

The same rule is prevalent in our political life. We are at this moment in the midst of a local campaign in which no man's character is above vituperation. "All's fair in politics." Victory must be won by hook or by crook. Down with the candidate of the opposing party at all hazards. *Vae victis!* A

few years ago, one of the purest and most distinguished of our citizens passed through a hot campaign as a candidate for the highest office in the gift of the American people, suffered defeat, and died within a month afterward—died of very shame under the charge of a hundred crimes and vices that he had never dreamed of. If charity is out of the question, we should at least expect a semblance of justice; but justice is not a perceptible factor in the problem. It was for this reason that Dr. Samuel Johnson, when asked to take part in a political controversy, replied, "God forbid! I should as soon a man would break my bones as inveigle me into any participation in the affairs of the state."

And what shall be said of our industrial life? We are troubled just now on account of trusts and monopolies. In a recent conversation with an enterprising "promoter," whose character in commercial circles is above reproach, I inquired, "Do you receive into your combinations all who are engaged in a particular branch of industry?" To which he answered, "O no; only those that promise a profitable outcome." "And what becomes of the others?" "They die." This is the inevitable result. Our strong manufacturers are swallowing the weak. Our great "department stores" are eating up the shopkeepers. One of Shakespeare's simpletons asks, "I marvel how the fishes do live in the sea?" To which the master answers, "Why, as men do a'land; the great ones eat up the little ones. I can compare them to nothing so fitly as to a whale; he plays and tumbles, driving the fry before him and at last devours them all at a mouthful. Such whales have I

heard of on the land, who never leave gaping until they've swallowed the whole parish—church, steeple, bells and all." It is this voracious spirit that has driven labor to the sweat-shops and aroused on every hand a murmur of anxiety and ominous discontent. It is not in human nature to live in perpetual dread of an octopus without an effort to destroy it. The figure of the octopus is well chosen, since Monopoly, clouding the waters with its exudation of selfishness, reaches out prehensile tentacles toward all honest industries and, one by one, gathers them in.

And Labor Unions are but a complementary development on the other side. Strikes and lock-outs, boycotts and monopolies are various phases of a common greed. They all alike express the tyranny of strength. What is to become of that brave little lady, Mrs. Polly McGrail of Paterson, who has thrice been waylaid on her way to the factory for no other reason than because she was determined to put bread into her baby's mouth? She must go down. The "Strike" decrees it. The combination must survive; and it can only survive by the downfall of personal independence. Selfishness must have its way. And what shall be said against it? Will you lift up a protesting voice in "the bear pit" at the Stock Exchange? Cease your clamor, gentlemen, long enough to answer this: Did you ever hear of the Golden Rule? Ah, there you go again, wild for a bargain. Cease for a moment and hearken to this word: Shall not the strong bear the infirmities of the weak? *Vae victis!* Every one for himself. A man's only hope of success is in getting the better of the other man,

In society as now constituted there are three classes: *First*; the Upper Ten Thousand, among whom there are some noble and magnanimous souls. But there is a contingent familiarly known as the "Smart Set," who give themselves up to a flagrant violation of the sanctions and amenities of respectable life. They are for the most part descendants of honest handicraftsmen; but their chiefest ambition is to get to the top where they can look down on butchers and bakers and candlestick-makers. They spend their lives in luxurious dissipation, regardless of the world's demands. In a lull of their revels there is heard a voice from without, "Pity, kind gentleman, friends of humanity; cold blows the wind and the night's coming on!" But who cares? On with the dance! Wherein do these differ from the brute creation? In no wise; since their only law is brute law. *Second*; the lapsed masses, weak, criminal or poverty-stricken, ever crying for help. *Third*; the Third Estate; the honorable working class; producers, who form the real strength and substance of our civil and social life. These are engaged from day to day in keeping the wolf from the door and in minding their own business.

Between these classes there is a great gulf fixed; and about that gulf is gathered a multitude of thoughtful men and women engaged in the discussion of "sociological problems." They have gotten hold of an unmanageable force. They believe in love, in charity, in universal sympathy; but the odds are tremendously against them. Here is the law of nature, the Survival of the Fittest: and what can sentiment do in a hand-to-hand struggle with this

grim law? How long will it take these doctrinaires to oust the prevalent spirit and better the universal order of things? Plato faced the problem and concluded that "beggars must be driven out and the sick must not be ministered to but suffered to die." It was a cry of despair. The best that secular philanthropy can do is to suggest a local application, a plaster, to hold the edges of the wound together in the hope that it may sometime knit of itself. It is not within the range of human power to loose the tremendous grip of selfishness or expel the ills that human flesh is heir to.

But here comes Jesus the Christ; and he brings with him a formulation of love in the Golden Rule, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them;" a rule which finds an exposition in the words of our text, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak." He furnishes in himself the best illustration of that rule. No other life was ever recorded so eloquently as his, in the brief monograph, "He went about doing good." No other ever found so blessed a consummation as his, upon the cross. Here is God's protest against the Survival of the Fittest. It is the Fittest that dies, in order that the unfit may survive. And, having thus laid in his own blood the foundations of a new dispensation of universal love and helpfulness, he sent forth a summons to all like-minded with himself, "Follow me! Follow me in the setting up of a kingdom of love in the world,—a kingdom in which every man shall minister to the weaker man, in which ye shall find life by losing it and serve God in caring for your fellows." Thus the

Christian Church was instituted. It is a living, growing, triumphing challenge to the Law of Selfishness. The strong Son of God leads the way and all who desire a reversal of the natural order in the substitution of love for selfishness are exhorted to fall in and follow him.

*The Church is a socialistic body* whose members are expected to "do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." It is a mutual-help society. Its pagan enemies said, "Behold, how these Christians love one another." If one of this company be overtaken in a fault, what then? The world would say, "Out with him! Away with him!" But the law of Christ says, "Ye who are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." Lend a hand! Strengthen ye the feeble knees and lift up the hands that are fallen down. There is no socialism in the world so true or so manifest as Christian Socialism.

"We share our mutual woes,  
Our mutual burdens bear;  
And often for each other flows  
The sympathizing tear."

*The Church is also a charitable institution*; it has to do not only with the welfare of its own members, but of all men. A true Christian bears in one hand a sword and in the other a trowel; with the sword he fights to destroy the works of the devil; and with the trowel he builds up the fabric of universal love. Reform is his watchword. I say without fear of challenge, that the Church stands in the forefront of all beneficent enterprises to-day. Our schools, hospitals, reformatories and philanthropic institutions of



every sort have the patronage of the church behind them. Her kindly offices are like God's rain from heaven which falleth upon the just and upon the unjust. It is recorded by Cyprian that in the pestilence which prevailed at Carthage in his time, the heathen were amazed at the magnanimity of Christians who, while others fled in terror, remained to minister to those who had persecuted them. One of their proverbs was, "A stranger is a wolf"; but of these Christians they said, "Behold, they treat their enemies as if they loved them." It is ever the part of the followers of Christ to succor the common needs of humanity, and to make the world, as they pass through it, a better place to live in.

*But the Church is more than this; it is an army of conquest, going forth in the interest of the Lord Christ to capture all sinning, suffering men, as prisoners of hope, and to offer them in his Name not merely temporal comfort but an entrance into spiritual and eternal life. This is the basis and rationale of her great missionary enterprises. It is not to be expected that the world should sympathize at this point with the followers of Christ. But if they are true to their Master, they must come up to this world-wide view. I see a man bending over one slain in the open field; and I hear a voice calling, "Cain, where is thy brother?" He answers, "I know not; am I my brother's keeper?" which being translated into modern phrase is this, "Charity begins at home; I do not believe in your Foreign Missions." Thus reasons the world. But I see another, bending over one who has been waylaid by robbers and left for dead; he is binding up his wounds and ministering*



to him; and I hear a voice saying, "Go and do thou likewise; be neighbor unto every man;" which is the rudimental form of our great Commission, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

It is in pursuance of this Commission that we send our missionaries to those who dwell in the regions of darkness and in the shadow of death. We have no alternative. We are the strong and they are the weak. It is for us as the "fittest" to see that they shall survive. We are interested in their civilization, but this is not the ultimate aim. We send teachers to instruct them; master-workmen to familiarize them with the instruments of honest labor; physicians to heal their diseases; zenana visitors to inculcate the domestic virtues; all this and more—much more. The great purpose of Missions is not to civilize but to evangelize. There is no balm in Gilead for sinners but the blood of Jesus Christ. If a man be converted to Christ, he will naturally put on the common virtues of industrial and domestic life and will surely rise in the social scale. But, by so much as eternity is longer than time, by so much is it more important that we should preach Christ as the Saviour than as a mere Helper in temporal need. The sympathy of the world is not to be expected here; for the law of the world is the Survival of the Fittest, while the law of Christ is the survival of the weak and unfit by the self-denial of the strong.

We are the strong. To us has come the great salvation. In Christ our past is forgotten and our future glorified.

Shall we whose souls are lighted  
With wisdom from on high,  
Shall we to men benighted  
The lamp of life deny?  
Salvation! O salvation!  
The joyful sound proclaim,  
Till earth's remotest nation  
Has learned Messiah's name.

Of those who went forth from Arthur's Round-Table in quest of the Holy Grail, all failed save one, who came at length upon a stranger dying of thirst. He placed the cup of cold water to his lips, and, lo, in that act of charity, the wooden vessel was transmuted into gold. He had found the sacred chalice! No man has discovered the philosophy of Christ who has not caught his spirit of magnanimity; who does not rejoice in doing good as he has opportunity unto all men. It was for this that Christ came into the world. It was for this that he emptied himself of heaven's wealth that we, through his poverty, might be made rich. It was for this that he climbed up Calvary with our sins upon his breaking heart. "Come down from the cross," they cried, "if thou be the Son of God!" Nay; it was because he was the Son of God that he could not come down. As the Strong, he must die for the weak. Of all in earth and heaven he was the Fittest; and through his self-denial the unfit must live. Let the mind which was in Christ Jesus be also in us. Let us bear the infirmities of the weak, because he bore ours. Let us reach forth the helping hand, because his arm was made bare for us. This is the privilege of the strong: "Let every one please his neighbor for his good to edification; for even Christ pleased not himself."

## THE SCARLET THREAD

“Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window.”—Joshua 2, 18.

The Israelites were encamped on the border of the promised land. Two spies were sent over to Jericho, “the key city” of the country. They put up at an inn kept by Rahab, a woman with a clouded past. The king of Jericho, who had received an intimation of their coming, sent officers to apprehend them; but the woman hid her guests under a heap of flax on the housetop until nightfall; then she let them down through a window and so effected their escape. In bidding them farewell she avowed her faith in the God of Israel and asked an assurance of safety in return for her timely help. “Our life for yours,” they answered, “if ye utter not this our business; and when the Lord hath given us the land, we will deal kindly and truly with thee.” The token of this covenant was a line of scarlet thread which she was enjoined to bind in her window when the city was taken. “So they returned and came to Joshua and told him all things that had befallen them.”

To defend the character of this woman would be a difficult task and quite unnecessary. She was an alien, a Canaanite with a smirched reputation. She

lied to the officers of the king with the utmost ease and nonchalance and was withal a most unpromising sort of person. But the Scriptures do not justify her faults. Let him that is without sin cast the first stone at her. If God's mercies were withheld because of sin, the best among us would be badly off.

" Ah, grace, into unlikeliest hearts  
It is thy boast to come ;  
The glory of thy light to find  
In darkest spots a home."

There is this however to be said for Rahab; in this matter she acted up to her light, and she improved as time went on. Afterwards she became a mother in the household of Israel and is mentioned as an ancestor of Christ.

Our attention is particularly directed to this scarlet thread as a symbol of faith. It is obvious that the thread itself had no value; it was merely the token of the covenant between the spies and this woman, in which she threw herself upon their mercy by virtue of her belief in their God.

1. *Her confession of faith was very simple*, but clear as a crystal: "The LORD your God, he is God in heaven above and in the earth beneath." It was decidedly to her credit that she believed something. A man in traversing the great circle of spiritual truth should be able to pause somewhere and say, "Here I stand." It is to be feared that many who sit at God's table sample everything and dine on nothing. *Credo* is a word of tremendous importance to all who live earnestly; for "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

2. *This woman's creed was founded on hearsay:*

“We have heard,” she said, “how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites whom ye utterly destroyed.” It is a very shallow philosophy that rules out such evidence. We are disposed nowadays to put everything to the test of fire, acid and litmus paper; but spiritual truth cannot be demonstrated in that way. Faith rests on reliable hearsay as to facts which lie beyond the province of the senses. By faith a child lives on its parents’ bounty, quite ignorant as to where its daily bread is coming from, but not lying awake at night through anxiety. By faith a skipper sails his ship, loaded with a valuable cargo, under the direction of nautical tables drawn up by experts whose names he never heard, in pursuance of mathematical laws wholly unknown to him. By faith a passenger enters a railway train, takes his seat, unfolds his newspaper and expects to be carried to his destination by an engineer whom he assumes to be at his post, though for his life he could not prove it. By faith men invest their money in Klondike claims on a current rumor that gold has been unearthed in those parts. By faith the farmer yokes his horses to the plow and scatters grain in the furrows, assuming that a law of germination, which he cannot explain, will accomplish what it is reputed to have done in former years. By faith men eat and drink, despite the fact that food and water are full of malignant germs, hoping for survival because others have lived after eating and drinking. By faith men in sickness put themselves into the hands of other men who have won the title “Doctor of Medicine,” which is

nothing more than a voucher given by a competent faculty of instructors. By faith the most undevout of men lies down and commits himself to sleep, knowing that the air is filled with flying arrows and that the pestilence walketh in darkness, thus acknowledging his belief in a God over all.

3. *But Rahab's faith, while resting on hearsay, was wholly reasonable.* It is a misapprehension to suppose that there is any antagonism between faith and reason. The real antagonism, if there be any, is between the testimony of faith and that of the senses. All things are under the ultimate jurisdiction of reason, whether they be in the province of material or spiritual things. God has never asked us to accept any dictum which is contra-rational; though we are bound to believe many things which are supra-rational, in the necessity of the case. If God could be comprehended by the finite, he would, by that token, straightway cease to be God. But all truth rests on evidence. The evidence of the five senses is conclusive in the demonstration of material facts; and equally conclusive is the testimony of faith, the sixth sense, with reference to spiritual things.

4. *The creed of Rahab was eminently practical.* It bore immediate fruit in the hiding of the spies. For this she receives honorable mention in the roll-call of heroes in the Eleventh of Hebrews: "By faith Rahab the harlot perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies in peace." She is mentioned also in James's argument for the invalidity of faith without works: "Was not Rahab the harlot justified by works when she had received the spies and sent them out another way?" Both statements

are true and there is no discrepancy; for "faith without works is dead." A dead man is no man at all. The evidence of genuine faith is in the works which proceed from it.

5. *The faith of Rahab was duly rewarded.* Not only was her life and that of her household spared in the taking of the city; but being converted to the true religion, she was received by honorable marriage into the princely line of Israel, and became the mother of Boaz and the great-great-grandmother of David. Her name is found in the genealogy of Christ (Matt. 1, 5).

We are living in an age of doubt. Materialism is the prevailing philosophy. The common thinker is an agnostic; nor can it be otherwise until he consents to receive the testimony of faith as to spiritual things. No man can call himself an honest doubter unless he argues within the prescribed limits of honest thought. The cloud which hung over the tabernacle in ancient Israel was reputed to be the mystic symbol of the divine presence. Let us suppose that a man wished to satisfy himself concerning that fact; how would he set about it? To investigate the laws governing the precipitation of moisture or to subject the phenomenon to any of the known principles of science would have led him into further bewilderment. The only way out of his difficulty was to bow down in the tabernacle and address himself to the God who had promised to speak to his people from the midst of the cloud. In like manner an honest doubter will call upon God who is the author and revealer of all spiritual truth. Prayer leads to conviction. This is the promise: "If any



of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him."

The important thing is to believe in something. A creedless man is like a ship without a compass. "Belief" is said to be from *by-lifian*, meaning "the thing we live by." Get hold of something, my friend, of which you may say, "This I believe." A small conviction is like a grain of mustard seed, which is indeed the least of all seeds; but it is a vital and therefore a growing thing. Be anything but an agnostic. A spot of *terra firma* only large enough to stand on is infinitely better than no standing room at all.

The right starting point is at Calvary. Here is where God reveals himself to men. And "this is life eternal, to know God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent;" that is, to know God as he has revealed himself in his only-begotten Son. The faith of Rahab was founded on testimony as to what God had done at Pi-hahiroth on the border of the sea. At Calvary he has manifested his grace and power in still stronger light. Here he parts the waters that our sinful race may pass through to the heavenly land. Do you believe that? If so, you have laid the foundation of a faith, on the testimony of Scripture, fortified by the experience of an innumerable company of witnesses, on which you may erect a fabric of character which is certain to make your life tell for God and your fellow men.

A simple faith in God as he has revealed himself in the great atonement is of inestimable value in the discharge of common duty. A company of workmen



engaged in digging a tunnel were shut off suddenly from the upper world by a caving in of the earth. At once their comrades set about their rescue. When they reached the endangered men they found them busy with pick and shovel at their usual task. "We were not worried," they said; "we knew you would come and help us." Thus it is with people who truly believe in God; they may be hemmed in by darkness, but they keep right on with their work, stimulated and enheartened by their faith in God.

So also in the hour of adversity. Pain, sorrow, tribulation cannot arrest the courage or suppress the hope of those who truly believe. Why does a child in the cradle sleep amid the beating storm and the rolling thunder? Because the mother's foot is on the rocker. So safe are we, if we have faith in the great Father who cares for us.

Not even temptation can appall the man who has rightly apprehended this truth. A correspondent of the *London News*, arrested as a spy at the siege of Metz, was arraigned before a military court amid the fierce cries of the soldiery, "Death to the spy!" The commanding officer said, "You see their purpose; how does it strike you?" The correspondent replied, "It strikes me as sheer foolishness. I am an Englishman and the power of my government is behind me." We fail in resisting temptation only when we forget that God stands surety for us. He has promised; the gates of hell shall not prevail against you. Therefore all sin is by default of faith. We are safe so long as the vital current is unbroken, so long as our confidence holds out. "God is our refuge and strength; therefore will

we not fear though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."

And faith is our refuge at life's end. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

The time came when Jericho was under siege. There were no catapults nor enginery of war; there was no assault nor storming of the gates. Round and round went the army, in solemn procession, led by the priests blowing on rams' horns. In the city were many unbelievers who scoffed at the strange proceeding; but there was one woman who, having hung the scarlet thread from her window, kept within doors and awaited the issue. On the seventh day came the tumultuous shouting: the great walls rocked and reeled, and down they came! The invaders were in the streets shouting, slaying and looting. But the word had been given, "Spare the house where the scarlet thread hangs from the window." The soldiers saw that pledge of their covenant and honored it; as it is written, "By faith Rahab perished not with them that believed not."

*Only believe.* There was no intrinsic virtue in the scarlet thread, but immeasurable value in the covenant for which it stood. Faith of itself is impotent; but in the covenant of grace it is "imputed unto us for righteousness;" and God's covenant holdeth sure. "He that believeth shall be saved." Faith, as the instrument of salvation by divine ordinance, brings us into vital union with God. Why will a struggling swimmer in Niagara choose rather a rope

thrown to his rescue than a boat drifting down the river? Only because he knows the rope is held by one on *terra firma* who has power to save him. In like manner we place ourselves in divine power by faith. Therefore, it is written, "Thy faith hath saved thee."

It is not enough that we should have an intellectual apprehension of God or of redemption as an objective fact. We must accept the truth and make it ours, so that God shall be our God and Christ our personal Saviour from sin. In one of Baxter's sermons he imagines Christ coming into the congregation and saying, "I have a beautiful kingdom at the antipodes whither I am willing to convey you all; and my ship is in the harbor." Now what will you do? Go down to the docks and admire the beautiful lines of the ship, the tapering masts, the fair canvas? Nay; you will get aboard with all haste and sail away with him. This is the part of reason: not to look on Christ and his sacrifice merely as a portentous fact in history, but to receive him and his sacrifice as our deliverance from sin.

I exhort you therefore to accept Christ here and now. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." All other means of salvation are vain. The virtues of character have their value; but *as means of salvation* they are of no avail. Here are six ciphers: virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, charity. All are ciphers; but Christ is the great Unit. Put Christ before those six ciphers and it is as if we marched toward heaven backed by an army of a million men. Thus the kingdom of heaven suffereth

violence and the violent take it by storm. If the Scriptures are true, there is one fact which admits of no denial or peradventure, to wit, no man who believes in Christ is shut out of the kingdom, and *per contra* no man rejecting Christ has ever entered it.

## A TRAGEDY

“Now Herod had laid hold on John and bound him and put him in prison for Herodias’ sake.”—Matt. 14, 3.

On a lonely height four thousand feet above the level of the sea, overlooking a dreary stretch of asphalt plains and the sluggish Sodomitic lake, are the ruins of the castle of Machærus. The outlines of its dungeon are still pointed out, with two crevices where iron staples were fixed for the prisoners’ chains. The place is invested with a weird interest by reason of a tragedy most foul and bloody enacted there two thousand years ago. The *dramatis personæ* were as follows:

*John the Baptist*, prophet of the wilderness and forerunner of Christ. His dress was of coarse camel’s hair, bound with a leathern girdle at the loins. We picture him as a man of stern visage, with eyes flashing from beneath cavernous brows. He was meek in the presence of persecution, but aggressive against sin. Our Lord paid tribute to his character in these words: “Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist.”

*Herod the Tetrarch*, son of that Herod called “the Great” who commanded the murder of the innocents. The Tetrarch was a politician worthy of that

degenerate age, not without popular characteristics; but fond of display, a votary of illicit pleasure and inordinately ambitious. The title which our Lord applied to him, "that fox," suggests an acquaintance with clever artifice. He was a Sadducee, rejecting the doctrine of immortality yet afraid of ghosts. One of his serious faults was indecision. His impressions were often right and his impulses generous, but he lacked the courage to execute them. Such men are not uncommon nowadays. We say, "If that man had but a little more nerve, a little more resolution, a little more conviction and courage of conviction, what a man he would be!"

*Herodias*, his wife. His "wife"? Well, one must not be too particular; for those were the days when, as Josephus says, "the women were wont to count their divorces by the rings on their fingers." This woman was Herod's own niece and sister-in-law. She had previously been married to his brother Philip, who was still living. She was of fierce and vindictive disposition, the Jezebel of the New Testament. She reminds one of that extraordinary line of Young's: "A shameless woman is the worst of men."

*Salome*, a dancing girl. She was the daughter of Herodias by a previous marriage. Carlo Dolce represents her as of surpassing beauty, standing on tiptoe with hands uplifted. She was afterwards famous as the spouse of Aristobulus, King of Chalcis.

*Joanna*, wife of Chuza, steward of the king's household. She is reputed to have been healed of a painful malady by Jesus, and is mentioned among the women who ministered to him. As lady-in-waiting at the court of Herod, she was probably an eye-wit-

ness of the incidents of this tragedy and informant of the historian who recorded it.

*An Executioner*, unnamed, and least guilty of all. In all probability a slave or gladiator, accustomed to obey without question and hardened to bloody deeds.

*The Spirit of God*; present throughout, like Chorus of the Greek tragedies, keeping behind the scenes, but directing and controlling all.

*Scene First.*—A Marriage in the Castle.

All Galilee is interested. The royal apartments are brilliant with many lights. Lords and courtiers are present to grace the occasion. The bridegroom is arrayed in royal apparel, with the nuptial turban. The bride is adorned with jewels and the bridal chaplet, her face veiled in token (God save the mark!) of modesty. The priest closes the ceremony with the customary words, "Take her according to the law of Israel." That, however, is the precise thing which the bridegroom cannot do; because this union is within the proscribed limits of consanguinity and is forbidden not only by the canons of Israel but by the common law. The God of Israel forbids the bans! But the deed is done; the irrevocable step is taken and the retainers of the court press forward to offer their congratulations. The shouts of the populace are heard without; processions pass by with lamps and torches. From the steps of the palace presents of oil and wine are distributed among the people. Thus the day closes; a day accursed to Herod, who passes irrevocably under the hypnotic influence of a pair of cruel, basilisk eyes.—We are reminded of what Lord Burleigh said, "Marriage is an action of life like unto a stratagem of war wherein

a man can err but once." It is, indeed, for better or for worse. All our dearest interests here and hereafter are involved in this union. Wherefore, as the liturgy says, it is "not to be entered upon unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God."

*Scene Second.*—The Wedding Reception in the Great Hall of the Castle.

Herod and Herodias are entertaining in state. Not a few distinguished guests have offered their congratulations, when one enters unbidden and unannounced. The prophet of the wilderness has been preaching to a great multitude at the fords of the Jordan. Now he has come to the palace with a message from God to the newly wedded pair. He makes his way through the imposing throng, points to Herodias, and says sternly to the bridegroom, "It is not lawful for thee to have her!" The words are calmly spoken but they contain a terrific arraignment. The prophet knows his danger full well, but royal authority has no terrors for him. A momentary silence falls upon the company. There is no power in the world so overawing as courage. In the draft riots of 1863, when mobs went surging through our streets, looting the homes of peaceful citizens and hanging negroes to the lamp-posts, and defying Mayor Wood and the police and militia, General Butler marched down to the Bowery with a squad of soldiers, took his stand on a barrel in the midst of an excited multitude, and said, "You delegates of the Five Points, fiends from hell, you have been murdering better men than yourselves!" His words were like a broadside from a battery of great guns; the man had God



and justice at his back, and the mob quailed before him. The words of John the Baptist were spoken with no thought of the consequences to himself. It was enough for him that God prompted them. He might have been allowed to depart in peace so far as Herod was concerned, for Herod was a coward back of all, afraid of the prophet and of the people who followed him; but Herodias was made of sterner stuff. Her eyes flashed fire. The prophet of the wilderness had yet to learn that "hell hath no fury like a woman scorned."

*Scene Third.*—In the Dungeon of the Castle.

The prophet of the wilderness is a lonely prisoner; cut off from the world and from the multitudes who at the fords of Ænon await his coming. Alone? Nay; the great Helper is with him, and he is sustained by the consciousness of duty bravely done. *Mens conscia recti!* There is no solace like that for solitary hours.

"Stone walls do not a prison make,  
Nor iron bars a cage."

Ten weary months he languished in this dungeon. And Herod, meanwhile, "kept him safe." For, despite Herodias, he shrank from doing violence to John; "he feared him, knowing that he was a just man and an holy." And not infrequently he gave him audience, and "heard him gladly." It would appear that Herod was not so far depraved that he could not recognize the moral power of this man. And though the burden of John's preaching was ever, "It is not lawful for thee to have her," he was drawn toward his heroic censor as the moth to the flame that burns its wings. "And when he heard him,

he was much perplexed." What should he do? Give up Herodias or persist in sin? Put her away, man, as thou lovest life! Put her away from thee as one would fling burning coals from his bosom! It is ever dangerous to dally with sin. Thus the conflict went on. But, his prisoner gone, Herodias entered, and he fell again under the spell of her baleful eyes. But good and evil still strove within him for mastery. One day he said, "I will," the next, "I cannot;" and so—O coward soul—he "let 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would.'"

*Scene Fourth.*—A Banquet in the Convivium of the Castle.

The birthday of Herod is being celebrated with much pomp and circumstance. The Galilean nobles are there and ladies of the court. Wine flows freely. There are riddles and enigmas and feats of legerdemain, according to the Oriental custom. At length the entertainment flags and time begins to hang heavy; then suddenly into the midst glides a vision of beauty. It is the dancing girl Salome, step-daughter of the king, who, forgetful of her maidenhood, lends herself to the voluptuous amusement of the hour. To and fro she sways in the graceful motions of the dance, weaving a sinuous snare for poor Herod's soul. Exclamations of delight and admiration are heard on every side. Herod, half-dazed by deep potations, is carried away with passionate enthusiasm: "Ask what thou wilt," he cries, "even to the half of my kingdom, and it shall be given thee!" It is a true proverb, "When the wine is in, the wit is out." The dancing girl glances for an instant at her mother, and the request falls glibly

from her lips, "Give me forthwith the head of John the Baptist on a charger!" The king is half sobered by the brutal words; he is "exceeding sorry." What shall he do? Why not say, "That head is not mine to give"? The moment of decision has come. It is the crisis of his life. His soul hangs in the balance. The eyes of the Galilean nobles are upon him. Has he not pledged his word? Aye; but an evil vow is ever better in the breach than in the observance. What shall he do? Herodias smiles: the die is cast. He speaks to one of his ministers, "Let it be done!" Toll the bell: the siege is over; the town of Mansoul has surrendered!

"Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,  
In the strife of truth with falsehood, for the good or evil side."

There are such crucial instants in every life. We come to the parting of the ways. The choice must be made, and made in a moment. It is for God or Satan, for sin or duty, for right or wrong, for the narrow way to heaven or the broad way to hell.

*Scene Fifth.*—In the Dungeon again.

John sits bowed in prayer. There is a footfall in the corridor. The door is thrown open. The prophet lifts his eyes and in the dim light reads his doom upon his visitor's face. "Come!" He is ready to be offered. He bows to the blow, and all is over. His soul is with God.—Thus it is written, "Lust when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death." But, blessed is the man who is faithful through all.—In the banquet hall the guests are waiting for the coming of the Executioner. It is not he that enters,

but beautiful Salome, bearing a trencher whereon is the dissevered head. Herodias smiles; and, as Jerome records, drawing near, thrusts her bodkin through the speechless tongue, as if to say, "Thou shalt trouble me no more." But Herod, who cannot withdraw his gaze from the gory spectacle, trembles in every limb. Those eyes, half closed, are accusing him! Those lips, though cold, are saying, "It is not lawful for thee to have her!" And the blood in that trencher he is destined to see in his dreams; in the watches of the night he will start up in terror beholding the grim yet kindly visage of his faithful reprover.

Not long after this event a rumor reached him that One was going up and down through the land preaching repentance and the kingdom of righteousness. They said it was Jesus of Nazareth; but remorse moved him to cry, "It is John the Baptist risen from the dead!" His Sadducean creed was put to shame by his sure instinct of retribution. Thus "conscience doth make cowards of us all."

In the following April Herod went up to the Passover at Jerusalem. Jesus was then on trial; and Pilate, knowing that his prisoner was from the north country, sought to escape personal responsibility by turning him over to the jurisdiction of this Galilean king. "And Herod, when he saw Jesus, was exceeding glad, for he was desirous to see him for a long season; because he had heard many things of him and had hoped to see some miracle done by him. Then he questioned him in many words; but Jesus answered him nothing" (Luke 23, 8). This is the only time Jesus

ever treated any man with contempt. Yet why not? The manhood had utterly gone out of Herod. It would have been ill-becoming to waste words on a creature so despicable; on one so false to himself, false to duty, false to conscience, false to God. The only revenge which Herod could take was to deliver his prisoner to the rude buffeting of his soldiers and send him back to Pilate derisively robed in cast-off purple. Thus vanishes the coward Herod from our view. Farewell! We have had enough of him.

And what is our lesson? *First*; let us heed the Voice of heavenly admonition. God never meant that Herod should die. He bore long and patiently with him; sent his prophet to remonstrate with him, spoke to him again and again in earnest entreaty; but all in vain; he ran headlong upon the bosses of retribution. God deals thus graciously with every man. "He is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." He speaks to us from our mother's lips, from the pages of Holy Scripture, by the voice of conscience in the inner man, through the words of his ambassadors who are sent to cry, "Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die?" by the voice of his Spirit bidding us to look to Christ for the pardon of our sins. Alas, that we should give so little heed! Alas for us that Christ should be crucified before our eyes, all unavailingly! "Come now, saith the Lord, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

But *secondly*, it is not enough that we should be

“exceeding sorry” as Herod was. A true repentance means not merely regret for past transgression, but an immediate abandonment of sin. This is that “godly sorrow which needeth not to be repented of.” Give up your sin, my friend. Have no parley with it. Cut loose from your vicious habit whatever it may be, once for all. God and his enemy cannot abide together in your soul. Make an end of your cherished sin as Maldonatus did when, knowing himself to be wedded to avarice, he brought his money bag to the taffrail of his boat and cast it over, saying, “I will destroy thee ere thou make an end of me!” A true repentance means not only remorse for the past but a bright outlook for the future. The blood of Jesus will wash away the old record and the living Christ will open heaven’s gate before you. Be wise to hear the word of warning against your darling sin, “It is not lawful for thee to have it!” Your destiny for all eternity depends upon your decision. O choose the right and with it life eternal! Farewell Herodias, and welcome truth, duty and righteousness! Farewell Herodias, and welcome to our hearts, thou gracious Son of God!

## SOWING AND REAPING

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”—Gal. 6, 7-10.

The Bible is a book of therapeutics. It offers specifics for all the ills that human souls are heir to. Here is one for heart trouble: “Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me.” For pain of conscience, due to conviction of sin: “Come now, saith the Lord, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” For a morbid memory, dwelling on a mislived past: “Forgetting the things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, let us press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” For insomnia: “I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.” For nervous prostration, resulting from fret and worry: “Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; your Father careth for them, shall he not much more care for you, O ye of little faith?” For hypochondria, its symptoms being doubt, discouragement,



ment and fear: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you."

These remedies have all been tried and proven. Testimonials are not lacking. A great multitude whom no man can number are prepared to certify to the efficacy of these divine prescriptions. "I was blind," says one, "and could not perceive the great truths of the spiritual life, but the Lord passing by anointed my eyes and, behold, I see."—"I was a leper," says another, "and, being sensible of the dreadfulness of sin, I stood apart with my finger on my lip, crying, 'Unclean!' Then the Great Physician laid his hand upon me, and his touch was as the purging of hyssop."—"I was a paralytic," says still another, "my will disabled as if bound with fetters; but Christ came, saying, 'Arise and stand upon thy feet,' and his word hath made me whole." And, strange to say, there is no record of failure. The testimony of those who have made faithful trial of the Gospel is all one way: "This poor man cried and the Lord heard and saved him out of all his troubles. O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men!"

The case of Charles Reade, the novelist, is in evidence. He was an unbeliever until he happened upon our text. As he read and pondered, his doubts vanished and the life-giving truth was revealed to him as when the dayspring arises with healing in its beams. He rose from his knees and wrote upon the margin of his Bible, "O God, grant for Jesus' sake that these four verses may henceforth be the guide of my life." A passage so fraught with power is worthy



of our study; it may be profitable to some among us "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

Its opening word is a caution: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked!" The Apostle has been speaking of special duties, such as the bearing of one another's burdens and the restoration of backsliders. He proceeds now to the statement of a general truth. The word "mocked" is from the Greek *mukterizein*, meaning "to dilate the nostrils," as when one sneers or laughs contemptuously. Will a man thus presume to mock God? It is done by such as deny his being; this, however, is a vulgar form of atheism and quite uncommon in these days. The derision is equally effective, however, when God is eliminated from the purposes and pursuits of common life; thus it is written, "The fool hath said *in his heart*, There is no God." But the reference in the present instance is to the deliberate setting of one's self athwart the divine law.

The law referred to is the very condition of our being; and to oppose it is to run as with suicidal purpose upon the bosses of God's shield. Ruskin says, "The most dangerous, because the most attractive, form of modern infidelity is that which pretending to exalt the beneficence of the Deity degrades it into a reckless infinitude of mercy and blind obliteration of the work of sin, and does this chiefly by dwelling on the manifold appearances of God's goodness on the face of creation." There is a sterner side of the divine character which finds its counterpart in our inward sense of justice. The thought of retribution, the meting out of exact justice sooner or later,

is so universal that it may be regarded as a generic intuition. This is interwoven with the very fibres of our nature and it cannot be disregarded with impunity.

The people in the Vale of Shinar were prosperous while they engaged in the peaceful and legitimate pursuits of agriculture; but they said, "Go to, let us build a tower that shall reach unto heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name." The tower which they proposed was to be like a derisive finger pointed at God. They built so far toward heaven," says the legend, "that the arrows which they shot upward returned to them stained with the blood of the immortals." But God is not mocked. "Go to," he said, "let us go down and confound them." He touched their tongue-strings and they fled, muttering and gibbering, hither and yon: and the record adds significantly, "They left off to build." God is not mocked. The man who defies his ordinance comes up sooner or later against *Karma*. He can build to the end of God's patience and no farther. He then leaves off to build. Death touches him. Close his eyelids; the lights are out.

The law of which we are speaking is stated thus: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." It is the Law of Moral Causation. Its analysis reveals certain particulars which must commend themselves to every thoughtful man.

*First.* *The time of seed-sowing is here and now.* Our present life is probationary, and destiny is conditioned upon it. We sometimes hear of a "larger hope," but such an intimation is in direct contravention of the divine word. The logical faculty of a

child can see that probation is meaningless if there is another probation to follow it. This is the very falsehood which was suggested by Satan when he sat as Milton says, "squat like a toad" beside the ear of Eve. "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" And the woman said, "We may eat of the fruit of all save one, of which God hath said, In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." And the tempter said, "Ye shall not *surely* die." This is indeed "the larger hope"; but be not deceived. God has given fair warning; his word is Yea and Amen. We are here on trial, here to make character for the eternal ages. There is no seed-sowing in eternity. We presently come to the dead-line where it is written, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; he that is righteous, let him be righteous still, and he that is holy, let him be holy still." As the tree falleth, so shall it also lie.

*Second. The harvest is sure.* It is otherwise in the natural world. In the West last summer, impressed by the luxuriant fields of corn, I said to a farmer, "You are having great crops." He replied, "We never count our corn-crop until we have it in the cribs." A blight may come, mildew or drought, or devastating storm. But no blight nor drought can interrupt the operation of the spiritual harvest law.

It would appear, indeed, that such an interruption did occur when the Lord Christ came to prevent by his vicarious death the imposition of the penalty for our sins. But observe, the law remained intact; there was merely a transposition of the penalty. He reaped our sowing. "The chastisement of our peace was

upon him." He stood as our substitute, taking our sins into his own body on the tree and offering us the full benefit of this vicarious expiation on the sole condition of faith. But, even so, we bear the present consequences of our sin. If a Christian violates the laws of health, he reaps the consequences in gout or dyspepsia or rheumatism, like any other man. But the long sentence was fully transferred to Christ and expiated by him. This is effective for such only as believe in him: others, by their own volition, remain under the law. They must reap what they have sown.

"Sown in the darkness or sown in the light,  
Sown in our weakness or sown in our might,  
Gathered in time or eternity,  
Sure, ah sure, will the harvest be."

*Third. The seed-sowing and the ingathering are homogeneous.* Like produces like. Men do not gather grapes of thorns nor figs of thistles. No farmer who sows oats expects to reap wheat or barley. So it is written, "He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; and he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Here are the two ways of living. To live unto the flesh is to be absorbed in self-pleasing and sordid pursuits: regardless of the higher demands of truth and righteousness. The end thereof is death. In the wood of Ephraim lies Absalom with three arrows in his breast; he has "sown his wild oats" and must reap the harvest. Life produces life after its kind; this is the irrevocable decree. He who lives to the Spirit devotes himself to the weal of others and the glory of God. He is not unmindful of that which is beyond. He dreams dreams and sees visions. He reveres truth

and duty. He cherishes the Hope of Israel and, like old Simeon beholding the face of the Christ-child, he can say, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

*Fourth. The harvest is manifold.* Sow a grain, and reap a spear of wheat; sow a handful, and gather a sheaf; sow an apronful and gather enough for a winter's hunger. The same rule of multiplication holds in spiritual things: "Sow an act and reap a tendency; sow a tendency, and reap a habit; sow a habit, and reap a character; sow a character and reap an eternal destiny." A thistle-ball, blown from the deck of a passing ship, is said to have seeded all the South Sea Islands with Canada thistles. That was a hundred years ago; but the farmers in that country are still plucking thistles from the furrows and fence corners. And good is no less prolific than evil. A lad in Scotland planted violet-seeds in a corner of his mother's garden. Long afterward he returned from his wanderings to find the old home gone and the trees under which he had played in his childhood cut down; but the garden was still fragrant with violets. It has been written, "The evil a man does lives after him, the good is oft interrèd with his bones." But the good we do is immortal and lives and multiplies when the places that knew us, know us no more forever. Great harvests shall be gathered by those who are living well; "thirty, sixty, an hundredfold."

The practical bearing of all this is obvious: *Let us make our lives tell.* If indeed the seed-sowing must be done here and now, we have no time to waste. It will be too late to go forth into the fields when eternity

breaks upon us. Live to-day! The sorest calamity that can befall an immortal soul is to be doomed to eternal barrenness. This was the curse laid by our Saviour on the fruitless fig-tree: "No man eat fruit of thee forever!"

"Nothing but leaves! The Spirit grieves  
 O'er years of wasted life;  
 O'er sins indulged while conscience slept,  
 O'er vows and promises unkept;  
 And reaps from years of strife—  
 Nothing but leaves!"

The way to make life tell, for good here and for glory hereafter, is to give every act its full significance. Do the next thing as if it were the sowing of a seed. In Richmond years ago a man lay in a drunken stupor at high noon, with the flies buzzing on his upturned face. A woman passed by and, turning, laid her handkerchief over his bloated features and passed on. She was called upon long after, by William Wirt—a name distinguished in our American annals—who said, "I am that man." On awakening from his stupor he had found the handkerchief with her name upon it; but shame restrained him from acknowledging her kindness. He now assured her that her considerate act had brought him to penitence and reformation. Who knows what shall be the harvest of the next thing we do?

But the conditions must be met. No journey can be taken without a first step. A useful life must have a beginning, and the beginning is in acceptance of Christ. If a man were to say to the owner of one of the abandoned farms of Vermont, "Why do you not sow your fields? How can you expect to be

prosperous if you do not scatter seed?" he would reply, "To what purpose? The soil is worn out; it would be as vain to sow these fields as to scatter seed in the ashes of Pompeii." So with the man who has abused his life; his soul is a barren soil. To make a new start, to formulate good resolutions, is futile. The field must be made over, and this making over is regeneration. Here is what Christ proposes to do for every man who believes in him: to obliterate the past and prepare the soul for future usefulness. Then begins the real seed-sowing of the better life.

And all that follows is faithful service; "Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not." In the "Farmer's Almanac," which used to hang by the farm-house chimney, such legends were found as this: "July 15. Now gather in your barley." But the times and seasons of spiritual ingathering are not thus marked out. Let it suffice that the reaping will be in fulness of time. He that believeth shall not make haste. We can afford to wait. "Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." Dr. Moffat labored for many years among the Bechuanas and won not a single soul for his hire. On receiving from England a message, "What shall we send you for Christmas?" he answered, "Send me a communion service." And his faith was duly rewarded; God's spirit was poured out and souls sprang up like willows by the water courses; so that, when the communion service arrived,



there were many to sit with the missionary around the table, rejoicing in the fellowship of Christ.

Here is the promise: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." But why should the farmer weep as he scatters the seed? Perhaps it is a season of drought and the seed which he scatters in the furrows is his children's bread. Nevertheless he would not sow it broadcast but for his faith in the law of the ingathering. In every tear-drop there is a rainbow of promise. Thus, whatever the pain and weariness of life, let us be confident that we shall join in the rejoicings of harvest-home. The promise is without peradventure; it speaks with a "shall" and a "doubtless." The word of the Lord hath spoken it. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."



# THE CHRIST-CHILD AND THE INNOCENTS

## A CHRISTMAS MEDITATION

“Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation and weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.”—Matt. 2, 16-18.

The birth of Christ is associated with sweet surprises, new lights in heaven, new angel songs, joyous pilgrimages and offering of gifts. But here is one discordant note. It is like the scream of a falcon in a dovecote, or the baying of a wolf at the sheepfold. One can scarcely believe the weird story; but we must remember the man and the time. The man was that bloody Herod, on whose character the Emperor Augustus threw a significant sidelight, when, being informed that the infant son of Herod himself had perished in this massacre, he observed, “It were better to be one of his swine than one of his children.” And the time was *before Christ*. It makes a great difference whether an event is dated “B. C.” or “A. D.” Life was cheap in those days. A placard may be seen on a ruined wall in Pompeii announcing an entertainment thus: “In the Arena a

hundred men will fight with ferocious beasts." Line up the victims! *Morituri te salutamus*. Drag out the dead! Such was Paganism in its Golden Age.

We are informed by scholars who have made a close calculation, that the number of children slain in Bethlehem and its environs at this time was not above twenty. But, pray, was not that enough? Twenty homes bereft! the prattling voices hushed; blue eyes closed and curly-heads stained with blood; little garments folded and laid away. Twenty mothers bewailing their dead; awaking in the watches of the night and vainly reaching out their empty arms.

A bold figure is here introduced. It was seventeen centuries since Rachel had been laid to rest in these fields of Bethlehem. A thousand years passed and Jeremiah saw her coming forth from her sepulchre to bewail the calamities of her people. The Assyrians were in the land; a band of captives were crossing the heights of Rama on their way to exile; and Rachel stood weeping, refusing to be comforted. And again, seven hundred years later, the unquiet mother issues from her tomb to bemoan the murder of the children of Bethlehem. Thus, at length, the prophecy of Jeremiah is "filled full."

The question arises, *Why must these innocents die?* I wish I knew. The mystery of suffering is everywhere; the deep, inscrutable mystery. But some things are clear in this connection. To begin with, *the children of Bethlehem did not suffer on account of their sin*. As yet, no actual transgression could be laid to their charge; and it is incredible as well as unscriptural that they should suffer thus for their part in

original sin. The defilement is admitted, as well by those who speak of "heredity" as by old-fashioned believers in original sin; but where the tendency does not develop into actual iniquity, we have definite ground for saying that the blood of Christ obliterates it. "The word of the Lord came unto me saying, What mean ye, that ye use this proverb, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel; for, behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine; the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ez. 18, 1-4).

It is obvious, also, that *these children were not "afflicted for their good."* We who have entrenched ourselves in old habits must needs be driven out at the point of the bayonet. This is God's goodness: "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it worketh the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby." But these little ones had no lessons to learn. They needed no chastening. A flash of the sword, and the village school was out; the children of Bethlehem were playing in the green fields of heaven.

*Nor, again, did they die as martyrs.* It is true they are in the Saints' Calendar; the twenty-eighth of December is their memorial day. But a martyr is one who stands up to testify at peril of his life. The death of these children was involuntary. Their place is not in the noble army of truth-defenders who dwell beside the heavenly altar, of whom we sing:

“ They climbed the steep ascent to Heaven  
 ’Mid peril, toil and pain;  
 O God, to us may grace be given  
 To follow in their train!”

*Neither can it be said that they died vicariously.* Now and then a life is saved by the sacrifice of another; as when but yesterday, General Lawton died in the front of our Philippine army in behalf of advancing freedom and civilization. But who would profit by the death of these innocents? The shedding of their blood was like water poured on the ground; it seems such a pitiful waste. I know of nothing better to say than that they “paid the debt of nature.” They passed under the common ordinance. To-day or to-morrow,—and what matters a day more or less?—we must all pass through the little wicket gate. A whirlpool is made by the meeting of counter currents. Heredity flows down through the polluted veins of the race until it meets the swirling tides of environment; and sooner or later we are caught in the maelstrom. Is this an inadequate solution of the mystery? Granted; the mystery still remains. Perhaps we shall be wiser when the curtain lifts; “in that day ye shall know.” Meanwhile we must content ourselves that, whatever problems are unsolved, there is a good God over all.

But another question of far more practical import occurs to us in connection with this episode; to wit, *Why was the Christ-child spared?* On the road leading southward through the wilderness went Joseph and Mary; and while the homes of Bethlehem were filled with weeping and wailing, this mother looked into the face of her Holy Child and thanked God. He

was spared for a high destiny. In the fulness of time he would be coming back, as it is written: "Out of Egypt have I called my Son." He would return to live and labor and suffer and die for the children of men.

The most casual observer of the wonderful life of Jesus must perceive his singular attitude toward childhood. It is ever a mark of highest manhood to stoop to the little people. Of all the old masters, we love Murillo best, because he loved the children; and there is something fine and beautiful always in his portraiture of them, even when his subjects were beggar-boys. For a like reason our hearts open widest to Longfellow among the poets; he loved the children, and they loved him. In his home at Cambridge they took great liberties with him, climbing over his chair and nestling in his arms. And this was his response:

"I have you fast in my fortress  
And will not let you depart,  
But will put you down in the dungeon,  
In the round-tower of my heart."

It is a pleasure to think of "Lewis Carroll," a professor of dry mathematics in the University, turning aside from logarithms and the measurement of stellar distances to tell of little Alice in Wonderland. In Jesus, the ideal man, we should expect to find the consummation of this manly grace; and we are not disappointed. Of all the great teachers of history, he alone is recorded to have opened his arms to the little ones, saying, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." He took a little child upon his knee and, looking around on his disciples, said, "Verily, I say unto you, except ye become as

this one, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of God." He admonished the religionists of his time to give no offense to the children, saying, "It were better that a millstone were tied about your necks and ye were drowned in the depths of the sea." He identified himself with the welfare of the children, assuring his hearers that to give one of them a cup of cold water was like quenching the thirst of his own parched lips: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me."

But the interest of Christ in children goes deeper still. They were redeemed by his sacrifice. In Holman Hunt's picture of "The Flight into Egypt," he represents the Innocents following in the wake of the little caravan; a sweet-faced company, awaking out of death with glad surprise in their faces, and trooping after "like a trail of rosy clouds." In some of the earlier theological controversies we find the phrase *limbus infantum*, "the hell of children." What a nightmare is here! It is sometimes said that John Calvin asserted that there were "children in hell a span long." While it is admitted that Calvin inclined to a somewhat stern view of the divine justice, it is only fair to say that in all his voluminous writings there is not a word to warrant this accusation. And, indeed, it is an open question whether any theologian, living or dead, can be held responsible for it. The very opposite is true, as is set forth in the exquisite prophecy of Zechariah: "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, The streets of Jerusalem shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof" (Zech. 8, 5).

A Scotch writer tells of a minister entering the

kirkyard and finding the old sexton planting seeds of white clover on the grave of a child who had been buried a few days before. "Why do you adorn the little grave?" he asked. The old man paused and, looking upward reverently, said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."—"But what difference does it make?" asked the minister.—"Surely, sir, I canna mak' over-braw an' fine the bed-covering o' the little innocent that's waitin' here until it be God's time to wauken it and cover it wi' a white robe an' waft it awa' to glory. Where sic grandeur is awaitin' it yonder, it's fit it should be decked oot here. The Saviour will surely see the white clover. Dinna ye think sae, sir?"—"But why not also cover the larger graves? Is not the dust of all his saints precious in his sight?"—"Vera true, sir," replied the sexton with great solemnity; "but I canna be sure wha are his saints and wha are no'. I hope there's many o' them lying in this kirkyard; but it wad be great presumption to mark them oot. It's clean different though with the bairns; their angels do always behold the Father's face."

But this matter goes deeper still; touching the obligation of all believers in Christ. It was a wise thought of the Master to care for the children, since "the child is father of the man;" and he doubtless intended that his Church, set for the propagation of his gospel, should here follow in his steps. Nor has the church been wholly recreant. The family altar, as the visible token of the covenant, is in evidence; and the Sunday-school, where millions are to-day singing the praises of Jesus' name; and numberless asylums and protectories for orphans and waifs. All



these are born of the Master's kindly thought. But, alas! the sword of Herod still flashes in the air. In China there are thousands on thousands of newborn children exposed to death on the hilltops. The nursery tale of the Babes in the Wood is no fable; there is little care for the living, and as for the dead, let the robins come and cover them up. And there are many homes in Christendom where the example of ungodly fathers is as fatal as if they were Herod's men-at-arms. Do we shudder at the thought of a Japanese mother selling her infant to a life of shame? What then shall be said of mothers in society who devote their daughters to lives of sinful frivolity, which can end only in spiritual and eternal death? Our streets are filled with homeless urchins and desolate waifs. Our slums reek with the red sacrifice of childhood. In our industrial life there are countless boys and girls employed in tasks far heavier than was the apprenticeship of the olden time.

“Do you hear the children weeping, O my brothers?

Ere the sorrow comes with years?

They are leaning their young heads against their  
mothers,

And that cannot stop their tears.

The young fawns are playing with the shadows,  
The young flowers are blowing toward the west,  
But the young, young children, O my brothers,  
They are weeping bitterly.

They look up with their pale, sunken faces

And their look is dread to see;

For they mind you of the angels in high places

With eyes turned on Deity.”

Sin is a constant factor in the world's life. Its only remedy is the gospel, and the work of the gospel



should begin with the opening of an infant's eyes. It is worthy of note that the last chapter of the Old Testament, like the dying flash of a torch in the deepening darkness, prophesies the rising of the Sun of Righteousness in fulness of time with healing in his wings; and the last verse of that chapter declares that the sign of the coming day shall be "the turning of the hearts of the fathers unto the children." It was not in vain that the death-cry of the Innocents of Bethlehem was mingled with the song of the herald-angels, if the hearts of future generations were to be quickened thereby to a deeper love of childhood and a more practical recognition of the importance of winning the children for Christ.

But the Advent-season brings to our remembrance above all, the providence that guarded the Christ-child. O wonderful child, foretold in prophecy and heralded with angels' songs; in vain shall the mighty seek thy life, since the Mightiest careth for thee! Thou shalt live to meet thy destiny, walking among men as the Wonderful, with heavenly wisdom on thy lips and healing in thy fingers. O wonderful King, climbing step by step to thy throne on Calvary, where, lifted up in agony, thou wilt draw all men unto thee! O wonderful Son of God enthroned in glory high and lifted up, "expecting, until thou shalt make thine enemies thy footstool!" Thou art worthy to receive honor and glory and power and dominion for ever and ever!

It was foretold of Christ that he should die without issue: "He shall be cut off out of the land of the living; and who shall declare his generation?" It was predicted also that in due time a numberless

progeny should rise up to call him blessed: "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." At Heaven's gate stands Rachel, the great race-mother, weeping no more for her children, but giving them welcome to their Father's house. Thus have we seen an earthly mother standing in her doorway at evening to receive her little ones. Heaven is full of children; and they are all Christ's, the fruit of the travail of his soul; as it is written, "Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; and *it shall be to the Lord for a name*, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

## THE DEMONIAK OF GADARA

“And ye when ye pray, say, Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.” Matt. 6, 13 (R.V.).

“And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit.” Mark 5, 1, 2.

Our Lord was a busy man and this was one of his busiest days. He had been preaching from a little boat rocking at the water's edge to a multitude assembled on the shore of Gennesaret. His theme was the Kingdom, and he spoke in parables: the pearl, the draw-net, the hid treasure, the leaven, the mustard-seed; adopting the method of the kindergarten in order to simplify the truths of the spiritual life. But school-teaching is hard work, and at eventide he was weary. “Let us,” he said, “pass over to the other side.” His companions, whose calling made them familiar with the signs of the weather, were not without serious forebodings; but at his command they pushed out. And Jesus, lying down with his head on the helmsman's cushion, fell into a deep slumber. We have an High Priest who can “be touched with a feeling of our infirmities.” Let us be grateful that he can sympathize with us in common toil and in the fatigue that follows it.

“Of all the thoughts of God that are  
Borne inward unto souls afar  
Along the Psalmist's music deep,  
Now tell me if that any is  
For gift or grace surpassing this,  
'He giveth His beloved sleep'?”

While Jesus sleeps, the winds come roaring through the funnel-shaped ravines on the eastern heights, and the waters are lashed into sudden fury. The mast curves to the gale, the sails are torn; the disciples are at their wits' end. They bend over the sleeper, crying, “Master, carest thou not that we perish?” He rises, stretches forth his hands and speaks the command, “Peace, be still.” O wondrous miracle! The winds go straightway whimpering to their caves and the billows, like naughty children, sob themselves to rest. And the disciples say one to another, “What manner of man is this that even the winds and the waves obey him!”

It was indeed a wondrous miracle, yet not so notable as that which followed it. As the boat reached the shore and Christ and his disciples were debarking, a man came running to meet them from his dwelling among the rock-hewn tombs; fierce, naked; his hands uplifted, with a broken chain clanking at either wrist, uttering half-articulate cries of mingled blasphemy and prayer and piteous appeals for help. Who is this? Time was when he lay an infant on his mother's breast, and she, looking into his face, dreamed dreams and saw visions; when as a lad he played merrily with his companions in the village streets; when as a youth he cherished fond hopes of an earnest, useful life. Now his past is a

nightmare and his future thick with the gathering shadows of a hopeless night. Children run at his approach and his old friends and neighbors look askance, whispering to each other, "He hath a devil." What does that mean?

We are here introduced to a stupendous fact; to wit, the power of Satan in human life. It is common in our time to deny the personality of the Evil One; nor should this occasion any surprise, since we are living in an age of denial. Not one of the great fundamental facts of the spiritual life is unquestioned. God is reduced to an all-pervading Law or Force; immortality is a dream; the Bible is "literature"; Christ is simply the best of men; heaven is a figment of the imagination, and hell is an outlived superstition. If the King upon his throne be set at naught, why should it be deemed strange that the arch-conspirator against his authority should be regarded as a myth? Yet, at the risk of being deemed a setter forth of old-fashioned truth, I venture the statement that nothing in the spiritual province is more clearly demonstrated than the personality of Satan. Our Lord has put himself upon record in the petition, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One."

It is strange indeed that a fact so universally attested in human experience, recognized in all the ethnic religions and accepted through all past centuries, should be called in question. As I walked home from an evening service with my Church treasurer twenty years ago, we spoke of certain deeds of violence which had recently been perpetrated in the neighborhood by a mysterious garroter. My friend

was incredulous, saying that the whole matter was a hoax and an unfounded rumor, and the "garrote" an impossibility. I had scarcely seated myself at home when there came a violent ring at the door and he entered, announcing excitedly that he had been waylaid and relieved of the evening collection. When I suggested that the garrote was impossible, he replied at once, "A rumor could not place its knee in the middle of my back, throw its arm around my neck and leave a black mark like this!" We are much given to reasoning against our own experience; and so in this matter as to the personality of Satan. We have felt his power and are more or less constantly under his influence, and what is to be gained by denying it?

His work has been manifest ever since the Fall. God made man to reflect his own holiness; but Satan, having gained an entrance, proceeded to corrupt the race. Things went from bad to worse until, as it is written, "God looked down from heaven to see if there was any that wrought righteousness and behold, there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Then came the Flood, in which God washed the world like a soiled garment. And again the process of degeneration went on under the influence of Satan until the sins of the people gave "a stinking savor in the nostrils of God." At length when they defied him in the Vale of Shinar he sent them hither and yon, gibbering in the confusion of tongues. The Call of Abraham marks a new effort to lift the race to better things. But the history of Israel is the oft-told tale of persistent sin; the lights of the sanctuary were finally extinguished and the Old Economy faded into

a dark night of four hundred years. Then the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in his wings.

At the Advent and during the ministry of Jesus there were such manifestations of diabolical power as never had been seen on the earth. The incarnate Son of God was regarded by men as "a root out of a dry ground" and "there was no beauty that we should desire him;" but the Prince of Darkness knew him as the Knight-errant who had come from Heaven, clothed with divine grace and power, to deliver the world from sin. It was not to be expected that he, as the Prince of this World, would surrender his dominion without a fierce struggle. To prevent the work of redemption, he summoned all the hosts of darkness. "Hasten, hasten, O ye spirits, from its station drag yon ponderous cross, that, mocking, is uplifted high in air!" Wherever a heart was open, the emissaries of Satan entered and took possession. The demoniak of Gadara was one of many who thus offered themselves to the malignant influence. Christ himself was not free from the approaches of the Adversary. From a lofty mountain top he directed the thought of Jesus, with a wave of his hand, to the kingdoms of this world, saying, "I know why thou hast come; but, behold, I show thee an easier way to the Kingdom. I am the acknowledged Prince of this World; one act of homage and I will abdicate; bow down and worship me!" Thwarted here as elsewhere, he took possession of the heart of Judas and accomplished the betrayal of Christ to ignominious death. The last die was thrown to his own discomfiture; Jesus expired, saying, "It is finished." The race which had sold itself under sin was



at length redeemed by the vicarious pain of the cross. Not yet is the world delivered from its bondage; the struggle goes on, but the end is in sight. The power of Satan is fatally crippled by the gospel; more and more the regions of darkness and of the shadow of death are being illuminated by the light streaming from the cross. The time draws near when the apocalyptic vision shall be realized in the great conflict of Armageddon; when the Prince of Darkness shall be cast into the bottomless pit, and cries shall be heard, "Babylon the great is fallen!" Then Jesus shall reign where'er the sun doth his successive journeys run.

Meanwhile, there is no surrender. The power of Satan is manifest on every side; "he walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." His emissaries are everywhere. . . . There is the Demon of Drink, whose victims go reeling through our streets, wrecked in body and soul, downward to the endless night from which returns the voice, "No drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of God." A man recently came to see me, desperate in this cruel bondage, to whom I said, "God stands ready to help, and you must stop now in your reckless career or you are a lost man." He replied, "Don't speak to me of hell; I'm in hell now!" . . . . There is the Demon of Impurity also. Open the morning newspaper and see how it drips and reeks with the foulest sewage. Walk through Twenty-ninth street nearby, on this Sabbath night, and see the multitude of young men and women openly flaunting their shame. . . . And there is the Demon of the Dice, who is dragging multitudes down every day. I visited a



gambling den in company with an officer one Saturday night and saw men of the working class come in and lay their week's earnings on the table. There was the sweat of their brows; there was their children's bread. And as they awaited the issue, their eyes glittered with a light that was not of this world; it seemed a very reflection of the unquenchable fire. . . . And there is the Demon of Avarice. How many have surrendered themselves to his sway! *Auri sacra fames*. The passion for gold is as utterly base and destructive as any of the more vulgar forms of vice. The Lord spake advisedly in denouncing this yellow-faced demon: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven! Yea, I say unto you it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a man who trusteth in riches to enter the kingdom of God." . . . And there is the Demon of Infidelity, pointing with one scornful finger at Christ and with the other at the Bible; jeering at holy things, at truths sanctified by the faith of the fathers. A young man who had fallen under this influence, lay adying and an atheistical friend called to comfort him. "Go," he said; "you have sapped my faith in sacred things; you have robbed me of all that I once believed and loved. Go now, and let me die in the dark!"

But what am I doing, calling the roll of the spirits of evil? Their name is legion on legion. Let us not disavow the facts of observation. Let us not deny the sight of our eyes. The practical question is, Am I harboring any such malign influence in my own soul? I do not believe that Pascal was right when he said, "A man is half angel and half devil;" but I do

believe that the influence of Satan is over every one. All sin is devilish. All meanness, selfishness, untruthfulness, dishonesty, uncleanness and unbelief proceed from the Evil One. Demoniactal possession is a fact in common life; there are many phases of iniquity which cannot be accounted for in any other way. Some have given themselves over to the evil power; others are making a brave struggle; all alike need to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One." We confess our bondage to habit; we are conscious that not infrequently our evil habits get the upperhand of us. But what is habit, in the last reduction, but complicity with Satan? It is an alliance with the Prince of Darkness in the commission of any customary sin.

Let us return now to the lake shore. Our Lord and his disciples have just landed from the little boat. The demoniac, with hands threateningly uplifted, is running toward them. What shall they do? Flee from him? Cast stones at him? Nay; let him alone; One greater than Satan is here. Would that we might have seen what then took place! It was the grapple of the strong Son of God with the Evil One, a foregleam of Armageddon. Christ speaks, "Come out of him, thou unclean spirit!" There is a crying and rending, a struggle of body and soul. The supreme moment has come. The man utters a fierce cry of farewell to the Adversary and falls prone upon the earth. Lift him now tenderly, and cast a garment about him. The man is dispossessed. A few moments later he sits at Jesus' feet, "clothed and in his right mind." Ah, what was the stilling of the tempest to this miracle of deliverance?

“’Twas great to call a world from naught,  
’Tis greater to redeem.”

The Christ who saved this demoniac is the same to-day, yesterday and forever. With the same eyes he beholds the struggles of sinful men. “His eyes run to and fro through all the earth to behold the evil and the good.” He who saw the demoniac on the other side of Gennesaret and went over to help him, sees every staggering drunkard, every lost woman in her shame, the thief now prowling through our streets.—And he has the same heart to pity. He can make no allowance for sin, but dies for sinners and regards them with infinite pity. It is written of Titus, that during the siege of Jerusalem he looked down upon the doomed city and cursed the obstinacy of the people who were bound to die. How different was the emotion in the heart of Jesus who sat over against the same city and wept, saying, “O Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!”—And he has the same strong arm to help; an arm made bare in behalf of every sinner who would be saved. There is more power in his wounded hand than in all the marshaled hosts of Satan. If he be for us, the gates of hell shall not prevail against us.

No doubt the friends and neighbors of this Gadarene held many a conference as to what might be done to reclaim him. It would be vain to reprove him for lawlessness; what cared he for law? “Let us commit him to prison,” they said; but he broke his chains as if they had been green withs. Some, believing in “ethical culture,” may have suggested

the reading of Plato's "Dialogues" to him; if so, they had their labor for their pains. Of what use is the law cure, the prison cure, the culture cure or the asylum cure in such cases? We must needs look unto the hills from whence cometh our help. Pledges and resolutions are of little avail. Christ came to destroy the works of the Devil and he alone can do it. To a friend who was urging the excellent tendency of certain benevolent schemes, Coleridge replied, as he cast a bit of thistle-down into the air, "The tendency of this is toward China; but we know it will never get there." So is it with every other plan of complete and ultimate reformation, except that which is contained in the Gospel of Christ.

As John B. Gough was reeling through the streets of Newburyport, a humble cobbler, noting the desperate strait of the poor drunkard, laid a hand upon his shoulder and said kindly, pointing upward, "John, there is one that can help thee." That marked the turning-point of his life. He gave up every other reliance and threw himself upon the omnipotent help of God.

Is there a mother here praying for her son, a wayward son whom all others have given up? Let her remember that Jesus knows no "desperate cases." He loved to heal those who had wasted all their substance on physicians and were none the better for it. He succeeded where all others failed. When he was in the Mount of Transfiguration, a man brought his demoniak son to the disciples who were gathered at the foot of the mountain and besought them to heal him; but they could not. The Scribes and Pharisees came and taunted them. Then down from the

mountain the Lord came, his face still shining with the glory; and he rebuked the cavilers, saying, "What question ye with them?" But before they could answer, the father of the demoniac had prostrated himself before him, saying, "I brought my son, who hath an evil spirit, to thy disciples and besought them to heal him and they could not. O Master, if thou canst do anything, have compassion upon us and heal him!" And Jesus said, "Bring him unto me." The afflicted lad was brought, writhing in convulsions and foaming at the lips. "Come out of him, thou unclean spirit," said Jesus, "and enter no more into him!" And the lad was healed in that self-same hour. We may fail, all philanthropists may fail; but Jesus never fails. He answers prayer. He is the Mighty to save. He is able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto him.

It is recorded of the Gadarenes, that after this miracle they "besought Jesus that he would depart out of their coasts." They had seen the working of a mighty power which they could not understand, and were affrighted by it. And, alas! he took them at their word. The little boat was loosed; and yonder he goes. Farewell! Farewell thou hope of Gadara! Nay, merciful Jesus, come back! There are sick folk in Gadara to be healed; there are other demoniacs to be dispossessed; there are sinners to be forgiven. Come back and make this wilderness of Gadara to blossom as the rose!

We are praying for a revival in New York. O for an outpouring of God's Holy Spirit upon us! O for the quickening of the churches and the salvation of sinners! But why do we thus tarry in prayer?

All God wants is to see a readiness on our part to receive the blessing which he stands ready to bestow. We are keeping him at arm's length by our half-heartedness, by our worldliness and continuance in sin. May he make us willing in the day of his power; and "the day of his power" is now.

One word remains. This man of Gadara held the key of his own soul. The door could not be opened from without. It is for every man to say whether Jesus shall come in and possess him. But this is certain, Christ and Satan cannot dwell together. We observe in this Gadarene the struggle of two personalities; one of them was the demon, crying, "What have I to do with thee, thou Son of the most high God? Why art thou come to torment me?" The other was the man himself, who, knowing his desperate case and longing to be delivered, ran toward Jesus. There is a like struggle in every man, "a war in our members" as Paul called it. The influence of Satan is ever holding us back from Christ, while our better nature would fain run to him for salvation and life. Let us yield to our nobler impulses. Let us open the door to Christ and bid him enter. He will sweep and garnish our souls; he will sprinkle his blood upon the lintels, and make us temples meet for the indwelling of the Spirit of God.

## BACK TO CHRIST

“And Jesus saith, Follow me.”—Matt. 4, 19.

The watchword of the Christian life is “Follow.” It rings like a clarion from the Master’s lips. At the beginning of his ministry he said to the fishermen of Genessaret as they were drawing their nets, “Follow me.” In similar phrase he pressed his claims on the young ruler and Matthew the tax-gatherer. As his ministry was drawing to a close he laid down this rigid rule of service: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.” There is inspiration in the word; it suggests a flashing sword, a waving banner.

Ours is an age of unrest. We are intoxicated by the fire-waters of progress. The old faiths, old methods, old landmarks are inadequate to meet the necessities of “advanced thought.” The bottles that held the religion of the fathers are bursting with the superior wisdom of their children. Our revolt against the authority of the elders must not, however, blind us to the fact that truth is authentic and peremptory whether it be traditional or not. Some things are unchangeable in the nature of the case; among which are Christ and his Gospel. The ingenuity of modern scientists has been unable as yet to suggest any improvement in air, sunshine or spring-water. In our



eagerness to cast off age-old error and falsehood let us take heed that we do not wander away from the immutable verities. By all means "Ring out the old, ring in the new," if we are quite sure that in doing so we "Ring out the false, ring in the true." No one will take issue with the cry, "Ring in the valiant man and free; ring in the Christ that is to be," if it be understood that the Christ of the future is the very same that preached in the streets of Jerusalem and by the shores of the Galilean lake. He has no new graces of character to offer, nor any new dicta in theology; he makes no new terms of salvation to the people of our time. If we in our eagerness to keep abreast of progress have permitted ourselves to turn aside from the plain teachings of the gospel in any measure whatever, it will be wise for us as followers of Christ to return to him. It is never safe to exceed our marching orders or advance beyond the pillar of cloud. "Back to Christ!" is a wholesome admonition for this restless age.

At the outset it behooves us to *return to the Cross as the only Plan of Salvation*. This is *spes unica*. It is written that Jesus was so named "because he should save his people from their sins."

If you are not a Christian, you may regard all religions as equally true, insisting that a Buddhist or a Confucianist or a Moslem has a reasonable hope of salvation if he only lives up to his light. But if you profess to be a follower of Christ you have no alternative but to accept the Master's view. He claims to be the only Saviour. The Gospel as he preached it is exclusive and tolerates no rivals or competitors. If the religion of the Scriptures is true, all others are



false. "I am the door," said Christ; "all that ever came before me are thieves and robbers;" and again, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me."

If you are not a Christian, you may trust to the sufficiency of morality, claiming that God requires nothing more of a man than that he shall tell the truth, pay his honest debts and live justly and charitably toward his fellow men. But if you follow Christ, you must believe what he says, to wit, that holiness is the prerequisite to spiritual and eternal life. And holiness is vastly more than morality: it is an absolute freedom from sin. This is wrought by the cleansing of Christ's blood; and "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin."

If you are not a Christian, you may assert the unconditioned efficacy of divine love. There are many who profess to believe that, since the great atonement has been wrought, all men are to be saved, willing or unwilling. But, if you are a Christian, you must defer to Christ's decision in these premises. He says there is a place where the pains of remorse are as the gnawing of an undying worm and the burning of an unquenchable fire. He teaches that the gift of eternal life is conditioned on the exercise of personal faith. It is not his cross that saves, but our grip on the cross. God does not so love men as to force salvation upon them; he "so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life."

The call "Back to Christ" suggests also *a return from all Variant Forms of Belief*. A good deal is being said just now as to the importance of cutting loose from the tyranny of creeds. It is quite true

that no man should permit himself to be held in the bondage of uninspired symbols. But this does not signify that we are warranted in cutting loose from all formulated systems of belief. A creedless man is a poor specimen of humanity. The Nicene, Athanasian and Apostles' Creeds have very great value, but always as beacons and never as fagot-fires. We may take issue with Calvin or Augustine, with the Synod of Dort or the Westminster Assembly, with all ecclesiastical authority whatsoever, if we choose; but as Christians we have one creed to which we stand covenanted in absolute and unquestioning loyalty, to wit, the Creed of Christ. He believed certain things and taught them; and his teaching is yea and amen to those who follow him.

One of the phases of current thought is the depersonalizing of God. He is set forth as the all-pervading force or energy of the universe. If you are not a Christian, you may accept that dictum of contemporary unbelief. But if you profess to be a disciple of Christ, you must needs believe in God as Christ believed in him.

There is also a disposition among the thinkers of our time to eliminate the supernatural from the philosophy of the universe. The incarnation of Jesus and his resurrection, together with all his alleged miracles, are ascribed to material causes. As followers of Christ we are not at liberty to accept that view since Christ himself asserted the contrary. He claimed a supernatural birth, was constantly doing things that natural law is inadequate to account for, and asserted, toward the close of his ministry, that he was about to return to "the glory which he had

with the Father before the world was." To the disciples of John the Baptist he said, "Go tell him the things that ye have seen and heard; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear and the dead are raised." In other words, he lived and wrought in the realm of the supernatural, and was constantly drawing upon the unknown laws and forces which center in the personal, invisible God.

As to the fact and method of a divine Revelation, also, there is much controversy. The absolute truth of the Scriptures is impugned. They are characterized as "literature" and assigned to a place among other books. If you are not a Christian, you are quite at liberty to hold that view. You may believe that Genesis is a compendium of old legends and traditions; that Deuteronomy is a wholesale forgery; that Solomon's Song is a sensuous epithalamium; and that the Gospels are a patchwork of mingled truth and falsehood. But as a Christian you are bound to receive the testimony of Christ as ultimate in that matter. He was infinitely wise and infinitely honest, yet he never betrayed by word or suggestion that he regarded the Scriptures as otherwise than wholly trustworthy at every point. He found no fault in them at all. On the other hand he characterized them as truth. In his pontifical prayer for his disciples he said, "Sanctify them by thy word; thy word is truth." And he enjoined men to search the Scriptures, adding, "For in them ye think ye have eternal life and these are they which testify of me."

Still further, the watchword "Back to Christ" suggests *a return from all unauthorized Rules of Conduct.*

We stand continually at the cross-roads. How shall we discern betwixt the worse and better reason? A young ruler in like perplexity asked of Jesus, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" The reply was, "What readest thou in the Law?" The question and answer alike had reference to the code of right living. The Law referred to, as the context shows, was the Decalogue.

It is sometimes said that Christ abrogated the Ten Commandments. There is nothing whatever in his teachings to justify that assertion. The law of life as laid down in the Decalogue is, "Thou shalt not kill." Did our Lord abrogate that law, or did he not rather emphasize and fortify it when he said, "Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire"?—The law of chastity as given in the Decalogue is, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Did Christ abrogate that law, or did he not rather lay a profound emphasis upon it when he said, "Whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery in his heart"?—The law of common honesty is, "Thou shalt not steal." Was it less or more that Jesus said in the Golden Rule, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them"?—The law of the Sabbath requires the hallowing of that day. Did not Christ honor that requirement and invest it with far more rigid sanctions when he said, "The Sabbath was made for man," that is, for the promotion of his spiritual and eternal

welfare by deeds of charity and communion with God?—Was there any modification of the Decalogue in the brief Summary which he gave? “The first and great commandment is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and mind and strength; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself”? Nay, here and everywhere in his doctrine and by his personal example he shows his loyalty and rigid adherence to those fundamental precepts which are written in the very constitution of our race. In general terms he enjoined a scrupulous abstinence from all sin; meaning by sin any want of conformity unto or transgression of the divine law. He knew no peccadilloes; he allowed no little sins. “Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments,” he said, “and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

If you are not a Christian, you are free to take the most liberal views of your relations to the Moral Law. But no Christian can be an antinomian. He must follow where Christ leads and must accept the ethical system which his Master prescribed for him.

*And, finally, as to the great Purpose of Life.* It has been said, “The secret of success is to grasp the handle of one’s being.” What are we here for? And what do we propose to do?

If you are not a professed follower of Christ, you may devote yourself to money getting or to the pursuit of pleasure as the highest good or to the attainment of the world’s honors and emoluments. But as a Christian, if these things have occupied the fore-

most place in your thought and purpose, it is high time you were getting back to Christ. For his injunction is, "Seek ye first of all the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things—that is, so far as they are necessary or desirable—shall be added unto you."

The beginnings of this Kingdom, so far as we are individually concerned, are in the narrow circle of our home-life. "Go down to thy house," said Jesus to the dispossessed demoniac, "and show what great things the Lord hath done for thee."

In the church, also, as followers of Christ, we serve the kingdom as laborers together with him. My friend, have you taken your place there? If you make no profession of devotion to Christ, you may feel free to hold yourself aloof from his people; but as a Christian you will give unquestioning heed to his will and word. He instituted the church. It is the net in the hands of his people who are ordained to be fishers of men. If it be not a perfect net, it behooves all who sincerely love him to help mend as well as draw it.

And then in the larger province of the world. The people of Christ must be cosmopolites. The commission of the Master is, "Go ye into all the world and evangelize." Go in person, if possible, but in any case by your prayer and influence. All who believe in Christ and truly love and follow him must go. Who is this that says, "I do not believe in Foreign Missions"? Surely not a Christian. For how could any Christian interpose an objection to the command of his Lord? A Christian is one to whom the merest word of Christ is an edict from the

throne. Look to your marching orders! Take your place in the rank and file of believers, and on to the conquest of the world for Christ!

We close where we began. The watchword of the Christian life is, "Follow me." The admonition, "Back to Christ!" means something. It is more than a mere emotional or transcendental phrase. It directs us to Christ as our Prophet, Priest and King. As our Priest, he alone can make atonement for us; as our Prophet, his instructions as to both faith and conduct are ultimate; and as our King, he should rule with an undisputed sway. The word of the virgin mother to the servants at Cana is the word for all true followers of Christ, "Whatsoever he saith unto you do it!"

Is this standard of loyalty too rigid? It is rigid but reasonable. Let it be submitted to the judgment of those who do not profess to follow Christ. They sometimes applaud the heretic and loose-liver; but let them sit in calm judgment and say if in their inmost hearts they do not believe and know that Christians who insist on pursuing their own ways of thinking and living are recreant to Christ. We who call ourselves Christians may rebel against the exactions of our calling and may say of this or that requirement, "It is an hard saying; who can hear it?" but the world expects us to hew to the line. O beloved in Christ, in the name of self-respect let us get back to Christ!



## THE BACKSLIDING OF JOHN MARK

“And John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.”—Acts 13, 13.

The John here referred to was John Mark, the author of the second Gospel. He was the son of a rich widow in Jerusalem whose house is closely associated with the early history of the church. In one of its upper rooms our Lord instituted the sacrament of the Supper; and for some years after his death it appears to have been the disciples' customary place of meeting. The widow's son must have been deeply impressed by what he saw and heard in that sacred place.

On one occasion an assemblage was held there under peculiar circumstances of sorrow and perplexity: Persecution had broken out; James their beloved pastor had been slain with the sword and Peter was languishing in prison. The little band of believers—a feeble folk like the conies—had come together to unite their prayers for his deliverance. The doors were shut, for fear, and a maidservant named Rhoda was stationed at the outer wicket. While they were thus engaged in prayer, there came a sound of knocking; an instant silence fell upon them; was another of their number to be haled away to judgment? But fear gave way to amazement when the portress came



running to say, "It is Peter that knocketh!" He was presently admitted, and told this wonderful story: As he lay sleeping in his cell between two soldiers, he was awakened by a hand laid upon him, and opening his eyes he found the place filled with a great light. A voice said, "Arise up quickly!" and straightway his chains fell off. "Gird thyself, bind on thy sandals and follow me!" He obeyed like one in a dream; the great gates of the prison opened before them as if their bolts had been drawn by unseen hands, and presently they stood under the open sky. Then the angel departed from him; and he at once directed his steps to this upper room, where he knew he should find the disciples praying for him.

The widow's son, John Mark, was among those who listened to that wonderful story. He drank it in with a boy's wonder. Not long afterward, when Paul and Barnabas, being set apart for missionary service, desired a helper, he volunteered to accompany them. The flush of enthusiasm was upon him; his was the age that builds castles in the air. He dreamed dreams and saw visions of splendid success. And thus they set forth, with the benediction of the little band of believers upon them, to preach the unsearchable riches of the gospel of Christ.

The missionaries turned their faces northward and, after a journey of three hundred miles, reached Antioch, "the Gateway of the East." The believers in that city were very numerous and influential, having no less than three pastors, Simeon, Lucius of Cyrene and Manaen, a foster brother of Herod the Tetrarch. A solemn service of ordination was held,

by which Paul and Barnabas were "separated" to their work. It is safe to say that John Mark congratulated himself as partaker in an enterprise which began under such happy auspices.

At the seaport of Antioch the missionaries, bidding farewell to loving friends, embarked for the island of Cyprus. On landing at Salamis they began their work, and found ready audience in the synagogues of the Jews. Thence passing through the island westward, preaching from village to village, they came to Paphos, where they delivered their message under the shadow of the famous temple of Aphrodite. All went well until they were opposed by Elymas the sorcerer; and Paul, being filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto him, "O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness; wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee!" And immediately there fell upon him a mist and darkness; and he went about seeking some one to lead him by the hand. All this was calculated to impress deeply the young evangelist. No doubt he said within himself, "I am glad that I came upon this mission; it is a wonderful work, and the Lord is manifestly with us!"

But a change of plans was made; it was decided to carry the gospel over into Asia Minor. A short sail brought them to the coasts of Pamphylia. It was an inhospitable country, occupied by semi-barbarians. The missionaries now proposed to push into the interior and preach the gospel to them that were afar off. John Mark looked on the high mountains in whose fastnesses were unknown possibilities

of danger, and felt his heart sinking within him. A ship was in the harbor, bound for home. He bade farewell to Paul and Barnabas, paid his passage and returned to Jerusalem.

It is a sad story, make the best of it. There is nothing more pathetic than to see a youth setting out on a noble enterprise, flushed with enthusiasm, faithful for a season, then turning back in the face of difficulty and giving himself up to an easy life.

*Was it homesickness* that moved him? If so, it was "a fault that leans to virtue's side." It would have been strange, indeed, had he not longed for the delights of his comfortable home in Jerusalem. He was the only son of his mother and she was a widow; and there's no place like home.

"A charm from the skies seems to hallow us there,

Which, seek through the world, we'll not meet with elsewhere."

In a great city like ours, there are multitudes of young men and women who have ever before them the vision of home. In the watches of the night they see the flower garden before the door, with old-fashioned hollyhocks and sweet williams growing in it, "the orchard, the meadow, the deep-tangled wildwood," and the well—"O for a drink of water from the well beside the gate at Bethlehem!" And in their dreams a face bends over them—the dearest face in all the world. There are no lines of beauty like the wrinkles on mother's face. There are no bands of duty stronger than mother's apron-strings. If she lives, dear friend, make the most of her; if she be gone, then, by her memory, live nobly because she loved you. The best men are those who are moved by such considerations. In Shakespeare's

*Henry V*, the Duke of Exeter, describing the battle to his king, says that, wrought to frenzy by the fierce contagion of the hour, he, on a sudden, came upon his kinsman, Suffolk, dying; whereupon "all my mother came into mine eyes and gave me up to tears;" to which the king replies, "I blame you not; for, hearing this, I must perforce compound with mistful eyes, or they will issue too."

But however we may sympathize with the homesick youth, we must give no place to any sentiment that withdraws the soul from duty. Duty! This is the greatest word in the vocabulary of life. It is recorded that a man once came to Jesus, saying, "I will follow thee, but let me first go bid them farewell which are at my home." And Jesus said unto him, "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." It was an hard saying, but a frank statement of the ethical imperative. The same truth is stated with still greater emphasis in the Master's words, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." The joy of living is in a right apprehension of the fact that Duty is first of all.

"Stern Law-giver! Yet thou dost wear  
The Godhead's most benignant grace;  
Nor know I anything so fair  
As the smile upon thy face."

*But perhaps it was not homesickness but fear* that moved John Mark to retire. The highlands of Pamphylia were occupied by a most inhospitable people.

It was to this country that Paul referred in his account of "perils of rivers, perils of mountains, perils of robbers." It was the region of adventure; the wonderland of those times. John Mark was an inexperienced youth. He had heard terrible tales of banditti dwelling in the defiles of yonder cliffs. But fear cannot excuse cowardice. The heart must be steeled to meet difficulty and to confront the dangers of the Christian life. Wherefore Peter says, "Add to your faith *virtus*;" that is, the courage of a true soldier. And Paul, "Quit you like men!"

The Pilgrim going to the Celestial City fell in with certain wayfarers, who admonished him that there were "lions in the way." And presently, as he came within sight of his destination, he heard the roaring of the lions and caught sight of them. At this point Bunyan inserts a significant parenthesis, ("The lions were chained, but he saw not the chain.") Then pursuing his journey with much trembling, he heard the voice of the porter at the lodge, calling, "Fear not! Is thy strength so small? The lions are placed there for the trial of faith. Keep in the midst of the path and no hurt shall come unto thee!"

One of the lions in our way is *the fear of Renunciation*. Now God forbid that I or any other should undertake to make that easy which Christ made hard. The life of a Christian begins with giving up. But what is it that must be given up? Sin, and sin only. And a man, whether he be a Christian or not, is not half a man unless he desires to give up sin. The pleasure that is mixed with sin, the ambition that is tainted with sin, the vocation that is pursued in sin; these must be renounced once for all. But think of the great

reward: "There is no man that hath left aught for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."

Another of the lions in our way is *the fear of Confession*. No doubt it is possible for a man to be a Christian and make no sign; yet the presumption is infinitely against him who undertakes it. We cannot but pity the woman who, having been healed in the crowd by touching the hem of Christ's garment, was not allowed to escape without making herself known. The Lord said, "Who touched me?" and, no one answering, he insisted, "Who touched me? For I perceive that virtue hath gone out of me." Whereupon the diffident creature "came trembling and confessed all." O, it was hard for her, but it was salutary. No man can be a coward and a true follower of Christ. He himself has said: "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." Stand forth, therefore, if you are trying to love and follow Christ. Forth, into the open! Let your light shine before men.

And many would-be Christians are deterred also by *the fear of Consecration*. The demand here is imperative and unequivocal. We are to lay ourselves as a living sacrifice upon the altar. Nothing can be withheld. "Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee." What else, indeed, could be required of us? Is our best too good for the Saviour who gave himself for us? And is not whole-heartedness the secret of success in every enterprise? Do we not say,

“If you would succeed, put yourself into your work”? The bravest of Athenian generals was Alcibiades, whose continuous triumphs were accounted for by the fact that he “gave himself to the matter in hand.” It is related of him that, when a mere lad, he was playing at dice in the narrow street when a chariot drew near. All the lads ran save Alcibiades, who disputed the road with the charioteer, by casting himself prostrate. “Out of the way!” cried the charioteer. “Drive on!” answered the lad. No coachman drives over anybody under such conditions; he alone is in danger who stands midway on the crossing, divided betwixt two. But whether in boyish play, in manly strife or in Christian service, the truth holds that *abandon* means success. If you would make your life tell in the kingdom of Christ, be wholly his. He asks not yours, but yourself. And he will have nothing less.

It is the part of a wise man to know the difficulty of the situation and confront it. Who would live an easy life? I like the word of the Nonesuch Professor, “Take heaven with the wind in your face!”

*But possibly the defection of John Mark was due to neither homesickness nor fear, but rather to a lack of sympathy with the expedition.* As a Jew he may have entertained the common prejudice against the evangelization of the Gentile world. Thus far on their journey, Paul and Barnabas had been seeking “the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” but now they faced the regions beyond. The highlands of Pamphylia were peopled by “dogs of Gentiles;” and the young evangelist had no thought of sharing with them the unsearchable riches of the gospel of Christ.



And who are we that we should blame him? Is there not a mighty prejudice in the church of to-day against the world-wide view of evangelization? Are our church-doors all open to all sorts and conditions of men? O for an enlargement of heart, that we might grasp the universal purpose of the Evangel!

Our Lord was a City Missionary; as such he preached in Jerusalem to the multitude thronging the streets. And he expects us to give his Gospel to the lapsed masses and the submerged multitudes. On Monday last an old man said to me, "I came to church last night for the first time in years; and I heard you say that Jesus had made this promise, 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' I have been in this city six weary weeks in search of an only daughter. I have haunted the theatres, frequented the department stores, stood before dens of infamy. I have knocked at doors, and when they were opened, she was not there. I have looked into a thousand faces, but not into hers. Do you think that if He were to help me, I might ask and receive? If He were to go with me, might I seek and find her? Would He direct me where to knock, that when the door opened I should see her face?" Here is one of the innumerable tragedies of our city life. The streets are thronged with prodigal sons and daughters; lost to the sweet influences of home, to truth and goodness; and we are commissioned to go after them and bring them back to God.

But Jesus was a Home Missionary, also. He went up into Samaria and preached his gospel on the frontiers. And, passing northward to Syro-Phenicia, he

became a Foreign Missionary. There are professing Christians who say, "I do not believe in Foreign Missions." Let the long journey of Christ from heaven to earth put them to an open shame.

"O, none of the ransomed ever knew  
How deep were the waters crossed ;  
Or how dark was the night that the Lord passed through  
Ere he found the sheep that was lost."

It is a pleasure to learn, from the sequel, that John Mark outgrew his mean and narrowminded conception of the gospel. It was twenty years afterward that Paul, writing from the Mamertine jail, spoke of him as "My fellow-laborer in the kingdom of Christ" and as "profitable for the ministry." The record is that he himself became a Foreign Missionary, going with Peter to distant Rome and thence to Alexandria, where he suffered martyrdom by being dragged asunder with ropes. If he might return and reason with some of us who stand hesitating on the borders of Pamphylia, he would surely say, "Fall into line, O Christians, with the vast purpose of Christ! He died for all: and ye are fishers of men."

It is customary to invite the impenitent to come to Jesus for their deliverance from the just penalties of sin. This indeed is a valid motive, but the lowest of all. We are called not merely to a selfish salvation; but to the service of a glorious Christ who purposes to save the world. He invites us to go with him into the yellow harvest, sickle in hand, and reap for God. This is the Christian life at its best and noblest; for the greatest thing in the world is to save a man. We are told of an accident in a Welsh colliery by which fifteen miners were imprisoned and in jeopardy of

death. The rescue was undertaken by brave volunteers. A week they toiled fruitlessly, and then heard a faint tapping. On the eighth day a voice was heard, "Make haste! make haste!" On the ninth day the rescue was effected. The bells of the village rang joyously and the people marched through the streets with the rescuers on their shoulders, singing, "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow!"

We are called to rescue-work. This is the very genius of Christianity. Let us not narrow the horizons of the gospel. We go forth in the name of Jesus Christ to the conquest of the world. In some measure we are responsible for the welfare of all, as well of those at the antipodes as of our neighbor next door. The great commission appeals to everything that is noblest within us. What shall we do? Lend a hand! Let us set forth to the Pamphylian mountains, if not in person, certainly by our prayers and sympathies. Let us render effective service in bringing all nations and kindreds and peoples and tribes to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. And so may an abundant entrance be ministered to us at heaven's gate.

There are some who, like poor Lot escaping from Sodom, will be saved "so as by fire." There are some who will be carried up to heaven on stretchers, saved by the faithfulness of others. But a glorious welcome awaits those who enter saying, "Lord, here am I, and they whom thou hast given me." This is the abundant entrance. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever."

## THE FAREWELL PRAYER OF JESUS

“Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me.”—John 17, 24.

It was the night before the crucifixion. The Paschal supper was ended and the disciples had risen from the table. As on the night of the original Passover the Israelites stood girt and sandaled for their wilderness journey, so these men were facing an unknown future. It was then that Jesus, lifting up his eyes to heaven, offered the sacerdotal prayer. Of all his wonderful prayers this the most solemn and impressive. It was a prayer after sacrament. It was a benediction after the sermon. It was the farewell intercession for those who were nearest and dearest to him.

It begins with an invocation: “Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.” In these words a sidelight is thrown upon the purpose of Christ’s life and passion; to wit, the glory of God. This is the focus where all life and history converge. The chief end of man, as of the Son of Man, of angels and archangels, of the whole created universe, is to glorify God.

The remainder of the prayer is intercessory. “I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me.” He had prayed for the world once

and again, on other occasions, but now his heart was filled with solicitude for his disciples. They were friends, comrades; he had led them about in labor of love and patience of hope. They had campaigned together, had shared their crust of poverty, their meed of persecution. But they were more than friends and comrades; they were bound to him by a mystical tie of spiritual kinship in one household of faith. They were his younger brethren, he the first-born. How natural his solicitude, then. It is recorded that when Joseph bade farewell to his brethren he required of them an oath that, when they should be delivered from captivity, they would carry away his bones with them; but Christ, as becomes his gracious magnanimity, asks that his brethren may share his destiny in the glory of the heavenly life.

The prayer consists of four petitions. *The first is for the Preservation* of those whom the Father had given him. "Holy Father, keep them. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name; and now come I to thee. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil." He leaves them behind as living epistles of his gospel. He knows that the great danger to which they must constantly be exposed, is conformity to the world; wherefore he asks that, being in the world, they may not be of it. One of the fathers, commenting on this passage, says, "A ship is safe on the ocean, so long as the ocean is not in the ship."

*His second plea is for their Sanctification*: "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth,"

Herein he reveals the secret of Christian growth and of the deepening of the spiritual life. The agent of sanctification is the Holy Spirit; the instrument is the Word. It is obvious, therefore, that no amount of sentimental aspiration can take the place of loyalty to the divine Oracles. In vain do we pray for the indwelling power of the Holy Ghost while ignoring or neglecting the Scriptures, since the Holy Spirit is accustomed to work unto edification through the Word.

*The third petition is for the Unity of believers:* "Neither pray I for these alone, but also for them that shall believe through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." The unity here referred to is not uniformity; since the Church is a living organism, as set forth in Ezekiel's vision of the Spirit in the wheels (Ez. i. 15-25). To beat the wheels of a chronometer into a bar of steel would be to secure uniformity at the expense of efficiency. The only "Church union" which is either possible or desirable is represented in the saying, "In essentials unity, in non-essentials diversity, in all things charity." When this is realized in the universal Church, the world will believe in the mission of Christ as the Saviour of men.

*And the final plea of Jesus in this sacerdotal prayer is for the Glorification of his people:* "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me."

I. Here at the outset is *our best definition of*

*Heaven*: "I pray that they *may be where I am.*" Heaven is not an abstraction, but a locality; nevertheless we are unable to locate it. It is referred to in the Scriptures as a home, as "a city, that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," as a land that floweth with milk and honey; but these are figures of speech. We long to know precisely where heaven is. It would be an unspeakable satisfaction if we could look toward one of the stars, as Alcyone of the Pleiades, and say, "Yonder is the great, white throne; and the saints triumphant are there, looking down upon us." But we have no such definite assurance. One thing, however, we can say with certainty: Heaven is where Christ is. And this means everything to those who follow him. It means that heaven is *a holy place*: for as mists are dissipated and bats and owls and all uncanny things flee before the rising sun, so does the presence of Christ repel all suggestion of sin. It is also a guarantee of *unalloyed happiness*. There shall be no more pain nor sorrow: weeping endureth for a night but joy cometh in the morning. At his right hand are pleasures forevermore. And still further it assures *our eternal security*; for as the mountains are round about the earthly Jerusalem, so does his love, like a mighty wall, encompass the heavenly city. What more shall we ask?

I know not the form of my mansion fair;  
 I know not the name that I then shall bear;  
 But I know that my Saviour will welcome me there.  
 And that will be heaven for me.

II. But Jesus asks more: "I will that they *may be with me*, where I am." This is not tautological. A man may be in London, yet never see the Queen.



He may be entertained as a guest in Windsor Castle, yet never set eyes upon her. We shall not only be where Christ is, but we shall behold him, him "whom not having seen we love and in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." In our highest moments of devotion we catch a momentary glimpse of his majesty: as when, on the Mount of Transfiguration, the disciples saw his face shining and his garments white and glistening. This is to behold him "as in a glass darkly"; but there we shall see him face to face.

And we shall be like him. "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is." Men who are long associated in the common affairs of life grow to resemble each other. John Anderson and his guid wife, who "climb the hill thegither," show in their faces the long blending of hope and purpose. "What rare and precious substance art thou?" asked a wise man of a pebble which exhaled a strange fragrance. "I am only a pebble," it answered, "but I have lain at the root of a rose-tree." Thus by long companionship with Jesus, as friends and followers, we must of necessity catch somewhat of his beauty of holiness and grow into some measure of his likeness from day to day.

And the highest joy of heaven will be in magnifying his goodness. "Worthy art thou to receive honor and glory and power and dominion; for thou hast washed our robes and made them white in thy blood." We shall join the goodly fellowship of the prophets,

the glorious company of the apostles, the noble army of martyrs and the innumerable company of angels and saints triumphant, in praising him.

I would begin that music here,  
 And so my soul would rise ;  
 O, for some heavenly power to bear  
 My passion to the skies!

III. But the prayer rises to a loftier height: "I will that they *may behold my glory which thou hast given me.*" Observe the pathos of this desire. The disciples of Jesus had been associated with him during the years of his humiliation: they had seen him in the carpenter shop; had known him as a homeless wayfarer; were now accompanying him to Gethsemane, the Judgment Hall and the Cross. How natural that he should wish them to behold him presently seated on his throne, in light and glory unapproachable, with adoring multitudes bowing and veiling their faces before him.

The reference is not to any such adventitious glory as earth's conquerors boast of. This is, indeed, but a transitory thing; its ultimate purple is a shroud, and its last domain is a narrow grave. The prime minister of Louis the Grand showed him a coin, having on one side a tribute to his diplomatic achievements, and on the other the royal portrait. "Canst thou not drive a nail here, above my crown, to fasten it thus?" asked Louis; "for the wheel of fortune hath such a way of turning that it may presently leave me upside down." All earthly greatness is, indeed, a trivial thing.

Nor does Christ refer to his essential glory; "the glory which he had with the Father before the world

was." It is written, "No man hath ever seen God." Can we look with undazzled eyes upon the glory of the midday sun?

The reference is to his mediatorial glory, "the glory which thou hast given me." This is the reward of his great sacrifice for the deliverance of the world. It was promised in the Covenant of Redemption: "When he shall give his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." In order to accomplish his great purpose he put aside "the form of God" and was "found in fashion as a man;" and in return, "God hath highly exalted him and given him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow." This is the glory which John saw in a vision: The Son of Man walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks, as the head of his visible Church, his face as the sun shineth in his strength, his voice as the sound of many waters. We shall behold him thus, *hisce oculis*, with these very eyes.

And—greatest of all conceivable honors—we shall be partakers of this glory. The mother of the Sons of Thunder asked for them that one might sit on the right hand of Jesus and the other on his left in his kingdom; and though that was refused as being impossible during the earthly life, a great distinction awaits us; as it is written, "To him that overcometh will I give to sit together with me in my throne." Here is a great mystery and we may not solve it. But this we know: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. 2, 12); If we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified together (Ro. 8, 17); If we par-

take of his sufferings, we shall also be glad with exceeding joy (1 Pet. 4, 13); "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God had prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. 2, 9).

O, could I see, as indeed they be,  
The glories of Heaven that compass me,  
I should lightly hold the tissued fold  
Of that marvelous curtain of blue and gold;  
But soon the whole, like a parchment scroll,  
Shall before my amazed sight uproll,  
And without a screen, at one burst be seen,  
The Presence wherein I had ever been.

IV. We come now to a singular expression which marks the incomparable power of this intercession: "*Father, I will.*" Here is a broad departure from the usual terminology of prayer. These are imperious words: "I will." In order to understand them, we must consider the complex nature of Christ. As the God-man, he had a dual self-consciousness in which there was a perfect co-operation of the divine and the human will. Now we observe the repression of one and again that of the other; as when, the shadow of the cross falling coldly over him, he cried, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. Nay, but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thyself!" And again in Gethsemane, when once and again he put away the purple cup, pleading, "O, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" and finally, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." So in this sacerdotal prayer he pleads with all majestic humility, as other suppliants, until he

reaches the farewell word; then all his power of Godhood stands forth to utter a manifesto as from his throne, "*I will* that they whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me!"

In this sublime passage we have an intimation of the all-prevailing character of his heavenly intercession. The High Priest of the olden time bore the names of Israel upon his ephod when he entered the Holy of Holies to make intercession for them: but our great Mediator has our names written upon the palms of his hands, and he lifts them in heaven with an omnipotent word, "Father, I will!"

The decree has gone forth. We are given to Christ as the fruit of the travail of his soul. "These shall be to him for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." He has willed our salvation; therefore we may say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

I knew a man, once on a time, who began the journey of the better life by putting his hand in Christ's and saying, "Lord, I would follow thee." He prospered until nightfall, when his soul was given over to fears and misgivings. But a Voice was heard, saying in the darkness, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? Be of good courage. I will that thou shouldst be with me!" Thus hope returned and with new purpose he trudged on. But at the end of the second day he came to Vanity Fair, where he turned aside; and there he laid his head in Delilah's lap and rose up shorn of his manly locks

and weak as other men. Again the Voice was heard, "I have not forsaken thee; I have not forgotten thee; I will that thou shalt be with me." And he shook himself and, tightening his girdle, resumed his journey. And all went well until he came, next day, to the Palace of the Mockers, where they point their fingers and cry, Aha! And there he hid himself for shame of his Master, until the Voice called, "Stand forth and wear my name as frontlets between thine eyes! I have died for thy salvation; and I will that thou shalt be with me!" Then he bowed his head, moaning, "Sorríe I am, my Lord!" and journeyed on. Thus every day brought its trial and temptations; until at last crossing the great desert of Patient Continuance the heat and burden of the day were heavy upon him. There he fainted and must have died but for the Voice, "Lo, I am with thee even unto the end of the world! I will that thou shouldst behold my glory!" Then he drank of a brook by the way and staggered on. And thus, at length, faint yet pursuing, hard bestead yet patiently continuing, he came to heaven's gate, where one met him, saying, "Well done! Take now the inheritance of the saints in light! The glory is before thee. Lift the song! Enter into the joy of thy Lord!"

Is it the story of your life? Aye, and of every faithful follower of Christ. His promise is our only strength and our support. We faint and stumble, and fall: but the great Friend is beside us and his rod and staff comfort us.

Here is the assurance of our perseverance unto the end. We live safely because we live under his protection. We walk safely, because we walk in his

companionship. We die safely, because he comforts us in the hour that trieth the soul of a man. Death is naught to those who believe in him. It is written of Enoch, "He walked with God, and was not, for God took him." We learn wisdom sometimes from the lips of the little people; a boy told the story of Enoch to his playmate thus: "He used to take long walks with God; and one day he walked with him a long, long ways; and when evening came, God said, 'Enoch, we are far from your home; you had better come in now and stay with me.'" Blessed are they who thus, at nightfall, enter the endless glory.

" 'Forever with the Lord!'

Amen, so let it be.

Life from the dead is in that word,

'Tis immortality."



## PETER'S SWORD

"Then Jesus said unto] Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath."—  
John 18, 11.

No doubt Peter was a great blunderer; nevertheless we cannot help liking him. He should not have drawn his sword on this occasion; yet "Bravo!" trembles on our lips; for was it not love to his Master that kindled his passion and loyalty that nerved his arm? It is easy to forgive the exuberance of a manly man. And we love courage; the sword dazzles us. We run to our windows at the beating of the drum. We applaud when soldiers go marching by. O, war is glorious! But think of "the thin red line": hear the ping! ping! of flying bullets, and see the dead looking up at the cold skies. Sherman was right when he said, "War is hell." And it was a great truth that Jesus uttered, "Put up thy sword into the sheath; they that take the sword shall perish by it."

But how did Peter come to have a sword? He was a fisherman, quite unused to edged tools. A skilful man-at-arms would have cleft the skull of Malchus, whereas Peter could but cut off his ear. He would doubtless have done better with an oar or a boathook. Nevertheless he did his best and verily thought he was doing God service. A few hours before, in the upper room, the Master, warning his

disciples of approaching trouble, had said, "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one." We can scarcely blame Peter, literalist as he ever was, for taking Jesus at his word.

And, indeed, there is a time for wielding the sword. If Peter, threading his way along the path to Gethsemane, had been assaulted by a highwayman, he would have been guilty of constructive suicide had he not drawn his weapon in self-defense. When Governor Bradford, of Plymouth Colony, received from Canonicus, the King of the Narragansetts, a bundle of arrows wrapped in the skin of a rattlesnake, he very properly answered by sending back the snake's skin stuffed with powder and balls. The first law of nature is self-protection, and there is nothing in grace to abrogate it. Or if Peter, going through a narrow street in Capernaum, had come upon a ruffian beating a helpless child, what should he do? Go to the guard-house and enter a complaint, that a rescue might be effected by due process of law? Nay, in such a case nothing would answer but a blow between the eyes. And here is the rationale of all just war; the vindication of natural rights.

' Strike for your altars and your fires ;  
Strike for the green graves of your sires ;  
God and your native land!"

The golden age of Arbitration is not yet. Among the just functions of government is the righting of wrongs which can only be accomplished by the chastisement of evil-doers. In the good time coming all swords shall be beaten into plowshares and all spears into pruning hooks; but that will be when the

government is upon the shoulder of the Prince of Peace.

One thing, however, is very clear, in the light of the Master's word to Peter; to wit, *The Sword is Never to be Used for the Propagation of the Gospel*. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual. The resort to war is for secular governments in the interest of law and order and human rights; the Church can use but one weapon only; namely, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

If the followers of Jesus had rightly apprehended this distinction they would have been spared an incalculable waste of energy. It is estimated by Gibbon that in the Crusades six millions of the bravest and best men of Christendom marched to the rescue of the Holy Sepulcher from infidel hands. Had those six millions turned a deaf ear to the specious cry, "*Deus vult!*" and heard instead the Master's word, "Go ye, evangelize!"—had they gone forth with the message of salvation, not to slay, but to make alive, what an impression it would have made upon the Pagan world. Six million missionaries, uplifting the cross as the remedy for sin! But they preferred to take counsel of their own passions; and their blood, in consequence, was as water poured upon the ground. There is worse than nothing to show for it.

But the lesson goes further. In the injunction, "Put up thy sword into the sheath," we have the setting forth of a great principle; *the Law of Spiritual Conquest*; that is, life out of death, or triumph by sacrifice. It is elsewhere stated thus: "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall

lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it" (Mark 8, 35).

I. *This means that Christ must die.* He had repeatedly told his disciples of this fact, but they were never willing to have it so. They answered, "Be it far from thee, Lord!" And Peter, in drawing his sword, was doing what he could to prevent it.

The vicarious death of Jesus was necessary in order that the world might be delivered from sin. The death penalty had passed upon the guilty race; as it is written, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die;" and salvation could be accomplished only by the substitutionary death of one whose blood should be of infinite value. The chastisement of our peace must be upon him, that by his stripes we may be healed. Wherefore Jesus said of the cross, "It must needs be."

It had been written in Scripture, "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." The scarlet thread of redemptive prophecy runs all through Holy Writ. Jesus recognized this when he said to Peter, after enjoining him to put up his sword: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scripture be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Matt. 27, 53).

It had been decreed of the Father, also, that his only begotten and well beloved Son should die for the world's sin. To this end he "gave" him and "sent" him. When Abraham climbed the mountain slope to offer up his only son, "he took the wood of

the burnt-offering and laid it upon Isaac, his son"; so, as Jesus staggered up to Golgotha, bearing his cross, the Father was with him, saying, "Thus it must be."

It was, moreover, the fixed and eternal purpose of Christ himself to die. He recognized his destiny, and faced it. His sacrifice was wholly voluntary, as he said, "Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, 'I rejoice to do thy will.'" In the castle of the Hohenzollern there was an instrument of death known as the Swinging Crescent. It was a gleaming blade, suspended from the dungeon roof and swinging to and fro, with each vibration nearer, nearer. It is said that the victim always lost consciousness under this approaching horror of death. But Christ did not swoon; he knew the death awaiting him, and "set his face steadfastly" toward it. He was sustained by his prevision of the great reward; the life of the world as the purchase of his death, an innumerable company of sinners born of the travail of his soul into the glory of an endless life.

II. *Our text suggests that the Church, also, must die.* The Church is the great organism through which God is saving the world; but salvation is ever wrought by sacrifice. A nation may conquer by the sword, but the Church never; hence the futility of the Inquisition and of all kindred modes of propagandism. It is estimated that under Torquemada no less than six thousand men and women were burned at the stake, not to mention those who were tortured by rack and thumbscrew. All this is in plain violation of the law which Hudibras announced in homely words:

"A man convinced against his will  
Is of the same opinion still."

There are three forces only which the Church may legitimately apply in the furtherance of the gospel: The first is *Attraction*, which is set forth in Jesus' Parable of the Magnet: "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." This is that "foolishness of preaching,"—the exaltation of Christ, living, dying and alive forevermore,—which is destined to win the nations and establish the kingdom of righteousness unto the ends of the earth. This is, indeed, "foolishness to the Greek and to the Jews a stumbling-block; but to them that believe it is the wisdom and power of God."

The second force is *Pervasion*, which is set forth in the Parable of the Leaven; "And Jesus said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened." The influence which thus pervades the world is Christian character. It works secretly, silently by permeation, and there is no resisting it.

The third force is *Germination*, which is set forth in the Parable of the Mustard Seed; "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which is indeed the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." Such is the power of Christian benevolence. The giving forth of energy in doing good is like the planting of a grain of wheat which, "except it die, abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Here is the principle, life out of death, conquest by sacrifice. We overcome the world by giving ourselves for it.

If Peter had been successful in wielding his sword, what would the result have been? Let us suppose that he had killed Malchus, and then, turning on the traitor Judas, had slain him also; that the other disciples had followed him and made away with Pilate and Caiphaz and Herod the Tetrarch; that they had rallied a multitude with the cry, "To your tents, O Israel!" and marching up to the Castle of Antonia, had overcome the guard and secured possession of the city; that Jesus had thus been seated upon a throne of temporal power and all Jewry prevailed upon to bow before him. What then? The new kingdom might have lasted a decade or a century; but what of that? Christ did not come into the world to set up a throne that should endure for a season and then follow in the long procession of principalities and powers to dusty oblivion. He came for salvation; to save the people from a moral bondage, and to establish an everlasting Kingdom.

III. *But our text comes nearer home; The Christian, also, must die.* We do not sufficiently emphasize the necessity of entering into the fellowship of our Master's death. In the Scriptures this fact is iterated and reiterated: "I protest that I die daily"; "For thy sake we are killed all the day long"; "We are appointed unto death"; "We are made a spectacle unto the world, unto angels and unto men"; "We bear about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus"; "We are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake." What does this mean,—this dying in Christ?

It means, at the outset, that *we die to self-will*. The man who has truly apprehended Christ has no purpose of his own. His will is lost in the higher



Will. His struggle ends where his Master's did: "O my Father, not my will but thine be done!" He believes what God tells him to believe: he does what God tells him to do: he sings, "I worship thee, sweet will of God."

*We die to the world, also.* Its ambitions are no longer ours. We live no more for the acquisition of wealth, the pursuit of pleasure, or the attainment of secular honor and emolument; all these are mere incidents in a life devoted supremely to the setting up of the kingdom of Christ. A crown was offered to him, and he refused it. *Inspexit et despexit!* Crowns and scepters are not worth fighting for. The Lord has better things for us.

*And, above all, we die to sin.* Here comes the tug of war. There is a war in our members; a constant struggle between "the new man" and the lingering passions and appetites of unregenerate nature. Put up thy sword! Cease struggling for the retention of that which would forever ruin thee. The glory of our renewed manhood is in the prevailing power of righteousness as against all sin.

If you or I had been in command of the Roman Guard in Gethsemane, when the sword of Peter flashed from its scabbard, we should probably have said, "Seize yon armed man!" But it was not Peter that they wanted; they must make an end of the quiet Man, unarmed and unresisting, who stood behind him. He, by the silent force of his Evangel, was destined to conquer the world. And he asked of them, "Whom seek ye?" They said, "Jesus of Nazareth." He answered, "I am he." And then "they went backward and fell to the ground." What

was it that suddenly smote them? A light shining from his face? The majesty of his innocence? A momentary unveiling of his glory? It matters not: the world reels backward in his presence still; and before the calm influence of his character in history all cavilers are stricken dumb. This is the irresistible power of the Evangel. And this is that light of his countenance which is to be ever reflected in the life of his disciples; as it is written, "Ye are the light of the world, let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify God."

I wonder what became of Peter's sword. Perhaps when the great tragedy was over and he went back to his nets and boats for a season, he hung it on the wall of the humble home of Capernaum and left it rusting there. A little later came Pentecost; and Peter stood up in the midst of an assembled multitude and preached the unsearchable riches of the gospel—"breathing thoughts in burning words." He told them how Christ had come from heaven to redeem the world; how they with wicked hands had crucified him; how he had risen from the grave triumphant and ascended to the right hand of God. "And being pricked in the heart, they cried, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then he answered, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." And on that day there were added to them about three thousand souls,—prisoners of hope, captured by the sweet reasonableness of the gospel. Thus Peter found the better sword, and wielded it with mighty power; the sword which is to win the world,—the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God,

A word in conclusion to those who have not yielded to Christ's overtures. God has a sword; as it is written, "If I whet my glittering sword and my hand take hold on judgment, I will take vengeance on them that hate me"; and again, "Who can stand before his indignation and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger?" We are reluctant to set forth the sterner side of the divine character; but his love is most manifest when it appears against the ominous background of his justice. "Wherefore, knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." We preach the gospel of reconciliation. "His gentleness hath made me great." His sword is sheathed; his hands are stretched out still. He draws us by the sweet constraint of love. He speaks to the sinner by the voice of his Spirit in the inner man. There are hands beckoning; there are voices calling: "Come now, saith the Lord, let us reason together";—"Come unto me all ye that are heavy laden and I will give you rest."—Come, come, come!—What more can he do? My friend, you are yourself, for the present, the court of last appeal. God will not force his great salvation upon you. It is for you to determine, Yea or Nay. If you are ever saved it will be by your own consent. Here is the decision:

" 'Tis done; the great transaction's done;  
I am my Lord's and he is mine.  
He drew me and I followed on,  
Charmed to confess the voice divine."

His sword is in its scabbard; he sets the cross before you. He can do no more. "He draweth us with the cords of a man."

## CHRISTLIKENESS

“ And they marveled and took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.”—Acts 4, 13.

Peter and John went up to the Temple to pray: but the beggar at the Gate Beautiful turned their plans upside down, so that the night found them languishing in jail. They should indeed have been more prudent. The sermon in Solomon's Porch was a flagrant infringement on the prerogative of the Sanhedrin. However, “all things work together for good to them that love God.” The two prisoners, despite the darkness and dreariness of their circumstances, had, no doubt, a comfortable sense of their Lord's presence. I seem to hear John saying,

“ Are you awake, Peter? ”

“ Yes; and though these chains are heavy and the chill oppressive, I know that our dear Lord has not forgotten us.”

“ What, think you, will the morrow bring? ”

“ I know not. We may be turned over to the Roman magistrates or perhaps dragged forth, like Stephen, to be stoned outside the walls.”

“ Does your heart misgive you? ”

“ Nay: I have been thinking of the Babylonish youth in the furnace; ‘ Behold, there was one with them like unto the Son of God.’ ”

“I also am sustained by his promise, ‘Lo, I am with you alway.’ We may sleep to-night with that gracious word as a pillow for our heads.”

And then, I think, they sang perhaps the psalm that was so helpful in the persecutions of the early Church:

God is our refuge and strength,  
A very present help in trouble.  
Therefore will we not fear, though the earth do change  
And though the mountains be moved in the heart of the  
seas;

Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,  
Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.

“Be still and know that I am God!

“I will be exalted among the nations,

“I will be exalted in the earth.”

The Lord of hosts is with us;

The God of Jacob is our refuge.

In the morning the prisoners were summoned to appear before the Sanhedrin in the hall Gazith, to answer to a criminal inquiry as to “the good deed done to the impotent man.” The question was, “By what power or in what name have ye done this?” As Peter arose, the power of the Holy Ghost came upon him, and he spake as an ambassador of Christ. We have a mere brief of this discourse, but enough to indicate its character. It was a bold arraignment of the Court for the murder of Jesus, and a clear presentation of the Gospel as set forth in his name, the only name “under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.” Its effect upon the learned assemblage is thus described: “*They marveled and took knowledge of these men that they had been with Jesus.*”

We want to know how that could be. What was there in the bearing of these apostles which betrayed their fellowship with the Man of Nazareth? Is there, then, a mystic effluence from his person, so that those who associate with him are pervaded by his spirit and grow to resemble him?

(1) Was their acquaintance with Jesus disclosed by *the Healing Touch*? The fact that he wrought miracles has been challenged by modern skepticism, but it was never called in question in those days. It should be understood, however, that his acts of healing were but incidents along the path of his great purpose. When he opened blind eyes, it was to show that he had power to give spiritual discernment. When he wiped away the white schale of leprosy, it was to reveal his power to cleanse from sin. When he called forth Lazarus from his sepulcher, it was to show that he could restore the spiritually dead to newness of life. The relieving of a few sick and suffering people was of slight moment as compared with that ultimate truth, "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sin."

The disciples of Jesus, at the first, were unable to wield this miraculous power. They could not calm the tempest, when they were alone in the boat; they could not dispossess the demoniac child at the Mount of Transfiguration. But presently the Lord breathed upon them, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." After that they were able to imitate his wonderful works. But these were merely indicative of a greater power which they possessed; to wit, the power of bringing souls under the cleansing and quickening influence of divine grace. This is the miracle of all

miracles; to lead men out of darkness into light; out of sin's poverty into the imperishable inheritance of the Gospel of Christ.

And this power is committed to all believers. The *charismata*, or miraculous gifts of healing, which were conferred upon the apostles to meet the necessities of the infant church, have passed away. Those who claim such power in our times are charlatans and mountebanks. But all true followers of Christ can convert men by bringing them under the influence of his grace. The exercise of this gift is contingent on our contact with him. When Samson, forgetful of his vow of loyalty, laid his head in the lap of Delilah, he arose shorn of his manly strength and was brought to the Temple of Dagon where he ground like a woman at the mill. While we abide with Jesus, we are strong; forsaking him, we are weak as other men. "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

(2) Or perhaps Peter and John revealed their acquaintance with Jesus by *their Manner of Speech*. His preaching was singular in its infinite grasp of spiritual truth. He had nothing to say of art or science or philosophy as such, but left those for the dilettanti. He spoke of great verities, opened the difficult doors of the invisible, solved the problems of the eternal life.

One of the characteristics of his teaching was simplicity. He avoided the terminology of the schools and made use of object-lessons, which he called parables. Another characteristic of his teaching was its ring of certainty. He used no "if" or "perhaps," but always, "Verily, verily." An "if"



in a sermon is like a crack in a pitcher; the pitcher may be very beautiful but it will hold no water. When you hear a minister airing his doubts and misgivings or indulging in vain speculation, you may be quite certain that he has not recently been with Jesus, otherwise he would have learned the wiser way. And still another characteristic of Christ's teaching was its tone of authority. He was the great positivist. How could it be otherwise, since he was himself the living source and center of truth?

Thus the speech of Peter betrayed him. He and his companion were but ignorant men, and they stood before a most learned assemblage. Well might they have been abashed in the presence of Annas and Caiphas, of Alexander and Hillel and Shammai; yet they exhibited no false modesty or hesitation; they had caught the manner of their Lord. The voice of Peter was but an echo of the Voice that shaketh the earth; and his discourse was buttressed by a "Thus saith the Lord."

And this is preaching. As ambassadors of Jesus Christ we present his Gospel in positive terms. Call this dogmatism if you will; we cannot for a moment allow that there is uncertainty as to the fundamental facts of our religion. Oliver Wendel Holmes says, "An opinion is provided with buffers at both ends, to break the shock of opposite opinions clashing against it; but a truth has no springs in it." We do not declare our own wisdom but that of the only-begotten Son of God; and we declare it without fear or misgiving on the authority of his "Verily, verily, I say unto you!"

(3) Furthermore, *the courage* of Peter and John betrayed their fellowship with Jesus. He was the most heroic man that ever lived. We have heroes in plenty, but none like him. The world is ringing at this moment with the words of Cronje, "We have some men, some arms, some ammunition, and we live; why should we surrender?" The record of his devoted band, in their frail barricade, surrounded by an overwhelming force and stifling in the green, corrosive fumes of lyddite, will live with the three hundred who defended the pass at Thermopylæ. It is to the credit of human nature that such magnificent deeds are not rare in history. But the heroism of Jesus stands solitary and alone in this, that it was free, wholly and absolutely, from all consideration of self. He set his face steadfastly toward the cross, not for personal honor or emolument but in behalf of men who hated and conspired to murder him. For this cause had he come into the world, to save sinners by his death; and never for a moment did he swerve an hair's breadth from it.

And Peter and John had caught the spirit of their Lord. They were timid men, unused to the pomp and circumstance of courts. They knew that they were facing the probability of death; yet they stood by their colors, untrembling and unappalled. The heart of their heroism was its magnanimous intent. Self was nothing; the salvation of the world was all. Time was when Peter shook like an aspen before the finger of a maid-servant; but he had been with Jesus longer, now; he had seen him with the glory of the resurrection on his face and had learned his power over death and hell. What were petty magistrates

and provincial dignitaries to men who had entered into the confidence of the King of kings?

But how were they sustained? From what secret fountain did they drink up courage? They had been with Jesus; they were with him now. His word was in their ears; "Ye shall be summoned before courts and magistrates; but fear not! I will be with you." And this is the strength of all true followers of Jesus. In the face of trial, of temptation, of death itself, we stand unmoved, if we remember him.

In our Metropolitan Museum of Art there is a picture called "The Last Token," representing a young girl in the Arena, awaiting her death. The galleries are filled with spectators; the lions are creeping from their dens with flaming eyes. The girl stands, with eyes uplifted toward the galleries, searching for the friendly hand which has just let fall a rose that lies at her feet. So does the promise of the abiding Presence come to the followers of Jesus in hours of bitter trial and apprehension. The fragrance of the King's garden is in this word, "Lo, I am with you alway." We can be brave if he stands beside us, saying, "I will not leave thee nor forsake thee! In six troubles I will deliver thee; and in seven there shall no evil touch thee."

(4) Again, the members of the Sanhedrin knew that these men had been with Jesus by *their Upright Bearing*. They took knowledge of their character, that it resembled his. He was the best Man that ever lived. There are many "good men"; but none who can claim to be without sin. Christ alone could utter the challenge, "Who layeth anything to my charge?" and evoke from his contemporary

judges and from all subsequent generations the reply, "We find no fault in thee at all!"

Peter and John were rough men. One of them had an irascible temper and had been addicted to profanity. But in their association with Jesus they had passed through a marvelous change; so that now, under the most trying circumstances, they preserved a meek yet manly front, reminding their persecutors of the Master whom they professed to follow and serve.

It is a singular fact that of all the sacred writers Peter, "the blunderer," is the most insistent on the importance of growth in character. It is he who says, "Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." And this is the test of loyalty to Christ, not a protestation of goodness, but a desire to attain unto it. No man can associate with Jesus and give himself over to habitual sin; since his presence, as one of the fathers says, "maketh us coy and tender." A true Christian does not merely avoid this or that particular sin, but, in copying Christ, develops a moral sensitiveness which makes him averse to sin itself. He learns to hate and abhor the appearance of evil. Thus the close companionship of Jesus brings us nearer and nearer to the stature of manhood. The minister of St. Furgus Church was once privileged to entertain the saintly

McCheyne for an hour in his study; and when the interview was over he wrote thus in his diary: "As I sit here my study seems a heavenly place, because Robert McCheyne has been in it; and everything is inscribed with the legend, 'Holiness unto the Lord.'"

(5) One thing more betrayed the association of these men with Jesus, namely, *their Manifest Purpose*. Christ lived, labored and died to set up a kingdom of souls; in other words, to save men. All lesser considerations were as nothing to him. He came not to be ministered unto but to minister. The one thought that dominated his being was the deliverance of the world from sin.

Not long before this, Peter and John were pursuing their trade as fishermen on the shore of Genesareth. Their chief concern was with the making of a livelihood. At evening they counted their catch and reckoned what it would bring them in the market. But one day Jesus passed by and said, "Arise and follow me; and I will make you fishers of men." Thenceforward a new purpose took possession of them. As they followed Jesus, they grew into his likeness and their uppermost thought was to do good as they had opportunity unto all men.

We, also, are called unto this "ministry." This is the meaning of the Master's word, "Take up thy cross and follow me." It matters little what befalls us, or what dangers confront us; life is of no value except for its opportunities of doing good; and death is nothing but promotion to higher tasks. If we live with Jesus, we live for others. If we abide in his fellowship, it is inevitable that the world should take knowledge of us, by reason of our self-denial in

behalf of others, that we have been with him and have learned of him.

A high standard of life and character is thus presented to such as follow Christ; and a high motive is here suggested to those who have not cast in their lot with him. He saves from death; but, more than that, he calls to highest manhood. He invites to the noblest service. He addresses himself to all that is best and divinest in our nature, saying, "Come thou with me, and realize the sublimest possibilities of thy being, in making thyself useful to thy fellow men." In one of Goethe's wonder-tales he tells of a magical lamp in a fisherman's hut, which, lighted at eventide, transformed the rude place into a palace, with walls of silver bedecked with precious stones. So is the mind of Christ in the soul of a man; it transforms him ultimately into a temple fit for the indwelling of God. A Christian is defined as "The highest style of man;" and the distinction is none the less true on account of our shortcomings. We want an ideal; the perfect ideal is Christlikeness. When Adoniram Judson was living among the Karens, they were profoundly impressed by his daily illustration of the Christian graces, insomuch that they called him "Jesus Christ's Man." Higher than this we may not aspire; better than this we cannot be. And if we patiently continue in well-doing we shall sometime realize this blessed hope; as it is written, "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

## THE BRIGHT SIDE OF FAILURE

“I will give the valley of Achor for a door of hope.”—Hosea 2, 15.

The Children of Israel, after crossing the Jordan, found themselves confronting a defile with Jericho at one end and Ai at the other; it was well named The Valley of Achor, meaning, “Trouble.” The capture of Jericho was accomplished by the advancing host with little or no difficulty; after which they were in high feather, being quite confident that nothing could arrest their progress. Spies were sent through the valley to inspect the defences of Ai, who reported that the town was insignificant and might easily be taken without ordering out the whole army. A detachment was sent, accordingly, and the people watched the vainglorious troop as it passed up through the Valley of Achor, banners flying and rams’ horns blowing. In a little while these men came running back, flinging away their shields and weapons by the roadside, having been put to an ignominious rout. And “the heart of the people melted and became as water”; they rent their clothes and cast dust upon their heads, crying, “Ah, Lord God, wherefore hast thou brought us over Jordan to destroy us?”

They were advised that the occasion of this defeat was the sin of Achan, who had hidden a golden



wedge in his tent. This evil thing being put away from among them, the Lord said, "Fear not; neither be dismayed; ye shall do unto Ai as ye did unto Jericho and her king." Up through the Valley of Achor went the army again, some of them, no doubt, recalling the scenes of their former discomfiture, and looking askance at a heap of stones which marked a recent grave and whispering, "Achan!" The expedition was now a magnificent success, so that Ai became "an heap and a desolation unto this day." An altar was reared to signalize God's power to turn defeat into victory, on which was inscribed the Law beginning, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and mind and strength."

Our text was written seven hundred years after that conquest of Canaan. The nation was now at the height of its prosperity and ripening for ruin. The golden calves at Dan and Bethel were surrounded by multitudes of worshipers kissing their hands and crying, "These be thy gods, O Israel!" Then began the divine judgments: the arm of the Lord was made bare, and he smote once, twice, thrice; until a cry of despair arose on every hand. A drought: the land was parched as an oven; lowing herds and bleating flocks sought water in vain. A pestilence: the air was reeking with infection; the dead lay unburied by the wayside. A hostile incursion: firebrands and dripping swords; bands of captives led away to bondage worse than death. The people watched them passing through the Vale of Trouble, and wept out their sorrow before God. Then Hosea lifted his voice and bade them be of good courage and hope in the

Lord; "for your exiles shall return again, the Lord shall give them the Valley of Achor for a door of hope."

Here is a truth for practical uses. Where is the man who has not been thwarted, defeated, discouraged? Our wrinkles and crows'-feet betray us. We have all marched up into the Valley of Achor, flushed with self-confidence, to be beaten back in confusion. But by God's grace our defeats may be changed into triumphs. "Men rise on stepping stones of their dead selves to higher things."

I. *Here is a man who has failed in business.* His is not a singular or infrequent case. It is said that ninety-five per cent. of all men going into commercial life for themselves are sooner or later forced into insolvency. The question is raised, however, whether or not this is properly called "failure." A friend of mine recently, as they say, "lost everything." Everything? He still has a happy home, a circle of loving children, a good conscience, a spotless character, self-respect, religion, the hope of an eternity with God. What then has he lost? A little yellow dust, the accumulation of a lifetime of labor, which sooner or later must slip through his fingers and be gone. A loss like this is, in any event, a mere question of time. "If thou'rt rich, thou'rt poor; for like an ass whose back with ingots bows, thou bear'st thy heavy burden for a season and death unloads thee." So then the man who loses money is, after all, only beaten back on the picket-line, the true conflict of life being on a much larger and more momentous scale. It is as if a chess player lost a pawn with the game still before him. Failure?

Bankruptcy? "Lost everything?" O no; if my friend had lost home, character, self-respect or faith in God and kept his yellow dust, that would have been failure, indeed; an awful bankruptcy, an irreparable loss.

If it be true that "misery loves company" then such as have failed in secular business may be comforted in the fellowship of the ninety-five per cent. of all voyagers on industrial seas who are beaten back by Euroclydon. The fact stated is not without its compensations. It is the working out of an economic law rudely formulated in the proverb, "There are three generations from shirt-sleeves to shirt-sleeves"; a law quite necessary to the world's social equilibrium. It is frequently said that "the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer"; and lamentations are heard on every side because the world's wealth seems to be accumulating in the hands of a few. This would be alarming but for the working of the law referred to. Of a hundred men who set out with the determination to accumulate wealth, ninety-five are obliged sooner or later to loose their hold and give others a chance. It is an easy matter to get rich; the difficulty is to hold the nimble penny. It takes wings and flies away. Thus the distribution of wealth is provided for in the long run. Were it otherwise there would be incalculable danger in the heaping up of fortunes; if money-makers could keep their earnings, we should all presently be millionaires. But the way to wealth is a narrow strait through many shoals. As two highwaymen were walking over a desolate heath in the night, they heard the creaking of chains and saw

dimly in the distance the body of a fellow-craftsman swinging from a gallows-tree. One of them, fear-struck, said, "If it were not for the gibbet, what a fine profession ours would be!" The other answered philosophically, "No, blockhead; were it not for the gibbet, every man would wish to be a highwayman and where would our profession be then?"

We observe here, also, the working of another law, familiarly known as the Survival of the Fittest. For what becomes of the ninety-five per cent. of business men who fall along the way? Many of them lose heart and are never heard of again. Others, whose moral build is more elastic, spring to their feet, face fortune, and press through difficulty to success: these are "the fittest"; they survive because they deserve to. Courage ever wins. Such a man was Cyrus W. Field, who, having convinced himself of the practicability of a submarine cable, determined to invest his fortune and energy for its realization. His first defeat was in the lobby of our National Congress; but he persisted until he secured the necessary franchise in the Senate by a majority of one. His original attempt to lay the cable was terminated by the parting of the wire five miles out at sea. The second was more successful, but the cable again parted, in mid-ocean. Thrice over the attempt was made, ending in failure. At length in 1858 the wire was wholly laid; but, after a few weeks of successful operation, it ceased to work. Fifty voyages to and fro across the Atlantic were made in order to secure sufficient capital for the further prosecution of the forlorn hope. The *Great Eastern* was chartered; when she was twelve hundred miles from

land the cable parted and was lost. Six millions of dollars had now been sunk in the enterprise. The cable was finally laid after twelve years of unremitting effort; and on July 27th, 1866, the following message was sent to New York from Newfoundland: "We arrived at Heart's Content at nine o'clock this morning. We are all well. Thank God the cable is laid and is in perfect working order. Cyrus W. Field." Heart's Content! The "desired haven" at last. An appropriate landing place for a man who had sailed courageously through seas of trouble. It is men like this who deserve to succeed. The world does not begrudge them their meed of victory.

" I like the man who faces what he must  
With step triumphant and a heart of cheer ;  
Who fights the daily battle without fear ;  
Who sees hopes fail, yet keeps unfaltering trust  
That God is God ; that somehow, true and just,  
His plans work out for mortals ; not a tear  
Is shed when fortune, which the world holds dear,  
Falls from his grasp ; better, with love, a crust  
Than living in dishonor ; envies not,  
Nor loses faith in man ; but does his best,  
Nor ever murmurs at his humbler lot ;  
But with a smile and words of hope, gives zest  
To every toiler ; he alone is great,  
Who by a life heroic conquers fate."

II. *But here is a man who has failed in the building of character.* This is a thousand times worse than any financial bankruptcy. All earnest people want to make the most of themselves; but this is not an easy matter. The easy thing is to drift with the current; the making of manhood is a beating up against wind and tide. But, when it is done, how splendidly the

end crowns the work. An easy liver is like a mushroom which, growing up in a night, is but a pulpy thing. But the oak—ah, there are men who grow like the oak. The winds cry, "We will wrestle with you and break you"; and the oak stretches out its hands, answering, "Let us wrestle, then!" The rocks beneath mutter, "We'll thwart you"; the oak thrusts down its roots, grapples with the rocks and conquers them; and at last reaching its gnarled arms aloft it gives its challenge to the storms of heaven. Thus we wrestle, and wrestling grow into the possession of those graces which, bound in a bundle, are called Character. We often fail? Aye, again and again. Blunder? Yes, all along the way. But the test of manhood is to push ahead and march through the Valley of Achor, past the shields and weapons that were thrown away in former defeats, to glorious achievement.

The beginning of this moral conquest is in ridding ourselves of sin. Have you tried that? Have you tried to break the chains of habit? Have you tried to eradicate from the nerve and fiber of your soul the foul principle of sin? Then, one thing I know; you have failed. But try again. Keep the Law if possible. And still the end may be seen from the beginning. Defeat; always defeat. It is the old story of Ixion over and over again. Why then should a man try? To learn the lesson of defeat. To find out his infirmity. Not until he has discovered that will he lift up his eyes unto the hills. Thus it is written: "The Law is a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ." And again, "What the Law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own

Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, hath condemned Sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us." Here is the secret of success in striving with the evil one; driven back upon ourselves, rending our clothes and casting ashes upon our heads, we hear God saying, "Trust in me." Here is the key of life: "Look to Jesus; his blood cleanseth!" Thus in our weakness the power of God rests upon us. Up through the Valley of Failure we fight our way to Golgotha and throw ourselves before him; and our victory is heralded in his words: "Thy sins be forgiven thee."

Thereafter all our striving is for growth in character; to add one grace unto another until we reach the full statue of a man. Of rebuffs and discouragements there are many. No soul springs full armed into life like the fabled Minerva from the forehead of Jove. Men must wrest from the enemy the weapons with which they may win the graces of true manhood. And the key to the situation is the courage of a true faith in God.

In the circle of the Twelve there were three historic sinners: One was Thomas, the Apostle of Doubt; who was beaten about by his besetting foe, yet was helped again and again to triumph over unbelief, until at last he won the crown of martyrdom in far away India. The second was Peter, the Apostle of Self-confidence. Boastful, impulsive, self-reliant; he fought against his besetting sin, worsted again and again, yet ever looking unto Jesus, until he too won the blood-stained crown under the walls of Rome. And the third was Judas Iscariot, the Apostle of Avarice. Although his sin was greater than



that of his associates, it might have been forgiven; but, alas! the heart went out of him. After his betrayal of Jesus, awful horror seized upon him, he plunged into the night and, in unconquerable passion of remorse, hung himself above the abyss of Hinnom. He lost hope, lost courage, lost his grip on God! It is an awful thing for a man to forget the divine omnipotence and infinite love. It is death for a man to give up.

Is there a backslider here; one who long ago entered into covenant with God and has broken faith with him? Here is your promise, my friend: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Struggle to your feet! Press on! God waits to be gracious. He is never wearied by our weakness, only by our withdrawal of faith. The difference between an unregenerate sinner and a Christian is this: when a godless man falls, he is down to stay, but "a just man falleth seven times and riseth up again" (Prov. 24, 16).

III. *The greatest failure of all, however, is the failure to accomplish one's life-work in the kingdom of God.* In the great Missionary Conference now assembled in this city are commissioners from the remotest ends of the earth; and as they sit together, like veterans around the camp fire, one truth becomes manifest, *God is at work in the world.* He is at work setting up his kingdom and is using men to do it. He is saving the world; and, in his great enterprise, he invites our co-operation. "My Father worketh hitherto," said Jesus, "and I work!" The man who has not discovered this all-pervading and supremely momentous fact in history is blind and deaf indeed. Listen!

The footfall of a multitude climbing the hills to carry the message of salvation. Listen! The rolling of the chariot wheels of Immanuel coming this way!

Have you found your place, my friend, in this great work? Or, are you toiling with a muck rake? chasing butterflies? reaching after tinsel crowns? Waste not your life in these lower pursuits. There is a place for you in the kingdom. Find it. As you care for eternal life, find it!

And, having found your place in the economy of God's kingdom, fill it. Be satisfied with nothing short of your best endeavor. I do not say that you will accomplish this. Nay, it is a forgone conclusion that you will fall upon your knees at every eventide, mourning, "I have done the things which I ought not to have done, and I have left undone those which I ought to have done." Nevertheless, he sends his arrow highest who aims at the sun.

But just here comes the test of your manhood. Have you courage to press on? We commiserate those who are called "backsliders"; in point of fact we are all backsliders. Two steps forward and one step back is the law of moral progress. This means that there is always room for repentance but never for despair. God's heart goes out to every man who longs to be better. Therefore, hope on, hope ever.

On the night after the battle of Marston Moor, when the Parliamentary Army had been defeated by Rupert and his Cavaliers, Oliver Cromwell, the Captain of the 7th Troop of Horse said to his Commander, "The sun hath gone down but the moon is full; let me advance my men!" And before day-break he turned defeat into glorious victory, driving

the Cavaliers like chaff before the wind. Blessed is the man who "does not know when he is whipped." It is so easy to quit; and God loves not quitters. Pluck up heart, discouraged friend; the sun hath gone down, but the moon is full! Quit you like a man; be strong! And God be with you.

Let me address a word, in closing, to young men and young women who have come to this great city from homes at a distance, and have met with many rebuffs and discouragements; who are lonely, homesick, jostled in the madding crowd, and oftentimes tempted to abandon the struggle. Do not give up! *Per aspera ad astra*; by the rough path to the stars! There is nothing in the world or in heaven for Faint-heart. All things are for those who have confidence in self, because they have cast self upon the bosom of God. It is said that Marshal Lefebvre once, seeing the eyes of a youth fixed steadfastly upon the medals with which he was profusely adorned, said to him, "Envious, are you? Stand off yonder thirty paces and let me fire at you twenty times and all these shall be yours. What, afraid? Young man, I have been fired at a thousand times to win these." The world is an Esdraelon; life is a conflict; a true man is master-at-arms. What, now, will you have for your watchword? The old Norse legend, a pick-ax and over it "I'll find a way or make one"? Nay, better that other Norseman's device; an arm reached up and an Arm reached down, and across them, "*Will God, and I can!*" I wish for you a brave heart, a prayerful hope and an ultimate glorious success. "In the bright lexicon of youth there's no such word as fail."

## CHURCH UNITY:

AS SET FORTH IN THE ECUMENICAL CONFERENCE ON MISSIONS.

“And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.”—Acts 15, 4.

In our Lord's last interview with his disciples he directed them to go into all the world and preach the gospel; but, for various reasons, they were slow to obey. He had said, “Tarry at Jerusalem until ye be endued with power”; but Pentecost came and went, seven years dragged their slow length along, and still the disciples were tarrying at Jerusalem. Then came persecution; Stephen was stoned, and the frightened disciples, being scattered abroad, went everywhere, “as far as Phenice and Cyprus and Antioch, preaching the Lord Jesus.” For a period of twelve years there was peace, and the gospel had free course and was glorified. The borders of the mother church in Jerusalem were greatly enlarged, and there were numerous conversions among the Gentiles of Antioch and elsewhere.

A dispute arose, however, at this time, which seriously threatened the harmony of the church; the leaders at Jerusalem, many of them Pharisees of the most straitest sect, opposed the receiving of these Gentile converts into their fellowship,

except "by way of the gate"; that is, through conformity to Jewish rites and ceremonies. The converts felt that this was a burden greater than they could bear. The controversy waxed warm, and a Council was called in Jerusalem to settle it. Paul and Barnabas went up from Antioch as commissioners, accompanied by Titus, an uncircumcised convert from paganism. It was a month's journey; and these commissioners preached the gospel with great power in cities and villages along the way.

On their arrival at Jerusalem a public reception was given them, after which the Council was convened. There was a frank discussion of the question, in the course of which Peter, calling to mind his vision on the housetop in Cæsarea, emphasized the fact that God is no respecter of persons and "hath put no difference between Jews and Gentiles, purifying their hearts by faith." He was followed by Peter and Barnabas, who devoted themselves to a setting forth of "the miracles and wonders which God had wrought by them." Then James the Just, the beloved pastor of the Jerusalem church, made an irenic address, in which he urged that converts from Paganism should be required to refrain from all idolatrous practices, but that no other condition should be placed upon them. Action was taken accordingly; and a circular letter was sent to the churches, as follows:

*"The Apostles and Elders and Brethren, to the Gentile Brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: Greeting! Whereas we have heard that certain men who went out from us have troubled you with words, and unsettled your souls, commanding you to circumcise yourselves and keep the Law, although we gave them no such commission:*

“ *Therefore it has been determined by us, being assembled with one accord, to chose some from amongst ourselves, and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent, therefore, Judas and Silas, who themselves also will tell you by word of mouth the same which we write unto you.* ”

“ *For it has been determined by the Holy Ghost and by us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that ye abstain from meats offered unto idols, and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication. Wherefrom if ye keep yourselves thus, it shall be well with you. Farewell!* ”

It is a long stride from that original Council to the Ecumenical Conference which has recently been in session among us: but the continuity of the gospel may be seen in their many points of resemblance. In one particular they were quite identical, namely, *the prevailing spirit of harmony*. It was not strange that this should be manifest in the Apostolic Church, since as yet there was no division into sects or denominations. Such division, however, was a for-gone conclusion. An army of Crusaders, going forth to the rescue of the Holy Sepulcher, was wont to separate, for prudential reasons, at the border of the desert, into various detachments, to meet again beneath the walls of the Holy City. Thus, despite the various denominations which were represented in this recent Conference, there was, in fact, a more substantial unity than that of the Apostolic Church. It was a seven-fold unity, as we shall see.

I. To begin with, these various bodies of believers were *animated by a Common Spirit of Life*. Each might

say, like the individual Christian, "It is not I that live; Christ liveth in me." Our Romanist friends have a proverb: "Where the Church is, there is Christ"; which, if reversed, is doubly true; "Where Christ is, there is the Church." For Christ is the center of all; he is the beating heart, the throbbing pulse, the heaving breast, the glistening eye, the busy brain, the eager hand. It is obvious that churches which are thus animated must draw nearer to each other as they approach this living Center, as radiating beams of light converge on their way toward the sun. The various branches of the Christian church may and do differ in matters of minor importance, but they are called after the same Name—the Name that is above every other in heaven and on earth,—and all are agreed in receiving him as first, last, midst and all in all.

II. These various denominations showed their oneness also in *the Enduement of Power*. There are indeed "diversities of operation, but it is the same Spirit which worketh all in all." The hand of Leo XIII, laid on the Roman Catholic Church, holds it in a rigid oneness like that of a bar of steel. But Protestant unity is of a different sort: if the bar of steel be wrought into wheels and levers and pinions, and if these be joined together and articulated so as to form a subtle mechanism, and if this mechanism be pervaded through and through with vital energy, you have a working combination which is vastly better because more productive than a rigid unit. Protestantism is made up of many factors brought together, not in a circumstantial but in a dynamic harmony, by the power of One Spirit who energizes all.



III. There was, furthermore, in this Conference a constant manifestation of *Mutual Sympathy*. The Church is often referred to in the Scriptures as "the body of Christ." The body is traversed by a nervous system, so sensitive throughout, that if you tread upon the foot, there is an instant thrill of sympathetic pain at the finger tips. The parallel is perfect: When reference was made by missionaries of the American Board to wrongs inflicted upon them in Turkey, the indignant response was instantaneous. When the hardships of missionaries in the service of the Wesleyan Church in Western Africa were reported, a wave of commiseration, transcending all denominational barriers, swept over the entire assembly. It was like the spirit of old-time Israel, when, at the sounding of rams' horns on the heights of Benjamin to announce the approach of the enemy, beacons were kindled from Dan to Beersheba and the gathering hosts, forgetful of their local shibboleths, marched as one against the common foe. If, as is often said, the crucial test of friendship is adversity, then have these denominations proven their amity in this sharing of burdens and mingling of tears.

IV. A like conclusion must be drawn also from their proclamation of a *Common Purpose*, to wit, *the Salvation of the World*. All other considerations were ignored or remanded to a subordinate place. The constant watchword was, "The World for Christ!"

Was there nobody to speak up in behalf of Prelacy, or Presbytery, or Independency? Nobody. Not that forms of government are unimportant; they were merely crowded out by larger things.

Was there no one in the Conference to say a word

for Creeds and Symbols? Not one. A profound interest is felt, just now, in the proposed amendment of the Westminster Confession of Faith; but, in view of world-wide schemes of evangelization, there was no disposition to consider it.

Was there no one in that vast concourse to lift his voice in behalf of Ecclesiastical Genealogies? Nay, not one. The Apostolic Succession may be regarded as of vital importance in some quarters; but men in the harvest field, sickle in hand, reaping yellow grain, cannot pause to dispute about their family trees. When the church is in conference, as to an enterprise involving the salvation of the nations, it would be grotesquely inappropriate for any particular delegation to lift up its voice, crying, "The temple of the Lord are we!" The attitude of this great assembly, toward all such minor propositions, was like that of the returned exiles, who, while employed in the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, were invited by Sanballat and others to come down and confer with them in the plain of Ono. Their answer was, "We are doing a great work so that we cannot come down; why should the work cease, whilst we leave it, and come down to you?"

V. There was a further manifestation of unity in the matter of *Equipment*. The workers were of one accord in reference to the whole panoply of service; the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith, and particularly "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

If there were any friends of the Higher Criticism in this great assemblage, they scrupulously hid their

light under a bushel. The nearest approach to any depreciation of the Scriptures was when a speaker ventured the statement that "Christianity is not a religion of a Book but of a Person." The half-truth thus enunciated was corrected in such vigorous terms, and the responsive applause was so unanimous, that there could be no doubt whatever as to the prevailing sentiment. How, indeed, could there be a difference of opinion, among men engaged in active service, as to the integrity of the word? For on the battle line the only weapon used is the sword of the Spirit. The proper use of that weapon gives the only promise of success; as it is written, "My word shall not return unto me void, but it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

If it be asserted that the question of the inerrancy of the Scriptures must be left to Biblical experts, we answer, Yes; but the true "Biblical experts" are not such as dwell in cloisters and pass upon the Scriptures by the light of midnight oil, but rather those who test the effectiveness of the word on the high places of the field. The best judge of a Damascus blade is not a metallurgist, but a soldier who adventures his life upon the quality of the steel. The reason why Higher Criticism is at a discount in the missionary field is because a man in active service is unlikely to interest himself in demonstrating this his only weapon to be a wooden sword.

In the Council of Nicea, which formulated for all subsequent time the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ as against Arianism and kindred heresies, the discussion was for a time carried on by doctrinaires; but its final settlement was accomplished by the

resoluteness of earnest men who had suffered for the truth's sake. There were some whose eyes had been plucked out, others whose sinews had been seared with hot irons, or whose bones had been broken on the rack. To these the important question was referred as to a Court of Last Appeal. And when they arose to plead for Christ's Godhood, who could stand before their sightless eyes, their handless arms? Our controversy in these times is not with reference to the divinity of the Incarnate Word, but—a question of correlative importance—the integrity of the Written Word: and its final determination is in the hands, not of men who insist upon their scholarly attainments, but of such as have demonstrated the truth of the Scriptures in personal contact with the great problems of evangelization. Among such there is no divergence of opinion, and it was meet and proper that there should be silence among the sciolists and a lull in controversy in the presence of these men.

VI. There was, furthermore, a *Consensus with reference to the Progress of the Work*. All were agreed, with Paul and Barnabas, that "God hath done great wonders and miracles." The opening of this Conference was simultaneous with that of the Paris Exposition, in which are set forth the results of secular progress throughout the world. Here there was, indeed, no such pomp and circumstance as in those palaces along the Seine, yet the manifesto was far more significant. When all the pictures exhibited in the galleries of Paris have faded, when the masterpieces of statuary have crumbled into dust, when our boasted engineering of industrial power is superannuated and present achievements are the laughing-stock of wiser genera-

tions, the results of Christian enterprise will remain as the basis of cumulative and eternal conquest. Here is an exhibit of the products of a single century of missions. For, strange to tell, the missionary epoch did not begin until a hundred years ago. Now all the doors are open, and everywhere are uplifted pleading hands.

It is sometimes urged that we have nothing to show for our missionary fervor except a few hundred thousands of converts in pagan countries; but this is a most inadequate statement. It is estimated that at the beginning of the century there were two hundred millions under the sway of the gospel; now there are approximately five hundred millions under the shadow of the cross. God has honored missionary enterprise not only in conquests abroad, but in the enlargement of our borders at home.

And all this at an insignificant cost. To speak of the cost of evangelization is to argue the question upon the lowest level. But no gold-bearing bonds have ever yielded such an income. The amount expended, possibly one hundred millions of dollars, has been but the pin-money of the church. Is it not marvelous that God should have honored so signally the gifts of our superflux? There is more money in the finger-rings of God's people to-day than in the exchequers of all the Boards engaged in the evangelization of the world. What we have invested thus far is less than one-third the estimated fortune of a single American multimillionaire, and about one-seventh the probable cost of the British campaign in the Transvaal. Yet what wonders and miracles have been wrought!

At one of the meetings of this Conference, ex-President Harrison, pointing to a Hindu woman who sat beside him on the platform, said, "If I had been worth a million and had given it all to Foreign Missions, and if there was nothing to show for it but this convert from Brahmanism, I would not want my money back." We might go further and say that if, of all the missionaries sent forth, not one had reached his destination; if every dollar invested in the enterprise had been lost in shipwreck on the seas; if all the energy put forth had never made a momentary rift in the deep darkness of the pagan world; we should still have no alternative but to obey our marching orders, "Go ye into all the world and evangelize!" God has been pleased, however, not to put our feeble faith to such a strenuous test. To the old question, "Watchman, what of the night?" there is but one answer from the missionary stations of the world, "The morning cometh!"

VII. And finally, we have observed in this Conference a *Perfect Unanimity of Hope*. Not once was there the striking of a minor chord. The text of Carey's famous missionary sermon in 1793 was, "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes" (Isa. 54, 2); and his discourse was divided into two heads: First, "Undertake great things for God"; Second, "Expect great things from God." It was this sermon that struck the keynote of the missionary work of the century; and now, as we look backward, we clearly see the warrant of that prophetic discourse. The man who undertakes, has reason to ex-

pect. It is the seed-sower who hears afar off the creaking of the loaded wain.

At the border of the centuries we are facing a vaster outlook. Who shall cast the horoscope of the next hundred years ?

I see an army of heralds climbing the mountains, fording the rivers, crossing the deserts; of whom it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good tidings of great joy!" I see the tottering walls of pagan strongholds, rent asunder like Jericho by the foolishness of preaching. I hear the fluttering of wings; and behold, souls are coming to Christ as doves that flock to their windows. Far off are the white sails of the ships of Tarshish, that bring the sons and the daughters of the nations, and their silver and gold with them. Hither come the rams of Nebaioth and the dromedaries of Midian; caravans laden with the glory of kings. I hear the clash of arms in midheaven, mingled with a sound of breaking chains; great Armageddon is at hand! I see the lifting of war clouds, the blooming of gardens, the opening of the heavens: and the voice of a great angel is proclaiming, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be their God."

We have observed a sevenfold unity in this Conference; and yet there was no exploiting of unity. There was no eloquent pleading for peace. The favorite hymn of the great congregations was not, "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love." Harmony was accepted as a fact accomplished; and the song that prevailed was Heber's bugle call:—



From Greenland's icy mountains,  
From India's coral strand,  
Where Afric's sunny fountains  
Roll down their golden sand ;  
From many an ancient river,  
From many a palmy plain,  
They call us to deliver  
Their land from error's chain !

A personal word in conclusion: We hear much in these times of the importance of keeping "abreast of the age." In the light of recent events it is fair to say that no man is abreast of this age who is not lending a hand with all God's people in the conquest of the world. This is the matter of supreme importance ; and it will take precedence of all other considerations until the last sinner is converted to God. The man who does not believe in Foreign Missions is lagging far behind the times. He has not heard the news. Life which expends itself in secular pursuits, unmindful of God's yellow harvest, is a lamentable waste, an eternal failure.

On one occasion, when Handel was rehearsing in London the oratorio of "The Messiah" he arrested the performance to say, "I miss one flageolet!" He had detected the default of a member of his great orchestra. Friend, have you neglected to perform your part in the service of the kingdom? Does God miss *you*? Fail not here! The air is vibrant with tidings of conquest all around the horizon. God asks you to coöperate with him in bringing back the world to truth and righteousness. If you would be abreast of the times, fall in with his faithful people: for the true "spirit of the age" is the Spirit of God.

## A CUP OF COLD WATER

“ And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.”—Matt. 10, 42.

Our city is greatly blessed just now in being permitted to entertain a large number of missionaries from all portions of the world.\* The air is vibrant with the magnetic power of the great propaganda. The word of command which was given by the Captain of our Salvation, “Go! Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel,” is heard above all the confused sounds of the great metropolis. It is a wonderful word; the blare of trumpets and the footfall of an advancing multitude are in it. And what a splendid illustration it finds in the life and labor of these veterans who have come hither from the firing line!

But they are not the only missionaries; all true followers of Christ are under the great commission. He said: “As the Father hath sent me into the world, so send I you.” The evangel is proclaimed not only by those adventurous and consecrated spirits who, with their lives in their hands, have penetrated the jungles and fastnesses of the pagan world, but by all who, however humbly, declare in word or life the unsearchable riches of Christ.

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\* The Ecumenical Missionary Council was in session in New York, April 21st to May 1st, 1900.

“ If you cannot cross the ocean and the heathen lands explore,  
You can find the heathen nearer, you may help them at your  
door.

If you cannot speak like angels, if you cannot preach like Paul,  
You can tell the love of Jesus; you can say, ‘ He died for all.’  
Take the task he gives you gladly, let his work your pleasure be,  
Answer quickly, when he calleth, ‘ Here am I, send me ! send  
me!’ ”

Not more really did Augustine or William Carey go preaching the Gospel than does he who, in the Master’s name, puts a cup of cold water to thirsty lips. Our text, which expresses the Law of Kindness in a nutshell, will enable us to correct some popular misconceptions with reference to practical Christianity as manifest in love toward men.

At the outset, we are here advised that *philanthropy is something more than a theory*. Our world would be a vastly better place to live in if all who are engaged in the forensic solution of altruistic problems, were to translate their arguments into good works. The gist of the matter is not to arrive at a correct understanding of the refreshing qualities of cool water, nor to discover the psychological basis of human kindness, nor to determine the just and normal relations of the water-carrier to thirsty souls, but to get the refreshing draught to fevered lips.

It was my privilege a year ago to attend a national Sociological Convention where each delegate seemed to have a panacea for all the ills that human flesh is heir to. There was no end of discussion as to the inequalities of society, the heartlessness of the rich, the miseries of the poor, and the wrongs of “ the man with the hoe.” No doubt all present were sincere in their desire for the world’s betterment; but, through-

out the proceedings, one seemed to be hearing continually the hard question of the Apostle James, "If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" The most useful member of that conference, as the issue proved, was an elderly man who uttered no word, but proceeded to devote the entire remainder of a large fortune to beneficence. Would that there were more like Dr. Pearson, who "suits ever the action to the word, the word to the action." All know the fundamental facts of sociological science; all are familiar with the misery of thirst and are sorry for the thirsty; but blessed is he who dips his cup into the spring and carries the water to those who need it.

The entire field of Sociology was covered by our Lord in his parable of the Good Samaritan. Three altruists were on their way to the Holy City: One of them, a priest, as he journeyed, saw a wounded man by the wayside and would fain have helped him; but contact with blood would have rendered him ceremonially unclean and unfit to minister in the Temple service, wherefore, though reluctantly, he must needs pass on. The next, a Levite, when he saw the sufferer, was moved with compassion and lingered a while over the prostrate form; but he had an appointment at the Temple and a glance at the sun reminded him that time was passing; he must hasten on. But the third, a Samaritan, who appears to have been riding in haste, probably on business of importance, dismounted and bound up the sufferer's wounds,

pouring in oil and wine, then set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn and took care of him. This is presented as our Lord's pattern of neighborliness. His conclusion of the argument is full of the eloquence of practical philanthropy: "Go and do thou likewise."

Our text, moreover, lays stress upon *the importance of motive*. The best work is that which is done "in the name of a disciple," or, as elsewhere stated, "because ye belong to Christ" (Mark 9, 41). All beneficence is not worthy of reward. There is a natural kindness which is merely instinctive, such as mother's love. It is no praise to say of a man that he is kind to his household; the absence of such kindness would be abnormal and monstrous. A tigress cares for her cubs; the hen gathers her brood under her wings. There is no moral value in this, nor reward attached to it.

There is an emotional kindness, which is better but not the best. It is the natural outgoing of a generous nature, oftentimes traceable to one's forebears. It expresses itself in voluble terms of commiseration and in flowing tears. A rum-seller died in New York recently who, being a factor in municipal politics, was eulogized by the newspapers chiefly on account of his tender heart. "No one," they say, "ever appealed to him in vain. He scattered his money right and left among the poor. He was a large-hearted, open-handed man. He could not see suffering without relieving it." But such benevolence as this, under analysis, vanishes into thin air. The business of the man was to ruin his fellowmen. His money was wrung from the hearts of widows and

orphans. With one hand he stole the loaf from the bread-winner and with the other gave a biscuit to his hungry children. With one hand he pushed his miserable victim out into the awful darkness from which returns the voice, "No drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of God!" and with the other hung crape on his doorknob and placed new coppers on his dead eyes.

A far better form of benevolence is that which comes from the recognition of our filial relation with all about us. That makes a great difference. The other day I pushed my way into a crowd gathered about a man who had fallen in a fit. I felt, as did all the bystanders, a sincere pity for the sufferer; but suppose I had recognized him as a brother, a real brother in the flesh, what a practical turn my sympathy would straightway have taken! In a moment I would have had his head upon my arm, wiping the flecks of foam from his lips. In reality, however, all the suffering people of the earth are brethren of mine; as it is written, "There is one God and Father of us all."

But the highest level of brotherly-kindness is when we help a man "because he belongs to Christ." This includes all the other forms of benevolence and vastly more. A drunkard, lying in the gutter, is not only my brother in the universal kinship, but he belongs to Christ. A wretched drab, whose shame is written in her painted face, has an interest in my Saviour's love. He paid the ransom for these outcasts. They are bought with a price, not silver and gold, but the precious blood of Jesus as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. It behoves me,

therefore, in the name of a disciple, to do good unto these as unto all men.

Still further, we have in our text *a correction of the common Rule of Measurement*. A cup of water seems a little thing, but the Lord intended that none should excuse himself from the obligation of kindness by the plea of poverty and so he put its exercise within the reach of all. And, indeed, who can say with assurance that a cup of water is "a little thing?" God alone can pass on trifles; his thoughts are not as our thoughts. The world revolves on small pivots; trifles determine the destinies of nations, the welfare of communities, the eternal weal or woe of men.

The world rings with the praises of great benefactions, such as the building of churches and the endowment of hospitals. Some men can do these things more easily than others can spend a shilling. One of our multimillionaires has just given fifty thousand dollars for the establishment of a public library in a neighboring town; and the trumpet sounds before him. But when we reflect that this man has a controlling interest in one of our great industrial trusts, from which not less than thirty-six millions are said to have been realized in profits last year, the benefaction loses much of its significance, being in fact less than one-tenth of one per cent. of the donor's income. All charities are good as far as they go, but some do not go very far.

All gifts and benefactions must sooner or later pass under the scrutiny of him who sat, once on a time, by the treasury of the Temple; while the people were casting in gifts. The rich men of Jerusalem passed by and threw their golden coins



into the brazen mouth of Corban, which answered back as with a trumpet's lips, "Behold, what Charity!" But presently a poor widow came by, pale-faced and thinly clad, and cast in two farthings; whereupon the Lord said, "She, who hath given of her penury, hath given more than they all."

No one can measure or discriminate between the great and the little; but each is bound to do his best and utmost. A grain of sand does its part in holding back the rolling tides; a drop of water helps to resolve the light into the beauty of the bow of promise. A child's hand may be a more potent force in history than a militant host. In great and little, therefore, let me do for others what the passing opportunity requires of me.

"If any little word of mine can make a life the brighter,  
If any little song of mine can make a heart the lighter,  
God help me speak that little word and take my bit of singing  
And drop it in some lonely vale to set the echoes ringing."

It remains to speak of the *reward of kindly deeds*. The farmers who are now scattering grain in their fields know not whether shall prosper this or that; but no seed of kindness ever fails to germinate. The promise is a great one: "Verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." It is bound with a threefold cord: "Verily," "I say unto you," and "In no wise."

The reward referred to is partly here and now. If there were no heaven, it would still be a profitable business to do good as we have opportunity unto all men. There is no pleasure in the world like that which one of the poets calls, "The generous pleasure of a kindly deed." The heart knows no

such genial warmth as that which is produced by practical sympathy with the suffering bodies and troubled souls of men.

There is a further reward in the lingering influence of a benevolent deed. I could never be an astronomer, however I might try, because the stars blur so before my eyes. The reason is this: I had a dear sister, gone to heaven years ago, who used to sit with me on starry nights in the porch of our far western home and point out the constellations. I can still detect the fragrance of the jessamine that grew beside the steps; and whenever I look toward the heavens I hear her telling over the signs of the Zodiac and *Ursa Major* and the others. In the interstellar spaces I see her face smiling down upon me, and the music of the spheres is the music of her loving voice. This is why the stars are blurred for me. Kindness is immortal. Men die, but their deeds live on. Hands are folded over silent breasts; but the helpful hand is forever stretched out.

The great reward, however, is reserved for the long hereafter. What that reward may be we are not told. The Master leaves it quite indefinite, saying only, "Ye shall in no wise lose it." Its value is intimated in such figures as a "penny at evening" (only a penny; but what a penny that will be!); "a white stone with a new name written therein" (God grant that the new name may be given to each of us!); "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away"; but even this inheritance can only be set forth in general terms, since the will is not opened yet. One thing we know; at the gateway of heaven the Master will meet us saying, "Well

done; enter into the joy of thy Lord" and, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

It is obvious from the foregoing that in order to gain a practical knowledge of the highest form of philanthropy, we must enter into cordial sympathy with the love and labor of Jesus Christ. He was the great Altruist, the great Philanthropist, the pre-eminent Lover of Men. All sociological problems find their solution in him.

One reason why a man should come to Christ is that he may get under the shadow of his cross; for there only can be found the pardon of sin. But another reason is, that he may get under the burden of his own cross; that is, to enter into fellowship with Christ in his great work of self-denial for the temporal and spiritual good of men. I have heard that during the battle of Fredericksburg there was a little patch of ground which was occupied in turn by the contending forces. It was covered with the dead and the dying; and all through the afternoon of a weary day the cry was heard, "Water, water!" A Southern soldier begged of his captain to be allowed to answer those piteous cries, but met with the refusal: "No; it would be certain death." He persisted, however, saying, "Above the roar of artillery and the crack of the muskets I hear those cries for water: let me go!" He set out with a bucket of water and a tin cup; for awhile the bullets sang around him, but he seemed to bear a charmed life. Then, as the Federals beyond the field perceived his purpose, the firing gradually ceased; and for an hour and a half there was an armistice, while the

soldier in gray, in full sight of both armies, went about on his errand of mercy. Verily, that was the truce of God!

And this was the kindness of our Lord. He came from heaven to bring the cup of cold water to dying men. Ah, that was the greatest kindness that ever was known. It was the most sublime heroism, too. But the firing did not cease when he came to us with the water from the well beside the gate at Bethlehem; his mercy to usward cost him his life. What shall we render unto the Lord for his loving kindness? We will take the cup of his salvation. All that he asks of you and me is that we drink and live. Take the brimming cup of heavenly grace, my friend; drink what you need and pass it on to your neighbor; for there is enough for all!

## PETER AND JOHN AT THE OPEN SEPULCHER

“The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulcher. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulcher. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulcher. And he, stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulcher, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulcher, and he saw, and believed.”—John 20, 1-8.

It was meet that the advent of Jesus Christ should be heralded in song. The virgin mother, Simeon and Anna in the Temple, the angels on the hillsides—how they sang, “Joy to the world! the Lord is come!”

It was meet that the death of Jesus should be celebrated with tears. The heart of the virgin mother was rent as by the piercing of a sword; the mothers of Jerusalem followed Jesus in the sad procession to Golgotha bewailing and lamenting him; the heavens were veiled during the awful tragedy and the earth's bosom heaved with moaning.

But now that Christ is risen, his disciples go running to and fro. The group of women who had gone with slow, sad steps to Joseph's garden in the early

morning, came running to the city with a strange tale, "The Lord is risen from the dead!" Was it strange that some refused to believe without a personal investigation? Peter and John said, "It is a mere rumor; we will go and see." They set out, accordingly, at a sedate pace, but presently broke into a run. For if this rumor was true, it was the best news that ever fell on mortal ears.

As they draw near to the garden they perceive that something has happened; the stone is rolled away from the sepulcher. They approach and stand without, peering into the darkness, saying nothing. They are divided betwixt doubt, wonder and unspeakable hope. They are facing the most stupendous of problems: "If a man die, will he live again?" The grave is empty. Does this mean that Jesus has triumphed over death? If so, they enter into newness of life. If so, the winter is past, indeed, and the time of the singing of birds is come. If so, life is worth living and death is the portal of life everlasting. What possibilities open before them as they stand gazing into the gloom!

Now Peter, more adventurous than his companion, has entered the tomb. John asks, "What seest thou?" He answers, "The cere-clothes are here,"—and doubtless the voice of the fisherman broke with tender recollections—"the very clothes wherein we wrapped him, still fragrant with the spices which Joseph of Arimathæa brought us."

Let us pause here to dwell upon an important truth suggested by these graveclothes; a truth which brings our Saviour into closest fellowship with us. He took upon himself not the nature of angels but of

men. At his birth he was wrapped in swaddling bands; and infancy was made sacred forevermore.

“A feeble child he came; yet not the less  
Brought godlike childhood to the aged earth.”

In course of time he put on the homespun of a workingman; and by that token handicraft was made honorable forever and the honest toiler brought near to God. Presently they clothed him in purple, the cast-off garment of a pontifical magistrate, and passing by they mocked him; and by that fact an innumerable company of lesser heroes have been enabled and encouraged to suffer for righteousness' sake. And when life was over, he was wrapped in the cerements of the grave. Thus he took our nature with all its attendant conditions, and even to the end, was very man of very man. We approach God's Acre with a firmer step since we know that he passed through its wicket-gate; the earth is not so cold since then, the sepulcher less dark. “So Jesus slept; and, passing through the grave, he blessed the bed.”

We left John standing without the sepulcher; but now he also enters; and as the two disciples gaze with reverent affection on the grave clothes, the sublime truth of the Resurrection is borne in upon them; “he could not be holden with the bands of death!” And they put each other in remembrance of his words, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.” And again, “As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so also shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” And they recall his forecast during the last journey through Cæsarea Philippi, which seemed so mysterious then, how he “must needs suffer many



things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised again the third day."

But, as doubt ever stands at the elbow of joy, so it occurs to these disciples that perhaps the enemies of Jesus have stolen his body away. This misgiving, however, is instantly dispelled by a glance at the napkin, folded carefully and laid away by itself. "This would not have been done," they say, "by those who were pillaging a tomb. Here are no tokens of haste, but of calm deliberation. He took his departure as when a king rises from his bed to greet the dawning light. He rubbed the death-dew from his eyes, laid off these garments of corruption passed through the door, and turning said, 'Farewell, O Death!'"

So they said one to the other, "We will doubt no more!" And they never did. There were indeed some of the disciples who doubted, but they had not looked into this empty sepulcher. Not many days after, amid the wonders of the Pentecostal miracle, Peter stood up in the midst of the multitude and said, "*Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did, by him, in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face; for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice and my tongue was glad; moreover*

*also my flesh shall rest in hope ; because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Men and brethren, the prophet spake this of Christ, whom God hath raised up, whereof we are all witnesses."* And long afterward when John was sole survivor of the apostolic circle, an exile in Patmos, he saw Jesus walking amid the golden candlesticks clothed with the garments of a royal priest and girt with a golden girdle, his countenance as the sun shineth in his strength, and he heard him say, "*I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and have the keys of death and hell."*

If it is true that Jesus is risen, what are the things that follow ?

*First ; he is very God of very God.* This was his great claim. He arrogated to himself all the divine attributes. He said distinctly, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father ; I and my father are one." All his miracles were intended to substantiate this claim ; but the climax of the argument was his conquest of death. He manifested his power over the elements by calming the storm and walking on the sea. He opened the eyes of the blind, wiped off the leper's spots and healed all manner of diseases. He commanded the demons to come forth and they obeyed him. But the demonstration of his divine authority was not concluded until he proved himself to be the death of death and hell's destruction. Thus it is written, "He showed himself to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead."

The issue was fairly joined when the seal of the Roman Empire was affixed to the door of the sepul-

cher. "Make it fast," said the Governor, and they did so. It was now the dead and buried Christ against Rome, against the Sanhedrin of Israel, against the world, against the powers of hell. Could he be holden? Then was he no greater than others who lay sleeping in the dust. The guards paced to and fro—and he that sitteth in heaven laughed. "Go," he said to a fortunate angel, "and roll away the stone from his sepulcher! Let the world know that he is my only-begotten and well-beloved Son!"

*The second truth which stands forth in the clear light of this miracle is the validity of Christ's gospel.* He claimed to have power on earth to forgive sin; our destiny rests in his verification of that claim. He hypothecated its truth on his ability to conquer death. This was the crucial test; if this fail, he is no longer an almighty Saviour but, like Samson shorn of his locks, is weak as other men. In showing himself as Lord of Life, he demonstrates his ability to quicken those who are dead in trespasses and sins. As the first beams of the morning are seen not in the East but in their reflected glory on the western skies, so the light of the open sepulcher falls upon the tragedy of the cross; and the weird darkness of Golgotha is made to prophecy the break of day. In that reflected light we read the sure franchise of our salvation: "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and "his blood cleanseth from all sin."

*The third truth thrown into bold relief by this miracle is our resurrection from the dead.* In this transaction as elsewhere, Christ stood as the representative of his

people. We share his destiny, for better or for worse. We are bound up in the same bundle of life or death with him. It is not enough for those who believe in his resurrection to say as Sir Walter Raleigh did:

“ E'en such is Time that takes in trust  
 Our youth, our joys and all we have,  
 And pays us back in sordid dust ;  
 Who in the dark and silent grave,  
 When we have lived out all our ways,  
 Shuts up the story of our days.  
 But from this earth, this grave, this dust,  
*My God will raise me up, I trust.*”

Not bold enough! Not positive enough! “ I trust ? ” Nay, blessed be God for certainty. I know that my Redeemer liveth; and I know that, because he liveth, I shall live also. There is no room for doubt or question or misgiving. The stone is rolled away, The problem is solved. The mists are rolled from before the sun. Life and immortality are brought to light.

*One other truth, fraught with immeasurable comfort, is made clear by the Easter miracle ; to wit, the home-life of heaven.* In our Lord's last interview with his disciples, in the upper room in Jerusalem where they were accustomed to meet, he spoke of his Father's house of many mansions, saying, “ I go to prepare a place for you ; ” and he closed that interview with the words, “ Arise, let us go hence.” Thus all the sweet conferences of earth are broken up. Thus all life's chapters of affection end. Thus from our earthly homes the dear ones vanish one by one. But ere long the disciples of Jesus met again in that Father's

house, and then they knew the full significance of his words. They saw his face; they recognized each other in new fellowship with him. So shall we meet and know each other in the heavenly home; and we shall go no more out forever. The friends from whom we have parted for a little while have entered into the inheritance of their risen Lord. God's Acre is but the King's garden, and the dew of those that sleep is as the dew of herbs.

“ With thy rude plowshare, Death, turn up the sod,  
 And spread the furrow for the seed we sow:  
 This is the field and Acre of our God,  
 This is the place where human harvests grow.”

It is recorded that when the two disciples had viewed the open sepulcher they went away again unto their own home. But home and service and life could never again be what they were. The joy of an unspeakable hope had entered their hearts and thereafter they went telling the news that “Jesus, who was crucified, had risen and was alive forevermore.” That which they thus so simply preached was presently formulated by the Apostle Paul into a doctrinal statement, which has been incorporated into the creeds of the universal Church: *“Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen. And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is Christ not raised; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain: ye*

are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order ; Christ the firstfruits ; afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father ; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and all power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. And, behold, I show you a mystery : We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? The sting of death is sin ; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

## THE PARABLE OF THE EMPTY HOUSE

“ When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace : but when a stronger than he shall come unto him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. (He that is not with me, is against me : and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth.) When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places seeking rest ; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself ; and they enter in, and dwell there : and the last state of that man is worse than the first.”—Luke 11, 21-26.

The speaker was distinctly a man of the people, wholly unfamiliar with the method of the schools ; yet he showed himself here a consummate master of dialectics. He was addressing a group of learned theologians who, standing by while he exorcised a dumb spirit, had charged him with casting out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of devils. His first answer was what is technically called the *reductio ad absurdum* : “ If it be true that ‘ a house divided against itself cannot stand,’ what shall be said of the kingdom of Satan if it be thus divided ? ” His second answer was the *argumentum ad hominem* : “ If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, what shall be said of your sons who claim to practice exorcism ? Let them be your judges. ” His third answer was in the form of a syllogism : “ If I cast out devils not by Satanic power, but with the finger of God, then is the king-



dom of God among you." So without turning aside an hair's breadth from his usual simplicity, he displayed an absolute mastery of the philosophic method. His adversaries were worsted; they had nothing to say.

He then returned to the customary use of parables, and bade his hearers listen to a Domestic Tragedy. The story opens with a Spirit of Evil—here called "the strong man"—in possession of a certain house, not as the rightful owner, but by squatter's right. Presently a stronger than he lays siege to the domicile and enters in. The strong man, thus evicted, "walketh through dry places, seeking rest and finding none." After a while he discovers that the house, though swept and garnished, is empty and unguarded; whereupon he calleth seven spirits, more wicked than himself, and they, forcing an entrance, take up their abode there: and the condition is thus worse than ever. The picture is easily filled out; there are lights in the windows, music and dancing, wild revels and boisterous laughter; the fiends are in possession.

The Jews would understand, at once, the historical reference in this parable. The besetting sin of their nation had been idolatry. They were forever coveting the abominations of the heathen. The Chaldeans worshiped the sun; and Israel must needs go into the chambers of imagery and bow before the lights of heaven. The Egyptians worshipped bulls, beetles and all manner of flying and creeping things; and Israel hastened to set up a golden bull in the very shadow of the flaming mountain. The Syrians worshiped Baal and Astarte; and the Israelites were not

content until they had kindled fires on all the hill-tops to the worship of those unclean deities. Thus for a thousand years the strong man was in possession of the house.

Then came *the sweeping*. In the seventy years of the Babylonish captivity, God's besom purged the nation of idolatry. On the return to Palestine the people set up their ancient altars and never again did they as a nation forsake the formal worship of the true God.

And after that *the garnishing*. For four hundred years the religious leaders of Israel devoted themselves to the construction of a ceremonial system. No such magnificent ritual has ever been known. The temple was reconstructed and an army of priests and Levites marched in solemn procession before it. They broadened their phylacteries and made long prayers at the corners of the streets. The annual feasts were observed by millions of worshipers from every part of Jewry encamped around the Holy City. There was scrupulous regard for all ecclesiastical forms; fasts were multiplied and tithes were paid of garden herbs. It was a most dazzling display of pomp and circumstance. The form of godliness was there, but not the power thereof. God said, "Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a weariness unto me!"

The house was full of religiosity, but empty of pure and undefiled religion. The strong man who had been evicted came back, with other devils worse than himself, and took possession: Pride and Arrogance, Avarice, Uncharitableness, Insincerity and Hypocrisy, and one with flaming eyes and cruel hands,—Blood-

guiltiness,—plotting the murder of God's well-beloved Son.

To the house of Israel thus emptied of idolatry, and re-occupied by other and more malignant spirits of evil, came the long-looked-for Messiah; for him the nation had been waiting since the time of the protevangel; and now behold, the people hid as it were their faces from him; "he came unto his own and his own received him not." He wept over the nation: "O Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered you, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not; and now, behold, your house is left unto you desolate!"

Let it not be supposed, however, that this Parable of the Empty House was intended for the Jews alone. We are all too willing to put up our umbrellas, in the hearing of great truths, that the practical application may fall on Jews, Samaritans or any other than ourselves. In the present instance we shall find, however, that our Lord's discourse is not only of general application but addresses itself directly to us.

We are all conscious of sin. This is a truism. But there comes a time in the life of every man when he feels that some particular sin has strengthened itself into a Habit; and sooner or later, if not arrested, this habit becomes a dominating Vice. Then comes the sweeping process known as "reform." The man is restive under the whip of scorpions which indulgence lays upon him. He knows that he was made for better things and resolves to free himself from his bondage. "I will!" he cries. "I will" is stronger than the strong man and drives him out. I do not believe in the

plea, so frequently advanced by bondslaves of habit, that their wills are paralyzed. As a rule, this means simply that the man prefers to continue in sin.

The man who, by the power of resolution, sweeps out besetting Vice, congratulates himself because he is no longer a vulgar thief, an inebriate or debauchee. He is determined to be a better man and sets himself about the garnishing. This process is also called "Ethical Culture." The man avoids this, that and the other pernicious thing. He scrupulously heeds such injunctions as, "Thou shalt not steal," "Thou shalt not kill," "Thou shalt not commit adultery." But "Thou shalt not" saves no man; for character is vastly more than a bundle of negative graces. To go thus far and no further is simply to come up alongside of the Pharisee who said, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men; an extortioner, an adulterer or even as yon Publican. I am free from flagrant sins."

But the house thus swept and garnished is still empty; and an empty house gives a cordial invitation to new devils who are ever ready to enter in. They are usually prim and respectable devils, indeed; such as Pride, Envy, Jealousy, Avarice, Unholy Ambition and others of the specious forms of selfishness; but quite as diabolical in the pure sight of Heaven as the more vulgar and repugnant vices.

The impious career of Ahab was brought to a halt by the three years of famine. When he stood at Mount Carmel and saw the fire descending from heaven to consume the sacrifice on Jehovah's altar, he was quite ready to fall in with the popular cry, "The Lord, he is the God!" His soul was then and

there emptied of his besetting vice, but he still kept Jehovah at arm's length, and other sins, no less heinous, came in and took possession of him. At length he came to Ramoth Gilead and there, in disguise, fought against God; an arrow shot at a venture found the joint of his harness and the dogs licked up his blood. It is an old story, but repeated over and over again in human experience.

In one of the letters of Charles Lamb occurs this pathetic passage: "The waters have gone over me. But out of the black depths, could I be heard, I would cry out to all those who have set foot in the perilous flood. Could the youth, to whom the flavor of the first wine is delicious as the opening scenes of life or the entering of some newly discovered paradise, look into my desolation, and be made to understand what a dreary thing it is when he shall feel himself going down a precipice with open eyes and a passive will; to see his destruction and have no power to stop it; to see all godliness emptied out of him and yet not be able to forget a time when it was otherwise; to bear about the piteous spectacle of his own ruin; could he see my fevered eye, fevered with the last night's drinking and feverishly looking for to-night's repetition of the folly; could he but feel the body of the death out of which I cry hourly, with feebler outcry, to be delivered—it were enough to make him dash the sparkling beverage to the earth, in all the pride of its mantling temptation."

And here we touch the point of weakness in all personal reform which is attempted without the help of God. The adversary, expelled for a while and

wandering in dry places, is ever vigilant to return with other foul spirits. In such cases we are wont to say, "The man has gone back." Not so; the Devil has gone back into him.

What is needed then in order to make the process effectual? *A new tenant*; for grace, like nature, abhors a vacuum. You may undertake to exhaust the foul air of an apartment by the mechanical process of the air pump; but, if successful, have you really produced a better condition of things? Is not the simpler method the wiser one? Throw open the windows, and the clearer air rushing in will drive out the foul. Here is what Dr. Chalmers called "the expulsive power of a new affection."

*The new affection* must be the love of God. The soul will be satisfied with nothing less, since it was created in the likeness and for the glory of God. He alone can animate it. A man may scour an image clean and clothe it in royal apparel, but God alone can breathe into it the breath of life. This is Regeneration. In vain are the cleansing and the garnishing, unless the divine Presence shall tenant the house, and unless the soul shall meet the primal behest, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God."

But there can be no new affection unless there be *a new conviction* for it to rest on. We cannot love God by main force; we can only love him when we perceive there is just reason for doing so. It would be an easy matter to solve the problem of perpetual motion if we could but find a perpetual force or motor to place behind it. All emotions are transitory, unless they rest on truth which is eternal. In casting about for the truth which shall serve as a substratum

for love toward God, we turn of necessity to the Cross. Here God reveals himself in Christ as the great Lover of men. He "so loved the world." Here is the rationale of piety: we love God because he first loved us. If we enter on religion with any other motive than that which is suggested on Calvary, we shall fail. You may set your clock going, but it will run down. The only chronometer that needs never to be wound up is God's planetary system, which finds its counterpart in his gospel of grace. To have a vision of God, face to face, as manifested in Christ crucified, is to be "reformed" effectually. The soul is swept in justification, garnished in sanctification, and filled more and more, as time passes, with love expressing itself in filial devotion to the service of God.

Thus the new affection, founded on the new conviction, leads to a *new occupation*, in pursuance of the Master's injunction, "Seek ye first of all the kingdom of God." The soul is no longer empty; its energies have found something to do. There is nothing more eerie than an empty house. Let it be swept and garnished never so well, it is the abode of loneliness and melancholy. Cry aloud and a hundred echoes answer you. Laugh and the wierd laughter of hiding specters comes back to you. What shall be done? Let the New Tenant enter. Light the candles, kindle the fires, awake the sounds of honest life and industry. The soul is unsatisfied with sweeping and garnishing: it must welcome the Householder and in his service find employment for its energies. There is nothing truer than the proverb, "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do."



The children of Israel, on their return from captivity, set about the restoration of the Holy City. The rubbish heaps were removed; the owl and the bittern fled from the sound of hammer and ax; the people, with trowel in hand, gave themselves to the building of the walls. In vain did evil spirits await the opening of the gates. Sanballat and Tobiah stood beneath the walls saying, "Come, let us take counsel together;" but the builders answered, "We are doing a great work so that we cannot come down." Oh, blessed is the man who has welcomed the Master to his soul and has found the true devotion which can reply to all temptation, "Why should the work cease, while I leave it and come down to you?"

We observe in the midst of this parable a singular parenthesis which seems to have no proper connection, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." In fact, however, this is the very heart of the parable. It sets forth the proposition that a half-Christian is no Christian at all. The man who has simply emptied his soul of flagrant vices is like Ephraim, "a cake not turned." The moral man who declines to admit Christ as his Lord and Saviour is not with Christ but against him. To sweep a house is not to welcome a tenant. Garnishing is not giving one's self to God. Freedom from vice is not virtue. To heed the command "Thou shalt not" is far from obeying the word "Thou shalt." Religion is positive life and perpetual growth. It is the throwing of the whole soul open to the unreserved mastery of Christ.

Here then is our lesson: Be not content with the sweeping and the garnishing. Throw open thy soul

to him who knocketh; thou art wronging thyself by refusing to admit him. Doctor Arnot, in Glasgow, learned that a poor widow was to be ejected for non-payment of rent and resolved to relieve her. He went to her house, accordingly, and knocked and knocked again in vain. Not long after, he met the woman on the street and mentioned his visit. "Why, Doctor Arnot," she said, "was it you? I was in the house all the time, but thought it was my landlord coming for his rent, and I kept the door bolted against him." How many there are who, thus misapprehending God's grace, are unwilling to receive him. "Behold, I stand and knock; if any man will open unto me, I will come in and sup with him." If you, my friend, have been making a vain struggle to save yourself by main strength, and have failed, why not open to the great Helper now? Your soul will be glorified by the light of his countenance and filled with all the fulness of God.

## THE FINDING OF AN OLD BOOK

“And Hilkiyah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. And Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, Hilkiyah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read before the king.”—2 Kings 22, 8-10.

The name of Josiah is in the roll call of the mighties. When, at eight years of age he came to the throne, religion was at its lowest ebb. At sixteen he was converted, or as the record says “he began to seek after the God of his fathers.” Soon afterward he instituted a national reformation. The high places and graven images were removed; the altars of Baal were broken down; the bones of the pagan priests were taken out of the sepulchres and burned on the defiled altars. In the eighteenth year of his reign Josiah gave orders for the restoration of the Temple, and the work was prosecuted with great energy. The incident referred to in our text occurred at this time. The high priest Hilkiyah, while rummaging in one of the lumber rooms of the Temple, found a dust-covered scroll bearing the title, “The Book of the Law by the Hand of Moses.” He took the book to Shaphan the prime minister of Josiah who was a scribe or professor of Biblical exegesis, by whom it was recognized as the long-lost and neglected copy of the Scriptures which had been deposited originally

in the side of the Ark to be used in the Temple service. The discovery was reported to the king, and the book was read before him. When the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy was reached, in which the words of the covenant are recorded with its blessings and admonitions, the king could contain himself no longer, but rent his clothes in token of extreme sorrow and contrition. Thenceforth the reformation which had been begun by Josiah was prosecuted with renewed vigor; and this book gave the key-note to the subsequent reign of Josiah, of which it is written, "And all his days the people departed not from following the Lord."

This original autograph of the Scriptures had been given by inspiration and "written by the hand of Moses." It could contain nothing but truth, since its author "wrote as he was moved by the Spirit of God." The shafts of destructive criticism have for the last fifty years been directed at this original autograph. The question stands thus: Was the Law of the Lord, as written by the hand of Moses, a volume of inerrant truth or a tissue of mingled truth and falsehood? We are told by those who have led the assault that the case is closed and that the Scriptures are effectively discredited as an infallible rule of faith and practice. If, indeed, the case be closed, it is not as the destructive critics assert, but rather after the manner set forth in Æsop's fable of the rushlight: "On a moonlight night a Rush, grown arrogant by over-much feeding with rich oil, said, 'Behold, how I outshine the sun and moon and stars.' But at that moment a puff of wind came by and blew it out; and, lo, the sun and moon and stars shone on."

It is not my purpose, however, to enter upon the merits of the Biblical controversy. The matter in hand is distinctly personal, to wit, *Where do we find ourselves with reference to the Scriptures?* Do we still receive them as an inerrant guide or has our confidence been shaken by the stress of contrary winds? The Bible is not lost to the world, since the Word of the Lord endureth forever; but, to all intents and purposes, it is lost to the man who no longer believes and loves it.

1. *The Bible may be lost by Neglect.* It was provided that the king of Judah should have a copy of the Book of the Law for his personal use; but the father and grandfather of Josiah, both indisposed toward the truth, had doubtless excused themselves from reading the sacred scroll on account of their absorption in affairs of state. We are all thus liable to waive the weighty matters of religion in our devotion to worldly cares. "The world is so much with us." If a man would succeed in our time, he must strip to the waist and enter the lists to win. In the morning after a hasty breakfast he speeds to the market-place; at night, weary, he retires to rest. His mind is full of temporalities, and the affairs of eternity go by default. The family altar is not unfrequently abandoned and the Bible lies unused upon the shelf; the dust covers it and spiders weave their webs about it.

2. *We may lose the Bible, also, by Reading without Studying it.* Our Lord said, "Search the Scriptures;" the word suggests an earnest quest, as of one seeking for hid treasure. A man may run fleetfoot for a lifetime over the richest gold fields and yet have not a

penny to his name. He who would find the precious ore must dig for it with pick and mattock. The cursory reading of the Scriptures is one of the lamentable faults of our busy age. We run as we read; and, so doing, run past great events and eternal verities. We run through the twentieth chapter of Exodus, and the sound of the Lord's trumpet makes little or no impression upon us. We run past Calvary and the great tragedy which darkened the heavens and shook the earth is as a tale that is told. We scarcely pause to think, much less to read between the lines; thus our reading of the Scriptures becomes a perfunctory and profitless service and the truth imperceptibly slips from us.

3. *We lose our Bibles, also, by Studying without Reading them.* This is not so paradoxical as it seems. We are frequently told that ours is an age of Bible study. It is true that we are much engaged in arguing about the Bible. We contemplate it from the outside, and discuss elaborately its structure, its codification, its chronology and geography, its etymology and syntax, everything except the truth which it contains; the revelation which God here makes to sinful men. What would be thought of a man who, on receiving a letter from his distant home, were to busy himself in turning it about without opening it; saying, "I must investigate this post-mark, which seems to be somewhat indistinct. It would appear that various kinds of ink were used in the superscription. If my father wrote this letter, how is it that he addresses it to the Borough of Manhattan rather than to New York as in his former communications?" Will a man vex his soul with such trivial considerations when he

knows not what message of weal or woe is written within? Oh, friends, we have studied about the Bible long enough! In the name of the good Father who has given us the Book, let us open it and discover what weighty message he sends us.

4. *The Bible is lost, also, by Reading and Studying without Putting it into Practice.* A man may be thoroughly familiar with the truth as here revealed, may be a learned theologian, a Biblical expert, and yet an ungodly man. The miser is so called because, despite his accumulated wealth he is a miserable man. Our riches are not measured by what we have but by what we put into circulation for our personal benefit and that of our fellowmen. The more a man knows about the Bible, the less fortunate he is unless he gets it into the nerve and fiber of his life.

5. *We are in danger of losing the Bible, furthermore, by Substitution.* Jesus said of the religious leaders of his time, "Ye have made the Law to be of none effect by your traditions." They had overlaid it by the teachings of their Rabbis; had allowed their Mishna and Gemara to supplant it. In like manner our Catholic friends have belittled the Scriptures by giving equal value to Apocryphal books, to papal Bulls and manifestoes and to the teachings of the Church. And there are others who supplant the Scriptures with the Prayer-book or with Thomas á Kempis or "Morning and Evening Meditations," or with commentaries and "lesson helps." The Bible is a jealous book; it tolerates no rivals. It stands alone and complete. The historian Froude says of John Bunyan that when he was in Bedford Jail he had but a single book; but that, he adds, being the Bible, was of



itself a liberal education. We may not underestimate the value of other religious aids, but there is a profound significance in the word "Finis" at the close of the sacred volume; it means that the Book is in and of itself a complete rule of faith and practice.

6. *We lose our Bible, also, by Renunciation.* We are told, in some quarters, that, in order to form a fair and dispassionate judgment as to the value of the Scriptures, we must give up all prejudice in their favor and view them wholly "as literature." Is this true? Shall I be obliged then to surrender my love for my mother before I can form a just estimate of her character? Or, must I give up my loyalty to the Republic before entering upon a consideration of the principles of constitutional liberty which underlie it? Or, must I cease to be a Christian before I dare venture on a consideration of the life and character and work of Jesus Christ? Nay; a system of criticism which makes such demands is obviously fallacious. The Scriptures are literature, indeed, but only as the lightning is light. We confess to a blessed prejudice in their favor which we cannot give up. There are no compensations in criticism to warrant the semblance of apostasy. We are not afraid of the results of adverse criticism; but let those who do not reverence the Scriptures kindle the fires under them; let those who have no vital prejudice in their behalf pour corrosive acids upon them; as for us, we shall expect to lose our reverence for Holy Writ when, for any purpose whatsoever, we waive or renounce our loyalty to it.

7. *And again the Bible is lost by Mutilation.* We are not at liberty to pick and choose among its teach-

ings. For how shall we determine what to keep and what to let go? Shall we keep what we like? The result must be as when Jehoiakim read with pen-knife in hand, casting what displeased him into the fire until naught remained. Or shall we keep what is approved by a self-constituted syndicate of Biblical experts? Unfortunately, no two of these "experts" are agreed as to what should be thrown out. Moreover, no Scripture is of private interpretation. The book is addressed, in simple terms, not to the learned but to average men; and the search-warrant is in the hands of all. Shall we keep the New Testament, then, and allow the Old Testament to go? One of the fundamental rules of evidence is *falsus in uno falsus in omnibus*. The Book is its own witness and all portions rest on the same authority. If the witness be discredited, let him step down and out. If the testimony of the Book is not to be accepted in full, how shall any of its statements be attested? The Sermon on the Mount rests on precisely the same authority as the Mosaic Law. The Creation of Man and the Incarnation stand or fall together. The Story of the Cross is on the same credible level as the story of the Serpent in the Wilderness. Christ himself hypothecated the truth of his Resurrection on the credibility of Jonah in the whale's belly. I know it has been said by some who have accepted the piecemeal theory of inspiration that "it has made the Bible a new book to them;" and this may easily be believed. What we want, however, is not a new book but a true one. We want no blind and hobbled guide for the journey of life. And a trustworthy book is out of the question unless we are

prepared to receive its own testimony concerning itself, yielding a cordial assent to a *Thus saith the Lord*.

“ This is the Judge that ends the strife  
Where wit and reason fail.”

The loss of the Bible is an inestimable and irreparable loss. It is like the going out of the sun, leaving the soul enveloped in gloom and hopelessness. How is it with us? Have we lost confidence in the Book? Have we been carried away by the confused clamor of its adversaries? Have we, without due consideration, concluded that where there is so much smoke there must be fire? And are we thus left to voyage without chart or compass; to fight life's battle with a wooden sword? If so, what shall be done? Let us prayerfully retrace our steps, and do as Josiah did when his attention was called to the lost Book: “ It came to pass that when the king had heard the words of the book he rent his clothes.” This was in token of sincere sorrow and repentance. If we have made a mistake with reference to the Scriptures, let us be frank to confess it.

“ And the king stood in his place in the assembly of the people and made a covenant before the Lord to perform the words which were written in the book; and they killed the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month.” If we would recover our faith in the Scriptures, let us also renew our covenant with God. After that we may keep Passover; not before, since we cannot be loyal to the Incarnate Word, while renouncing the written Word of God. It is vain to pray for the deepening of the spiritual life without a due regard for Scripture, forasmuch as the Holy

Ghost works for our sanctification through the Word; as Christ himself intimated in his pontifical prayer, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy Word is truth." It is vain to pray for a revival of pure and undefiled religion while discrediting the Scriptures; since the Holy Spirit works in conviction and conversion by "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." It is vain to pray for the success of Missions, unless we have confidence in the truth of God's holy word; if the Bible be surrendered, our Missionary Boards might as well go out of business; for the Holy Spirit works in the great propaganda by the power of the Word, as it is written "It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

Having repented of our fault and renewed our covenant with the Author of the Book, let us follow still further the example of Josiah, who adjusted his subsequent reign to the words that were written in it. Our Lord well knew the necessities of our Spiritual life when he said, "Search the Scriptures for in them ye think ye have eternal life and these are they which testify of me." Let us cease to consort openly or by secret sympathy with those who assail the divine veracity, and let us open our hearts to the revelation of our Father's will.

A blind girl, whose Bible was printed in raised characters, found that by manual labor her finger tips had become so callous that she could no longer read it. She held it affectionately in her hands, saying, "Farewell, dear Book! Thou hast been my strength and comfort, but I must let thee go." And tearfully

printing a last fond kiss upon the Book, she read with her sensitive lips, "The Gospel according to St. Luke," and, behold, her Bible had come back to her! Dear friends, the lips are ever more sensitive than the fingers to spiritual truth. The heart has a power of discernment which the eyes have not, and love goes deeper than reason. It is lack of love that leads us astray at every point in our religion. Let us, therefore, open our hearts to Revelation, welcoming its light and power. "O, how love I thy Law! It is sweeter than honey and the honey-comb. I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always, even unto the end."

## THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

“There is a sin unto death.”—1 John, 5, 16.

If there is a sin which carries the soul beyond the reach of mercy, it behoves us to inform ourselves about it. The common view, which is quite incorrect, has led to much morbid introspection and reduced many to a state of religious melancholia. ~~I know of such an one~~ <sup>many a one</sup> in the asylum to-day, ~~sitting~~ <sup>there</sup> with his head in his hands, a wild light in his eyes, given over to utter despair under the conviction that God has forsaken him.

~~It is in order to inquire~~ <sup>we are asking</sup> at the outset if there is any such thing as an “unpardonable sin.” Here the Scriptures speak with no uncertain sound; “*There is a sin unto death.*” It is referred to particularly in four passages: Luke <sup>xii</sup> xii, 10: “*And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven*” (The reference here is to a profane and violent defamation of the Spirit of God);—Matthew xii, 31, 32; “*Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither*

*in this world, neither in the world to come*" (This is explained in the context; the Pharisees had referred the miracles of Jesus, which were wrought by the divine Spirit within him, to the influence of devils); —Hebrews vi, 4-6: "*For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance: seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame*" (Observe the sin of apostacy here indicated, is set forth specifically as an offense against the Spirit of God); —1 John v, 16, from which our text is taken: "*If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.*"

I. It should be noted at the outset that *all sin whatsoever, of every form and measure, is abhorrent to God*. It is the one thing in the universe which God hates and which should therefore be hateful to those who are created in his likeness. Its inevitable result is alienation from him. The full measure of this penalty was represented in the ~~climacteric hour~~ of the passion of Christ when, standing as our substitute before the bar of offended justice, he passed into momentary exile, crying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" That which he, as the Infinite One, endured for a moment in our behalf, must be of infinite duration in the case of the ~~obdurate~~ <sup>obdurate</sup> sinner.

A good deal is being said just now, *pro* and *contra*, about the doctrine of eternal punishment; and, what-



ever else may be in doubt, it is quite clear that nobody likes to believe it. That, however, has nothing to do with the merits of the question. What we wish to know is whether the doctrine is true or not. And that must be determined by the Scriptures. What have they to say about it? If a man does not believe the Bible, he may adopt whatever view he chooses; but as for us a *Thus saith the Lord* is ultimate. The Scriptures say, "There is a great gulf fixed so that they which would pass from hence cannot" (Luke xvi, 26). And again, <sup>3</sup> ~~three~~ <sup>times</sup> repeated, "Where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched" (Matt. ix, 44, 45, 48). The words used to characterize the duration of punishment are "~~etern-  
aion-aionon~~"; that is, "forever and ever." The testimony of the Scriptures in such passages is unmistakable and, as believers in the divine word, we are bound to receive it.

II. The second fact of importance in this connection is that *there are Degrees of Sin*. The Rabbis in the time of Jesus were accustomed to make a distinction between the precepts of the Moral Law. The greatest commandment, they said, was that which was written on their phylacteries: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might"; and there was a general agreement, also, that the least commandment was that in Deuteronomy ~~xxii~~ <sup>xxii</sup>, 6, referring to the robbing of a bird's nest.

The distinction is valid, in general terms. If so, it follows that there are degrees of guilt in the violation of this precept. There is truth in the

saying, "It is a sin to steal a pin," but it is obviously a greater sin to steal a purse or an inheritance. It was a sin for the rich farmer to take away the ewe lamb of his humble neighbor, but it was a far greater for David to rob Uriah of his wife. In every court of justice such distinctions are made as grand larceny and petty larceny, murder and manslaughter: and corresponding penalties are inflicted. Much depends on the motive and much on circumstance. The bell-ringer of Saint Germain who, in 1572, gave the signal for the massacre of St. Bartholomew was not without guilt; but the captain of the Royal Guard, who in the street below led the assault upon the innocent Huguenots, was guiltier still. What, then, shall be said of King Charles who, standing in the balcony of the Louvre on that fateful night, with arquebuse in hand, looked down upon the scene of carnage crying, "Kill! kill!" Did he not drink the cup of blood-guiltiness to its dregs? No; a greater sinner still was "God's vicar" at Rome who signed the death-warrant, and who, when the bloody deed was accomplished, struck off a memorial coin bearing on one side his own name and on the other, *Strages Ugonottorum*. If punishment is to be measured by guilt, then his Holiness was the arch-malefactor in that historic tragedy. And the harvest is ever according to the seed-sowing. Thus Jesus said, "The servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did not commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes" (Luke xii, 47).

III. Still another fact to be considered is that *all sins whatsoever are pardonable*. This is the meaning of the cross: "the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sin." He is able to save unto the uttermost all that will come unto him. Unto the uttermost! No sin is beyond the reach of his pardoning grace. Sins that are scarlet are made white as snow. The penitent thief who had passed his life in deeds of violence was pardoned *in articulo mortis*. The Magdalene, from whom all pure women drew aside their garments, came to Jesus in contrition, and he forgave her all. Peter denied his Lord <sup>3 times</sup> thrice, with a bitter curse, saying, "I know not the man!" and he went out and wept bitterly; and Christ restored him. Judas—alas! had Judas but known the infinitude of divine grace, his shame would not have led him to remorse, his grief would not have driven him to despair. Instead of rushing unforgiven into eternity through the dark gate of suicide, he might have thrown himself, with abandon of faith, upon the bosom of a gracious God. He is a great Forgiver. There is blood enough in the fountain, which he has opened for uncleanness, to wash away the sins of the guiltiest and most desperate. He blots them out as a hot stylus erases the inscription on a tablet of wax. He removes them from us "as far as the East is from the West." He casts them behind his back. He sinks them in oblivion; he remembers them no more against us.

All this on the sole condition of faith. Faith is necessary, as the stretching forth of the hand to receive a proffered gift. Free as water is God's grace; but we must dip it up. Free as air, we must breathe

it. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." He that looked upon the brazen effigy in the wilderness was healed by it; to refuse to look was to die. The deepest longing of the human soul is for deliverance from sin: "What shall I do to be saved?" The answer, given variously in many passages of Scripture, is ever the same in its last reduction: "He that believeth shall be saved." Look and live!

IV. *Nevertheless, there is one sin which is unpardonable*, in the necessity of the case. This statement is not so paradoxical as it seems. It is quite consistent with what we have been saying, as will appear from the following facts:

(1) *The natural heart is biased against the truth and goodness.* It matters not whether the occasion of this bias be referred to the Fall or to Heredity; the fact itself is indisputable; and every man is sensible of it. The virus is in our blood: and, alas, we would not have it otherwise. We prefer to sin. No sin was ever yet committed except by preference, else it would not be sinful. No man can lay his finger on any guilty thing in his life of which he may not say, "I might have avoided it." This means that we are inclined toward sin. We are handicapped by our love for it.

(2) *But this cannot be offered in extenuation of our guilt, since it is offset by the influence of the Holy Ghost.* The good God has not left us to ourselves, but has put us under the power of his Spirit who continually strives with us. He points us to righteousness, enabling us to distinguish between

right and wrong. He warns, remonstrates, persuades and urges us to avoid evil and do good. And when we sin, the Spirit exercises his most important function in offering us the benefit of pardoning grace. He puts us in remembrance of the things that Jesus said and did in our behalf. He stands ever ready to apply to our sinful souls the power of the atoning blood.

(3) *But a man may harden his heart against the Holy Ghost; and he who does this effectually is guilty of the unpardonable sin.* There are three steps to death: One of them is referred to in Ephesians iv, 30: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God;" as when wayward children grieve a loving mother. The second step downward was indicated by Stephen, in his address to the Sanhedrin: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye." We thus resist when we refuse to hear the Spirit's warnings and admonitions. The third and final step is designated in 1 Thessalonians v, 19; "Quench not the Spirit." A spark may be quenched in more ways than one. It may be stamped out, smothered or merely left to die. The Holy Ghost may be effectually repelled by an impious affront like that of the Pharisees when they referred his work to Beelzebub; or his voice may be drowned in the confusion of Vanity Fair; or he may sadly take his departure after years of persistent neglect and inattention. Let the spark alone, and it will die; and with it, hope goes out forever. *what is the result*

It appears then that *the unpardonable sin is the ultimate rejection of Christ as he is offered to the soul by the Spirit of God.* While all sins are pardonable, it is

obvious that the rejection of pardon is beyond remedy. It is the closing by the soul itself of the only door into eternal life.

Our Lord refers to this sin of sins in his Parable of the Vineyard: "A certain man planted a vineyard and hedged it round about, and digged a wine press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country; and when the time of fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen that they might receive the fruits of it. And they took his servants and beat one and killed another and stoned another; and he sent yet other servants and they did likewise unto them. But last of all he sent his Son saying, 'They will reverence him.' But when the husbandmen saw the Son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him;' and they caught him and cast him out of the vineyard and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? He will miserably destroy those wicked men" (Matt. xxi, 33-41).

The consideration of this subject is full of comfort: since it is quite safe to say to all who are sincerely concerned about the matter, *You have not committed the unpardonable sin.* How may this be known? The interest of a man in his own welfare is proof positive that the Holy Spirit is still striving with him. One who has really committed the unpardonable sin is spiritually dead. He cares nothing for God's word of grace; he sins without compunction and without fear of the consequences. A man whose spiritual eyes are still open, whose heart beats, whose conscience is not seared as with an hot iron, who scru-

ples to sin and longs for pardon, may rest assured that he is still on mercy's ground. The Spirit is striving with him; and while there's life there's hope.

But we cannot dismiss this subject without an earnest word of caution. It is ever dangerous to trifle with God. Few are the souls that mean to die. Men die by default; they trifle with their destiny; they wear out the divine patience by reckless procrastination. They put away the overtures of divine mercy, day by day and year by year, until their hearts are hardened and their consciences seared; they congratulate themselves because now they can sin without scruple and have no more fearful looking-for of judgment. Let them take heed; this is the crossing of the danger-line.

*Suppose you were a*  
 If you, my friend, were a prisoner in the besieged town of ~~Mafeking~~ and were informed of a secret gate leading to freedom, how long would you hesitate to take advantage of it? We are shut up in the City of Doom; and there is one gate only to safety. The voice of the Spirit calls, "Escape for your life!" How long will you tarry? ~~I put you in remembrance~~  
*of* the word which is written, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him: and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." There is no time to lose. Grieve not the Spirit; resist not the Spirit; quench not the Spirit. To-day is yours; to-morrow is God's.



## AQUILA AND PRISCILLA

“Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus.”—Rom. 16, 3.

The persons here referred to were Jews, natives of Pontus, belonging to the mercantile class and well-to-do. Tradition says that in the year 33 they came up to Jerusalem with other pilgrims and were among those “dwellers in Pontus” who witnessed the effusion of the Spirit. If so, they heard the address of Peter in which he set forth the saving power of the Cross and the perpetual presence and influence of the risen Christ. It was with such impressions upon their minds that they returned from the feast; and doubtless, as years passed, they spake often one with another of this gospel of life.

In 54 A.D., they were pursuing their trade as tent-makers at Corinth, whither they had come in pursuance of a recent edict of the Emperor against the Jews (Acts 18, 1-3). It chanced that, at this time, a journeyman tent-maker, weak-eyed and stoop-shouldered, who was also a philosopher and dialectician, and an itinerant preacher of the Gospel, while seeking work in Antioch, found his way to Aquila's shop. As he plied the needle, he related to his fellow-workmen the wonderful story of his conversion and explained the good news. It was the same gospel

which Aquila and Priscilla had heard twenty-one years before at the Feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem: and they welcomed it gladly and were known thenceforth as followers of Christ.

A year later they were at Ephesus (Acts 18, 24-26). A learned Jew of Alexandria, named Apollos, had come to the city and, being eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures, "was teaching diligently of the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John." In other words he perceived that the times were out of joint and anticipated the coming of the kingdom; but the larger truths of the Gospel were as yet unknown to him. In some manner he came under the influence of Aquila and Priscilla, and "they expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." This tent makers' shop appears to have been the first Theological Seminary of the Christian Church: primitive, indeed, yet it may be doubted whether in all the world there was another institution of learning where the truth was more profoundly or comprehensively taught. Not Zeno's Painted Porch, nor Plato's Academy, nor Gamaliel's school at Jerusalem could have so well equipped Apollos for his work as an evangelist.

In the year 59 the tentmakers had drifted to Philippi (1 Cor. 16, 19). Mention is now made of "the church that is in their house." This probably means no more than that, at stated times, the followers of Christ met and worshipped together at their family altar: nevertheless the domestic circle is thus invested with a peculiar sanctity, as the germ of that great organism which we call the Christian Church.

A year later they were at Rome (Rom. 16, 3-5). It would appear that they had been involved in some sort of persecution, from which they had rescued Paul at the peril of their lives. And again mention is made of "the church that is in their house." A strange contrast this to St. Peter's in the Rome of to-day! That humble church in the tentmakers' house had no tiaraed Pope, no imposing College of Cardinals, no elaborate paraphernalia of worship; yet great was God's blessing upon it.

The last mention of Aquila and Priscilla finds them back at Ephesus in the year 66 (2 Tim. 4, 19). There is a tradition that on the 8th of July—the day set apart for them in the martyrology of the Romish Church—the faithful couple were led out beyond the walls and beheaded. It is easy to fill in the details of the pathetic picture; each looked at the other with eyes full of love, as if to say, "Farewell; fear not!" There was a flash of the blade, and they were at home with God.

*The story of Aquila and Priscilla is a beautiful idyl of home-life.* The religion of Christ is singular in the emphasis which it puts upon the privileges and responsibilities of the domestic sphere. It is written that when Sayka-Muni had discovered the Great Truth, and had determined to devote himself to its propagation, he came to his home in the night-time and, finding his wife asleep, with her infant beside her, he softly kissed her, said farewell and went his way. This was *Mahabanish kramana*, "The Great Renunciation." He saw his home thenceforth no more, but, sitting under the sacred Bo-tree, gave himself to meditation, losing himself in contempla-

tion of the Ineffable One. How striking the contrast between this and the life of Jesus! At the home in Nazareth, he was "subject unto his parents"; at the home in Bethany he found rest and comfort during the troubled years of his ministry; at the home in Cana he laid his benediction upon the delights of social life; and when he would portray the glories of heaven, he spoke not of a city, nor of a better country, nor of a garden of delights, but of home, sweet home. "In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you."

*Here is a pleasant picture also of wedded love.* Aquila and Priscilla are always named together, as if they were inseparable; but, singularly, the order varies, suggesting that there was no strife for the preëminence. It reminds us of what Jeremy Taylor said; "When God created woman, he made her not out of Adam's head, as if she were to rule over him; nor out of his feet, as if he were to rule over her; but from his side, close by his heart, because he should ever love and honor and protect her."

In these days of loose thinking and looser living in these premises, it is well to emphasize the fact that *wedlock is a divine ordinance*. It is not a sacrament; wherever so regarded, as among all the Latin nations, immorality prevails. But this union was ordained of God in the time of man's innocency. "It is not good," he said, "for man to be alone"; wherefore he made woman to be his helpmeet. The generic man, the social unit, is not one but two in one; as it is written, "Male and female created he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam" (Gen. 5, 2).

This union is, further, pronounced to be "*honorable in all.*" A Scotch girl to whom her minister had said, "Janet, it is a very serious thing to be married," answered without hesitation, "Aye, minister, I ken it is a serious thing to be married, but it is more serious no' to be." The eloquent humor of the canny lass was quite eclipsed by her philosophy. There is such a thing as "single blessedness"; but it stands as the exception and not the rule. Blessedness is a path for two. It has been truly said of wedlock, "It halves our sorrows and doubles our joys."

*But there are two conditions affixed to an ideal marriage:* One is mutual love. There is no place in the divine economy for a "marriage of convenience." It is a perversion of the order of nature and a travesty on the ordinance of God. You may carpet your floors with softest velvet, cover your walls with richest tapestries, fill the atmosphere with music of harp and dulcimer and spread your table with all rare and delicate viands; but if love be wanting your home will be no better than a lodge in a garden of cucumbers. On the other hand, the nearest approach to heaven is "love in a cottage." The hail may rattle on the roof, the snow sift under the eaves, the grate be cold and the larder empty; the wolf may howl at the door, the King of Terrors himself may stand beckoning at the threshold, but if love abides within, all's well.

A man in public life, well-known and distinguished among our law-makers, whose domestic establishment is a proverb for hospitality and whose wife is a recognized leader in society, recently said, "Our hearts go back longingly to the time when we lived in a home of two rooms, practicing petty economies

to make both ends meet; when we were apart from the world and alone with each other; those were our happiest days."

Love is better than beauty or wit;  
Love is better than gold;  
For love is not found in the marketplace;  
Love is not bought and sold.

The other condition of ideal happiness is to be joined in the Lord. It has been wisely said, "Be not unequally yoked together" (2 Cor. 6, 14). This is an old-fashioned precept; but its wisdom is certified by the sorrow of many lives. It is obvious that when husband and wife are at odds concerning the fundamental facts of religion they are not "united as one." A Christian thinks more of his religion than of anything else; it is his meat and drink; it is the very air he breathes. The name of his Saviour is as ointment poured forth, he lives for Christ, and is willing to die for him. How, under such circumstances, can one be happily joined to another who is averse to such considerations or quite indifferent to them? The advice of Paul to couples who are thus matched but not mated is found in 1 Corinthians 7, 12-17: but an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. A duet of musical instruments is impossible except as they are keyed to the same pitch. There are many who, failing to remember this, have married in haste to repent at leisure.

The family altar is the heart of the Christian home. It is as true now as in the days of Obed-edom, that God prospers the home where the ark abides. In the morning, when each member of the household sets forth upon a day of unknown duties and

dangers, is it not well to kneel together and offer a prayer like that of the Breton Mariner, "O Lord, keep me; my boat is so little and the ocean so wide"? At eventide, is it not well to invoke the protecting care of God? In the hour of sorrow, when sickness invades the home, or when there is crape on the door, there are strength and comfort and hope in clasping hands at the doorway of the Holiest of All. It is a grave responsibility which a father takes, who allows his children to grow up to maturity and pass out into the responsibilities of life without having heard his voice lifted in their behalf at the throne of the heavenly grace.

We glory in our American homes; but before the foundations of this Republic were laid, the Christian home had its place among the Scottish hills. "The church in the house" was kept up at peril of life and confiscation of goods, by those who were pledged to Christ's crown and covenant. Very many of our lyrics of domestic life are of Scottish birth. One of them is "The Cotter's Saturday Night." The steps of the weary worker are quickened as he catches sight of the light in the window:

His wee bit ingle, blinking bonnily,  
 His clean hearthstane, his thriftie wifie's smile.  
 The lispin infant prattling on his knee,  
 Does a' his weary carking cares beguile,  
 And make's him quite forget his labor and his toil.

\* \* \* \*

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,  
 They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;  
 The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace,  
 The big ha'-Bible, ance his father's pride;  
 His bonnet reverently laid aside,  
 His lyart haffets wearing thin an' bare:



Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,  
 He wales a portion with judicious care;  
 And "Let us worship God!" he says with solemn air.

\* \* \* \*

From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,  
 That makes her loved at home, revered abroad.

And another is "John Anderson, My Jo." The faithful wife, on whose cheeks the rose has faded, in whose eyes the light is dim, looks up into the face of her gray-haired companion and sings with quavering voice:

"John Anderson, my Jo, John,  
 When we were first acquent,  
 Your locks were like the raven;  
 Your bonnie brow was brent;  
 But now your brow is beld, John,  
 Your locks are like the snaw;  
 But blessings on your frosty pow,  
 John Anderson, my Jo!

"John Anderson, my Jo, John,  
 We clamb the hill thegither;  
 And mony a canty day, John,  
 We've had wi' ane anither.  
 Now we maun totter down, John,  
 But hand in hand we'll go;  
 And sleep thegither at the foot,  
 John Anderson, my Jo."

And another of these home-songs tells of the Reconciliation. The husband has quarreled with his gude wife and speaks entreatingly:

Thou has sworn by thy God, my Jeanie,  
 By that pretty white hand o' thine,  
 And by a' the lowing stars o' heaven  
 That thou wad aye be mine.

And I hae sworn by my God, my Jeanie,  
 And by that kind heart o' thine,  
 By a' the stars sown thick o'er heaven,  
 That thou shalt aye be mine.

Then foul fa' the hands that wad loose sic bands  
 And the heart that wad part sic love;  
 But there is nae hand can loose my band,  
 But the finger o' Him above.

Come here to me, thou lass o' my love,  
 Come here and kneel wi' me :  
 The morn is fu' o' the presence o' God,  
 And I canna pray without thee.

The Book maun be ta'en when the carle comes hame  
 Wi' the holy psalmodie ;  
 And thou maun speak o' me to thy God,  
 And I will speak o' thee."

But Aquila and Priscilla, husband and wife, *were also partners in faithful service*. It would appear that they shared the duties of their workshop. It is a great deal to say that they were not ashamed of manual toil; since, in those days, it was regarded as the business of slaves. The life of Jesus as the Carpenter of Nazareth has done much to reverse that judgment, though there are still some who deem it more honorable to live by the sweat of their fathers' brows than of their own. But these tentmakers of Pontus were not ashamed of their craft. It is safe to say moreover that the product of their labor was known for its excellent quality. Their tents were made of honest goat's-hair, sewn with honest seams and disposed of at an honest price. The trade-mark "A. & P." would mean much among the dwellers in tents of those days.

But Aquila and Priscilla did not confine their attention to handicraft; they were in the higher

service of the kingdom of Christ. Though not in holy orders, they were faithful in the preaching of the gospel and showed its excellency in their walk and conversation. The supreme need of our time is not more preachers but more consecrated laymen; more men and women ready to exemplify their religion in the common duties of life.

It was a goodly sight when the Crusader rode forth from his walled castle, clad in chain armor, his plume waiving, banner flying, lance poised, in quest of valorous deeds. The world looked on while he strove in the tourney or championed the weak and helpless or fought for the conquest of the Holy Sepulcher. But it is a grander sight before God when a man, with no blazonry or pomp or circumstance, addresses himself, day by day, to labor of love and patience of hope. Such an one was Charles Kingsley of gracious memory, of whom his wife wrote: "The outside world must judge him as an author, a preacher, a member of society, but those only who lived with him in the intimacy of every-day life at home can tell what he was as a man. Over the real romance of his life and over the tenderest, loveliest passages in his private letters a veil must be thrown, but it will not be lifting it too far to say that if in the highest, closest of earthly relationships a love that never failed—pure, patient, passionate—for six-and-thirty years, a love which never stooped from its own lofty level to a hasty word, an impatient gesture or a selfish act, in sickness or in health, in sunshine or in storm, by day or by night, could prove that the age of chivalry has not passed away for ever, then Charles Kings-

ley fulfilled the ideal of a 'most true and perfect knight' to the one woman blest with that love in time and to eternity. To eternity, for such love is eternal, and he is not dead. He himself, the man, the lover, husband, father, friend—he still lives in God, who is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

Are such lives unnoticed? Nay, they are "compassed about with witnesses." The galleries are filled! The Master himself looks on; and every word that his diffident follower speaks in the interest of truth and righteousness, every stretching forth of the helping hand, every denial of self, is recorded in heaven. It is said that the vibration of the atmosphere produced by speech is so rapidly diffused that within twenty hours the entire aërial envelope of the earth is affected by it. Our life puts on a serious aspect when we pause to consider that the very air into which we are speaking is a vast auditorium, wherein our utterances are preserved forever. This puts an emphasis upon the precept, "Do ye nexte thynges." Let us not complain of the narrowness of our sphere, but rather seek earnestly to fill it. "Go down to thy house," said Jesus to the man of Gadara, who, in gratitude for healing, desired to follow Christ as a disciple—"Go down to thy house and show what great things the Lord hath done for thee." In memory of the quiet but useful lives of the many Aquilas and Priscillas whom we have known, let us do with our might whatsoever our hands find to do, at home, in the marketplace, in the fellowship of the evangel; and may the God whose eyes run to and fro through all the earth, take knowledge of the work of our hands and establish it upon us.

## “AND THUS I MAKE MY PILGRIMAGE”

A SERMON FOR THE NEW YEAR.

“Arise and take thy journey.”—Deut. 10, 11.

There is a legend of an Oriental king, whose fool was also his personal friend and favorite; and never was quainter or merrier jester than he. As a token of regard the king presented him with a golden wand and bells, saying, “If ever thou find a greater fool, give this to him.” Years passed and the king lay on his dying bed. To his friend, the jester, he said, “I am going on a long journey and alas, am ill prepared.”—“Is it an unexpected journey then?”—“On the contrary, I have been forewarned these many years; but so engrossing have been the cares of government and pleasures of the court that I have given this matter little or no attention.” Whereupon the jester silently handed him the golden wand. He had found a greater fool than himself, at last.

It is the New Year's Eve. At midnight we shall cross the river, whether we will or not. There are unknown tasks and responsibilities before us. It is the part of wise people to stop now and think. Have we made due preparation for this journey?

I. *At the outset we should have a definite understanding as to our destination and the road thitherward.* Have you

formed a definite purpose for the coming year? Will it content you to retrace the former path? Is it enough to eat and drink and sleep and walk the treadmill? Do not oxen and horses the same—a day's work and a stint of oats? Do you aim at a “competence”? There is something to be said for that. Or is it your purpose to enjoy life? There is something to be said for that, too. Or have you set your eyes on honor and emolument? These might answer for a man whose breath is in his nostrils; but obviously they are beneath the aspiration of immortals.

We live in deeds, not years: in thoughts, not breaths;  
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.

We should count time by heart-throbs. He most lives  
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best.

The three successive levels of a worthy life are these: *First*, to make the most of one's self: nevertheless, mere self-culture is but a sublimated form of selfishness. *The second* is higher; namely, to do good as we have opportunity unto all men. He who devotes himself to the welfare of others is inadvertently kindest to himself, ever feasting on “the generous pleasure of kindly deeds.” Wherefore, to do good and communicate, forget not. But *the third* level is above all; and as immortal men and women we should content ourselves with nothing lower than the noblest and best. Emerson said, “Hitch your wagon to a star!” If God is the living Center of the universe he is clearly entitled to our undivided service. Lady Huntington, on her way to a court function, called to mind the question, “What is the Chief End of Man,” and its answer, “The Chief End of Man is to glorify God”; and so deeply was she

impressed with the solemnity of this proposition that, then and there, she consecrated all her energies to God. There is, indeed, a transforming power in this truth; and no man has fully “come to himself” until he has apprehended it.

II. The purpose of our life being thus determined, are we ready to set forth upon the journey? Not yet. *Not until we have rid ourselves of certain impedimenta.* It is the custom of the Chinese to close the year by paying all honest debts and so enter on the future with a clean balance. This is as it should be. But there is one debt which we shall find it impossible to cancel in any ordinary way: namely, the debt incurred to divine justice by our violation of holy law. To carry that over into the New Year would be like dragging a ball and chain. But how shall it be paid? To this end Jesus Christ came into the world, that by his blood the handwriting of ordinances which was against us might be blotted out. He offers to cancel our obligation in full, on the sole condition that we believe in him. “Come now, saith the Lord, let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” This done, we may remand our sins to oblivion, since the Lord himself has promised that he will “remember them no more against us.”

Then, how about our evil habits? To cling to these while accepting the pardon of past sin would be to mock the heavenly grace. It behoves us just here to cut loose from all such bondage. My friend, disencumber yourself to-night. It is a proverb, “Hell is paved with good resolutions.” True; but



so is heaven. The difference lies here: the paving-stones of hell are resolutions broken, while those of heaven are resolutions kept. And the one thing necessary in order that you may keep your resolutions is that you shall make them in prayer and with the proviso, "God helping me." You are quite safe while you lean hard on God.

III. Having thus "laid aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us," are we ready now to set forth upon our journey? Not yet. *It still remains to provide ourselves with the pilgrim's panoply.*

And *first of all, the Staff*; as Sir Walter Raleigh says, "Give me a staff of faith to lean upon." We are coming to steep hills and dreary stretches of wilderness; and we shall need a strong staff to support us. I know of nothing that can meet the necessity except a living faith in Christ. Not a mere intellectual assent to historic facts; not a mere subscription to dogmas and symbols of belief: but a vital apprehension of Christ as the living and life-giving Son of God. The rod of Moses was only a shepherd's crook, so long as nothing was required of him but the folding of Jethro's flocks. But when God called him to larger responsibilities he transformed that crook into a rod of power; so that all Egypt was filled with terror of it. And a further transformation still was wrought, when the same rod was laid by Moses' brother before the Ark of the Covenant, and, before the eyes of the assembled people, it put forth leaves and blossoms and fruit. It was endowed with life! Such are the three degrees of faith: *the faith of duty*, which prompts to the dull drudgery of bondsmen; *the faith of power*, which wins the com-

mendation, “Well done, good servant”; *and the faith of life*, by which we come into sonship, through a vital communion with the living Son of God. This is the faith by which men say to mountains, “Be ye torn up and cast into the sea!”

Then, *secondly, the pilgrim’s Gown*; “the gown of glory, hope’s true gauge.” There will be chilly days in the coming year and cold nights, when we shall need to gather it closely around us. A hope worth having is for constant use. Is yours folded and laid away in some precious portion of Scripture, as in a cedar chest? Put it on, my friend, and wear it all through the coming year. We have in Christ a comfortable hope, “a hope that maketh not ashamed.” A Christian has no right to be melancholy. Lift up your eyes; the heavens are open above you. We live for eternity! Wherefore, let us dream dreams and see visions. Charles V., the most powerful monarch of his time, coined a medal to celebrate the triumphs of his reign, on which were the pillars of Hercules, the boundaries of the known world, and over them the legend, *Plus ultra*, “More beyond!” Aye, ever more beyond! All eternity beyond! All heaven awaiting us. Let every crimson sunset be to us like the opening of the gates of glory. No hypochondria next year; no doubt or despondency. Hope on, hope ever! We are living in a good world; there is a kind providence round about us; and we have heaven to crown it all.

*The third item in the pilgrim’s equipment is a pair of stout Sandals.* One of them is courage; the other, patience. These “wax not old.” Toil and weariness await us; the heat and burden of the day; but

what of that, if divine resources are at our command? Some one has said, "When a resolute fellow steps up to that great bully, the World, and takes him by the beard, he is often surprised to find that it comes off in his hand; for, indeed, it was only put on to scare timid folk." Resist the Devil and he will flee from you. Confront duty, and it will smile upon you.

"So nigh is glory to the dust,  
So near is God to man;  
When Duty whispers low, 'Thou must!'  
The youth replies, 'I can!'"

It is easier to be courageous, however, than to be patient. Patience is the shoe that pinches: nevertheless it is the mate to courage. The secret of ultimate success is "patient continuance in welldoing"; to keep working when there are no visible results; to trudge on and seemingly to get nowhere; to march the seventh time around Jericho, ram's horn in hand, with all the people laughing from the walls,—this is the hardness of life. But be not weary in welldoing. Buffon's motto is worth remembering: "Hold on, hold fast, hold out!" Better still are the words of Paul: "Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

*The fourth* and final part of our equipment is a *Scrip*, or Wallet furnished with food. Our wallet is the Scripture, which we have taken to be our infallible rule of faith and practice. Here are great truths to be believed. Accept them as they are. Here are moral precepts, for the resolving of doubt when we stand at the crossroads of conduct. Here are promises, "exceeding great and precious." Make

much of the blessed Book, my friend, if you would be a faithful and effective Christian. Live upon its truths and precepts; eat and drink its promises. It is written that as Jacob journeyed and was weary, he came at nightfall to a lonely place, where he unbound his girdle and spread his rude repast of dates and parched corn; then lying down, with his head pillowed upon a stone, he saw God's ladder reaching down from heaven, with angels carrying his prayers upward and returning with blessings upon him. So, when you are weary with the routine of duty, undo your scrip and eat and drink. Here is something better than dates and parched corn—living bread and wine of heaven, grapes of Eshcol, apples and pomegranates;—and then dreams and visions.

Thus we are equipped for the journey; staff in hand, gown about us, sandals under foot and girdle filled with food. What more would we? Shall we set forth now, singing with Sir Walter,

“Give me my scallop-shell of quiet,  
My staff of faith to lean upon,  
My scrip of joy, immortal diet,  
My bottle of salvation,  
My gown of glory, hope's true gauge,  
And thus I take my pilgrimage”?

IV. Nay, we are not ready yet. One thing is needful still; a friend to journey with us. It is weary work to travel all alone. “Two are better than one; for if one falleth, the other will lift him up; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to lift him up.” Cowper sings,

“How sweet, how passing sweet, is solitude!  
But grant me still a friend in my retreat,  
Whom I may whisper, ‘Solitude is sweet.’”

And where shall we find a friend like Jesus, who sticketh closer than a brother? All the rough places and dangerous are known to him. In evil and in good report, in life and death, he has promised to be near and strengthen us. "Lo, I am with you always."

The heart of Moses sank within him when, on the verge of the wilderness, he foresaw the dangers and difficulties before him; and kneeling down he made this prayer, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence!" Then rising from his knees, he beheld the pillar of Cloud; and it gave him a two-fold promise, of communion and guidance. For the Cloud stood over the tabernacle; and within that tabernacle was the Ark of the Covenant; and on that Ark was the Mercy-seat where God had covenanted to meet his people and commune with them. Our spiritual health and comfort depend on our making constant use of this privilege of prayer.

"O may my hand forget her skill,  
My tongue be silent, cold and still,  
This throbbing heart forget to beat,  
If I forget the mercy-seat!"

But the cloud spoke of guidance, also. For, "when it was taken up from the tabernacle, the people journeyed; and in the place where it abode, there they pitched their tents." Thus, if we put aside self-will, the Lord, according to his promise, will ever go before us.

"He leadeth me, O blessed thought!  
O words with heavenly comfort fraught!  
What'er I do, wher'er I be,  
Still 'tis his hand that leadeth me."

And now we are ready, quite ready to go forward. The Old Year gives us farewell: the New Year begins!

The cloud lifts from above the tabernacle. Arise, girt and sandaled, and take thy journey! This year we live for God. This year we live for eternity. This year we aim at the noblest and best. No doubt there will be much of shortcoming and stumbling along the way; but let us do our best. An angel could do no better; and God asks no more. But let no man think that he is doing his best unless, with all his doing, he is leaning hard on God.

A few years ago, on the Lakes of Killarney, a boatman rowed me to the Meeting of the Waters, where, under a towering cliff known as the “Eagle’s Nest,” he rested on his oars, saying, “This is the place of the wonderful echoes.” He was about to call forth the genius of the place by shouting aloud, when suddenly another boat appeared with a company of tourists and a bugler. “Do you know the bugler?” asked I of my boatman. “Yes,” he replied; “his name’s Phelim, and he’s no player at all.” Just then Phelim put the bugle to his lips to awake the echoes. The tune was “Rory O’More,” and he played it poorly enough: but, O such music as filled that bowl among the hills! The bungling notes of poor Phelim were caught up, as it seemed, by sprites or angels behind every tree and jutting rock; and ravishing harmonies they made! Dear friends, our best efforts in the coming year will of themselves be worthless save as Christ shall give them value by his blessing. He will transform our homely service into the beauty of holiness. He will supplement our weakness with power. He will take our stammering supplications and change them into omnipotent pleas by adding, “for my sake.” If we have no bullock

for his altar, a turtle-dove will please him. All that he requires is faithfulness. If we lack spikenard for the anointing of his feet, our tears will content him. He is not an exacting Lord. He asks no better than our best; but our best is possible only by keeping close to him.

I wish you now a Happy New Year,—A year of bright hope and strong assurance; a year of high purpose and holy aspiration; a year of prayer unceasing and of deep mining among the treasures of Scripture; a year of growth in grace and kindly deeds; a year of devotion to Christ and of close walking “in his steps.”

“Let us 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; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”



## THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES

“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”—Matt. 5, 20.

This is an hard saying; for the Scribes and Pharisees were the strict religionists, and in many respects the best people, of their time.

The Scribes were a body of learned men organized by Ezra at the time of the return from Babylon. Their business was to transcribe and expound the Word of God. Inasmuch as the Jewish government was a theocracy and had no system of jurisprudence except that which was founded on the moral code of the Scriptures, these Scribes were also properly called Lawyers. They were experts in theology and ultimate authority as to Biblical truth.

The order of Pharisees—from *pharash*, meaning “to separate”—originated in a time of spiritual decadence, its purpose being to resist the encroachments of liberalism in religion and of anti-Judaism in politics. These men prided themselves on being Separatists and were renowned for their peculiar piety.

The words of Jesus were, therefore, very much as if one were to say nowadays, “Take heed and beware

of your preachers and elders, of your Doctors of Divinity and Theological Professors."

The question was one of righteousness. Christ preached a gospel of righteousness; he desired to set apart for himself a righteous people; he purposed to establish a kingdom of righteousness on the earth.

We need not go to the dictionary for a definition of righteousness; it is made perfectly clear in our Lord's teaching. It has a negative and a positive side; negatively, it means freedom from sin; positively, a perfect conformity to divine Law.

Let us attend now to the caution; for our Lord's reference to the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees is like a beacon set up to warn mariners on a dangerous coast. It is pertinent to inquire, What was the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, and wherein was it insufficient for such as desired to enter the kingdom of God?

The elemental parts of religion are three: a creed, a moral code and a devotional cultus. In all these the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees was at fault.

*I. They had a Creed*, an elaborate one; and they were most strenuous in defending it. They were, as Hudibras says,

"——Of that stubborn crew  
Of errant saints, whom all men grant  
To be the true Church militant;  
Such as do build their faith upon  
The holy text of pike and gun,  
Decide all controversy by  
Infallible artillery,  
And prove the doctrine orthodox  
By apostolic blows and knocks."

They were great believers. They held to the doctrine of a personal God, having his name written as frontlets between their eyes and the *Shema* on their forearm, "Hear, O Israel, The LORD our God is one LORD!" They held to immortality, and therein were at swords' points with the other national party, the Sadducees, who rejected the doctrine of angels and the future life. They were sticklers for the inerrancy of Scripture, insomuch that they attached a sacred significance not merely to its words but to every jot and tittle.

Thus they were orthodox of the orthodox. And so far, so good. Far be it from me to say a word in disparagement of the strictest loyalty to truth. A man without a creed is an intellectual and moral invertebrate; and he who, professing a creed, is recreant to it, is something worse. Heresy is a violation of common honesty. The disregard of ordination vows is distinctly a breach of contract and ought to be classed with such offenses as forging a check or tapping a till. Nevertheless, for some inscrutable reason, the man who thus offends, wins an ephemeral popularity. If I were unsuccessful in holding a congregation and had no scruple against ecclesiastical perfidy, I should begin to preach against the faith which I have solemnly espoused; uttering doubts as to the personality of God, insinuations against the divinity of Christ and reflections upon the truth of Scripture: and it is safe to say that presently there would be "standing room only" as in other extraordinary show-places. But, fortunately, the people soon detect this sort of thing; and they know in their heart that such a renunciation of denominational

truth, within denominational lines, is perfidious. Honesty is the best policy for preachers as for other people, in the long run.

Observe that, as disciples of Jesus, we are not told to avoid the orthodoxy of the Scribes and Pharisees, but to "exceed" it. But how shall we do this? *By adding life to it.* The insufficiency of their doctrinal righteousness lay in the fact that it was hollow at the core. It needed the quickening power of sincerity. The only creed worth having is a creed with a heart, a creed with eyes to see the path of life and feet to walk therein. Thus it is written, "Faith without works is dead."

" For when a man can live apart  
From works on theologic trust,  
I know the blood about his heart  
Is dry as dust."

*II. The Scribes and Pharisees had also an elaborate Moral Code.* They revered the Law so much that they made a fetich of it. They were careful to write its precepts on parchment made from the skin of a clean animal ; they must needs have a margin three fingers wide at the top of the page and four at the bottom ; they must wipe the stylus carefully whenever they came to the name of Jehovah ; and when transcribing the truth they must neither move the foot nor turn the back ; and the parchment must never be touched with the naked hand.

In their exposition of the Law they were known as strict constructionists, holding themselves to the binding force of the very letter. They "separated" themselves from others by rigid obedience, saying, "Stand aside, for we are holier than you."

And again the followers of Christ are not commanded to avoid but to exceed this Phariſaïc regard for Law. There is little danger of legalism in our time ; we are disposed rather to minimize the value of scrupulous obedience. In part, perhaps, this is due to the fact that the Decalogue is in certain quarters called in question, not merely as to its Mosaic authorship but as to its divine origin. The prevailing sin of our time is antinomianism. It is openly asserted that Christ abrogated certain precepts of the Moral Law. This seems to me a libel upon the perfect Son of God. We take great liberties with the Ten Commandments ; not so did Christ. He came not to destroy the Law but to fulfill it. He ever honored it. He required a most exact and implicit compliance with it.

Where then was the flaw in the morality of the Scribes and Pharisees ? It was purely mechanical. *It wanted life.* It was a body without a heart ; a tree without a root. They revered the letter which killeth and ignored the spirit which giveth life. Their service at the behest of duty was like that of galley-slaves chained to the oars. We need all of this rigid regard for Law *and something beyond it.* Men of business, see that the Law is written above the desks in your counting-room and at the top of every page of your ledgers. Busy women, heed the Law in your drawing-rooms and in all your domestic relations. Followers of Christ, let the mind that was in your Master be also in you. The Law which he revered should be as sacred to you as if it were written upon the blue skies by day and across the starry dome in fire.

It was to one of the learned order of Scribes that Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." And when asked what he meant by this regeneration, he explained that a man must be born of water and of the Spirit; that is, of cleansing and quickening. It is not enough that we shall be outwardly presentable, that we shall tell the truth, pay our honest debts and look well to our reputation among men. God looketh on the heart; and the regeneration which he asks involves a new will, a new conscience, a new conception of duty, and a new devotion to it. The whole nature must be animated by love and loyalty to God.

III. The Scribes and Pharisees had also a most admirable *Ceremonial Cultus*. They were devoted to the Church. In the conviction that they alone were right, they "compassed sea and land to make one proselyte." They were scrupulous to the last degree in the observance of all ceremonial precepts. They never appeared in public except in their canonicals, wearing phylacteries or prayer-fillets upon their arms. They were extremely careful as to purifications; to eat with unwashed hands was a crime equivalent to homicide. In the washing of their hands they must use an egg-shell and a half of water, lift up their hands so that the water should run along their wrists, and then, depressing them twice, allow it to trickle from their finger-tips. The Law of the Sabbath was observed with such particularity and with so many additions to the original prescript that it became an intolerable burden. It was a grave misdemeanor to light a fire or cook an egg or tie a shoe on the holy

day. In payment of tithes they exceeded the legal requirement, giving not only one-tenth of fields and flocks but even of garden herbs, such as mint, anise and cummin. They fasted twice every week, and made long prayers on the corners of the streets.

Why should our Lord denounce such scrupulosity? And wherein are we to "exceed" it? *The ceremonial righteousness of these Scribes and Pharisees was wholly superficial.* They were as whited sepulchers; fair without, but within full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. They made clean the outside of the platter, having little or no care for heart-religion. Their fault was hypocrisy. Self-righteousness is always hypocrisy. Paul refers to this kind of religiosity in severest terms: "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Romans 10, 3).

Let us not suppose, however, that devotion to the church or to its ceremonial requirements was displeasing to Christ. He himself organized the Church. The man who would honor Christ must not cast reflections upon the beauty of his bride. It was Christ also who ordained the sacraments. If we surely love and revere him, we shall not disregard his last injunction, "Do this in remembrance of me." Nor can we assert the uselessness of baptism, since our Lord commanded his people to go and baptize all nations.

We are not in danger, in these times, of loving Christ's Church too well or of esteeming her ordinance overmuch; but we are now as always in danger of insincerity. Hypocrisy is not a sin of the ancient



time; we are all prone to it. The meaning of the word is "mask-wearing"; and where is the man who does not desire to appear better than he is? The purpose of Gratiano is always in vogue:

"I will put on a sober habit,

Talk with respect, wear prayer-book in my pocket, look demurely,

Nay more, while grace is saying, hood mine eyes thus with my hat and sigh and say, 'Amen.'"

Our Lord admonished us to "take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." It is indeed as insinuating and permeating as leaven in meal. Let us be genuine. The Lord sees through and through us. It behooves us to worship him in spirit and in truth.

Thus it appears the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees was at fault, every way; in its creed, its moral code, its ceremonial observance. And the inadequacy of this righteousness was demonstrated when the Scribes and Pharisees rejected Christ, saying, "Away with him!" This is the touchstone and final test of righteousness. There is no true morality, no true religion, no true righteousness which does not hold Christ as the very heart and center of all. He himself suggested the criterion when to the young ruler, who protested that he had kept all the commandments from his youth, he said, "One thing thou lackest; go part with all and come and follow me."

We return to say again, that righteousness has a positive and negative aspect; and, both ways, Christ is the sum and substance of it. On the negative side, it is freedom from sin; and there is no pardon except at the cross; as it is written, "The blood of Jesus

Christ cleanseth us from all sin." On the positive side, it is perfect obedience to perfect law; and this is found to be impossible, in the experience of every man. It may be realized, however, through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. He kept the Law perfectly. Of all who ever lived he alone was as good as the Law. And it is provided, in the Covenant of Grace, that as our sins are imputed to him in the sacrifice of Calvary, so the merit of his perfect obedience is imputed to all such as have a living faith in him. He casts about them the "fine linen, clean and white" of his own righteousness, and they are thus made fit to appear before God in judgment. Let no man, therefore, who rejects Jesus Christ, imagine for a moment that he can stand before a holy God without fear; for his righteousness is but a vain and empty show. His sins are unforgiven and that which he esteems as righteousness is but filthy rags. But he that believeth in Christ shall enter into life; for Christ "is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1, 30).

## THE DRAG-NET

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world.”—Matt. 47-49.

Our Lord was preaching by the seaside. His theme was *The Kingdom*,—a well-worn theme. But, inasmuch as this is the key of Christ's gospel, it is most important that his people should understand it. All through the Old Testament runs a golden thread of prophecy touching the coming of One known as The Hope of Israel, who should bear the keys of government upon his shoulder and have upon his vesture and upon his thigh a name written, “King of kings and Lord of lords.” In the fulness of time, out of the wilderness came the forerunner, crying, “Cast up an highway! Repent ye! repent ye! For the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” And presently, when Christ began his ministry, he preached the truths of the Kingdom, and taught his disciples to pray, “Thy kingdom come.” Here by the seaside he presents seven parables, which follow each other in logical order.

First, the Parable of the Sower, in which is set forth the inception of the Kingdom. The earth is a fallow field, into which God goes forth, like a hus-

bandman with apron-full of grain, scattering seeds of truth and righteousness. What matters it that some fall by the wayside, and some on stony ground, and some among thorns? There is still enough to make sure the joy of harvest home.

Second, the Parable of the Tares, in which is announced the opposition to the Kingdom. The Prince of Darkness goes forth while men are sleeping and, sowing tares among the wheat, departs upon his way. It is too much to expect the Evil One, without resistance, to suffer his dominions to slip from him; he will, if possible, thwart the gracious purposes of God.

Third, the Parable of the Mustard-seed, which states the formative principle of the Kingdom. The Law of Progress is germination. The living seed must grow. It grows in silence, unseen. "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation"; neither do men say, Lo here, or Lo there!

Fourth, The Parable of the Leaven. Behold the pervasiveness of the divine energy. In vain is opposition; the end may be seen from the beginning. Do we pray, "Thy kingdom come"? His kingdom shall come! The leaven is destined to leaven the lump. The glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Fifth, the Parable of the Hid Treasure. Here is the personal application of the doctrine of the Kingdom. It is of supreme importance that a man shall have part in it. He that succeeds in everything else but fails here makes a fiasco of life. The field where the treasure lies hid is made known; wise is the man who secures it.

Sixth, the Parable of the Priceless Pearl. The cost of an interest in the Kingdom is renunciation. Let the merchantman sell all his goodly pearls and buy this. It is the bargain of life.

Seventh, the Drag-net. Here is the consummation of the Kingdom, the final casting up of accounts. "So shall it be in the end of the world."

The scene comes vividly before us. As the Lord teaches from the prow of the little boat, his eyes fall upon a company of fishermen drawing in their net. The white flash and ripple on the surface of the water, here and there, give token of the vain struggle of the captives. They are drawn in slowly, surely, irresistibly, until at length the fishermen sit upon the shore dividing the spoil.

The interpretation is plain: The net is that divine force in the world which makes for truth and righteousness in the name of Christ. Call it the Church, if you will; or let it stand for personal righteousness. No matter; this power is the Kingdom, which controls the destinies of men and nations. The sea is the world; the shore is eternity; the fishes are the children of men.

*Observe, first, The net is in the sea.* Thanks be to God! In this we perceive his purpose of salvation. He loves the rebellious race. He wants souls. All history is to be interpreted in the light of that proposition. Here is the meaning of the Evangel: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head"; which was the casting of the net into the sea. Here is the meaning of the Call of Abraham. At a time of great spiritual declension, when it seemed as if truth and righteousness must perish from the earth,

it pleased God to select a man in Chaldea to be the father of a "chosen people," chosen not to special privilege so much as to special responsibility; for to this family of Abraham was entrusted the duty of keeping the Oracles and handing down the Messianic prophecies to succeeding generations until the Day Star should arise with healing in his wings. And here is the meaning of the Temple, with all its elaborate ceremonial system. It was impossible to behold from afar the smoke rising from the brazen altar of sacrifice without perceiving that God was at work, saving men.

This was, also, the meaning of the Advent. God had not forgotten to be gracious; his energy of love was in the world like the drag-net in the sea. Break forth into singing, O herald angels, for God hath sent forth his message of good-will toward men!

And this is the deep significance of the Cross. God is drawing the world. "He so loved it." He hath made bare his arm for the deliverance of the ruined race. Hard work, this drawing of the net, a grievous burden even to the strong Son of God.

And the Church itself is an expression of the same energy. It is the fulcrum of the lever wherewith God is lifting the world into the eternal light. "Go ye," said the Master, "and evangelize! In my name save the world!"

As he walked once beside the sea, he came upon a group of fishermen washing their nets. All night they had toiled and taken nothing. He bade them launch out into the deep and let down their nets again, and, lo! they enclosed a miraculous draught. Whereupon he said to them, "Fear not; from hence-

forth ye shall catch men." And they forsook all and followed him. This is the apostolic commission—the commission which our Lord lays upon all his "sent ones" that labor together in the drawing of the net. They share with their Master the toil and glory of saving the world from sin.

*Observe, second, the net enclosed a great multitude of fishes.* And again, blessed be God! On one occasion a man came to Jesus asking, "Are there few that be saved?" His answer was, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate"—the word here rendered "strive" is literally "agonize"—"for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life; and few there be that find it." This was true at the time it was spoken; but it was not true when Watts made his paraphrase:

"Broad is the road that leads to death,  
And many walk together there;  
But Wisdom shows a narrow path,  
With here and there a traveler."

At the time of the ascension of Christ there were only one hundred and twenty men and women who, gathered upon the mountain-top, looked upward in tearful farewell. Few indeed were those who, as yet, had found the narrow way. But, ere a fortnight had passed, Pentecost came and the descent of the Spirit, and thousands were gathered in. And there was thenceforth no possibility of arresting the momentum of the gospel. The kings of the earth did set themselves and the rulers took counsel together: "Kindle the fagots!" they cried. "Sharpen the



sword! Bring forth the lions! We will make an end of this sect of the Nazarene." But the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church. The net was in the sea and destined to enclose the multitudes. To-day there are hundreds of millions who love and worship Christ. In heaven there is "a great multitude which no man can number." John saw them, with their faces turned toward the throne whereon was the Lamb; he heard their voice like mighty thunderings and the roll of the ocean, singing, "Worthy art thou to receive honor and power and glory and dominion; for thou hast saved us out of every nation and kindred and people and tribe, and hast washed our robes and made them white in thy blood!"

Yet how much remains to be done. The net is not filled. It is recorded that, after the crucifixion, Peter said to his fellow disciples, "I go afishing"; and they said, "We also go with thee." One morning early, as they were toiling in their boats, Jesus appeared on the shore; but they knew him not. He called, "Children, have ye any meat?" They answered, "No." And he said, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship." They did so and were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Thus do we toil as the Lord's fishermen in these last days, making naught by water-hauls; and from the shore yonder comes the voice, "Launch out! Cast the net upon the right side!" He would have us undertake larger things. The salvation of the world waits on our slow methods. O for a lofty spirit of enterprise! "All power," said Jesus, "is given unto me"; and that power is at our command if, with the abandon of entire consecration, we hold ourselves ready to toil and triumph with him.

*Observe, third, the net encloses all sorts of fishes.* The Church is a mixed company; therefore the world thrusts out its lip and points a derisive finger. Yet what else could be looked for, since the net "gathers of every kind"? The word of invitation is addressed to all sorts and conditions of men: "Come"; "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden"; "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye"; "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come: and whosoever will let him take the water of life freely." God is no respecter of persons. Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. The cross was raised on a hilltop; and its arms are stretched out in universal appeal. The words of the gospel are large words, "all," "whoever" and "whosoever."

Not only so; the church doors are open to all. "The Kingdom is preached and every man presseth into it." Each is responsible for his own confession of faith. It is not without significance that there was a traitor in the apostolic circle. So in the visible church there will ever be some who are self-deceived and some, alas, who are wilful deceivers. The tares and the wheat grow together until the harvest.

It is true that discipline must be administered in flagrant cases; but who is sufficient unto these things? God alone looketh on the heart. A man who had grown old as an official member of the church, was accused of a grievous sin. The evidence seemed irrefutable. He was summoned before the session; there was an appalling array of circumstantial proof. One witness in particular, acknowledged complicity with him. Urged to make confession, he refused,

persisted in his plea of innocence, was found guilty and excommunicated. The man lived on, shunned by his fellows, burdened with shame. When dying, he was visited by his pastor, who exhorted him to make confession, that he might go with a clear conscience to meet God. He said, "I have no confession to make; you have grievously wronged me, but I blame you not. I shall meet you presently at the Judgment and there, in the light of God's countenance, I will repeat my answer; I am innocent!" And before the grass had grown upon his grave, the chief witness against him was moved by remorse to admit that she had perjured her soul. The justice of all earthly courts is imperfect, God alone can enter the sealed chambers of the heart. Let us, therefore, be charitable one to another. The world may deride the church for harboring weak and staggering souls; but we are all too fallible to usurp the judicial functions of Omniscience. We can afford to wait.

"Cross her hands humbly,  
As if praying dumbly,  
Over her breast;  
Owning her weakness,  
Her evil behaviour,  
And leaving with meekness  
Her sins to her Saviour."

*Observe, fourth, the net is ever being drawn toward the shore.* God's power moves onward with a mighty sweep, enclosing men and nations, bearing them surely, irresistibly, through time to eternity. It is a beneficent force; and those who are least in accord with its benign purposes are still enmeshed in them. Vainly do they struggle, like fishes in the net. All

are influenced by the gospel, whether they will or not. God exempts no man, however bitter and rebellious, from the constraint of his kind providence. The net moves onward, onward to the shore.

And on that shore occurs the final reckoning. Men may argue as they will concerning the great problem of destiny; the Scriptures have but one voice as to the ultimate separation of the righteous and the wicked. We who profess to follow Christ must take him at his word concerning this matter. "His fan is in his hand and he will thoroughly purge his floor." The wheat and the tares must grow together until the harvest, when the tares shall be bound into bundles and burned, and the wheat shall be gathered into the garner (Matt. 13, 30). The same truth is set forth in the figure of the shepherd folding his flock; he shall divide the sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. To those he shall say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"; and to these, "Depart from me" (Matt. 25, 31-46). And again in the parable of the virgins; all go together to the festal hall, bearing their lighted lamps; but there they divided; the wise pass in and rejoice at the wedding; the foolish remain without, knocking and crying in vain, "Lord, Lord, open unto us!" (Matt. 25, 1-13).

The lesson is this: Let each look to himself, that he be counted worthy of eternal life. All are under the power of the gospel, but all are not saved. All are children of privilege, but privilege means responsibility. The gospel is an atmosphere in which all

men move; but if we would live, we must breathe it. Strive, therefore, to enter in. The true "striving" is that which lays hold on Christ as a personal Saviour. The line of final cleavage is faith in him. Faith is the word of destiny. We have no right as Christians to reason for ourselves as to the issues of life. God has spoken; "He that believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved, and he that believeth not \_\_\_\_\_."

## “IN HIM YE BEN FYLLED.”

“And ye are complete in him.”—Col. 2, 10.

The Church at Colosse had been founded by Paul, and he was profoundly interested in its welfare. A messenger came to him, during his imprisonment at Rome, to say that ravening wolves had entered the fold. On the one hand, there were Gentile perverts who corrupted the Gospel in a vain effort to harmonize it with current philosophies; and on the other, there were Judaizers who insisted that faith in Christ was insufficient unless accompanied by conformity to the ritual observances of the Old Economy. To both these forms of heresy the Apostle makes answer that Christ alone is sufficient.

The only heresy is anti-Christ. There is no danger if we cleave fast to him. One cannot have a wrong creed if he receives the word of Christ as ultimate in all matters of faith. One cannot go wrong if he receives the precepts of Christ as a final rule of conduct and follows in his steps; as it is written, “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.”

All that is necessary in order to a well-rounded character is to be found in Christ. He is himself the fulness of the Godhead bodily; we are complete in him; or as Wycliffe quaintly puts it, “In him ye ben fylled.” He is our Prophet; as such his doctrine is

to be received without demur. He is our Priest; as such, at the redemptive altar, he prepares our method of approach to God. He is our King; as such he dominates our walk and conversation, his will being our law. As Prophet, Priest and King, he is our satisfying portion; first, last, midst and all in all.

*The one thing necessary at the outset, to the completeness of the spiritual man, is Life.* But what is life? Is it to breathe, and eat, and sleep? Then is a man fellow to the ox and horse, to birds and creeping things. Then is he rightly defined to be “a stomach and its appurtenances.” But life is something more.

Is it then to have part in the social organism, to mingle in the strife of the market-place, to love and hate, to covet and hoard, to laugh and make merry, to climb the ladder and push others down? Is this to live? If so, it is a serious question whether or no life is worth living. If this were all, man is indeed but “a poor player, who frets and struts his little hour upon the stage and then is seen no more.” Nay, there is something further still.

Let us have the definition of Holy Writ; “This is life eternal, To know God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.” We have a divine birthright, are endowed with divine energies and destined to an eternity of communion with God. This was the gracious purpose of our creation; but sin, like a wild boar, ravaged our garden of delights. And the only-begotten Son of the Father came to restore it. We realize our manhood in him; as he said, “I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly.” He, as Mediator between the finite and the Infinite, is the vital point of contact between



the soul and God. To touch God in Christ is to be thrilled through and through with life.

We journey on, burdened with our sins, wondering, questioning, doubting, denying, until the Son of Man meets us as he met Thomas and we stretch forth our fingers and put them into the wounds of his hands, crying, "My Lord and my God!" Then life begins; henceforth our conversation must needs be in heaven where he dwelleth. We are in the world, yet not of it. Our life is hid with Christ in God. We have found a new secret of life which expresses itself thus: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

*The second thing necessary to the completeness of manhood is Peace.* For by nature we are at variance with God, with ourselves, with our fellow men and with everything about us.

We are at enmity with God. It should have been possible for us, as it was for Adam, to walk and talk with God in the cool of the day. But something has gone wrong, so that we are alienated from God. The comfort has gone out of our souls. God calls us by name and, like Adam, we are afraid and hide ourselves from him.

We are at odds, also, with ourselves. "A man is his own worst enemy." We cheat ourselves, wrong and overreach ourselves, cut ourselves like the demoniac among the tombs, and ultimately kill ourselves; since sin is in its nature suicidal. He is a fortunate man who has never come to a place of disappointment and remorse, where he cried, "I hate myself!" who has never lain awake in the night-watches, his conscience pointing a gaunt finger at him and crying, "Shame upon thee!"

We are at enmity also with our fellow men. The Golden Rule should be the standard of human conduct; but selfishness controls us. The rule is, “Let every man look upon his own things.” We walk among the suffering and dying, with hands stretched out on every side and voices appealing for help; and we are ever seeking our own.

But into this world of universal strife and hatred comes the Prince of Peace, bearing a flag of truce. His purpose is to reconcile a man with God; and this he does by vindicating law in the expiation of sin. One who is sensible of sin, is ever troubled by “a certain fearful-looking-for of judgment.” He is like those miners of Cornwall who, working in shafts beneath the sea, hear ever the rumbling of the troubled waters above them. To dull one’s conscience against the law of retribution is but a poor subterfuge. It is the part of a coward to cry “Peace! peace!” when there is no peace. But Christ, the Mediator, stands with one hand in the Father’s and the other outstretched to us, desiring to bring us into a sweet and eternal at-one-ment with God.

And Christ reconciles a man with himself. Peace of conscience is one of his most gracious gifts. Not that a Christian may count himself to have apprehended, as though he were already perfect; but he is sensible of a right purpose. He knows that his past sins are forgiven and that, with much slipping and stumbling, he is trying to follow in his Master’s steps. And he may say with the utmost candor and humility, as Isaac Watts did when dying, “I thank God that as I close my eyes it matters not to me whether I shall open them on earth or in eternity, since the

word of the Master has come to me, 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.'

He reconciles us also with our fellow men. His Gospel is the very antithesis of selfishness. He who delivers us from the spirit of bondage and enables us to say "Abba Father," teaches us also that all men are brethren in him. This is the manifesto: "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth and good will among men!" I am my brother's keeper. The Good Samaritan is my exemplar. It devolves upon me in pursuance of the Gospel to do good, as I have opportunity, unto all men.

*One thing more is necessary to the fulness and completeness of spiritual life and character, to wit, Power. These three, Life, Peace and Power; and the greatest of these is Power.*

A man is at his very best and noblest when longing to make his life tell for God's glory and the welfare of his fellow men. A gravestone with an elaborate epitaph is of little moment. A triumphal arch is no better, since it soon crumbles into dust. The pyramids of the Pharaohs yield sooner or later to the tooth of time and rasure of oblivion. But one thing abides, Influence. Here is the magnificent power of an immortal man. The soul can reach no loftier height than in the prayer of Moses; "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it!"

Our life is a bundle of energies, but latent for the most part. No man makes the most of himself,

The average man is a sleeping giant. What matters it that I was created in the likeness of God, if all the lilliputian hopes and purposes of sordid life have bound me? What signifies it that a drop of water has in it the energy of an earthquake, if that energy is forever undeveloped? A living man is no better than a mummy or a graven image, if he does not quit himself like a man.

And O, the waste of power! the squandering of substance! If Louis XVI. is contemned for turning aside from the lofty pursuits of statecraft, and diplomacy to tinker with clocks, what shall be said of the man endowed with immeasurable possibilities of influence who fritters away his life in the pursuit of things that perish with the using? Yet who of us makes the most of his opportunities? There is many a life which ends, like that of poor Chatterton, with the words, “My name is writ in water.”

One of the great purposes of Christ in coming to dwell among men was to teach them how to make the best investment of their energies. He spoke of a kingdom of truth and righteousness which he purposed to establish in the earth, and he invited all earnest souls to turn aside from frivolities to cooperate with him. In pursuit of this great end he came not to be ministered unto but to minister; and he called his disciples to a similar service. *Ich dien* is the princely motto of every transformed life. And to the end that his followers might succeed in this splendid life of service the Lord endued them with his Spirit; he breathed on them saying, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.”

This was the baptism of power. It is a privilege

which belongs to every true Christian as really as the original Twelve. The energy thus conferred has been the transforming factor in history through all the ages. All energy is invisible. We see the wheels moving, but not the Spirit in the wheels. We see the smoke at the cannon's mouth and hear the whistle of the projectile, but the propelling force is not manifest to the senses. So is it with the energy which comes from God and is set forth in the walk and conversation of his people. The kingdom cometh not with observation. A Christian looks like any other man, but he partakes of the dignity of omnipotence, since God is within him and works through him.

It thus appears that Christ supplies our utmost spiritual need. All that the world can bestow is its three shadows; wealth, pleasure and honor. What is wealth but a little yellow dust, which presently we must leave behind us? And what are life's delights but flowers that fade at nightfall?

For pleasures are like poppies spread,  
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed;  
Or like the snow fa's in the river,  
A moment white,—then gone forever.

And what is the world's honor but a mausoleum bearing an indecipherable name? Three breaths, three shadows, three troubled dreams! The world can give no more. But in Christ we have three substances, proof against all time's vicissitudes; life, peace and power. What more would you? There is no more. Here is satisfaction. Here is the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away.

A group of children were talking with each other about the Twenty-third Psalm; “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.” One of them said, “He feeds his sheep”; another, “He drives away the lions”; but the third said thoughtfully, “*He carries them up the hill.*” Here was wonderful exegesis; it was the setting forth of the Shepherd’s love in an all-embracing way. If Christ be ours, living or dying, we shall not want; as it is written, “All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours: for ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”

One practical inference: This truth of our completeness in Christ is intended not only for the nourishment of our faith and the increase of our comfort, but also for the guidance of our conduct. If it is in Christ that we are complete, then in Christ we must abide. We have no life apart from him. Unless we abide in him, we are but fruitless, broken, withered branches, of no use to the Vine, to ourselves, or to the world around us.

But if we abide in him our life shall be fully rounded out; we shall bear many and various fruits, to Christ’s honor and to the benefit of our fellow men. Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control,—all sweet and delectable fruits shall grow, developing by the law of our new nature; and many will sit under the grateful shade and delight themselves in the sweet clusters of a life that shall be “perfect and entire, lacking in nothing.”

O for more of the manifested completeness of the

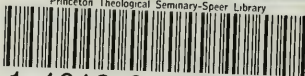
Christian life! Would God we were less angular, irregular, uneven! We may be more harmoniously developed. We are complete in Christ. In him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily. There is no part of his fulness that he withholds from us. The fountain is inexhaustible. We may drink our fill. We are not straitened in him. Of his fulness we all receive, and grace upon grace. There is no limit except our own little cup which we bring to the fountain.

More life, more perpetual peace, greater power, —are ours, but only in Christ, and only to be had by abiding in him. They will be given as we keep his commandments and especially his one great commandment of love one to another. We are under no narrow and confining statute, like the Mosaic law; but under a charter of liberty sealed with the blood of Jesus, in whom we are complete.





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