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THE MEMORIAL PULPIT.—VOL. I.

CHURCH WORK:

TWENTY-SIX SERMONS

PREACHED IN THE

PRESBYTERIAN MEMORIAL CHURCH,

MADISON AVENUE AND FIFTY-THIRD STREET, N. Y.,

BY

CHAS. S. ROBINSON, D.D.,

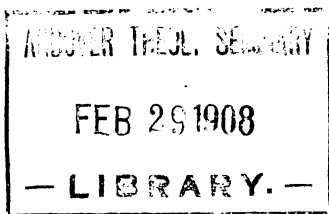
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PREFACE.

THESÉ sermons are neither occasional nor selected. They are the actual rehearsal (once a week) of a half-year's pastoral work.

They are published first in pamphlet, and now in book form, because it is humbly hoped that what would do good here, might be prospered elsewhere ; and because those who heard them wished to keep them in permanent shape.

It is expected that each six months, for the present, will complete a volume in the series.

I dedicate them to my own people, in sincere thankfulness that they will be welcome.

CHAS. S: ROBINSON.

New York City: 57 East 54th St.,
July 1, 1873.

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The Gospel no Shame.

"So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."

—ROMANS I: 15, 16.

LOOKING, as we must from long education and habit, upon the religion of Jesus Christ as the principal source of human blessing, civil and personal, we can hardly appreciate the necessity of so formal an announcement as this in the text.

The Apostle Paul, in inditing a letter, and promising a visit, to the imperial capital, takes occasion to say he is not ashamed to preach a sermon there upon the plan of salvation as revealed in the Scriptures.

Very well: and we find ourselves ready to ask—why should he be? We do not gain any adequate notion of the fine moral heroism he here exhibits, until we put ourselves in his place, as he was at the time when he uttered the words. The intensity of their meaning is centred in the mention of the city where the gospel message would be such a surprise. Let this simple declaration be written upon the dark background of Roman lordliness and lust, Roman intelligence and intolerance; and then it will be flung into bold relief, and start forth into its own peculiar sublimity and power.

I.—It is worth while, for a few moments, to trace out these characteristics, before we seek to draw our lessons of practical good.

1. Remember that at this time the Italian empire was

dominant among the nations, in actual *supremacy* the mistress of the political world. Throned upon her seven hills, that proud city, to which this most vigorous letter was going, sat loftily amid all the pomp of royalty and the pageantry of rule. The sway of the government was widely extended, as territory after territory, violently wrested away by fierce conflicts, was added to its dominion. It was questioned nowhere. It could work its wild will all across the planet, and no living thing would dare call it to render account.

Now was there no such thing as fear in the nature of this Apostle? You all know the elemental characteristics of the gospel. It never had any soft words for people in power. When it found a deceitful sycophant, it called him a hypocrite and a viper. When it discovered a false moralist claiming perfection, it did not linger to tell him, with many a suave bend and circumlocution of courtesy, that he might possibly be mistaken, and so politely warn him off from some vague wrath to come. It publicly called him a liar, and asked him how he could hope to escape the damnation of hell. Indeed, when it detected wrong anywhere, it could not wait for the first blow, but struck it at once, and then struck it again—and kept striking. When it met pride, it rebuked it, and then rebuked the man that flattered it. If it suspected avarice, it charged on it its own essential meanness and folly.

Nor in those primitive days did the gospel allow its preachers to take any hints of peril. If it aroused in the arrogant hearts it attacked any malevolent passions or angry malignities, it censured anew the very explosions it fired. In a word, here was a system of belief and practice, a scheme of logic and life, which ran counter to everything distinctively human, because distinctively evil. It did not wait for resistance or even provocation. It delayed for no formal challenge of war. It went straight up to wickedness, and smote it in the face without a word. Was it not brave enough, then, in any man to say, "So as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also!"

2. As to the *vice* in Rome, it would be difficult to find language of sufficient strength to describe it. With no power of control, no truly religious custom or principle, to bind the people to any firm standard of purity or right, the Latin empire became as luxurious as it was learned, as voluptuous as it was supreme. Nothing can be more pitiable than the patent fact that men used the very keenness of high education in inventing new means of pandering to the lowest kinds of licentiousness. The people were sunk under the dominion of dissoluteness and personal wickedness almost indescribable to decent men and women.

It is an adage, as old almost as history itself, "like master, like man." The villas around Naples and Pompeii, where the nobles spent their leisure, were simply brothels of lust. It is perfectly fair to judge the empire in those days by its rulers, central and provincial.

Felix, governor of Judea, was living in shameless adultery with the Drusilla before whom Paul pleaded, in vice so conspicuous that the filthy magistrate fairly trembled when he heard the intrepid Apostle reason of righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come.

And Cæsar, on the throne at Rome itself, seen showily over the whole earth, filling the city with the unconcealed loathsomeness of his licentious court, was such a man as cannot be described. Hyperbole cannot even touch him. Invective has never been able to do his execrable character justice. He was a head and shoulders above all his fellows; and there were giants in those days. He was a monster of iniquity. He might have been mistaken for a fiend loose from hell. In mean malignity, and hatefulness incarnate, he was all that we think of when we pronounce his name for a hissing and proverb. He was *Nero*.

Need we pause, here again, to challenge admiration for this fine show of moral courage, when so sensitive a servant of God declared he was ready to preach the gospel of Christ even in the capital city of such an abominable empire of sin?

3. But we may move forward still another step, and note the superior *intelligence* of Rome. In the intellectual advancement of that educated age, the orators in the Forum, and the scholars in the Hall, led the civilized world. Eloquence, literature, and science, find even now no worthier models than are furnished by classic Rome under Augustus and the Antonines. How do you imagine that a new religion, proclaimed thus far only by a few fishermen from Galilee, and urged now by a tent-maker from Tarsus, was going to be received by the pedants in the porches of that learned city?

As for vain philosophy, and silly speculation, there was no end of it. From the buoyant character of the old Greek mind, we come at once in the history to the Latin comparative manliness and stability. We know Rome was in some few respects better than Athens; and yet Rome was bad enough to command all commiseration. The precincts were filled with academies of science, falsely so called. Stoics and Epicureans vied in proclaiming the intangible merits of their opposing systems. These kept singing up and down the gamut of their inharmonious scales. Never agreeing, save in their hatred to what was arrayed against both, they made common cause, with mutual alliance to resist the attack of truth, and waged energetic warfare upon it.

Who has any idea that such magnificent masters in metaphysics as these could be prevailed upon to even test the argumentative claims of a gospel, the very first doctrine of which was that concerning the resurrection of the ashes in their urns into new life hereafter? It happens that the elemental characteristics of the New Testament faith are such as to render it always unwelcome to the learned and scientific. It puts such a small estimate on mere human attainment and power.

No man understood this better than the Apostle Paul. He had been educated at the feet of Gamaliel, and he remembered how little good it did him now. It was no embassy of compliment his letter was going upon. His message would

enter the schools of philosophy unasked, and thunder its censure. In the moment it detected intellectual arrogance and dialectic pride, it certainly would run directly up to it, and across it, and harrow it into strips, even though it rested upon the luxury of imperial patronage, and cooled itself complacently beneath the very shadow of Cæsar's palace.

Ah, indeed, it was a brave thing for a man, who evidently knew what he was talking about, to say—"So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also, for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ!"

4. But this is not all. We are to add to it an understanding of the *intolerance* of Rome. The laws of the twelve tables forbade and condemned all forms of worship, and schemes of doctrine, inconsistent with what we now term mythology—the standing religion of those days, when Jupiter and Juno, Venus and Mars, Cupid and Mercury, were deemed the deities for a human soul to reverence.

They did tolerate Judaism for a while, and after a struggle, in Judea, even after it became a Roman province. Paul had been reared a Jew. But the only reason for Roman indulgence of Hebrew faith was the utter inability of escaping the necessity of it. The empire was too large and too unwieldy for the authorities to keep armed forces throughout its length and breadth. Without these to coerce the nation, the Jews would not forsake their ritual. The Romans opposed it. They tore down the temple. They burned swine's flesh upon the holy altars. They crucified the priests. But all to no purpose.

Moreover, these mercenary conquerors were in want of money. All the world over, Jews were rich. And it was not long before the imperial treasurers discovered that to deprive the Jews of their old religion was to break them all down at once, put an end to their prosperity, destroy entirely their power of productiveness. So they lost the tribute. Crucifixion of Israelites, though exceedingly delightful, grew costly. Silencing the evening psalms at sacrifice was really the poor

est of all investments of imperial energy, when what they needed most was mere shekels of gold. So at last they bore with Judaism, and sullenly suffered the robed servitors to proceed with the regular oblations. But they hated the entire system, and loathed its proselytism unutterably.

Much more, then, did they hate Christianity, and detest a Christian Jew. Judaism had age to recommend it. The Romans always revered anything venerable. But Christianity was new and unsettled, and in many places, a little away from Palestine, unknown. Judaism had friends. It had been for many creditable years the established religion of a positive nation. The people had clung to it, as the faith of their fathers, with a tenacity of hold, and an energy of affection, which of itself won a sort of regard. Christianity had nothing behind it. It was the faith of only a few, and they were not very steadfast. Judaism was grand and attractive in its external forms, and rejoiced in the magnificent parade of a splendid temple ritual. Christianity was severe in the ruggedness of its unadorned simplicity.

All these differences made the religion of Christians more distasteful to Romans than even that of the Jews, which they hardly endured. And over and above these, there were elemental peculiarities in it that forced it to run exactly counter to everything that was Roman in thought and feeling. In all of the various governments in this world wherein aristocracies hold sway the popular sentiment is subtle and irresistible, that every movement must be judged according to the social and political position of those who organize and lead it. Now the Romans were told that *Jesus Christ was the head, the sum, and the centre of this new system.* And any one had a right to ask—who is this *Jesus*? The answer would certainly give offence.

Christ was a Jew: even then had begun the mad prejudice of ill-feeling toward that unhappy people, which for so many long years since has wounded and wasted them. Moreover, he came from Nazareth: and even his own nation regarded

that village contemptuously, and made a by-word of it— ‘Can any good come out of Nazareth?’ Moreover, he was of emphatically low life there, the son of a mere builder; and the Romans of all the world looked disdainfully upon those of plebeian origin, or such as followed a trade. Furthermore, he had no friends. His family disowned him. His neighbors tried to throw him down the precipice as a criminal. Even poor despised Nazareth for once forgot its nothingness, and erected its tremendous public opinion into dignity high enough to declare it despised *him*. Moreover, Jesus was now dead, and could in person no longer plead his own claims. It is always hard to apotheosize a hero who is actually in his grave, unless the crowd are led by another, a better hero still. Here the case was complicated by the shameful manner in which Jesus had been disposed of. Crucified between two malefactors, he seemed to those proud patricians as much of a malefactor as either of the others. He had met the most ignominious end a Jew or a Roman could know. And really, in all those early times, it was about as hard to persuade men to accept a crucified Christ, as it would be now to make them believe in a Lord of Glory who had been recently hung for treason.

These were all reasons for an expectation in the mind of the Apostle Paul, that any message he might offer would set on fire the intolerant rage of the whole empire. Judaism was bad enough; Christianity was unendurable. We cannot help being impressed, therefore, with the noble spectacle of manhood he presents, when he tells those people, I am “ready to preach” even to you, “for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ!”

II.—It does not seem necessary now to lead this analysis on any further. Our lesson of instruction will be seen to be as simple as it is important. Are there none, in these days of ours, who get ashamed of the gospel of Christ? Feeble were its advocates then; many and strong they are now. Narrow was its reach then; the world knows all about it now.

For more than eighteen centuries this letter to Rome has been read throughout Christendom. And not everybody loves it.

Do we never hear of new measures proposed—legislation, education of the masses, ingenious moral reform—all proffered as means of regeneration of the race, as if the old faith once delivered to the saints were dead? Why is this? Are our times better or worse than those? Is power more heavily entrenched? Is vice more violent? Is learning more audacious? Is even scepticism more intolerant? Is there any reason for a parliamentary vote, through a frightened Christendom, of want of confidence in the gospel of Jesus?

For remember Paul succeeded at Rome. He established a fine church there. He had saints even in Cæsar's household. That "man of three cubits height," as Chrysostom calls him, "became tall enough to touch the third heaven." He made his message to sound in their ears with the loftiness of Isaiah, the devotion of David, the vehemence of the haggard Ezekiel, and the sublimity of John: and over and above these, with a stroke and a ring that was his own, which, while it comprehended them all, transcended them all, and gave to his form of address a living energy and power that has never found its equal in the teachings of man. There was no secret in all this. Paul was a preacher of such lighting and flame, simply because he bore as the burden of his embassy a gospel which itself was fire.

Oh, let the church of the living God learn here her lesson! A pure gospel is the instrument of her working, and the insurer of her success. The growth of the cause at Rome was only the type of all true growth in the earthly kingdom of God. Rome has fallen from her seven hills, and all the trophies of her former greatness have faded: even the memories of her glory have "gone glimmering back amid the dream of things that were." And Paul, too, lies silent in his martyrrest, and no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. But his theme of speech, his instrument of mastery, yet lives.

The gospel is "still achieving, still pursuing." And empire yields to the mightier powers that be, when a soul is truly converted unto God.

While the world stands, and poor weak human nature continues to be what it is, I suppose, there will always be those who shrink away from the constant reiteration of the invitation which God has sent to our dying race. Some ribald tongue has given a nick-name to evangelical preachers; he says they belong to the—*come, poor sinner, come*—style of orators. Well—is there any need of entering violent denial of that? Is it best to be quite ashamed of the gospel of Christ? Yet ministers take many a predilection, consciously or unconsciously, from their audiences. If our churches become tired of hearing their preachers say—*come, poor sinner, come*—it is quite possible the preachers will say it less; and meantime less of the sinners will come.

It behooves the churches to stand by us in the simplicities of the faith. Men are just *Romans everywhere*; and the same spirit which Paul had to meet is found in this city where we dwell. Call it by what name you will, it is as intolerant and uncompromising as ever. People do not like to hear about Christ crucified to save miserable sinners. *And yet that truth was what did the work in Rome.* They wish discussions concerning Geology and Genesis—disquisitions about the intermediate state—arguments as to the Bible in the common schools—and essays disclosing methods of high moral culture—with now and then a patriotic oration on the eve of a parade.

If the churches second this demand, the men in the pulpits are human; and the standard of gospel fidelity will be perilously lowered. By and by the clamor will force its purpose, and a new and willing babbler will come at the call. Then the ordinary ministrations of the sanctuary will be like the entertainments of a Lyceum. The crowd will applaud, the choirs will sing, the players on instruments will be there. But the days will pass harvestless and unprospered.

But once let the mind and the heart of the church be

filled with anxiety for souls, and the ministry will be held up to its work. For this we need, all alike and together, to pray more and labor more in fraternal counsel with each other. In the air around us we must learn, like soldiers on a battle-field, to distinguish between the sweet sighings of the forest, soothing us to sleep, and the awful cries of pain uttered by our wounded comrades dying in the midnight. Oh, for more spirituality in our life, more fervor in our speech, more confidence in our message, more glorying in the cross of Christ!

Talk about a minister's taking charge of a new church! Believe me, in a very important sense, the church takes charge of a minister also. He becomes very much oftentimes what he thinks his congregation want him to be. You are to crowd him up, therefore, to his duty. Be sure he knows you want to hear the old, old story. Demand of him, by your silent satisfaction, that he shall never be ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Cause him to understand that there can never be any possible peace or place for him, by night or by day, unless he proclaims the glad news of salvation to perishing souls. Speak to him less of Whitefield's eloquence, and more of Baxter's anxiety.

Ah, think of it! What words those are of Richard Baxter, for a preacher to ponder:—"The Lord knows I am ashamed of every sermon I preach, when I think what I have been speaking of, and who sent me, and that men's salvation or damnation is so much concerned in it. I am ready to tremble lest God should judge me as a slighter of His truths, and of the souls of men; and lest in my best sermon, I should be guilty of their blood!" Wise alarm, indeed, is this. He who works under its pressure cannot fail to be a more thoughtful man.

I make the solemn proclamation to-day, in the earliest sermon I preach from the pulpit in this church, of the purpose with which I enter and shall occupy it while it is my privilege here to minister. "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel"—to you who are in New York also—"for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."

There is no city so grand, no audience so intellectual, no community so cultured, as to have outgrown its need for a pure gospel earnestly and faithfully presented. I am well aware, my Christian friends, how pitifully like bathos and anti-climax it seems, for him who now speaks to quote, as his inaugural announcement, these words of the great Apostle. And yet, if you will take the entire verse together, you will note that there is an exceedingly elastic form of expression in it, which relieves me of presumption. Paul said—"as much as in me is." Anybody can say that, who knows his work as a minister.

When this same apostle told the Corinthians that it had pleased God to save them which believe "by the foolishness of preaching," he did not by any means desire them to understand that preaching would become more Scriptural or more effective in proportion as it became more weak, more diluted, or more sensationally silly. One does not necessarily grow more puerile or foolish by growing more simple. It is not even possible for a preacher to be foolish or tame, as long as his sermons contain the full, true gospel, in its close relations to his hearers and himself.

I cannot conceive it my office to pursue phantoms, or hunt after shadows. To lift Christian faith, and to convert souls, is my errand, from this day forward—the same I have cherished through these years.

Sometimes men become errorists and fanatics by merely condescending to meet such in conflict. I conceive that our pulpits at the present day have higher aims than this, and safer tasks. The air in the enchanted ground of speculative inquiry is bewildering and full of intoxication. It will not do to let license have its own way, when short logic can resist it. But the chase need not go far into the shadows. Some dangers may tranquilly be left to Providence to avert. The deep things of God, the sublime mysteries of his dealing with men, the far-off and dim realities of the future world—all of these will keep if we let them alone for the leisure of eternity. It

were well for us if we were never called upon to forsake the plain of our own level, but could stand still before these great revelations of divine mystery, which loom up like mountains in the distance; and recognizing their position, gaze reverently upon their majestic proportions, yet leave them alone, unexplored though acknowledged, with their summits wrapped in clouds.

Still, if unabashed Error clammers up, should not Truth follow fearlessly, even though she wears, like the prophet, her reverent veil? Yes—sometimes. But let not even Truth exceed her mission. If the unhallowed footstep dares to enter the cloud-presence unbidden, then let Truth cover her eyes from the blaze, and return. Jehovah will vindicate his own upon the mount that should not be touched!

Oh, that the days might return to the church, when God's Spirit acknowledged his own message, and accompanied his own word! Oh, that there might come a baptism upon the ministry and the people, which should fill them with the Holy Ghost, which should humble pride and hush reinless ambition; which should curb the unhallowed intellect, and check shadowy speculation, and make us all better satisfied with the clear faith of the fathers, and the simple themes of the gospel! Then would the Sun of righteousness rise upon us with healing in his wings. Then would all darkness flee away, and not a shadow rest upon the path along which God's kingdom is coming—save now and then the shadow of the Great Rock in a weary land!

ASHAMED OF JESUS.

JESUS ! and shall it ever be,
A mortal man ashamed of thee ?
Ashamed of thee, whom angels praise,
Whose glories shine through endless **days**.

Ashamed of Jesus ! sooner far
Let evening blush to own a star ;
He sheds the beams of light divine
O'er this benighted soul of mine.

Ashamed of Jesus ! that dear Friend
On whom my hopes of heaven depend !
No ; when I blush—be this my shame,
That I no more revere his name.

Ashamed of Jesus ! yes, I may,
When I've no guilt to wash away :
No tear to wipe, no good to crave,
No fears to quell, no soul to save.

Till then—nor is my boasting vain—
Till then I boast a Saviour slain !
And oh, may this my glory be,
That Christ is not ashamed of me !

The Common Humanity.

"The rich and poor meet together : the Lord is the maker of them all.

—PROVERBS 22: 2.

AMONG all the distinctions we meet in daily life, those produced and fostered by wealth are the most frequent and most inveterate. Gold makes the foolish man wise, and the weak man influential. There is no consideration for a poor philosopher, there is no beauty to a dowerless maid. "The rich man's wealth is his strong city; the destruction of the poor is their poverty."

So says this wise hard world. Hence the text surprises us, when heard for the first time. Everybody knows it must be a quotation. Most persons would quite shrewdly conjecture that it came from the Bible, which has a habit of saying such impracticable things. It seems slightly agrarian. It appears as if it might work revolution, if injudiciously handled.

We can more easily deal with and even reconcile all other differences among us than these. Men are unlike in stature. But talents are respected. Napoleon Bonaparte and Isaac Watts were both men of smallest size. Men are unlike also in gifts. The intellect ranges all along the scale from the weakling to the sage. But moral worth is respected. And we receive the histories written by our fathers, and peruse in reverent regard the books of science compiled in the ages which have gone. We always have some way of relieving the anomaly. George Washington was neither learned nor intel-

lectual ; and Richard the Lion-hearted could hardly sign his own name.

So in many other particulars ; we differ, but we agree. But in the matter of mere riches we agree to differ. The possession of a large or small estate fixes chasms of division in our ordinary association, at times, almost as impassable as that between Dives and Lazarus in the other world.

Against all this, Christianity is diligently striving. It asserts that there is one line of common humanity running through the race. Our text is an embodiment of the whole Bible on this point. Let us come to the study of it unprejudiced. Let us light up its meaning a little with a few illustrations. Then you will see it is the plainest sort of truth.

I.—In the first place, let us remark that the rich and poor meet together *in their ordinary allotments of life*.

That is to say, all these surroundings of competence or narrowness, luxury or necessity, everything indeed by which the fact is determined as to whether they are to be reckoned rich or poor, are settled by one common Arbiter and Sovereign of them all.

I suppose there are some people who will always need reminding that there is no such thing as chance in human affairs. The usual apportionments of privilege are oftentimes singularly and mysteriously adjusted among men. But "the Lord is the maker of them all." That is, he not only created them all, but he dowered them all. He made one man rich and another man poor. We have one Father, but the children are not all alike. It is not money which is the root of all evil. Inspiration never said that. It is the sinful *love* of money which has done all the mischief. That, God never gave any man. Divine wisdom has constituted human society pretty much in essential things what it is. But the perverse ingenuity of fallen man has quite disturbed many of the balances and compensations.

Some matters are better as they are. These grades of possession, divine wisdom has established from the beginning.

There is not a trace or evidence of communism in all the orderly government of God. And nothing but a wicked abuse of privileges ever makes them in any respect unnatural or oppressive. It is quite likely there are virtues of forbearance, on the one hand, and of benevolence, on the other, which are better secured now than under any different order of arrangement.

Here, then, is where we all meet on the broad plain of almighty purpose. My father, perhaps, laboriously acquired property. When dying, he bequeathed it to me. Your father, it may be, was in debt all his life. When he died, he left you only an inheritance of unpaid obligations, which (for mere family honor's sake) have kept you positively poor from the first moment you drew breath. Now why should I lift myself above you? I am no better, because my parents were wealthy, any more than I would be worse if I were struck by lightning. My education may be finer and higher. But yours would have been the same, if you could have afforded it. I am simply your equal in every respect in which I am a man; and you are mine. Neither of us was consulted as to the lot in which we should be born, or the result might have been different. God gives one person opulence; God gives another person poverty. There they meet in the arrangements of God.

II.—In the second place, the rich and the poor meet together in *the ordinary characteristics of their nature*.

By this I mean, we are all human in our wants and our weaknesses, in our faults and our failings, in our whims and our frailties, in our ambitions, pains, pleasures, in our temptations, and our falls before them.

It is one of the most natural things in the world for each of us to love to puncture the swelling pride of mere assumption. There is a fierce bad feeling in the human heart that enjoys the spectacle much, when the foibles of people are put in caricature, or even in coarse exhibition. There is a vulgar applause always ready for that public speaker who has a will

and a gift to show up the rich. It would be easy for me now to earn a cheap approval, if I were to indulge in a strain of cutting remark. For everywhere there are those whose hearts are bitter, as well as those whose tongues are sharp. I pander to no taste like this. But it is needful to my purpose of good that I make you see plainly how the possession of mere wealth never lifts a man above, how the inconvenience of poverty never drops a man below, the great common humanity which holds us all. Our bodies, our minds, our homes, our sensibilities, are one and the same throughout.

1. The *body* has the same number of bones and muscles, nerves and sinews, in any of which disease may fasten and pain may centre. No matter what his fortune may be, any man's physical frame is independent of it. He may cringe with suffering, and cry out with aches. He may have an accident, and be mortified with a limp. He may be caught where, despite of his pride, he will shiver, or be hungry. Every one of us dwells in a house of clay. There may be resident within us a thousand infirmities, pestilences, and impurities. The rich and poor meet in this.

2. Nor is our exposure any the less in our *minds*. We have asylums for paupers, and retreats for millionaires. Oh, how sad it seems to think of the lights of reason gone out anywhere! But no adornment of an altar can avail to keep the flame burning on it. There are questions which none of us can answer. There are perplexities of doubt which no wealth can explain, no poverty can resolve. Rich men are sometimes as ignorant as poor men; and poor men are sometimes as obstinate as the rich. There is no height, up to which—there is no depth, down to which—anybody can go, and be rid forever of malevolent passions, silly conceits, and sinful disorders.

3. Our *homes*, likewise, prove that in every characteristic we are simply human. It is said that a man's house is his castle; and no other man can enter it uninvited. Never was a more extravagant mistake. It does well for a conceit in a

poem. But it is not at all true. "None of us liveth to himself." We are dependent on each other. In the intricate mazes of every-day life, we all really serve each other. Let the rich cease to need the poor, and they will sew their own garments, and wait on their own guests. Let the poor imagine they have ceased to need the rich, and we shall soon see who is the humble servant that prefers not to starve.

4. Our *sensibilities* are also the same. In all our joys and sorrows we are alike. One day I saw a strong man at the door of a burial vault, where, within marble walls of surpassing splendor, he was laying all that remained to him of the wife of his youth. He shook like a leaf of the aspen which drooped over the railing beside him. His heart was surcharged with impetuous and over-mastering emotion. Another day I saw a similar sufferer, following on foot a coffin to the strangers' corner in the same cemetery, to lay his dead in a monumentless grave. For aught I could discriminate, he shed the same sort of tears in the woeful abandonment of his grief, for his heart had lost likewise all there was to be the light of it. "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin." We are all constituted precisely the same in the tastes, affections, and sympathies, which make us glad or sad, and fill us with joy or mourning.

III.—We pass on to remark, in the third place, that the rich and poor meet together *in their destinies in the common hereafter*.

1. We all meet at the *grave*. One little plot of land there is to-day, somewhere on this planet, which waits to receive each of us in our appointed time within its narrow enclosure. Not a few of us have chosen it for ourselves. No man can help growing thoughtful as he looks upon the slight section of soil, that affecting oblong of earthly space, which before long is sure to become august and solemn as the depository of his dust kept in security for the resurrection. The tomb is the great leveler of the world. "There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary are at rest. There the

prisoners hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and the great are there, and the servant is free from his master. Man dieth and wasteth away, and where is he? He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more."

2. Nor is this the last of it ; we all meet at the *judgment*. The dead, small and great, are to stand before God. The great white throne is already set for them. It is a fixed fiction of ours, even in regard to human justice, that all parties are alike before the common law of the country. But the loopholes through which wealthy offenders are wont to slip unharmed, are lamentably many. And crime grows bold, and passion runs riotously, because of the hoped-for evasion. It may be a thorough novelty to some, and a mighty surprise to others ; but the solemn announcement of the fact is made before all. "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. So then every one of us must give account of himself unto God."

3. Of course, then, we all meet likewise in *eternity*. Somebody has lately said that this little period of human existence always seemed to him like the key-board of a piano ; he did not know what came before the bass ; nor, as he ran his fingers up, did he know what came after the treble ; he was most concerned by what he saw. There is force in the figure ; and a half-truth in the statement. It does not make much matter what came before our birth. It does, however, seem greatly wise to inquire what sort of unseen immortality there is leading on beyond death. It only lies within our province now to say that no distinctions of wealth ever cross the line running between this world and the next. The soul then stands all alone, removed from every power or weakness it had here. It is treated simply as a soul. The awards of that unending future are very impartially to be made. The disclosure of God's glory, as his future residence, will come freely and fully to every believer, with no possible respect of

persons. The sorrows of the lost will have no mitigation of their severity, neither to the poor because of his poverty, nor to the rich because of his wealth. In the careful adjustments of our destinies, such questions will be finally set at rest. "If the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be."

IV.—It is needed, to relieve the melancholy sadness of this picture, that we go on at once to remark, in the fourth place, that the rich and the poor meet together *in their rights under the gospel*.

I use this word, as referring only to the relations they sustain as man to man. No human being, be he rich or poor, has any such thing as rights before the bar of God. He, who is a rebel, has forfeited everything which bears the name. He is an outlaw, and the wrath of God abideth upon him. But divine mercy has been pleased to say that there is forgiveness with God that he may be feared. Grace takes the place of justice. What we have no possible right to receive, is proffered to us in wonderful favor.

In the distribution of this grace of pardon no man stands in another's way. Our thought has at last reached its highest point. It bears now upon our hearts with more reach and relevancy than ever before. We may, perhaps, disregard the fact that God has made us all after one pattern in earthly things. But when it comes to the gospel, we must perforce pause to think. It will never do to pass by those who are our co-heirs in the kingdom. We may not offend the brother for whom Christ died. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism. Let us go over the details once more, for a new rehearsal.

1. *There is the same need in the fallen nature.* We are all one in our sins and pollutions; one in each of our soul-needs—forgiveness, paternal watchfulness, comforts, sympathies, instruction, guidance, entire redemption from guilty purposes and unholy lives. Just the same pride may be found in a poor man's disposition that is found in a rich man's. Some-

times both of them have idols. Sometimes the poor man curses, and sometimes the rich man swears. Sometimes the rich man swindles, and sometimes the poor man steals. Sometimes it is a pauper that is prayerless and godless, and sometimes it is the man who owns millions. And no matter what are the manifestations, the fact remains:—"All are gone astray, there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

2. *There is the same supply furnished in the inexhaustible mercy of a crucified Redeemer.* We are all one in his pity. We are all welcome at the cross. "Whosoever" and "whatsoever" are great words. Yet our Lord used them over and over again to assert the fullness and freeness of his atonement. "Whosoever will, let him come." This is why one of the Apostles calls the gospel "the *common* salvation." This is why Paul wrote to Philemon the master, concerning Onesimus the slave, "Receive him as a brother beloved."

3. *There is the same clear condition annexed to the call.* One must *want* Christ. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden." He seems never to think of worldly position. All the fitness he requireth is to feel our need of *him*. Oh, I think the glory of the gospel lies in this! That withered old beggar, down on the wharf, with no home but the street, no garments but the rags charity gives him, no food but the broken bits he has picked from the gutter, can hear the voice of Immanuel calling him to home, hope and heaven, as plainly as blind Bartimeus at the gates of Jericho. If he simply hungers and thirsts for the gospel, he shall be filled. If he will hear the call, come to repentance and faith, Christ will save him.

4. *There is the same unalterable pledge annexed to the promise.* Christ never mentions how much a man owes or owns, when he says—"Incline your ear and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with *you*, even the sure mercies of David." Some few intensifications of his language are remarkable. He says, "Him that cometh unto me, I will *in no wise* cast out." The

gospel seems to contemplate men as mere bodiless souls. The garments they wear, count for nothing. The consideration people bestow upon each other is alluded to in the Scriptures only as the reason for a warning. There is no royal road to salvation. The entire honor of the Godhead is put into the seal annexed to every proffer of divine grace, to the rich and poor alike.

5. *There is the same fullness of fruition held out in answer to every hope at the last.* There is one, and only one heaven for all the finally saved children of God. The institutions of the church are intended to show the real equality we all shall share in the Father's house with many mansions. I cannot see why we are all so slow in coming to this recognition. One of the most difficult words in the Lord's Prayer is the small pronoun with which it opens. We can easily say "Father," for that commits us to nothing. We can talk about the home, "Heaven," for that is too far away to be compromising. But to speak that little word "Our"—with all its width of revolutionary meaning, and so admit the brotherhood which equals us here, as surely as it will group us hereafter, this is most serious.

"The rich and poor meet together." From what has already been rehearsed before you, you cannot fail to see that this does not mean that they confront each other, or attack each other. This is not a mere duel for money. The word *meet* does not mean encounter or fight. Nor does the text teach that rich and poor are all mixed up with each other; nor that they ought to associate more closely, or cherish more familiar intercourse. Nor does the verse assert that they are alike in gifts, or culture, or manners; nor that they meet in capacities, or in conditions, or even in responsibilities.

What the text does teach is this: that outside of all these particulars just enumerated, the rich and poor have one common ground on which they are equal. They share alike in the need of God's mercy, and in the supply of it. That is to say, the point of contact is religious, and is found in the gos-

pel of Jesus Christ. I choose to put the entire truth into one distinct proposition ; namely, this :—

THERE IS NO PROPERTY-QUALIFICATION WHATSOEVER FOR CITIZENSHIP IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

So I go on quietly to mention a few inferences that do not follow, and then a few that do.

It does not follow that all distinctions of providential condition are insignificant and trivial. Differences which God makes cannot be treated as matters of indifference. What God does, he expects to have noticed. If he bestows more wealth on one man than on another, either by parental bequeathal or personal industry, that man must recognize that he has been singled out for more work, and much wider extensiveness of responsibility. It is a weighty honor to be endowed with the power of being serviceable. "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none ; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise."

Again : it does not follow that the rights of property are oppressive, and may be disregarded. Just the reverse of this is true. When God has given a man the use of wealth, all that God has given him is, so far as other men are concerned, entirely his own by every law of equity or justice.

Now, on the other hand, it does follow from the considerations we have urged, that in all providential arrangements of human life, mutual forbearance and moderation should be the rule of association.

Let the working-classes learn self-respect. Let them carefully discriminate between honest pride of feeling in their calling, and that hateful feeling of spite towards those who pay them for their work. One really can be quite dignified and manly, without putting anybody else down. Jesus of Nazareth chose his lot with the poor. I cannot help thinking he knew that rich people would go to a poor Saviour a great deal quicker than poor people would have gone to a rich one. Let your daily life show, by its candor of consideration, and by its industry of honest purpose, that you have a right to

claim kinship with all whom the Redeemer loved and came to save.

Now to meet the poor in this, let the rich come more than half way. The old proverb had a subtle wisdom in it, when it said—"It is easy for one to go on foot, when he is leading his own horse by the bridle." He could ride, you see! And when all immunities and all privileges are on one's side, he can afford at times to vacate them for the sake of doing good. It is by no means fair to judge of men's essentiality to the world, and sound the fathoms of their manhood by any line of mere counting-house accumulation. One may have great riches, and another may have none. "A man's a man for a' that!"

When we advance with these few simple principles in our right hand, into the sphere of christian relations, and the practical associations of church membership, it ought to be no surprise to any of us to discover that they clear away many of our most perplexing difficulties. Surely, nowhere on the earth do men meet together as they do within the circle of Christ's love. A true christian congregation is a living body. That is the fine picture for us furnished in the gospel of grace. "Now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, *as it hath pleased him.*" You see he has never consulted anybody beforehand concerning the position or endowment he was going to give him. Hence, "the eye cannot say unto the head, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you." We are parts of each other. And if any distinction is to be made, even in smallest particulars, it ought to be in favor of the poor. The rich have many resources; the poor have few. So the verses run on:—"Much more those members of this body, which seem to be feeble, are necessary; and those which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor."

My brethren, the ministry of these two years among you has made little impression as to its meaning and purpose, if

it yet remains to me to assert that I have no revolutionary or sensational propositions to make to you, in this peculiar crisis of our history as a people. We have been permitted, in God's kindness, to erect a new edifice, one of the most beautiful, one of the largest in this great city. We laid the corner-stone in faith; we have laid the cap-stone in joy. We placed before ourselves, before each other, one definite aim in the outset. We planned for a building far more extensive than we needed for our own use. We desired to make the inquiry of God's providence and God's people—*Can the rich and poor meet together?*

In such a community as this, every congregation has its own errand. This is ours. And here we have come in, congratulating one another over the success we have achieved in the earliest stage of our endeavor. The pews are here. Now will they be accepted and filled?

To this there is needed,—first—last—forever—an unbroken faith in God. If this purpose of ours be worthy—may he favor it! If it shall not be for his glory—may he dash it in pieces!

Then, an unbroken faith in manhood of manly men. I do not know how we can defend ourselves, if there should sometime "come into our assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment." But we certainly can hinder ourselves from having *undue* "respect to him that weareth the gay clothing," and we can check our words when we are tempted to say unto him, "sit thou here in a good place," and to say to the poor, "stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool."

Oh, we are just alike before God! The rich are not worse, the poor are not better. The poor are not perfect; the rich can improve. And we can all grow milder and brighter, if we charitably and considerately meet each other in gentle amenities of help, while the rough jostle of life makes us all sigh for the world that lies next to this, and shines just beyond it.

FOR A' THAT.

Is there, for honest poverty,
 That hangs his head, and a' that?
The coward-slave, we pass him by,
 We dare be poor for a' that!
For a' that, and a' that,
 Our toil's obscure, and a' that;
The rank is but the guinea's stamp—
The man's the gowd for a' that.

What though on hamely fare we dine,
 Wear hodden gray, and a' that;
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,
 A man's a man for a' that;
For a' that, and a' that,
 Their tinsel show, and a' that;
The honest man, tho' e'er sae poor,
 Is king o' men for a' that!

A prince can mak' a belted knight,
 A marquis, duke, and a' that;
But an honest man's above his might,
 Guid faith he mauna fa' that!
For a' that, and a' that,
 Their dignities, and a' that,
The pith o' sense, and pride o' worth,
 Are higher ranks than a' that.

Then let us pray that come it may,
 As come it will, for a' that,
That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,
 May bear the gree, and a' that;
For a' that, and a' that,
 It's coming yet, for a' that,
That man to man, the world o'er,
 Shall brothers be for a' that!

Three Promises.

"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."—PSALM 85: 10.

IN the southern waters of the Atlantic was sailing a ship, wearing heavy signals of uttermost distress. The mariners upon another vessel hurried nearer for immediate help, and shouted—What do you need? "*Water, water,*" came back the hail, "we are dying for want of water!" Quick indeed was the answer which went flying over the crests, in a tone of half-vexed surprise—Dip it up, then, in the first bucket you can find!

For the fact was, they were at the very moment in the mouth of the Amazon River, where the stream ran fresh water a hundred and fifty miles wide all around them! It does seem a folly that men would grow maniac with thirst, when tossed on an ocean of relief. Alas! there are men who will die of soul-thirst, when salvation rolls full and free beneath them!

Will you kindly listen to me this morning as I talk familiarly with you concerning three promises of God, made long ago, but fulfilled more lately, in each one of which you and I have the deepest interest? They will all serve to illustrate the text I have chosen. "*Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.*"

I.—In the first place, God engaged to send to this earth a Redeemer for Sinners.

No sooner was the forbidden fruit eaten in the garden of Eden, and so the old covenant of works was broken, than the provisions of a new covenant began to be developed. Men thenceforward were to be treated as dead to the law, being

under its curse, without the true knowledge of their Maker, and all the time growing more and more degradingly polluted with sin. And as the immediate and only relief from such a case, God promised that Christ—an Anointed One—should come as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The Life he should be by his atonement; the Truth, by his word; the Way, by his example. This was definitely pledged at the same historic point of time. So that Adam, as he lost communion with the Father, was offered the companionship of the Son. As he stepped across the threshold of a forfeited Eden, he was bidden to see in the distance the tree-tops of another Paradise, in which Life and Knowledge were both fadelessly blooming within his reach.

Now as this early promise came to be repeated through a lapse of years, it continually grew by a strange accretion of unusual particulars. Christ was to be born in a specified village, and from a specified line of ancestry. A date was set for his advent. His lot in life was described. The reception he would meet from his relatives and nearest friends was foretold. Then his death was indicated, and the place of his burial pointed out. Singular little details, as for example, the companions he should have on the cross, the sparing of his limbs from the strokes which should break theirs, his petitions for the divine pardon of the two malefactors, and the sort of tomb he should be laid in, kept coming to light from one source and another. Then were added a positive profusion of names, and terms, and places, so that the mind of many a devout believer grew alarmed with the fear of possible failure at some point, and actually wondered whether yet all these things would be fulfilled.

Nor was this thing done in a corner. Over and over again was God's own voice heard reiterating the terms of the covenant, as long as he saw fit to hold converse face to face with men. Then the commissioned prophets took up the same theme. Many a haggard old man appeared, suddenly echoing the promise before the people, and quite frequently

annexing to it, under inspiration, some fresh particular to complicate the issue, and render failure more likely. With wild mien, and coarse garments, yet noble with the dignified consciousness that they were bearing messages from high heaven, those strange servants of God, came forth on the stage of life, and asserted their errand with a potent "Thus saith the Lord." Men began to catch the magnetic earnestness of their manner, and to bow before their words. They saw the seer-light in their eyes, and kindled under the flaming energy of their predictions, as they rolled down into the coming time this one glad voice of hope for the future. And the world was hushed to reverence, as these reverberations of prophetic sublimity went beating along among the hills and valleys of history yet to be.

There is enough in all this to make any man thoughtful. We cannot even at this day read such complicated predictions without curiosity. But think, with what an awakened imagination, with what an eager expectancy, all those ancient Hebrews must have held them in mind. With what solicitude they must have put the question we put now, as to whether the promise was thoroughly fulfilled.

The answer with us is very easy. Angel-voices brought the witness to the Shepherds of Judea, and the star shone for the Wise Men's guidance from the East. The Bethlehem anthem evidenced that glory did indeed belong unto God in the highest, for that he had brought peace on earth and goodwill to men. The promised Redeemer came. He came in the line of Judah. He came at Bethlehem-Ephratah. He came at the set time, which Roman poetry and Persian lore remembered. He came accredited again and again by the words from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him!"

Thus every item of complication and perplexity vanished. The covenant was kept. And for eighteen centuries the Christian Church has been challenging cavilers to find even one particular unfulfilled, which was essential to the ancient promise. God's truth had been at stake, his mercy now man-

ifested it. "Mercy and truth were met together; righteousness and peace kissed each other."

II.—Coupled with this there was a second promise; namely, the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Remember that these engagements were the most transcendent conceivable. The Redeemer was God himself. He is called Jehovah. He was the Second Person in the Trinity. The Comforter, also, was God himself. He is called Jehovah. He was the Third Person in the Trinity. Hence two advents of Almighty God were covenanted.

There was no profit in opening a way to man, though it was a way of restoration. He would not walk in it. The fault was never in God's truth when human beings rejected it. Pilate did indeed once ask petulantly: What is truth? But Pilate had no more complaint to make, as he gave Jesus over to crucifixion, than had Saul of Tarsus when he fell blinded before him on the road to Damascus. Truth is the same. It was the same sermon exactly, which men would not heed and hear from Isaiah, that the Ethiopian eunuch, out in the desert seven hundred years later, did hear; and he was saved. The difference in success with the truth always is owing to the presence in it, or the absence from it, of the Holy Ghost. Paul may plant, Apollos may water, in vain. It is God the Spirit who giveth the increase. Personal holiness is distasteful to most men. They need God himself to give them a liking for it, and a disposition to strive after it.

Hence you perceive that the promise of the Holy Ghost was next in momentous importance to the promise of the incarnation. To the intelligible word of revelation must be given a spiritual warmth which would cause it to melt its own way in, when it fell on the soul. To the hammer of argument a spiritual hand must be joined, to enable him, who should wield it, to break the flinty heart in pieces.

A great promise of God, therefore, was added even in the earliest proclamation of the gospel. The Almighty definitely pledged himself to supply all the needed energy and personal

force to the truth, so that it should never altogether fail of making an impression. To be sure, the free agency of each human being was to be respected. In no case was omnipotence going to crush and break its way into any man's heart. But the announcement was clear, that the Spirit should come and strive with all. God was going to set before his creatures the way of life and the way of death. They were to be summoned to choose between them. And then, not to leave the decision to become a matter of indifference, the Spirit of divine grace was to stand by and use all kinds of moral pressure to persuade men to choose life and blessing before cursing and death.

We do not need to quote here the exact terms of this wonderful engagement. Over and over again, under ever-varying and ever-fresh forms of ritual and figures of speech, did all the prophets in turn repeat the promise, which Jehovah himself at least once uttered in person, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh."

Then to crown the covenant, our Saviour put the explicit agreement into terms. He told his disciples that he was going back to heaven. He knew most likely, but he did not inform them, why the Comforter could not be here, as a Person of the Godhead, when he was here. He understood, but they did not, and we do not, why the Third Person of the Trinity would not come until the Second Person returned to the Father's House and sent him.

But this was the promise. And I am sure you know it was most carefully fulfilled. Our Lord seemed, whenever he spoke of it, to esteem it to be the highest and choicest of all the engagements ever made in behalf of the church. For he dwells upon it in his later sayings more than upon any other.

You will readily recall how the fulfilment came about. The Forty Days had passed—that strange mysterious period, during which, after his resurrection, the Redeemer continued to show himself among his disciples, and suddenly disappear, repeating the glowing terms of his final covenant meanwhile.

Then he ascended from the Mount of Olives, near Bethany, while his followers stood excitedly gazing after him into the sky, as if his actual departure was after all a vast surprise.

It had been commanded them that they should remain at Jerusalem until the real descent of the Holy Ghost should be received. They met daily in an upper chamber. There they communed. There they prayed. There they encouraged each other. But no Comforter came. Some wavered. Some doubted. But they clung together. And I find nowhere, in all that early history of the new Church, any spectacle more beautiful than this, as I imagine their patient waiting so long for their Helper to arrive. With no murmuring at delay, with no headlong zeal of rash endeavor, they simply kept the precept.

At last they received their reward. On the day of Pentecost, about ten days after Jesus had left them, there in the apartment, where they had been wont to assemble, a sound as of a rushing wind was heard, and they were baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire !

No track is on the sunny sky,
No footprints on the air ;
Jesus hath gone ; the face of earth
Is desolate and bare.

That Upper Room is heaven on
earth ;
Within its precincts lie
All that earth has of faith, or hope,
Or heaven-born charity.

One moment—and the silentness
Was breathless as the grave :
The fluttered earth forgot to
quake,
The troubled trees to wave.

He comes ! he comes ! that mighty
Breath
From heaven's eternal shores ;
His uncreated freshness fills
His Bride, as she adores.

Earth quakes before that rushing
blast,
Heaven echoes back the sound,
And mightily the tempest wheels
That Upper Room around.

One moment—and the Spirit hung
O'er all with dread desire ;
Then broke upon the heads of all
In cloven tongues of fire !

Thus the word of covenant engagement was kept. Thus this promise, as matchless as it was marvellous, was com-

pletely fulfilled. The Comforter has been on this earth for eighteen hundred years. There are to-day in heaven three thousand human souls, who never will cease to remember that blessed day. Indeed, it will be no mean sight for ourselves some time to see a Pentecost convert, who really heard Simon Peter's sermon. He will know perfectly what we mean, when we say and sing with him, in full reminiscence of the faithfulness of God, "Mercy and truth are met together ; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

III.—The third promise, to which I made allusion in the beginning, comes even closer to us than before. Under the covenant of redemption, God engaged to gather together a new nation, a spiritual people, and redeem them to himself.

Christ turned back the whole current of history, when he announced that Israel was rejected as the kingdom of God. The Jews forfeited everything in that awful moment when they denied the Messiahship of Jesus. Henceforth they were cast out from their old supereminent place of privilege. Now no lines of government, or of race, are respected. The middle wall of partition has been broken down. Gentiles are saved just as easily as Jews. Whosoever will, let him come ! "For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world ; looking for that blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Has this third promise, likewise, been kept? Yes: it is keeping now. The Church of our Redeemer is before you. You can see for yourself. What is termed the Lamb's Bride is out before every eye, "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." It may not seem a very modest thing to say, but this is what the word of inspiration has put on our lips :—"We know that we are of God,

and the whole world lieth in wickedness." There is an organized body of believers in existence this very day. There is a Church visible, and in it a Church invisible. It has a history and a headship. Every one, of all that vast number which have belonged worthily to it, has been sovereignly created anew by the active grace of God. And after all the foolish and ribald talk of the gainsaying world has been exhausted, there yet remains the fact, that this old Church of Christ has numbered with its hosts the noblest names of the nations where the truth has gone.

We are told that an ancient artist being commissioned to make a fine statue for adorning the Capitol, sent for all the most beautiful virgins of Greece. Then he took from each one of them that feature considered the nearest perfection, and blended them all into one matchless form of loveliness. When the marble was completed, each of the modest maidens in that classic land felt she had done her best for her country, and was ennobled by the fame of the service she had rendered.

"Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Only be it understood, he found no feature of attractiveness in those he chose: he gave them the graces they furnished; he adorned them with the beauties they brought.

The ordinance, which assembles us to-day, is our standing memorial of this. The memories of the past, the hopes of the future, are linked with it. The annals and the prophecies meet in one. Martyrs have gone forth from this Table to the stake. Witnesses in by-gone ages have gained strength from its provisions. We claim with these a common relationship. We kindle our souls with the remembrance that the Church becomes one here.

Our question, therefore, is answered. God has been faithful to his three promises. He will not fail hereafter. It really

seems a fair process of logic to reason from the past over to the present and the future.

In the promise of a Redeemer, kept in the gift of Christ ; in the promise of the Spirit, kept in the descent of the Comforter ; in the promise of a chosen people, kept in the organization of the Church ; everywhere has God shown himself the same faithful keeper of a covenant. He has not only been true to all he has spoken, but often he has transcended the literal engagement by a fulness and splendor of final grace, as wonderful as it was welcome. Thus "Mercy and truth are met together ; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

The one thought, which grows out of all this discussion, is, that any man who is athirst may drink from the ocean around him. Any man who desires to be forgiven his sins, and become a child of God, has at this moment a fair chance to be saved.

In the name of God's Mercy and Truth, here met together, I offer to any one who hears my voice, hope and heaven : if he will repent of his sins and forsake them, and will take Jesus for his Saviour, God will surely receive him, and his soul is safe.

Take up the picture of the ancient allegory once more. Imagine the all-seeing Creator, when, in the midst of his counsels, he was determining whether he would issue the order to make man. The world was already fashioned, so the little story runs. But about the middle of the sixth day, the Almighty paused and took advice. The morning stars were singing together over the beauty of the new earth, as they saw it rolling in majesty and bloom beneath them. At this supreme moment God summoned all his attributes to draw nigh, and invited each in turn to say what should be done as to peopling it.

Prudence spoke first. Looking forward into the years, she foresaw (as they all did) the inevitable catastrophe of *sin*. She gave warning as to the care it would cost to mould and manage a race so wilful and rebellious as men were sure to

be if they were created. She said, "Alas, we have had enough of that!" and voted unhesitatingly, *No.*

Then came *Justice*. He remarked he well understood that the immutable law flung all the burden of inflicting its penalties upon him. These men would be disobedient, and so the curse would have to fall upon them. Everybody knew that he desired nothing so much as to give God glory; but he hoped there might some way be chosen, if possible, this time, beside that of public executions for sin. He voted *No.*

Truth was summoned next, and wished to be allowed to say nothing; but being pressed, declared that she feared there would be trouble coming, if any new class of creatures at all should be brought into being, free-willed. For ever since this awful rebellion of Satan, it had been announced that God would punish every sin. Satan was loose now, and he had denied it and defied it. He wanted to renew the old conflict. God would have to stand by his word. She voted, "It is better not—*No.*"

Love seemed a little anxious to interrupt; at any rate, he said he "felt surprised at so much foreboding in the council; for here was *Wisdom* to plan, and *Power* to carry out, any sort of arrangement. For his part he was strongly in favor of this new creation. Oh, how beautiful the earth looked down there! Had the *Attributes* all seen how fair it was? God had found unspeakable happiness in all he had ever yet made. He would not fail this time!" *Love* grew fairly enthusiastic as he pictured man in the garden, so exactly the being to till it, and have his home in it. With all his heart he voted *Yes.*

After this, *Wisdom*, *Power*, *Holiness*, and all the rest, took part in the reverent discussion, and at the end voted variously. But while the conversation lingered, the omniscient eye observed that one meek and beloved Attribute was silent. "And has *Mercy* nothing to say?" he asked benignantly.

Thus beckoned, *Mercy* answered humbly:—"No world, no race, has ever been given to me. In all these eternal ages, I have never been permitted to show how I, all alone,

can glorify the adorable Father of heaven. *Power* had the shining planets, *Wisdom* had the seraphs, *Love* has now even on this new orb, the beasts, the fishes, and the birds. Even *Justice* had the sinning angels; I had none. Let man be created; he will sin; he will repent. Let *Wisdom* help me; give this penitent sinner to me; let me see if we cannot bring him back, and outwork a new glory to our God!

Then they all joined their voices; and even *Prudence* changed her vote. They agreed that man should be created, and *Mercy* should have this world to herself. But they set up this test: If she would bring into heaven one sinner redeemed, that *Justice* would admit unchallenged, then they would wait to hear him sing, standing on the golden floor. And then her face all aglow, *Mercy* exclaimed—"One! I will have a whole choir of them, a hundred and forty and four thousand; and when their new song begins, there will be matchless silence in heaven!"

Then the divine Word was spoken, and *Truth* was sent to bear it to the earth. Man was created. *Justice* put on his awful panoply, and stood at the door, for his keen eye caught a glimpse of SATAN, that old serpent, gliding in the garden; and his ire was up. Like a beautiful seraph, *Mercy*, white-clad, passed out underneath the arch, *Wisdom* mysteriously keeping her company. And all the *Attributes* watched the history in Paradise. And all the angels of God peered over the battlements of heaven, earnestly desiring to look into it. They saw the sin—the fall—the horror—the shame; all done before the two sisters had reached the spot; Adam and Eve were lost!

And then they marked, oh, with unutterable wonder, that *Mercy* planted just the *Cross* at the gate, and *Wisdom* went in to tell those two sinners what it meant. At their side stood *Truth*. She had found her unaided power of no avail to stay the catastrophe. She went to the gate, and saw the symbol of atonement. *Mercy* and *Truth* kissed each other when they met.

Then *Justice*, up in heaven, drew a long breath of relief and whispered, "It is done!" Before long, the train of the redeemed began to come in. They bore palms. They wore crowns. *Justice* looked every one in the forehead, and found the mark of the Lamb; so he passed them in. On the glittering pavement they assembled. There beside the eternal Father sat the Son, Immanuel the Prince, returned from the earth.

"And they sung a new song, saying—Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God, by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth."

Thus God showed he was rich in mercy to man, for his great love wherewith he loved us. Thus now he forbears, and invites, only saying, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

MERCY'S REPLY.

AN ARABIAN ALLEGORY.

THE Earth was made ; yet still, though full of light,
 And life, beneath the conquering breath of God,
 That rolled away the anarch of old Night,
 There was no ruler for the teeming sod ;
 When to the glorious ministers that stand—
 Justice, Truth, Mercy—by his throne,
 Eternally, he waved his awful hand,
 And spoke, as God can speak alone,
 “ Shall we make man ? ” Then stern-eyed Justice cried,
 “ Oh, make him not, for he in his vain pride,
 And base ingratitude to **THEE**, the great First Cause,
 Will trample evermore upon **THY** laws ! ”
 When Truth—“ Yes, make him not—his impious foot
 Thy temple pure will evermore pollute ! ”
 But Mercy, dropping on her knees—her eyes
 Suffused with pity and all full of tears,
 In that else tearless Paradise—
 Gazed up, and cried amid her sterner peers,
 “ Make him, O God ! I will watch o'er his head
 In all the troublous paths that he may tread ! ”
 Then God looked down upon the Earth again,
 And as man started up from Eden's plain,
 He said (while Mercy, rising, blessed and smiled)—
 “ Now, ruler of thy planet, go,
 And with thy brother gently deal below ! ”—

Meeting God.

"Prepare to meet thy God."—AMOS 4 : 12.

THE most impressive sight in a geologist's cabinet is a collection of meteoric stones. For each one of them is a piece of another planet.

This fragment of a verse, from an ancient Book in the Bible, has in it a power which we fully recognize, and yet know is not at all commensurate with anything we behold on its surface. It arrests attention at once from even the most careless mind. And the reason of this impressiveness is found in the fact that it utters directly and authoritatively a thought *from another world.*

A thick cloud of darkness hangs between us and the future life. We have become satisfied, after years of impatient waiting, that this veil is now wholly impenetrable, and was meant to be so from the start. Yet so painfully do we long to know the mysteries beyond it, that we often in our hours of meditation find ourselves sitting before its folds, passionately peering into it, trying to force our vision through to the other side, and know what there remains for us yet to discover.

Suddenly the silence is broken by a voice. We listen with strained attention. But it bears no new information. It only utters an admonition of intense solemnity: "Prepare to meet thy God!"

Now we would like to put a few questions in our turn! Where is God? When are we to meet Him? What for?

What does He think of us? What will be the result of our interview?

But there comes no reply. This proves to be a voice, and nothing more. But it does its errand. The utterance seems very sober. The words are fastened in our minds. If an arrow had been shot unerringly from God's own quiver, it could not have struck or stuck more to the purpose. We cannot escape an uncomfortable foreboding that the meaning is more momentous than usual in the lesson we have received. It encourages no curiosity, but it urges a serious and pertinent counsel.

Every word in our text is weighty. In every word there is one distinct suggestion of thought worth our while to ponder. And so in our present consideration of the theme it introduces, we take it up word by word; and the last will come first.

I.—Earliest of all, we learn here that the *grand expectation* of the future world to each human soul is the full vision of God.

1. Every man, the moment he draws any picture of coming time, instinctively imagines the form of the Deity enthroned at its centre and capital. This I adduce in evidence now, because to each conscience it is nearest and clearest, most pertinent and most incontrovertible. God has not left himself without witness in our fallen nature. In our times of curious speculation we all have much to say concerning the recovery of our friends gone, the beholding of celestial glories, the attainment of new themes of thought, and the experience of extraordinary pleasures, as well as the avoiding of terrific pains. But after all, when one reaches the interior of his own honest heart, there he finds himself saying what marks his transcendent and ultimate anticipation; he exclaims—"The moment the curtain is lifted, I am to see God face to face!"

Hence we are wont to yield full sympathy to what would otherwise seem most inexplicable reserve in the Scriptures;

the sacred and suggestive exclusiveness with which inspiration uses the awful word *Eternity*. It occurs but once in our English Bibles. We employ the term with trivial frequency; our translators used it but once, and then only to indicate the dwelling-place of Jehovah. He is called "The High and Lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity, whose name is Holy." When our souls are candid to each other, we recognize the fitness, as well as the unparalleled majesty, of this form of description. What is Eternity? So we ask ourselves with hushed voices. And the answer is: Eternity is the habitation of God. What, then, in the tremendous moment when we enter its doors, shall we earliest see? And the quiet answer is—*God!* Whatever else I shall see there, I am certain that my very first sight will be—*GOD!*

2. Now it is all-important just here that we understand this does not merely happen to be so. Nor is it so because 't has been taught and learned so. It is not the result of either accident, caprice, or education. It is universal and intuitive. Constitutionally the human soul cries out after God. It need no more pride itself upon this inalienable characteristic, nor feel humiliated under it, than a magnet need feel elated or ashamed over its tendency to the north star. It can neither take it, nor shed it, at mere effort of will.

When one is walking amid oriental ruins, and his eye is arrested with the sight of a strange device, a circle with wings, cut in stone over the portal of a temple, he will almost unconsciously modulate his voice and subdue his mien, as he is told this is the symbol of the Divinity once worshipped there. The very suggestion of the idea of God finds something in our deepest nature, to which it makes powerful appeal.

The truth is, the soul of man has never been permitted to throw off the memories of the image it wore at the creation, so as utterly to forget God. We have perverted the idea, but our heart still answers responsively to the vague recollection of what we once were. Like a disturbed lake, trying to reflect the sun, and only tossing the likeness from crest to

crest of the troubled waves, losing the shape while retaining the luminousness, dispersing the form in fragmentary flashes; so our poor soul gives back semblance—pitiable enough—of anything divine, now in its broken and restless condition. But the bright image still floats upon its surface; and even our fallen faculties are sometimes radiant with the light they distort.

II.—But let us move on. There is need, in order to the full reception of this thought, that we couple it with another. We learn in the second place, from our text, that the *grand recognition* of the soul in the future state, will be the rightful sovereignty of God over itself.

For this solemn voice, speaking from out the realities of the other world, lays emphasis on a word, which we might otherwise pass cursorily by. It asserts a relationship full of royal meaning. It ceases to be speculative, and becomes entirely commonplace. It says to each individual in turn, “Prepare to meet *thy* God!”

1. It is always easy to find attentive hearers, when we in the pulpit ask, or attempt to answer, metaphysical ingenuities concerning our Maker. Men are quite patient then to listen or to speak. But if the quick inference be suggested, that if God be a King, we are subjects, and should immediately and continuously do His will; that if God be a Father, He ought to have from each one of us His due honor; that if God be a Master, then we are in every point His servants, owing Him labor; if these inferences are pressed, the heart of many a tranquil auditor will become excited with a wilful rebound into independency and rebelliousness of temper. This is just natural.

When the patriarch Job was drawing up his indictment against the wicked in his day, one of the tremendous charges he brought with serious reprobation was that they even put the question, “What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him?” The force of an inquiry like this turns upon that one word *serve*. It is not a seeking after God, which is

blamed ; but a doubt concerning God's supremacy, a denial of God's right to exact service. There were in all likelihood men in that age of the world, as there are in ours, who do not desire to know God, simply because they wilfully refuse to obey Him. Acquaintance with duty implies the doing of duty. Hence a deep, practical, virtual Atheism holds the mass of unconverted souls under its sway. There may be a God in the universe somewhere, quite possibly, but He is no God of theirs, as they understand it.

2. It is not an unfrequent thing, however, that a corrective to this view is applied even in the present life. Take one notable and familiar instance, for illustration. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, was always ready to admit, in his interviews with Moses, that there was a Deity called Jehovah. He thought of him somewhat superciliously, of course, as any high-bred and thoroughly aristocratic man would be likely to think of what belonged to his servants. Jehovah—oh, yes, he knew that name ; it was the new Hebrew Deity that some of his bricklayers worshipped ! This king never attempted to compel the Israelites to idolatry, with all his ingenious cruelties of oppression. What he denied was, any obligation on his part of allegiance to Jehovah. The intense violence of his question, so crowded with explosions of irrepressible passion, centres in the closing words : “ Who is Jehovah, *that I should obey his voice ?* ”

Now it was not of the slightest consequence, comparatively speaking, what was King Pharaoh's opinion about the sovereignty of that monarch of heaven he defied. To no other person in the universe had this any importance, no matter how contemptuously he swelled in such a message. And even to himself, the notion he cherished speculatively was of little moment save for one reason. It bore upon his life, it moulded his character, it exhibited his insubordination, it rendered him more tyrannical to the chosen people, it influenced others within the confines of his own realm. All this forced him into conflict with God. A question of supremacy came to immediate issue, and had to be worked out in his person.

Plague after plague followed in swift succession. But not till Pharaoh himself was fairly drowned in the Red Sea, did he seem to learn that Jehovah was God, Jehovah was *his* God.

3. The force of our text, as an announcement out from the mystery of another world, turns exactly upon this important point. It is God's own assertion of Himself, and an intimation that He means ultimately to vindicate His sovereignty, here or elsewhere, as against all disregard or defiance. No matter how proud and unmanageable may be the human temper which gazes curiously over the line into the dark, if any man ever becomes sufficiently thoughtful to look steadily for a moment at the future, that same calm, unmistakable, voice addresses his conscience, "Prepare to meet God, to meet a God who is *thy* God!" And hence with every premonition of either death or the judgment, there is joined this one anticipation to each responsible man or woman, "There I am to meet the Being who gave being to me; not some one else's God, but my own; not a monarch of some distant realm, but mine!"

III.—In the third place, we learn from this verse, that the *grand disclosure* of the future is to be in the mutual recognition between the human soul and its divine Maker.

There will be one moment of intense meaning to each of us, of more importance, perhaps, than will ever occur again in our personal history; that moment, when, all bodily hinderance removed, our souls shall step forth from the multitude, and come, at the call of our names, out into the white light of God's throne of judgment. Then there will be a recognition. We shall *meet* God. And I suppose that means we shall see Him, shall be seen by Him, and shall hold conference with Him.

1. It might seem a fine thing to see God from a distance and among a crowd; as a pilgrim sees the Pope at Rome sprinkling holy water on a multitude. The pageant of the final judgment would rise on our imagination as a very imposing spectacle, perhaps, if we knew we were only to be present as

spectators, and could rehearse it afterwards as some adventure of celestial travel. But no prisoner at a grand assize ever held his breath in anxiety, as the presiding justice came in, with a deeper hush than shall we ours then ; for never had human being such mighty issues at stake in any court, as we shall have in that stupendous trial. Then God will be seen, as no man ever saw Him before. The very first act in the tremendous drama will be a full and powerful exhibition of Jehovah and His peerless attributes, without a hinderance and without a veil. " Now we see as through a glass darkly, but then face to face ; now we know in part, then shall we know even as also we are known."

We shall find the curtain withdrawn from before that ineffable Love, which makes the angels believe and sing ; and that invincible Justice, which makes the devils believe and tremble. We shall learn how it was that Mercy stayed the hand of wrath, when Jesus plead for leave to go to the earth and die in behalf of men. We shall have no doubt then as to the exhaustless power of Omnipotence, or the limitless range of resources to which Omniscience can go. The one blazing centre of all radiance, beauty, majesty, and illumination, in that hitherto hidden, but now suddenly disclosed world, will be seen by every eye in the universe. And then we may be sure it will be understood what angels have meant all along in their myriad songs, when they have kept declaring that the *King* is the glory of that kingdom where He reigns. God will be there on His throne, wearing the many crowns of His illustriousness and majesty, and wielding the sceptre.

2. Of course the result of this will be the necessary disclosure of ourselves. To meet God is to be seen by Him, as well as to see Him. That man, who stands so near the sun, will be rendered instantly visible, and become terribly conspicuous. History will be suddenly recalled. Character will be disclosed. Nothing else will be there.

All those pretty little veils and gauzes of conventional concealment, gracious duplicity, polite reserve, social deception,

and spiritual hypocrisy, with which we are wont to keep ourselves away from indecorous scrutiny, will be quietly crumbling in the coffin with the body they used to adorn. The sight of God's glory will be the illumining agency, which will search as well as shine. Severe indeed will be the inquiries of an hour like that. Even the best saints on record can do no more than hold up the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The cry of fear and faith will be, "My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever!"

Every unrepenting man knows, in the secret of his own heart, that when his eye rests upon that awful Form, in the last grand vision of eternity, he will perforce fall on his knees. The sense of guilt is one of the most intense of all our mental exercises, and yet the most singularly distinct in its forms of operation. It has a recognizable and inseparable connection with *sin*. And sin is going to be the subject of the conference, when any human soul meets God.

And the one absorbing and over-mastering thought in every human mind will be, as if left all alone, in the moment of its vast discovery, to express in soliloquy its wonder, "Here then am I, come up through all the windings of personal history, now a bodiless soul, at last face to face with the Monarch who rules monarchs, as He makes and unmakes them; who sways from this eternal seat of His sovereignty the rule of a government, wide enough in its embrace to hold a universe, specific enough in its reach to touch an atom; at last, at last—through all the sunlights and the shadows of life, I have reached its awards, and am in the undimmed presence and revelation of *God!*"

IV.—With what gathering force of instruction do we now return to our text for its final lesson. We find it in the opening word: "*Prepare* to meet thy God." The *grand counsel* for men in all ages is only this, to make themselves ready for this tremendous vision of the future, before the hour has irrevocably come.

It seems hardly necessary to go over the familiar ground again, and rehearse what is the preparation needed. "The way ye know."

1. Reconciliation comes earliest. The term employed here is a military one, primarily. It means—prepare to meet thy God in battle. Its sense in the historic connection is somewhat alarming. It announces to sinners that the Lion of Judah is at the head of the fray.

There is no reason to forget the figure. Surely there are two ways of preparing to meet an advancing host. One is to treat with the commander for terms. There is no other hope, when it is God that a man is to meet. No hand ever lifted against Him hath prospered. "Acquaint thyself quickly with Him, and be at peace." Confront Him on the way with a flag of truce; proffer negotiations of surrender and penitence, of amnesty and pardon.

Our Saviour adopts this very similitude once in the New Testament, and presses the advice. This is his parable: "What king, going to make war with another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace?"

The peculiar advantage we possess in our rebellious conflict with God is, that He has summoned us to a parley already. He says, "Come now, and let us reason together."

He proposes an armistice. He deprecates a final appeal to the sword. The law of God has been broken. He is coming for vindication of justice. But he suddenly halts, and waits. And all he says is, "Why will ye be stricken any more?"

The conditions of reconciliation are repentance for sin, and faith in Jesus Christ. Their simplicity seems somehow most unphilosophically to fall in their way. Old Rowland Hill once went to preach in a Fair, where the tradesmen were selling their articles at auction. "Oh," said he, "look there!

My friends are finding a great difficulty over yonder to get you up to their prices ; my difficulty is to get you down to mine !”

2. Next to reconciliation in this process of preparation, there is needed renewal. The curse of a broken commandment demands a ransom, the pollution of one's own heart under a course of sin, makes an entire change of it indispensable. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” A radical revolution in the aims and purposes of one's entire being is necessary to his being saved. He cannot meet God with sin still defiling his soul.

This work of regeneration is wrought by the Holy Spirit ; and no mortal can tell how He does it, nor even precisely what He does. There is sovereignty in the act ; but it is exercised in answer to the simplicity of prayer. “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” Prometheus brought fire from heaven to earth. Socrates brought philosophy from heaven to earth. But God himself had to send this gift of His grace, by a new revelation. And He has given us to understand that shall never be a lack, even till the last son of his love shall be brought into glory. You may light a taper with a lens concentrating sunshine on it. And taper after taper may thus shine to illumine human darkness, without the sun's ever feeling wearied, or growing in the slightest measure exhausted. So of the Sun of Righteousness ; there is an absolutely inexhaustible fullness in the Light of the World.

Even then, when once this grand act of regeneration has been performed, how much remains to be done before one is really prepared to meet his God ! How many bad passions there are to be subdued, how many graces there are to be still implanted, how many tastes there are to be acquired, how many habits there are to be broken up ! Oh, the folly indescribable of believing the work finished, when it has only just begun ! Surely one desires some little attainment of grace before he enters the companionship of angels !

The Greeks at the feast said, "We would see Jesus." Absalom, restored from banishment, was right when he exclaimed, "It is to little purpose I am come to Jerusalem, if I may not see the king's face." Alas, it would be of no avail for one of us to enter heaven, if we might not see God! But purity is the condition of such a prospect. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Growth in grace is part of Christian duty. We shall be exactly like Christ, when we shall see Him as He is. We should begin to resemble Him now. "I do not want to be like Paul, or Apollos, or any mere man," wrote the indefatigable Judson; "I want to be like Christ. We have only one perfect example—perfectly safe—only one, who, tempted like as we are in every point, is yet without sin. I want to follow Him only; copy His teachings, drink in His spirit; place my feet in His footprints, and measure their shortcomings by these and these alone. Oh, to be more like Christ day by day!"

3. And then, when we are considering this preparation to meet God, it does seem as if we ought likewise to add some measure of active accomplishment for His glory. It would be at least generous to attempt something for others around us, before we leave them.

There is found among the children's hymns one concerning "a starless crown." Who wants to wear such? If we could just ourselves be successful enough to worry through life into heaven, would not our hearts be sad to remember no soul was waiting there to welcome us, for not one had we set on in the way! Think of this world of ruin and sin all around us; how it welcomes any help offered to it! Did you ever lay your finger upon the edge of a bird's nest, when the mother was absent, and mark how blindly, but instinctively, those callow necks and open bills all stretched up towards you for food? So the whole race stands expectant. If you have any good to offer, you will find a million hearts around you that need it.

You are not prepared to meet your God, my fellow-man,

until your work is done. Even Christ had to say, "It is finished," before He gave up the ghost. Humble your pride to accomplish any labor for Christ. The sainted Elliot, when he labored most mightily among the Indians, used to say to those who fell laggard behind him in the discouraging work, "Study mortification, brother, study mortification."

But what if none of all this most extensive preparation has been yet begun! Oh, let the imperiled, unready, hesitating men who hear me, heed now this voice, which out from the mystery of another world pleads with them! Put an end to this trifling and trimming among such momentous issues! Away with this tempting of God's forbearance. His goodness is intended to lead you to repentance. The soul of each man chooses its own future, under the free government over us.

And hence it is true that every one of you, even unconsciously, *is* preparing to meet God. Science says that the image last seen by a dying man, just before he draws the lid over his eyes for eternity, is indelibly stamped on the retina, and remains there unalterably until the body is dust. This may be a conceit; but one thing is certain, *character decides destiny*. The view to which the spiritual eye has been habituated in life, is that which permanently abides on the soul, and forms its prospect on the other side of the grave.

"I WILL BE WITH THEE."

WHEN my last hour is close at hand,
 My last sad journey taken,
 Do thou, Lord Jesus ! by me stand ;
 Let me not be forsaken :
 O Lord ! my spirit I resign
 Into thy loving hands divine ;
 'Tis safe within thy keeping.

Countless as sands upon the shore,
 My sins may then appal me ;
 Yet, though my conscience vex me sore,
 Despair shall not enthrall me ;
 For as I draw my latest breath,
 I'll think, Lord Christ ! upon thy death,
 And there find consolation.

I shall not in the grave remain,
 Since thou death's bonds hast severed :
 By hope with thee to rise again,
 From fear of death delivered,
 I'll come to thee, where'er thou art,
 Live with thee, from thee never part ;
 Therefore I die in rapture.

And so to Jesus Christ I'll go,
 My longing arms extending ;
 So fall asleep, in slumber deep,
 Slumber that knows no ending,
 Till Jesus Christ, God's only Son,
 Opens the gates of bliss, leads on
 To heaven, to life eternal.

Division of Labor.

“One soweth and another reapeth.”—JOHN 4: 37.

IN the British Museum there is an ancient lamp, once picked up at Pompeii, which was refitted and refilled, and kept lighted in order to show its original design. Thus what was only a vile fragment of bronze, lying unnoticed amid the ashes and sand of a buried city, is rendered useful again by the mere common-place service of new oil.

A like ingenuity is that on record of the apostle Paul. When he was addressing the intellectual scholars of Athens, he took an old line of poetry which he had discovered among the moral verses of their dramatists, dull and dead already as an utterance of heathen devoteeism—“for we are also his offspring”—and, pouring into it the oil of inspiration, set it burning again for all future time.

Here in our text we have an instance of higher authority still. Our divine Saviour selected this little proverb as a remnant of the dry wisdom of by-gone ages, and made it vital once more as a medium of instruction by the fresh spiritual life he put in it. What was then only a sententious adage became sacred as an avowed principle of the Gospel.

I.—Let us in the beginning trace out the analogies suggested by the figure thus employed: “One soweth and another reapeth.” Passing over from nature into grace, it will be well if we carry along with us a clear perception of the point upon which the force of the illustration turns.

1. Sowing and reaping require different *seasons* for their

performance. "There is a time to plant, and a time to pick up that which is planted." The furrows are to be prepared and the grain cast in, near the opening of the year. Then the husbandman has to wait awhile. The mystery of growth begins, at once inscrutable and independent. It may be that spring laborers will have new and distant tasks in the autumn. One of the most natural occurrences, as things run, is, that other laborers will come eventually to reap what these have planted.

2. Sowing and reaping need different *skill* for their performance. Farmers' boys will often vie with one another in generous contention as to whose is the highest prowess, both in the scattering of most grain and in the binding of most sheaves, between any given dawn and sunset. But rarely do the same excellences meet in the same man. The quick step, the free arm, the erect form, the measured motion, which make the sower eminent on the emulous records, are very unlike the rapid and agile grasp, the bending endurance, the strong stride, that insure celerity to the reaper. The sinewy hand which is most expert at throwing the seed may not be the hand which most expeditiously wields the sickle.

3. Sowing and reaping demand a different *spirit* in their performance. Sowing proceeds on a principle of hope and faith; reaping proceeds on a principle of reminiscence, calculation and gratitude. The sower always faces the blank field, and leaves the seed disappearing behind him, with only an unconscious prophecy in his own mind as to the result. The reaper faces the actual harvest, and cuts his way proudly in among the forests of ripened grain, beating time with his sickle to his song.

4. Sowing and reaping have a different *standard of success* in their performances. The success of sowing is that the seed be sowed well; the success of reaping is that the grain be reaped well. If you will discriminate carefully, you will observe that both of these two forms of activity are to be estimated according to their nature. Neither of them has

any right to reckon upon the harvest as a criterion of fidelity. For the harvest depends on growth, the secret of which is beyond any laborer's province. Men are hired to sow and reap, not to concern themselves about the yield. The responsibility of one ends when the corn is fitly in the ground, and of the other when the sheaves are fully in the garner. They who plant, only put in the "bare grain;" God giveth it the "body that shall be," as it pleaseth him.

II.—Turning this figure now into the line of religious instruction, let us inquire, in the second place, for the doctrine of the proverb.

1. Consider it as a settled fact, that *for every reaping there has been a seed-sowing*. The field is the world; the harvest is one of souls. "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the sun." There are spiritual processes, which, like the natural, demand duration, and simply retire within the secrecy of their own economy. Some one must begin them, of course, merely meeting first conditions. After that they need no help, and will suffer no interference. Nothing can hurry them. They must be allowed to run their course. The ministrations which are efficient in their advancement are limited, and cannot avail at all beyond a certain fixed line. Hence it often happens that when any early instrument God has honored in the using has dropped from his hand, the link of association is lost; and before the spiritual harvest arrives the one who sowed the seed is humanly forgotten. Nevertheless, let us remember that never was a soul born again in this world but that somebody prayed for it, somebody labored for it, somebody far back, in the faith of a hopeful husbandman, planted the germ of life, covered it carefully, and perhaps watered it more than once thereafter with tears.

2. Consider it likewise as a settled fact, that *for every seed-sowing there will be a reaping*. The old covenant of nature still abides to keep farmers alive. "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer,

and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." How we do rest in that !

" How awful is the thought of the wonders underground,
Of the mystic changes wrought in the silent, dark profound !
How each thing is upward tending, by necessity decreed,
And the world's support depending on the shooting of a seed !"

Well for us is it that there is a covenant of grace just as settled as this. We need to know that, in due season, we shall reap if we faint not. Otherwise courage fails, and all enterprise ends. So the explicit engagement has been made: " For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth ; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

3. Consider it as another settled fact, that *for every labor there must be a laborer*. God has been pleased to select men, women, and even little children for his fellow-workers under the plan of redemption. He retains just enough of hold upon all the processes of life and grace to show us how deep is the mystery attending the birth of any renewed soul, and how absolutely impotent we are for any endeavor beyond that which is merely extrinsic and conditional. We cannot even predict results, much less produce them. A narrow circle of appliances and instruments has been left for our employment. Curious, even as a study, is that kind of limited coöperation which God has permitted. The grain is God's, the germ in the grain is God's, the life in the germ is God's, the growth of the life is God's ; but the soil is man's, the plow is man's, dominion over the beasts is man's, and the sickle is man's. Certain actualities of fact, which we term means of grace, are put within our reach for ourselves and others ; that is all. Hence every labor calls

for a laborer. It will not do for us all to stand back, consulting taste and preference and convenience. We are servants; there is only one Master. Harvesting is most welcome while weak human nature is what it is; but then seed-sowing must be done. He is the best servant who just puts his hand to what is nearest.

4. Consider it also as a settled fact, that *for every laborer there is a labor*. And the sooner we are all at our appointed work the better. These are no times for any one to stand in the market-place all the day idle. The good tidings are to be preached to the meek. The broken-hearted are to be bound up. Liberty remains to be proclaimed to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are in bonds. The mourning need to be comforted. The old wastes are to be builded up, the desolations of many generations are to be repaired. There is a place, then, for every follower of the Lord Jesus. He himself gave the motto for the church: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." In the infinite varieties of labor, surely every one might find his place. The call does not make any discrimination; it says only, "Son, go work to-day, in my vineyard." Every spirit of calculation is excluded and rebuked. "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" The fields are already white to harvest. "He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." Clouds and winds are God's; we have nothing to do with them; the implements we are to use are the plow and sickle.

III. All this is taught under the figure here employed by our Lord. But lest you should think the interpretation has been forced, let us now, in the third place, examine the philosophy of this form of arrangement. Why not let every man have one field, little or large, and do his own sowing, and rejoice in his own harvests?

Perhaps it is never wise for us to attempt to pronounce upon the primal design of the Almighty in any of his forms of arrangement; but from an after study of the exquisite adap-

tations of means to ends, we may often infer proximately what it might have been. At any rate, there are discoverable these singular advantages belonging to the plan now under our eye: it holds before our minds a continuous and splendid illustration of God's sovereignty; it serves to evoke and educe various gifts, both of intellect and heart; it makes provision for meeting the extreme diversities found among the differing classes of men; it most effectually disciplines personal religious experience for its good; and it engenders the new grace of charity in our estimates of others.

1. "One soweth and another reapeth," in order to illustrate the Divine sovereignty. "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever; nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it: and God doeth it that men should fear before him." The inveterate tendency of human pride is to exalt its own efficiency under every increment of success. And this is even more especially true in those cases when it has a secret conviction that the power it has wielded is not its own. That was the most supercilious steward in Scriptural history, who, having made a great show by lending his lord's money, as if it were his own, now, even when he had lost the stewardship by reason of speculation discovered, made a still greater show in attempting to collect it. In the world around us, it is the agents of rich people who become most violent and most purse-proud. An ill-concealed consciousness of imposture in all their attempts at dignity renders them more maliciously vain. Observe, then, how carefully the all-wise Master, in this moral field, has ordered it that no laborer, whom he employs, shall forget his place. He is not allowed to remain long enough at one work to begin to usurp control in it. The ownership in any harvest cannot vest in the sower, for he never beholds it; nor in the reaper, for he finds it white when he comes. Thus the glory of everything belongs to God, and God receives it. He makes it "beautiful in his time."

2. "One soweth and another reapeth," in order to evoke

human gifts. Men are not alike either in ingenuity or perseverance. They need many forms of labor in the development of both the intellect and the heart. Sanguine temperaments best begin great undertakings in the world's history ; quiet temperaments best bring them to issue. Men with strong personality start out with every vast enterprise ; but men with deep humility come in with the sheaves of success. In each moral purpose the mind of a Christian worker skills itself for effectiveness according to its prevailing gift. Thus each is enabled to stand on a better vantage-ground by entering into the labors of those who preceded him. Finely illustrated is all this kind of division of labor in the discoveries of science. To find a grand principle of nature is one thing ; to apply it is quite another. So the most meritorious achievements have oftentimes to distribute the honors widely. Gioja invented the compass ; Columbus followed it over the sea. Franklin linked lightning to electricity ; Morse linked electricity to thought. And generally it may be said that all these conspicuous successes have been preceded by a great unreckoned, unhistoric, inconspicuous mass of minor successes, each opening the path toward the final triumph. Thus every man becomes more useful by a concentration of his genius, and God gets the better glory.

3. "One soweth and another reapeth," in order to meet the diverse dispositions of men. We must never forget that the grand purpose of the Gospel is the conversion of souls. If this is not gained, there never is any real advance. And so subtle are the intricacies of the human heart that ingenuities of approach to it are in high demand in the churches. Now, it matters nothing how large is the work to be done or how small ; different dispositions require different methods of dealing, and where one fails another may succeed. Take any great work : in the Reformation there were the bold-faced ecclesiastics to need the thunder of Martin Luther's voice, and then there were timid common people to need the quieter accents of Melancthon's. At one time the move-

ment went on more safely by far because Luther was shut up in Wartburg Castle. So the trumpet of John Knox was as helpful as the pen of John Calvin; but neither could have been spared. Take any small work; here is an unsuccessful Sabbath-school teacher toiling almost hopelessly over a rude boy in the class; another person comes, and the spell of resistance is dissolved. The one teacher is no better than the other, only the one is unlike the other. God uses the mere personal characteristics of both at his will.

4. "One soweth and another reapeth," in order to discipline religious experience. You will never understand why Elisha sent Naaman to bathe seven times in the Jordan with a view to his cure, unless you take into the account the interior life of the man. Each time previous to the seventh he would be likely to say as he came up from the stream—still no better, no better. But with every repetition of an act of duty done, not because of anticipated reward, but because it was duty, there would come an unconscious increment of faith. His will would be breaking, his self-confidence would be on the wane, and by the time the final obedience was reached he would be in a state of mind fit to be healed. So of the company which at Joshua's command marched around Jericho only blowing ram's horns for an entire week. With every day's repetition they would think quietly of the duty conscientiously performed, their faith deepening, their anticipation quickening, meanwhile. Now this is really the law of Christian advancement. What God once said to Israel, he now says to each one of us: "I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass." The grand purpose of all this life is just to *bend that iron* and *soften that brass*. Human will needs to be broken by repeated disappointment before it becomes meet to receive success. It matters little how painfully the discipline is continued, if only at last the heart will be able to say with the heroic Paul: "By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I

labored more abundantly than they all ; *yet not I*, but the grace of God which was with me."

5. "One soweth and another reapeth," in order to teach us charity. To one properly educated in spiritual and moral mechanics, there will always be significance in even the slightest lever and pinion and pin, as well as in the massive wheels within wheels. You will remember the absurd disappointment of the laborers, who jealously demanded more than their penny because the same was given to those who came into the vineyard at the eleventh hour. There must be no envy among the followers of Christ. Fine, high challenge is that which the apostle uttered, when some weak-minded converts were forming parties in Corinth: "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered ; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth ; but God that giveth the increase." No man is so great in this world as to be greater than any other man, provided both of them are the servants of God. Samuel swayed rule in Israel, but the day was when the forgotten Hannah made him a little coat every year. The widow of Sarepta, with her barrel of inexhaustible meal, her cruse of unfailing oil, and her loft where he abode, had very much to do with that splendid triumph of Elijah on the summit of Carmel. Andrew had a share in the converts at Pentecost, for he led Simon Peter to Jesus. Do you know who Epenetus was? Did you ever hear of Adronicus and Julia? Yet please go and read the last chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, to see how kindly he spoke of these and others ; they were all his "work-fellows" and his "kinsmen."

IV.—In making practical application of these thoughts, there will be danger of my becoming prolix. The reach they possess is very extensive ; they serve to correct many mistakes. But I will delay your minds with the mere mention of only a few lessons.

1. Here you discover the true dignity of *faithfulness*. Success is the world's criterion of merit; fidelity is God's. The reward of being "faithful over a few things" is just the same as being "faithful over many things;" for the emphasis falls upon the same word; it is the "faithful" who will enter into "the joy of their Lord."

2. Here you learn how imperatively every one is urged to enter some field of duty. Alas for the force which is simply wasted in trying to find one's work! If he is not good at sowing, let him break up fallow ground; if he cannot plow, let him go and reap. Do something somewhere immediately.

3. Here you perceive the folly of being disheartened at delay. God sometimes takes natural methods of removing obstacles even when they would appear most dilatory. Philip the Second used to say, "*Time and I will work wonders.*"

4. Here you discover, on the other hand, how weak is all undue elation at success. God not unfrequently sends a man to reap that whereon he bestowed no labor. Sometimes a Christian worker reports a name with great joy; a new soul has been added to the redeemed. But now, if influences were searched out, it might be found that the prayers of a dead mother or the counsels of a distant father had made the way easy.

5. Here, then, you begin to imagine what surprises there will be at the final ingathering. As the great day draws nearer, events will hurry somewhat. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed." He that reapeth shall then receive his wages, and gather fruit unto life eternal; "that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together." "They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands."

THE EVERLASTING MEMORIAL.

Up and away, like the dew of the morning,
 Soaring from earth to its home in the sun ;
 So let me steal away, gently and lovingly,
 Only remembered by what I have done.

Up and away, like the odors of sunset,
 That sweeten the twilight as darkness comes on ;
 So be my life—a thing felt but not noticed,
 And I but remembered by what I have done.

Needs there the praise of the love-written record,
 The name and the epitaph graved on the stone ?
 The things we have lived for—let them be our story,
 We ourselves but remembered by what we have done.

I need not be missed if my life has been bearing
 (As its summer and autumn move silently on)
 The bloom and the fruit and the seed of its season ;
 I shall still be remembered by what I have done.

I need not be missed if another succeed me
 To reap down those fields which in spring I have sown ;
 He who plowed and who sowed is not missed by the reaper,
 He is only remembered by what he has done.

Not myself, but the truth that in life I have spoken—
 Not myself, but the seed that in life I have sown,
 Shall pass on to ages—all about me forgotten
 Save the truth I have spoken, the things I have done.

So let my living be, so be my dying ;
 So let my name lie, unblazoned, unknown ;
 Unpraised and unmissed, I shall still be remembered ;
 Yes—but remembered by what I have done.

Our Christian Names.

"Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni." —JOHN, 20: 16.

IT does not seem to me wise to attempt any exposition of this dialogue : a conversation, as you will carefully observe, consisting of but two expressions, and these the mere utterance by each of the other's name. It will not bear cool analysis. It reminds us of our own indescribable and inarticulate experiences—the rush of hurried welcome, when we have greeted a precious friend at the doorway—the sudden outburst of a name, when we saw a face that was unexpected yet very dear—a Christian name, a half-name, a pet name, that means familiarity, and marks joyous intimacy—a little personal term of endearment recalling the past—something which we would take from no stranger, and no stranger would think of giving. Our text presents Jesus in his most amiable character. He is unmistakably human, affectionate, gentle, considerate, and kind. He says simply to that woman, "Mary ;" and she replies as simply, "My Master !"

You all know what I mean. The lesson I seek to draw for our present meditation, from this incident recorded of the resurrection morning, may be thus stated :—

Christ knows personally every individual that has ever once loved him, and can call him by his Christian name.

I.—It is not necessary to rest so interesting and important a truth as this upon so slender a ground as that furnished

in the text alone. Indeed, this narrative is before us now more as a pointed illustration, than as a logical argument.

1. It would be legitimate to say that the entire representation in the New Testament of the Redeemer's relations to his people, assumes this special reach of the covenant.

Figures and facts, promises and parables, quite agree. In all the gospel you find nothing vague or diffuse. Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for the Church, to be sure ; but in no other sense than that he redeemed its individual members. The Sun of righteousness is like the natural sun. It sheds its invigorating light over the vast forest, bringing it up from the grave of winter into the new birth of spring. But this it does by shining upon each tree and sapling and shrub through the wood. Nay, more ; it does not even fall upon a whole tree in any other way than in detail of all its parts ; pouring over its single branches, shimmering on the surface of the glowing foliage, and sending the sap of thrifty life through the woody veins and arteries of the mountain monarch. Thus it shoots out its millions of radiant lines, working their luminous path through the shadows down to the individual leaves, warming each one that it touches as if there were but one to touch, over all its smaller surface, and hurrying the life-currents through the finer veinlets, and among the more delicate tissues.

So Christ pours the light of his love and care over the Church. The passages in God's Word are too familiar to need to be adduced in any marshaled battalion of proof. There is only one representation in the matter. The Saviour never says a word to the collective body of his people, which does not belong to each saint to ponder and receive. His address is direct to the individual, "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, thou art mine. I have called thee *by thy name.*"

2. But this is not all. Look at the history of our Lord when on the earth, and see how he wrought the theory of the gospel into fact.

You cannot fail to mark the exceedingly close and personal intimacy Jesus of Nazareth always sought and kept with those who came to him. Founders of other religious systems have deemed it necessary to their success that they should guard against too great freedom of intercourse with their devotees. Withdrawing from sight sometimes prompted reverence, and inspired awe.

Not so did Jesus. He drew nigh all to be known of them, and to know them in turn. And men loved him the more, the more they saw of him. Zaccheus may be a very insignificant person in more respects than in stature ; but if he wants to see Jesus, Jesus wants to see him. The great crowd must halt while our Lord bids him come down from the tree, and make ready for his presence at his home. He means thereafter to be that publican's acquaintance and friend. A poor woman, sick and weary, may creep up behind him in the press, and he may heal her when she only touches the hem of his garment. But she is not to be allowed to depart as unnoticedly as she came. She must now be called forward, before all that curious multitude, to make herself known, and be received as the fast follower of Immanuel himself. An humble and may-be guilty child of sorrow and shame may steal gently into the guest-chamber, and break the alabaster box of ointment over his head as he sits at the table. But the odors that fill the house will not lull him into the forgetfulness of passing her by without thanks. Nor will even the weak hastiness of his disciples hinder him from saying to her kindly : "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace." This was Jesus' usual manner of dealing with men and women. He drew them to him one by one, sought their acquaintance, and followed them up with kindness. And often, as a literal fact, he called them by their names.

3. Once more, examine the doctrines of grace in proof of this statement as to the individualism of the true believer's experience.

From the earliest invitation of a sinner to the latest prom-

ise to a saint, the gospel approaches each man by himself. Christ says to every one alike, "My son, give me thine heart." The new life is a strictly personal life. The second birth is just as distinct and peculiar as the first. Each Christian comes into the kingdom of God precisely as each infant at Bethlehem came into the kingdom of Herod. Our Lord himself was no more an individual infant, separate in circumstances and destiny from those that were slain by the edict, than is now every babe in Christ separate from all others born of the Spirit, even at the same moment. Each person is justified, all alone, by a sovereign act of divine mercy.

Sanctification, likewise, progresses in the same way as it begins. Indeed, the formula of description under the New Testament plan would be, an individual saint and a personal Saviour dealing together. One kindles, and the other glows. One illumines, and the other reflects. One is the standard of all perfection, and the other is coming to it.

The whole idea of union to Christ, also, supposes this. The presence of the Spirit is in each soul. The saint is adopted as any infant is adopted; the parental hands are laid for recognition and blessing on the child's own head. Hence every believer is taught to think of the atonement as the Hebrew offender was taught to think of the lamb he had brought to the altar. As he could say of that gift, while the priest offered up its life—This is mine, and no one else's in any sense to interfere with its being a victim slain exclusively for my sin—so each Christian can say of the Lamb of God: He is mine; Christ died for me; he belongs to no one else in any such sense as to preclude me from the full help of his death.

4. Again; it is worth while to consider the ordinances as Christ established them, for further illustration of the principle stated.

By baptism as the initiatory rite, each person is introduced into the visible Church, either under his parent's covenant or his own. At that time he receives a name, which by

common consent is called his "christian" name. Thus he appears marked by God, separated from his race, and put forth forever upon a new plane of responsibility and privilege. There is a sense in which even the unconscious infant, thus sealed, is reckoned as belonging to his Maker by the fresh tie of redemption. This is part of the significance of that momentous act of the officiating minister, by which the ineffable name of the Triune God is spoken over him in the formula.

Of course no one asserts intelligently that the giving of a child's proper name to him is part of the prescribed ordinance. In so far, however, as this is a mere symbol of his individualization, there is meaning in it. In so far as it is singling the infant or the adult out from the race at large, it is part of the spirit of the rite. It works towards the special engagement of the covenant. So striking is this disclosure, that the entire body of God's people seem unwilling to relinquish the belief, even when they are pressed with the suggestion that the so-called "christening" will be perverted or misunderstood. Parents quote the language of the old prophet in quiet explanation and defence:—"I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring; one shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall *call himself* by the *name* of Jacob; and another shall *subscribe with his hand* unto the Lord, and *surname* himself by the *name* of Israel."

So in the Lord's Supper. In one of the parables of our Saviour, he presents to us the figure of a flock, of which he himself is the Good Shepherd. He says there: "I know my sheep, and am known of mine." He had just been enumerating the characteristics of such a keeper as distinct from a hireling. One of them was this: "he calleth his own sheep by *name*, and leadeth them out."

Allusion is here made to the custom in oriental lands of naming the animals in each flock. So perfectly acquainted with their own special appellations do these docile creatures become, that when thousands of them are huddled around the same watering-place, different flocks commingled in what to

a stranger might appear inextricable confusion, the shepherds are wont merely to stand off at a little distance, and call—each for his own—name by name. And then will be seen here and there, all through the moving, struggling, promiscuous multitude, one and another forcing its vigorous way out from the rest towards the voice which it recognizes and follows.

How vivid and how affecting the illustration ! How many times we have seen, upon the communion Sabbath, this one and that one hurrying forth from the crowd, seeming to say : “Hinder me not, seeing the Lord hath prospered my way ; send me away, that I may go to my Master !”

II.—This then is the doctrine ; now, what will come of it ? Whereabouts does it touch upon human experience, and meet our religious life ? Let us understand the question.

For all these eighteen centuries since that scene at the sepulchre, men, women, and children, have kept coming to this one Saviour in the same way. Each has been accepted alone. Each has felt the quenchless love calling him to the cross, and then has passed on his way singing. Each one has needed, and each one has received, the whole atonement ; yet each has left the merit undiminished. And the words of the entire band of the redeemed on the earth or in heaven would be the same ; all personal, all appropriating, all distinct. If they were at once and together on the broad plains of eternity, they might close their eyes, each shutting out the vision of all the rest, forget the throng they were in, and say, one by one, like the freshly-convinced Thomas : “*My* Lord, and *my* God !”

1. Out of all this comes a fine lesson concerning our *growth in grace*.

The idea is precisely this. Here is a Saviour that *knows* us. He could call us from out of heaven by our Christian names, if he would. He did call Saul of Tarsus so. He did call Samuel so. He did call Abram so. His eye is on us. Conformity to his own image is what he requires ; exact spiritual likeness to himself. For the purpose of accomplishing

this he became incarnate. He has drawn near to each one of us. And growth in grace is nothing more and nothing less than coming to resemble him. Not the Church at large ; but believers one by one are to accept this work of the Spirit, and strive for the same end. He calls each of us, as he called Mary, by name ; and each is to answer, My Master !

Take an illustration from nature. Every little drop of rain or dew lying on a leaflet, if it be round and clear, has in its depths the full-rounded disc of the sun that lights it. You would find a perfect reflection there, if not another globule were in existence. The angels now possibly are wont to see the sun above, and the image of the sun below. Yet there would be nothing in all this to prevent just as perfect a likeness in every one of the drops that sparkle far and near over the meadow. To each of them there is given a whole orb in the sky ; and from each of them there is demanded a whole reflection in return.

Thus of Christ, shining in the new life of the believer. He is "the true Light, which lighteth *every man* that cometh into the world." Each eye is to see him, high, bright, radiant with glory. It is now for each one of us, without limit or confusion, to produce the full image of his perfections in our souls—a whole image, of his life and character, as if there were not another saint in the universe, as there is not another Saviour. But this is not to interfere with the rest. All Christians are to do the same thing in their turn. Hence growth in grace does not consist in measuring ourselves by others, or in comparing ourselves with them ; but in a personal increase in resemblance to our Lord.

2. In the next place, let us learn from this representation a lesson concerning the *activities and duties* of Christian life.

Sometimes we are halting and laggard. Sometimes we are timid and fearful. To each of these experiences Christ addresses himself, when he singles us out and calls us by name.

The notion is very prevalent that the love of God goes forth for his spiritual Israel in tribes, and for Judah in divis-

ions. A grand but vague conception of an over-ruling providence is about all that many believers seem able to attain. They hold all the blessings of the new covenant, as the early disciples are said to have held their goods, "in common." We are not accustomed to consider that each Christian has a whole Christ to himself; a whole gospel, as he has a whole atmosphere. What is sufficient for the entire race, is yet absolutely needful for each living soul.

The result of misconception in this particular is unhappy. It frequently leads to a sort of diffusiveness of experience, and a dissipation of responsibility. We imagine we are lost in the aggregate. Any act of humble service is unappreciated, and will pass unnoticed. Any act of neglect will escape reckoning now, and have no importance hereafter.

The rebuke and the corrective here are one and the same. Christ knows each one of us by name. The books are kept precisely as there were only pass-books for individual believers. Hence no one can be omitted who is faithful over few things; no one can be omitted who has neglected to be true to his Lord.

3. Again; let us apply this thought to our experiences of *suffering and bereavement.*

Trial is always apt to move the Christian from his steadfastness. Let a man believe that God has nothing but a general providence over him, and he cannot rest there. I think every real mourner wants something more specific than words of wise counsel about counting the hairs of his head, and watching the perilous accidents of little birds. He desires to know he has a personal and affectionate friend in the Saviour.

"There is one great throng of Christians on the earth, and another in heaven," so soliloquizes many a weak faith, "what am I among them? I may be lost or forgotten. I needed to come to the cross alone. I did come alone. Jesus saw me there. He came directly to me. And he never forgets faces. Mine was weary enough, I am sure, and there

were tears on it. But he remembers me enough to speak to me, if he would !”

Such a reflection is perfectly legitimate. Here our text comes into force at once, with all the narrative to which it belongs. Never was any one more truly bereaved than Mary of Magdala. Her dearest friend was gone, and she had not even the poor comfort of weeping at his grave. While she stood in tears by the tomb, the Saviour himself drew nigh. She was impetuous and worn with emotion. He spoke to her ; but as long as he called her “Woman,” she never looked up. Then he spoke again ; but he neither proffered sympathy or suggested explanation. He just repeated her name. Her heart leaped up to hear the well-known voice, with inexpressible tenderness and delight—“Jesus saith unto her, Mary ! She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni !” The comfort lay in the recognition.

4. Once more ; there is in this conception an inspiriting argument for *personal loyalty* to Jesus Christ.

Moses was once troubled in reference to his duty as the leader of the chosen people. He seems to have had but one plea to make, and it is astonishing to mark how it emboldened him. This was what he urged : “Thou hast said, I know thee by name !” That plea prevailed. The Lord replied, “I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken ; for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name !”

Ah, this is the help we have ! Let no humble worker for God be discouraged. He has one argument in his prayer to God for help, to which no reply is ever made but acquiescence and favor. Jesus recognizes our personal devotion to himself. He loves nothing so well as that sort of importunity which seems almost childish egotism to us. When Simon Peter said so naively, Lord, we have left all to follow thee, Jesus gave no check, but turned himself to reply in substance, Very well, and you will get your reward for it. The Christian soldier fixes his eye upon the Captain of his salvation, and

finds there a light which can fill the tamest soul with daring and work up even the spiritual coward to valor. Who has not breathed hard, and trembled with emotion, as he read in Jewish history about that glorious old Maccabee mother, whose seven sons were thrown in turn into the caldron of boiling oil, rather than be false to their faith? There was power enough in the feeble tones of that tortured woman's voice to hold those stalwart men firm in the midst of appalling agonies. She could see them die and never flinch, because it was right; and they could die and never flinch, because it was right and she saw them.

Now what the winged words of that Jewish matron could do, as she called her sons forth by name, the words of our Saviour can more than do for those who will hear them. He addresses us personally. He knows us by name.

5. And then, finally, here is found a most affectionate *call for a backslider* to return.

Jesus once knew you by name. You have a Christian name now. But you have seemed to give up the acquaintance. He has never given up yours. You once loved the mercy-seat; he sits there still. You once prayed in your closet, and with your household. The ashes of a sacrifice, long since burned out, are lying now on your family altar. There bends from the skies of love even this very hour the form of One who longs to restore you to his favor. You may have neglected duty; you may have gone from peace; you may possibly have slipped out of the church by an ingenuity which we all understand very well. But you are not yet out of the Saviour's remembrance, nor beyond the reach of his recall. He holds out his hand to you, and speaks your name.

"Jesus saith unto her, Mary! She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni!" Our translators have missed one of the fine points of this answer. *Rabbi* means Master, *Rabboni* means *My* Master. When Jesus calls you by name to return, you need only reply, **MY MASTER!**

FAR OFF, YET NEAR.

O BLESSED Lord !
 Once more, as at the opening of the day,
 I read thy word ;
 And now, in all I read, I hear thee say,
 " To those who love I will be ever near ;"
 And yet while this I hear,
 To me, O Lord, thou seemest far away.

Thou Sovereign One,
 Greater than mightiest kings, can it be fear,
 Or blinding sun
 Made by thy glory, so if thou art here,
 I cannot see thee ; yet this word declares
 That whoso loves and bears
 Thy Holy Name shall have thee ever near !

I bear thy name :
 That love, dear Lord, have I not long confessed ?
 Thy love's the same
 As when, like John, I leaned upon thy breast,
 And knew I loved : oh ! which of us has **changed ?**
 Am I from thee estranged ?
 O Lord, thou changest not ; I know the rest.

My doubting heart
 Trembles with its own weakness, and afraid
 I dwell apart
 From thee, on whom alone my hope is stayed ;
 I would, and yet I do not know thy will
 And perfect love—am still
 Trusting myself to be by self betrayed.

O blessed Lord !
 Far off, yet near, on me new grace bestow,
 As on thy Word
 I go to meet thee ; even now, I know
 Thou nearer art than when my quest began ;
 One cry, and thy feet ran
 To meet me ; Lord, I will not let thee go !

Life for Life.

" Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."—JOHN 12: 24, 25.

OUR Saviour is here talking of himself. He has been instructing his disciples concerning the ignominy of his coming departure. Yet he does not seem to consider crucifixion a shame. He applies quite a different term to it. His words intimate triumph. "The hour is come," he says, "that the Son of Man should be glorified." His decease was to be his true beginning; he must die to live; he must be crucified to be crowned.

The philosophy of a contradiction so startling, he now goes on to explain. It consisted in the revelation and development of a higher life in the instant of ruin to a lower. "This he said, signifying what death he should die." His earthly existence covered the germ of an existence celestial and divine. He was to become the life of men by dying in their place.

The illustration he employs to exhibit his thoughts is an exceedingly familiar and felicitous one. He says to those simple-minded hearers—Take a common seed, a lively grain of wheat such as the sower carries; examine it carefully; it will grow if it is planted; but the present form of it will disappear in the growing; it must die in order to live; its productiveness is now all out of sight, enveloped, hindered, imprisoned, by the remnants of the last year's harvest that gave it birth. The dry habiliments of its former existence are coarsely and

roughly enclosing all its promise of a new. You cannot discover the green shoot, the petaled blossom, or the ripened fruit, now in these husks. The grain must perpetuate itself by destruction; it must be propagated through decay. Out of the form it wears it must utterly perish, in order that it may reappear in the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear. Activity out of inertness, increase out of singleness, are to be secured only by reproduction out of ruin. This is the rule. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit."

The spiritual application of this principle is made directly. The Saviour seems to say of himself: I must die in order to live, that in me men may die in order to live. My work demands that the higher form of life shall come through the utter loss and destruction of the lower. I must be crucified for your pardon, but Omnipotence will raise me up again. A little while and ye shall not see me; and again a little while, and ye shall see me. I must suffer that you may reign. A life for a life; this is the penalty, the price, and the payment. This the law insists upon; this the gospel admits. The Son of Man must lie in the grave in order that he may rise anew from the dead, and in the rising become the first fruits of them which sleep in Jesus.

This application, so luminously annunciated, our Lord immediately extends, making it embrace not only his own case, but that of all likewise for whom his offering should become available. He avows this as the one open principle of the entire plan of redemption—*life for life*—life of the higher sort wrought out by sacrifice of the lower; and hence he adds, with unrestricted reach of meaning: "He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal."

I.—The doctrine of our text, therefore, thus drawn out by exposition is simple, but all-absorbing. *In all true conversion, consecration, and usefulness, life goes for life.* We are to look for harvests in proportion as we bury ourselves for seed.

1. Here, *conversion* is giving our old life for a new life, our temporal life for eternal life, our earthly life for a heavenly life, our present life for a future life. Men must count the cost of coming to the Saviour for redemption. The question they are to answer, each one for himself, is: Will I be Christ's for a life-time? Will I be slain by the law that I may become alive in the gospel? This requires not a mere impulse of emotion, but a calm hour of deliberate survey. Will you count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord? Will you present your body as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God?

What is a *living sacrifice*? One who considers himself a victim any moment, and yet the knife of the priest does not fall on his neck. The Christian is not offered by fire, but by zeal. He stands pledged to any extreme. His picture is found in the ox engraved upon the ancient seal, standing between an altar and a plough; the motto underneath tells the story in simple but sincere words—"Ready for either." I will go to the flame or the furrow. My Saviour shall call, and I will answer—Here am I. If I live, I live to the Lord; if I die, I die unto the Lord; whether living or dying, therefore, I am the Lord's. I am a living sacrifice.

This may seem very high ground, but he who has not reached it has not yet been converted; and he who is not willing to reach it, is not yet ready to be. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me; for whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it."

2. This being the principle of true conversion, therefore, you will readily see that true *consecration* must have the same. As the new life begins, so it must progress.

The separateness of walk, which every real follower of Jesus is bound to cultivate, finds its pattern in Jesus himself. He forsook heaven for earth, angels for men, wealth for poverty, the tranquil felicities of his eternal Father's companionship for the restless narrowness of an humble lot with no place

whereon to lay his head. Though he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, he made himself of no reputation, journeying from the throne to the footstool for the task of human redemption. He formed no domestic relationships. He left his parents' home early, and never erected one of his own. No engagements of business life were permitted to entangle him. At once, when he entered on his work of the ministry, he allowed himself to be involved in no cares, fettered with no occupation that would hinder his full absorption in preaching the glad tidings to men. His motto of existence was found in his youthful question—"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" He gave his entire self to his errand.

In this he demands imitation. He gave his life. He claims life for life. His words are—"If any man come to me, and hate not"—that is, as a matter of course, comparatively speaking—"his father and mother, wife and children, brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." "He that loveth father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." Here our Lord intends to show the extensiveness of our surrender to him. He gave up everything, even life, for us; he claims everything, even life, for himself.

3. You are prepared to see now that the same principle underlies all true *usefulness*. The secret of success is found in just this one utterance—life for life. As a corn of wheat must die to be fruitful, so a believer must put his life into his effort. He must be willing that self should be lost in the toil, sunk in it, absorbed in it, overwhelmed and forgotten in his labor for God. That which he sows is not quickened except it die. We work for souls; therefore we must put our souls in our work. Self is sternly to be denied. The former existence must be crowded down until it presents no hindrance. The apostolic direction is, that we "mortify our members." That does not mean that we merely humiliate them, abase

them, shame them. The word signifies make dead. Our passions are to be killed, crucified, until we are dead to the world, and the world dead to us. "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

Our divine Redeemer, here as before, offers his own example. He gave his own blood, drop by drop, for our joys and privileges, one by one, in a sublime cost and payment.

"He sank beneath his heavy woes to raise us to a crown :
There's ne'er a gift his hand bestows, but cost his heart a groan."

This ought to be the Christian's measure of devotion in effort for others. "Hereby perceive we his love, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." This is the real spirit of fidelity. It will live or die at God's will. It only longs to apprehend that for which it has been apprehended of Christ Jesus. This temper of mind and heart, entering into any endeavor of intelligent zeal, renders it almost omnipotent; it "Laughs at impossibility, and says—It shall be done!" It expects to die, yet it lives. Poor, it has vast resources; feeble, it is out of weakness made strong; losing its life utterly, it eternally preserves it.

II.—And now, my Christian friends, I wish it might be in my power to render this admonition of the text fully our own. What is the instruction our Saviour desires, in all this, to give? Simply this: From the beginning to the end of our earthly round of existence and service, there is only one rule of unvarying decision—*life for life*. If one wants the new life by conversion, he must give life for life. If one asks for the measure of consecration, the answer is—*life for life*. If one inquires for an unfailing principle of success in usefulness, here it is furnished by the Lord of glory—*life for life*. Apt indeed is the explanation it furnishes of many a mystery; and forcible is the argument it urges for many an honest endeavor of persistent zeal.

1. How quickly, for example, does it answer the question concerning *our repeated failures in trying to do good*. Our children are not converted. Our efforts to help others are not prospered. Our church is not revived in graces of family or individual piety. Endeavors that promise much, run behind strangely, and miscarry from the time that we touch them. You have become discouraged. You murmur—Alas, my prayers are unheard ; my toils are unheeded ; others are blessed, but I am passed by ; they see good springing up ; I look around me, and there is no life rising from all I have attempted !

Ah, I catch your own words. I put it to you soberly ; *no life comes up*—can it be because *you put no life in* ? The grain, which springs into abundance, must dismiss its own germ into the stalk sent up from the spot beneath which it lies buried. He that withholds life, abides alone. He that is urged by false economy to hoard the wheat which ought to be planted, will be not only saddened at the harvest with no multiplied yield, but will be startled to discover that mildew and decay have ruined his garner. Perhaps it was a miserable scant measure of seed we cast in. It cost us nothing. We did our work, we offered our prayers, we gave our counsels, carelessly, formally, listlessly, mechanically. Of course that seed did not spring up. No life ever comes up from fields where no life was sown.

2. Again, how readily this explains the *smallness of the spiritual harvests of the church at large*. It is because the members of Christ's body are trying to save life. They are putting themselves on a low diet of self examination, and fraternal admonition. Whereas they should leave themselves entirely to the Saviour, and be busied with the redemption of souls. The world is full of work to be done ; and yet the church uses the major half of its energies keeping itself in order. It is wasting its cares upon its own communion ; and so the grand cause languishes. For stinginess in seed-sowing no fertility of a field can atone. Oh, if when we gain even one

grace of piety, we would just put it at earnest living work, we could keep it! If we turn around upon it, and nurse it, and cherish it, and embosom it, it will die. If we put it in the ground, it will not abide alone. He that hateth his life shall keep it unto life eternal. External aggressiveness is the church's only real defence. It is the best thing for the army to order an advance along the whole line.

If a man would keep his influence, let him use his influence to win souls. If he would keep his health, let him become fatigued with honest work in winning souls. If he would keep his wealth, let him fairly lavish it to win souls. If he would save his own soul, let him put it into living endeavor to win other souls to the cross. Just remember that in all history they have been most useful who have flung themselves into their duty as soldiers fling themselves into the breaches which a forlorn hope has made. When this is done, then the harvests of the church will be plentiful and rich.

3. Yet again ; how abruptly this rebukes all mere mock-heroic feelings, and *all mere sentimentalism in piety*. It is well to bear in mind that the Christian in these times is not always pledged to die for his Master, but the rather to live for him. Even in the final supplication, uttered at the earliest communion-table, our divine Saviour himself said : "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." There is no courage in one's offering to slip away quietly into heaven, the moment he hopes his sins are pardoned. Christ enlists his soldiers not for surrender and parole, and not even for hospital duty ; but for campaigning and fighting in the field. "There is no discharge in that war." All these multiplied forms of devoteeism, by which one tortures himself into maceration, are not to be in any instance mistaken for devotion. No monk is in his cell nearer to Jesus, merely because he is mechanically separate from other people. A shut up idler is an idler still. A nun is no more a bride of heaven for

refusing to be a bride on earth. The promise of a white robe by and bye is no surer for her wearing a hideous hood now. Burning a corn of wheat destroys it, to be sure, just as much as its falling into the ground does ; but the one is followed by a harvest of much fruit, the other abides, as it began, alone. It is not necessary for one immediately at conversion to look around for an instrument of suicide. Dying to the world is not always dying out of it. These may seem to themselves exceedingly sweet exemplars of unwonted sanctity, and a few silly enthusiasts may minister to their vanity with plaudits. But old Epaphroditus, carrying messages from the Christians at Philippi to the lonely inmate of the Mammertine prison in Rome, was worth a hundred of them ; for " he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life," that he might supply the lack of service towards a silently suffering servant of God.

4. Again ; let this discussion teach us the *temper in which we ought ever to work*. Let unselfishness, and self-sacrifice, be our motto. Put life into every effort you make, however humble. Take the giving of a tract, the uttering of a counsel, the teaching of a lesson—for an example. When you attempt it, it is needful that you impress your whole soul upon the act. You want that man's life, and you must force your life into the endeavor you make to attain it. Put your faith into it ; believe you will have the blessing of God. Put your prayer into it ; go forth with the petition yet moist on your lips, which you have just offered at the mercy-seat. Put your zeal into it ; let the ardor of your devotion glow on your cheek, and fairly flash from your eye. Put your experience into it ; try to remember how you felt when you were earliest asked to come to Jesus. Put love into it, the love wherewith the Saviour taught you to love him. Put your hope into it ; go afterwards inquiring for results. In a word, put yourself into it. Centre the entire force and fervor of the new life Christ gave you, in one wistful, earnest, yearning desire for that soul's conversion. Then expect that God will give it to you !

5. Here likewise is a counsel concerning *duty which involves*

danger. The motto of all real living to Christ is: "I die daily." "For thy sake we are killed all the day long." Just as a corn of wheat must perish to be fruitful, so every believer must put all the surroundings of his earthly existence into his surrender to the Redeemer. "Hereby perceive we Christ's love, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." In the early hour of his first espousal to God, the believer gives himself entirely away, with all the sacredness of devotion of a bride to her husband; for richer or for poorer, in bloom or in wasting, for better or for worse, in life or in death. Feeble-minded sympathy once implored the brave-hearted Paul to keep out of peril. Remember his courageous answer: "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus!" How little of the apostolic zeal there is in our willingness to undergo risk in saving souls! We are afraid to wear out early. Think of Whitefield's noble words: "I am immortal till my work is done!" What is life, what is health, what is ease? Souls are perishing for whom Christ died! An epidemic in a suspicious neighborhood drives us home in miserable cowardice and alarm, while for wealth men are tempting the winds of India and the miasmas of the tropics! And what even if we perish? That was what we bargained for in the outset.

The recluses of an old Franciscan convent were summoned to go forth to minister to the sick and dying, once when the plague was raging in the city. They were allotted one by one to the duty, and went without hesitation or reserve to their solemn task. When each day was done, the man returned to an out-house within the inclosure, and *if he could*, rang a bell to show he was alive. If that tolling monitor was silent at sundown, then another monk was dispatched for his relief if possible, at any rate to continue the work. They knew that their comrade had fallen. When the pestilence was finally stayed, it was found that twenty-four unshrinking men had paid the

penalty of their devotion. But think of it, how many lives of men had these lives saved? In the measure of life for life, an unerring Eye struck the balance. "Whosoever shall seek to save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life, shall preserve it." Here Christ means to counsel fidelity, and forbid fear, under all perilous and extreme forms of trial. He says: Give your life to me; it is more precious in my sight than in your own. I will keep it; you cannot. If you attempt to manage your protection, you will be more imperiled than ever. Do your duty and leave the rest to me. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

6. Here, finally, is a lesson as to *the ease of all usefulness*. It is sin only in this world which is difficult. Once bring a man into communion with the Saviour, and he swings as naturally into doing good as a star into its orbit.

You remember the motto on the pedestal of the Eddystone lighthouse—"To give light and save life." So out on the rugged shores of time each child of God is set. The waves are around him, the eternal ocean breaks at his feet. Storms are wild, and midnights are gloomy. Yet, untremulous and undimmed, gleams that lantern on the rock, to give light that shall save life. There is nothing strange or strained in this. Poor mariners are drifting here and there far out to sea. They discern the faithful glimmer, and are piloted in. Now it costs the lantern nothing more to do this than it does to live. For the very oil it consumes radiates the rays. The beams the keeper trims it by are those that save the sailors. It does its duty when it is true to itself. And that soul which grace has lighted, saves life when it keeps its life true. "He *doth* much," says old Thomas à Kempis, "who *liveth* well." Here is a picture of true Christian manhood. "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

ALL FOR THEE.

JESUS, I my cross have taken,
 All to leave, and follow thee ;
 Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
 Thou, from hence, my all shalt be !
 Perish, every fond ambition,
 All I've sought, or hoped, or known,
 Yet how rich is my condition,
 God and heaven are still my own !

Let the world despise and leave me,
 They have left my Saviour, too ;
 Human hearts and looks deceive me—
 Thou art not, like them, untrue ;
 Oh ! while thou dost smile upon me,
 God of wisdom, love, and might,
 Foes may hate, and friends disown me,
 Show thy face, and all is bright.

Go then, earthly fame and treasure !
 Come disaster, scorn, and pain !
 In thy service pain is pleasure,
 With thy favor, loss is gain.
 I have called thee, Abba, Father !
 I have stayed my heart on thee !
 Storms may howl, and clouds may gather,
 All must work for good to me.

Soul, then know thy full salvation,
 Rise o'er sin, and fear, and care ;
 Joy to find in every station
 Something still to do or bear.
 Think what Spirit dwells within thee ;
 Think what Father's smiles are thine ;
 Think that Jesus died to win thee ;
 Child of heaven, canst thou repine ?

Haste thee on from grace to glory,
 Armed by faith, and winged by prayer !
 Heaven's eternal day's before thee,
 God's own hand shall guide thee there ;
 Soon shall close thy earthly mission,
 Soon shall pass thy pilgrim days,
 Hope shall change to glad fruition,
 Faith to sight, and prayer to praise.

Serviceable Greatness.

"Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."

—MATTHEW 20: 27.

IN the conversation, of which our text forms a part, our Lord does not seem at all surprised, nor even grieved, to find his disciples already raising the question of preëminence in his kingdom. He only informs them of the right way in which to proceed. If you put with this verse the one before it and the one after it, you will perceive that he accepts, as perfectly natural, greatness as an object of even Christian ambition. He only limits the form of expression, and exercise, which ambition should choose. It did not make men masters of each other, but servants. It did not confer authority, but serviceableness. So he says—"Whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all." And then he proffers himself as the one grand exemplar of greatness estimated upon the new principle—"For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and to give his life a ransom for many."

I.—It becomes us, then, to check ourselves in some of the unintelligent tirades we are prone to utter against ambition as a reprehensible motive in human history. Christ has not judged it so. Vain and illusory as our prejudice may often declare this goal to be, it is not at all unlikely we shall be at some time found among the excited athletes that are running towards it.

The Scriptures are crowded with incident to illustrate the

manifest advantage which has often occurred, even to the best cause known to us, to the positive progress of the kingdom of God, merely from the greatness of a few of those who have loved it, and suddenly proffered help.

It was a fine thing for the children of Israel, when they went down into Egypt, to find Joseph there in most exalted position, at the head of Pharaoh's household. It was a finer thing still, when in the fulness of time the chosen tribes were to be led out with a high hand, and an outstretched arm, that Moses was possessed of the loftiest order of intellect, and had been educated in all the learning of the Egyptians. It will have to be remembered gratefully, that in those terrible struggles for the right of way into the promised land, the chosen people were prospered mightily in the presence of Joshua as the noblest military commander of the time. And even when the nation was settled finally in Canaan, it was well that David rose to the very summit of power, and Solomon shone in the uttermost splendor of regal rule.

Nor even under New Testament advantage must it be forgotten, how helpful it was to this poverty-stricken band of disciples, to whom the Saviour was talking, that when he died there should suddenly come to view a rich Nicodemus to purchase the costly spices for his burial, and a wealthy Joseph of Arimathea to give them loan of a tomb. There was always in the history of the Church, under both dispensations, a recognized place for great men ; and a purpose, for the furtherance of which their highest reach of greatness could come into play.

There is no need of growing cynical therefore, when we hear the rolling of cannon, whose salvos tell that the anniversary of a statesman's birth has come round again. There is more reason for gratitude than for jealousy, when garlands are hung on memorial columns. Solemn processions, stately parades, may be considered quite in order, when a public benefactor has gone down to his honored rest. That nation would soon degenerate which showed neglect or forgetfulness of those who have lived for its service, or died for its fame.

There is need only that we exercise a careful discrimination as to the exact meaning of our Lord in the text. He bids his disciples nowhere to reject or despise the noble gifts to which men generally attribute greatness—power, learning, wealth, influence, social position—all these are valuable beyond any depreciation. But how shall a man use them—that is the question. And our Saviour replies—use them not for selfish exaltation or for personal ends, but for others' good—not for lordship but for service. The great shall simply be a great servant; the chief among you shall simply be chief servant.

II.—This leads us forward a step. Our Lord proffers himself as the fine example of greatness; a greatness not only shown in usefulness, but earned by persistency in serving others, and crowned finally by laying down his life in behalf of many.

It is lawful always to be emulous in seeking resemblance to Jesus Christ. It is only that ambition which centres on self that is everywhere rebuked. In this hurry and strife of existence, the worst side of human nature has been driven into prominence. That motive, which was intended only to promote a salutary forwardness in well-doing, has been forced into unnatural violence and vice. And the general results are most unattractive and unhappy.

Trees in the thick forest grow exceedingly tall and straight, just in the act of stretching upwards to monopolize the sunshine; but when the unambitious edge of the forest, in all its richness of verdured leafage, is cut away, the trees appear most dry and unlovely in their lean length of trunk, ungenerous of foliage all the lofty way up. Thus with men; they make an extraordinarily poor show, when their petty rivalries come into notice, and their selfish desires to overtop each other are unexpectedly exposed.

But on the contrary, the life of such as defy the tempest to give the shelterless a covert—such as devote the best energies of their lives to mitigating the ills that flesh is heir to—

this is not only noble, but beautiful in its time. The world at large are generally honest enough to admit this estimate without much question. The philanthropist who has helped the poor to rise ; the statesman who has led his country on to higher advancement ; the soldier who has bravely periled his life in order to quell a rising in arms, and establish the right over the wrong ; the scholar who has wrought out in his vigils systems or appliances of truth which show men advantage or aid them in bearing their burdens ; in one word, the man who in public or private has addressed himself sincerely to the work of being serviceable to his fellow-men, he it is who receives the award of greatness. He abides in the eminent estimation of the good and the true of all ages. " Put a sundial over my grave, and let me be forgotten," were the dying words of John Howard. A most modest request surely ; and yet it is fair to say that, though his countrymen, and the world at large, would have granted him any other prayer, this they promptly denied. " The name of the righteous shall be held in everlasting remembrance, but the name of the wicked shall rot."

I think we conceive much more nobly of Paul, working at making tents in Corinth, that he might go on another preaching tour without being chargeable to anybody, than we do of Herod, with all his fine apparel, uttering his rotund sentences while the people cried—" It is the voice of a god." So I think we have far more admiration for that reputation of goodness and piety which made the multitudes bring forth their sick, and lay them where Peter's shadow, as he passed by, might fall on them—than we have for that reputation of splendor which made fawning courtiers praise Cæsar at Rome. Even Esther's fame comes down more welcome than Vashti's, though both were queens to the same king ; for though the one may have had peerless beauty, the other periled life for her nation.

But the argument may well be suffered to rest here. Our Lord has laid the principle down, and we may be quite con-

tent to accept it. Three times in the sacred history is it recorded that the disciples strove together for the highest place. Once he took a little child and set him before them as a pattern : once he arose and washed their feet like a slave ; once he gave them the word plainly—"whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all." It is not to be supposed that men of the world will accept a principle so destructive of selfish and personal ends. The day has not yet passed when Diotrophes loveth the preëminence. But there is the greater force to be attached to the words in this direction, twice repeated—"among you." Among *you* it is to be expected that your Lord's command will hold power. In the Church of Christ greatness must be measured by usefulness : he is most Christian, who is most like Christ ; and he is most like Christ, who serves all the rest, and will even lay down his life for many.

III.—Let us, then, proceed immediately to draw some few inferential lessons from this counsel, which will also serve as applications for ourselves.

1. First of all, we see that *all true greatness must be sought indirectly.*

We seek for serviceableness, and then greatness comes. No man ever became great by laboring to be so. Indeed, there is nothing so belittling as for one to be continually afraid he is going to become little. Most pitiable and melancholy spectacle is that, when men and women are found complaining they are not noticed. Men and women who are useful, cannot be kept out of notice. The way to keep in position is just to keep in service, and go on doing good all the day. I have heard of a man's refusing to speak to his friend ; but I never heard once of a man's refusing to speak to his servant. We have a profound respect for what we lean heavily on. Eminence is not to be reached by a frantic struggle after eminence. The road to it is much more commonplace. He that would dazzle must dig. There is some force as well as much poetry in the words of Schiller :—

"Straightforward goes the lightning's flash, and straight
 The fearful path of the cannon-ball. Direct
 It flies, and rapid, shattering that it may reach,
 And shattering what it reaches. But the road
 The human being travels, that on which
 Blessing comes and goes, follows the river's course,
 The valley's playful winding, curves around
 The corn-field and the hill of vines, honoring
 The holy bounds of property ; and thus,
 Serene, though late, leads to its desired end."

Recall one familiar text, and give it analysis. "Let your *light*"—not yourself ; divine grace in you, not personal gifts—"so shine before men, that they may see"—not *you*, but—"your good works." And this simply, "that they may glorify"—*not you at all*, but—"your Father which is in heaven." Here is an intense thrusting of self back out of sight and out of notice. And yet the Christian, who will do that persistently, can never help it but that he will become conspicuous. Think of the graceful surrender of John the Baptist, when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God !" He had been a man of mark before. Now he retreated out of notice. His last and noblest act was to say, I am not the Christ ; I am a mere Voice ; he must increase ; I must decrease. Hence when he seized and waved the torch of truth, that it might flash radiance on Jesus' face, how could he help it but that it should illumine his own ? Thus, and thus only, he became a "bright and shining light" himself, by walking straight up to Christ, and saying, "This is the true Light of the world !" The sunshine he stood in made him luminous forever.

2. Again : we see here *a perfectly just test to apply in all our estimates of human worth.*

We have many ways of fashioning out grades among men in this ingenious world of ours. Those who belong to what is termed an aristocracy, stick most sturdily for blood. Corsican soldiers must never be permitted to herd among kings. But it is amusing to observe how often the world's history negatives the world's opinions. The moment any man be-

comes useful, the people will take him up, and put him in a throne. So everywhere ; the state, the community, the church, are full of men and women claiming prerogative ; but the wise world plods on, and puts forward those who are useful. He that would be chiefest, has to become a servant of the rest. And if he be a self-seeker, it is most likely it will fare hard with him till he learns the lesson. "This statement of Christ conveys, that the only superiority in his kingdom is that which springs from the service of love ; and the only superiority of power is that which appears in ministering."

Oliver Cromwell found (so they say) twelve great silver statues in York cathedral. Suddenly he asked, "Who are those expensive fellows up there?" The ecclesiastics told him they were the disciples of Christ. "Ah, very well," said the rough old Puritan, "let them come down and be melted up ; then, like Christ, they will go about doing good !"

Right through all the tinsel splendors of royal position, right through all the meretricious adornments of fashion, right through all the factitious importance of wealth, this principle forces itself, and demands a new measurement of those men and women who have been calling themselves great. It asks—what are they doing for Christ, and his cause, and his people? In the exalted name of the one Master, it utters the challenge—"Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say."

3. Of course this leads us on to a third lesson : we see here likewise *a fresh register offered by which to estimate historic fame and splendor.*

Now it must be remembered that greatness, as a term employed by the world at large, is susceptible of a wide variety of definitions. Its real meaning must be judged according to standards of time and circumstance, which unfortunately cannot be considered fixed. One age rejects what another accepts ; one generation repudiates what the next generation crowns with honor. It is not clear, therefore, what mankind would at any one time agree to consider as either truly excellent in character or eminent in value.

But here divine wisdom decides for us. It constitutes *serviceableness* the criterion of judgment. It declares we must hold men accountable for the good they have done for each other. Amid all the thundering plaudits of a mad generation this gentle, quiet truth asserts itself. These garlands will fade, these flashing splendors of luminous praise will go out in darkness, these parades and processions will come to a halt. And then the serious question will be raised, what has the hero done for his race—what has he added to the world's aggregate of usefulness—what heart has he comforted—what mind has he illumined—what hand has he lifted—what foot has he helped to speed on?

To be a Christian is to be Christ-like; to be Christ-like is to be God-like. He became poor that we might be made rich. Some one expressed his surprise once to John Newton that he should have so much pity and love for the depraved and the vile. And he replied, "I consider that if it had not been for divine grace, I might have been as abandoned as they are!" When a name is flung out into the community, it is perfectly fair to inquire who bore it, and why does it now ask homage? The Romans decreed a crown always to any citizen who had saved a man's life. But the crown of Christ's kingdom is given only to him who has saved a man's soul.

4. Yet another lesson may be learned here: we see also a possible *explanation of failures* in great projects.

He who is bravest and truest is ever the one to recognize most humbly just wherein his disaster lies, when all his plans come to naught. It seems to me there is no more pathetic record in all biography, than that which the honored Chalmers left for himself. He had lived long enough to hear his favorite project to relieve Britain of pauperism pronounced a failure. Then he wrote this: "I have been set on the erection of my Babel. I have trusted more to my own arguments and combinations among my followers, than to prayers. And though I cannot resign my convictions, I must now—and

surely it is good to be so taught—I must now, under the experimental sense of my own helplessness, acknowledge with all humility, yet with hope in the efficacy of a blessing from on high, still in reserve for the day of God's own appointed time, that except the Lord build the house, the builders labor in vain !”

Oh, what a sight is this ! The old veteran soldier of the cross, bringing his sword, and quietly laying it down at eventide, confessing even with tears that though he believes the temper of the weapon is still good, yet because of the weakness of his arm, and the faithlessness of his heart, the enemy is still unvanquished. Surely never was this great Scotchman so great, as when he humbled himself thus to be useful.

5. In the fifth and last place, we see here *the first step in that way which surely leads to eminence.*

We must be content to stoop to conquer. They say that an eagle, when contemplating a higher flight than usual, suddenly bends her career downwards, and pushes her whole strength into a swoop directly towards the earth ; but by the impetus thus gained, she is certain to rise with accelerated velocity, as she passes peerlessly on up towards the sun. Thus with all greatness ; it begins with self-abasement. The chiefest becomes first a servant.

It is for us, then, to strive to be serviceable to those with whom we are thrown. Wise remark that, uttered by Goethe : “ Blessed is the man, who believes he has an idea by which he may aid his fellow-creatures ! ” Alas, if only half the breath could be spent in saying kind words to the lonely that is foolishly wasted in mere assertion of self, and mere complaints at want of appreciation, there would be far more men and women worthy of notice than there are now ! It is not well to avoid the pressure of these reproaches, by saying that these ancient counsels of the New Testament bore only on the heathen of those days. It is true, there is no word that means spiritual humility in the Roman language. There

was none in the Greek, till the Apostle made it for Christian need. But it is just as true that there is pride, regnant and baleful, and needing to be rebuked, among us, as anywhere else in the world. We must bend our necks to Christ's yoke, and seek to know the Master's way.

"Oh, what a world of beauty a loving heart might plan,
If man but did his duty, and helped his fellow-man!"

The Persians have a simple saying, that "a stone, which is fit for the wall, will not be left in the roadway." There is nothing so sure to make a true man appreciated, as for himself to forget his own worthiness, and remember only the world's want.

Oh, how pitiful, in the light of such considerations as these, seem all our petty rivalries here on earth! What mighty convulsions society has to undergo, over the advent of a new equipage, a costlier dress, a statelier mansion! "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision." The great earth moves on, its heroes and heroines disappear, and no man layeth it to heart. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

LABOR IS LIFE.

PAUSE not to dream of the future before us,
 Pause not to weep the wild cares that come o'er us,
 Hark, how Creation's deep musical chorus
 Unintermitting, goes up to Heaven !
 Never the ocean wave falters in flowing,
 Never the little seed stops in its growing,
 More and more richly the rose heart keeps glowing,
 Till from its nourishing stem it is riven.

" Labor is worship !"—the robin is singing,
 " Labor is worship !"—the wild bee is ringing,
 Listen ! that eloquent whisper upspringing,
 Speaks to thy soul from out nature's great heart.
 From the dark cloud flows the life-giving shower,
 From the rough sod, comes the soft breathing flower,
 From the small insect, the rich coral bower,
 Only man, in the plan, ever shrinks from his part.

Labor is life !—'Tis the still water faileth,
 Idleness ever despaireth, bewaileth ;
 Keep the watch wound, for the dark rust assaileth !
 Flowers droop and die in the stillness of noon.
 Labor is glory !—the flying cloud lightens,
 Only the waving wing changes and brightens,
 Idle hearts only, the dark future frightens,
 Play the sweet keys, wouldst thou keep them in tune.

Labor is rest—from the sorrows that greet us,
 Rest from all petty vexations that meet us,
 Rest from sin-promptings that ever entreat us,
 Rest from world-sirens that lure us to ill.
 Work—and pure slumbers shall wait on thy pillow,
 Work—thou shalt ride over Care's coming billow.
 Lie not down wearied 'neath Woe's weeping willow !
 Work with a stout heart and resolute will !

Stoop not, though shame, sin, and anguish are round thee,
 Bravely fling off the cold chain that hath bound thee,
 Look to yon pure Heaven, smiling beyond thee !
 Rest not content in thy darkness—a clod !
 Work—for some good, be it ever so slowly,
 Cherish some flower, be it ever so lowly.
 Labor !—all labor is noble and holy—
 Let thy good deeds be thy prayer to thy God !

Confession of Sins.

"For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me"

—PSALM 51 : 3.

ONE little sentence there is, of only three words in length, which is in any language the hardest to speak just as it ought to be spoken. Seven men there are, who have been mentioned in the inspired record as having made the trial. Of these, two seem to have succeeded : the remaining five failed. You will be surprised when you learn how simple the sentence is. It is only this : "I have sinned !"

The afflicted Job, worn to impatience with pain, grew restless and unsubmitive ; but had grace enough to afterwards admit the wrong. "I have sinned ; what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men !"

The sorrowful David, rebuked under the stern fidelity of the prophet Nathan, saw his wickedness, acknowledged its aggravations, deplored its vileness, and perceived its reach. "I have sinned against the Lord !"

These did well ; the others all made a miserable mistake in the spirit of their confession, though they employed precisely the same formula of language. Pharaoh was among the number. He sent for Moses and Aaron. He was going to make a fine impression by his magnanimity. He said when they arrived, "I have sinned this time ; the Lord is righteous ; and I and my people are wicked." But the tyrant was only hardening his heart while he spoke, and striving to gain time for the evasion of duty. He was frightened, not repentant.

Balaam was another who had equally poor success. On his way to curse Israel, with his soul full of ambition and greed, and his will set quietly on disobedience, his path was blocked,

and even the beast he rode rebuked him. When his eyes were opened, and he discovered the bright form of the Angel of the Lord directly in his path, he burst out in his consternation with the cry, "I have sinned!" But that there was no sincerity in the words is easily proved from the fact that he went right on in the execution of the same iniquitous purpose.

Next in the history comes Achan, the troubler of Israel. Strangely circled with the pressing proofs of his crime, and solemnly urged to confess the guilt of it, he answered, "I have sinned." Only a sullen admission, however; he knew he could not deny the theft. And a great cairn of stones was raised over his beaten body, before the fierceness of God's anger could be turned away from his people.

Then we meet these same words spoken by Saul. Under the terrible denunciations of Samuel, he writhed in the agony of a wounded pride and fear of disrepute. Seeing no hope of escape, and most ungraciously making a virtue of necessity, he suffered the simple sentence to escape his lips, "I have sinned." Such an admission might have had some fitness to it, but for his clumsy attempt at extenuation and apology. "I have sinned; for I feared the people and obeyed their voice." The moment he tried to shift the responsibility of his wickedness, and lay it upon the demands of the populace, his words became a mere mockery.

Last of all on the sorrowful list of failures we read the name of Judas. He said, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood." Only to the chief priests, however, did he say it, not to God. There was no hope for him in the admission: the tones of his voice were hollow with despair.

Now I have quoted thus at length all these historic attempts merely to show you that words of confession, even the clearest and most explicit, may be easily spoken, and yet there may be in them no true repentance for sin. Real life seems to have been sadly deficient in exemplary penitence, to afford only two out of seven instances in fifteen hundred years of history. And even when our Saviour wished to illus-

trate the godly sorrow that worketh repentance unto life, he thought it safest to imagine a penitent, and planning a parable, put the confession in the mouth of a prodigal—"Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son!"

I.—In further exposition of the thought, let me seek to show what true confession of sin is not; and that will lead the way to a fair consideration of what it is. I have read you one verse from the fifty-first psalm as my text; but almost any other in that song of penitence and prayer would have served me as well. They will all bear study. Let any burdened heart, that cannot find fitting words of its own, repeat that Psalm on bended knees before God. He will hear it, and forgive.

1. Confession of sin is not *a mere abandonment of sin as a losing game*. That was a shrewd, but not very flattering estimate, found on record in the private thoughts of an old divine. "I believe," he says, "that it will be shown that the repentance of most men is not so much sorrow for sin as sin, or real hatred of it, as sullen sorrow that they are not allowed to sin." When any individual surrenders an iniquitous occupation because he perceives public opinion is setting against it, and that eventually he will be injured by its continuance, it is simply mockery for him to try to make moral capital out of the relinquishment. When a young man forsakes dissipation, because it endangers his place with his employer; when a merchant gives up dishonest trade-marks, because his tricks are becoming transparent, and honesty seems the best policy—this is not penitence for sin; it is only the hypocrisy of worldly-wisdom. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." But he will fail, who simply seeks it for the profit.

2. Again, confession of sin is not *the mere relinquishment of sin as a weariness*. There is a certain satiety in some forms of indulgence which makes worldly pleasure to become distasteful by-and-by to almost all who pursue it. "If thou

kill not sin, till it die of itself," says Augustine, "sin has killed thee, and not thou thy sin." A worn-out voluptuary need not seek to make merit, by turning anchorite. He is disgusted, not contrite. Men sometimes think they have left sin, when really it is sin that has left them. True confession acknowledges the sin that is pleasing, and turns from it before it becomes distasteful. A votary of fashion is not necessarily a penitent before God, because she no longer enjoys the round of hollow conventionals, and has become literally worn-out with frivolity. The church of Christ is exceedingly large, and entrance is quite easy, and the embrace is wide ; but it ought to be understood that peace has its home only in the loving heart of a forgiven child. Neither the world nor the church can give that, nor take it away.

3. Once more, confession of sin is not *the mere surrender of sin as disreputable*. How singular is the fact that men sometimes fear their fellow-men, when they are perfectly careless how they appear before God ! Sin is frequently abandoned because it is unfashionable. Profane persons check even the semblance of swearing, when in the presence of clergymen. It shows good breeding to respect the saintly garments ! Sabbath-breakers guard with much caution the forms of their wickedness, so as to preserve all the decencies of gentlemanly life. There is no sense of the true nature of sin. Men will lie sometimes, who consider it the last degree of insult to be told they lie. There are just two ways of looking at sin ; there are not even three. The one sees it to be guilty in the sight of an infinitely pure God. The other treats it as a mere conventional thing which takes its character from circumstances. Hazael had the one idea, Joseph had the other. Hazael was tempted, and made the grandiloquent reply—"Is thy servant a dog that he should do such a thing ?" Joseph was tempted, and made the eloquent reply—"How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ?" The one invoked mere decency ; the other fell back on his piety.

4. And yet again, confession of sin is not *the mere acknowledgment of sin, with the purpose of making the acknowledgment serve as a reparation of wrong.* There can be no intelligent view of the gospel plan in the minds of those who imagine that they are restored to God's favor on the ground of simple admission of their guilt. Confession is the mere condition. The ground of our pardon is the atonement made by the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence there is not necessarily any piety in the mere act of penitence. There is no merit in sorrow over sin. They are making miserable mistake, who complain that they are suffering so long under conviction of sin. Remorse has no virtue in it. Judas hung himself in the keenest remorse. The devils grovel under the wildest remorse, when they believe and tremble. Hell is ~~filled~~ filled with mere remorse. There is no salvation out of Christ. There is no peace save in Christ. Infinite justice accepts no atonement save the death of Christ. He that is not in Christ by saving faith is not a Christian. He is not even on in the way to be a Christian, till he begins to believe. Repentance can make no reparation for a broken law. Yet God requireth the past. Confession of sin does not put the parties back where they were. Does mere remorse of a thief restore property? Does the remorse of a murderer restore his victim to life? Will the repentance of either bring back innocence before the majesty of the law they have broken? What folly, then, to suppose that God's government is less vigilant, less inflexible, than ours! When we repent, it must be in the full view of the Cross, or it will be ineffectual. The work of the Redeemer repairs the wreck and confusion our sin has made. We repent, and then he forgives us. The order is one of mere time, not of necessary cause and consequence at all. We are forgiven through the sovereign grace of our Maker, unconstrained, magnanimous, and free.

II.—This leads us on directly to consider, in the second place, the characteristic marks of true confession of sin. I can only mention them briefly as we pass.

1. First, true confession is *personal*. It is a shrewd remark of the old philosopher Seneca, that men love lenses for looking at their neighbors' faults, rather than mirrors for examining their own. This inveterate folly needs to be guarded against most carefully. It is our own sins that we are to acknowledge before God. Never is a man so thoroughly separate from others, never so utterly disintegrated in every respect, as when penitently imploring pardon for the multiform wrongs he has done. The loneliness of guilt is unbroken. The true penitent looks off at the sin he committed, and recognizes his full ownership in it. He alone must bear the responsibility. He says in his heart: "That is mine!" This was the exact experience of David as handed down to us in the text: "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me." I think every Christian heart knows just what he meant. In the silence of the midnight, when all were in slumber around you, wakeful under the stings of a perturbed conscience, you seemed able to look up from your bed, straining an almost supernatural vision through the ceiling, through the roof, and through the sky, far on upwards, till you met the eye of God's infinite purity in the blaze of heaven itself; and there, emboldened by your own desperation, you have said in agony: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned! Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me! A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise!" •

2. Secondly, confession of sin should be *frank*. No subterfuge of concealment should be tolerated for a moment. What will it avail with God? "Naked and open are all things unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do!" To even attempt to hide one precious darling indulgence will vitiate and forfeit the whole. "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me." Our first parents in the garden of Eden were not singular at all in the forms of evading responsibility they employed. Adam, when charged with sin, said: the woman gave it to me. Eve, under the same reproach, said: the ser-

pent gave it to me. This is human nature. Here is our temptation. Let there be no attempt at extenuation in our confessions of guilt. Let us throw up our refuges, and admit the worst, resting on the abounding grace of God. We gain nothing by instituting any examination as to the grades of our sin. He came to seek them which are lost. He will save to the uttermost. We are to admit everything ; say in the fullness of our sincerity—we are vile. Then when our iniquity is acknowledged, he will listen to our prayer.

3. Thirdly, true confession of sin should be *definite*. It should fasten upon particulars. If one means to make a real acknowledgment, he knows what he means to acknowledge. Now there is such a thing as a man's being overwhelmed with argument on depravity, so as to admit that he is a sinner. All mankind are sinners ; he is a man ; therefore he is a sinner. This cold logic will suffice for the time being to prove that he is wicked. Then comes another train. God commandeth all men everywhere to repent ; he is a man ; therefore he must repent. This will sometimes lead an individual, even in public, to quite an edifying confession of general sin. But the moment you test it, you find no sincere response. There never has been any real contrition, any specific particularization of sin. He may make prayers that have all the tone of penitence, without any token of the presence of its temper. A vague admission of a sinful disposition, he will be willing to make ; but not an act that flows from it does he ever lay out frankly before God. And there is conceivable truth in the assertion that men can be found who will confess unlimited sinfulness, in a general way ; and yet who would pass through a catechism on the decalogue, without pleading guilty to any one of the commandments. Now a real confession demands real iniquity. If we have been cold in spirit, and unfaithful in prayer ; if we have neglected duty, or been inconsistent in service, or brought reproach on the cause of Christ ; if we have wronged an associate in business, or indulged in prevarication, or broken the Sabbath, or maligned

our neighbor's character in a moment of passion ; if we have been petulant in temper, or unsubmitive to God, covetous or worldly, frivolous or volatile—whatever may have been our form of evil, we are to confess, not anything else and everything else, but that evil we have committed. The gospel demand is confession, not of *sin*, but of *sins*.

4. And finally, confession of sins should be *immediate*. I press this point with all intensity of emphasis, because there are those who wait repentance till, as they are pleased to phrase it, they have more feeling of conviction. There is a familiar philosophy in the use of language, which shows the utter falsity of any such subterfuge of hindrance. Speech unlocks the soul. A stubborn child may restrain feeling for a long time if permitted to remain in silence, brooding and morose. But push its lips to confession, and the hard heart yields on the instant. I have seen a rebellious sinner resisting the power of God's spirit. He would not repent. Driven to desperation by the struggles of his proud will, at last he consented to pray. With but the first utterance from his lips, he broke down into a flood of tears, sobbing out his contrition with a subdued rush of penitent petition for pardon. With the heart man believeth unto righteousness ; but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. God commands men everywhere *now* to repent. To delay for more poignancy of feeling is simply absurd. Think of a sailor, when the waves are highest in the storm, and the peril deepest, sitting quietly upon the hatchway, and deliberately remarking—"I suppose I may be of a different temperament from many : nor am I certain that my escapes from a watery grave hitherto do not affect my feeling ; but I am candid enough now to admit that I am not aroused as perhaps I ought to be : I am hoping before long I shall receive, in some way, *a more alarming sense of shipwreck* ; then I will take in sail !" Think of a student, reading through the whole night in his room with closed shutters. You enter in the morning, when the full blaze of day is around you, and you find him groping there in darkness. You

start to throw open the blinds, and let sunshine in at the windows. He checks you with the preposterous words,—“No, no: wait a moment: *let me get some of this dark out* before you begin!”

There never was greater folly in any human heart, than when it lingers in confession of sins, in some sort of vague hope it will receive more anxiety, more contrition, more depth of solicitude. For really it is the confession which leads to the greater conviction. President Edwards has left on record a declaration like this—“Often have I had very affecting views of my sinfulness and vileness; very frequently to such a degree as to hold me in a kind of loud weeping, sometimes for a considerable time together, so that I have often been obliged to shut myself up. I have had a vastly greater sense of my own wickedness, and the badness of my heart, than ever I had before my conversion. And yet it seems to me my conviction of sin is exceedingly small and faint. I have greatly longed of late for a broken heart, and to lie low before God.”

It does not seem necessary to press the analysis further. Two remarks, grounded upon what has thus far been said, will close this sermon.

One is this: You see here that God cannot be held responsible for the continuance of one's remorse of feeling, no matter how intense and agonizing it is. There is no advantage in that pain. It is not repentance at all. He suffers to no purpose who suffers with it. Acquaint thyself quickly with God and be at peace. God takes no pleasure in the anguish you feel. Confession, frank, thorough, immediate, would relieve it at once. Yield instantly, as you would have a child yield to his Father, who only waits his penitence to forgive him. Put an abrupt end to this conflict with your Maker. One great thought seems at times to have passed entirely out of mind. An impenitent man has no rights at the throne of grace except to ask for pardon. This has been

given by special grace. "Him, that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out:"—that is, cometh for forgiveness. He has no possible access for anything else. He is not on speaking terms with God. He needs to open communication by confession of sins earliest of all. It is all useless to talk about the universal fatherhood of God. God is angry with the wicked every day. He gives no sort of encouragement of this assumption of his tender-heartedness, as if he pitied a rebel sinner too much to punish him. He is good; but we are told explicitly that "the goodness of God leadeth to *repentance*." There is keen discrimination in the remark of Richter: "There are men who have learned the *Pater Noster* in every tongue, and yet have never prayed it." God is not the Father of any man, till that man is reconciled to him with confession of his sins. Up to that moment, no one has any right in his petition to go beyond our text, "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me."

You see here, likewise, that necessarily this work of confession grows the more difficult the longer you put off its performance. There are more and more sins to confess. The will is growing more stubborn. The pride is rising in your wicked and perverse heart. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall find mercy." You may seek, with all the reckless recoil of an obstinate heart, to stifle your convictions. They will return on you again and again, till this true confession is reached. Go now, as a poor, troubled penitent, and plead for your pardon. You cannot rest till your conscience is unburdened. You will never cast off the load that oppresses it, till you frankly say, "I have sinned." You will find yourself less able, every day of delay, to gird up the energies of your mind to the effort. There is in all indulgence a positively weakening effect of sin. David had once to confess this, "My strength faileth because of mine iniquity." There will never be an hour in all your history so hopeful as this, to which you now are spared.

THE SINNER'S REFUGE.

WITHOUT blood is no remission,
 Thus the Lord proclaims from **heaven** ;
 Blood must flow, on this condition—
 Thus alone, is sin forgiven.
 Yes, a victim must be slain,
 Else all hope of life is vain.

But the victim, who shall find it—
 Such a one as sinners need ?
 To the altar who shall bind it ?
 Who shall make the victim bleed ?
 Such a victim as must die
 All the world could not supply.

God Himself provides the victim ;
 Jesus is the Lamb of God ;
 Heaven, and earth, and hell afflict **him**,
 While he bears the sinner's load.
 'Tis his blood, his blood alone,
 Can for human guilt atone.

Joyful truth ! he bore transgression
 In his body on the cross ;
 Through his blood there's full **remission**
 For the vilest, e'en for us ;
Jesus for the sinner bleeds—
Nothing more the sinner needs.

A Child-like Spirit.

"Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."—MATTHEW 18 : 3.

THERE is in the Scriptures no record of a Sunday-school. Mention is made of a theological seminary. Paul and Silas found at Philippi something very like a maternal association. And there was a union prayer-meeting once held on Mount Tabor. Some of our modern institutions, therefore, are not original in the churches. Here in this chapter I think we find the nearest approach to an account of a teacher's class. The Saviour gives the instruction, the twelve disciples are the learners ; but the lesson they study is not presented in a book, but embodied in the person of a little live child.

What if the process should be reversed in our Sabbath-schools once in a while, and the pupils become the teachers? How would we relish being taught by one of the children? Yet this is precisely what our Lord here proposes for a perpetual exercise. We must become as little children ; and therefore children must be our unconscious instructors as to what we are to attain. Highly privileged, then, are those who have their monitors so constantly before them.

In our present examination of this passage, let us first search out the doctrine ; then we can easily trace its practical results.

The doctrine of the text must not be misconceived. There is one thing it does not teach, and there is another thing it does.

It does not teach the sinlessness of children. Christ says in

this very chapter that he came to "save" the "little ones" because they were "lost." No more certainly was **Bartimeus** the son of Timeus—a blind descendant of a blind father—than are all children the ruined offspring of a ruined race. Tradition, not reliable, tells us that the little boy whom our Saviour called to him on that occasion, was the one who afterward came to be the martyr Ignatius, thrown in his old age to the wild beasts at Rome. That is the best which can be said of him ; and we do not know that even so much is true. Surely he was not offered as a model child. Our Saviour was the only model child that ever lived. Our text does not teach infant innocence.

It does teach the excellence of a true child-spirit. It presents an ideal before our minds. The temper of a proper child in its father's house is the pattern we are to picture. Not childishness, but childlikeness, is the condition of our entering the kingdom of heaven. And so our question will arise at once—What is this child-spirit? We all have our theories ; but subjecting them to a careful, yet not very extensive, analysis, I judge we should agree upon these four characteristics : contentment, obedience, affectionateness, and trust.

I.—CONTENTMENT. The apostle Paul says : "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." But he had to *learn* it. With children this is innate. It comes without discipline, and only deepens with experience.

1. A child is perfectly content with its *privileges in the home circle*. Ask any member of your class, "Whose little boy are you?" and he will answer : "Father's." "And where do you live?" He will tell you : "At home." Now he thinks you know all about him. There is only one father in the world, and there is no home but that father's house. He desires nothing beyond that for either rest or enjoyment. Disturb him, wound him, frighten him, and his earliest wish is : "Just take me home."

2. A child is perfectly content with its *restrictions under the home economy*. He expects to be governed. Helpless, he

just owns it, and is not humiliated. Ignorant, he just admits it, and is not ashamed. Weak, he just acknowledges it, and says: "Help me, for I cannot go alone." There are others in the same family. He fully understands he must give them equal rights. He must adjust his liberties so as not to interfere with theirs. When he fails, he expects to be prompted and warned. The life he lives is a mere embodiment of the prayer: "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

3. A child is perfectly content with the *sanctions affixed to the home law*. He loves approval, he fears punishment. He accepts the essential righteousness of both. He takes to the rewards best, but he knows when he merits the penalties. I asked my little girl once to choose her own punishment. To my unutterable dismay, she chose the toughest. She passed intuitive judgment on her offence.

II.—OBEDIENCE is the next characteristic of a true child-spirit. And as here is likely to be our greatest failure, so here needs to be our closest observation.

1. A child obeys his father *unconsciously*. He is not aware he is doing anything remarkable. The parental will is law. He receives its mandates as a matter of course. He makes no virtue of necessity. He cannot really understand the Hindoo doctrine of merit. He discusses no mysterious principles of family government. His subjection is instinctive. When his father is at home, he expects to mind.

2. A child obeys his father *specifically*. He plans to do the thing he is set to do. Casabianca stands on the burning deck, because there he was bidden to stand. It needs a man grown to become skilful enough to consider whether something else might not be substituted in the place of a commandment. Children do not compound for one sin "they are inclined to," by damning another sin "they have no mind to."

3. A child obeys his father *unhesitatingly*. A teacher commenting on one of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, asked her pupils around the class: "How is the will of God 'done in

heaven'?" One answered: "Cheerfully." Another said: "By all alike." A third added: "All the time." But the youngest little girl in the class, with a keen penetration, replied: "It is done *without asking any questions.*"

III.—AFFECTIONATENESS is another characteristic of the true child-spirit. Some time when you are perusing the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, put in the place of the word "charity," in the fourth verse, the word "child," and see how it would read.

1. The affectionateness of a child is remarkable for the *spontaneousness of its exercise*. Half of our labor in this conventional world is wasted in simply graduating our favors to the ranks of recipients; watching the effects they produce; wondering what return they will bring. We must propitiate one man's dislike; we must keep down another man's pique. We reckon with much precision how much attention will be needed to ingratiate ourselves with one family, and how much caution will have to be employed to keep us from entanglement with another. Now, a child never calculates. He is thoroughly self-forgetful in his distribution of love. Thus his behavior delights by nothing so much as its naturalness. He is so artless in the surrender of all his powers of entertainment, that he will tell you all his stories at once, and sing you all the songs he knows, with a reckless exhaustion of his capital in a single effort. Thus he makes others happy without thinking of it. He brightens a whole company without planning it beforehand, or remembering it afterward.

2. The affectionateness of a child is remarkable for the *indiscriminateness of its bestowal*. It believes in the doctrine: "He who would have friends must show himself friendly." It cherishes no respect of persons. Distinctions of wealth, position, even of color and race, a child does not know how to deal with. How suggestive are the lessons we ought to receive from our own rebukes and mortifications on this point! We try to teach our children choice in playmates; but the

moment our backs are turned, off they go with some wretched urchin from the next alley. Then we force them to play the aristocrat ; but oh ! how mean it sounds, when we happen to hear them through the casement explaining to the sad little girl with the ragged clothes how we have sagely warned them away from her. Neither seems to understand the case much. They asked the good Cecil's daughter what made everybody love her, and she answered, with her peculiar kind of logic : " Because I love everybody ! "

3. The affectionateness of a child is remarkable for the *persistency of its endurance*. It beareth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things ; it never faileth. Breathe in the ear of a proper child even one word of suspicion, and mark how startled and yet how stubborn will be the assertion in reply. His fidelity is simply incorruptible. Did you never have one of your neighbor's little girls come and visit at your own house ? For a while all went well, but by and by she became uneasy. You told her stories, you asked her questions, then you showed her pictures. Meantime she continued so silent that you flattered yourself on your shrewdness in beguiling her attention ; when suddenly looking you full in the face, right in the midst of your most enthusiastic endeavors, she said as calmly and as resolutely as a fate : " I want to go home and see my mother ! " That tone carried conviction ; you had to let her go.

IV.—TRUST is the remaining characteristic of this true child-spirit. You will find illustrations of this in a child's mode of thinking, method of reasoning, and manner of life.

1. A child is always *intelligent* in its trust. A lady asked a little daughter of the missionary Judson : " Were you not afraid to journey so far over the ocean ? " And the reply was : " Why, no, madam ; father prayed for us ! " I think Ruskin, the great English critic, must have had a faith like this in his mind, when he penned those exquisite words of his : " The true unity of earthly creatures is their power and their peace ; not like the dead and cold peace of undisturbed

stones and solitary mountains, but the living peace of trust, and the living power of support ; of *hands that hold each other, and are still* ; the quietness of action determined, of spirit unalarmed, of expectation unimpatient ; more beautiful than ever, when the rest is one of humility instead of pride, and the trust no more in the resolution we have taken, but in the hand we hold."

2. A child is always *logical* in its trust. You will mistake seriously if you imagine children continue their confidence blindly. They reason in matters of the heart far more consistently often than maturer people do. The mind of a child is more logical than the mind of a man, in so far as his information reaches ; for no swerving influence comes in to pervert the process. A twilight bird goes right on sailing into the shadow, with the momentum it gains from flying in the sunshine. It passes under a dark archway with the impulse it takes from the lit flight it made toward it. And just so the faith of a child presses on unhesitatingly in the line of its convinced reason, and with all the force that reason has acquired. Do him a kindness, and a boy will believe you always a kind man. Help him once, and he will never hesitate to come to you for help. Learning his father from what he knows of him, he hurries along with a swift and fearless prediction, inferring with the instincts of a sure intuition what he does not know.

3. A child is always *tranquil* in its trust. There was once a monarch in Israel's realm, accustomed to put his experience to music, and sing the strains of affection that were too exuberant for prayer. Floating down the ages, he has sent us one Psalm, gentle as a Bethlehem hymn sung at a covenant cradle, yet manly enough in its utterance to become a "song of degrees" on the way to Jerusalem. And this is its burden : "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty : neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely, I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother."

This seems to be the doctrine of the text ; let us now trace a few of its most prominent results. You perceive that the practical force it has for us turns on the fact that it has been made the condition of our salvation. These characteristics of a true child-spirit have been delineated at this length not for any purpose of mere interesting inquiry, but because each of them must be received into our experimental possession as a spiritual grace.

1. Consider its bearing upon our *intellectual processes*. Many a man flatters himself with a sweet consciousness of magnanimity, when he imagines that observers are pointing him out, and saying: There goes one, once a skeptic, who, having determined to put all systems to trial, has just now been investigating Christianity: he took up the evidences masterfully, he has given in his adhesion *manfully*, and thus shown his lofty fealty to his convictions! Ah! yes; but our text does not talk of manhood, but of childhood. There is no child-spirit in this proud surrender to argument. A man needs conversion, not conviction. The Bible reverses human terms of counsel. We say to a child, Be a man; Christ says to the man, Be a child. Hence he will "enter the kingdom" only when he studies with his faith as well as his intellect.

2. Consider its bearing upon our *formulas of belief*. A child's theology is frequently wiser for human need than a man's. It often comes to pass that when a mature intellect has been worrying itself into most discouraging confusion, it is startled by the keen penetration and almost oracular deliverance of an infant trust. What is God? Good Gillespie's prayer did the best it could for a definition. "God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." Now you know what God is! But you cannot make much use of it. Ask a child what God is. You will get for an answer perhaps this—it takes it out of the prayer instead of the catechism: God is our Father who is in heaven. Now, for all practical uses.

for all availableness to deep experience of need, I soberly affirm, that little as this seems to say, it says more than the other does. Faith cannot climb up on the north side of a doctrine in the shade. I believe in formulas for catechetical instruction with all my heart ; but I think they ought to be explained more in the very warmth and light of the Scriptures.

3. Consider its bearing upon our *estimates of human greatness*. You remember that the disciples had been disputing concerning superiority, when Jesus gave them this lesson. Possibly Peter plead for preëminence, and instanced the gift of the keys. Possibly John called attention to his usual place at the table. Possibly Andrew begged to remind them he had led the first convert to Christ. Possibly James insisted on the prerogatives of his age. All this was met by the spectacle of a tranquil little boy, who possibly wondered why he was put into show. A child-spirit is keen enough to find, and generous enough to recognize, good everywhere. It loves all that love its father, all whom its father loves. It discovers no companionship so humble that it cannot spend a gleeful hour in the light of it. All the world is in one family till ten years after people are born ; on the play-ground, in the school-house, from the nurse's arms, to that dreadful hour when conventionalism steps in and tutors the unconscious democrats into lords and ladies. But half of the human race dies before the fifth year. When the millennium comes, you will find only children a hundred years old. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts ; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days : for the child shall die a hundred years old ; but the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed."

4. Consider its bearing upon our *tests of grace*. We love

to deal with subtle evidences of a change of heart. Here a plain one is proffered. Our text presents the final result, the completed picture, of conversion : it consists in a child's temper and disposition. Any one ought to know whether he possesses that or not. He can find out. And if not, he is "becoming as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

5. Consider its bearing upon *advice to inquirers*. Some of them completely invert the order of relation between belief and duty. Much of the difficulty they profess to find in the Bible is irrelevant in the matter of obligation, and entirely illogical to faith. Any sensible child is aware that its father's relationship by marriage, social connection in the community, or form of daily occupation, has nothing to do with the question of its own obedience to his commands. Told to go and serve him, it never pauses to inquire whether he is a citizen by birth or naturalization, or what amount of political influence he wields in the party, or how much money he owns. Yet this is just what human reason asserts its right to do over and over again. In perfect defiance of logic, inquirers will insist upon searching into the Trinity, before they take up repentance ; upon understanding the incarnation, before they will begin faith. They will worry over the decrees, when we urge holiness ; they will dispute about foreordination, when we press the necessity of prayer. Whereas, not one of these stands in the way of the other. There is only one condition of salvation, and that is this child-spirit. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ;" but the taking of the yoke comes first, then the learning of the doctrine. "Be not children in understanding ; howbeit, in malice be ye children ; but in understanding be men."

6. Consider its bearing upon our *aims for attainment*. How far away are we as yet from this child-spirit? "There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed." Do you ask how this may be reached? Only one direction is needful. Look at your own children, in your class or in your home. Your lesson is before you. *What you would have your child*

be to you, that be you yourself to God! You will not accomplish that alone. You had better ask for help at once.

Quiet, Lord, my froward heart ;
Make me teachable and mild ;
Upright, simple, free from art ;
Make me as a weaned child ;
From distrust and envy free,
Pleased with all that pleaseth thee !

As a little child relies
On a care beyond his own,
Knows he 's neither strong nor wise,
Fears to stir a step alone ;
Let me thus with thee abide,
As my Father, Guard, and Guide !

In the old fable which the Hebrews used to teach their children about the fallen angels, they said that the angels of knowledge, proud and wilful, were cast down hopelessly into hell ; but the angels of love, humble and tearful, crept back once more into the blessed light, and were welcomed home.

HE FIRST LOVED US.

SAVIOUR ! teach me, day by day,
Love's sweet lesson to obey ;
Sweeter lesson cannot be,
Loving him who first loved me.

With a child-like heart of love,
At thy bidding may I move ;
Prompt to serve and follow thee,
Loving him who first loved me.

Teach me all thy steps to trace,
Strong to follow in thy grace ;
Learning how to love from thee,
Loving him who first loved me.

Love in loving finds employ—
In obedience all her joy ;
Ever new that joy will be,
Loving him who first loved me

Thus may I rejoice to show
That I feel the love I owe ;
Singing, till thy face I see,
Of his love who first loved me.

Outlived His Welcome.

“Thirty and two years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years : and he departed without being desired.” ✓

2D. CHRON. 21: 20.

ONE representation there is in the Scriptures, frequently met, which strikes us as among the saddest of all the delineations of human life and death. We are forced to picture the world as it will be in the years that follow our funeral ; during that mysterious time after the last sod has been laid over our heads, and the last tear been decorously shed at the grave. “One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them.”

Most graphic is this sketch ; but it does not arrest our minds like the other. “As the cloud is consumed, and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his *place* know him any more.” There is something almost weird in this wonderful rhetoric. The bold personification of one’s “place” is matchless—that little space of air and earth he filled—that most inclusive and pathetic area of affection and influence he tenanted for his two or three score years. Here it is endowed with powers of perception ; the vacancy created by a life’s departure is represented as contemplating its late proprietor, and refusing any longer to continue his personal acquaintance. “He shall fly away as a

dream, and shall not be found ; yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night. The eye also which saw him shall see him no more ; neither shall his *place* any more behold him."

Four thousand years ago the patriarch of Uz asked this : "Man dieth, and wasteth away, and *where is he?*" Since Christ came to the world to bring life and immortality to light, we feel ourselves measurably ready to answer that question. We know where the saint is. We know where the sinner is. And we know that, whether saint or sinner, what any man is here, fixes where he is to be hereafter. If we could quite set at rest the estimate of character, as God sees it, in any given case, we could say easily, when one of our neighbors died, just where he went, and just where he is to-day.

But we find our minds dwelling upon what remains behind. Few persons are there, who, altogether unmoved, can listen to the familiar chime in the villages where they were born, and among the graves of their schoolfellows repeat, without a pensive tone in their voices, the words of the simple couplet they used to sing :—

"And so 'twill be when I am gone ;
Those evening bells will still ring on."

The imagination rests with a half-morbid curiosity upon that strange queer vacancy, that is going to be created. How odd it seems ! Will there be a gap left when I die, which will talk about me ? Bildad told Job that when death destroyed a man "from his *place*, then it (the place) shall deny him, saying, I have not seen thee !"

Does the world close up after each man drops out, as the vast atmosphere does after you and I breathe in a bubble of air ? Do the living currents and swells just rush together again, as the ocean does when the ship-steward dips a bucketful out of the Gulf Stream ?

When the young David proposed for an occasion to remain away from the table of King Saul, Jonathan remarked to him,

“To-morrow thou wilt be missed, because thy seat will be empty.” And we fall to asking whether on the sober morrow, after we cease to sit at the banquet of earthly existence, we are likely to be *missed* by anybody? We may as well be candid about it, to ourselves and with one another. It depends upon circumstances. Sure we are of one thing; this great world has been turning on its axis for many a season since some of us began to think and remember. Yet of all **the busy** generation that has passed from the stage of acquaintance, we ourselves miss only very few.

If you **were to** count up the funerals which, first and last, you have attended, **you would** find them less in number than you think. Out from all **those** whom you respected, choose now those you mourn. Out from **these** select such as you actually miss;—the cherished few for whose **help** you still sigh, for whose counsel you are a loser day by day, for **whose** affectionate words, no longer heard, the earth is lonelier and sadder to *you*.

Follow up this calculation with another. Reckon how many, all told, will those be, who will miss you when your place will be empty. You are certainly growing old. You are not the lithe leader in the community you were a dozen or twenty years ago. Perhaps you notice a suspicious prudence to pass you by in strict consultation. If this goes on a score of years longer, your place will be vacant, that is evident; but will you be *missed* on the morrow?

A serious question is this. We may as well face it. There is something more than mere sentiment in it. It has a real meaning and majesty to the most thoughtful of us all. It cannot be a Christian thing for a man to be careless of what is said about him after he is dead; for the pen of inspiration has offered the admonition, “The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot.”

Here in the text we find an illustration very much to the point. Jehoram was a man of a good deal of celebrity in his day. He became king of Judah with a tremendous flourish

of trumpets. He reigned in Jerusalem eight years. Everybody had to notice him, honor him, obey him. But he behaved ill. He lived wickedly. He abused his privileges. And when he died, nobody wanted any more of him. He "departed without being desired." Most likely, there could not in all the land have been found a score of respectable men to be his pall-bearers. They laid him in a dishonored grave. And you may read the record of the Old Testament through in vain; you will never find the name of this man mentioned after his loathsomely diseased body was put out of sight.

It is a most pitiable spectacle, that of a man who *outlived his welcome* at forty years of age, died and disappeared, as positively the most creditable thing he could do!

We can readily believe that Jehoram never took the approach of death tamely. That is human nature. Some persons nowadays live inglorious lives; but when retired from business, and beginning to feel the on-coming of age, they set about notable plans for preventing the final catastrophe of forgetfulness. There are men who fondly spend the hours of failing strength in fashioning funerals. They have several shows out of which they choose the final pageant. You should see their lot in the cemetery. You should walk solemnly around the vast monument they have already caused to be raised. You should imagine the extensive details of the parade-day after the struggle is over. There is a family undertaker, who really does not mean to say or do a wrong thing; but he cannot help being a little professionally impatient to have the grand event come off.

Lest you think all this is a caricature, remember the historic fact concerning that monarch who imprisoned more than a hundred of his nobles, with orders for their immediate execution when he drew his last breath. He said there should be mourning in his realm *at* his decease, if not *for* it. It seems quite comfortable to read, right afterwards, that the men were all freed the moment a new king held the sceptre.

One thing seems clear enough ; this is not the way to make one's self happy in life, or desired in death. Indeed, it is difficult to point out what is the way, to those who will recognize only the coarse methods of earthly endeavor.

One man there is in this world whom you should rather pity than imitate. I mean the one who has given his entire life to the mere amassment of wealth. He has succeeded ; but he is not to be envied for all that. There are two things he cannot do ; he cannot give away his riches with enjoyment, and he cannot keep them without fear.

He cannot spend his money with any comfort, for there is a curious effect produced by gold-getting on the human mind. It destroys the faculty of trust. Covetousness is idolatry. It rejects Jehovah ; it believes in Mammon. A young man may say devoutly as he grows in wealth, I am trusting God. By the time he is old, he is rich ; and now he says, I am trusting seven per cent. He verily believes he should end his days in a poor-house, if he began to use and spend.

But on the other hand, he cannot keep his acquisitions without alarm. Blind his eyes as he will, he cannot help seeing that his legal heirs want to have him die. They are decent in his presence, but he knows they whisper. He finds them quarrelling ; and he can imagine no reason save jealousy of each other for a place in the will. No wonder he grows malignant and spiteful, and begins to quote Ecclesiastes : " I hate all my labor which I have taken under the sun, because I must leave it unto the man that shall be after me ; and who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool."

It is discouraging for a preacher to try to talk to men, who, with myriads of just such painful examples before them for warning, still persist in the same career. I have now in my mind a Christian friend, who cherishes a most lofty ambition for what is termed a *country seat*. He has succeeded in making a beginning. He has before his balcony a most beautiful lawn. The acres of his vast estate spread far away over woodland and meadow, till you catch the gleam of flashing water in the distance.

He seems to have an insatiate desire to cover it up and keep it for himself—except a few friends—and he keeps the friends for himself too. He cannot bear to have other eyes intruding on his outlooks and vistas. With most fastidious taste he manages all the most minute improvements. You could not offend him more (for all your intimacy there) than by trimming with your knife a twig in his presence. Spring-guns are set all over the premises whenever he goes to church. They catch people while he worships. Violent mastiffs out on the gravel-walks do for him just what he does for his fellow-men. They fawn with obsequious attention on chosen intimates; the rest of the race they would willingly tear all to pieces.

Now with my way of looking at things, I should think his estate would be the torture of his life. I do not approve of this ambition. I am not certain I even understand it. The other morning I read at his family altar the forty-ninth Psalm. I honestly believed he would be caught with such sentences as these:—“He seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish man perish, and leave their wealth to others. Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue forever, and their dwelling-places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names!”

But it never is of any use. He is to-day toiling like an industrious worm, giving all the energies of his life to spin the beautiful cocoon he will die in. The cocoon will then be very valuable in the market; the tenant will have departed, and few men will desire him.

If all that I have said thus far had not been uttered most amiably, it would seem cynical and harsh. The question arises at once, what is there better than this? Can a man forestall the forgetfulness of the future? Is there any unailing way by which one can fix his name in the affectionate memory of the world around him?

Certainly: as an offset to all this misfortune and mistake, I venture to insist that you return to the Word of inspired

wisdom. There I am persuaded you will find a plan which will meet satisfactorily every need.

Earliest of all, let a man kneel, in the sincere homage of a submissive and repentant soul rendering up its purpose to its Maker, and enthroning him where it is his supreme right to rule. It is only a Christian man or woman that can survive the shock of the sepulchre. In this dazzling universe there is but one single reality that will stand for the future. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God *abideth forever!*"

With confessed sense of sin, with true contrition for all the guiltiness of his life and motive, let him implore pardon on the ground of a crucified Redeemer's merits. Let him commit himself in the hour of first espousals to Christ—for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, for joy or for sorrow, for bloom or for wasting, for youth or for age, ever and forevermore into the hands of his merciful Lord who bought him, and know Jesus Christ as his reconciled God. Then a new life is begun. Then first do the pulses beat of a fresh and vigorous existence that cannot fail to impress itself into the records of human want, and love, and memory. Such a man will surely be missed, when his seat shall be seen empty. Such a man shall never be suffered to outlive his welcome. Such a man will not depart "without being desired."

It is folly to call this the old story; for it is just as old as the race of man is, and no older. The Cherub flashed it in flame at the gate of Paradise. The angels sang it in music on Bethlehem hills. And it is surely none the worse for all that. There is the spring of perennial blessing to one's self and the world. Over the great gate of Cardinal Grenville's house once stood a magnificent statue of marble. In one hand the figure held a wine-cup, in the other an urn. But the wine-cup was inverted and empty; the urn was erect, and overflowed with pure water from the hills. And on the pedestal for a motto was carved the single word, *Durate*, endure!

Oh, I pray you, accept the symbol! Write it on the por-

tals of your being. Over against all the brilliant pleasures so-called of this mistaken world, ruddy in the goblet, yet soon drained to the dregs, I set this clear current of gladness from the crystal river of the water of life, flowing freely and sure. Here is memory enduring, and life immortal, all in one.

For just projecting this spirit outward into exterior and commonplace existence, it enters every sphere of human relations, and hallows them as it enters.

Home first, of course ; for home comes earliest in all that will or will not "desire" us in the hour of departure. Tell me, are there not among us now men grown to years of maturity, and with their grandchildren around them, who will talk, even now that their forms are bending, and their hair silver, of their own father or their own mother, in the time long ago, as if there could never be such another man, as if there never was such another woman? Oh, the counsels of those lips, now so silent! Oh, the prayers of that heart, now so still!

Question still further, and you find the same word repeated so unconsciously, and yet how much it means—"Alas, I miss them more and more as the seasons pass on!" I appeal to those who are wilfulest and wildest, have you not felt and yielded to the influence which some calm elder brother once had over you? Do you not say—"Oh, I should be a better man, if he had only remained to help me!" Perhaps some quiet sister it was, who gave you cautions and admonitions. You grew restive, but you heeded her. And to-day you say—"I believe I could be a Christian, if she were only here; she was the only being that ever knew me!"

Is anybody going to say all this of you, when you are gone? Ah me, how true piety does hallow a home! Come with me on some anniversary day, when the festival table is set, or the family song is singing. You find a seat empty, the chairs growing fewer. How pensively and affectionately we speak of the dear ones gone! There is nothing in all this world that lasts like goodness and truth. Gentle amenities

are the fruits of the spirit ; and so are all the graceful courtesies of affection, and the considerate charities of life. These are what make men and women loved and lovely. These are what keep one from outliving his welcome. No human being, who loves God and his fellow-men, can be suffered to depart "without being desired."

- Next to home, for a Christian man, comes the Church. In any congregation how few men and women are missed, when by death or removal their names fall off the roll of membership! How few there are who have force enough to their piety to render their presence felt, or their absence remarkable! When Lot retired from Sodom, there were not ten people that missed his prayers in the fire.

The reason of this is plain. The task of every religious organization is accomplished, if it is at all, by the laboriousness of only a slender proportion of the nominal membership, although they all repeat the same covenant. The seed is sown, the sheaves are brought in, by a very few husbandmen. And he departs desired the most, who has been most efficient.

Surely you remember that most affecting little incident, recorded in the closing history of the prophet Elijah. Some of the theological students of that day, missing their great leader, begged of Elisha that they might be permitted to take fifty strong men, and go in search of his body, lest peradventure he might have been cast upon some mountain or into some valley. Three whole days they spent in looking for him. He did not depart "without being desired!"

Alas, how few are there in any modern church who are sufficiently missed to be ever looked after! It costs most of our searching just to find them before they are dead, and keep them decorously up to communion.

He that hopes to be missed, must labor to be useful. Oh, there are some we mourn for always! Some cause trembles, which their faithful hands used to steady. The enemy comes in through some gate they used to guard. Our hearts

are feebler from the want of their prayers. Our souls are duller through lack of their example. We long for the old deeds of help, the old words of gentle sympathy and cordial reassurance with which they always met us. Oh, to be just remembered thus ourselves! Can ambition reach higher? To feel that, when we are gone, there will be mourning hearts unconsciously seeking for us, or for our like, again, wistfully yearning for but the tones of our voice.

But we can have even more than this. For the circles of usefulness, ever widening, open up the entire world to our reach. Wherever there are the weary to be helped, the sick to be comforted, the listless to be inspirited, the halting to be aided, the poor to be fed—there is a new opportunity for us to make sure we do not outlive our welcome. It is touching sometimes to see the tears of the weak and the humble in life, at the funeral of some prospered and opulent benefactor. Ask them the meaning of their sorrow, and they will exclaim, “Oh, we are sure we shall miss this generous hand, this thoughtful heart, for many a coming day!”

Humanity makes the best monument. Granite is nothing to it, and marble crumbles earlier. Write your name with kindness on a fellow-man’s heart, and he will “desire” you.

I admit there is something fine in the picture of Peden at Cameron’s grave, weary and weeping, and saying, “*Oh to be wi’ thee, Richie!*” But I am sure that was a grander testimonial to worth and valor, when from the hilltop was seen the rout of the Covenanters’ forces just for want of the old dead chieftain of Scotland; as the sad wail of the stricken people went up like the cry of one broken-hearted man, “*Oh, but for one hour of DUNDEE!*”

A NAME IN THE SAND.

ALONE I walked the ocean strand,
 A pearly shell was in my hand ;
 I stooped, and wrote upon the sand
 My name—the year—the day.
 As onward from the spot I passed ;
 One lingering look behind I cast—
 A wave came rolling high and fast,
 And washed my lines away.

And so, methought, 'twill shortly be
 With every mark on earth from me ;
 A wave of dark oblivion's sea
 Will sweep across the place
 Where I have trod the sandy shore
 Of time, and been, to be no more ;
 Of me, my frame, the name I bore,
 To leave no track nor trace.

And yet, with Him who counts the sands,
 And holds the waters in His hands,
 I know a lasting record stands
 Inscribed against my name,
 Of all this mortal part has wrought,
 Of all this thinking soul has thought,
 And from these fleeting moments caught
 For glory or for shame !

Hearing Salvation.

"Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

—ROMANS, 13 : 11.

WHEN I began the preparation of this sermon, the streets were all alive with the hurrying footsteps of those who bore the glad greetings of the season into the circles of acquaintances where they were welcomed with friendly return. A Happy New Year! How many times has that honored salutation been repeated during the week that has just ended! How many little worlds of affection and interest have been enlivened by its utterance! How many estrangements have been healed by it; how many neglects forgiven!

A Happy New Year! The wish will be answered to a few. Some of you will doubtless be prospered, as some of you have been. Some will be afflicted, tried, embarrassed, thwarted. Some will be alarmed with the advent of new fears. Some will be cheered with the accession of fresh hopes. On the whole, does not the risk seem prodigious?

A Happy New Year! Say it over now for experiment, and give it a backward index. Refer it to the past time. Say to your friends, a happy *old* year to you! Was it happy? What is the meaning of that grim smile that makes reply? Not so happy after all! And yet you will remember that this was the very year that went in its eagle pride soaring peerlessly out towards the summer sun, only twelve little months ago! Did it keep its promises?

A *Happy New Year!* I repeat it to you all who hear me, with a heart full of the truest gladness and joy. The salutation has only one place where it may be safely spoken. From a Christian pulpit, it comes reliably to every Christian ear. I challenge you to remember that this will be the happiest of all your years to you. This is the best New Year's Sabbath we ever knew. "For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

I.—In the first place, the limit of life is nearer. There are in the economy of nature certain movements entirely involuntary and irresistible. The will of man can neither retard nor accelerate them. Such is the steady progress of time. We never hear its footfalls; but it goes persistently treading on. And this morning the grave is one degree closer every one of us here.

Now death for its own sake is unwelcome. It is the ancient curse of our race. It can never be anything less than a curse. But with the vanishing of life, all that makes death dreadful disappears. There is nothing repulsive in the act of death. Most men suffer scores of times more than they do when they die. In many cases the dissolution is not

"So much as even the lifting of a latch :

Only a step into the open air,

Out of a tent already luminous

With light which shines through its transparent walls."

1. The departure of life takes with it all its *delusions* and *cheats*. I know this world is beautiful in many things. The sunshine on the snow, the blossoms on the branches, the glee on the lips of children, the song of the weaver at his loom, the affection in the eye of a friend: all are beautiful. It is not a Christian thing to despise them. But what if we could keep all these, without the cloud on the sunshine, without the worm in the blossom, without the care-mark to come on the child's face, without the hectic flush on the cheek of the weaver, without the coldness of possible estrangement in the eye of the friend? What then? We shall do that when life

departs. "Not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon."

2. Life also takes its *trials* with it when it goes. This is our period of discipline. We are children at school. We long for the recesses. More than all, we wish it were out. Things that are beautiful are given us here only to merely live and learn by. To enjoy them remains for days to come. All our books are class-books. We may read for pleasure by and bye after study hours are over. It will not do to be too much interested in what we have. That would interfere with our centreing all hopes upon what we are to have. The good Cecil was just right when he said—"You may take up a pitcher to drink; but the moment you begin to admire its figures or form, God will in love dash it in pieces." This is the philosophy of bereavements. It will be a fine thing not to have them, nor to need them. There is a Paradise, the soil of which beneath the trees, by the streams, nowhere has ever been broken for a grave. On its hill the free air has never vibrated under the ringing of a knell, or the singing of a funeral hymn. We are one post more onward in our journey towards it.

3. Nor is this all; life takes with it its *labors*, when it goes. Here day after day there is a struggle for food and raiment. Cares press on every heart. We have to take thought for the morrow in spite of all the sparrows or the lilies have to say. The ant is the truer teacher. Work is the law of the race; and sin, inviting the curse, increases the work. Half the world toils to take care of the other half. The burden now has to be carried only for what time remains. The watcher by the invalid's couch has three hundred less nights now to be wakeful and weary. The feeble frames that falter and are fatigued on the way to this Sanctuary, are fifty Sabbaths nearer the uplifting of the everlasting doors where the King of glory shall come in.

II.—In the second place, the victory of self-conquest is nearer than when we believed. The experience of the Apostle

Paul seems to be repeated in every life. "When we would do good, evil is present with us. The good that we would, we do not; the evil that we would not, that we do." Painful enough is this unending conflict. The world, the flesh, and the devil are all on the alert. Who does not hate this continual duty in the sentry-box? Last year I remember I made some new resolutions. I nailed them up in my recollection. This morning I read them over. They were under protest a whole season ago. We are all in debt hopelessly. We enlisted; had our bounty money; put on our uniform—there was the end of our military duty last year! I am ashamed of that record. So are you. I feel more troubled, however, with the honest fear that this year will see it all repeated again. We are bidden to reckon ourselves as dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through our "Lord Jesus Christ." Such reckoning as ours is full of meanness and mockery.

There is an ancient legend told of one of the primitive saints that will arrest your attention possibly as a figure of yourselves. The one paramount regulation of the Order of Saint Francis is that each monk shall implicitly obey his Superior; for life or for death is the vow of irrevocable consecration. And so they fable that once there came into the fraternity a man, that proved imperious and refractory. He broke the command of his chief. Instantly he was apprehended. A grave was dug, narrow and deep. They put him standing in it; and earth was trampled in around his body. Then when it had reached his middle, the Superior drew nigh the living sepulchre, and fixing his relentless eye upon him asked, "are you yet dead to human will?" There came no answer, for that priest was not of any common mould. And the clods of the valley were again shoveled in upon him. Stern as doom itself, that horrible burial went forward—to his armpits, to his shoulders, to his neck, to his lips. Then in agony he threw up his nostril for breath. Again St. Francis approached him, and put the icy question—"Are you yet dead?" And

the brothers waited on their spades for the final order. The culprit looked up in the eye of his chief, and found nothing there in its grey cool depths, so passionless, yet so resolute, but unflinching determination. Then the will broke, and the lips murmured, "I am dead."

Behold a picture of the living death which we call life. This period of our existence is but a burial of our will. With rightful authority, not with usurped force—with kindness and gentle discipline, not with the rigorous terrors of relentless doom—with the yearning heart of a parent, not with the domineering decree of a priest—our Lord asks us will we die unto the world, and live unto him. "*Jesuita, non Jesus ita.*" Yet we wilfully battle with what benefits, and struggle for what injures. Said old Thomas a'Kempis—"If every year did but extirpate one vice, we should soon be perfect men!" Yet we hinder it ourselves. Purity will come only when this world is over. There is a city in which reigns that wisdom which is "first pure, then peaceable." "The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it; and there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." One step nearer are we this day to its portal. Those isles of the blessed float on the bosom of the eternal ocean, and we only dimly see their radiant spires. But one degree closer are we, and our eyes almost see the King in his beauty, and behold the land that is very far off.

III.—In the third place, now is the full establishment of God's kingdom on the earth nearer than when we believed. The triumph of the church is drawing nigher. There is no reasonable doubt that Paul meant in the text to refer to the grand consummation of all things included in the Christian hope and prayer. Not that he then looked for the immediate ushering in of the day of judgment; but that his eye of prescient faith saw over beyond the intervening period, even to the time when Christ should return. And how much more there is to this

suggestion to us than to him—we are eighteen centuries nearer.

1. This morning we are a twelvemonth nearer the downfall of all the foes of Zion. Antichrist is growing bolder and more daring; that however is the signal for hastening ruin. The false prophet is losing his hold over many minds, and the ancient political dynasties are breaking, by the force of which that false faith was furthered. The church grows almost impatient with its prayer, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." The martyrs are redoubling their cries from under the throne, "How long, O Lord, how long." The wheels in the middle of wheels of providence are hastening on their axles. "That Wicked" is revealing, whom the Saviour is to destroy with the brightness of his coming. We are one year nigher the crowning victory of that cause, for which the fathers prayed, though they died without the sight.

2. And further; prophecy is fulfilling with the change of the seasons. The owl hoots in the palaces of cities that, when our text was written, were only doomed to fall. The weary Jew has been wandering many a desolate year since the blood of the Redeemer fell on his head. The fable of the man is real in the nation, for it wanders homeless still. But even Israel is beginning to look for the latter-day glory. Lights are flaming in the distance, that were only promised to be kindled in Paul's own day. The earth rocks to and fro with the unseen forces which are waking from the ancient slumber. The voices of the seasons are almost hoarse with singing. He whose right it is to reign shall come. Predictions are registering themselves daily on the books and reporting for duty as histories. Events are marshalling into order for the final pageant.

3. And still further; the crowns are gathering for the head of him who has many to wear. The children of the kingdom are cutting the palms they will throw in the pathway of the new King. Go up on the outlook of this New Year's Day, and cast your eye off on the nations. Can you see what

Daniel saw—that little stone cut out without hands, destined to fill the whole earth? Take down the harps from the willows—be ready for a new song. The kingdom we have so long prayed for is surely coming.

IV.—In the fourth place, now is our final fruition nearer than when we believed. This, I judge, is the individual reference of all that in the text the Apostle calls salvation.

I. And first, this includes *home*—oh, word of inexhaustible meaning—home again—the new Eden—the second Adam—the same Father—the ancient brotherhood—home! “The instinct of nature,” says the pious Rutherford, “makes a man love his mother country above all countries; and the instinct of a renewed nature will lead the believer to love his country above, and sigh to be clothed upon with his house not made with hands.”

To be candid, etymology is a somewhat dry, but on the whole a useful, science. For now and then we find a great deal of instruction in a single word, when we actually know what it means. In the affecting reply of the patriarch Israel to King Pharaoh, when he asked him, “How old art thou,” there is this statement:—“The days of my pilgrimage are one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage.” Twice in the same sentence he calls life a *pilgrimage*. And we cannot hope to catch the full significance of the impressive figure, until we learn the exact meaning of the word. Now everybody thinks he can define it. A pilgrim is a traveller; a pilgrimage is a journey. Very well; but is that all? Does every one, who takes a journey, go on a pilgrimage? The Mussulman does, when he starts for Mecca. The Jew used to when he went to Jerusalem. Let us look in the Lexicon. A pilgrimage is “a journey for religious purposes, to a place esteemed holy.” Ah me, was there ever one word, then, which better described true Christian life? It is a journey over the hills of the years, for a purpose most hallowed, to a

place where the inhabitants unceasingly cry, "Holy, holy, holy," to their King.

And what I say now is, that our pilgrimage is the nearer its end by a twelvemonth to-day. Travel is almost ended, home is almost reached. An old martyr, looking across the meadows between him and the place where he was immediately to be burned, exclaimed—"Only two more stiles to get over, and I am at my Father's house!"

2. Second, this includes *friends gone before*; for they are at home, we are away from it. The parted will be reunited, where the pardoned are pure. "Dear Sir," wrote Jeremy Taylor to Evelyn—"I am just now in some little disorder by reason of the death of a young child of mine—a boy that lately has made us very glad; but now he rejoices in his little orbe, while we think, and sigh, and long to be as safe as he is." Bear this thought deep in your mind: It is only the dead that are safe—the lost are preserved—the deceased are in the land of the living.

The fishermen's wives, on the shores of the Adriatic, are wont to go down on the beach, especially when the chime of vespers strikes, and the night promises to be tumultuous or unusually dark, and there lift up their voices, as only Italian women know how, singing some sweet little *bàrcarolle*, with a long, lingering note for a refrain at the end of each verse. When this last beautiful swell of harmony has got well started out over the waves, they suddenly pause, and alertly listen for a response. If it be possible to communicate, their husbands and brothers, far out of sight, send back the song. And in it comes—beating across the crested surface of the sea, softened by the distance, and mellowed by the night. Then they know all is safe, and retire contented to their work, in hope of a sure meeting of their home-friends before long.

Now I cannot say that those, who have left us here, and have sailed out on that mysterious main all around this living world, do even attempt to echo our music back again. But I am sure they hear what we sing, in faith and love, in praise

of their Redeemer and ours. At any rate, it is a fine thing to think of them when the years strike their evening chime. And we know there will be one day, when certainly we shall hear from them, when the quick and the dead shall be caught up together. And that dear day may dawn even while we are singing.

3. And third, this includes the *presence of Jesus*. The play of earthly shadows is ceasing more and more on our vision. The great future is opening its doors. Like the disciples on the mount of transfiguration, we lift up our eyes and see no man, save Jesus only.

A mere glimpse of glory almost made Peter wild. An hour of spiritual communion with him whom our soul loveth is a great acquisition. What will an eternity of his companionship be! "The Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel's land!"

The intercessory prayer is beginning to press—"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." The night is far spent, the day is at hand. A few more setting suns, and then the grand disclosure of the shadowless vision will be ours. Are we alive to this expectation? If we are anticipating the arrival of a very dear friend, some one exceedingly near and precious, to us, how impatiently we look out of the window, how eagerly we listen for a footfall at the doorway. How solicitous we are lest we should be caught unprepared. Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye know not the Son of Man cometh. Blessed is that servant whom he shall find watching.

In view of this whole subject, surely it will not be inappropriate that I exhort you, my fellow-pilgrims on the way, to throw off listlessness, and awake out of sleep. All this final fruition is nearer by a twelvemonth to-day than ever before.

Let us walk honestly, as in the day. We are living epistles, known and read of all men. Let us be among the few

names, even in this Sardis, who have not defiled their garments. We need circumspection of the highest sort. Only one word kept Moses out of the promised land. Only one moment's unwariness might have made Paul a castaway, even while he preached to others. An instant's confusion may blur all the prospects of the better life.

Let us walk courageously. Let us put on the whole armor of light. This will afford ample protection, for it includes the shield of faith, and the weapon of all-prayer. If we are ever saved, it will be said of us: "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb!" Be willing, therefore, to owe all to him. Said the good Lady Huntington: "Oh, I want no holiness that Christ does not give me. I wish for no liberty but what he likes for me. And I am satisfied with every misery he does not redeem me from!"

And so let the New Year open cheerfully, and the hearty salutation come with a welcome: "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." There need be to the Christian no view of sadness in all the joyous prospects of the opening year. We are all growing older; let us hopefully see to it we are by the grace of God growing better likewise. It is folly to look back; let the dead Past bury its dead.

ALMOST HOME.

ONE sweetly solemn thought,
Comes to me o'er and o'er—
I am nearer home to-day
Than I ever have been before.

Nearer my Father's house,
Where the many mansions be ;
Nearer the great white throne ;
Nearer the crystal sea ;—

Nearer the bound of life,
Where we lay our burdens down ;
Nearer leaving the cross ;
Nearer gaining the crown.

But lying darkly between,
Winding down through the night,
Is the deep and unknown stream,
That leads at last to the light.

Father, perfect my trust !
Strengthen the might of my faith ;
Let me feel as I would when I stand
On the rock of the shore of death !

Feel as I would when my feet
Are slipping over the brink ;—
For it may be, I'm nearer home—
Nearer now than I think !

Reuben's Instability.

"Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel."—GENESIS 49: 4.

THE narrative, in the midst of which this text occurs, introduces us to a scene of surpassing interest in the life of a most remarkable man. The sole survivor of that splendid triumvirate of patriarchs, who shone out under the earliest dawn of redemption, as it rose over the hills of history, Jacob seemed to unite in his person at this time all the venerableness and grandeur of Isaac and Abraham his predecessors, whose benedictions of promise had so constantly been joined with his own in the repetition of the ancient covenant.

Moreover, this scene is the final one of his life. We are, in imagination, summoned to attend his death-bed. He had now reached the ripe age of one hundred and forty-seven years. Knowing that his end was near, he sent for his family, for he had a singular closing message to utter in their hearing. And from all the wide fields of Goshen, they forsook the flocks they were tending, and came together at the call. Around his couch they stood reverently waiting. Fine show it now makes, that splendid circle of sons. These were "the children of Israel," of whom first and last we read so much. Yet they were not children. They had reached manly stature and maturity. Even the youngest was thirty years old.

Furthermore, this patriarch was for the moment to become a prophet. The last words of a dying father are always very

sober words for any thoughtful and affectionate son to hear. But Jacob was now to speak under positive inspiration. His bodily presence was weak, and his speech might be contemptible; but the sublime sanctions of heaven itself were to attend upon his utterance, and that vast mystery, the future life of those younger men, was to be revealed.

And yet further; this scene is interesting from the fact that the dying father was about to officially disinherit his first-born child. Reuben was now to be deprived of his birth-right; and in the hour which brought parental blessing to all his brothers, he was to receive only what would seem like a curse. We can well imagine the pain which this must have given to Jacob himself. He intimates as much in the use of terms of extraordinary endearment, as if he would break the force of his awful words afterwards. "Reuben, thou art my first-born, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power: unstable as water, thou shalt not excel."

I judge that the moral instruction of this scene will become more apparent, if the lessons it offers be mentioned at once and in order.

I.—The first of them is this: *no sin of any intelligent being can ever be lost, so as to be forgotten.*

Forty years before this, Reuben had committed the one wrong act for which he was now punished. He had insulted his father, shamed his entire family, and sinned against God. I am willing to believe that in Jacob's words now there was no feeling of personal malevolence or revenge. Indeed, I conceive that the words which he spoke were not so much his own, as God's. The almighty and all-seeing One, who had known of that young man's iniquity in the day of it, had marked it down in his book of remembrance.

How much there is, therefore, for many a man yet to meet in the revelations of the future, who now deems himself living a most exemplary life. God "requireth the past." Most earthly possessions can be sold and bought in the mar-

ket. But there is one ownership which no proprietor can vacate, either by gift or sale ; and that is, his ownership in the follies and sins of his youth. Each act of wickedness, no matter how apparently secret, quietly goes up like a witness in court at the calling of the names, and ranges itself alongside of others just like it, and there waits for the trial at the judgment. The Buddhist proverb seems really full of wisdom : " All that we are is the result of what we have thought. It is founded on our thoughts. It is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him as the wheel follows the foot of him that draws the carriage. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him like a shadow that never leaves him."

Sometimes even in this life a transgression becomes a swift agent of Satan, and reaches us for torment even before our day. No sin ever dies out of the memory of the individual who committed it. No sin ever becomes a stranger to its author : he will certainly see it again ; and the moment he sees it, he will recognize it. I have heard that hunters sometimes clip the wings of a bird they have caught, and let it loose again, with the curious purpose of testing whether it will ever be heard of thereafter. I have even been told that sailors, rioting on an island-shore, will mark the hard shell of a turtle, so as to see whether they will ever find him again. Oh, this is not necessary with *sin* ! It may fly all over the world, out of sight, and out of remembrance ; but one day or another it will be sure to come back, like a trained carrier-pigeon to the window of its master ; and with many an impertinent and unwelcome (but well-remembered) peck and twitter at the casement, will demand to be taken in.

And at any rate, be sure of this : Any base reptile of vice, like that of Reuben, no matter how distant the unfamiliar shore where it was committed, will manage somehow (bearing its legible mark) to crawl to its own owner's door, even through the silent ocean of years, and there slimily claim his personal acquaintance.

II.—In the second place, we can learn from this history *how much even one sin affects a character.*

Wisely has it been said—"It is but the littleness of man that sees no greatness in a trifle." It is never safe to call any transgression of the law of God a trifle. This old sin of Reuben's was no trifle. It was the exercise of a bad passion, the indulgence of reinless desire. Men oftentimes cover up the weaknesses of their character for many a year. A decent show of correctness may easily be preserved by a resolute will, controlling all vicious propensities, save at times when ingenious perception discovers they may be let loose safely. But it ought never be forgotten that it is not *sins* which God estimates, but *sin*; not so much the mere acts, as the character lying behind the acts.

Vivid indeed is the illustration of this principle which we find in the case of Reuben. He was not naturally a bad man in every respect. The account which we glean from the Scriptures is oftentimes very favorable. It was he who saved the life of his brother Joseph, when the more violent of his father's sons would have killed the lad. He offered to be responsible in his own person for Benjamin's life, when their old father was hesitating as to his departure into peril. He seems to have been warm-hearted in disposition, generally just, and frequently generous. His trouble appears confined to hardly more than one feeble point. He was hot-headed and rash, and so unreliable in the tenor of his life. He could not be depended upon. He was most likely a creature of impulse, and could not move by sober principle. Simeon and Levi were crafty, and sometimes cruel; Reuben was only impetuous, unrestrained, and irregular. Yet we can plainly see now that this one weakness destroyed the balance of his character.

III.—A third lesson meets us at this point: namely—*that under divine law retribution follows the exact lead of crime; God pays in kind.*

The denunciation was—thou art unstable as water; the punishment was—thou shalt not excel. That is, the proper

penalty for being unstable is instability ; unstable now, remain so forever. Now there is a very simple philosophy that bears upon this point. Habit becomes second nature to us all. Irregular impulses indulged render men impulsive and irregular. They perpetuate themselves without any effort. They grow like weeds, self-sowing year after year, the harvest multiplying with unreckoned and immeasurable progression.

A sad, and yet most singularly interesting record is that which history makes out for Reuben and his tribe. Was this prophecy, uttered by his dying father, ever fulfilled? After events give full reply to the question. There never was any excellence reported of the descendants of this first-born son. No prophet came forth from his tribe. No judge appeared among his children's children. No hero carved for himself an honored name. When even the woman Deborah judged, and Barak fought, this tribe made no response to the call issued by the female chieftain. They were taunted by a woman, and yet were not stung. In their effeminate tranquillity, they permitted her war-song to be sung in their hearing, twitting them with lingering amid the sheep-folds, listening to the bleating of flocks, when their country was overrun with invaders ; with preferring the pipe of the herdsman to the warrior's trumpet. The tribe soon faded out of existence positively. There is now hardly a vestige in history left of them. The very towns they lived in are known by Moabitish names. Finally they even lost the faith of the fathers, and apostatized into obscene idolatry. And the last historical mention of Reuben's tribe anywhere made, is of their captivity, from which it is not known they ever returned.

Reuben was first-born : so he might have had the birth-right blessing, but that went to Joseph. He might have had the kingdom ; but it went to Judah. He might have had the priesthood ; but that was given to Levi. He might have been preëminent in everything ; he lost all. Unstable as water, he never could excel.

IV.—In the fourth place, we are to learn from this history

that *every man, being the architect of his own fortune, must accept the lot which he fixes for his future.*

When in the prophecy of Ezekiel it is declared, that if in any case the judgment of the Lord should fall upon a land, not even the presence of Noah, Daniel, or Job within its borders should deliver the inhabitants ; and that the holiness and well-desert of these men, beloved of God, should be unavailable even to the members of their own families, so that they should deliver neither sons nor daughters, and only their own souls should be delivered by their righteousness—it was intended to be the enunciation of one of the clearest and strictest principles of the divine government ; namely—that every man stands reponsibly by himself in the ultimate reckoning of character. An unrelieved, intense, individualism pervades the whole plan of God's dealing with men. Neither parents, nor pious friends, neither foes, nor strangers, can help or hinder. A man fixes his own future under sovereignty of God.

The parental disappointment in this instance must have been full of keenest suffering to Jacob. All fathers have their thoughtful moments, when they ponder the ancient question as to their offspring—"What manner of child shall this be?" Experience can avail very little, if at all, in framing the reply. The family organization is an instrument of mighty power ; and parental prayers are not ever to be intermitted or derided. But it remains as a solemn fact, that sooner or later the free will of each child for himself has to enter into the calculation, and generally has final potency in determining the result.

The name—Reuben—means in the original language—"behold ! a son !" I presume it was the joyous and exulting exclamation of his mother at his birth. She was so glad to have the news borne now to her husband ; and the appreciative father seems to have desired to perpetuate her gladness in the name he gave the boy.

Alas, how little that Hebrew woman knew of all the dark future of her infant then in store for it ! How affectionately

she would have folded him in her arms, with a vain hope of protection, if she could have foreseen those days of dereliction and sorrow! But Reuben was bent on making his own destiny in despite of her. He was to work out his own fortune.

The truth lies just here. Men are not the creatures of circumstances, but of principles. They are not at all built up like so many cooper's casks—held into roundness and consistency by mere force of exterior clamps around interior emptiness. Under the general law of God's providence, they make themselves by the force of personal will. Hence they become righteously accountable for their own history, and for their own character. Botanically speaking, human souls are endogenous—inside-growers.

And this is what makes so momentous that hour when we earliest begin to perceive in our growing children the will forming outside of parental authority; that is, the first beginning of that personal architecture which by and bye will stand or fall to their Maker and to ours.

And this, too, is what renders it so ineffably mean and false for any young man to plead the prayers of his mother for his hope, when he himself continues to sin; or to charge on his father's restrictions his ruin, when he himself will not seek to obey God. Every man is his own master, and fixes the future for his own soul.

V.—Our fifth and final lesson brings out the practical instruction of this entire narrative—*how sorrowful a thing it is to become a mere beacon in history.*

When one of the earliest of the ancient martyrs saw the soldier putting the torch to the fagots piled around him, he said—“ Ah, you will kindle a fire to-day that will never go out in this world!” It is one thing for a man thus to burn on the summit of some great principle, and so prove to be a grand light for the ages, inspiring the laggard, and illumining the dark. But it is quite another thing for a man to burn with his own lusts on the summit of discovered shame, and so prove a baleful fire to gaze at, and keep away from; a mere lurid warning off from

the wretched vices that kindle it. You will never think hereafter of the name of Reuben, without remembering that he was unstable as water, and could not excel. Out on the shores of time he now stands, bidding us shun the devious way along which he wasted his manhood.

The religious reference of all this counsel is of course immediate to each of the children of God. Instability forestalls and forbids all excellence. "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways; let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."

Yet how often we meet such! Some are unstable in feeling. One day they are on the last Pisgah-top of delightful experience, and the promised land is out before them in full vision: the next day they are far back in the wilderness and can see nothing but Anakim, and will drink only at Marah. These fitful frames and fervors of feeling; these ebbing, flowing tides of experience—oh, how weary they are, and how profitless! One must learn to live by principle, and not by impulse, or there can be no lofty attainment for him whatsoever. "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel."

And some are unstable in purpose. They are all activity and all zeal to-day; to-morrow, listless and laggard. "Ye did run well, what did hinder you?"

In one of those pensive pictures that sometimes rise upon a pastor's memory, I see a young man, the child of many prayers. He comes at last to the Saviour, and pledges his life at the cross. For some days it is heralded through the community. We all rejoice over him as a triumph, and thank a merciful God that he has given us a new brother beloved. He enters boldly the sphere of Christian profession. For awhile he is faithful in duty, cheerful in demeanor, liberal in heart, earnest in zeal. But by-and-bye he seems to grow weary of restraint. He becomes cold in experience, and remiss in fidelity. We miss him from the wonted circles of prayer. He forsakes his charge in Sabbath-school. He is heard of in company, which shows he is becoming entangled

with the world again. He respects the Lord's Day less. He seeks and receives gay society, and remains in volatile and unprofitable companionship.

Of course Christian charity looks him up, and paternal affection seeks to lead him home again to duty. But he has begun to be jealous of rebuke, impatient of even a hint of correction. He is testy and fretful, when he receives requests for the help he used to love to bestow.

Yet does he have his better moments. Then he makes resolutions, the tears in his eyes. But the world pours in upon him once more. Now he yields and wavers, breaking a little worse than before. He leads this time, where he then followed. The dance pleases him more than the prayer-meeting. The wine-cup has its delights. The lively and the jovial seek his side. Now and then a low, coarse man claims his acquaintance; and he cannot recoil. Still conscience is tender, and the shafts of truth will reach him once in a while. Then he has some more better moments. But he limps and lingers just as before. Unstable as water, he cannot excel.

Suddenly we hear that disease has seized him. Nobody quite knows where he has lived lately. Soon we are informed that delirium has come. And when we see the dear old face again, it is hot on the pillow, and the mind is gone. The eye sees wildly. He never seems to know how we are working and toiling, and watching and praying. The faith has no force to gather up its first energies. The gay friends grow gayer. They never come to help him. We are fighting the last enemy alone. O God, be pitiful! "There are no bands in their death." And so that poor tempest-tossed soul lingers for a day or two, single-handed, making ready as best it can, out of reach, for an eternity just before it. From the disjointed ejaculations that flash out now and then, we fear it is not successful to its liking. And so he dies, and makes no sign. We can put no question further.

Alas, alas, for the spiritual Reubens in the Church of Christ!
How many I recall this hour, who once went out with mag-

nificent promise, but a little while ago! Where are they now? I have seen many young Christians like drift-wood on the river. They were off their footing. They made some fight for life. They caught at this, they hung a moment on that. They twisted, they writhed. They beat, they plunged. But all the time, they were hurrying down the current. And high on the desolate beach, somewhere unknown, they are mournfully stranded to-day.

“Take fast hold of instruction ; let her not go ; keep her ; for she is thy life.”

“I have set the Lord always before me ; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.”

HOLD US UP.

FROM the recesses of a lowly spirit,
Our humble prayer ascends ; O Father ! hear it,
Upsoaring on the wings of awe and meekness ;
 Forgive its weakness !

We see thy hand ; it leads us, it supports us :
We hear thy voice ; it counsels and it courts us :
And then we turn away ; and still thy kindness
 Forgives our blindness.

Oh, how long-suffering, Lord ! but thou delightest
To win with love the wandering ; thou invitest,
By smiles of mercy, not by frowns or terrors,
 Man from his errors.

Father and Saviour ! plant within each bosom
The seeds of holiness, and bid them blossom
In fragrance and in beauty bright and vernal,
 And spring eternal.

Then place them in thine everlasting gardens,
Where angels walk, and seraphs are the wardens ;
Where every flower, escaped through death's dark portal,
 Becomes immortal.

Theory of Stewardship.

"It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful."—I COR. 4: 2.

MY purpose this morning is to discuss, in a very quiet way, the theory of Christian capital in its relation to the Christian church. What is the legitimate connection between piety and property, between acquisition and contribution, between gain and godliness? Let us help each other to give an answer.

It is plain that in its reach this question is radical. Whatever principle is held on so vital a point controls the man. Every true child of God surely desires to be rightly informed. And every one, who is invited to become such, ought to be intelligent, so as to count the entire cost of the life he enters. There was a time in which each man was expected to sell his worldly possessions, and give all the proceeds immediately into the common treasury. Two persons are found on record as having been struck dead in an instant, for a lie concerning the amount they realized. If this be the theory now, then we are in awful peril, and moving under serious mistake.

Is there any positive principle in this matter? If that old rule has been displaced, what is the new one? Is life freer, now that the church is wealthier? Or is responsibility heavier, now that the church is stronger for effort, and the world is opened? These are things we surely need to know.

In a word, our *theory* on this point is essentially important. It enters into our very life. It educates our conscience—it modifies our plans—it moulds our character—it fashions our example—it fixes our power—before the world.

Now it is helpful in the highest degree to discover that inspiration has been mindful of our needs. There is not the slightest apprehension of mistake for any humble Scripture student ; for no relations have been more clearly and lucidly defined than those of capital to Christianity.

Three parables were uttered by our Lord himself, bearing explicitly upon the three particulars, which enter into our examination. These give us the true theory of I—Ownership ; II—Disbursement ; III—Accountability.

I.—The first of these is the familiar story of the householder, who, going on a journey, left his vineyard in charge of husbandmen. Now the simple question to be settled was, WHO OWNED THAT PIECE OF PROPERTY ?

In due time, he sent servants to receive the fruit of the vines. But in his absence these men in control had grown insolent and grasping. A kind of confusion had fallen over their minds. They were weak enough to suppose that all they had to do was to deny the lord's right in the premises, and so claim the vineyard as belonging to them. With this most cool and exquisitely calm intent, they maltreated and abused the messengers he had commissioned. He bore patiently for a while ; but finding that plain understanding must be reached in some way, he at last dispatched his son, saying, with a simplicity fairly pathetic, " Surely they will reverence my son ! " But, glad enough to have the heir in their power, they caught him, cast him out, and slew him. For this outrageous act there was no forbearance. The lord himself came home. He thrust them forth from their superintendence, and brought them promptly and severely to justice. It was evident *he* owned the property.

Here, then, comes out the true theory of ownership in this world. The meaning of Jesus' parable is explicit. No mat-

ter what the vineyard represents. I suppose the figure is intended to include everything, of which any human being is put in charge by divine providence in the allotments of life; everything which can be registered in terms of earthly valuation; time, talents, education, social influence, as well as wealth in all its versatile forms, lands, goods, and houses. The question is—who owns them? And the answer is—they belong to GOD. He never gave them to his servants. The husbandmen in the parable had a theory radically wrong, and subversive of the first—chief—most unalterable—principles of ownership.

Here, likewise, comes out our precise name and office. We are STEWARDS. One of the ancient Rabbins has this forcible explication of such a figure. "This world is a house," says he; "heaven the roof, the stars the lights, the earth with its fruits a table which is spread. The Master is the holy and blessed God. Man is the steward, into whose hands the goods are delivered. If he behave himself well, he shall find favor with his Lord; if not, he shall be turned out of his stewardship." In all this world, we can buy nothing in our own name. We have nothing to sell. We have no right anywhere that is exclusive, when the Lord speaks from heaven. We may pass property; but it is only selling a lease. We call our work giving possession, but we transfer nothing in fee simple. The absolute, inalienable ownership of God underlies every trade. We dwell on hired land; we live in rented houses; we work with borrowed capital; the title everywhere vests in God. We are simply stewards, of whom it is required that they be found faithful.

II.—With this point established, our question of disbursement, which comes next, is easy of solution. Once settle whose the money is, and arrangements for distribution will not be at all difficult.

We have another parable, proffered for our help—that of the talents given, to one man five, to another two, and another one. You remember very well the equitable form of reck-

oning employed at the last. The five-talent man, and the two-talent man, had improved their chances ; they had increased the sum, and were rewarded with the same reward. But the one-talent man hid his lord's money, and thought he did all that was proper when he brought it back. He received a most condign punishment. We need to recollect always, in studying this story, that it is the mere use of such a term in the parable, which has bestowed upon our English language a new word. Talents are now deemed to be mere gifts of intellect ; then they were mere estimates in gold of certain amounts of wealth. If we were to speak of "improving our talents" now, we should be understood to refer to some process of mental education ; then the expression referred to making money.

Of course, then, the earliest lesson of such a parable is, that we are to disburse our capital, as if it were our own, in all the legitimate uses of business-life. We are not to treat the Lord's money lightly, nor be afraid of it. We are bound to bestow upon its management, however, the entire wisdom we possess, in order that it may increase without risk, and be influential for good and not evil. Every man certainly is under obligation to become as wealthy as his wits will permit him, and his capital allow, by judicious, honest, thrifty, and industrious investment. Our Lord comes for his own, "with use."

This principle has no limits. No matter as to what our talents are ; they may be anything put in our charge by God's providence. We are to improve them, and increase them, to the glory of God himself. Every Christian man is bound to make his education efficient, his influence more potent, his money productive. His neighbor cannot relieve him of his responsibility. The church has never been set to give him discharge. The ministry is not ordained to stand in his calling. He is the steward of that measure of God's estate which God has entrusted to him. The lord in the parable could have buried his own money, if he had wanted to, with-

out asking this one-talent man to help about it. His purpose was to make something out of it. And our duty as stewards can be no less than to urge our resources into work, and do all we possibly can with them.

Then the next lesson is, that the gains as well as the principal belong to the original owner. It was the Lord, who gave the five talents, that came and received the ten. So in the other parable; it was the house-holder, who owned the vineyard, that had a right to the yearly fruits. It would be tedious folly for one to waste time in showing to businessmen, in this working age, that the very idea of stewardship for another's wealth involves the giving of the gains to him. How long would any one, of those who hear me to-day, tolerate tenants in his dwellings, who, in making calculations for annual expenses, are careful to reckon for everything but rent? How long would he be content to stand at a doorway, and reason in gentleness with those inmates who confess they have not the honor of his acquaintance, and are so sweetly surprised at his coming on a quarter-day? Are men particularly genial and happy at being kept out of their own? Do property-holders ever outgrow patience with supercilious people, who live off of them, and tranquilly put on airs? Just about how many times would you go with a bill to a tenant, and listen to his bland reply—"Ah, so you have come around again with your little book! I cannot give you anything, to be sure; for I have laid out so much on plans for next year; but I am always happy to see you; I have said often, that you were the best collector I ever knew, and had a positive gift for going on *begging* errands!"

III.—We move forward now to consider the third point mentioned in the outset—the theory of accountability. "Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found FAITHFUL." The language is explicit.

For this we have another parable of our Lord. You will recall what Luke records concerning the unjust steward. He was reported, to the rich man who had given him his place,

as having wasted the goods with whose care he had been entrusted. Summoned at once into the master's presence, the question was put to him—"How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward." Couple this with the other similar parable we find in the same gospel. There the steward is represented as saying in his heart; "My lord delayeth his coming." Then he begins to grow proud and insolent, and to live in luxury. He beats the men-servants and maidens. He eats and drinks, and is drunken. Now comes the warning; and that no one may miss the point, our Saviour has employed the most forcible terms:—"The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with unbelievers." In both these cases, you are to observe it is the owner of the property who comes at the last, and demands that a report be made to him.

All this teaches us that our account is to be kept with GOD, and rendered to him—also, that he claims nothing but what simple decency and justice would give him, when he comes for his own—also, that for any dereliction in faithfulness, or any waste in luxury, he will hold us responsible at the last—also, that when he finds an incorrigible steward, he makes short terms with him, casting him out with all ignominy and contempt among the hypocrites—also, that fellow-stewards do not seem to be called in for any help in the matter; only those, who saw the thing done, might be expected at least to grow thoughtful in their own behalf.

Practically, therefore, as this instruction bears upon modern times, we learn, what will strike some persons as a very welcome truth, that our responsibility in the matter of money-giving does not centre in any opinion or organization of men. No person has any right, in his own behalf, to challenge our meanness or our liberality. He may speak in God's name—he may come in fraternal solicitude—but our ultimate appeal

is to a wisdom far above us all. Comparisons are entirely out of place. That you give more than I do—or less—is nothing to me—nor you. You and I are stewards of different estates. I cannot go to your enclosure, nor you to mine, to levy on anything, even for Christ's sake. We are totally independent of each other in all this thing.

Nor can the church, as a whole, stand between us and God, unless we ask it to do so, and covenant that it may do so. Each church has an organization of its own, and rules by which it is managed. If any man, under such a constitution duly explained and understood, binds himself to the church, well and good. He is like a steward who has joined a guild or association of stewards. The church has control over a Christian just so far as he voluntarily asks his brethren to assume control over him. But no ecclesiastical law can make any man issue contributions large or small. I freely admit, that all I find in the Bible teaches me fully, that this entire acknowledgement of independence belongs to each steward of God.

But then, back yet more solemnly upon the individual falls this weight of accountability, when it centres in God. "To his own master every man standeth or falleth." The box is fixed in the temple as it used to be; but it is Jesus Christ, just the same now as then, who sits "over against the treasury," and sees the rich from their abundance—the widows from their poverty—give their millions or their mites.

Now then, Theory and Practice go together. If we are clear concerning the great question, if we have actually settled *who owns the property*, that for a little while of earthly existence stands in our names, we are ready for a few most interesting practical applications of the principle. It would seem that the point is established:—God made the world, and all that is in it; so he owns it. Moreover, God keeps all the world and the race in existence, and says he owns them. He even goes so far as to declare before the best Christians his

tory can find—"Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price!" There is no deed of transfer anywhere on record. A simple commission of steward has been made out for each one of us, and the property explicitly described, of which we are to have charge. And hence nobody owns anything—he merely manages.

1. Note how this theory bears upon the duty of *systematic beneficence*. The Apostle's rule seems to have been made general in Galatia, before he announced it in Corinth:—"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." Why not accept this everywhere? Because Christians have reversed the theory of ownership, I answer; they *plan* for themselves and *allow* for God. And sometimes they will not even allow.

Picture yourself passing the gateway of two beautiful estates. You overhear the conversation of the two sleek stewards who manage them. One of them asks of the other, with an anxiety which shows he is becoming perplexed—"How will you pay up the revenues this season?" And the other quietly replies—"Oh, I shall not be able to give my proprietor anything this year; I have generally been pretty liberal; but I have laid out so much on other things already, that really I cannot afford to pay *owner's* dues!" And the first, much relieved, continues—"And so have I; I always plan in the spring for this and that and the other; this year I cannot even allow for my lord!" Thus the wise old stewards talk and talk big words, as if they really imagined they were property-men!

2. Note, in the second place, how this principle touches upon *business embarrassments*. Some years trade prospers, and wealth flows in. Other years are hard, and gains are meagre. How shall any Christian keep up his contributions? His credit is everything to him. Shall he go on giving, till religious benevolence actually runs him into ruin?

To this I have two replies to make. One is—it will be

time enough to hesitate when the ruin is nearer. I wish you would just name one man, or ten men, who came into narrow circumstances because of religious benevolence. I have heard of some who failed by reason of bad partners, bad investments, bad friends. But I should like to know if there was ever a clerk, who became ruinously embarrassed, because he paid to the teller the entire sum demanded by the cash-book. I think there would be a place in the show, open for that laborer who grew poor because he put all his Master's loads of wheat in the barn. If a christian steward knows business at all, he ought to know that he is going to fail, not when he pays the interest due for his capital borrowed, but when he neglects to do it.

The other answer is—acting on the faith of the churches at large, our various branches of christian work are pushed forward always beyond the means in hand. Missionaries are sent abroad for life—buildings are erected—young men educated—with a forward look. To stop is to die. So year after year, we all pledge ourselves to God, and intelligently rush into debt, hoping and expecting that churches will find funds for us. Generally they do; but now and then comes a close year. You ask, what is an individual to do—and we ask, what is the church to do?

I believe that business-men recognize such parties as “preferred creditors” in circumstances even the most desperate. And I leave the thought for quiet pondering in possession of ordinary intelligence, whether a believing man may not safely consider his Saviour as one who has first right, and fullest claim, when really he is maker and owner of all.

3. Try this principle also upon *solicitations for money*. Perhaps no term was ever employed more essentially degrading in itself than the name often given to pulpit-appeals in behalf of great causes of benevolence—*charity sermons*. A mistake, which would be ridiculous, if it were not so serious in results, lies at the bottom of the misnomer. Men forget *who owns* the property they manage, and so incautiously re-

veal their own superciliousness. Who is the beneficiary, one would like to inquire, the lord or the steward? Whose stipend is most properly called *charity*?

Now truly the solicitation belongs quite on the other side. A man makes a blunder, when he thinks he is to *be* asked for the Lord's money. He is to ask the Lord for the money he himself uses. He should set apart the Lord's money, and joyously bring it to him at the moment it is due. When he plans an excursion, or orders an indulgence, he must seek the Lord's consent; for it is the Lord's money he is spending. Retrenchment in narrow times begins with his own extravagance, and not with religious benefaction.

4. Let us note also how this principle bears upon *poor people's gifts*. Some most excellent and worthy workers in the church of Christ become discouraged. They have no wealth, and what they can set apart for the great causes seems pitifully meagre. No words in the Bible are more definite than these of our text:—"It is required of stewards that they be found *faithful*." Very well: faithful over what? Over what God has given him; nothing more. Let every one be true, as far as he goes; and Christ will never blame him for not going further. He marks well and with grand approval all the minor ministries of affection for him. He says: "If there first be a cheerful heart, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."

Oh, I am learning to admire this plain way of showing principle! I am growing more and more fond of this commonplace consecration. I could skip some of the rapturous experiences, if I had more of the available funds. There was one man, who was going "down into" the water for immersion. They suggested that he relieve himself of his valuables. He took out all—his wallet he carefully put back again, as he remarked;—"I have always said that when I became a Christian, my pocket-book should be baptized with me!"

“YE ARE NOT YOUR OWN.”

OH, not my own these verdant hills
And fruits and flowers and stream and wood ;
But his who all with glory fills,
Who bought me with his precious blood.

Oh, not my own this wondrous frame,
Its curious work, its living soul ;
But his who for my ransom came :
Slain for my sake, he claims the whole.

Oh, not my own the grace that keeps
My feet from fierce temptations free ;
Oh, not my own the thought that leaps,
Adoring, blesséd Lord, to thee !

“ Oh, not my own ! ” I'll soar and sing,
When life, with all its toils, is o'er,
And thou thy trembling lamb shalt bring
Safe home, to wander never more.

Giving:

ITS MOTIVE AND MEASURE.

"Freely ye have received, freely give."—MATT. 10: 8.

CHRISTIAN beneficence is no new thing under the sun. It is not sprung upon us in these latter worldly days as a discovery. It did not have its rise in the Dark Ages. It is no invention of priestcraft. It is not now either the offspring or the instrument of ministerial ingenuity. It is a plain duty; and takes all its binding force from the explicit precepts of the great Head of the Church. It was Christ himself who said: "Freely ye have received, freely give."

Our Lord never acted without reason, but he did not think it necessary always to explain what he did. When, therefore, he had respect to the weaknesses of his disciples, and deigned to exhibit the philosophy of his teaching, it becomes of immense value to us. Here in the text he has laid upon us an obligation, and in the same breath shown its reasonableness. The contribution of a liberal portion of our possessions to Christian work is not grounded in mere reflex advantage, although it has blessing in its train; nor on the expectation of future reward, although that arrives according to covenant promise; but in the fact that what we have has been put in our hands for this very purpose. The text offers us these particulars:

I.—THE MOTIVE—"Freely ye have received."

II.—THE MEASURE—"Freely give."

I.—Our very earliest question has reference to the source of obligation which this simple counsel is intended to enforce. What is it that the Christian has received so freely? In reply, we must count up all our mercies; for the pressure does not cease even now of that most searching inventory of the Apostle: "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"

1. Certain plain providential blessings we all have, so continuously bestowed that they have become commonplace, perhaps, often forgotten surely because never missed.

There is this Christian land, for example; the freest land in the world. Here no conscription tears our children away to become soldiers in an army of conquest. Here are schools in every valley, and colleges on every hill. Speech is unrestrained, and opinion unattacked. Feudal despotism, hereditary caste, social distinctions, have no sceptre to wield over us.

Then there are these Christian homes. A wife waits at the doorway for the return of her husband at evening, knowing she stands loftily as the queen of his heart and the charm of his life. You may see women yoked with beasts in the furrow in Europe; you may see them treated worse than brutes in Asia; you may see them sold for less than animals in Africa. But Anglo-Saxon blood tolerates no such thing here. There are in the English language three words, that have not even their exact synonym in any other; these are: wife—comfort—home.

Then beyond this, there is the Christian church. Around you, from your earliest infancy, have its blessed ministrations been gathered; its benedictions from heaven; its prayers by the bedside of the sick; its consolations around the coffin of the dead; its Sabbath rest, its saintly fellowship, its offered

communion with God ; its far-reaching covenant, embracing even the seed of the righteous ; and, over and above all this, the hopes of the gospel proclaimed in the pulpit, and taught in the classes of the schools. Oh, what wonderful blessings are all these ! We, poor worms of the dust, are told we shall rise into an immortality where a harp is ready for our fingers, and a crown for our foreheads ! A few more years, and then welcome to the companionship of angels, the joys of God's presence, the society of the redeemed !

Now it is not a christian thing to forget such distinguishing mercies as these. I have read of an artist, whose long years of yearning anticipation were at last gratified, so that he stood in the galleries of Italian art. He solemnly resolved to give himself up to meditation there for an hour each day on the simple theme of his happiness in the company of such masters as these. It is not fair to let the faithfulness of God force us into forgetfulness.

2. But besides all this general benevolence of our Father in heaven towards us, it needs to be specially noted that the very possessions, of which we are summoned to give a portion, are as evidently the gift of divine love, as our salvation is the gift of his grace. Indeed, the two are linked very closely together.

There was a remembered period, my christian friend, when you used to pray, with a clear sense of spiritual bankruptcy: "Forgive me my debts." You were hopelessly involved under sin. You admitted your liabilities before the divine law. But once on a time, you became more and more solicitous. You knew this life could not go on so. Deeply interested for your soul's salvation, you felt how utterly helpless you had come to be. You offered to renounce yourself, and consecrate your all, if only the Saviour would forgive you. Graciously now he took you at your word. He gave you a new heart, and you were satisfied. In the very exuberance of your gladness that day, you sang aloud that wonderful verse of a hymn :

“ Were the *whole realm of nature* mine,
That were a present far too small ;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands *my soul, my life, my all !*”

These lines seemed to you the most positively literal expression of your state of mind you could conceive. They did not strike you as extravagant. Nobody urged you to repeat them. You volunteered the covenant. No doubt you were perfectly sincere. You simply gave yourself, and all you had, over into God's hands for time and eternity.

How shall I make you see now the entire meaning of that transaction? Do you remember the pathetic story we read some years ago in the public prints? An honorable merchant was driven to financial ruin by the dishonesty of his son. His fortune was inadequate to meet the vast liabilities incurred. But he summoned together all the creditors at his own house for a settlement. Strange company was that, under the roof where they had met on equal terms the man whose home was gone, whose heart was broken. They sat around his table. At the proper moment he entered, the soul of honor, but the wreck of self. He bore a small tin box, and emptied its contents of deeds and bonds on the board. Simply but with dignity he said: “It is all I have in the world ; deal with it as you will, I can do no more,”—and retired.

The company waited in grave silence for a few moments. Then they decided he could do better with his business than they could themselves. And all they did was to take an inventory, and mark the securities for record ; then they turned them over to him, and told him to go on with his own, only remember an account would be asked.

Behold here your picture on the day of your first communion. You felt your life had been a failure. You gave up everything to God. You came into the sanctuary, and with one of the tenderest but most binding of oaths that the human tongue can speak, you engaged to put your whole

future life, and possessions, and gains, into the hands of your Lord. You said, with grateful tears in your eyes, you would henceforth live only for him.

When, however, you reached your home that evening, you found everything undisturbed. Your house, your plate, your equipage, your adornments, were all there. You had given them to God, but nobody had been sent to remove them. *The Lord just let your fortune stand as it was, in your own name.* The Saviour had laid your gift back on your hands gently; but he told you hereafter you were to manage it in his interest, and report it finally to him. So of all your business life; you gave up everything; but the Lord returned it, only saying: "Occupy till I come!"

Now what I say is, that all you are and all you have belongs to God; for you transferred it to him under your own covenant. That you have it now in use is proof of his generous love. Freely you received it; now he says to you, freely give.

II.—So, then, we enter easily upon the second branch of the subject, the measure of beneficence.

1. It seems hardly possible to state any rule for contribution, which will fitly fix the *amount* for all persons alike. The terms of the text are carefully chosen, however. "Freely" answers to "freely." If God has poured out of his treasures liberally, our example is set. In business phraseology, it would be fair to say, he has lent us all we have "on call." And that happens to be the word we use, and the word with which most refusals are irritably pointed. Some say there is no end to the "calls" for money. Most likely there never will be, unless Christians stop praying. The world over, there are people who never cease imploring God to open new fields of usefulness. He seems to suppose that this is what the church wants him to do. And he certainly does more and more of it every year. Let us ask and answer a few questions, making the first "freely" in the text measure the last "freely."

Shall we give to those *far away* from us? God does; we are all far enough away from him, and from hope and from heaven. The most remote heathen are not more completely beyond reach than ourselves. Christ, the Son of God, journeyed further than any foreign missionary the world ever knew.

Shall we give to those *beneath* us? God does; he says: "If any man will be great among you, let him be your minister,"—that is, your servant. Angels were sent to shepherds in Bethlehem; angels ministered to the beggar Lazarus in heaven. Christ became poor, that we, through his poverty, might become rich. He stooped to save.

Shall we give to the *wicked*? God sends his rain upon the unjust as well as the just. He means his goodness shall lead to repentance. It would make frightful disturbance in many of our plans and hopes and histories, if we should discover that almighty power was going to put an end to giving freely to sinners as we are, or even was about to graduate his favors according to the moral character we truly bear.

Shall we give to the *injurious*? Where one has done me a wrong, is it ever my duty to be benevolent to him? Surely, it is just to ask how God has treated ourselves. Has anybody ever done more to spite us, and hurt us, than we have in person done to forget and neglect God, and even misuse his bounties? Yet he continues to give *freely*. That is a true remark of the sainted Buckminster: "The highest exercise of charity is charity towards the uncharitable."

Shall we give to mere *animals* and *brutes*? Ah, I sometimes think we fail there the most! God notes the fall of the sparrow; he gives young eagles their food. He feeds the ravens when they cry. One of the severest reproaches on our age is our cruelty to the dumb creatures that serve us.

Indeed, there is no nearer limit to these questions than to the duty they suggest. I cannot see that we are at liberty ever to refuse our responses to divine calls. We are to give as freely as he gives freely. And when a Christian grows im-

patient because of the multiplication of causes presented to him, let him remember how much he himself asks of God.

2. But there is wisdom in all this way of doing things. Let us enter a little upon its *philosophy*. Could not God have conceived some other plan of distributing his money-favors except this of employing stewards? Why does he not help the world, and support it, and bless it, and evangelize it, directly, and save human beings the duties of alms-giving?

Now it is not wise to say what were the divine reasons, cherished beforehand, for any method of working God chooses. But we are always at liberty to suppose that any advantages which we discover were in his purpose originally. And we certainly do observe two great benefits flowing from this plan.

One is, that money may become the discharge from individual labor. We are never to forget that money is worth nothing for its own sake, even when put upon a contribution-plate. Money never built a church, established a school, or converted a heathen. Money means work. The only unfluctuating element in political economy is the day's labor of an able-bodied man. Gold varies, silver varies, food varies; but the one steady thing in all this world is what one man will be able to do twelve hours in the same given climate.

Now it is labor which the children of God are under obligation to bestow. The Almighty has laid a great task upon the people of his choice, which it takes hands of active energy, brains of educated intellect, and hearts of fervid zeal, to accomplish. This belongs to the whole Church; not to pastors, nor evangelists, nor missionaries, not to poor nor to rich people; not to any classes or conditions of Christians; but to us all alike. The printing of Bibles, the distribution of tracts, the manning of missions, require downright hard work, and this it is your duty and mine to furnish. But what if each of us had to do mission work in person for five years? What if every man had to serve an apprenticeship in the study and the pulpit? Now each one can abide in his own

home, and there stir up for profit his best gifts ; and the Church hires its messengers, and supports them while in active service.

But add to this still another advantage, which is found in such a method of management. We introduce the principle of division of labor into church enterprise. Thus our work is not only more easily done, but more perfectly done. Skill and experience go hand in hand as helpers of the gospel. One who follows a particular branch of toil, even the most minute, learns the duties of it—the knack of it—more thoroughly.

“ ’Twill employ seven men to make a perfect *pin* ;
 Who makes the head contents to miss the point ;
 Who makes the point agrees to leave the joining.
 And if a man should say, I want a pin,
 And I must make it straightway, head and point,
 His wisdom is not worth the pin he wants !
 Seven men to a pin and not a man too much.
 Seven generations haply to this world,
 To right it visibly a finger’s breadth,
 And mend its rents a little !”

It is easy to see how this principle touches the point of *personal consecration*. Our relation to Jesus Christ is feudal. Prince Immanuel is at war, and summons us to the field. Personal endeavor is our obligation. Of this money becomes the representative.

It is all in our interest that he permits us to purchase freedom with tithes. The work of the church on earth must be done by hands and heart and brain. But not every one has gifts for special service. Carey, who began as a cobbler and ended as a missionary, could make (so it is said) as good sermons as shoes. And Saul of Tarsus learned the trade of tent-making, which served him in excellent purpose when he became Paul the Apostle.

Most of us, therefore, are content to choose one calling, because we cannot carry double vocations like these. We

are like citizens in monarchical countries, held to military service. The government allows us to commute in money. We do not estimate the value of our substitute, but our own. Our contributions measure the value we hold ourselves at. Profitable thought it will always be for us, as we lay our offering on the plate—there, that registers what I am worth as a worker for the Lord in this direction !

Nor is the meaning of this military simile quite exhausted, until we bring into remembrance the history of our conflicts with God, our subjection by omnipotent grace, and our subsequent restoration to favor. We who were accursed have now become sons.

You see, every man is just a conquered rebel, making terms. There is recorded in Roman history the tale of a great city, entering into the final stipulations of surrender. The question was asked of those who came out of the gates for conditions—what do you deliver up? And they replied—ourselves, and our city; our families, and our fields; our water, our food, our fuel; our temples and our dwellings; we put our all into the hands of the imperial general. Then they were received, as under solemn covenant. But when the army entered, it was proclaimed—Let every man keep his own, and use it as before; only let him remember hereafter he is a loyal citizen of Rome !

Your Maker and your Master says, from out the innermost glory, "Give yourself and your all to me; choose me for your God; covenant to my service all your possessions; and I will become your God and your portion forever. Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth !"

It is easy, also, to see how this principle bears upon one's *growth in the grace of giving*. If the word "freely" in the text fixes the reach of the other, then it follows, of course, that, if God increases a believer's fortune, as the years pass on, he expects the beneficence to keep pace with the benefit.

It seems perfectly natural to us, in the observations of

common life, to notice that as a young man becomes older, and his possessions reach the measure of opulence, he will select a finer house on a more welcome street ; he will wear a better garment, and set up a more costly equipage. We explain the greater show by the quiet remark—he is doing well in business. Now why should it not follow with equal certainty that when a Christian is becoming rich, he will show it by his benefactions more quickly even than by his luxuries ?

Hence the mystery of meanness in a true man's money-matters. Some people grow in wealth for a whole life-time, and die as contractedly little as they began.

Did you ever see a bird, hopping up on the door-stone of a village church—in a moment it sprang higher, and lit on an upper window-sill—then, with another little flutter, it reached the point of the roof—and now you imagined how far away it could see—up it flew again to the belfry—ah ! the hills and the rivers, and the meadows, in the prospect—then another flight, and it stood sheer aloft upon the spire—your heart swelled with the thought of the vast reach of landscape by this time under its eye—but you really felt surprised that the bird continued so preposterously little all the time—you could hardly see it now at all, away up there on the gilt vane, and in an instant, with rapid skips from point to point, it settled clear to the ground again—in no respect expanded—a poor little bit of a bird, pecking in the gravel for the worm it came down after—just as it had started, satisfied with the curb-stone, when it might have seen the stars !

Bad enough for a bird—but what will you say of a man, journeying up from poverty to wealth, and yet never growing beyond the narrowness of stature with which he started ? It must be a most inveterate contraction of the soul which forces one to pervert the text into a motto—receive *freely*, but keep *mean* !

THE VOICE OF THE WEARY.

I come from a land where a beautiful light
 Is creeping o'er hill-top and vale ;
 Where broad is the field, and the harvest is **white**,
 But the reapers are wasted and pale.

All wasted and worn with the wearisome toil,
 Still they pause not—that brave little band ;
 Though soon their lone pillows must be the **strange soil**
 Of that distant and grave-dotted strand.

For dangers uncounted are clustering there :
 The pestilence stalks uncontrolled ;
 Strange poisons are borne on the soft languid air,
 And lurk in each leaf's fragrant fold.

There the rose never blooms on fair woman's wan **cheek**,
 But there's beautiful light in her eye,
 And the smile that she wears is so loving and meek,
 None can doubt it comes down from the sky.

There the strong man is bowed in his youth's golden **prime**,
 But he cheerily sings at his toil,
 For he thinks of his sheaves and the garnering time,
 Of the glorious Lord of the soil.

And ever they turn—that brave little band,
 A long wistful gaze towards the west—
 "Do they come? Do they come from that dear distant **land**—
 That land of the lovely and blest?"

"Do they come? Do they come? We are feeble and **wan**,
 We are passing like shadows away ;
 But the harvest is white, and lo! yonder the dawn ;
 And for helpers—for helpers, we pray!"

Old Honest's Riddle.

"The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself."—PROV. II: 25.

THOSE who are familiar with Pilgrim's Progress, will recall that, when the little company under the lead of Greatheart were entertained in the house of Gaius, there was a good deal of innocent hilarity at the dinner-table. The travellers were tired, their appetites were keen. And so much comfort, and so much rest, coming at once, put them in the best of spirits.

After a few old-fashioned jokes, and sage attempts at pleasantry, good Mr. Honest gravely announced his intention of propounding a riddle. They were very merry at this time, but of course quite well held in hand, and they waited with much respect for the old gentleman's effort. He put it in quaint rhyme thus:

"A man there was, though some did count him mad,
The more he cast away, the more he had."

Their most respected host understood at once that the puzzle was aimed at him, and that everybody lingered anxiously for his reply. He paused a while, however; but whether to guess the answer, or frame the couplet into which he would put it, we are not informed. It is not everybody in this world who can make poetry to order. But Gaius finally offered this solution:

"He who bestows his goods upon the poor,
Shall have as much again, and ten times more."

At this juncture, one of Christiana's boys impulsively broke in: "I dare say, sir, I did not think you could have found it out!" The genial old man answered: "I have been trained up in this way a great while; nothing teaches like experience; I have learned of my Lord to be kind, and have ever found that I gained thereby." Then he went on to clinch his remark with an apposite verse from Scripture: "There is that scattereth, yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing; there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches." And then (continues the narrator) Samuel whispered to his mother: "This is a very good man's house; let us stay here a great while."

It is not easy to say how many persons in a vast mercantile community like ours there are, who will care to go patiently through the line of study offered, so as clearly to comprehend the positive accuracy of this as a financial statement; but our present text is only the riddle of old Honest thrown into prose, and fired with inspiration. It suggests these two themes of thought:

I.—THE RIDDLE OF CHRISTIAN INVESTMENT;

II.—THE GOSPEL INTERPRETATION OF IT.

I.—Men say—a penny saved is a penny earned. God says—a penny rightly expended is a pound to one's credit. To scatter is the only way to increase; to hoard up is to come to poverty.

Thus divine wisdom seems directly to decry human foresight. And that this is no mere isolated or accidental saying, is evident from its reiteration in forms most varied and altogether unmistakable. Isaiah takes up the exact burden of Solomon: "If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday; the Lord shall

guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones ; and thou shalt be a watered garden and like a spring of water, the waters of which fail not."

The New Testament rule is the same. "This I say, urges the apostle Paul, "he which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly ; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully." No sin seems to have been more sharply rebuked than covetousness. The inspired writers argue and expostulate with men upon its folly as well as its guilt. They denounce it as a crime, and they stigmatize it as a blunder also.

Thus there can be no mistake in asserting that the riddle of old Honest is to the diligent student of the Bible, only the utterance of most commonplace fact.

II.—The interpretation of this riddle, therefore, is easy. It can be made authoritative on the instant ; for in a single New Testament text, the apostle Paul has been at pains to group all the advantages and gains of liberality together. He speaks of them as directly bestowed by divine reward. "Now he that ministereth seed to the sower, both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness."

1. Earliest among these benefits, therefore, we may reckon *the multiplication of one's own resources*. He that gives seed to be sown, brings at the harvest bread to him that sows it.

Start with an illustration most familiar to you all. Here is a Christian thoroughly educated. If he sits down to become a mere recluse, he will soon reach dulness. He learns more just by teaching, than in any other way. Exercise of gifts increases them. Toiling for the poor is as effective for health as a course of gymnastics. When one of our famous vocalists summoned the servants of the hotel generously to listen, it was better than a music-lesson in preparation for the concert.

Or to resume the figure of the verse I have quoted from

the epistle : any one who is backward in sowing seed will suffer from the pressure of a scant harvest. That is the same similitude employed in the chapter from which our text is taken. The Septuagint translation is full of meaning—“There are those, who sowing their own, make it more ; and there are those who gather, and are impoverished.”

It cannot be considered a mere superstition ; it is a fixed providential fact. Bad as this world is, mean people cannot thrive in it. The curse of ill-success will follow a miserly man. There will be sickness in his household. Some of his children will go astray, and plunge him into debt. Everybody loves to cheat him. He will be compelled to employ more counsel, and repair more damages than most other men. And the plain explanation of these misfortunes is found in the inspired rule : “With the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.” Small investments bring niggardly gains.

Now, my brethren, I admit this is the lowest of all considerations ; but it is worth thinking of, or the Bible would not have mentioned it. As a matter of fact it will reach the very minds that need it, more forcibly than anything else. Martin Luther and his brother reformers were out on a ride one day ; and all, as was their custom, gave alms to the poor. “Who knows,” said one of the number, “in what way God will return and increase these pieces of money to me ?” Luther turned quickly at the speech : “Just as if God had not given them to you in the beginning !” said he : “we must give freely, out of pure love, and cheerfully.” Then he quoted the verse : “Do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again.”

No doubt, disinterested benevolence is the true rule, but it is rare of reach at the present day. And if there be those who will stand on this lower plane of a permitted cupidity, there on that plane the word of God meets them, and declares that there does not live on this terrestrial ball a Cræsus so rich that he can afford to be stingy.

2. But we come up to a higher and worthier ground. In the second place, you may always observe that liberality *increases the general intelligence* of those who persistently exercise it.

Two things there are which are especially wanted by the present generation of Christians. One of them is : *views*. Some men never have any views. They have impressions ; they have opinions ; they have prejudices. But the impressions are mysteriously imbibed, the opinions are borrowed, and the prejudices are simply wilful and arbitrary. No one of all these is intelligent, for not one is the fruit of thought, not one is born of investigation.

Then the other thing which is wanted is breadth of perception. Some men see hills and valleys, but never take in a landscape. Some men see waves, but cannot see the ocean. Some men can deal with individuals, but are unable to group them into systems.

Now as a matter of fact, every object increases in value in proportion as we put with it its relations. A child discovers a rainbow, and admires its beautiful colors. A philosopher goes further ; sees all that the child does, and then revels in the thought of its intricacy of reflections and refractions, and the mystery of the laws of light it discloses. But a Christian distances them both ; for he reads in the glorious arch above the storm the sign of God's covenant in the early ages of a venerable past. His view of it is grander because it is wider ; and at the same time, it is truer, because it embraces all the rainbow means.

One of the old satirists gave us the line : " there was a little man, and he had a little soul." And the difference between such a man and a great man, is that the one has more reach of perception. Without going a single step into speculation to show why this is so, I need only call your attention to a common matter of observation. A covetous, grasping, miserly man is always contracted in his estimates of things around him. Our very terms, unconsciously employed, fol-

low this lead. We say of one—he is a *small* man—when surely we have no reference to his size ; we mean he is close, penurious, and money-loving. I once saw a child measuring the sun, in all its purple splendor of twilight, by noticing that a penny before his eye just covered it, edge to edge. And I have known many men who measured a noble deed, a high purpose, a fine character, even a great plan of God's gospel, by a coin laid over it.

On the other hand you discover that when one has begun to contribute liberally of his means, his notion of things enlarges. He becomes better informed. Tell him of a hospital ; and he will be interested to learn of comforts and cures. Tell him of a mission-cause, and he will buy an atlas, and read a report, to know where the field is. Liberal gifts of money bring liberal measures of education. And that is frequently a great year in one's history, when he has entered the college of contribution.

3. This leads us naturally to consider a third advantage which comes from open-handed benevolence. *It stimulates the growth, and increases the attractiveness, of our Christian graces.*

Our mental and spiritual organization is in many respects precisely like our physical. The law of exercise lies fixedly impressed upon our entire nature. Vigorous action always increases force. Determinate indolence induces weakness. This everybody admits on the instant. But few seem to go far enough to perceive another law, directly alongside of this, of equal strength, and of yet more subtle influence. Each specific exercise has an universal benefit. You may use only your arms, but not these muscles alone will grow ; the whole frame will feel the increase, and become more sinewy. You cannot possibly put flesh on your wasted members without bringing more or less fire in your eye, or kindling glow on your cheek.

This principle is just as true of the mind and the heart as of the body. It is not possible to develop one real Chris-

tian grace, without powerfully improving all the rest. If the soul grows at all, it grows very nearly symmetrically. For example, if you strengthen your faith, you confirm your hope, you stimulate your joy. A happy heart sings the more musically, when toiling most heavily up the hill. Thus the whole character feels the circulation.

Take any instance from real life ; such have fallen certainly under your own observation. A church-member, known for a long time to be miserly and small, suddenly under some new force begins to be generous and free with money. You see the difference in a month. Charity sets in motion all the other graces. His love grows ; his zeal grows ; his prayerfulness grows. He is more gentle with his children. He actually is more polite. He shakes hands differently. He meets his neighbors with more cordiality. He knows this as well as anybody else. He quickens in self-respect. The impulses of his religious life are invigorated ten-fold. His evidences of piety multiply to his measureless content. He is more alive than ever before. He is a happier man ; a better man ; more of a man all around.

On the other hand, any one of the graces being dwarfed, the rest are dwarfed ; power and beauty are drawn away, and the whole system is crippled and distorted. You have all read of how the Chinese bind the feet of female infants with thongs, to make them genteelly little. The effect of this custom moulds the entire sex in that nation. It makes walking very painful, of course. So the enervate creatures find it is their strength to sit still. Now conceive one of your neighbors to have been bound in this way, in early life. It would not seem to amount to much. Only his feet—only one foot—if you will. His hands are free ; his tongue unloosed ; his eyes unbandaged ; he is everywhere unrestrained, undeformed ; only a single member has been put in straps. And yet, that single member spreads its contraction over the whole man. Propose any manly effort—any activity, any pleasure, any duty, any game. His first thought is—how

much walking will it involve? All things, great and little, bend to it.

Talk to him of a ramble over the hills at sunrise; he looks up with simple wonder. Talk to him of becoming a soldier for his country; he would let the government break before he would begin to march. Talk to him of visiting the poor; of social duties; voting at the polls. His endless reply is—I cannot be long upon my feet. Thus the whole world is forced to narrow this way, and shrink in that, till it can be girdled around the equator with the thong he wears on his feet.

Now this is hardly a caricature. Do you not know men, whose liberality is all leathered up, whose every step of contribution gives them pain? You may raise the loftiest themes of manly thought—of public spirit—of patriotic fervor—even of religious endeavor—their first question is—how much of expense will all this involve? And the whole range of intelligent life is simply contracted to meet the standard of their personal meanness. They not only give small sums, they think small thoughts, they devise small plans, they speak small exhortations, they pray small prayers. Their entire religious existence is slow, limping, unhealthy, and unhappy.

The only relief is to cut the thongs, off with the clogs, and step forth as free sinewy men among men, standing up erect as the crowned creatures of God! The moment they do so, their whole selves will be immensely relieved; nature will reassert herself, and remedy the distortion. For it is neither painful nor unnatural to walk; it is only the being bound up which is distressful.

4. There is time now to mention only one more advantage of liberality, and yet it would not be well to pass it by altogether. In the fourth place, *it intensifies one's influence, and so multiplies his power of doing good.*

Giving freely has great force in leading others to give freely. The benefit here is, therefore, somewhat of a mechanical nature. It enables us to throw the rope of our ef-

fort around other pulleys ; so that without drawing any harder, we really move more weight. We kindle some, and we shame others. We encourage some, and we direct others. Indeed, we start up the deadness, and make a beginning all around. One truly liberal contributor precipitates himself upon the community with more force than even a hundred middling, hesitant men, who perhaps jointly reach the same amount. Often a person of slender means sets on a neighbor of large wealth to far outstrip him. You have known an insignificant member of a society to double the practical value of his gift by the surprise he effected.

And this reacts just as before. As one grows in influence, he advances in credit ; and credit is money. So his resources for further opportunity are multiplied, until by and by just a word from him helps a worthy endeavor actually into being.

Now look at the contrast. How many business men there are, who have felt the awfully benumbing power of a mean subscriber upon a project of public good. He must be asked, and he puts down his name. The moment you read it, you know the enterprise is stone dead. Shame and sorrow on us is it that the church of Christ should meet the same hindrance. But many a noble work is killed, because a mean man has taken it in charge. An aged and prudent pastor once told me that he had made a serious offer to one of the officers of his congregation, to give him the present of a sum just equal to what he gave for missions, if he would quietly contrive to be absent on contribution days. People all watched him as he returned with the plate to the communion-table ; and the light ring of the small coin he dropped upon it, discouraged all the rest, and provoked them otherwise than to good works.

Let a free, open-hearted Christian go through any church, he will gather twice what others will ; not that he begs harder, not that he cringes more ; but he is a manly follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the world knows it. He leads ; and men will follow one who leads worthily. Julius

Cæsar was once asked how it came that his soldiers kept up so close in the charges of hand-to-hand conflict. He answered: "I never say *Ite illuc*; but *Venite huc*." He never ordered them—*go there*—he beckoned them—*come here*—for himself was ahead.

With this enumeration of advantages to be expected, under God's covenant, to follow true Christian liberality, I leave the subject. But suffer me as I close the sermon to speak a few frank and honest words to young men and women, who are not yet far on in the way of life. The power of a pastor over his people is a constant energy, moulding them year by year. It ought never to be forgotten, or underrated by himself—never to be derided or ignored by others.

This is the reason why, at the end of such appeals, I turn to the young with a word of pleading. I feel intensely anxious to accomplish some permanent good. My one great, overmastering desire is, in all I say and do in this congregation, to lead them nearer and nearer the standard of noble Christian manhood. Especially I long to have our young people start with a determination, which no impulse of temptation, no encroachment of worldliness, no feebleness of piety, can ever shake; a resolution to be open-handed, cheerful and generous; a face set as a flint against everything little, picayune, parsimonious, and mean.

In his explanation of old Honest's riddle, Gaius told the boy Samuel that the way he came to guess it was—he had been *trained up* in this thing a great while. Habit is everything to us.

The words of our text are chosen with beautiful aptness. If you will look at the margin in our English Bibles, you will find that what is rendered a "liberal soul" is translated "a soul of blessing." Oh, what a gift of gifts, therefore, this must be! Not an act of blessing—not even a life of blessing—but a soul of blessing—carrying its living benediction into its immortality—watering others here, and drinking the water hereafter, from the river of life!

YOUR MISSION.

If you cannot on the ocean
 Sail among the swiftest fleet,
 Rocking on the highest billows,
 Laughing at the storms you meet,
You can stand among the sailors,
 Anchored yet within the bay,
You can lend a hand to help them,
 As they launch their boat away.

If you are too weak to journey
 Up the mountain steep and high,
You can stand within the valley,
 While the multitude go by ;
You can chant in happy measure,
 As they slowly pass along ;
Though they may forget the singer,
 They will not forget the song.

If you have not gold and silver
 Ever ready to command ;
 If you cannot toward the needy
 Reach an ever open hand,
You can visit the afflicted,
 O'er the erring you can weep ;
You can be a true disciple
 Sitting at the Saviour's feet.

If you cannot in the harvest
 Garner up the richest sheaf,
Many a grain both ripe and golden
 Will the careless reapers leave ;
 Go and glean among the briers,
 Growing rank against the wall,
For it may be that the shadow
 Hides the heaviest wheat of all.

Christlike Piety.

"I have set the Lord always before me."—PSALM 16: 8.

YOU will remember that the Apostle Peter, in his earliest sermon on the day of Pentecost, quotes this Psalm almost entirely; and, arguing upon it at length, applies its wonderful statements directly to Jesus of Nazareth, whom God had raised from the dead. We are not, therefore, left in doubt for a moment who is meant here by "the Lord." To David, it was the Messiah, forward to whom he looked with the eager anticipation of hope, and the clear intelligence of prophecy. To us, it is the Lord Jesus Christ, backward to whose historic advent we look in all the confidence of gospel faith.

So it comes to pass that our text, found in one of the ancient Jewish songs of praise, is of pertinent value even to Christian hearts. While it reproduces and perpetuates the lively experience of one of God's chosen children, it discloses to all of them, in brief compass, the most extensive information concerning the secret of his admitted superiority.

I.—IT REVEALS THE STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE AT WHICH HE ARRIVED.

II.—IT EXHIBITS THE PROCESS OF ATTAINING IT WHICH HE EMPLOYED.

I.—The character of God's only-begotten Son on earth, now our risen Redeemer, must be for all ages the one stand-

ard of human excellence. Under both dispensations of grace piety is the soul's likeness to Christ.

Hence here is an immediate and intelligible answer to the question, What is it to be a Christian? In our periods of self-searching we ask this over and over again, oftentimes painfully. To be a Christian is to be a Christ-man, or a Christ-like man. It consists in setting the Lord always before us; and that, in these two special particulars—as our Sacrifice for sins, and as our Pattern in all holy living.

Even the eternal purpose of the Father, so mysterious in its inception and form, becomes perfectly intelligible at the point where it touches the individual. It never goes one step further than this. We are predestinated only “that we should be conformed to the image of his Son.” The new life has in it nothing strange or strained. No experience attends its arrival, or accompanies its continuance, either startling or unprecedented. It is only our daily life transfigured with a fresh and better purpose, and illumined with a clearer outlook. The likeness of Jesus Christ becomes stamped upon every member of our bodies, every faculty of our minds, every affection of our hearts, and existence itself is only another name for service at his bidding. “None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.”

One Life there is, and only one in all history, erecting itself out of the plane of human experience, as the grand embodiment of all superiority. We have the lineaments of its transcendent beauty traced in the four gospels. We set the Lord before us, in one very important sense, when we read the inspired chapters. With our continued study, we find ourselves mysteriously — almost magnetically — attracted nearer to him, urged by a power we can neither define nor resist.

This was to be expected. Our Saviour himself, referring

to the death he should die, said :—"And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Singularly enough, therefore, the crucifixion scene, so humiliating when judged by any human standard of preference, becomes the chief centre of our admiring affection. We fairly glory in the Cross.

True religion and undefiled consists in yielding cordially to this imponderable but omnipotent force, and suffering our entire being to be attracted to him. We bend our wills in all submission. We surrender our souls and bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, into his hands. We desire nothing so much as to catch the likeness of that radiant face, and repeat its expression upon our own, growing more and more to resemble him, as more and more we unveil our hearts to the sunshine of his presence. "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."

Now with this understanding of the text, you readily perceive how abruptly it rebukes the continual comparison of our own spiritual state with that of others. It was the Lord that David set before him—not any saint, however eminent or historical. Even religious biography may easily become a snare to those who mistake its use. Especially will harm be done, if the unusual exercises and manifestations of devotees or mystics be unduly exalted in estimation, and vainly imagined to have been the secret of their strength. That believer will certainly fail, who puts any human perfection, real or conceived, in the place of Christ. "They measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."

Nor is this all : our text rebukes, likewise, the setting up of an abstract experience, or any form or frame of feeling, as the model. It is inconsistent with every theory of independent or individual life, that there should be furnished a distinct emotion, or a formulated fervor, which is necessarily to be reached by us all in turn. No fixed pattern of penitence

or peace, no mere exercise of the soul can be imagined, up to which each man is to come, and towards which he is to set his ambition. David did not put conversion always before him, but the Lord. And any believer will mistake much, and lose in the error, who puts an experience always before him, and not Christ.

Least of all will you catch David ever setting some sort of second conversion before him, as if he were aiming at a state of excellence in which he might be a model also, and get a "power." He says in another passage, what discloses the intensest solicitude of his soul:—"As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

II.—All these views will receive greater clearness and confirmation as we go on, now in the second place, to consider the process by which this conformity to our Saviour's image is to be attained.

1. Earliest of all, there is involved a *personal recognition of one's own religious life as an actual thing*, capable of being moulded, influenced, and changed.

It is a perversion, now, to interrupt by saying, That leads directly to self-consciousness. For the fact is, the soul of every child of God, in the strait and conflict of growth, is absurdly and morbidly self-conscious from the beginning; and this is not what has led to it. The state of nature is a diseased state. Of itself, like all other ill-health, it keeps a man in a chronic unrest, egotism, and alarm. He has a "fearful looking-for of judgment." To bid such a man consider his life as capable of entire restoration, if he will only take it in hand, no more leads to introspection and self-consciousness, than telling an invalid he may get well, if he will only set about caring for his health, leads him to petulance and conceit. It points out the only cure.

Men must learn to look off at themselves as others look at them, or as they look at their own image in a mirror, at the commencement of this recovery. That fine, high, beau-

tiful self-forgetfulness, which looks out—and off—and away, is the thing to be sought; it comes farther on, sometimes before one knows it. In the beginning, a man has just quietly to consider his ways as he starts to turn his feet unto the Lord's testimonies.

The ancient picture of creation represented Prometheus as sitting before a huge mass of clay, like a sculptor before a block of marble, fashioning the first man with skillful blows of mallet and chisel. We are to take our clayey nature, and plant it before our contemplation in just as real a way as this. We must feel that now it becomes our duty to work upon it. On the one side we hew off a deformity, or extirpate an excrescence. On the other side we develop a grace, or bring a beauty into expression. That Christian will be sorrowfully mistaken who imagines his piety will advance by itself. It is not even vigorous or vital enough to hold its own without being watched. The very first condition of proper growth in grace is the consciousness that grace can be made to grow, and will grow, if cared for.

Out before an intelligent understanding our entire religious character needs to be planted, where we can look at it all around, discern its defects, and detect its deficiencies. It is positively a plastic reality; it may be moulded into almost any form. Under the guidance, and with the help, of the Holy Spirit, it is our own fingers that must fashion it into comeliness. It is capable of increase and discipline. It may be strengthened, educated, cultivated, and adorned.

2. Then, as a second step in this process, there must be *a keen, delicate, artistic, appreciation of the pattern.*

That is to say, since the Lord Jesus Christ is our model, there needs to be a persistent endeavor to ascertain by actual study the secret of the illustrious Life we imitate. I am afraid many of us read the gospels altogether in fragments. Our investigations are disconnected and materialistic. A few disjointed verses, here and there, in one Book to-day, and far away in another to-morrow, will never give us a balanced

and complete knowledge of anything as a beautiful whole. It would be like looking at a flower, by a microscopic examination of a petal or a pollen-grain, now a stem, and then a stamen. We lose all notion of symmetry, entirety, and living embodiment of grace.

Moreover, we labor too much in pursuit of external details. Plant us by the well in Samaria, and we fall to tracing its circumference with a measuring-line, and sounding its depth with a plummet. Yet there sits the Master, waiting for us to look him in the face! Our entire being ought to be awake to its own overwhelming necessities, until we see in Jesus our everlasting supply.

We are to read the Bible definitely, that it may disclose to us more of him. Our souls faint for help, and there in Jesus Christ we find it. As a Brazilian slave seeks in the deep bed of the river for diamonds, and sees nothing but diamonds, and gathers nothing but diamonds, and thinks the day dreary and disastrous when no diamonds are discovered, so we ought to study the gospel for lessons concerning Christ, and feel that the study is lost when no lessons are learned concerning Christ. Quickness in appreciation is very delicate, and seems sometimes a rare gift; but it can be cultivated even in confessedly dull people. We can become accustomed to see our Master and our Model in every line and verse of the inspired word, if we desire it.

And really it is worth the effort. When we journey around with him through the villages, go with him into the mountain to pray, sit with the eager multitudes that hear him preach, wonder with the hushed throngs that marvel at his miracles—when we mark the tireless zeal to do good, the unflagging energy to relieve a widow's wail or an orphan's mourning, the infinite majesty preserved under pressure of undeserved abuse, the tender compassion, the considerate charity, the undisturbed meekness, the clear devotion to truth, the bending obedience of his prayerful will—oh, when we see all this—the measureless repose of power in reserve,

the grandeur of single-hearted fidelity to purpose—when each grace and each beauty of that faultless Presence comes more and more frequently into view—when that recognized, well-known, beloved Form passes out and in under our eye, and we have grown so alert to catch its signs of coming, and our loving souls begin to watch for it more than they who watch for the morning—then, ever clearer and ever nearer, we behold him whom we long to see, and more and more desirous becomes the wish and the yearning—“oh, that I might be like thee, as I see thee! that I might resemble him I so revere! whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire beside thee!”

3. Here, then, we have the two, the Soul and its Pattern, now fully recognized, and placed side by side. What more is necessary? Surely, *continuous labor to liken the one to the other*, comes next.

Put your mere dead clay on the stand, no matter how close to the choicest Apollo of any master, it will never fashion itself into resemblance. It must have toilsome labor from the patient artist's hand; and that continuous, often-times severe, before it will reproduce the graces of its model.

So of our religious life. Set the Lord before it always; and even then it will require to be wrought upon with skillful endeavor. The form of this work, however, is as simple as it is effective. We conceive of our Saviour as being precisely in our place, so far as earthly surroundings are concerned—tempted like as we are—meeting the daily circumstances that oppress us—and then we grow habituated to ask the quiet question, *How would he behave if he were here?*

This is not a thing that invites extravagance, or provokes singularity. Piety takes no man out of his ordinary calling to become Christlike—that is, if his occupation be decent. It confirms every one all the more in any vocation that is honest and true. But it claims that we bear our religious principles with us into all our daily labor, and there, conscientiously live up to them. Whether tending flocks, or man-

aging merchandise—in the artisan's shop, or at the desk of the book-keeper—mechanically wielding the tools of industrious labor, or intellectually bending over the page of investigation and professional study—wherever we are, or however engaged—that unimaginative question returns, How would my Lord act, if he had my labor? What would he reach as his conclusion, if he had my decisions to settle? This is what is intended by setting our Lord *always* before us. And when our instinctive reply is reached, there remains no alternative but that we accept the conclusions, adopt the behavior, live the life, of our Master; and deliberately undertake to reproduce his likeness in our daily walk.

4. Still I am bound in honesty to say, there is no worth in these counsels thus far, without one thing more. There may be a clear recognition of one's own religious life as a reality; and there may be the intensest study to know more and more of the deeper experiences of the Redeemer; and there may even be diligent effort to assimilate all our personal characteristics to the divine pattern of perfection—all this, and yet the affair fail; all this, without that which alone would make them available to our permanent good.

In the fourth place, there is involved in this process of attainment a *prayer—a steady, earnest, importunate cry for help*. The believer, who truly sets the Lord Jesus always before him, will soon learn that there are heights of experience in a Life that he sees, far beyond the attainment of the life that he lives. Of himself, he never can secure them. He does not possess himself sufficiently. He has not got his reinsless passions enough in hand. And he is conscious of ignominious short-coming.

This leads him straight to the mercy-seat. He knows that the infinite Helper alone can bring him up to those lofty plains of serenity and enjoyment on which falls the sunshine. Admitting his insufficiency, he implores the divine interposition. And oftentimes there are no petitions so fervent as these unutterable longings of his heart. Language fails, and

he would fain be found sitting in silence at the gates of the city, holding out his hand like a beggar, when they tell him Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. Yet do the hours come and go, when his voice rises in the secrecy of supplication—"oh, let me be likened unto thee, thou sinless Son of God! not to the noblest on any earthly record, not even to the seraphs that burn and brighten before the ineffable throne! but unto THEE, in all thy matchless beauty, in all thy wondrous perfection; unto thee let me be likened by the Spirit of grace!"

Thus the communion and the growth go hand in hand. The law of our being fixes it as a fact in all experience, that we become assimilated in character to our companions, just in proportion to the love and reverence we bear them. Common observation, even our daily and desultory reading, stately histories, or current narratives of public print, persistent curiosity—anything, indeed, which throws us alongside, and keeps us in the communion, of another mind, will show after a while that we are catching the peculiarities, repeating the speech, reproducing the gestures, imitating the gait, or even affecting the singular ways, of a possible pattern.

Rising higher, when a truly noble life is before us; a manly act, a generous deed; our admiration is unconsciously awakened towards the individual who did the shining thing; and we are lit by the light we contemplate. And when to our own powers of imitation there is added the force of divine grace; and when our Model is Jesus, the sum and embodiment of all excellence; then what is there which can hinder our going on from grace to grace, and at last into glory?

Fine picture was that of the old Christian scholar, who studying alone, late into the midnight, was observed by one of the family, who came unperceived past the crevice in the door, to close reluctantly his volume, reverently lift his cap from his forehead, saying, as his final prayer ere he went to his rest,—“Blessed Jesus, thou and I will never be separated!”

This, then, is what is meant by Christ-like piety. It consists in an early choice of Jesus Christ as one's everlasting model of perfection; and then a diligent, prayerful moulding of one's self to resemble him. Its motto is—"Looking unto Jesus."

It begins with looking unto him as a sacrifice for sins. This comes before everything else. It precedes even the raising of the question we have been seeking to discuss now. There can be no piety whatever until one's iniquities are all washed away in the blood of the atonement. The soul's surrender comes previous to the soul's adornment. It will not do at all for one to say—"Now I will be good, and will be exactly like Christ." The first thing he will note in Christ is his sinlessness. And no man can be like Christ whose sins are still unforgiven. And his sins can be forgiven only when he acknowledges them, and implores their forgiveness for the sake of him who died on the cross.

Really, then, it is time that we drop the faulty conception, so widely and unwisely cherished, that to be a Christian means merely to cultivate a few sweet amenities of love and praise, quicken our fervors now and then with a spiritual song, grow meditative over a summer walk in a cemetery, discharge some feeble function of zealous effort in a mission-school, start family prayers—and so journey on joyously toward the heavenly gate. The life of a Christian is a warfare with self. It is not a single battle, nor even a single campaign. "There is no discharge in that war." Christ is the Captain of our salvation. And we need to grow like our Leader, in the very moment we follow him. Think, now, how the simple verse, daily repeated, sounds on your lips:—"I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."

"THE CARPENTER'S SON."

As oft, with worn and weary feet,
 We tread earth's rugged valley o'er,
 The thought—how comforting and sweet!
 Christ trod this very path before!
 Our wants and weaknesses he knows
 From life's first dawning to its close.

Do sickness, feebleness, or pain,
 Or sorrow in our path appear,
 The recollection will remain,
 More deeply did he suffer here!
 His life, how truly sad and brief,
 Filled up with suffering and with grief!

If Satan tempt our hearts to stray,
 And whisper evil things within,
 So did he, in the desert way,
 Assail our Lord with thoughts of sin;
 When worn, and in a feeble hour,
 The tempter came with all his power.

Just such as I, this earth he trod,
 With every human ill but sin;
 And, though indeed the very God,—
 As I am now, so he has been.
 My God, my Saviour, look on me
 With pity, love, and sympathy!

Fluctuations of Feeling.

"I have set the Lord always before me ; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."—PSALM 16 : 8.

AN inquiring friend once asked me, after a public service, When you close your eyes for prayer, and commence as you did this morning—"Infinitely high and holy God"—what do you see, or what do you seem to see?

What he meant was—what sort of mental conception does any Christian have in his ordinary devotions? What is the image which rises before him, when he addresses what he terms in common conference the throne of grace?

Since then I have passed the question on and around somewhat extensively, especially among those of largest experience and rarest gift in public prayer. Various answers are given. One said he seemed to see a vast audience-room, vague angels ranged through it, a throne in the midst—and he never found himself going further ; but towards the ineffable centre of Royalty he sent his petition. Another said that on the instant of closing the world out from his vision, he appeared to himself to be looking straight up into a splendor of light, an undefined radiance of glory that no man could approach unto. Another told me he saw positively nothing ; he felt himself in a Presence ; he spoke as he would speak to a friend in the next room, out of sight but within hearing. Another pictured himself as kneeling at the

very foot of the cross on Calvary, like the Virgin Mary and her friends. And another still chose for a like similitude Mary at Bethany, sitting at the Saviour's feet.

On the whole, the impression I have now is that most believers seem to have a vision of a personal God in the form of Jesus Christ—the Redeemer in his human shape more or less recognizable—and that the image different Christians contemplate will vary according to the floridness or dulness of their imaginations, according to the clearness or vagueness of their intellectual processes, and specially according to their individual temperament.

The matter is not particularly important, save as indicating the power of a mental conception upon a mechanical habit. It is evident that the entire structure of a prayer, the formation of one's customary expressions, and even the spiritual experience received under the exercise, will be modified by the Presence he seems to be in.

And this may be extended almost limitlessly in its reach. It appears to be the fixed rule for the whole new life under the gospel. The theory of personal piety controls the practice. "As a man thinketh, so is he."

Hence it would be one of the fairest, most pertinent, and most profitable questions ever put to any Christian—When you think of growth in grace, what is your standard? When you picture the height of attainment, towards what do you aim? When you close your eyes, and contemplate all that you wish or hope for as a perfected child of God, *what is it you seem to see?*

David, in our text, says:—"I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall never be moved." You have already learned that he meant the Messiah. So there can be no mistake; the Christian,—no matter what may be his exercise, his purpose, his hope, his enterprise, his duty,—in that supreme instant when his mental vision begins, cherishes a perfect ideal; and, if he be spiritually-minded, and properly taught, the ideal he sees is Jesus

Christ. One fine, high, peerless model of perfection attracts and rivets his attention.

Then comes the engagement of perfect success to him. All fluctuation of feeling, all inconsistency of life, is gone. If he sets the Lord always before him, he will find that, because he is on his right hand, he shall not be moved.

I.—The imperative demand in our day is for some steady and common standard of reference, by which real religion is registered.

The great insufficiency in many of our modern processes of self-examination is their want of precision. In form they are indefinite, in purpose uncertain, and in results unsatisfactory and inconclusive. We must not reproach our brethren; we are bound to believe that most errors of this sort lie in ignorance rather than perversity. The mind naturally demands clearness and tangibility. We teach each other too much that interior emotions constitute the evidences of grace; that frames of feeling must be attained in order to assurance; and even a routine or curriculum of exercises ought to be passed through in order to holiness. It is inevitable, therefore, that certain persons will be found always offering their own experience for others' acceptance; and that many of the household of faith, who honor and love them, will be straining for years to attain what they assume to be such unusual excellence. It is a very easy thing, in our incautious hours, to mistake semblance for substance, and so treat the truth as mere illusion.

The radiant architecture of a religious life is unlike everything else. It can be made, as a sublime and beautiful whole, to rise at once on the chastened imagination of each believer; for it is embodied in a single pattern. Christianity is incarnated in Christ. More or less completely, the perfections he exhibited are reproduced in human followers; but all that even Paul the Apostle could say was:—"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."

Travellers tell us that Warwick Castle flings a reflection

on the placid surface of the Avon river, by the side of which it stands, so like itself—massive buttresses, high-windowed walls, long lines of battlements, beautiful and luminous—that the image, seen down in the tranquil water, has all the distinctness of the actual structure on the bank. Indeed, in the flashes of sunshine each might be easily considered the ethereal counterpart of the other. For both are so finished in all the fine details, that sometimes the upper vision, and sometimes the lower, seems the castle in the air; and just so in reverse, sometimes the old stronghold it is which appears the illusion, as if builded base to base with one beneath it, upheld by miracle of magic in an enchanted stream.

Just such confusion between the actual and the ideal is frequently found in minds around us. That high fine model of piety, which is the pattern and embodiment of attainable grace, seems to them vague, distant, and shadowy. They conceive it to be only the fancy of a too imaginative faith, or the figment of an attenuated enthusiasm. So they summon earthly leaders, and imitate nearer excellences, as being the only solidity, the only beauty. The inverted, and often distorted, projection of religion, so urged and tossed sometimes by human passion as to be scarcely more than mere devoteism, seems to them the admirable thing to be gained. They study Christ in Christians; not aloft, where he is, but below, where he reflects. They learn to crave excited experiences, and seek for them down in the lower currents of worldly motive and maxim. And they fail just in proportion as they think they succeed. They are like their models, and their models are not Christ. "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." He who sets the Lord before him always, is the only one who will never be moved. The quivering fitfulness of the pattern will render the character, that rests in it, unstable and insecure. And happy will he be, who does not in his turn mislead others, and build up their painful disquiets on his own fluctuations of feeling.

II.—Now there is no use in entering upon such a theme

as this without going through with it. It would be a pity to lose the practical force of the principle thus enunciated, just through the lack of a plain specification of the points at which it comes in contact with our daily histories. Let us note a few classes of persons in every Christian congregation who need to carefully examine what they are in the habit of setting before themselves.

1. Take, for example, such as are all their days trying *to do some vague thing*.

There are those who contemplate the new life as a mere exercise-course. Disdaining its rests and refreshments, they would treat it, if they had their own way, as they treat the Psalms of David, skip all the Selahs every time they read aloud. They hence lose every advantage of reposeful study, all the gain of meditative thought, all the force of reflective investigation. They seem to be on the excited search for mere enterprise. One hour a conference-meeting, and a Bible-class the next; services and songs succeeding each other with a rapidity most breathless and exhausting.

Their mistake lies in the fact that what they set before them is work for the Lord, and not the Lord himself. Existence becomes a mere bustle. Even the power of calm thinking is surrendered. Sooner or later every such Christian will be constrained to lift the sorrowful lament of the Bride in the Canticles:—"They made me keeper of the vineyards; mine own vineyard have I not kept."

Now no one denies that the Apostle Paul said:—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" But no one ought to forget that this same most zealous man afterwards said:—"This one thing I do: forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." When he had a chance to labor quietly on himself, he welcomed it.

2. Again: there are those who are always attempting to accomplish *some dramatic thing*.

It is not rare, the spectacle of a believer laboring sedulously to construct a sort of show, in the centre of which he expects to appear. Highly imaginative temperaments there are, full of ingenious invention. Life is a drama, and they occupy themselves in fashioning poses, and writing parts for delivery. They see *themselves*—feeding the poor. They see *themselves*—going on a foreign mission. They see *themselves*—marching at the head of an infant-class. They love to contrive plots, the up-shot of which is unusual. They get up tableaux of Christian zeal; the band plays, the drapery is drawn—there they are!

The sadness of this is, their utmost wisdom fails. They never reach the desired ripeness in the schemes. They betray themselves with self-consciousness. And the thing which is most healthy to observe is, that at the promising moment (so considered) the entire scheme falls into foolishness, simply because their own piety, supplemented by their own good sense, withdraws them from the melo-drama just in time to be safe.

But no life, thus running on in dreamy scenic effects, can be a thoroughly useful, or even a happy one. Christians are not stage-heroes and heroines. Quaint surprises are not what a father wants from his children; nor will visionary children increase either in love or likeness to their father, by rehearsing little speeches they mean to make to him, accompanied with gestures.

Oh, grand—commonplace—tender—plain—earnest—life was that of the Master! How unconscious, how majestic, just in its naturalness of labor and love! He that puts that Life before him always, will end this vacillation, this melancholy, this thought of unappreciated merit; and will go on honest errands just to save the soul that stands next to him.

3. There is a third class also, who may learn a lesson here. A great many Christians are dissatisfied unless they can be set about doing *some big thing*.

Naaman's case contains the stock illustration for sinners, and so perhaps is not precisely in point. He liked home rivers better than those of Israel; and he had been expecting the prophet would make more ado over him; come forth and exhibit a miracle. He had to be reasoned with before he would go and wash in the Jordan. "And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said:—My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather, then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?"

But as a New Testament believer, Simon Peter comes better within our range—a great, honest, loving soul, but often self-conscious and melo-dramatic. He told Jesus Christ once that he would lay down his life for his sake. That was rash and unnecessary. Better have kept still, till he was asked. There was going to be room enough for endurance and valor that night, without wasting it in brag. Jesus rebuked him—predicted the denial instead, and warned him sternly. Peter felt himself misused—at least misunderstood. He meant even Jesus should do him justice. He gets hold privately of a sword, and follows valiantly on. He intends to show he had been literally in earnest. So he marches through the shadows in a military way towards Gethsemane, sword drawn in preparation. Only he meets nobody, and of course has no fight. And time soothes him a little. The Jerusalem evening took down his fever on the walk—nights are chill and cooling there out-of-doors. By the time he reached the shade of the olives he was considerably calmed. Then Jesus said suddenly—not fight—but just wait here. The eager Peter was put at commonplace watching. And he that was going to die just now for Christ's dear sake, simply fell asleep the moment he was left alone at his post.

When the good Lord wants any of us to die, or to fight, for him, he will undoubtedly tell us so. It remains for us to be quite as willing to live and to watch. The slighter min-

istries of affection will show that we set him before us *always*; then we shall not be moved.

4. Once more; there are some Christians who think they *can do nothing* for Christ. To them, likewise, the text has a word to say.

Cowed and broken people are living around us—disappointed people—poor, uneducated people—invalids, the infirm and the old. What an ineffable comfort there is in remembering that all our Saviour really demands at our hands is the unquestioning acceptance of his will. The close and unromantic atmosphere of a sick-chamber has not much exhilaration in it. That world of existence and duty, which is bounded by the four walls of one room, seems contracted and discouraging. Yet are there found in just such circumstances some of the truest heroes and heroines in all the world. The passive virtues in Jesus Christ's character are those which are as delicate as they are difficult. It is easy comparatively to work; but to wait and see the work rush on by us, while we sit still and suffer—nay, sit still and exhaust others' activities in making our beds and cutting our food—this is hard. But many are called to it—and Christ had as much of this kind of endurance as any one else ever had. And he who sets Christ before him, is doing precisely as well as if he established a mission, or preached a crusade.

Two hours before he died, the lamented Arnold wrote in his private journal these words:—"Above all, let me mind my own personal task; keep myself pure, and zealous, and believing, laboring to do God's work, yet not anxious that it should be done by me rather than by others, if God disapproves my doing it." Thus he waited and worked; and he was not, for God took him.

Sometimes it would really seem as if there were peculiar advantages for personal growth in grace offered by this service of suffering. The most equable lives we find are frequently made such by the discipline of pain. Calm serenity

seems associated with a pale face, an attenuated form, a lighted eye, a hectic cheek. At all events, the humility and inconspicuousness of such a retired life are favorable to close communion with heaven.

The lowly spirit God hath consecrated
 As his abiding rest ;
 And angels by some patriarch's tent have waited,
 When kings had no such guest.
 The dew, that never wets the flinty mountain,
 Falls in the valley free ;
 Bright verdure fringes the small desert fountain,
 But barren sand the sea.

For all these classes of persons—the visionary and the vain, the ambitious and the dispirited—our text has only one simple lesson. To each of them it says:—Give over your pretty pictures, and hush your mistaken repinings: when you close your eyes and set your pattern, imagine just Jesus Christ before you: come down off from your dreamy quests, and be commonplace; take one noble verse of Scripture for your daily creed:—“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.”

Let this sermon be closed with the mere statement of two counsels. The principle is applicable to all vicissitudes of experience.

1. *Set up Christ in the heart.* This ever-present vision of the Lord Jesus as our pattern will give us fortitude under reproach, patience in affliction, restraint in rashness, steadiness in duty, and ineffable repose everywhere. Have done with vague and vain imaginations of sainthood. Study to know and resemble your Master. Stop sighing—look to him. Forget your everlastingly present self; see him. Lift up your eyes like the disciples; see no man, save “Jesus only.” Cease prating about your conflicts, your difficulties, your trials. Some people's crosses are no more real, no

more heavy, and in fact give them no more trouble, than one of those white crosses which used to be embroidered upon the shoulder of a mendicant crusader; they were never meant for more than a sign; they were badges and not burdens. There is no toiling, no pain, no crucifixion. Those who have courage to bear heaviest crosses, (as Jesus did,) bear them silently.

2. *Teach others to see Christ.* Never tell a Sabbath-school pupil to notice such a one—imitate a good man or pious woman—or to try to be as another pupil. Say always—to children, and to yourself:—How would Jesus Christ act if in person he lived here? What would he wish me to do, if he spoke out of heaven?

When Robert Bruce died, he laid the solemn charge upon his faithful friend Douglas to bear his heart—enshrined in a silver case—to Jerusalem, that it might be interred near the sepulchre of Christ. The noble Scotchman set out on his long journey—the relic in his bosom. But the way was difficult, and the path was perilous. In Spain he was beset by a party of Moors, and in uttermost danger for his life. Back on him and his few trusted adherents the barbarians were pressing. In the instant when it seemed he must be overpowered, he is related to have flung the sacred casket ahead directly among his enemies; and then, with superhuman energy, to have dashed himself after it, exclaiming, “Where Bruce’s heart has gone, a Douglas’ hand will never fail to follow!” So he saved himself, and all he valued.

Let there be one, sole, intelligible, purpose in our whole being. *Where went the heart of Christ? Then shall we follow on.*

COMMONPLACE PIETY.

Why thus longing, thus forever sighing,
For the far-off, unattained, and dim,
While the beautiful, all around thee lying,
Offers up its low, perpetual hymn?

Wouldst thou listen to its gentle teaching,
All these restless yearnings it would still ;
Leaf, and flower, and laden bee, are preaching,
Thine own sphere, though humble, first to fill.

Poor, indeed, thou must be, if around thee
Thou no ray of light and joy canst throw ;
If no silken cord of love hath bound thee
To some little world through weal and woe.

Not by great deeds that the crowd applauds,
Not by works that give the world renown,
Not by martyrdom, or vaunted crosses,
Canst thou win and wear the immortal crown.

Daily struggling, though enclosed and lonely,
Every day a rich reward will give ;
Thou wilt find, by hearty striving, only,
And truly loving, thou canst truly live.

Shrinking from Sin.

"Then said he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."

—MATTHEW 26: 38.

OUR earliest chapters, in the grand revelation God has made of himself to man, begin with the picture of a beautiful garden. And our latest chapters continue the disclosure of divine purposes of grace with the account of another garden, where a restoration from the ruin of the first is to be effected, and eternal holiness is to be permitted to eat of the tree of life.

Between these, we meet, in the midst of the historic annals, a description of yet one more garden; a little enclosure lying at the foot of the Mount of Olives. In this, the link of association, binding the former two together, is evidently found. That otherwise unremarkable spot, just beyond the brook Kidron, affords an explanation of the way in which Eden becomes Heaven.

Gethsemane is the great spiritual epic between Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained.

We visit this garden to-day on an errand of inquiry as to that most surprising dejection of spirits, manifested by our Saviour Jesus Christ, when he withdrew from Jerusalem for his final resort to it, the night after the institution of the Lord's Supper—the last night of his life.

I.—The language, in which this deep melancholy and grief of Jesus has been indicated to us, is so unusual that it

demands a few words of explanation in the outset. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." And in the verse immediately preceding the text, we are told—"he began to be sorrowful and very heavy."

Even the devout Doddridge is found complaining of the tameness of our English version in the rendering of the original Greek. He says—"The words which our translators use are very flat, and fall short of the emphasis of those terms in which the Evangelists describe this awful scene."

We are told by scholars that the language employed by our Lord indicates a sorrow and suffering so deep that it unfits any man for company, forces him to shun all communication with his kind, turns him away in unutterable loneliness and separation, and presses like a weight of lead upon his soul. No single term can be found, in the tongue our Lord used, more expressive than this of profound depression of the whole being. It means, literally, to be overwhelmed with anguish.

It will be remembered that, in his description of this same experience, the Evangelist Mark introduces yet another expression. He says Jesus "began to be *sore amazed*." This is a word—only one word it is—which means exactly—thunderstruck. It is the same that is employed in speaking of the Apostle Paul, when, on the road to Damascus, he was startled and alarmed by the appearance of a great light. It is the same by which is described the sudden fright of the disciples, out in that terrible night upon the Sea of Galilee, when they imagined they saw a spectre or a ghost walking on the waves.

And the use of such a term, in this connection, intimates that in Jesus' experience there was an element of intense unexpectedness akin to surprise or apprehension, perhaps even fear. At all events, the language, in each of the gospels, is so forcible and specific that no one can fail to see that the Saviour's feeling, as he entered the garden of Gethsemane that evening, was of such dejected and disconsolate character

as one would have who was entirely forsaken of the world, bereft of every hope, filled with indescribable anxiety, and startled by disclosures of new keenness in suffering which threw him into a sort of apprehensive fright.

It is worth observing, for the impressive lesson it brings, that in all his history our Saviour is found quoting the Scriptures the more copiously when he is deepest in his troubles. In the discussions, which just before this had taken place in the upper chamber, he had been expounding to his disciples a passage in the prophecy of Zachariah. And we are quite at liberty to think that, when he broke the silence on the way to Gethsemane with the words of our text, he had in his mind some verses of that wonderful Psalm (the twenty-second), which he perfectly knew had been prophetically written concerning himself, and which he afterwards repeated in portions aloud, in the very agonies of crucifixion. When he says his soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, one can hardly fail to conjecture he caught his phraseology from that complaint—"My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death!"

II.—Thus much concerning the inspired description of our Saviour's experience. Let us, in the second place, inquire concerning its nature. We have gone far enough already to learn that his mind was arrested by some powerful disclosure, forced suddenly upon his mental vision. We are not satisfied until we know, in so far as the Scripture has made it plain, what it was which gave him this dejection, and filled him so with pain.

1. Could it have been that he was surprised at some discovery, at that point in his history, that his Father was not going to interfere in arrest of his utter humiliation? Was he alarmed to find that the shadows were thickening over him, the moment of his betrayal drawing near, this the last night of his life, to-morrow the day of his doom?

Surely we have not been accustomed to read thus the

character of Jesus of Nazareth. Who ever heard of his flinching pusillanimously in the hour of trial? How does it seem to you to think, that, when he had been heretofore pronouncing all those brave speeches about his work on earth and predicting its bitter end, he had only been shamming a heroism he did not have any need to feel, and had been holding, in a kind of reserved collusion with his divine Father, the expectation of relief at the moment in which the danger should become imminent?

No, no : never was a manlier spirit than his, and certainly never was a truer. We cannot forget that he had told his disciples, in the cheerful discourse at the table, that he was to be betrayed to his enemies that very night. He was perfectly intelligent in the prospect. He told Judas to be off upon his baleful errand as soon as he pleased. He startled the villanous traitor with the words—"what thou doest, do quickly!"

Furthermore, we recall the many instances in which he had, in days gone by, intimated his thorough knowledge of what he was to undergo, and yet professed his almost eager desire to have it hastened. You can note an apparent impatience to be in the midst of it, and have it over. "I have a baptism to be baptized with," were his impetuous words, "and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

2. Well, then, if this was not the reason of his frightful reversal of feeling, could it be that he foresaw the immediate defection of his disciples, under the pressure of this persecution? Did he feel anxious concerning the effect of his crucifixion upon the prospects of the gospel-faith?

One or two things that happened might well suggest such a thing. He said in so many words :—"All ye shall be offended because of me this night ; for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad." And then, when Simon Peter ventured to inform him he was certainly quite mistaken, at least in *his* case, he had replied plainly predicting Peter's act of denial.

It is true that Jesus foresaw he was going to be forsaken by all those men he had lately befriended and taught. And there possibly may have been some sort of tender clinging to them to the last moment, which prompted him to invite them to go with him into the garden as far as they could without disturbing the reserve he needed for his solitary communion with his Father. But this could not have been the reason for his mysterious dejection.

For there was nothing in it new or unexpected. All this was understood beforehand. It is evident something else depressed him. As you read the account of that moonlit walk, down from St. Stephen's gate over the brook into the shadows of the olives, you cannot fail to observe how the spirits of the whole company begin to be excessively sad. They catch the mood of depression from their Leader. Few are the words spoken on the way. The conversation languishes. Pauses grow more frequent. They all see the unusual weight with which the Master has become suddenly burdened, and it is impossible to resist silently sharing it.

3. We must look, for our explanation of this great burden of grief, deeper into the heart and mind of Jesus Christ than any notion of mere human dread or apprehension would lead us. And it will not do to hazard any guesses, however ingenious, upon such a matter.

So far as we can learn, from a most reverently thoughtful study of the Scriptures, we feel ready to assert that the deep pain and dejection of our divine Saviour arose from *the consciousness of having at last to be put in the posture and condition of a sinner before God.*

Understand once for all, Jesus Christ was never himself a sinner in the garden or on the cross. There was no transference of man's moral character to him ; no infusion of personal unholiness thrust into his nature or life. But in judicial state before the majesty of divine justice, he was to be reckoned guilty.

He had had hitherto the comforts of his heavenly Father's

favor. Now he was bereaved of that. Nor had even one thought of impurity ever before lodged upon him. At this awful moment he saw he was irresistibly entering into the place of man, a culprit in the cognizance of the law. This he had asked. He had previously arranged, under the covenant of redemption, that the extreme curse denounced on human sinners, should be, to the uttermost extent of the divine wrath, discharged on him. He had said—"Lo, I come!"; now he came. He was this evening turning the angle of his prophetic work, just where it bent into, and was lost in, his priestly work.

He knew he was not personally defiled. But he had definitely agreed to be treated as if he were a sinner. Asked to plead in man's stead, he stood up before the bar of arraignment, and answered, Guilty. That was what shocked him. What he signified was that he was bearing *our* griefs, and carrying *our* sorrows. Then the curse fell upon him; he was wounded for *our* transgressions.

This must be the meaning of that tremendous, and otherwise inexplicable, passage in ancient prophecy, which he had been quoting on the way down the hill—that wonderful verse, in which one Jehovah is represented as discharging wrath upon another Jehovah. Words indeed of awful import are these—read them solemnly:—"Awake, O Sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow"—my equal—"saith the Lord of hosts; smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered!"

I do not carelessly and presumptuously apply these sentences to Jesus, the Nazarene son of Mary. He applied them to himself, and that not a half-hour before he knelt in his agony to pray. When the stroke of divine justice fell upon him, he suffered the more, not the less, because he was the fellow, or the equal, of almighty God. It was this unutterably dreadful contact with sin, and this consequent hiding of his Father's face, which pressed, in one supreme moment of affrighted pain, a passionate prayer of deprecation out from

the bravest lips that ever spoke words of human language, or cried with human tears.

If I can succeed in making you quite understand and appreciate this experience, by a simple illustration, you will be ready to admit that, in the seeming weakness of Jesus there in the garden, is really his wonderful strength as the Redeemer of men.

It is the mark of a noble nature to be horrified when under unmerited reproach. I can conceive of a person, who for affection's sake takes his friend's place in a public court of justice. Innocent himself, he consents to be summoned and sentenced as guilty. And I think I can understand how, with all his previous philosophy, he finds, in the awful instant of degradation, that the pain of the shame is even more than he anticipated. The herding with criminals, the taunts of the crowd, bear him heavily down, till his resolution fails, and he is ready to sink joyously into the chasm, if only the merciful earth would open beneath him. This is not an evidence of unmanliness, but of the loftiest manhood. It shows a flawless honor, a recoil from fellowship with felons, a high-minded appreciation of fair name and fame among decent men, which go to assert nobleness of nature wherever found.

In this—not altogether imaginary—picture of our best human nature, it seems to me I can recognize, in feeble but intelligible measure, something of a reflection of Jesus Christ's experience, even though his nature was divine. When he found himself actually under the frown of his Father, he appeared to be quoting the words of that significant Psalm, written (as he was well aware) for the Messiah, that is, himself, to speak—"My iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head." I cannot help believing that the entire explanation of all this mysterious agony in Gethsemane, the first folds of which, at this moment of gloom, were darkening over his soul, is found in the irresistible recoil of an infinitely pure nature from the pollution of even vicarious sin.

III.—From this conclusion our advance is exceedingly easy to the consideration of the practical instruction suggested by this experience of our Lord. My solicitude is so keen, lest I may turn your minds away from the scene as it is, with Jesus in the centre of the picture, that I shall group the lessons around the statement of three considerations, which I feel quite sure entered into his thoughts, and deepened his alarm.

1. *Jesus Christ shrank back from contact with sin.*

He could not prepare himself to face it. When it came, it filled him with amazement and alarm. He had talked much about "the sins of the world" before this. No doubt he had long schooled himself for this hour. He had planned about it, girded up his energies to be ready for it. Now here they were, massing themselves in awful aggregate upon him. He was shocked, amazed, alarmed. All the lies, and all the murders; all the perjuries and all the blasphemies; all the adulteries and all the fornications; all the black hearts and all the evil eyes—oh, how his infinitely pure heart must have shrunk back with loathing of the abominable things!

And here is our lesson. 'If Jesus of Nazareth, in all his conscious rectitude, cried out, when he found himself thus placed, and fairly shuddered, falling back upon himself with an exclamation of unmistakable alarm, sorrowful even unto death, oh, tell me, what will you say of that man or that woman, bearing his name, who willingly abides in contact and companionship with what so horrified him?

Mark's word here is terribly specific: he was *thunder-struck* when he even stood under vicarious reproach. What will you say of a Christian, who calmly rests, with his own sin on his soul?

2. *Jesus Christ shrank back from the punishment of sin.*

It is not becoming for me to attempt to say how much of man's literal curse our Redeemer bore. That mystery lies between him and his Father. I do not know where Jesus' spirit was, during the days between the burial and resurrection of his body. The last I hear of it was when he committed

it into his Father's hands. The expression in the old creed—"he descended into hell"—means only that he entered the region of disembodied souls. One thing alone is clear; he felt the punitive power of sin itself. The presence of sin is a punishment. No sin is ever stingless. Every sin stings with its sting. Vice is venom. And as long as Jesus felt himself unclean in the sight of God, he knew the mantle would be drawn over his Father's face. He would then be deprived of heavenly favor, and be forsakenly left to the dread companionship of sin.

No man is expected to be anything but restless under even the imputation of wrong-doing. It is for him to clear his righteousness as the noontide, if he can. And if he is really in the intelligent and conscious disobedience of any one precept of the divine law, God will severely punish him. If God hides his face, we perish. If our prayers fail, if our communions are hindered, if our pulses of religious life beat faintly and low, there is no manliness in either stoicism or indifference. It is better for us to be frightened, and cry out in alarm.

For sin is its own executioner. It is not hell one needs to be afraid of, half so much as it is himself. It is not worth our while to waste words concerning the existence of a bottomless pit, and the threat of eternal punishment. If God's word does not make that clear, no language of any human tongue can possibly indicate it. But I cannot believe that the place has much to do with the penalty. If I am to be burned alive, I do not think I care to choose whether it be in the summer noon or the winter night. I never could make myself shudder at hell. What alarmed me, years ago, was the sight of myself eternally impure, unholy, debased, vile, shut away from the good and the true forever, because I was unfit to associate with them. Oh, this is awful! To be one's own self a loathing to one's self—to dwell eternally with one's own uncleanness as a companion—this is the one supreme shudder of every manly heart!

3. *Jesus Christ shrank back from the Prince of sin.*

He was now put on a fair level with the great adversary he had been fighting so long. Hitherto he had been able to say in peerless purity—"Get thee behind me, Satan." Now he felt he stood, or seemed to stand, on common ground. This I take to be the meaning of his own lonesome and heartrending words—"Hereafter I will not talk much with you; for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."

Jesus foreknew all this; but when he came actually up to it, it seemed to him he could not endure it. He was shocked. He felt his soul shrinking back from the companionship with all the uttermost recoil of his will.

It has been my sorrow and shame to be compelled to overhear a great deal of ribaldry and blasphemy in my day. But no one thing ever made me shudder so much as that wild talk about the future after death; that joking, leering, sort of remark concerning the mysteries of the hereafter to a lost soul.

I once read of an old martyr condemned to die; he was to be put in a sack with venomous serpents. He knew all that the fearful sentence meant. He tried for days to accustom his mind to the contemplation. Forcefully he held his imagination up to the horror of the doom, by dwelling upon it, and saying to himself—I can bear it for Christ, my Master! And yet when plunged in among the hideous reptiles, feeling the cold crawling folds against his flesh, he lifted his voice in a wild scream of fright and horror. He knew then that he never could have foreseen the utter, utter, loathing he felt.

Oh, I beseech you, have done with ribaldry about God's punishment of sin! You can never bear even the sins themselves. You cannot dwell with yourself in such a future.

There is a clear way of deliverance. Indeed, the Saviour's anguish, in that Gethsemane hour, made rescue from sin possible. Believe in him. Let his exceeding sorrowfulness bring joy to you. Take his merit for your atonement. Hold out your hand for free pardon.

WOUNDED FOR ME.

O SACRED Head, now wounded,
 With grief and shame weighed down,
 Now scornfully surrounded
 With thorns, thine only crown ;
 O sacred Head, what glory,
 What bliss, till now was thine !
 Yet, though despised and gory,
 I joy to call thee mine.

What thou, my Lord, hast suffered
 Was all for sinners' gain :
 Mine, mine was the transgression,
 But thine the deadly pain :
 Lo, here I fall, my Saviour !
 'Tis I deserve thy place ;
 Look on me with thy favor,
 Vouchsafe to me thy grace.

What language shall I borrow,
 To praise thee, heavenly Friend :
 For this, thy dying sorrow,
 Thy pity without end ?
 Lord, make me thine forever,
 Nor let me faithless prove :
 Oh ! let me never, never,
 Abuse such dying love.

Forbid that I should leave thee ;
 O Jesus, leave not me !
 By faith I would receive thee ;
 Thy blood can make me free !
 When strength and comfort languish,
 And I must hence depart,
 Release me then from anguish,
 By thine own wounded heart.

Be near when I am dying,
 Oh ! show thy cross to me !
 And for my succor flying,
 Come, Lord, to set me free !
 These eyes, new faith receiving,
 From Jesus shall not move ;
 For he who dies believing,
 Dies safely—through thy love.

The Eagle's Nest.

"As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, and beareth them on her wings—so the Lord alone did lead him."—DEUT. 32 : 11, 12.

In this text are presented the dealings of God with his chosen people. The illustration is drawn from the natural habits of an eagle teaching her eaglets to fly.

She is accustomed, you know, to build her eyrie in the top of some lone cliff, and there rear her young. She recognizes by instinct the exact age at which they should be taught to spread their wings, and begin life for themselves. But she finds it hard to force them forth from the borders of the rock. They stretch their callow necks over the edge of the nest, and instantly draw back when they see the awful depths beneath it. So her maternal shrewdness is brought into exercise. Here commences a curiously interesting educational process. Extraordinary measures are required to bring them out into self-reliant effort.

These are detailed with minute faithfulness in the verses now before us. She "*stirreth up the nest*;" she "*fluttereth over her young*;" she "*spreadeth abroad her wings*;" she "*taketh them and beareth them on her wings*." All these characteristic acts seem to be included in the similitude here instituted in order to show how believers are fitted for the exalted service of glorifying God and enjoying him forever.

There are, therefore, four distinct parts of the divine

work. There is *the removal of hindrances*; there is *the setting of an example*; there is *a kindling of the ambition*; and then there is *the bestowal of help*.

I. In the first place, says our text, the eagle "stirs up the nest." She removes hindrances.

She begins to pull away the sticks and stones of the eyrie. Never so much, however, as to bring real danger to the eaglets, but only enough to show them she is in earnest, and that their narrow home in the fissure of the cliff will be thereafter a very unsafe and uncomfortable place for them to abide in. She plucks off the straw and the moss; she tears out splinters, and sends with her talons pieces of the loose rock rolling and echoing down the cliff-side. You would pity her poor brood, but she knows them better than you do. She is determined that they shall come forth into the great heavens, where their proudest heritage is to be as kindred of the king of birds. She wants them to fly; and she means to relentlessly remove the whole nest, if it continues to hold and to hinder them.

Now you will not need that I dwell extensively upon this form of action, type as it is of God's in respect to his beloved children; for you catch the simple similitude at once. When they settle down in forgetful ignorance or timid ease, and begin to love the matted twigs and plastered stones of these earthly eyries, he *stirs them up*. It may be that his providence pulls away part of the nest. His intelligent purpose is, that they shall not contentedly abide in what is unworthy of them. If they perversely refuse to come forth into nobler atmosphere, either through indolence or fear, he tears from them the hindrance, whatever it may happen to be.

How frequently do we notice a child of God, thinking lightly of the glory of his only true home, unmindful of his relationship by the new birth to the family of his high-born kinsmen, and lingering contentedly amid these lower joys and pleasures, to the prejudice of his everlasting good. One there was, possibly among your own acquaintances, whose

nest was too easy and too welcome. Business entanglements were furrowing his countenance, hardening his hands, and silvering his hair. You seemed to hear him say to himself, really as if he hugged his cares: "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years." You knew he would be disturbed ere long. By and by the hand of an unseen power pulled this side and that, tearing away wealth on every hand. He became a poorer, a sadder—but a wiser and nobler man thereafter.

Another man, perhaps, you remember, whose very home-love kept him away from God. He was so happy in his children that he forgot his Father in heaven. Home from daily toil early, it was his brave boy, or his demure little woman of a girl, or the crowing infant in his arms, that took him from his neglected Bible, and made him forsake his altar of prayer. So before long, an unexpected coffin crossed the threshold, and a little grave was dug out in the yard among the tombs. And in that hour of terrible bereavement, those parents were taught that the only true home for a Christian to rest in is above, not here.

II. This removal of hindrances is not all, however, that is needed to educate the believer for his true life. Our text goes on to present a second peculiarity in the natural habits of the eagle, as an illustration of God's further dealing with his people. She does more than stir up the nest; she "fluttereth over her young."

The object of this is to instruct the little ones by her own example. She suffers her peerless strength to be held in check, and binds all her energies down to merely beating the air. Thus, while she hovers over them, the eaglets scream, and leap about, and spring up above the edge of the nest; then fall pantingly back again, exhausted by their half-frantic, unintelligent efforts; yet all the time learning the prime lesson what their pinions are for. Over and over again, that patient teacher poises herself close at hand; keeps moving on her wings, yet never exceeds what they can accomplish,

if they will ; never discourages them with even one exhibition of inimitable power.

Behold once more, in this, the symbol of God's dealing with believers. We need more than just to be aroused to exertion. We must be taught the way. Remember that the one great purpose of our Creator is that we should become conformed to his image ; that we should learn to do as he does, and be as he is. Godliness is God-likeness. Hence the first effort of grace would be to render the divine pattern distinctly human, so as to make us sure its perfections were attainable in all the measure demanded at our hands.

How many are there, think you, who would be able to come, even by patient and extraordinary endeavor, to anything like obedience, if there were given us only the one bold and startling command—"Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect?" It was really needed to bring our exemplar nearer, and set our model close at hand. Hence God was made manifest in the flesh for our salvation. Divine excellence took a truly human form, that we might be persuaded to attempt to become pure and holy as God is himself. We may hopefully labor to assimilate our character to his, by growing in conformity to one who is "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person."

Jesus of Nazareth was God ; but then he never seems far off to us. It does not frighten us to be told we must become Christlike. We have boldness to draw nigh to him ; for he was a man tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. He proved that one might be tempted like as we are, and yet remain without sin. And it is also noticeable how we are taught by grades of example even below this. Holy men of old are offered us still nearer. Paul, the apostle, bids us follow him, as he followed Christ. And there is comfort in remembering, that when we are very far behindhand, we may keep such saints in the line before us, as we strive for excellence, to show we are going in right courses.

That is, to resume the figure of the text, our example flutters over the nest very close to where we are ; and we are praised much, and feel quite happy, at every little success we have. The exercise gives us strength, too, as well as skill, power to advance another step by the exertion we put forth to accomplish the first.

III.—There comes now a third act in the process of instruction, detailed also in the text. The parent eagle knows that the whole lesson is not learned, even when the young birds are fluttering as bravely as she. For fluttering is not flying. She is well aware that in her little ones there is lying dormant an eagle's spirit as yet all undeveloped ; the wild, free ambition which belongs to the king of the air. To that she makes in this instance a direct appeal. She "spreadeth abroad her wings."

Even while the eaglets are resting and twittering beneath her, and while every keen eye is fixed on her movements, she makes a bold plunge into the firmament, and on pinions broadly extended turns her slow flight in venturous progress towards the sun. The eyes of her astonished brood dilate with wonder as they behold her circling advance. One sweep follows another—you know how the eagles fly—the wings beat faster and faster ; and she rises as she circles ; until by and by, with a thrilling scream, which makes the whole cliff vocal with echoes, she directs her gaze straight aloft, and strikes dauntlessly out for a flight beyond the clouds. For a moment she is gone. But all at once they behold her re-appearance as she return in the tremendous swoop, her feathers wet with the spray gathered in the high regions of the thunder, yet her wing still tireless, and her vision undimmed. Back to the eyrie she comes, circling easily as ever. But do you suppose those aspiring eaglets will ever be satisfied in the trifle of fluttering, when they have even once looked upon a peerless flight like that ?

Now observe, again, how perfectly this symbol the dealings of divine grace with believers. Sometimes we think we

can find, in some of its lowest particulars, quite a happy resemblance between our Saviour's life and our own. He wept for Mary and Martha ; and we know we are sympathetic. He drove the money-changers indignantly out of the temple ; and we are conscious of most strenuous endeavors to keep our business calculations out of church. He helped the poor ; and we try to be liberal. Thus, you see, our example is fluttering, and we are fluttering ; and down close by the nest we think we do pretty well together. So we go on with that wonderful history in the four gospels.

But suddenly we come across some strange, wonderful excellence, that springs clear up out of every experience of common life, as unexpected and as inimitable as the flight of a seraph towards the altar of incense ! Oh, we never had anything like that, indeed !

Shall we be cast down, therefore, and be discouraged hopelessly and forever ? No ; singularly enough, that does not seem to be the effect of it. Rather the other way ; our souls are aroused as never before. A royal ambition is kindled. Nevermore will we be satisfied with low attainment. Not to the angels, not even to the brightest seraph that burns before the throne ; but to thee, O thou Prince Immanuel, would these souls of ours become likened in the light !

IV.—The last step, however, is yet to come. We return to our text once more for its figure.

Roused by this spirit of holy ambition, the believer makes trial after trial for the ineffable excellence he has learned to crave. He succeeds more perfectly with each endeavor ; and success is always wonderfully encouraging. Panting with eagerness, he tries to soar above failure, and beyond reproach, even like his teacher. But he is weak and undisciplined. Just in the hour of his most exultant hopes, he comes headlong back, with soiled and drooping pinions, mourning over his own defeat. He has been betrayed by his unanticipated adversary within, and has been defeated by the unsuspected wickedness of his corrupt heart.

Oh, if there ever is a discouraging time for any Christian, it is when he sits alone, baffled in an effort after good, and lamenting wearily over his self-induced want of success. There now arises a new need, or he will faint fatally and forever. It is not desire after holiness ; he has that—and burning as an altar-flame it is, too, on his heart. It is not ambition ; he has that—fully kindled. But he wants help. His spirit is willing, but his flesh is weak.

The final thought of our text, therefore, claims especial attention, both as a fact and an illustration. It has a fine pertinency just at this exigency of the believer's personal experience. When the parent-bird has aroused the eagle-spirit in her little ones, and lit the emulous fire in their keen eyes, she seems to know that really they are not able to follow her proud circles at once. So she lends her exhaustless strength to theirs. She "taketh them, and beareth them on her wings."

Quietly supporting her light burden on her back, she springs with it out into the vast abyss around the eyrie. Circle after circle is swept over ; and at last, when far away from the cliff, she casts the eager fledgling off, throwing it boldly upon its own wings. She watches it, however, all the while, and goes slowly—shows it how—gives to it glances of encouragement—utters cries of possible explanation—stimulates and exhilarates it more and more by swooping around it—and over it—and before it—and beside it—and by and by, when she discovers that the feeble wings are really worn and exhausted, the tired energies are beginning to falter, and the young strength to fail—down all at once she suddenly sinks underneath it, and catches the half-breathless flutterer on her own back again. And while it folds its weary wings, and nestles itself into security and repose, she beats around in mid-heaven, and goes careering aloft, as tireless as ever.

Here as before you find the spiritual symbol. God helps the believer, as well as instructs him. When any fatigued follower of Christ finds his powers failing in his patient en-

deavors after good, there comes to him a heavenly voice, saying: "Fear not, I am with thee; underneath are the everlasting arms!" With the word always comes the help. Oh, the ineffable comfort of such a sustaining and repose upon the Almighty-wings! "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. *They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.*"

My Christian friends, I turn now to you with the full force of the exhortation implied in the text—to you, the children of God's love, to ask: Whereabouts are you in this line of instruction to-day? At which point in the gracious discipline have you arrived?

If you are at the height of it—if you are fairly out in the serene heavens with your Saviour, your ambition aroused, your powers developed, be bold enough to believe that any attainment of grace, no matter how rare or radiant, is thoroughly within your reach. Even the apostle Paul could give no other secret of all his excellence than this: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." And that any one of us can say. And of any one of us it is possible to become as true, as of him.

Keep close to your teacher. It is said that whenever an eagle discovers that her eaglet is growing perverse or wilful, and is beginning to disdain her companionship, she suddenly turns her back upon it; and strikes home for the nest with unparalleled swiftness, and sometimes permanent desertion. I do not vouch for this in fact or in figure. It does seem that the good Lord determines never utterly to forsake his covenant. Christ gives us to understand that, having loved his own, he means to love them to the end. But thus much is

true, at any rate : He suffers those who are wilful and disdainful, to fall back on their own strength sometimes, in order that they may find it absolute weakness. And all this is even worse than lost time, until they come back to him, and rest in him. There is no safety for any believer save in close companionship with Christ.

But there are many Christians who have not yet reached so exalted a degree in the discipline. They are still listless and unaroused. They are fluttering down by the eyrie of first life. They seem almost satisfied to be just certain they have wings. It is humiliating to find even one who has forgotten his great heritage, who has not so much as learned his own royal nature. Do eagles belong in rocks and holes of worldly association when the broad heavens are overhead ?

Oh, let us attempt a lofty style of piety ! Let us become *uncommon* Christians ! Let us venture a higher flight of Christ-like excellence. Let us kindle our ambition, unloose our wings. " Beloved, 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 ! " One may enter heaven, quite possibly, from a tame and low level. He may be among the righteous who are " scarcely saved. " But he is most unfortunate who finds himself just within the gates of pearl, and all whom he knew and loved far away above him among the shining ranks of the redeemed. Growth in grace is as needful as grace is.

Sadder still it is to have to admit that some there are even behind this step in their progress. They are yet in the nest, and are loving and learning to stay there.

Let there be no misapprehension at this point. Christians are not forbidden to love their homes or their children. Believers are exhorted to be " diligent in business. " It is no man's duty to belittle or disregard his benedictions or his duties. But legitimate concern for every-day life is very different from absorption in it. The force of the first com-

mandment in the Decalogue is found in its last two words—*before me*; “thou shalt have no other gods before me.” The Maker of heaven says almost in so many words: “Love everything; rejoice in everything; be happy; be industrious; but cherish no idols in the heart; *love me more than these*; love me supremely!”

So the counsel is clear. Shun entangling alliances. Make your earthly pleasures only instruments in the attainment of heavenly graces. And when you are conscious of losing interest in religious things; when you are beginning to be content with what you have, and have no sighing sense for what you may have—then be on your guard. Watch for the warnings of your teacher. *Stir up your own nest*, before you find a gracious force plucking away its comfortable enclosure around you. Your enjoyments may fly away before you, and leave you lonely on the rock. “Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away *as an eagle toward heaven!*”

GOD'S WAYS.

How few who from their youthful day
Look on to what their life may be,
Painting the visions of the way
In colors soft, and bright, and free ;
How few who to such paths have brought
The hopes and dreams of early thought !
For God, through ways they have not **known**,
Will lead his own.

A lowlier task on them is laid,
With love to make the labor light,
And then their beauty they must shed
On quiet homes and lost to sight.
Changed are their visions high and fair,
Yet calm and still they labor there ;
For God, through ways they have not **known**,
Will lead his own.

The gentle heart that thinks with pain
It scarce can lowliest tasks fulfill,
And if it dared its life to scan
Would ask but pathway low and still ;
Often such lowly heart is brought
To act with power beyond its thought ;
For God, through ways they have not **known**,
Will lead his own.

What matter what the path shall be ?
The end is clear and bright to view ;
He knows that we a strength shall see
Whate'er the day shall bring to do :
We see the end, the house of God,
But not the path to that abode ;
For God, through ways they have not **known**
Will lead his own.

The Argument of Penitence.

"For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great."
—PSALM 25; 11.

BIBLE logic is sometimes very abrupt, and very surprising in its processes of proof. Unexpected inferences are drawn, apparently irrelevant considerations are admitted in evidence, and singular results are asserted to follow from causes with which they seem to have no legitimate connection. Our intellects are fairly baffled with paradoxes; and this, too, from the mere transcendency of the truths which lie fixed as the basis of redemption for the human soul.

Our text is a prayer, offered by an inspired man. We cannot help noticing that it is passionately importunate in spirit, and must have been lifted from out the profoundest depths of a full and guilty heart; a heart that is convulsed with penitence, and has need to be. Yet it is backed by an argument singularly contradictory and preposterous in its terms.

This is what he says: "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." He does not say: Forgive me, for I have done much good in my day, and am going to do more. He does not say: Restore me to thy favor, for I have not done much evil, when my poor chances are fairly considered. He takes his stand like one most anxiously candid; he blurts out the whole truth, and urges it without an extenuation or apology. He says: Pardon me, for I am a *great* sinner. He plants himself on his unworthiness; he argues from demerit.

Now this is so contrary to all human notions of pleading, that it awakes curiosity. We say to our fellow-men on slightest occasion—pardon me, I did not mean to. This penitent says—pardon me, I did mean to. And as a final result, we know this prayer was answered perfectly. We are constrained on the instant to recognize a virtue, unmistakable and unparalleled, in superabounding grace, as a principle of the gospel.

“ Man’s plea to man is, that he nevermore
Will beg, and that he never begged before :—
Man’s plea to God is, that he did obtain
A former suit, and therefore comes again :—
How good a God we serve, who, when we sue,
Makes his old gifts the examples of the new.”

It seems, therefore, to be the unusual rule for our repentance, that excuses are excluded, and aggravations become pleas ; extenuations only hinder, self-renunciations prevail.

Yet, after all, there is a true logical force in this argument of David, when we take the whole verse into consideration. The evident meaning hinges on the opening expression—“for thy name’s sake.” This intimates that there is a reason in God himself for a preference of pardon over punishment. The *name* of God is one of the scriptural terms by which the character of God is intended. God’s character is to us his person, himself. This argument in the text assumes that God wishes to pardon iniquity *for his own sake*.

We may legitimately devote a few moments to the development and illustration of so startling a statement. How is God’s name interested in man’s iniquity?

I.—First of all, let us accept God’s own declaration that HE HATES SIN BECAUSE OF ITS VERY NATURE.

His words are these : “Howbeit, I sent unto you all my servants, the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, oh, do not this abominable thing which I hate !” Sin, therefore, God hates as an abominable thing. Do you remember Chaucer’s fine definition of hate ? “Hate,” says the ancient

poet, "is only *old wrath*." God looks on sin with old and unappeasèd wrath.

No matter where found, sin is the one grand organism of impiety and rebellion in the universe. It is not a calamity, but an outbreak. It inheres always in a responsible person. It belongs to somebody. It is the baleful offspring of that permitted liberty which for wise ends the Creator gave to the creature. Sin is just will against will ; and on the earth one will is man's, and the other will is God's. The Almighty decrees holiness as the law of his realm. That law man daringly defies. God meanwhile forbears, and for a time suffers his goodness to work, to lead men to repentance. There the issue lingers as yet unsettled. God and man confront each other on a question of right, and God waits for man to yield.

He covers his face from the spectacle of sin, however. He will be no party to the insult. It is wonderful to think how far this malignancy can go. There is on this planet now, one nation, the existence of which God with infinite patience tolerates, whose vernacular language contains in its vocabulary no name for him, no word that means soul, no word that means God. Yet those people have plenty of terms by which to speak of tomahawks, scalps, and war-clubs ; anything horrible or brutal in massacre. There is another race likewise, who, with the same lack in language, cannot pray even if they would ; cannot address their Maker in their mother-tongue ; but they have words plenteous and forcible by which to picture all shades of murder, and all degrees of debauchery, with the nicest precision, and even with poetic variety of synonyms.

This is what sin can do. It is the one thing that cuts the world off from heaven. With ingenuity at fiendishness, and wisdom at debasement, it hurls purity into the dust. *And God hates it for its own sake.* It becomes an argument for a penitent to say to God, holding his old wrath ; Here is more sin—pardon it—end it—rid thy footstool of one more offence !

II.—It adds to this, when we consider, in the second place, that SIN HAS EXERCISED THE DESTRUCTIVENESS OF ITS

POWER IN ONE OF THE FAIREST AND DEAREST PORTIONS OF GOD'S KINGDOM.

We cannot fail to be impressed, from a close reading of the inspired record, with the thought that this world of ours, and the race placed upon it, were among the favorite creations of the Maker of all. When the earth came into existence the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. Sin has completely defiled and ruined both the world and the race.

Go forth into a field upon one of these bright spring mornings. Listen to the anthem which bird and bee, blossom and bud, are all singing to the common Creator. The murmuring branches over your head are vocal, the wind is making music, the streams ripple down the slopes with song. Yet you are depressed, harassed, and sad. You are disturbed, in the midst of all this scene, by a force that is potent beyond measurement in its destructive energy. Every thing is under curse, waiting its doom or deliverance. Inanimate nature bears on its material surface, marks of *old wrath*. You cannot enter a forest without a hiss is heard in the shadows. Thistles in the meadow, thorns in the orchard, and prickles in the garden, wound your hand. Mildew blackens your fingers with mould and decay, as you pluck the full corn in the ear.

And on this cursed earth resides a cursed race. Sin has broken up the balance of the universe. It has ruined the nature of those who were intended to rule the world. It has rendered human imaginations dark and irregular. It has filled the mind with horrible images. It has swayed the judgment irrevocably away into folly. It has kindled the hottest fires of malice, and agitated men's ambitions with unholy desire. It has overthrown the legitimate sovereignty of right reason; and, distorting all true manliness of appetite, it has quickened our baser instincts into longings for passionate indulgence. Thus it has made the royal race earthly, sensual, devilish. And God knows all this history. It be-

comes an argument with him to say—here is sin ; sin that has ever filled hearts with even the worst corruptions, envies, jealousies and debate ; pardon it, end it, wipe the blot away !

III.—In the third place, let us remember that ALL SIN IS FROM THE DEVIL, AND SATAN IS THE RECOGNIZED ANTAGONIST OF GOD'S ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON.

It must ever remain a mystery to our understanding, why the Almighty permits this prince of all wickedness to continue at warfare with Immanuel. The fact is all we need to know. Sin is the chief element in Satan's power, the principle he uses as an instrument. He prefers to render the soldiers of Christ traitors, and then leave them in the ranks, rather than take them captive. He perverts, he insidiously undermines, he corrupts ; that pleases him most. He is then sure of his man, and can afford to bide his time for the defection.

Sin, therefore, being the devil's chief weapon, what would you suppose the Captain of our salvation would choose to match and defeat it? With a sublime splendor of sovereign patience, he meets *sin* with *pardon*. When Satan causes sin to abound, Immanuel causes grace to much more abound. Thus the soldier, over whose ruin the devil had begun to exult, is saved to the cause. He loves the more, the more he has been forgiven. To pardon sin, therefore, is to defeat Satan in his deadliest wile ; just here comes in our plea.

"He that committeth sin is of the devil ; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. *For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*" Now all we have to do is, to immediately proclaim to Christ that sin is upon us. He will attack sin on the instant ; for sin to him is Satan. With all the infinite rejection of unsullied purity, he would turn away from sin wherever he found it. But now, having made it his errand on the earth to destroy sin, he strikes at it with horrible tempests and fire. The first argument with him, therefore, is this:—Here is

more sin, and Satan is near by ; banish it, pardon it, end it, and so defeat him! Here is a stronghold of the enemy planted in thy dominion! Here is a heart made a citadel of corruption ; break the heart, subdue the will, defeat the devil, assert thine own honor!

IV.—There is yet a fourth consideration, which enters into the unusual logic of this prayer: **OUT OF THE PARDON OF SIN GOD HAS SOVEREIGNLY DECIDED TO WORK HIS GREATEST GLORY.**

We say God is happy ; but we surely understand that he has something to make him happy. We say God is glorious ; but we understand he has something to make him glorious. One thing, Creation, made him both happy and glorious. Another thing, Providence, continually does the same. On the head of Christ, we are told in the Apocalypse, there were seen “many crowns,” not one only. And of all these, the noblest is the crown of Redemption. It seems to be the chief treasure of the regalia of Heaven.

“God, in the person of his Son,
Hath all his noblest works outdone.”

Now what I say is, that the all-wise Monarch of the universe has chosen for his supreme joy and glory, this pleasure and renown, which come from the pardon of sin and the ransom of the redeemed. The great song of eternity is going to be what is called “The Song of Moses and the Lamb.” Moses represented the Law; and Christ, the Lamb, represents the Gospel. “Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” There is no figure of the Bible so reaching and so royal, as that which offers us the picture of Jehovah himself in the exercise of his supreme happiness, when his pardoned saints come in through the gates of pearl. I do not think I thoroughly know what it means ; it seems so stupendous a conception for even the most reverent and chastened imagination. But these are the words : “The Lord thy God in the midst of thee, is mighty ;

he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy ; he will rest in his love ; *he will joy over thee with singing.*"

We can conceive of some high-minded physician, who hates sickness, and devotes himself to curing it ; or of some philanthropic merchant, who hates debt, and lays out his income in relieving misfortune ; or of some soldier, who hates oppression, and consecrates his life to any banner that freedom advances. We can even imagine that these men grow accustomed after a while to look upon sickness, debt, or oppression, as real existences, inviting their presence and help. With little or no reference to individuals, they might pursue the *thing* with all their energies, and find deepest delight in triumph over it, whenever it was put down.

All this illustration is low and inadequate, of course ; but perhaps it will aid in the suggestion of the divine plan. God has set for himself the task of redeeming our race, and means to find glory in it.

Gathering now all these considerations together, therefore, it is easy to see where the extraordinary plea of our text bears in, as an argument for any human penitent, praying for the forgiveness of his sin.

1. The first thought that arrests our mind is concerning the altogether inadequate notion men are apt to have, of God's meaning and purpose, in making an atonement for the sins of the world.

It is far more than merely to show pity towards an unfortunate soul. Our insignificance, personally, has really very little to do with it. The pardon of a human transgressor enters those transcendent fields of study where the best intellect finally fails. We are at once among the sublimest mysteries of moral government in the world. We are summoned to accept the intricacies of that diplomacy, which manages the home and foreign relations of the kingdom of God. And we need not expect to grasp them always, or understand them at all.

It is sometimes difficult to cope with the higher inquiries

even of abstruse physical science. The mind is bewildered and fatigued with disquisitions concerning the swell of the tides, the impulse of the gulf stream, the rage of volcanic fires, or the precession of the equinoxes. These lead us out among the gigantic forces of nature, and our hearts shrink back into timidity because of our ignorance.

Alas! these are nothing to the subduing thoughts that fall heavily upon one's soul, as he contemplates the majestic working of God in reconstructing the ruins of the human constitution, and in bringing back the rebel world to himself. Oh, how these petty disputes of ours among ourselves, concerning rank, and dress, and equipage, do wane, and shrink, and shrivel, before the mighty movements of the hosts of God! They say there were two farmers at law about part of the wheat-field where the battle of Waterloo was fought. Readily, it would seem, might they be content to stop the wretched suit and forget their insignificant feud, when Empire trembled in the armies' shock. Never, never, shall we comprehend the measureless reach of the divine plans, until we do so far force ourselves away from the contemplation of our own littleness, as to see that beyond all our personal benedictions or perditions, God is wont to do many grand things in the world—and in other worlds—and in all the worlds—simply for HIS OWN NAME'S SAKE!

2. Then, next to this, comes the thought that in this tremendous disclosure of God's personal interest in redemption, rests our hope.

Tell me I must judge myself by the law revealed in my nature, and recorded in the Scriptures. I look up, and find that law over me; I found it here in the world when I was born. Indeed, the earliest thing I remember seeing, was this awful law of God stretched across the whole universe. I found the northern lights over me, too, about the same time. These seemed to me very like each other in my childhood. I never could reach or understand either. I was afraid of them. There they both were, unmistakably suggesting a

mystery behind them; pure—clear—cold—sharp—with threatening lances of bright “old wrath” fringing the horizon around them. I never could escape out from under that eternal arch. Tell me I must lay my life alongside of the rule. Assert that I must attain the standard, or be lost. What can I do? I am shut in with overwhelming despair. I have never kept that imperial law. I am cursed by it from the start. I have no ransom. I am simply crushed, helpless, and half-defiant.

But just now you tell me that God hates sin, and hates Satan. I feel that I never had in me even one thing he loves. But if I have in me this one thing he hates, *he cannot be indifferent to me.* I know his balances of justice are so delicately poised that the daring footsteps of even one wilful sinner shakes the universe. He confronts the devil—and I am in the devil’s army. The thought occurs to me, he can thwart Satan some by pardoning me. Though I come to be nothing among saints, I am yet conscious of being conspicuous among sinners. There is no man Satan has a surer right to, than he has to me.

So I watch my opportunity; and when I see Immanuel, the Prince, in the distance, I suddenly come forward out from the ranks of the devil’s hosts, throwing down my weapon, and pushing onward as far as I can. Between the great lines, I lift up my voice, like one of Joshua’s trumpets, in the clarion utterance of a dauntless faith, which is at once a surrender and a triumph—“Oh, *for thy name’s sake*, Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great!”

And that petition cuts the air, and reaches his ear—it would have reached it, if I had only whispered it! With all the determination of my will—with all the deep loathing of my nature concentrated and intensified—I scorn, reject, abhor, renounce my sins. And there he meets me. By one sublime act of pardon, through the atonement made on the cross, he forgives in the instant I face him with such a plea. Henceforth, I, hitherto a follower of Satan, become a soldier

of Christ. I enter the ranks most humble in spirit, most awkward in drill ; but in loyalty to him I yield to no one. I am nevermore my own. I am bought with a price. I belong to him.

3. Finally, then, see how foolish it is for any man to try to deny or conceal his sins.

Really, they are his argument. Where sin doth much abound, grace doth much more abound. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper ; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." In the hopelessness of the ruined soul lies its hope. Any pride, which seeks to apologise or extenuate, only stands heavily in the way. Better to own up everything, and by the confession end it. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous ; and he is the propitiation for our sins ; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

It would seem as if there could be no other temptation so subtle and so dangerous, as that of Satan when he urges a sinner to doubt Jesus Christ, because he has nothing in him to offer Christ but sins. "This man receiveth sinners." There is no promise for any other. And there is no prayer which receives a quicker or surer answer than this : "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, *for it is great!*"

A PENITENT'S PLEA.

Like a child that is lost
From its home in the night,
I grope through the darkness
And cry for the light ;
Yea, all that is in me
Cries out for the day—
Come Jesus, my Master,
Illumine my way !

In the conflicts that pass
'Twixt my soul and my God,
I walk as one walketh
A fire-path, unshod ;
And in my despairing
Sit dumb by the way—
Come Jesus, my Master,
And heal me, I pray !

I know the fierce flames
Will not cease to uproll
Till thou rainest the dew
Of thy love on my soul ;
And I know the dumb spirit
Will never depart,
Till thou comest and makest
Thy house in my heart.

My thoughts lie within me
As waste as the sands ;
Oh, make them be musical
Strings in thy hands !
My sins, red as scarlet,
Wash white as the fleece—
Come Jesus, my Master,
And give me thy peace.

Unappreciated Usefulness.

"Wisdom is better than strength; nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard." —ECCLE. 9: 16.

WE do not know precisely whether the simple tale, in the midst of which our text occurs, is merely an Old Testament parable, or the narration of an actual fact. In either case, it serves our purpose well; for it illustrates the great principle we are searching out.

The royal preacher says he once knew of a small city, whose name he does not mention, which had only a feeble garrison to protect it. It was suddenly put under the severity of a siege. Attacked by a large army, and menaced with much skill of engineers in bulwarks, the downfall of its slender ramparts was just at hand. But among the citizens, an inconspicuous laboring-man was opportunely disclosed, who conceived a new plan of defence, so wonderfully ingenious in construction, and so easy to push into rapid employment, that it proved successful even at first trial. He "delivered the city."

And that was the end of it. Nobody "remembered that same poor man." Want of social standing ruined all his chances. His valiant service went just for nothing, because he was not rich. All his helpful work was accepted, but received without reward or record.

The old, familiar, humiliating story, you see; an humble artisan summoned by a mighty exigency to the head of affairs, and then abruptly dropped, after he had been exhaustively

used. In that impertinent little town it appears that property-qualification was one of the conditions of permitted public spirit. No one can doubt that this extemporaneous soldier was most eminently disgusted with the ingratitude he met. If he declared in his haste that the entire commonwealth might be blown to splinters hereafter, and not a wave of trouble roll across his peaceful breast, nobody would really have the heart to blame him for impetuosity.

“ But the cunning old hero, though dying in shame,
 May be sure that he labored and lived not amiss ;
 For his deed has outlasted the foes of his fame—
 And the world owes him much for a lesson like this :
 That a private success is a public offence—
 That a citizen's fame is a city's disgrace.”

King Solomon seems to have felt somewhat the soreness of the scandal. He remarks—“Then said I, wisdom is better than strength ; nevertheless, the *poor* man's wisdom is despised and his words are not heard.”

One of our best lessons from this incident is that which suggests itself earliest and plainest. The story was published somewhere about a thousand years before Jesus of Nazareth was born. So we learn that the communities in Solomon's time were agitated by the same interminable questions, and apparently actuated by the same inconsiderate spirit, as ours.

Some, however, are inclined to claim that there are complications—not a few—peculiar to our time, and fresh to the discussion. It is unfortunate for all parties concerned, that laboring-men are not heard more frequently in their own behalf. Injustice has been done often merely through ignorance of first facts. We grow very angry over the inconvenience we feel from strikes among work-people ; and we upbraid the whole of them for their folly in harming themselves, as well as everybody else, by their spiteful behavior. We clamor at the extraordinary prices they demand for their services. We institute ungenerous comparisons of these times with those which came earlier. Demagogues declaim

against the unappeased restlessness of the masses, and actually talk of force as becoming necessary to coerce them into a more obsequious silence.

Now the lion, in Æsop's fable, was reminded that he had been pictured always with the foot of a man upon his neck. Hence he must infer his own inferiority. Whereupon he mildly requested that *he* might be permitted to draw the picture, and then, said he, we shall see where the supremacy will lie.

I.—It becomes a serious and interesting inquiry, whether there is yet one side unrepresented in this discussion. Is it a settled conclusion, that, in all the present conflict of opinion, laboring-men have no case at all, and must be immediately thrown out of court? Have they no words of soberness to speak to the community, no message of solemn explanation to utter in the ear of the churches?

1. They do have thus much to say to the community. They assert that all the old hope to work-people, of better times coming, is gone.

When this present generation came upon the stage, almost all labor was done by hand. Now it is done by steam and water-power. And everybody knows it is done better so on the whole, and the market is easier, and thus the poor are helped. Besides even this, new branches of industry are opened in the construction of the factories and the making of the machines themselves. But out of this unexpected state of things are rapidly growing a series of singular results. One word indicates them.

The grand rule now is *centralization*. The whole country is settling around a system of cities. Every village has a bustling city within twenty miles of it, towards which the index-finger on every sort of guide-board points. When a villa is to be builded, or a piano is to be tuned, the one to do it comes down on the cars. Local mechanics have almost no chance now. All the home-work passes into foreign hands.

The next step is, of course, inevitable. As the towns

centre in the cities, so the principal trades in each city centre in a few large establishments. Master-masons and carpenters can purchase costly machinery ; poor men cannot compete by hand, and cannot buy the engine and the saw. Those will get the contracts out of the city, who can make themselves known abroad by expensive advertisements. Those will get the contracts in the city who can carry them forward to completion without demanding advances of money. So a poor man has no opening.

Great establishments receive work at any distance. Expensive buildings go up on avenues far away from the suburbs in which journeymen have to live. When we talk sharply about this lessening of a day to eight hours, we ought to remember that it takes a good deal more than one hour to go, and another to return. They rise early, and get home late. Nobody wants them, in their every-day clothes, on the cars, and it costs money, too. But the masters will not let them walk on their time.

Only one grand result can possibly follow from this course of affairs. It becomes an almost hopeless impossibility for any poor man to work up his way into a competence. He cannot expect to reach a master's place in his particular calling. Hence, ambition is broken. All the bright, cheery influence of "a long look ahead" is gone. So most journeymen grow content to live from hand to mouth. Those courageous, plucky little tales we used to read, about the printer-boy, who became a scholar—the tailor's lad, who grew to honest fame—the young blacksmith, who found a seat in the Senate—these are lamentably out of date at the present day. Twenty years of machinery have revolutionized the age. A dreary, morbid, hurt, lonesome feeling is found almost everywhere, if the people fall to thinking at all. A man says, If I were actually to deliver the city, nobody would remember me ; *I am poor !*

2. It is not necessary to go farther in these practical details. More legitimate to the time and place is it for us to

inquire respectfully what message working-people have to send to the churches.

Many families, even from Puritan New England, are found among the mixed multitudes around us. Reared in the circles of strictest and most virtuous association, they fall at once here into the closest seclusion. They discover that the social lines are drawn tensely. The rates of pew-rent are, in all acceptable congregations, exceedingly high. Their old homes used to be neighborly, and friends were close at hand. The general welcome in city life is cold and uninviting. A man may die, and be buried from the next door, and no one know or care about the funeral. For a while they make a compromise. But human nature is not amiable under neglect. Little by little, they glide away from their former habits and convictions. Soon they become worldly, like all the rest, and at last they are lost in the obscurity of the throng.

When you visit these people, they receive you kindly; perhaps they will burst into tears, when you propose to pray with them. Tell them of the religious friends they might have. Urge them to go to Sabbath services. They will only assure you, with a queer puzzled expression, that the thing is preposterous and *impossible*.

I have used this word advisedly. I do not know how better to indicate that sighing—wistful—desperate state of mind I have so often met among the respectable poor. There is something far beyond the prices of pew-rent which renders an attendance on many churches a positive impossibility. Everything is incongruous—clothes, manners, education. The whole atmosphere in that so-called house of God is such that a poor man cannot even breathe it, much less live in it. In no way is he able to force himself to feel at home.

It would be amusing, if it were not so pathetic, to hear him try to tell why. He does not altogether know why. The subtle sense of his own inappropriateness is a thing which hardly any one can ever clearly define. Did you ever

watch a quiet village-christian, here on a visit, or an old-country Scotchman just arrived, or one of those plain mechanics whom you invited (while they were doing work for you) to come to the sanctuary, attempting, in his own bewildered, astonished way to find out what the musical quartette in the loft were at, during the service? Well then, you ought to know that his shake of the head, so dubious and so sorrowful, as he walked wonderingly away from that church, was not half so much at its expensiveness, as at its profound and impenetrable mystery. Not unlikely the preacher was as incomprehensible to him as the choir. That poor plain man could never hope to understand what all that rustling congregation were trying to do. Only one thing would certainly grow clear; *it was surely no place for him*; oh, no, it was impossible!

II.—There is no reason to be given why this form of presenting their own case to the community at large, and to the churches in particular, should not be accepted by us all. If we listen candidly, I believe we shall find our reply kindly and frankly received.

1. As to the plain question concerning the relations of capital to labor, in these practical circumstances, when centralization seems undoubtedly to be the rule of life, I cannot here on the present occasion offer much help.

Sure I am of one thing; there is no sort of use in attempting relief by any project of re-adjustment or re-distribution of wealth. I have once seen that tried. In the lurid light of a burning city, amid the bacchanal cries of hordes of drunken beggars on horseback, my mind still kept far enough from delirium to be perfectly able to assert there is no help that way. It ends in worse ruin. If there be any one opinion more wild, and more wicked than another, it is this agrarian notion of equalizing the money of the world, by distributing it among the masses, or by casting it into some communist treasury for universal use. Reason and God are both against it.

For, remember its transparent hypocrisy. All history repeats that, when once a mob begins to divide the property of the citizens, the poor are not content with equal shares. They cry—down with the rich—altogether. It is no desire of theirs to render themselves, or their pauper neighbors, comfortable and free from want. They fiercely rejoice in impoverishing the wealthy, and recklessly destroying the gains of years. Really, they have not the slightest notion of equalizing property. Their plan goes no further than just hatefully to deprive the owners of the whole of it.

Then again, remember its violent injustice. What God's providence suffers any man to accumulate is his own, any other man to the contrary notwithstanding. Nobody has a right to say to him—give me half. He might as well demand the use of his dwelling, or the service of his children. A whole commandment in the Decalogue has been leveled at this. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's."

And further ; how perfectly useless this division would be. Make one man comfortable, and he will squander everything in laziness in a month. Make another man comfortable, and he will work, and barter, and trade, and in a month treble his money. And there you are again—one wealthy, and the other begging—just as you were when you started. And most likely it will be our indolent friend, who will come up, sleek and soft anew, and clamor for a fresh division ; possibly adding now that it would be better to make the thing *periodic* by law, while you are about it.

2. Then to this I add a single remark concerning fashionable churches. It is not for me to say that there is even one sanctuary in the world where a poor man is unwelcome. But I do most sincerely refuse to accept the statement that it is impossible to find one where a decent laboring-man can go, and retain his self-respect. This language is extravagant,

and the assertion is untrue. There are many churches, in this city and elsewhere, in which any respectable mechanic will find himself at home. There he may live, rear his family decently, and be useful. And these are not mission churches, nor anything of the sort. But no one can deny that there is some room for improvement in fraternal feeling all around.

III.—Our real relief, in all these confusions, must come from within, not without. We cannot change the ordinary course of affairs; we must peremptorily adjust ourselves to them. While we admit all that Solomon says in the text, we must add to it his conclusion in the context, and quote the whole at once: "Then said I, wisdom is better than strength; nevertheless, the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard. The words of wise men *are* heard *in quiet* more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools."

Christianity reduces men to units of one vast aggregate. It levels them to one common low plane. They are all rebels condemned. Jesus, the Son of God, dies to redeem them. He offers pardon without money and without price. His Spirit changes the heart, and gives a new disposition. In temper, in feeling, in experience, in hope, the Christian is an entirely fresh creation of omnipotent grace and power. This single principle is intended to revolutionize the race. Little as it seems, it proposes to relieve the entire perplexities of our confused age. Let Christianity triumph, and it will not be true that "a poor man's words are despised." And while Christianity is coming to its triumph, "the words of wise men," be they rich or poor, will be "heard in quiet."

Here then, best of all, do the rich and poor meet together at the foot of the cross. From the deepest need to the highest glory, there is only one reach of redemption. The gospel, with all its solaces, its reliefs, its duties, and its hopes, advances, with its open hands towards every man and woman that seeks to be saved. No one has any paramount claim.

Only let every man remember God is our Father, and we all are brethren.

As I proceed, now, to the plain application of this theme to the matters of common life, I feel embarrassed under the pressure of two opposing systems of inference.

The text does not mean that "wisdom"—or intelligent piety, sanctified genius—is any better in a poor man than in a rich one. Solomon himself was one of the richest, as well as one of the wisest, men. Nor does it mean that when a rich man is wise, his voice is necessarily the cry of one who ru'eth among fools.

It does mean that if a man is a true Christian, and behaves himself wisely, his influence will be felt. Neither the supercilious neglect of the rich, nor the spiteful clamors of the poor, can avail to keep him from being heard.

Hence it cannot be said to follow as an inference, that our remedy for these daily confusions is to be found in a continual lashing of the rich, or in a persistent hushing-up of the poor. No legislation—no mere school-system—can reach the trouble. Practical facts are stubborn. *Relief must be found in the renewing of men's hearts, and the awakening of a fraternal spirit.*

And hence it does follow that we must accept gospel principles, and proceed upon them.

1. *Remember we are all pretty much alike.*

That is to say, we differ in show, we are the same in substance throughout. Go with me a moment, in imagination, to an orchestra during the little impressive space of recess, while all the instruments lie along the racks and over the seats, deserted by the players. Look around upon those mute creatures of brass and box-wood, of ivory and silver. Some are plain and cheap and homely. Others are gilded and chased and costly. Some are worn with years, and some new from the maker. Even now you have a kind of suspicion that the less showy ones may be the more valuable. How curious the shapes, how skilful their construction. Yet with all the measureless variety, and all the marvellous range of intricate combination, they have each the same limit of reach.

All the music is produced from the mere *eight notes to the octave*. You think there are too many of one kind, or too few of another. But when the performers return, and the grand chords begin swelling again, you are convinced they were grouped by a wisdom higher than yours. They are all necessary to each other. They cannot afford to be jealous. And so, no matter whether the harmony is strung for the wedding or the wailing, for the plaintive dirge or the brilliant song, all are obedient to the rod of the master-musician who guides them.

2. *We must get into communication somehow.*

The incident is related of a Hindoo and a New Zealander, chancing to meet upon the deck of a missionary ship. They knew not one word of each other's tongue. They wished to communicate. They pointed to their Bibles. They kept shaking hands. They smiled in each other's faces. They kneeled down together. But they could do no more. At last with a sudden joy at new discovery, the Hindoo cried out, *Hallelujah*; the New Zealander caught the syllables of that well-known doxology, and answered enthusiastically, *Amen*! There they were, then, finally on common ground. Reared almost at the antipodes, they met together, when one shouted "Praise the Lord," and the other responded, "So be it!"

3. *"Blessed is he that considereth the poor."*

Consideration is the first gospel-grace. Let us respect and dignify manual labor. Let us be quick and generous in recognizing worth. Let the rich accept wisdom from a homespun-clad citizen. Let the poor keep themselves worthy of respect. Let laboring-men have done with the hypocrisy of demanding hours for study, and then spending them on the corners or at the gin-shops. Let them read, as they say they will. When the libraries are crowded, then mechanics will be a force. And when "in quiet" they are felt, they will be come a power.

For there is no limit to the influence of an honest intelligent Christian, who has given his heart to Christ, and his "wisdom" to his fellows.

'MRS. LOFTY AND I.

MRS. LOFTY keeps a carriage,
 So do I ;
 She has dapple grays to draw it,
 None have I ;
 With my blue-eyed laughing baby,
 Trundling by,
 I hide his face, lest she should see
 The cherub boy, and envy me.

Her fine husband has white fingers,
 Mine has not ;
 He could give his bride a palace—
 Mine a cot ;
 Hers comes home beneath the starlight—
 Ne'er cares she ;
 Mine comes in the purple twilight,
 Kisses me,
 And prays that He who turns life's sands
 Will hold his loved ones in His hands.

Mrs. Lofty has her jewels,
 So have I ;
 She wears hers upon her bosom—
 Inside I ;
 She will leave hers at death's portal
 By-and-by ;
 I shall bear my treasure with me
 When I die ;
 For I have love and she has gold ;
 She counts her wealth—mine can't be told.

She has those who love her station,
 None have I ;
 But I've one true heart beside me :
 Glad am I ;
 I'd not change it for a kingdom,
 No, not I ;
 God will weigh it in his balance,
 By-and-by ;
 And then the difference define
 'Twixt Mrs. Lofty's wealth and mine.

Faith and Failure.

"Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you."—NUMBERS 14: 28.

THE principle which lies embodied in the text, and to the presentation and enforcement of which this entire sermon is to be devoted, may be stated succinctly thus:—

In all spiritual enterprises of faith and labor, that Christian, who predicts ultimate failure, simply fulfills his own prophecy. The Lord does to him precisely what he speaks in the Lord's ears.

I.—Some few illustrations, drawn from common life, will exhibit the meaning of this proposition, and at the same time show that there is nothing strange in its announcement.

1. Begin on the lowest plane. You note, that when your young children are seated at the table for study of their evening lessons, it is the one who says, Oh, I cannot do these sums—that never gets the right answers; and it is the one who quietly addresses himself to the task, as if he had nothing unusual in hand, that in the end works out the successes.

You note, also, that your daughter, whose really worthy accomplishment in music is a private pride to you, breaks down most humiliatingly when chance company is in, and retires from the instrument in utter confusion. She told you she should fail; and you have to admit she is a girl of her word. You remark, as if it were an unquestionable explana-

tion and apology, Poor child! She could do it well enough, if she would only think she could.

2. Enter more serious life. In business ventures you have observed that one merchant reaches prosperity by a career which ruins another. Two young men start about alike in capacity and capital. One is sanguine and hopeful, the other is timid and apt to despond. Both may have the same prudence, and both meet the same general chances. But the bright happy temperament of one carries him blithely on over the surface of peril without breaking in. He sees the ice is thin; but he is across it in an instant, and going on—on always, chirk and cheerful as a bird. The other pauses on the brink contemplatively to make the remark, "I never can—I never shall," and he never does. Thus comes a new application of the old adage, "Faint heart never won the fair lady Fortune for a bride."

3. Introduce now the fresh element of personal danger. Military commanders are accustomed to take into closest consideration the natural dispositions of their subalterns before they heavily trust them. One general will carry a battery, take a fort, or win a field. Another is sure to fail everywhere. Both may be thoroughly patriotic; and they may be equally supported by brave battalions. But the one expects to succeed; the other has his doubts about it.

Of course, soldiers catch at once, in a sort of subtle or magnetic way, this inspiration or desperation from a leader. Indeed, out of military life there has come lately the new word—*demoralization*. It does not mean cowardice, nor treason, nor indolence, nor deficiency in drill. For there are on record no exploits more noble than those wrought out by these broken-spirited regiments, when suddenly seized on retreat, and rallied anew by a voice which they trust and which they know never learned to shout any other word than Victory.

4. History furnishes most vivid illustrations of this principle. All the great problems of the world have been solved

by men to whom the hope of final achievement was instinctive and unalterable. Wilberforce believed he should live to see the slave-trade ended in Britain. Howard had no kind of doubt of the ultimate establishment of prison-reform.

Timid friends shut Martin Luther up for two years in Wartburg Castle. They never could have caged him so, but that he supposed his enemies held him captive. They were demoralized, and feared for his life. But he saw the downfall of Rome afar off. He told friends and foes alike that he should go to the town of Worms, even if every tile on each housetop were a devil.

Peter the Hermit, haggard and lonely, precipitated a million of men upon Palestine, the best blood of Europe—not because he had any more resources of intellect, eloquence, or genius, than other men—but because he had more sublimity of faith in his cause. Single-handed, he roused Christendom to the rescue of Christ's sepulchre from the Saracens, simply because he believed the Christian's cross could be planted in triumph upon the walls of Jerusalem.

5. So sometimes accomplishment of desperate enterprise is reached by what seems sheer force of unconquerable will. Now and then, on the high places of human renown, may be seen the form of some simple-minded hero, altogether unconscious of the show he makes, and most likely unaware that he will ever be considered the centre of his age, or the fine figure of the era.

Out on the prow of his vessel, looking for land, while his crew mutinies behind him, see the face of Christopher Columbus, searching for a new world! Deep in the forest at Valley Forge, kneeling for prayer, see George Washington, the flicker of the faint camp-fire on his features, while the snow lies around him red with the blood of his shoeless soldiers! Then later in the annals of this Republic, see Abraham Lincoln, the morning after our worst defeat set the wires in a quiver, and flung the land into awful mourning again; listen to the quiet words, so quaintly and queerly characteristic—"Well, it sets

us back a good deal, but we shall do better by-and-by ; we must keep pegging away !”

Now I think you know very well what I mean by the proposition which has been stated. It seems to be one of the most familiar of all our principles of every-day life. A man succeeds according as he expects to succeed ; and if he says he shall fail, he will fail. It is exactly this embodiment of Faith, this personal incarnation of Will, which in our national character has gained a recognition and a name the world over, and made American determination and pluck in enterprise famous.

II.—We pass, then, to consider, in the second place, the acceptance, which is made in the Scriptures, of this as a principle of Christian life. We are prepared to discover this, for we have learned long ago that the Bible always uses for its own excellent ends everything that is valuable and available in the best human nature.

1. The easiest and pleasantest method of exhibition would be found in simply rehearsing the many instances of both faith and failure, found in the sacred records. Esther going into the presence of the king, for her risky interview—Paul intrepidly confronting shipwreck with a promise that every life should be saved—indeed, all those wonderful biographies sketched in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, read to you at the beginning of the service, that matchless “roll-call of the sainted dead,” would be exactly to the point, and would argue as well as illustrate.

But our text is enough ; taken with the entire passage of which it is a part, it gives us a plain statement of what our Maker intends. The children of Israel had got through the desert, and were close up to Canaan—so close that they sent over an exploring company to come back and tell how things looked. These spies returned, bringing grapes and bringing tidings. The land was fruitful and delightful ; but, alas ! there were giants in it. Then the people set up a great, big, foolish cry of disappointment and terror. They blamed

Moses, and blasphemously murmured against God. They exclaimed—"We shall never get in; we had better died in Egypt; we had better been buried in this wilderness!" All but two persons joined in this. And then God's patience gave out. He was angered against the whole of them. He made Moses tell them that they might have trusted him, and he would have borne them on. Now that they said they should not enter in, they should not enter in; no one but Joshua and Caleb should ever set foot in the land of covenant and promise. Those who had said they were going to die in the desert, might die in the desert, and he would wait forty years for them to do it. "Say unto them, As truly as I live," saith the Lord, "*as ye have spoken in mine ears* so will I do to you." And then he commanded that the entire nation should start back down towards the Red Sea again. There can be no mistaking the purpose and sense of this history; for the Apostle, away over in the New Testament, remarks—"So we see that they could not enter in because of their *unbelief*. Let us, therefore, fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."

2. Such narratives are interesting in rehearsal, but I judge that easier remembrance of them will be kept if we subject them to a slender analysis. In one of the ancient utterances of prophecy, the Almighty is represented as saying, concerning his people—"I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." And everywhere in the Bible it may be distinctly seen that his plan in dealing with each individual of our race is just this; he puts human motive alongside of divine suggestion; he mingles human courage with divine grace. Hence around the plain proposition I am seeking to enforce there may be gathered three characteristic groupings of incidents and texts. These will furnish three points to be remembered.

The first of them is this:—*God always holds a Christian up to the extreme of manly energy and courageous endurance, as his earliest demand.*

When the disciples came to him, asleep on the pillow, with the absurd question, "Master, *carest* thou not that we perish?" he arose and rebuked the sea into quiet; but then he turned upon them with equal rebuke—"Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?"

When Simon Peter came down on the water, where Jesus stood, and began to sink, and began to cry, "Lord, save me," Jesus caught him by the hand and saved him, but censured him seriously for getting demoralized—"O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

Hence he meant his calm words, spoken before, to be heard and heeded. He told those disciples—"Have faith in God." He assured them he would see them out into success, even in most difficult times, if they would implicitly rely on him, and any one of them might test it; if he would not "doubt in his heart," but would "believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass," he should "have whatsoever he saith." To this he added these remarkable words—"Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, *believe that ye receive them*, and ye shall have them."

Then there is a second thing to be remembered:—*At the supreme moment when human ability fails, God interposes with suddenly disclosed help.*

In the same exquisitely dear passage of the Word, which we have learned so lovingly and so often to quote—"A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench," there is found a figure of speech so wondrously beautiful that we ought always to repeat it in the connection—"I, the Lord, have called thee in righteousness, and will *hold thine hand*." Just as a child, who is going out into the dark it dreads, or is bracing itself up for pain which it has to undergo, says—"Father, hold my hand," so here the manliest believer is permitted to encourage his faith by a new grasp of his omnipotent Helper's hand!

How much wiser in this experience was Jonathan once

than David. David had been told that he was chosen of God ; but Saul was so hard upon him that he became demoralized. He exclaimed—"I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul!" No, he would not ; why, he was already anointed to be king after Saul should be dead. But he fled into the wilderness. "Then Jonathan, Saul's son, arose, and went to David into the wood, and *strengthened his hand in God.*" He took, as it were, the hand that was flying loosely around groping after help, and laid it back in the clasp it had lost ; for this is all he had to say—"Fear not ; for the hand of Saul, my father, shall not find thee ; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee, and that also Saul, my father, knoweth."

Just this firm confidence, that in any instant, when his own resources should fail, there would come new help from on high, made the great Apostle to the Gentiles so calm and courageous. Want did not move him ; wealth did not embarrass him. He had *learned* to be content. He could go down a wall in a basket ; he could cast off a viper into the fire ; he could get ashore on a timber ; he could be taken to Rome at Rome's expense ; his explanation was always the same—"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

The third thing to be remembered is this :—*In the light of such unlimited promise of assistance, God demands our unwavering confidence.*

Whatever enterprise he summons us to undertake, he orders us to *expect* it will certainly succeed, and that before we begin it. He gives us this plain verse—"Without faith it is impossible to please him ; for he that cometh to God *must believe* that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them which diligently seek him." He has made prayer an instrument of communication ; and no one counsel of Scripture is so clear as that concerning the right, and the result of, petition. "This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will he heareth us ; and if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

III. We reach, at last, the practical applications which this principle has, as it comes into our religious work.

1. Apply it, first, to any Church enterprise, involving great responsibility and risk, like this of ours. Somebody has worked it out and prayed it on, so far. The rest will come in the same way. In our text God says he will do *as we say*. Hence, if any faint faith exclaims—"Oh, we shall never accomplish this; we shall never succeed in that," he may turn back our whole blessing and humiliate us with failure.

2. Apply the principle to an inquirer's seeking after Christ. When told to pray—to go in humble penitence to Jesus, asking for a full free pardon of sin, because of what has been suffered on the cross—one is apt to say, "Oh, I have done that often, it will come to nothing; I shall feel no better than before!" Well, anybody that starts so will find it certainly must come to nothing. God says in our text that he will do just as we ask him to do. You predict failure; just so—you fulfill your own prophecy. If you say to yourself, I believe Jesus' words just as they stand—"Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out," and then come unto him, you will not be cast out; you will be accepted and saved.

3. Apply this principle to our individual growth in grace. You have a bad temper, it may be. You will never control it as long as you say you cannot control it. You have some besetting sins; you will never rid yourself of one of them until you say in earnest, "I will root it out forever and forever by God's help." Neither Moses nor Stephen was conscious of the coming upon their faces of the fine shining they wore. Your Christian graces will arrive when you order them from abroad explicitly, and expect the vessel; and their beautiful radiance will surprise your humility, but not at all your faith.

4. Apply this principle to personal effort for souls. The disciples wondered, when they returned from Shechem with food, to find Jesus of Nazareth holding conversation with the woman at the well—the most discouraging mission-school

of *one*, most likely, ever put on record. Bigoted, vicious, ignorant, impertinent, who had any reason to suppose she could be forced into a hopeful state of mind? There is nothing impossible to a courageous faith. Go bravely anywhere, in the name of Jesus, and dare to speak of his love for sinners; believe you are going on his errand. If you say it will do no good, it will do no good. He tells us, in the text, he will do precisely what we speak in his ears.

IV. We might well suppose, my Christian friends, that this theme could be wisely left here to work its own way, and commend itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But most of us know there are many who frankly confess they have not yet reached the repose of this unquestioning faith; they wonder how they may acquire it. To such I offer a few counsels in closing.

1. *Cultivate a determinate hopefulness.*

There is not the least measure of grace in a lackadaisical melancholy of spiritual life. It is not even humility. We are all creatures of habit. We can keep complaining and rehearsing ailments till we become as hypochondriac in piety as in anything else. Greatheart told his friend Honest that Mr. Fearing "had a Slough of Despond *in his mind*, a slough that he carried everywhere with him." Surely there is no beauty, nor profit, in this. Be cheerful; look for the lining in the clouds. Remember every success. Forget failures. Answer one plain question now: What sort of work would it make with you if you prayed with the Psalmist—"Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, *according as we hope in thee!*"

2. *Be very careful about quick speeches.*

Our very thoughts are heard in heaven. God says he will do to you "as ye have *spoken.*" Then be cautious; and moreover, remember that our ways of expression recoil upon us. Words ill-considered, like muskets ill-loaded, often kick back with more force than they shoot. God says to you precisely what you say to your children—"If you get in the habit of crying out, 'I cannot, I cannot,' you certainly never can."

3. *Make a plain business of prayer.*

God never trifles. You must not mock him. He never said, Ask to see *whether* I will give it to you. He says, Ask and I will give. I always liked the downright earnestness of that diseased woman who sought Jesus. She simply thought to herself, He can heal me ; how can I get to him. She considered the chances practically. She doubted doctors ; had had experience, you know. She doubted the disciples ; and as affairs turned out afterwards, we know she had reason to. But she said, "If I can touch the hem of this Nazarene's garment, I shall be healed." As to that there was no kind of question. Now we are to take all our needs to Christ in that way. If it be that you lack *faith*, go to Christ and pray him to give you the faith you lack. Expect he will.

4. *Keep giving encouragement to others.*

There are men and women one never desires to meet more than he can help. They carry an atmosphere of doubt and depression everywhere they are. Others are sunny, and brisk, and hopeful. They bear us up on their wings till we can do anything. Did you see that incident the other day in print? The fireman was on the ladder, up by the fourth story, after a child. The smoke choked him. The flame flashed in his face. He was demoralized, and turning to come down. Somebody in the great crowd shouted, "Let us give him a cheer!" And away up around him went a roar of voices. He heard and looked ; and the air quivered with waving hands. One more glance upward, and the window shivered with his plunge in. Ah ! but did not he have another cheer when, a moment later, he sprang through the fire with his burden in his arms !

5. *Charge final failure on yourself.*

Never be so mean as to say God broke a promise. As you speak in his ears he will do. If you ask and receive not, it is because you ask amiss. Then the blame lies with you.

WAKING.

I have done, at length, with dreaming !
 Henceforth, O thou Soul of mine,
 Thou must take up sword and gauntlet,
 Waging warfare most divine :
 Life is struggle, combat, victory—
 Wherefore have I slumbered on
 With my forces all unmarshalled,
 With my weapons all undrawn ?

*Oh, how many a glorious record
 Had the angels of me kept,
 Had I done instead of doubted,
 Had I warred instead of wept !*

I have wakened to my duty,
 To a purpose strong and deep,
 That I dreamed not of, aforesaid,
 In my long inglorious sleep :
 Oh, those olden days of dalliance,
 When I wantoned with my fate,
 When I trifled with a knowledge
 That well-nigh had come too late !

*Oh, how many a glorious record
 Had the angels of me kept,
 Had I done instead of doubted,
 Had I warred instead of wept !*

Yet, my soul, look not behind thee,
 Thou hast work to do at last ;
 Let the brave toil of the Present
 Overarch the crumbling Past ;
 Build thy great acts high and higher,
 Build them on the conquered sod
 Where thy weakness first fell bleeding,
 And thy first prayer rose to God !

*Oh, how many a glorious record
 Had the angels of me kept,
 Had I done instead of doubted,
 Had I warred instead of wept !*

Our First Love.

“ Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”—REV. 2: 4.

NOT everybody remembers that there are in the Bible two Epistles to the Ephesians. This little letter was addressed to an entire church in Asia Minor. Whatever local meaning it possesses will seek our attention hereafter.

One thing may be always taken for granted in our study of the Scriptures—that what is said to any organic body of believers, can be of no service unless personally appropriated by each individual among them in turn ; and that what has been said to Ephesus, or to any other people, is equally applicable to all communities where the same admonition is needed.

The plain purpose of this sermon is to set before you two matters of consideration : what this experience is, which is here called “ *first love* ;” and wherein consists the guilt of leaving it, so singularly announced as being “ *against*” a man.

I.—Our analysis of this early experience of a Christian convert will be helped somewhat by the homely, and yet significant, figure of one of the old prophets—“ Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord : I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals.” The simple symbol employed is the first affection of a young bride for her husband.

To a young Christian, old things have passed away, and all things have become new. He lives in a fresh world. To

many it seems as if a positively unknown universe had been opened upon them in the hour of their earliest surrender to Jesus. Temperament, of course, has much to do with the enthusiasm of any person's exercises ; but in some few points I judge, we all agree.

1. In the first place, *Sensibility* is an element of this early affection.

When one finds himself actually entitled to a hope of heaven, he may be like the woman who had found her piece of money ; or like the man who had got back his sheep that went astray. He wants to be demonstrative. He is full of enthusiasm. His heart is inditing a good matter. He calls in his friends to share his joy. The moment God's love is shed abroad in a human experience, it seems as if the glad believer could not say too much.

At the old Roman games, we are told that the emperors, on rare occasions, in order to gratify the citizens, used to cause sweet perfumes to be rained down through the vast awnings which covered the theatres ; and when the air grew fragrant, there instinctively arose the shouts of loud acclamation for the costly refreshment.

Not unlike this is the delighted outcry of exuberant thanksgiving, when the unseen love of God has been unexpectedly shed upon a believing soul. Or ever he is aware of it, he becomes like the chariots of Ammi-nadib. He is all afire with excited feeling. And he will utter it aloud. While he is musing, the fire burns ; then will he speak with his tongue. Like the disciples returning from Emmaus, the instinctive question (demanding no answer) which he puts is—"Did not our hearts burn within us by the way?" He has no sort of fear that he shall offend against the law of religious reserve. He says constantly—"Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare unto you what he hath done for my soul !"

Such a Christian is sure to grow lovely by just loving—by just going on in love for Christ. It has been fabled from

old times that the graceful swan was changed from a most ugly bird, into its present beauty, merely because of its constancy to its mate. But oh, how Christian fact is sure to outrun even classic fable! The soul grows wondrously lovely which pours out thus its faithful affection. It beholds Jesus' face, as in a glass, and is changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

2. Next to this, as an element of first love, comes *Consecration*.

Once, among the Scottish highlands, the Queen of Great Britain, storm-stayed, took refuge in a cottage. Not till after she had gone, did the simple-hearted housekeeper know who it was she had sheltered under her roof. Then she quietly took the chair which her sovereign had occupied, and set it reverently aside, saying—"None shall ever sit in that seat less than the heir of a crown!"

Oh, loyal word that! And when the august Monarch of heaven has condescended just to enter our hearts, there is no place there for any one less than one of his children. There is nothing in all our possessions that can possibly be too good for him. Whatever he will grace with his touch, or honor with his use, shall be reserved to him, and to him alone.

There is nothing more pathetic than the length of self-devotion, to the extreme of which young converts appear ready to go. Like children, just come home to a loved and loving parent, they find luxury in simply trying to surrender all—all—to him. They are not going to be merely cinnamon-trees, fragrant in the outer bark only; they rather choose sandal-wood for their symbol, and mean to be strongest at the innermost heart, in order to fill the whole house with innocent love.

3 In the third place, *Gratitude* is an element in this early affection.

Why should not this stand actually first? We owe all we have to this divine Saviour. Indeed, we love him because

he first loved us. He began the acquaintance. When Naaman came up from the Jordan, cleansed of his awful leprosy, he pressed a gift most importunately upon the prophet. He would spare nothing. He must, and would, show how full of thankfulness his heart was, now that his flesh had come back like that of a little child. The Christian is sure to be filled with strong desire to do *something*, that his affectionate sense of obligation be known.

He will sell all he has to procure some alabaster-box of expensive ointment to pour on his Saviour's feet, if he has no other way. He remembers what has been done for him, and artlessly rejoices in it. But he feels a fine, keen solicitude lest his benefactor should be left to imagine he does not appreciate the wonderful favor, because of the comfort it brings.

Perhaps you have read the story of that sorrowful woman whom once the good Dr. Doddridge made happy. He was instrumental in forwarding her petition for the pardon of her husband. It was successful; and she was informed in the ante-chamber of the palace that the father of her children was free, and, already at home, was waiting her arrival to bid him a welcome. She seemed to think she knew where her duty belonged. Resolutely she bent her steps straight to the parsonage first; she would not so much as pause at her own dwelling, until she had seen the faithful minister, fallen at his feet in tears of overcharged feeling, and exclaimed—"Oh, my dear sir, every drop of blood in my body thanks you for your kindness to me!" Then she returned to her house to meet the dear face of her husband, and begin home again.

4. Another element in this first love of the Christian is *Humility*.

True affection is always modest, and distrustful of its own merits. And self-abasement is generally the most prominent of all our experiences at our first communion. The spirit of every child of God, who remembers what he might have been, indeed has been, and what he now is by the grace of God, is

much the same as that of King David, when the glorious engagement had been made with him that his son should be permitted to build the temple upon Mount Moriah. At once he went into his place of retirement, and fell on his knees to say—"Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come!" It was impossible for him to understand how God could single him out for such distinction.

Our Redeemer, when on the earth, seemed to take special cognizance of this spirit of self-renunciation. For there are at least three several instances in which the little ministeries of humble and unobtrusive regard are recorded; and each of these is made to furnish contrast in the very moment of commendation.

He made no comment whatever on the profuse splendor of Simon's feast; but he was careful to send down into perpetual remembrance the deed of the woman that was a sinner, who at a great risk of reproach came near to wipe his feet with her hair, washing them meanwhile with penitent tears. Just so in the incident narrated of the Roman centurion. This man actually thought he was not worthy to receive Immanuel under his roof. Yet Jesus pronounced him first man—*primus homo*—among believers. And with equal discrimination our Lord seemed to forget the noisy multitude that thronged him, and notice only the inconspicuous and nameless woman who touched the hem of his garment.

So far does this reach, that one would be willing to say Jesus loved humility more than any other grace. A sense of unworthiness rendered people attractive. It makes you think of the quaint comment of an old divine on the verse in Solomon's song, where the Bride is represented as saying—"Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me;" then the Bridegroom replies, as if enraptured at the sight of her—"O thou fairest among

women!" Upon which runs the ingenious comment—"Blushing at her own poor color was the best she could do to redeem her beauty!"

5. In the fifth place, *Zeal* is an element in this first love.

Zeal means boiling. An earnest irrepressible desire to reach some other souls, and bring them into the same lofty relationship with Jesus, springs up in the breast of every right-minded child of God. By-and-by, in some cases, this really becomes the ruling passion.

There was one grand old martyr who even in the moment of agony could think only of people to be saved. When he saw the vast crowd bringing fagots with which to burn him, he thought only of them as such a fine audience! He sent word of inquiry whether he might just preach to them for an hour. When they silenced him, he was keenly disappointed, and turned meekly to prayer, saying—"Behold, the harvest! O Master, send thy laborers forth to reap!"

Ah me! when I consider ourselves, what a rebuke seems to come from every direction! I remember seeing in a German gallery once a painting, representing Bartimeus at the gates of Jericho, the moment when he received his sight under the miraculous power of Jesus. It did not satisfy my imagination. I think the time for such a picture should be chosen a little later in his history, when, I doubt not, that most grateful man might have been found at the work of leading other blind men to the same source of help. Most likely he would say to himself—"Here I am, a poor uneducated beggar; it is of no use for me to try at this time of life to set up for an apostle; there seems only one thing I really can do; there shall not be left in all this city even one man sightless, without at least hearing of this wonderful Saviour!" So I can conceive of his zeal easily. And if it were for me to paint a picture of him, it would show him at the instant when he had led up a blind neighbor to Jesus, and was instructing him what to do. If my pencil would work my will on the canvas, it would make you see the three figures plainly—Bar-

timeus, his groping friend, and Jesus, the Christ. And you should seem to hear Bartimeus whisper—"There now! call with all your might! Say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me! Never mind the disciples; aim straight at Jesus! Say it again—and again! Oh, he is looking at you now; he will call you in a moment; tell him right out what you want of him; now, this instant, or you will be too late! Oh, I wish I could call out for you; but he would not hear *me for you, when you are here!*" And then you should see the face of Bartimeus, so eager, so wistful, so beseeching; so intent, bending forward, while his sightless friend is talking with Jesus; and so overjoyed as he sees the eyes opened, and knows that another poor fellow less sits begging at the gates!

Nor would you be surprised to know that this same man turned to speak his final counsel in the ear of his mate—"Now, then: never, while you live, forget what you owe to Jesus; the least you can possibly do for him is to be off as I am, leading up blind men to him!"

6. Then note, as a final element in this first love, *Solicitude*.

It would seem as if Christ had said audibly to each convert, on receiving his pardon, what he said to the impotent cripple at Bethesda, on receiving his cure—"Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee!" Yet does it appear very strange, surprisingly strange, that any such warning should ever be needed. Suppose any one of our neighbors had thought it necessary to admonish you and me against downfall, in the high experience of our earliest communion-day. How impertinent it would have seemed! How much grace it would have required not to resent it! *We*—we who had just eaten that bread, who had just tasted that wine!. How determinately we set our wills against all on-coming of wrong—how anxiously we sought to be on our guard. Oh, how easy it is for us now to say, it would have been better for our spiritual life if we had never relaxed one iota of that sensitive vigilance.

To be careful against any sin which may offend our Saviour, is not legalism, nor bondage. True watchful fear does not cripple love. It would not be right for you to ridicule any young bride for being over-particular, or call her a slave to her husband, because she is almost punctilious lest she wound him in anything he likes. The busier she is, the happier she is. All the day, during his absence, she laboriously discharges her unromantic duties with housewifely anxiety, so that home may be ready when he returns at nightfall. In demeanor, dress, and demonstration, she seeks to be ever true to him ; for her fair name is his. So she finishes Martha while he is away, and begins Mary when he arrives. And that husband loves on to the end with most gladness who finds that the bride of his youth never grows old, forgetful of the gentle sollicitudes and timidities of her first espousal.

II.—An analysis, so clearly set before you, leaves little, if any, necessity for extensive consideration of our second point in the text ; namely, the guilt of leaving first love.

1. You will see this, first, if you remember the utter *needlessness* of religious declension. Really, there can be no excuse for any one's losing his first love for Christ. Like a pardoned child's affection for his father, it is in every element calculated to be steady, and ought to hold its own. To fall away from it, is only to say one has got tired of Jesus Christ.

2. Then again, remember its essential *weakness*. It is not manly, it is not womanly, to give up duty, and forsake a covenant. There was one sentence, spoken by Johnson, which Boswel declared he could never read without emotion. "I think," said the great moralist in one of the numbers of the *Rambler*, "that there is some reason for questioning whether the body and mind are not so proportioned to each other, that the one can bear all which can be inflicted on the other ; whether virtue cannot stand its ground as long as life ; and whether a soul, well-principled, will not sooner be separated than subdued." That rugged old philosopher was not willing to give up that a man's courage was firmer than his affec-

tion ; he did not believe that a hero could be burned without flinching, and yet could not stand temptation without sin.

3. In the third place, leaving first love must be guilty because of its *alliance*. It makes a Christian the fellow-worker with Satan, the adversary of God and of good. I have heard of vampires which fan their victims, while they suck away their blood. There are poisons which stupefy while they kill. There are diseases that fling hectic beauty on the face, while they consume life in the bosom. There are slugs in the fruit which force it forward into a luscious maturity, just because they are fattening at its core. There are brigands who encourage alpine travellers to rest in the snow, and rob them as they freeze. But no simile I can find gives me the awful picture of that diabolic wile of Satan, when he cries—Peace, peace,—while there is no peace ; driving the soul into torpid death by chilling the heart of its love. Oh, be afraid of him, who can cast both soul and body into hell !

4. Nor is this all ; there is guilt in leaving first love because of its *example*. The Jews in central Europe have a saying, which shows true perception of that two-fold kind of harm, which sin inflicts on all who come within range of it :—“Woe to the wicked man, and woe to his neighbor !” This is the sentiment inspired :—“One sinner destroyeth much good.” It seems pitiful to think God’s children can do more injury in the world than God’s enemies. But no one doubts that a vicious wedded woman can do more at corrupting the young of her own sex, than all the world besides. They trust her, and they think she knows. Hence it comes they doubt all truth and purity. And hence when a Christian loses heart, people doubt whether there is any heart. Hypocrisy is really the most venomous serpent in Eden. Coldness in spiritual affection affects not only the future, it tends to pervert and misrepresent the past. It is like a big blot of ink let fall into a volume you are writing ; it does more than discolor the fair pages as yet without their record ; it stains back through the leaves where former experiences have been

engrossed, and blurs them, and darkens them, clear to the beginning. Thus it is awfully wicked, in that it forces others to think there is no sincerity anywhere in Christ's people.

Hence mere personal experience becomes often the register of a man's influence for good or evil. If he be in a flame of fervor, the heat of his affection will radiate quite unconsciously and spontaneously to others. If he grows frigid himself, he will grow freezing to those around him. They shiver inevitably, when he congeals.

5. Finally, the guilt of this leaving one's first love is seen from its *hopelessness*. It ends in leaving all love. When one becomes cold in his feeling towards Christ, it seems impossible to help him. To speak about his religious life only exasperates. By-and-by you cease even to do that. He has lost all feeling, has a name to live, and is dead.

Peasants in France carry live coals in their hands from one brush-heap to light another, by simply filling the palm full of ashes beforehand. The heat cannot penetrate through the mass. So sometimes the most inveterate hindrance to the fire of the gospel is found in the ashes of old experiences, which have burned out long ago. Religious fervor cannot even warm through the cinders of a past passion.

I cannot close this sermon without at least raising the question, What is one to do who has left his first love? This much, at any rate, is possible. If a Christian discovers he has even begun to leave his first love, the next best thing for him is to *cling to his first anxiety*. Next to being in union with Christ stands the thorough dissatisfaction of being estranged from him. Loathing of husks in the far country is one step towards longing for the bread enough and to spare. Next to consolation in Jesus, stands disconsolateness away. Be restless; then return to rest. God says: "Turn again, O backsliding children, for I am married unto you!"

"ALTOGETHER LOVELY."

EARTH has nothing sweet or fair,
Lovely forms or beauties rare,
But before my eyes they bring
Christ, of beauty Source and Spring.

When the morning paints the skies,
When the golden sunbeams rise,
Then my Saviour's form I find
Brightly imaged on my mind.

When the star-beams pierce the night,
Oft I think on Jesus' light—
Think—how bright that light will be
Shining through eternity.

When, as moonlight softly steals,
Heaven its thousand eyes reveals,
Then I think;—who made their light
Is a thousand times more bright.

When I see, in spring-tide gay,
Fields their varied tints display,
Wakes the thrilling thought in me—
What must their Creator be?

Come, Lord Jesus! and dispel
This dark cloud in which I dwell,
And to me the power impart
To behold thee as thou art.

First Love Left.

"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."—REV. 2: 4.

YOU have already once been addressed from this text. I have spoken of the nature of religious declension, bringing before you the elements of what is called here "first love," in order that you might be intelligent as to what is forsaken, when one really departs from it. Now the purpose of considering, as I propose on the present occasion, the causes that lead to this guilty lowness and listlessness in experience, is certainly quite simple. I want to ascertain a reliable process of cure. When we have found ourselves in a wrong state of mind, it sometimes gives great help in getting out of it speedily to learn just how we happened to get in.

It may be a thankless task for any one to attempt to arouse a whole church like Ephesus from the gathered apathy of generations. To stir up such people seems to make the matter even worse at first. "When I began," says Sidney Smith, "to thump the cushion of my pulpit at Foston, as is my wont when I preach, the accumulated dust of a hundred and fifty years made such a cloud that for some minutes I lost sight of my congregation." There is nothing of that sort for me to fear here. I believe your hearts are seriously and sincerely with me in this thing. We all desire to know why the work of God seems to slumber upon our hands. And every true Christian among us longs to regain that early ex-

perience, that love of his espousals when first he knew Christ.

I.—I mention in the outset, as one of the most prolific causes of declension, the *spirit of compromise* with the unconverted.

I mean that yielding disposition, which is manifested by not a few Christians, who fear that piety is not going to be welcome, but will be considered too severe in its requirements of practical duty and consistent walk at home. They imagine they can make it less repulsive by lowering its standard *just a little*.

A husband thinks his wife will be better pleased with his large benefactions, if he indulges her more in lavish display. A wife thinks her husband will accompany her more often to church if she will yield, now and then, and go with him to the theatre. No one needs assert that a surrender of this sort is made from other than the best of motives.

Yet it has been laid down as a maxim by the wisest and the best of men, that all compromises with error are dangerous to the truth. When the world demands of the church that religious people should be more lenient, lest the faith of the gospel should seem austere ; that they should be a little less rigid in rules of ordinary life in order to do away with prejudice against piety ; a simple Greek parable may be related as in point.

On a time an embassy came from the wolves to the sheep, assuring them of positive friendliness and respect for everything in a decent shepherd's fold ; but begging leave to say that the conduct of certain dogs had become of late exceedingly exasperating, Indeed these dogs were the sole cause of the war. Sheep were amiable, and must be loved by every one ; but these dogs, it was evident, would never allow quiet. If the dogs would just be given up, peace might be made at once. It was a silly flock that listened. The watchful guardians were sorrowfully led forth through the gate, and soon torn to pieces. Then, as might have been expected,

sheep were devoured at the pleasure of even the veriest whelps in the pack.

There never was a sinner saved by lowering the claims of the gospel down to him. It was possibly a little easier for Naaman to carry his profession of a new faith, by just going as usual with his old master into the temple of Rimmon to worship. But Naaman could not compromise between Jehovah and an idol, and we surely never hear of his master's conversion.

I have seen people choose for their fine garments what they call a changeable silk. In one light it looked crimson, in another light green. In its texture it was made thus. It was woven part green and part crimson. It was never really green nor really crimson. It was simply a changeable pattern. I am sure Christ's robe of righteousness was nothing of that sort. I am sure the fine linen of sainthood is not now brilliant and now dingy—never decided, but woven on a warp and filling of compromise. It carries its purity in its steady whiteness.

II.—In the second place, I mention as a cause of declension from one's first love, *bad companionships*.

There is no need for my entering upon an illustration to show how influence is transmitted from one to another in the ordinary associations of life. "As iron sharpeneth iron, so the countenance of a man his friend." When the worldly Lord Peterborough stayed for a time with Fenelon, he was so delighted with his piety and his amiableness, that he exclaimed at parting—"If I remain here any longer, I shall become a Christian in despite of myself." There is a power, therefore, in the unaffected simplicity and truth of a religious life. But if Fenelon had not been one whose character was fixed, and whose experience was positive, the story might have been sad on his side to tell, when the brilliant wit, and the noble station, of his guest had begun to tell heavily on him.

It will not do for any young believer to keep up his old acquaintance with the gay circles of worldlings he has left.

One little temptation may ruin him. Mediæval history records how a famous fortress was taken by merely tying a thread to a beetle's wings, and suffering him to crawl up the rocky rampart ; from that a cord followed, and from that a rope, and then a ladder, and then a soldier, who slew the sentinel and threw open the door. Tampering with sin and sinners is unsafe and requires care. One's only real safety consists in his watchfulness and nearness to God. He must learn to be in the world, and yet not of it. The Bible commands no asceticism ; monks and nuns are modern inventions and have no favor.

Some points of Jesus' life are easier to imitate than others, but all are needful to make up the perfect man in Christ. One feels as if he could go into the solemn retirement of the temple and meditate, or wander away into a mountain apart to pray, or spend hours of pleasant intercourse in a Bethany home, Martha serving, and Mary sitting at the Master's feet. But beyond all this, one has to meet the demoniacs at Gadara, the Devil in the desert, and keep serene under the scoffs of the judgment-hall. This a worldly companionship never helps a young Christian to do. And it may be readily traced to just one bad associate, sometimes, that an enthusiastic convert becomes in a few years a cold hard backslider.

III.—There is a third cause operating to produce religious declension, and that is the entangling influence of even *legitimate business life*.

It is one of the laws of our nature that we cannot be interested in two paramount things at a time. If there be one chief end, then all the rest must become subordinate. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon"—is the quiet utterance of Christ himself. Yet there are men who spend most of their lives trying to make this impossibility possible. They are too moral and too conscientious to be altogether doubted. Charity never desires to say they are hypocrites. But they live like Mahomet's coffin in the fable, suspended half way between heaven and earth, and really belonging to neither,

yet ultimately sinking at the last. One is certainly bound to be diligent in business ; but no one is called upon to sacrifice his religious life to his partnership. God even indulges us somewhat, and forbears to a great extent. But he summons us to remember that we are not our own ; we are bought with a price. The Jews were permitted to gather clusters and pick flowers all the way to Jerusalem ; but they were not to forget that the object of their annual journey was not acquisition, or even entertainment ; they were on their way to the worship of the solemn feasts.

The line of limit in this matter lies within a narrow compass. It is the heart God demands. And all unholy affections are rebuked. If a man allows himself to love something else better than he loves his Saviour, the result is inevitable. The new feeling at first chokes, and at last strangles, the old. There is an idol in the heart.

It is sometimes supposed that the entire caution in this respect is discharged upon men who are in trade and have to do with money. By no means : a politician seeks for popularity, a literary man for fame, an artist in music or in painting for admiration and applause. Ruin will be sure to come when the first command is broken, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." That which turns the affection away from Christ is what brings the danger. The story is related of a ship, driven upon the rocks miles away from the harbor which the pilot thought he was entering. The blame was passed from hand to hand ; but neither steersman's skill, nor captain's fidelity, nor sailor's strength, could be charged with the loss. Then it came to light that a passenger was trying, hid in his berth, to smuggle into port a basket of steel. The berth lay nearly under the compass, swerved the needle from the north star, and drove the vessel a-wreck. He who attempts to smuggle even one sin into heaven will simply go down.

IV.—In the fourth place, I mention as one of the causes of declension, the indulgence of *secret sin*.

“Because iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes cold.” It seems to me that where we most fatally and most commonly fail is in our sincerity of repentance. We have no real conviction of wrong-doing before God. In the case of David, there is nothing he ever did or wrote which satisfied the true root of holiness that was in him, so much as the fifty-first Psalm. He sang God’s praises as perhaps no other sweet singer in Israel ever did ; but it is in his penitence that his grace appears.

We are not sincere. We profess all horror at wickedness ; but we seem to mean wickedness in general, not anything we have really done in particular or in person. It is sin we deplore, not sins. Our words of self-abasement must not be pressed, nor misunderstood. In the old legend it was no less than a cardinal that once went to confession. “Oh, I am the very chief of sinners,” he murmured in the ear of the priest. “Too true, too true ; God have mercy”—were the words that came back through the grating. “Surely I have been guilty of every kind of wrong,” he continued. “Alas, my son, it is a solemn fact—have mercy upon him, O Lord.” Thinking that great enormities admitted, would force at least a deprecation, he went on—“I have indulged in pride, malice, revenge, and ambition.” This he sighed in mournful tones ; and in tones as mournful the honest monk answered—“Yes, alas, some of this I had heard of before ; the Lord have mercy.” The exasperated cardinal could stand it no longer. “Why, you fool,” he burst out sharply, “do you imagine I *mean* all this to the letter ?” “Alas, alas, the good Lord have mercy,” said the pitiful priest, “for it seems His Eminence is a hypocrite likewise !”

Let us evermore understand it is not the confession of a sin which rids us of it ; the lips may tell of very many iniquities, and the heart still harbor them as much as before. One single habit indulged, one single bad passion permitted sway, may frequently ruin a whole character. And the saddest thought is that this may be unconscious. There is no prayer

which a solicitous Christian needs more frequently to offer than that of the Psalmist: "Cleanse thou me from secret faults—set my iniquities before thee, my secret sins in the light of thy countenance. Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

There is no need of going further in the enumeration of causes which lead to religious declension.

1. Surely, one of the earliest lessons we can learn is concerning the *dignity of religious scruples*.

We need never fear to offer in denial of any invitation to sin, that those who are the children of God have too much at risk to venture in peril. I have somewhere read of an artist, over-persuaded to go into a battle, in order to paint a real war-scene on canvas. The experience was not promising; for a mischievous cannon-ball took off his right arm, and he never wielded brush or pencil again. Carelessness is dangerous, when one carries eternity in his hand. "That may soon be lost by mere neglect," says old Thomas A'Kempis, "which after much labor we have at length scarcely attained through divine grace." Nobody has a right to entice a Christian to imperil his soul. It is enough to answer, I am a child of God—as a refusal to sin. In all religious hesitancy there is dignity.

2. In the second place, we can learn here *the explanation of that low unrevived state of a church, where the work of God is hindered*.

A church consists of its members. If they leave their first love, the church is dead and cold. When family prayer is given up, when the social meetings languish, when the Bible is a closed volume, then the wicked begin to grow bold. The trouble is not in any vague, shadowy organization, we call the church: it lies in your heart and in mine.

It seems so easy to remedy this, that people wonder sometimes why it is endured. All a church has to do is to cast out the backsliders.

Ah, yes: but the remembered remark, made by a quaint old puritan, is unfortunately still correct—"You cannot always tell what o'clock it is in a man's breast by inspecting the mere dial of his daily countenance." Even Jesus used a whole parable to instruct his disciples that it must always be impossible to separate tares from wheat; if one should attempt it, he would most likely root up wheat also.

Still there is one thing which ought to be done. The church should do all it can to arouse the waning energies of its membership. When a Christian falls away from his first love, inquiry should be made searchingly as to where he is. He is like an heir to a kingdom, who wilfully deserts the ancestral palace. His absence concerns more than himself. He must be looked up. It will not do to suffer him to wander through the realm, and breed discontent as if royalty were an imposture.

3. Once more, let us learn at this point *the law of Christian charity*.

It may seem to have been established as a rule of worldly politeness, and demanded as proof of good breeding, that one must not allude in common conversation to his own, or his neighbor's spiritual state. But honest affection, true fraternal feeling for those who are members of the same communion with us, would reverse this hollow pretension. When a man is in peril of losing his soul, *tell him so*. "Give me a roaring devil," was once the prayer of the pious Rutherford, "rather than a sleeping one; for the sleeping ones make me slumber, but the roaring ones make me run to my Master." Our duty and privilege is to help one another. And the worse off any one is, the quicker should be our effort.

Sometimes men not only fall into darkness, but love darkness rather than light. "If you should see a man," said Payson once, "idolizing a set of lamps, and you wished to make him truly happy, you would begin by actually blowing out the smoky wicks; and then, throwing open the shutters, you would let in the full light of heaven." In his narrow chamber

of experience the backslider sits, and he will not see the glory of the morning. You are his best friend when you positively force him to look out of the window on the clear hills. Then most likely he will need your patience ; for his own hot breath falls impurely on the pane, and he cannot see the sun. It is Christian charity to persist, and never leave him till he is lit with the light his pardoned eyes are looking on.

4. We may learn, furthermore, that *this religious declension is guilty, and not merely unfortunate.*

The carefully-chosen word of our text must not be missed. It says—"left." We frequently quote it as if it read *lost*. One may lose by accident ; he only by intention leaves. So all backsliding is in one sense wilful. Alas, for those who have a name to live and are dead ! Address them as unconverted, and they deem you uncharitable. Plead with them as believers, and they will not respond. Thus they live on—

" Making good the saying odd,
Near the church, and far from God."

Oh, for more decision, more clearness, more consistency. The Arabs tell this fable : Once they said to the camel-bird—that is, the ostrich—"Carry a burden," and it replied—"I am a bird, I cannot." Then they said—"Fly up in the air," and it answered—"I cannot, for I am a beast." Anything seems to be always in order, if a man wishes to shirk responsibility as a Christian, or escape reproach as a worldling. Meantime, God says he despises the lukewarm, and is going to spew them out of his mouth !

5. Finally, we may learn here *the need of alertness and watchfulness.*

This guilt can be averted only at the beginning of the evil. A child's finger may start an avalanche ; a man's hand cannot stop it ; a whole army cannot carry it back. Oh, awake to this on-coming of wrong ! When one of the emperors of Europe was crowned, and the train was on its march, the wife

of an ambassador broke her costly necklace of pearls, and the jewels fell in the street. She would not pause in the pageant ; and they were trampled by the crowd. Oh, how many a Christian sweeps on with empty parade, and loses in the dust the pearl of great price.

The simple truth is, this first love ought to more than hold its own. It should protect itself by increasing from year to year. Love grows by just loving. It is stimulated by the disclosure of new excellences in the person whom we love. It strengthens itself by gentle ministries of kindness. It becomes happier and firmer with expression. No young convert was ever beguiled by the Devil into a mightier mistake than when he began to imagine that backsliding into a common level of apathy and coldness was the regular expectation and experience of true Christian life.

There is no more solemn crisis in any soul's history than that which it has reached when it begins to *look back* to an earlier period for its evidences of grace. These ought to be more clear to-day than ever. "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

THE LOVE OF GOD.

LIKE a cradle rocking, rocking,
 Silent, peaceful, to and fro—
 Like a mother's sweet looks dropping
 On the little face below—
 Hangs the green earth, swinging, turning,
 Jarless, noiseless, safe and slow ;
 Falls the light of God's face bending
 Down and watching us below.

And as feeble babes that suffer,
 Toss and cry, and will not rest,
 Are the ones the tender mother
 Holds the closest, loves the best ;
 So when we are weak and wretched,
 By our sins weighed down, distressed,
 Then it is that God's great patience
 Holds us closest, loves us best.

O great Heart of God ! whose loving
 Cannot hindered be nor crossed ;
 Will not weary, will not even
 In our death itself be lost—
 Love divine ! of such great loving
 Only mothers know the cost—
 Cost of love, which all love passing,
 Gave a Son to save the lost

First Love Regained.

"Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works."—REV. 2: 5.

THE force of the warning in the last clause of this verse is increased ten-fold by the impressiveness of the historic fact that this church at Ephesus, to which it was addressed, did not repent, did not remember from whence they had fallen, did not do again their first works. Hence the threat was literally fulfilled. The candlestick was removed.

The city ere long passed from the zenith of its commercial splendor. One of the largest marts of traffic in the world at the time, its influence began to decline. The land was overrun by the Ottomans, and Ephesus was totally destroyed. There remain now only a few heaps of ruinous stones, a mud cottage or two, tenanted occasionally by wandering Turks. The church, which was once so enviably large, so faithful, and so flourishing, that the Apostle Paul's heart rejoiced over it, has been so completely swept away that there is not at the present day a single Christian, dwelling where the great congregation once worshipped. Travellers say that the streets are obscured and overgrown. Herds of goats are driven in for shelter, as the sun scorches at noon, and crop a scanty sustenance from the midst of the deserted ways. Noisy crows also from the quarries seem to insult the dignified silence with their uproarious cawings, and the partridges call even in the areas of the stadium and the theatre. The scientific expeditions have been patiently hunting for years to find the ruins, or even trace the foundations, of

Diana's temple, one of the seven wonders of the world. The epistle to the Ephesians is read elsewhere all over the globe ; but there is no one in Ephesus who reads it now.

This is the simple commentary which history writes upon the judicial declarations of God. When he warns, he means to be heard ; and when he threatens, he means to be heeded. It becomes men to listen. "Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

You will doubtless very distinctly remember that we have already considered the nature of religious first love, and how it may be guiltily left. There remains only this one question more—how it may be regained. Spiritual declension is a diseased state ; it requires a cure.

Our text furnishes in its clauses all the division of particulars we need to aid our memory. There are just three directions proposed—reminiscence, repentance, and resumption. "Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works." We note these in turn.

I.—"Remember from whence thou art fallen." In the very language here used there is found another hint as to the sadness of this state. It is a "fallen" condition. It is reached only by suicide of wilful precipitation. Lucifer, son of the morning, is at once its agent and its symbol. A fallen angel seems bad enough ; a fallen saint is worse.

This call to reminiscence implies a solemn pause ; a thoughtful examination of one's position and prospects, as contrasted with what once they were. "I thought upon my ways," said the Psalmist, "and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." The ancients used to imagine that Memory had a temple whose walls were hung with paintings of past scenes. She sometimes suffered mortals to enter the galleries ; and, strange to tell, no matter how varied were the throngs of those who visited her, every man saw only the pictures of his own life. There is a mighty truth underneath this heathen fancy. Many an old man pauses in the midst of his declining years to recall what is gone. Retrospection summons before

him the forms of early companions, and the shadows of early hopes, all passed away alike ; for in this fitful world forms seem like shadows.

Sometimes one journeys back to the homestead of his fathers, and sits down by the familiar stream that runs through the old meadow. A great flood of boyish recollections comes over his sensibility.

“Down to the vale this water steers, how merrily it goes !
 ’Twill murmur on a thousand years, and flow as now it flows.
 And here, though older much this day, I cannot choose but think
 How oft, a joyous boy, I lay beside this fountain’s brink ;
 My eyes are filled with childish tears, my heart is idly stirred,
 For the same sound is in my ears that in those days I heard !”

Now there is something more in these seasons of retrospection than mere sentimentalism ; otherwise they are not worth instancing, and will come to nothing of profit. There is power in them. They can be rendered truly valuable, if managed as they ought to be by a wise man.

For anything is worth saving, in this awful rack and hurry of life, which just sets one into even an hour’s tranquil thought. “I think it meet,” wrote Simon Peter, to “*stir you up* by putting you in remembrance.” Going back in one thing may get us into the healthy habit of going back in other things. Reminiscence will lead us to the time when our first love was possibly warmer than it is now. Then we earliest entered the Saviour’s banqueting house ; we sat under his shadow with great delight ; and his banner over us was love. Surely those were quieter times than these, and their record appears clearer than any we are able to write in these later and more bewildering days.

It will be profitable for each of us to ask himself the question, How long have I been a member of Christ’s church on the earth ? Recall your early experience when you began to act as a Christian. How much better experiences those were than these ! Your prayers helped you then : how dull and difficult they are now ! Then you used to go about the

Master's business with alacrity: now it seems almost an age since you spoke to any one about his soul. How the meetings for devotion were thronged! You loved to take most active part in them then. Oh, be at least dissatisfied with this apathy and coldness! Sigh for a place once more near the Saviour's side. Think of heaven as your destination, God as your Father, believers as your brethren. "All sorrow," says a German poet, "ought to be only *Heim-weh*"—as we term it, home-sickness. If each one of us will see clearly that what we have forsaken is heaven and its supreme joys, it will lead us into profitable meditation.

II.—Still it would be fair to say that it will do no good to just remember whence we are fallen, and rest contentedly or even pensively there. Our text announces a second duty—*repent*. "Return unto me, saith the Lord, and I will return unto you."

One of the first refuges of lies into which a backslider sometimes allows himself to flee, is an increase of religious forms and ceremonial duties. But God calls for nothing of this sort. "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

To expect to revive a declining experience by multiplying ceremonious outward observances, would be as silly and fruitless as to hope to warm the dead Lazarus into life by muffling him more thickly in shrouds. The inward man needs to be made alive first. A godly sorrow is needed for the sin of backsliding itself, as well as for all the sins it has led into.

It is of no use to plead the violence of the adversary. For if we resist the devil, he will flee from us. We yield too tamely. We submit with quite too much alacrity. We are too content to be captives. We are

—"like birds, who flutter for a time,
And struggle with captivity in vain;
But by-and-by they rest; they smooth their plumes,
And to new masters sing their former notes"

Thus many a Christian at first interposes some coy objections to the encroachments of the world, but gives up quietly at the last. The soul of a true believer ought to flutter like the starling, and beat its wings against the wires till they are featherless, rather than be conquered, and rest satisfied in a cage.

There is a subtle injury inflicted on many a Christian just at this important point in his history. Satan, the shrewd adversary, stands exactly at his elbow, and suggests that all this counsel to penitence and contrition seems plausible enough; but then it is altogether undecided and undefined as yet *what repentance is*; there is curious caprice on this subject; one is justified in withholding his acquiescence, until he understands clearly what exercises of mind are required of him in this so-called repentance.

Now I cannot stay to argue soberly with any mature person, who says he does not know what the Bible means when it says—"Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." It is not even difficult to define this duty; it surely is easier still to point it out. Old Thomas A'Kempis was right, when he exclaimed—"I had rather feel compunction, than be able to give the most accurate definition of it."

Repentance is an intelligent sorrow over sin. It is real regret that it should ever have been committed. It includes resolve against all recurrence of it. It shows its sincerity by the thorough self-abasement it produces. Job said—"I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." The direction of Ezekiel was—"Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall *loathe yourselves* in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations."

Only that hypocrite, who has never seen himself under the bright light of God's law, and tested his life by the commands of his Maker, may mistake this entire experience.

That eye will weep the most sincerely which sees most clearly the shameful need of its tears. The heart which truly repents, will grieve to think Christ has been wounded in the house of his friends. Above everything else, will rise this feeling of deep pain—that against so good, so patient, so long-suffering a God, has his sin been perpetrated. He will seek to make all human reparation. He will industriously remove his stumbling-blocks from before sinners. He will make open and prayerful confession before God. It is of no use to cavil at the mystery of repentance as an act. It is plain to every mind. He that questions in this captious spirit what it means, is seeking not for information, but for a subterfuge of escape from duty.

III.—This leads us on naturally and legitimately to the closing counsel of our text. Reminiscence and repentance only open the way to resumption of duty. “Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and *do the first works.*”

The plain commonplace direction of the Scriptures, everywhere offered the backslider, cannot possibly fail of being understood. The Bible says—If you are conscious of doing wrong, then end it. Turn on your track, and begin again. Start anew where you left off. If we doubt our present experience, it is never worth while at all to chase it up. A fresh one will be better. We are just to go back, and lay over the foundations. It oftentimes happens that some flaw in material or construction renders a most stately building a nuisance to the neighborhood, and a shame to the architect. He knows that to work on it as it is, with any alterations, will only result in a botch. It would be far wiser to commence with the lowest stones, and do the entire work as it ought to be done.

The difficulty, which is deplored in all these instances, seems at first to bar the way to this process of cure. Says a backslider—You counsel me to come to prayer and return to duty: I have no interest in this; it is that which shows my state; *I have no heart to pray or labor*; I need cure for my reluctance.

The illustration, which would seem to make this clear, might well be taken from the case of an invalid, who has been seriously ill. You tell him he will gain health by exercise ; and he impatiently contradicts you with saying that he has no strength to begin to walk or ride ; he needs to be in better condition. Now every intelligent physician knows that the man must help himself in this thing. Feebleness and listlessness are cured by effort in one's own behalf. *He will learn to enjoy doing, by beginning to do.* So with the Christian. He must use his little faith to get more faith. He must pray—"Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief!"

But to be specific—what are the first works here intended? One of them is the study of the Bible. *Seek for clear right views of the whole plan of redemption.* Search the Scriptures daily. Let error alone ; look for truth. Do not allow yourself to play around a hook which dangles before you though it may be baited with very flattering doctrine. They used to call in derision Tottenham Court Chapel in London, "Whitefield's soul-trap." Other soul-traps there are in this world, which may be seriously named. Glorious captivity is that when the soul is truly caught for Christ ; awful slavery is that, when the soul is in bondage to Satan. "Oh, never mind them," said the sainted Venn to his Bible-class, when the revilers told them his religion was all extravagance : "never mind them ; never answer them ; read your Bibles ; press forward, dear lads, and you cannot miss of heaven with a lamp to your feet!"

Then *seek Christian society.* One of the evidences of regeneration is love of the brethren. Shake off worldly associations and companionships. Go up into the serene atmosphere of Christ's presence. Commune with him. You can never accomplish any good for yourself as long as you linger where these ribald companions will defy you.

Oh, I have seen the soul of a true penitent cherishing its lowly confessions, its humble resolutions for a better life ! Over all the exercises of his experience nobler thoughts, gentler

memories, loftier aspirations, were settling and nestling, like a myriad of happy birds among the branches of a summer tree. And suddenly there came a sharp hard voice, full-aimed in mockery and spite, like a school-boy's stone shied maliciously into the foliage, and away on the instant went the entire flock. It is impossible to return to Christ and be on good terms with this wicked world.

Once more: *labor for souls*. The quickest impulse of your first love, in those dear old days of your early espousals to Christ, was to make others understand how you desired, and he desired their salvation. Begin there at once. I remember reading once that a priest stood upon the scaffold with Joan of Arc, till his very garments took fire with the flames that consumed her, so zealous was he for her conversion. How few of us are truly awake to this zeal! Yet that is the way to arouse our own dying souls. "None know how to prize Christ," wrote the good Lady Huntington, "but such as are zealous in good works for others."

There is no need of further analysis. *The first works are what everybody does first, who comes savingly to Jesus*. He repents, accepts, believes. And these are what are to be done over again in all simplicity, by one who would regain the joys and successes of his first love.

Mere external efforts at self-reform do not amount to much. The heart needs warming, that the life may throw the worldliness off.

Go forth with me in the winter morning, and mark a little cottage half buried in the snow. Great ranks of icicles are pendent from its eaves. Smokeless, the chimney stands crowned with a snowy tuft on its summit, like the white plume of a hussar. The trees in the yard arch the roof, and burden it, as they bend under the load of sleet and drift. Oh, how cold and cheerless—you wonder if any one ever lived in it—you shiver as you look at it—what will you do? Of course you would never do any good by mounting the gable, and toiling away with the shovel. No: dig in to the door if you

can. Once inside, kindle a roaring fire on the hearth—pile on the wood—send the brisk hot flames wreathing up the frosty chimney. And ere long, you will see the shingles steaming at the ridge—the window-panes clearing up—the icicles dropping off one by one—and at last, with one great plunge, that rights up the trees and shakes the burdened building free, the cataract of snow slides off the roof—and home begins again where winter was enthroned.

Oh, I pity the mistaken man, who toils on with all industry of examination and penance and drill, when the real fact is that nothing but just the fire of new grace in his heart can warm him into a true life! Begin again. Come once more to Jesus, as if for the first time. Perhaps, indeed, it *is* the first time. Trust no old experiences. An anchor may rust hanging at the hawse hole, as well as on the beach in the sand. Better have a new one, with a new chain.

I do not feel easy, my Christian friends, at closing this sermon without giving expression to two thoughts, which have been gathering force in my mind since we started together in our study of these verses. The one is calculated to give comfort; the other is a solemn admonition.

1. The comfort is this. Sometimes the adversary of all good puts it into the heart of a penitent Christian, who longs to return, to think that he never can come again, after all, to the entireness of his first love; God is not going to give back his confidence, and he, the believer, is not going to get back his early joyousness and zeal.

It will not do now to go into a strict analysis to show what will be the differing elements of, or degrees in, this restored affection. I will only say that a patient study of the Word of God, the history and the precept together, would make it perfectly clear that one can attain not only the same, but even a far more worthy, stand in the fellowship of Jesus Christ, when he faithfully repents of his wandering, returns on his steps, and resumes his duty with new resolve. Surely

the Psalms, written subsequent to the fifty-first, show David to have become a better man after his great sin. And Simon Peter would never have penned those wonderful epistles, but for having wept bitterly over his denial of Christ.

Nobody says that it is better to be false in order to become true ; it is a perversion to say that. But no experienced child of God can deny that those make the steadiest allies, who have been once tempted to stray. The Holy Spirit overrules the departure to good. The life becomes the more satisfied, when the soul has found that there is no peace save in the secure love of Jesus.

You can return at once, if you will, and begin where you left off. When you are once more united in covenant love to your Saviour, you will discover that your restless questionings, and chill departures, and unmanageable emotions, have really fitted you better to understand and appreciate *rest*—oh, word of inexhaustible meaning—rest and peace in the changeless love of God !

2. The admonition may be left with you in the very words of the text. The church in Ephesus is warned that the candlestick will be removed from its place, except the repentance appears. This can mean nothing more nor less than that the last vestige of hope, the last monition of conscience, the last figment of grace, the last striving of the Spirit, shall be solemnly withdrawn forever from the soul. Then darkness closes in.

BACK AGAIN.

SWEET the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the cross we spend ;
Life, and health, and peace possessing,
From the sinner's dying Friend.

Truly blessed is this station,
Low before his cross to lie,
While we see divine compassion,
Beaming in his gracious eye.

Love and grief our hearts dividing,
With our tears his feet we bathe ;
Constant still, in faith abiding,
Life deriving from his death.

For thy sorrows we adore thee,
For the pains that wrought our peace,
Gracious Saviour ! we implore thee
In our souls thy love increase.

Here we feel our sins forgiven,
While upon the Lamb we gaze ;
And our thoughts are all of heaven,
And our lips o'erflow with praise.

Still in ceaseless contemplation,
Fix our hearts and eyes on thee,
Till we taste thy full salvation,
And, unvail'd, thy glories see.

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