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Yours sincerely
Joseph H. Wright

THE
PATIENCE OF HOPE

AND

OTHER SERMONS,

BY THE LATE

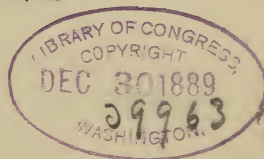
REV. JOSEPH H. WRIGHT,

WITH A BRIEF SKETCH OF HIS LIFE.

EDITED BY

OLIVER J. THATCHER.

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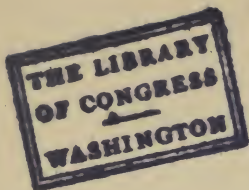
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PREFACE.

AFTER the death of the Rev. Joseph H. Wright the wish was expressed by many that some of his sermons might be published, and especially those whose pastor he had been desired to have some of his sermons in such a form that they could easily be preserved. It seemed to many that such a volume would be the most suitable memorial of his life. For various reasons it seemed best that the editing of them should be undertaken by me. The result is now placed before the public in this volume of fifteen sermons.

The large number of his written sermons made the choice somewhat difficult, since many of them were of nearly equal excellence. Those chosen appear here in the chronological order of their production.

The first two were written while he was a student of Theology, the first one indeed during his first year at the Seminary and is the first sermon he preached. No. VII was preached before the Ladies' Missionary Society of the First U. P. Church in Xenia, Ohio. No. VIII was preached before the Greene County Bible Society. No. IX was preached at the dedication of a new church by

the U. P. congregation at Unity, Ohio. No. XIII was preached to the students of the U. P. Theological Seminary at Xenia. No. XIV was preached before the Christian Union of Monmouth College, Illinois. The others were preached in the regular Sabbath services in his own pulpit.

The pulpit form of address has been retained throughout. No apology for this will be necessary when it is remembered that they are sermons prepared for the pulpit and not for the press. Only such changes in them have been made as seemed truly necessary. Without doubt, if the author had been permitted to prepare them for publication, he would have corrected and improved them in many ways. It is a matter of great regret that they could not receive a thorough revision from his careful hand.

Much that fascinated those that heard these sermons will be lacking to those that read them. The flashing eye, the eager earnest face, the appropriate gesture, the fervid manner, the sympathetic moving voice, above all his firm conviction of the truth of his words, and his deep spiritual earnestness, in short, much of the strong personality that appeared in the delivery of his sermons will not be felt by the reader. But for those who have heard him often it will not be difficult to supply all these things. Although dead he will still *speak* to them. But may all who read them find and accept the truth that is in them, and may the Master whom he served in love,

bless this effort to enable him to speak to a larger audience. The work will not have been in vain, if any who read them shall have their spiritual pulse quickened and strengthened with new life.

OLIVER J. THATCHER.

U. P. THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,
Allegheny, Pa.

Sept. 21, 1889.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

JOSEPH HARRISON WRIGHT was born in Mullagreenan, Monaghan County, Ireland, July 19th, 1849. He was the youngest of five children born to George and Ann Stewart Wright. While he was still in infancy his father died and at the advice of friends his mother sold her home and came to America that her children might have better advantages. She settled in Delaware County, New York, where her brothers were already located. Here his childhood was spent, in a region famed for its quiet beauty, and known as the scene of some of Cooper's novels. These early took great hold on his imagination and stirred up in him a love for literature which he cultivated all his life. For about ten years he was sent to the excellent Academy at Fergusonville, where he excelled as a pupil and gained the lasting affection of his teachers. For a few years he then worked on the farm.

When he was sixteen years old he was converted. He well remembered the time and place where he knelt in prayer and gave his heart to God. He united with the United Presbyterian Church at West Kortright, whose pastor was the Rev. Dr. John Rippey. From the first his religious life was marked by earnestness and clearness. His voice was soon heard in the prayer meeting and led by a desire to reach the hearts and lives of

the other young people in the neighborhood he was one of the principal agents in establishing a prayer meeting for the young. The meeting was continued for years and had great influence in forming and molding the religious character of those who attended it.

Almost from the time of his conversion he believed that he was called to be a minister of the Gospel of Christ. His pastor, seeing his fitness and ability, encouraged him in this, and in order to fit him for college, generously gave him private instruction. In further preparation he spent some time in the Academy at Andes and entered Union College in 1868, where he soon won a name as an exact, pains-taking and brilliant student. But at the close of his junior year, he was compelled to leave his class because of trouble with his eyes, caused by a too early use of them after an attack of measles. His eyes never regained their natural strength and he always felt greatly crippled on this account. By private study, however, he was able so far to complete the studies of the senior year that the Faculty excused him from attendance at college the next winter also. In this way he was able to begin the study of Theology at once. In 1872 he entered Union Theological Seminary, New York, where he spent the next two years, returning to college in the spring of '73 to receive his diploma.

At Lansingville, April 29th, 1874, he was licensed to preach. He spent the next year in completing his theological studies at the United Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Newburgh. He then accepted a call to the U. P. Church at Davenport, New York, over which he was ordained and installed as pastor May 25th, 1875. It was a happy settlement. He had almost grown up

among the people of this congregation. They had known him from a boy, and he seemed one of their own number. To him it was a source of the greatest happiness that he was called to minister to those who were already his acquaintances and friends. His labors among them were abundantly blessed and the breaking of the pastoral tie was the cause of mutual regret and sorrow.

During this pastorate, April 26th, 1876, he was united in marriage to Miss Ella M. King, of Pulaski, New York, who was not only a devoted wife but became also an efficient and earnest helper in all his work. Few homes have been happier than theirs. To them were born nine children, seven of whom are yet living.

In '79 he became the pastor of the Fifth U. P. Church in Philadelphia. He remained here only a year and a half when he was called to the First U. P. Church in Xenia, Ohio, where the remainder of his life was spent. Here he gave his days and nights to the work and labored incessantly. By constant study he tried to get a better understanding of the Truth, and Sabbath after Sabbath, endeavored to present this to the congregation in a fresh and attractive form. He was also frequently called to do the work of an evangelist in other places and his work was always blessed.

All this time he was increasing in power. He was in his fortieth year but had not reached his prime. He was still rapidly growing and seemed to be entering on what promised to be a far more fruitful period of his life. Apparently he was only beginning his work. His life thus far seemed but the preparation for, and the earnest of, far greater things. But on the 9th of last March after a very busy week, while sitting in the evening con-

versing with friends who had called, he was suddenly taken ill. The disease was pleuro-pneumonia, and in spite of all efforts to help him he quietly passed away on the morning of the 20th of March.

All who came into contact with him were impressed with his cheerful and happy disposition. His jovial, hearty laugh was infectious. His words were always cheerful and hopeful and his visits to the sick, the down-cast, and the discouraged were always welcome, for he came like a burst of sunshine on a dark day. His fine sense of humor, his quick wit and ready repartee, his high intellectual attainments, and his catholicity of spirit made him one of the most delightful of companions. He was welcome in all circles. He had such a deep impression of the myriad sides of life and was so thoroughly alive to all that concerns it that he was in ready touch and sympathy with all, and so could mingle easily and freely with all. He came close to people, for they felt instinctively that he was a true friend.

Although so sunny in his disposition, he was not insensible to the shadow. Even more than his own the sorrows and burdens of others seemed to oppress him. His warm heart was running over with sympathy and he forgot his own troubles in listening to those of others. He was especially gifted in speaking comforting words to the sorrowing. He made their sorrows his own and so deep and close was his sympathy that he could speak just those words that would bring most comfort. Interpreting God's providence in the light of His Fatherhood, he made cheerful submission to His will easy, and misfortune and bereavement were shown to be God's ministers sent to do us good and make us more like Christ.

He often expressed his thankfulness that it was his life work to carry comfort and cheer to hearts that were sad and heavy.

These qualities gave him power in pastoral work, in which he took delight. While he loved to preach, it was a still greater pleasure to him to meet men singly and to press upon them the claims of the Gospel, or to help them solve their particular difficulties. If he knew that any one needed him he was wholly at his service. Although fatigued by the labors of the day he would gladly sit late into the night, repeating over and over "the old, old story," pleading that it might be accepted and praying for the salvation of the inquirer. Of his faithfulness as a pastor, all who were under his care can testify. He was assiduous in visiting the sick, in cheering the downcast and discouraged and in comforting the bereaved. He was faithful and tender in warning and rebuking those who seemed to be departing from the way. He was accessible to all and had a manner that inspired men with confidence and invited them to seek advice of him. And he possessed that rare power of approaching men easily, and without offense inquiring about their religious welfare.

As a preacher he was eminently successful and was gladly heard by all. Few preachers are more conscientious in their preparation for the pulpit than he was. He gave much prayerful study to every text he chose in order to learn the truth it contained, and then strove with all his might to present it in such a way that all would easily understand it and be led to accept it. Clear, crisp thinking, and plain, vigorous statement were his aim. He excelled in the art of illustrating. His

illustrations always illustrated, and by their beauty, aptness and force often carried conviction to the minds and hearts of his hearers. He was an omnivorous but systematic reader and close observer and drew his illustrations from every source. Art, science, nature, history, literature, all were laid under tribute and readily lent him their richest materials for illustrations.

His greatest power, however, lay in the fact that he had a message to deliver, a message in which he believed with all his soul. He was an ambassador for God and was conscious that he brought the very news that all the world needed. He spoke with all the earnestness of conviction and plead with all the tenderness of love. And no one who heard him could for a moment think that he did not believe all he said.

Two things in his religious life stood out prominently; his sense of his own sinfulness and his faith in God as his Father. He kept a very close account with himself, knew his besetting sins and prayed and fought against them earnestly. In talking and preaching about Heaven he dwelt on the fact that there is no sin there. And those that have talked with him in private about this will not soon forget the light that came into his face when he repeated, as he often did, the words, "No more sin there." He loved to dwell on God's holiness. Conscious of his own sinfulness and feeling keenly his daily struggles against temptation he longed for the time when he should stand before God perfect in righteousness.

His faith in God as his Father knew no wavering. He often said, "He loves us better than we can love ourselves." He knew that he had been constantly led in a way better than he himself could have chosen and so he

found it easy to submit to God's will. When long cherished plans could not be carried out he simply said, "I will be glad that it is so since it is His will." He loved Faber's poem, "The Will of God," and often repeated it softly to himself while walking or riding or in going about his work at home.

" Ill that he blesses is our good
And unblest good is ill.
And all is right that seems most wrong
If it be His sweet will."

His work is done. His life so eloquent with bearing witness for Christ has dropped out of this world to be made glorious with praise in the world above. His death has left a great void in our church, in our homes, and in our hearts. But many of us know that through him the whole current of our lives has been changed and led into new channels. Through him, many lives are purer and stronger and many hearts have hopes, for he taught them the way of life. And in us he will live on, a life multiplied by ours, and his influence extending in ever widening circles until at last we come to stand with him forever before God, and our tears too have been wiped away and our faces made radiant with the sight of God.

I.

THE PATIENCE OF HOPE.

“It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.”—*Lam.* iii. 26.

MEN of great power and lofty station in days of old, have lived their lives a hundred times over, for the benefit of posterity, in the pages of their biographers. Pens to depict and pencils to portray, the various episodes of their lives have not been wanting. The number and minuteness of these life-sketches have usually been in proportion to the magnitude of the virtues or vices of their subjects.

Such being the rule, we would naturally enough expect a full account of the lives of the men selected by infallible Wisdom to be the prophets of the Most High Jehovah. We look for copious details of their personal appearance, of their habits of life, of their daily doings, but we look in vain. They have left behind them scanty materials out of which to construct a biography. However useful to us might be a picture of their individual experiences, of their way of meeting temptations, of their failures and successes, of their struggles with doubt and their joy in finding light, it has seemed best to Omniscience to leave us in almost utter ignorance of these things. Glimpses we have, all the more interesting from their rarity.

In all the goodly fellowship of the prophets, there is

no other of whose feelings and sufferings we have such distinct knowledge as we have of those of Jeremiah. Yet of even him we know so little that the dates of his birth and death can not be satisfactorily ascertained. From his appearance we can trace him onward, for more than forty years, till carried away into Egypt where the close of his life is lost in the same obscurity which shrouds his birth. His life is like the river of time described by Addison, which "rises out of a thick mist at one end and again loses itself in a thick mist at the other." What we certainly know of him may be gathered from the book which bears his name. Through the sacred authors as channels, there flows down to us the river of the water of life, and the stream is somewhat impregnated with the nature of the soil through which it passes.

Especially is this true of Jeremiah. Such is the intimate connection between his work and himself that in reading of the one we learn much of the other. Concerning his associates we gather that he was contemporary with the prophets Zedekiah, Habakkuk, and Urijah, and with the prophetess Huldah; that he lived in Judea and uttered his prophecies during the reigns of Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiakin, and Zedekiah, covering a period of about sixty years.

Of his nature we infer that he was very impressible and impulsive, had a spirit easily bowed down, and was intensely conscious of his own weakness. With all this natural mildness and gentleness, he had a soul—not to scorn suffering—but calmly to bear it.

Regarding his life, we learn that it was a life-long martyrdom. Opposed by kings, priests, and people, he

drank to the dregs the bitter cup of strife, till he cried out, "woe is me my mother that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth." At last the phials of God's wrath were poured out upon a "stiff-necked people." Jerusalem was laid on heaps. Zedekiah and his nobles were carried off to Babylon. Of the remnant left from the sword and gyves of Nebuchadnezzar, Jeremiah was one. The gray-haired prophet, now verging toward sixty years of age, gave utterance to his sorrow in the Lamentations. The first chapter is a wail for the solitude and desolation of Jerusalem; the second, for the destruction that has laid it waste, and the third chiefly, though not exclusively, expresses his own sore calamities. That he mourned not as one without hope is reasonably manifest from the verse before us. "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."

What is it to quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord? Salvation here means deliverance, and the salvation of the Lord, that deliverance which God sends to his children oppressed by any trouble whatsoever. In this case it refers undoubtedly to the "sea of troubles" whose billows now threaten to engulf Jeremiah and also, in some measure, to the captivity of his brethren. More remotely the allusion is to the sorrows which God gives to his people in all ages. To wait quietly for salvation from these, is to bear them with meek and patient endurance. It is to "commune with your own heart and be still." It is to act upon the advice Isaiah gave to Judah, "Your strength is to sit still." "Be *still*, and know that I am God." It is to offer from a full heart and with all sincerity the petition taught us by the

lips of Christ and enforced by His example in the garden: "Thy will, not mine be done."

It is shown in a spirit of entire submission to the divine will in the commonplace matters of everyday life. Despise not the "day of small things." We are apt to overlook the effect on our character and destiny of what we, with strange infatuation, name trifles. Trifles! why, "drops make the *ocean*; seconds make the *years*." For the *trifling* negligence of the blacksmith, "a shoe—a horse—a rider—a kingdom was lost." A murderer was traced, detected, and executed, from the trifling circumstance of a bent nail in his boot.

Watch the sculptor. It was by trifling blows of the mallet that Michael Angelo set free the angel he had declared imprisoned in the unsightly block of senseless marble. When the goodly work seemed to others finished, the eye of the master saw defects and excrescences, and his deft hand lightly tapping, tapping, shaped the growing form into more perfect resemblance to his own exalted ideal. So God sees in you, buried it may be in the rubbish of this world, or in the crust of sin, a soul whose proper place is among the holy angels, and his hands take the mallet and the chisel to set your angel-nature free. His ideal is, to make that nature "meet to partake of the inheritance with the saints in light." And when you feel yourself growing irritable by reason of insignificant but necessary daily duties, or peevish from petty provocations, remember, God sees in you many sad defects to remedy, and these little things are the tappings of His chisel to clear away the rubbish, remove the crust and bring out a closer resemblance to Him in whose glorious image you are made.

Does it seem as if these trivial matters were beneath the notice of the Almighty? What does earth hold that is not trivial to Him before whom "the nations are counted as the small dust of the balance?" Looking from His point of view, the difference between so-called small and great matters, though magnified a million times, would be to us invisible. The relative magnitude of infinitely small quantities is a matter of entire indifference, in so precise a science even, as mathematics. The things to which we attach least importance, are frequently those chosen of God as means to His grandest ends. His greatness appears from the variety of His manifestations as much as from their magnitude. He makes the thunders of Sinai rive the sin-hardened heart, warning it that "our God is a consuming fire;" but to the trembling, pleading penitent, there comes the "still small voice" from Calvary, whispering sweetly, "God is love." "Whether, therefore, ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

Again, it is shown by meek firmness of spirit under reverses of fortune. When blows that stun from their suddenness fall upon you, in the loss of money or health, position or reputation; when from a clear sky the bolt of vengeance falls upon you; when the hand of destiny dashes in pieces the pleasant cup it was just raising to your thirsty lips; when you gaze, as Audubon and Newton, upon the toilsome work of years reduced to ashes in a moment; when the stately fabric you have all your lives long been toiling to build, crumbles into ruins at the touch of the topmost stone; when the scorn of enemies and the jeers of the indifferent are swallowed up in far more bitter pain at the perfidy of friends, whose

hands were in the dish with yours, but whose heels are lifted up against you ; when the plans you have formed with high resolve are utterly confounded by unforeseen events, and the hopes you have cherished with fond solicitude fade away in the fell gloom of despair ; when all or any of these calamities assail you, then learn in lowliness of spirit to put your trust in Him alone who never disappoints.

The lesson may be hard to learn, but if so, there is the more need to con it thoroughly. It may be that the idols wrenched from your hearts have left them torn and bleeding, but in Gilead there is sovereign balm. It may seem as if a large part of life itself has been cut away, but ask Him who "fillesh all in all" to occupy the vacancy with His own healing presence, and thank Him from the depths of humble fervent hearts, for loving you so truly as to covet your *whole* heart. Have you not professed Him to be your portion for this life, as well as for the life to come ? Would you be free from reverses in this life ? Wretched mortals ! who say to their souls, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years ; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry." Thou fool, "The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies." "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh" at your calamities and mock "when your fear cometh as desolation and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind." Better, far better, to quietly wait through a few sharp disappointments here than to be roused from a bed of slothful ease at last only to open your eyes in anguish with a "certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation."

But most of all is quiet waiting for the salvation of

the Lord shown in resignedly bearing the yoke of severe affliction. When the floods overwhelm you and all his waves and billows beat upon you, then, though almost hopeless, cry out of the depths mightily to the Lord and He will bring you out of all your distresses. "He maketh the storm a calm so that the waves thereof are still." His command is as potent to subdue the angry tumult of your troubled soul as it was to still the raging turbulence of the mad waves of Galilee. "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundation with sapphires;—In righteousness shalt thou be established; thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear; and from terror; for it shall not come near thee." Jeremiah felt that there was no sorrow like unto his sorrow, yet it worked out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; for in his darkest hour he could truly say, "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."

But what is it to hope for this salvation? The word here translated "hope" is a little differently rendered in some other places in the Bible. In one place "tarry" is the word used, in another, "wait." But in all cases where another word than "hope" is used, the meaning is clearly shown by the context to be, waiting with confident expectation that the thing tarried for will surely come to pass. This view of its meaning is confirmed, and much light gained, by comparing the clause now under consideration with the fifth and eleventh verses of the forty-second Psalm, where the same word is used in the original. The base conduct of his unnatural son Absalom

has driven David from Jerusalem and from the sanctuary for which his soul panteth as the hunted hart for the water brooks. The psalm whether written by himself or by one of the sons of Korah for him, is David's wail of sorrow. In the midst, and at the close, of this outbreak of feeling he confidently exclaims, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? *hope* thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him."

It is then no dull, stupefied, benumbed state of feeling which the prophet here calls good, nor yet a calmness arising from dogged stoicism, but a patient endurance of one's lot coupled with a yearning for relief, so strong as to become a prophecy that relief will come. To Jeremiah it was revealed that Jerusalem must be laid waste and its inhabitants slain or carried off to exile. Yet while in a dungeon, and with death at his elbow, he bought with all due formalities a parcel of ground from his kinsman, in the confident hope that houses and fields and vineyards should "again be possessed in the land." Such action finds but one parallel in history. Livy tells us, when Hannibal's victorious army was hourly expected to be thundering at the gates of Rome, and dismay filled all hearts, that a noble Roman bought at its full value the ground then occupied by the enemy's trenches.

We have the same word of promise in which to trust as did Jeremiah. Well did the Psalmist understand this feeling when he exclaimed, "I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning. I say, more than they that watch for the morning."

For many months the citizens of Aix repelled every assault of the city's beseigers. Reduced at length to a starving condition, further resistance was impossible and an agreement was signed to surrender, provided succor did not arrive within twenty-four hours. That was early in the morning. The day passed with no alarm to disturb the quiet serenity that had settled down upon the beleaguering camp. At nightfall a horse foam-flecked and dust-covered dashed up to the city, whose rider announced that a large army was on its way to the rescue of the famished citizens, and would arrive by daybreak the next morning. Heavy hearts leaped for joy and exultation lighted up wan faces, but only for a moment. What if the promised succor came too late! There were many things to impede the progress of the coming host—the darkness of the night, ignorance of the way, inefficient commanders or treacherous guides—how slight a thing might cause a delay of an hour, and an hour from daybreak, they were pledged to surrender. Slowly the heavy night dragged by; wearily wore the hours away. At midnight the city guard was changed.

Let us follow the movements of the watchman, selected with special care, whose station is on that quarter of the walls whence the first approach of relief may be discovered. No sleepy dullard is he, careless of the result. Already his keen, restless glances seek to pierce the veil of darkness for the gleam of friendly bayonets. Ever and anon he pauses at the turn of his beat, and listens intently for the faintest sound boding that help is near. But when the shrill chanticleer warns him that dayspring is nigh, how his blood tingles. The East now divides his attention with the South; the coming dawn

with the hoped for aid. Every nerve is tightly strung. Every faculty keenly awake. With heart full almost to bursting he notes the first faint streaks of gray that tinge the horizon and usher in the morning. A little grayer grows the light, a little grayer grows the darkness. He turns and lo! barely discernible to his eager vision, the swift ranks of the reënforcing troops are sweeping down upon the enemies' works. Then arose the tumult of battle, and when the King of day rose over the scene his glad beams fell upon a routed foe and a rescued city, whose every bell rang out an echo to the soldiers' shout of victory.

Desponding Christian, is the night dense with gloom? The dawn is near. Is your heart heavy with sorrow? "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Are you hemmed in by ruthless foes and worn out in the conflict with them? Courage! Christ Jesus, our great Captain, bringeth reënforcements. Hope for His coming. Doth thy soul faint for His salvation? Hope in His word. Do thine eyes fail for His word? "Forever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven, Thy faithfulness unto all generations."

How is it good for a man thus to hope and thus to wait? "Sin brought death into our world and all our woe." All then must suffer, "for that all have sinned." To make the best of circumstances requires quiet submission and confident hope. The caged bird may beat its life out against the prison bars, but it can not break them. The unruly horse may champ the bit and chafe under the saddle, but the hand of his rider rules him literally with a rod of iron. The muzzled ox might as well kick against the pricks of the plowman's goad, as

for you to rebel against the severe discipline which must destroy the growth of sin in your nature. Accept the afflictions as God's laborers hired to break the clods and prepare the soil, and disappointments as life-giving showers causing the seed to germinate, and trifling annoyances as the gentle dews of grace dropping from heaven to stimulate the growth of the plant, causing it to bring forth first the tender blade, then the forming ear, then the full corn in the ear. Do this, and the furrows in your heart turned by the plowshare of suffering, will yet wave with a plenteous harvest of joy.

It develops and strengthens Christian character. It teaches how "to suffer and be strong." "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." It gives control over the appetites and passions, an attainment absolutely necessary to such as run the race in a corrupted world for an incorruptible crown. Every one who has learned to "be in subjection to the Father of spirits" in patient hope, may affirm with Paul, "I therefore so run not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body and bring it into subjection."

Again, it turns the attention from things seen and temporal to things unseen and eternal. By teaching you to set a just value upon the ephemeral shadows of earth, it calls to your mind the enduring and substantial benefits of heaven. It thus gradually weans your affections from the transient unrealities which are ill calculated to give you satisfaction, and as it transfers the soul from the service of sin to that of holiness, so it fixes the heart upon heavenly things. It brings you into closer, sweeter com-

munion with One who "doth not from the heart afflict nor grieve the children of men," but chasteneth whom He loveth. It begets an earnest longing for the time when you may be blessed with the fulness of His presence in heaven. "Even so come, Lord Jesus," becomes the language of your heart. It is the crowning glory of the Christian religion, embodied in this patient expectation, that it best equips a man for both worlds.

It brings down showers of blessings upon his head. It leads him in ways of pleasantness and in paths of peace. Upon him the clouds drop fatness. His worst misfortunes become only stepping stones across the dismal swamps of earth to the gate of the garden of Paradise. All crosses he bears with cheerful patience, through buoyant hope of the "recompense of reward." And his hope shall be more than realized, for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things" laid up in store for him beyond the portals of heaven.

To sum up in a word all the benefits of him who hopefully waits for the salvation of the Lord, he grows into the image of Christ. No better example of this could be adduced than that of Jeremiah. Though he saw Christ's day only with the prophetic eye of faith, yet the principles Christ lived and died to exemplify, were deeply rooted in his heart, and had their full effect on his life. In the lives of the two, Jeremiah the weeping prophet, and Christ the man of sorrows, there is a close resemblance. Upon each there came early in life a consciousness of his great mission. Each spent his life in opposing the moral degeneracy which had settled down on the Jewish people. By each, God sent his last warnings to a nation fast rushing to ruin. Neither had any large

measure of success. Each met with determined and rancorous opposition. Without honor in his own country, each was driven from the home of his youth, Jesus, from Nazareth, Jeremiah, from Anathoth. Both protested, admonished, entreated, but all in vain. The protests of Jeremiah against the false priests and prophets of his day, are but forerunners of the woes denounced upon the Scribes and Pharisees by Christ. Both were men of tears, who wept over the desolation their warnings availed not to avert. Each had a bitter cup to drink and each submitted with a struggle. To Christ were given taunts, scourging, and crucifixion; to Jeremiah torture and a living death in a prison-pit where his feet sunk in the mire. If, as many with good reason believe, the twenty-second Psalm was written by Jeremiah, its first words make the likeness still stronger between him and the dying Saviour who found in them expression for His extremest suffering. To complete the parallel, Jesus, to fit His disciples for the tribulation of the world, gives them the charge, "In your patience, possess ye your souls," and Jeremiah testifies, "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."

My brother, who art not the brother of Christ: Hast thou no part or lot in this matter? There is a message here for thee also. It is a warning, silent but forcible. If it is *good* that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord, then it is *bad* that a man should have no hope. It is worse that a man should quietly wait for the damnation of the Lord. It is worst of all that a man should entertain a false hope and indifferent patience until God forgets to be gracious, and

for salvation sends despair. The sharpest-toothed scorpion of hell is the demon that hisses into the ears of the damned, "No hope." Dost thou wish to feel the gnawing of the worm that never dies? This text is the Lord's pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night to guide His patient people to a land of promise, the fruition of hope; but to thee, it is destruction at noonday and terror by night, through which glares in terrible anger, the wrathful eye of Almighty God. Flee from the wrath to come, to the open arms of an inviting Saviour. He will provide a refuge and a covert from the storm. He pleads with thee, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Throw off the mantle of mad indifference which prevents you from seeing your nakedness. Come, put on the robe of your Redeemer's righteousness. Sit, clothed and in your right mind at the feet of Jesus, and learn of Him *how good* it is "that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."

II.

THE CALL OF WISDOM.

“Unto you, O men, I call.”—*Prov. viii. 4.*

WE have here a call to be wise in that wisdom, the beginning of which is the “fear of the Lord,” and we are told that the “fear of the Lord is, to hate evil.” This is its negative side. Positively, the fear of the Lord is called a fountain of life, and the Psalmist asserts that “the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever.”

If any one is still uncertain as to the precise meaning of the fear of the Lord, and its intimate connection with true wisdom, let him ponder well the conditional promise given by Wisdom herself, “My son, if thou wilt receive my words so that thou incline thine ear unto Wisdom, yea, if thou criest after knowledge, if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures ; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.”

Let us notice now some of the many characteristics of the call of Wisdom, and I shall seek to present those which are more especially emphasized in this chapter.

This call is genuine. By genuine is meant not simply that the call is actually made, but also that it is given in good faith. It is important to establish this at the outset, lest in pursuing the theme, some question should arise concerning the sincerity of the call. If men doubt this call, whether it be of a covenant-keeping

God or not, the fault is their own. For though we believe not, yet He abideth faithful, He cannot deny himself, He is faithful that promised. "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments, to a thousand generations." But it is needless to go beyond this chapter for confirmation of this truth. "For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips. All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him that understandeth and right to them that find knowledge." The Lord of hosts and God of battles who sends ambassadors to the town of Mansoul, demanding its surrender, is then no treacherous roving chieftain, who desires possession of the citadel only that he may massacre the garrison and plunder the inhabitants. He is rather the rightful king of the city, who has devoted himself, Codrus-like, to death for its deliverance, and who asks that his great sacrifice should have a grateful requital. He rises from the grave to reassert his claims to the throne of the heart He has bought with His heart's blood. Do not think He will cheat with false promises the people He loved so well. Do not suppose He will lightly esteem the ownership of that, to buy which cost Him so dear. My brother, when the subtle tempter suggests the possibility of a doubt about the faithfulness of Him who calls you in Christ or of the genuineness of the gospel message, put the devil and the doubt resolutely behind you. Slay the dragon with a cleaving blow from the sword of the Spirit. Be this your answer, "Thus saith the Lord."

This call is impartial. God is no respecter of persons. In this matter, "the rich and the poor meet together," the peasant and the prince fare equally, the serf and the Czar are joined lovingly in the same heaven, or yoked hopelessly in the same hell. Not only social diversities are ignored, but mental, and moral, as well. The profoundest philosopher is no better than a fool if he heed it not, and the fool may through it become wise unto salvation. The scrupulous Ruler who has kept the Decalogue from his youth up, is not too good to be bettered by it, and the besotted, swine feeding prodigal is not too bad to be raised by it and set safely on the Rock of Ages.

Nations and kindreds and tongues and peoples are indiscriminately accosted by the voice of Wisdom. This is clear from the context. "She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths; she crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors." Surrounded as ancient cities were by walls, the only entry was through the gates. Here might be found mingling together men out of every clime under heaven, of every degree of intellect and of morals. Thus in the streets of Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, heard the call of Wisdom through Peter.

The ministry of the incarnate Wisdom, from beginning to end, inculcates the same grand truth. At the well of Sychar he told the woman the hour was coming

when the worship of God would not be confined to Jerusalem or to Gerizim, and His parting words to the twelve were in the same spirit, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Far as the trump of doom shall sound, the gospel call is to be heard.

Impressed with this truth men of ardent piety and commanding talent have emulated their Master's zeal and devotion in carrying the "Wisdom of God unto salvation" far and wide throughout the world. For this, Moffat and Judson and Eliot have lived. For this, Livingstone and Martyn and Brainerd have died. They despised their own ease and were instant "in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often," simply and solely that they might carry out the will of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. How forcible in this connection are the words of Asaph, "The mighty God, even the Lord, has spoken and called the earth, from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof."

This is an imposing call. Its Author is thoroughly self-conscious. He challenges to Himself the power of modifying, nay, even of radically changing all the issues of life, by changing the heart out of which the issues flow. He who can accomplish this must be no mere quack, and he who dares to assume such high prerogative must be either a rash impostor, or in very truth the One whose name is "Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God." What are the terms in which He vindicates His

claims? "Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength. Riches and honor are with me; yes, durable riches, and righteousness. Receive my instruction and not silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies, and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it."

Are these the words of truth and soberness? Witness, all those for whom old things have passed away and all things become new. Witness, the long line of saints from Noah to John, who became new creatures by attending to their call. Witness, the throng which no man can number, around the throne, "who cease not day or night" to cry, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, for Thou hast redeemed us."

Contrast with this testimony the barren labors of those false Christs who, like Theudas, "boast themselves to be somebody," and also like him are brought to naught. They speak "great swelling words" of promise, but their performance is contemptible. The Papist boasts himself innocent as an infant by the absolution of his Christ, the priest. The Universalist would have us believe it is in the crucible of suffering that putrid mortality throws off all its scum and from this it comes forth at length a polished jewel for the Temple of God. The moralist maintains, in opposition to Job, that a clean thing may be brought out of an unclean, a holy life out of a sinful heart, a blessed future out of a corrupt present, by the mere outward observance of the ten Commandments. The heart seems not to him "hard and flinty," "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," but rather a plastic lump from

which the black drop of iniquity may easily be wrung—as the story says it was from the heart of Mohammed—and which will readily assume any shape their moulding fingers choose to give it. Many are the shortcuts, which pilgrims try, between the city of destruction and the celestial city, vainly hoping thus to reach safety and happiness more quickly and easily than by the King's highway, which leads through the humbling wicket gate of simple faith in Christ.

The great importance of attending promptly to the call of Christ in the guise of wisdom should be fixed in the mind, as commensurate with the dignity of the call itself. It is freighted with the weightiest interests that can arrest the mind, move the heart, or influence the life of immortal creatures. It concerns the safety of their lifeboat both on the little stream of the time that now is, and also on the boundless Ocean of Eternity, that washes the shores of the unknown Hereafter. Then let all other claimants for attention lose their power to attract. Let no mention be made of precious stones, for the price of wisdom is above them all. Let a man sell all that he hath and buy this pearl of great price. The topaz of Ethiopia, the onyx and the sapphire are so many gleaming basilisks, alluring to destruction, if their baleful glitter be not overcome by a greater magnetism. The possessor of this one pure pearl is richer than Croesus, more potent than Alexander.

The old myths tell us of a wonderful stone which possessed the strange property of changing every thing it touched into gold. But the pearl of great price is the true philosopher's stone in which is lodged the magic virtue of transmuting all with which it comes in contact

into royal coin, not of the gold of Ophir, but of the truer gold of pure hearts and good deeds.

There is a suggestive story told in some old parchment of a man who discovered in his researches that the philosopher's stone was lying within certain limits on the bank of a deep and rapid river. To this place he at once resorted with a bit of iron in his hand to test the various pebbles. Walking along the edge of the stream, he picked up one stone after another and as it failed to work any change in the iron threw it carelessly into the river. At length he picked up the long-sought stone, at whose touch the iron became gold; but overjoyed at the sight of the gold he unthinkingly tossed the precious stone after the others into the whirling waters. So many a man, strolling along the bank of the river of time flings thoughtlessly away, not once, but Sabbath after Sabbath, the pearl of great price, from his very grasp, and there remains to him only the golden grain of additional knowledge which the touch of the jewel of truth has impressed upon his mind.

The force of habit is in danger of ruining some of *you* forever. Just as the man reared within a stone's throw of Niagara, neither appreciates nor heeds its roaring. It was the lullaby of his infant slumbers, the comrade of his boyish sports, the bosom friend of his youthful reveries, and the companion of his manly toils. Its awful roar stuns the casual visitor but jars not a nerve in him. So it is with the people reared in Christian society under Christian teaching. The invitation of Christ—whose voice, in the Apocalypse, is likened to the "sound of many waters"—falls on their ears unheeded. They let the gospel offers pass idly by, as the

wind that fondly kisses their cheeks, but can not woo them to seek whence it cometh or whither it goeth.

This call is generous. The Lord "who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith He loved us, hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Such is the language of all those who listen to the call of Wisdom. "Behold, happy is the man that findeth Wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding." "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace." For this, let all Christians render praise to Him "who hath called us with a holy calling," and with one heart and one voice swell the anthem of His praise. But let us not spend all our time and strength in hosannas. Remember the exhortation of the Apostle, which speaketh unto you as unto children, "that ye would *walk* worthy of God who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory."

Herein is generosity, that Christ stands patiently where the multitudes are passing by, to press upon their notice and acceptance the rich gifts of heaven's own treasure house. Herein is short-sighted folly, that men deign not a glance at the desirable riches, or push them scornfully aside to clutch greedily after glittering baubles and worthless gewgaws.

While Peter the Great was winning his fame, there lived a beautiful peasant girl in one of the hamlets of Southwestern Russia. There was war in the land and a battle was fought near her home. Pitiful but courageous, she went forth and ministered to the wounded soldiers where the bullets flew the thickest. The sight filled the Emperor with admiration, which further acquaintance deepened into love, and he called her to the throne of all

the Russias. The nations thrilled with wonder at the generous affection which transformed the village maiden into the Empress Catharine V. Much more let the nations thrill with wonder at the generous love of Christ for His church. She has no beauty of her own that He should desire her, and His sway is from sea to sea; yet He calls the lowly maiden with all her lack of comeliness to share His royal throne, and presents her, faultless, to His Father, as His loved and loving bride, "a glorious Church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing." The call that made Catharine Empress was selfishly generous, while the call that makes us kings, is free from selfishness and more than generous. It is loving in good truth.

This call is gracious. "My delights were with the children of men," whether they love me or not. "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden." Stubborn wills may mock at the threatenings of Scripture, they may defy the Omnipotent to do His worst and calmly await the thunderbolt they have invoked. But who can stand unmoved by the tender call which casts aside warnings and promises, appealing only to the heart? Christ loves you. You are filthy with sin which He hates, you have done despite to His holy law, you have turned a deaf ear to His admonitions, you have cherished His enemies and hated His friends, you have with wicked hands crucified the Son of God, *but He loves you*. You have trampled on His love but He loves you still, He would fold you to His bosom in the everlasting arms, and shield you from "the pestilence that walketh in darkness and from the arrow that flieth by day." Every imagination of the thoughts of your heart has

been only evil continually, but His great heart yearns over you as a mother's over her wayward boy. Hear Him speak, stretching out the arms of welcome, "My son, give me thy heart," "My son, be wise and make my heart glad."

How utterly impotent your small weak hearts are to give back an adequate return for such peerless love! But do not let this hold you back from responding to His appeal. The tiniest dewdrop nestling in the coy violet, mirrors the dazzling sun just as perfectly as the mighty Ocean. Let your heart melt into a dewdrop, to flash back the bright image of the rising Sun of righteousness. You remember the story of how Bunyan asked his little daughter why everybody loved her. Her answer was "I don't know unless it's because I love everybody." If love begets love, how quickly you should respond to the loving call of Wisdom.

Finally, this call is urgent. "Doth not Wisdom cry? O ye simple understand Wisdom, and ye fools be ye of an understanding heart." Plain language that. "He may run that readeth it." There is need of urgency in such a call. Men are so taken up with the whirl of pleasure and the rush of business, so absorbed in the race for wealth and fame, position and power, so "careful and troubled about many things," that he who would call their attention to the "one thing needful," must needs put a trumpet to their ears and thunder out, Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get Wisdom and with all thy gettings get understanding. O for the voice of that Archangel whose trump shall one day wake the dead, to make dead sinners alive to the call of

Wisdom! "Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many. Take fast hold of instruction, let her not go, keep her; for she is thy life. Get Wisdom, get understanding; forget it not, neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not and she shall preserve thee; love her and she shall keep thee. Exalt her and she shall promote thee; she shall bring thee to honor when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thy head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee."

How many are willing to let go of the world and take fast hold of Wisdom to-day? The call is urgent, to be sure, but it is also optional. If you see fit, you can reject the earnest overtures of Wisdom. This call is, to you, like the variable quantity in mathematics, worth just what you will make it. Its value ranges all the way from zero to infinity. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." As the aged Moses said to the Israelites, "I call heaven and earth to record, this day, against you that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life that both thou and thy seed may live. That thou mayst love the Lord thy God and that thou mayst obey His voice, and that thou mayst cleave unto Him."

What more can be said? You are famishing in a barren land for lack of the bread and water of life. You hear of a far country which "floweth with milk and honey." The Lord of that country sends you an urgent invitation to come and live on "the fat of the land." He sends also horses and wagons to bring you and your friends thither, provisions to sustain and attendants to guard you on the way. But he does not send his

soldiers to bind you hand and foot and bring you by force to occupy his palace. Will you take your journey? From starvation to plenty, from poverty to abundance, from peril to safety, from false and fleeting joys to rivers of true pleasure, from unrest and fear and doubt and trouble, to rest and peace and trust and freedom? Does not your heart cry out with Jacob of old when his doubts were scattered and his fears allayed at the sight of his son's great preparations for his coming down into Egypt, "It is enough?" Let me beseech you, respond at once. "The night cometh." You are polluted and no pollution shall dwell in that land of Beulah, but "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin." Say therefore as did the tainted lepers in the camp before Samaria, "If we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us." Tarry not, but go to Him at once; He calls you. And let me offer for your devout meditation by the way these words of James, "The Wisdom that cometh from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."

III.

FINISHED.

“It is finished.”—*John* xix. 30.

A BED of great sickness is not a good place for reflection upon the scenes and events of life. Such occupation calls for “a mind at leisure from itself” and a body so far from surfeit yet so much at ease that its own presence is not too obtrusive when eternal interests are made to be felt by the approach of death. A few striking events start out in unnatural size to occupy the foreground of thought and cast all other facts in the shade. When the body is racked with pain and seems to be furnished with ten thousand exquisitely sensitive parts each producing a different kind of agony, it is next to impossible for the mind, even if free from troubles of its own, to reason calmly and balance justly. But when both mind and body are intensely occupied with suffering, which is the keener for their mutual sympathy, how difficult is the task to recall and measure the deeds done in the body. Yet Jesus Christ on the cross was so truly the Son of Man as to feel all the mental and bodily torture of his condition, and so truly the Son of God as to grasp the full import of his past life and present situation. While his flesh was pierced, and his soul was wrung in the anguish of crucifixion, his mind unclouded, and free, traveled back over the weary journey of his career on earth, and further through the ages of

earthly and heavenly time, to the moment when in Triune counsels, was planned the work of Redemption. And as the years and cycles came up before him and his omniscient eye could detect neither blank nor blot, neither flaw nor failure, in all that survey, he declares the result as simply and briefly as if he were healing a leper or speaking a world into existence. "It is finished."

Finished his busy life on earth, with its shame and sorrow, its winged words and example of goodness; finished, the fleshly manifestations of infinite fatherly love; finished, the burden of prophecy, with the entire Old Testament dispensation; finished, the peculiar privilege and probation of Israel; finished, the kingdom and power of darkness; finished, the atonement for sin; finished, the second Adam's perfect obedience; finished, the provision for future holiness of saints; finished, the glorious work of redemption; all this, and more is included in the one word of the text, "It is finished."

First, then, his earthly life was finished. In the account of John it would seem as if having spoken this word, immediately the signal was given for the approach of death, which had no power over the Son of Man till he bowed his head in token of submission. But from the narrative of Luke we learn that he first addressed his Father asking Him to receive his spirit. If we consider this as his greeting to the new world of glory upon which he was entering, for the Son of Man had not yet been in Heaven with his body, then we may fairly regard the text as his last farewell to earth. He will rise again to comfort and command his disciples but not as heretofore. Rather it will be as he appeared to Moses in the bush,

or to Joshua before Jericho, or to Abraham in the plain of Mamre.

It is always felt as a great loss when the masters of speech lay down their sceptres in death. They spoke immortal words but themselves were made of clay. Even thus the voice that calmed the tempest and aroused the dead, is silent. Never man spake as this man, but this man speaks no more. His loving followers may visit the synagogues of Capernaum and Bethsaida but he who was wont to preach in them the acceptable year of the Lord is not to be heard; they may climb the Mount of Beatitudes and linger in the courts of the Temple, but only the memory of his sermon or of his invitations will remain. No more shall they listen to his salutation of peace, or treasure up the pearls of wisdom as they drop from his open lips. He did not strive nor cry nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets, and yet without him the streets and courts of Jerusalem are strangely quiet in the midst of tumult. There is a hush in their hearts which no clamor can invade and when they seek out the places where he loved to pray, the seclusion of Olivet, or the solitude of the mount that was apart, or the wilderness to the North of the Sea of Galilee, then a horrid silence surges around their senses and beats a sad refrain. Whether they tarry among the cities of Judah or flee to the desert from the strife of tongues; whether they journey in hot haste from land to land to escape the edge of the sword, or enter into their chambers and shut their doors about them, to hide as it were for a little moment, until the rage of persecution be overpast, wherever they are, the last word of their dying

Lord must echo mournfully in their loving ears, "It is finished."

His labors too are finished. This is the utterance of a mind overloaded and a frame overtaxed when the burden is taken off; what was said of him at the close of creation might be repeated now. "He has ceased from his works and entered into rest." Not as at the first, for then he was not weary. Millions of worlds came into being, found their places in the ranks of the firmament, and took up their steady ceaseless march. Round and round they went without jar or confusion, led and sustained by his almighty hand, which never tired of its office. He loosed the sweet influence of Pleiades and forged the bands of Orion. He brought forth Mazzaroth in his season and Arcturus with his sons. He stretched out the North over an empty place and filled up the chambers of the South, and when he stayed his arm it was not because he found the effort tiresome. Six days he labored and the seventh day he rested. Not because he needed rest, but that the seventh day might be forever hallowed to himself. "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?" Yet he stoops under the weight of a cross and groans beneath the load of sin and sighs with relief when the work of salvation is finished. Thank God, they *are* finished; the long journeys and the long delays; the thirty years of patient waiting and the three years of constant effort; the nights of watching and the days of toil, the exhaustive labors of incessant preaching, and the depressing strain created by violent and bitter opposition. Never again shall he sit thus on the well,

overcome with fatigue, nor slumber heavily on a steersman's cushion. Never again shall his eager spirit push him on in advance of his disciples, to reach the goal and be eased of the load, nor drive him into the wilderness to be weakened with pangs of hunger and to be tempted with devilish device. He has wrought with clumsy tools at the carpenter's bench to earn an honest livelihood and these tools are dropped only to take up a harder task. He has been hewing with infinite drudgery and raising with painful effort, the timbers of a mighty ark wherein all flesh may find a refuge. But the last joint is fitted, the last stroke is given and "It is finished."

His sorrows, too, are over. He was a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." No ordinary amount of misery could be characterized in these terms. His must have been a sorrow transcending our knowledge as it does our experience, to need such intense description. What could have been the cause of so terrible a grief, a grief that marred his visage and disfigured his form more than any man?"

In all that relates to the deeper feelings of the heart, the poets have ever been held to reach and enshrine the truth. Their genius and sympathy give them an insight into the workings of the heart that is next to inspiration itself. One of them tells us that "a sorrow's crown of sorrow, is remembering happier things." Here is one cause for the Saviour's grief. How often as He appealed in vain to a stiffnecked people must His thoughts have reverted to the legions of angels whose greatest joy lay in doing His lightest bidding. This feeling breaks forth more than once in his troubled life, but notably near the last when he called on his Father to restore him to that

glory which had been his portion before the world came between to make an almost total eclipse. Again an equally sorrowful fact was the unbelief in his Messiahship which met him at every turn. As another poet says:

“Of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these, it might have been.”

How well have Tennyson and Whittier caught the truth that breaks out in such pathetic way when Christ beheld the city and wept over it saying, “If thou hadst known,” and again “How often would I have gathered thy children together, but ye would not.”

Then again his rejection by “his own.” All the previous history of Israel is a history of God’s preparation of them to receive His Son. For this He had freed them from Egyptian bondage and miraculously fed, clothed, and led them in the wilderness. For this He had given them a rich land and blessed them with all temporal blessings. For this He had made them His own peculiar people, had adopted them and cherished them as His son. For this He had given them judges to deliver them, kings to rule over them, and prophets to teach them. For this He had chastened and punished them, had sold them into slavery and again redeemed them. God had lavished His love on them and His Son had the right to expect that they would be overjoyed to receive him that they might show their gratitude for their great blessings.

It is said that the Lord Eldon was once engaged in a case in which his success depended on his being able to

show who had founded a certain chapel. A casual examination of the building gave no hint of its date or history. But he observed that the tables of the commandments had been inscribed on some old plaster which he thought might conceal an original opening. Upon removing some of the plaster he discovered the keystone of an arch on which were inscribed the arms of his client's ancestor, and so established his cause. So the Jews had inscribed on the exterior, "Holy to the Lord and to His Christ." But under the plaster of rites and ceremonies was cut the stamp of selfishness and insincerity. So when he came whose loving subjects they had professed to be they cut him to the heart by the basest ingratitude and most degrading rejection that history has ever recorded. Who can measure the sadness of those words, "He came unto his own *and his own received him not?*"

Further there was the gloomy shadow of the cross, in which he always walked. To this event more than to any other in the world's history is the line of Campbell appropriate, "And coming events cast their shadows before." Full well he knew that the revenge of his enemies should be complete. The wormwood and the gall of a shameful death were mingled with every cup he drank and grew more bitter as he drained the dregs of life. Time after time did he say to his disciples, "The Son of Man must be crucified." Add to all this his actual sufferings from poverty, trial, bruises, mockery, crucifixion, and we have causes enough for sorrow. Yet over against these must be set the causes he had for joy. We read of times when he rejoiced in spirit, and for the whole series of his griefs we have the assurance of

inspiration that "for the *joy* set before him, he endured the cross and despised the shame." We must look further then before we can allow the justice of his claim to be *the* man of sorrows.

One other reason may be clearly outlined to our vision. It has been well said that "the suffering of his soul, formed the soul of his suffering." All that he suffered in body was as nothing. His greatest burden was the burden of our sins. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all." The mere contact of sin, though it did not defile, or outwardly irritate, must have been loathsome and abhorrent to him. Suppose a woman pure and good, suddenly set down in the midst of vice and corruption, such as may be found in the slums and dens of a great city. How overwhelming would be her sense of shame and how pitiable would be her misery. Yet the space between a Water Street harlot and a crystal pure maiden would be infinitely less than that between the maiden and the Holy, Harmless, Undeiled One, who was a companion of publicans and received sinners. But this is not all. Even more dreadful than this proximity of that abominable thing which God hates, was the sorrow to which the Saviour stooped when he bowed his shoulders to receive the full weight of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God, his own Father. This it was that ploughed his form with long furrows and harrowed his gentle soul with suffering. This is why he can challenge the earth to show grief that can compare with his. "Call, ye that pass by; Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger."

But this is now a thing of the past. Never again shall he mingle with sinners or confess his weakness to them. Never again shall he say to a troop of idolaters, "I thirst," nor to a shameless woman, "Give me to drink;" for he has drunk of the brook in the way and quenched his thirst in the river of his Father's pleasures. Once for all, he has stretched his form upon the cross and shuddered in the cloud that hid his Father's face.

The task of atonement for sin was taken up by him and carried steadily, painfully, unflinchingly forward, till the thick cloud of sin that overhung his cross no longer obscured the sky; till the face of a reconciled Father shone down upon him and us, and then, O then! "It was finished."

So also his example is finished. In doing the will of God for our salvation he was not unmindful of our need in this respect. What poor crooked sentences our actions in life would spell out, if we had no pattern to copy! Even as it is, we are too much like children, who copy after the next line above, instead of looking to the top.

O! fools and blind, who scan your neighbors' lives so narrowly to imitate not their virtues, but their faults; when will ye look to the alone model of life and seek to mould your own lives after it? "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves, but they measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves among themselves are not wise." Let us rather look to Jesus. His example is complete in every portion. We can safely imitate any part of it. All the fullness of the

Godhead dwelt in him to make for our example one perfect pattern, and, "It is finished."

Again, there is finished the fleshly manifestations of Godlike love. This is implied in what has been said, but the thought is worthy of distinct enunciation. We can never on earth, perhaps not in heaven, fathom the depth of God's love for a world lying in sin. But in sending his Son, He gave the fullest possible revelation of that love, He tore away, as it were, the covering from the Eternal bosom and laid bare the very heart of the Godhead, that all might see its beating and note its loving throbs.

On the cross of Christ was completed the argument for the love of men to God, drawn from the love of God to men. No more convincing proof of God's yearning after our hearts will or can ever be given than this, "that he spared not his own son but delivered him up for us all." If you are willing and wishing to believe on God, and become His child, but are waiting and wishing for a token of His interest in you individually, reflect that He has already done His utmost in this direction.

It only remains for you to take and apply to your own need what is offered so freely to the needs of all. Come with boldness to the Father and plead the blood of His Son. Be not so foolish as to ask for a larger space in His thoughts, which already are so precious toward you that you can not measure, and so numerous that you can not count them. Look not for a more beautiful and fragrant flowering of His affection toward you for His good will has reached its culmination in the passion flower of Calvary, and a voice comes from the cross of his well beloved Son, saying, "It is finished."

Further the burden of prophecy is finished and with it, the old dispensation and the peculiar people lose their place. All things that were written in the law and the prophets concerning him are finally and fully accomplished. He came not to destroy but to fulfil and his mission is at length concluded. "All things," the lifting up and the scourging, the vinegar and the mockery, the casting of lots and the company of thieves, found their perfect fulfilment. The piercing spear was not far away, and the rich man's grave was near at hand. How many prophecies there were of Christ in his life and death! It is said that more preintimations were given of the last twenty-four hours of our Saviour's life than of any other equal period in history, and of all that was spoken not one jot or tittle fell to the ground. But his whole life was a sequence of filled up prophecies. From the cradle to the grave his path had been marked out and every step he took in that painful journey was in its proper place.

The old dispensation too, that labyrinth of types and shadows, typical persons and typical places, typical victims and typical times, is now abolished forever. Great has been the glory of Moses and the prophets in thus reflecting the light which fell faintly on them from heaven. But even as Moses put on a veil to conceal from the eyes of the people, the fact that his own face glowed less and less with the glory of Sinai, so has a veil been over the hearts of the people in reading the law and the prophets. This veil is rent by the dying Redeemer, so that all can look within, and lo! the name of "Ichabod" is written above the ark and in the temple, for the glory of Israel has departed.

The death of Christ has swept away the peculiar privileges of dispensation and people together. They who

were once his peculiar treasure, above all people, reject with hate and scorn the message of his covenant and they are henceforth rejected of Him. He came to his own because he was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But they received him not, and therefore the middle wall of partition is broken down and Gentiles may come to his light and kings to the brightness of his rising. The Jewish people have filled up the measure of their iniquity, "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron and with the point of a diamond."

They knew not the day of their merciful visitation, and of their probation as a people it may fairly be said, "It is finished."

Once more, the kingdom and power of darkness are finished. The reign of terror is over. When the united powers of death and hell broke their lances in his quivering body, ere the last breath was drawn apparently in utter failure, he spoke the words that announced the final defeat and overthrow of all his foes, "It is finished."

"O death, where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy victory?" Very beautiful are the words of Dr. Hanna, "Contemplate him, the one and only instance which this world has witnessed of the last enemy, death, being fairly met, met in his own territory, triumphed over in his own domain, by the use of his own weapons. That grim inexorable tyrant wealth has never bribed, tears have never softened, beauty has never moved as he made his unfaltering approach and struck his unerring blow.

Two only out of the many millions of our race, two in olden times, were snatched away before the stroke of the destroyer came upon them, and passed away without tasting death. But the translation of Enoch and Elijah was no victory over death; they never met, they never

grappled with this foe. They were withdrawn from the battlefield before the day of conflict came.

One alone of human form ever grappled with that strong wrestler, death, and cast him from him overcome. His way to conquest lay through brief submission.

Like others he descended into the dark and dreary prison house. The grave opened to receive him. He seemed to have passed away as the multitudes who had gone before. But death and the grave never received such a visitant into their silent and vast domains. He approached the throne of the tyrant to wrench the sceptre of empire from his hand. In bursting as he did the barriers of the grave it was no mere respite that he obtained for himself but a full and final victory." And so concerning all the vaunted power of Satan, sin and death the fiat of Omnipotence spoke from the cross of Calvary, "It is finished."

In short, the whole glorious work of Redemption, of transforming a thorn-cursed earth into the abode of righteousness, and fallen abject man, into a child of God is fully and forever finished. In view of this fact what shall we do brethren? Bonfires, processions, delirium of joy? Sweat and groan to add a few bricks or stones to the finished pile? Folly! Earn our own salvation? Do something to merit heaven? or do as well as we can and expect salvation for that? No, that work is finished, we can add nothing. What, then? Surely we are not to sit tamely and make no sign to show our appreciation of the tremendous task that belonged to us, but to which we need not lift a finger. What is the moral of the story of the cross? What concern have we in it? What is our immediate connection with the finished work of Christ? This, only believe, *only believe*, ONLY BELIEVE.

IV.

PRISONERS OF HOPE.

“Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope: even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee.”—*Zech.* ix. 12.

WHEN the armies of old times were defeated in the field, it was usual for the fragments to take refuge in the walled towns. Hither also came the inhabitants, abandoning their lands and houses to the ravages of the enemy. If city after city was taken and the whole country lay at the mercy of the conqueror, then the brave remnant, whose courage was invincible, would shut themselves up with what arms and provisions they could secure, in the strongest and most inaccessible fortress that remained to them, there to abide the result of a siege, or to watch for the opportune moment when the invader, made careless by victory, should expose himself to their vengeance. This was the condition of Israel at the time contemplated in the text.

There is no difficulty in settling what time is meant, for the ninth verse of this chapter is expressly referred to by Matthew, as written of Christ. When he came riding into Jerusalem as its meek and lowly king, the Jews had been driven from their vantage ground, as God's peculiar people, and were reduced almost to the last extremity. The sceptre was slipping from the feeble grasp of Judah and his lawgivers were fast becoming slaves. It was high time for them to seek out some

impregnable stronghold and to such action they were summoned by the voices of the past as well as by the troubles of the present. Was it not strange that none of those who cried, Hosanna to the Son of David, understood that this meek and lowly Prince of Peace carried their salvation with him? That his dominion was from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth? And further that their deliverance from Roman as from Grecian power, was to be only "by the blood of the covenant?"

If we wonder at their blindness let us avoid their error. This word of prophecy is addressed to us just as truly as it was to them. Let us read the whole passage that we may the better appreciate its beauty and truth. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout O daughter of Jerusalem; behold thy king cometh unto thee; he is just and having salvation; lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen (i. e., the nations) and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea and from the river even to the ends of the earth. As for thee also (i. e. Judah) by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the stronghold ye prisoners of hope: even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee." In the last verse read, we have a command laid upon certain individuals and enforced by a promise instead of a penalty. Let us consider the persons addressed, the precept given and the promise annexed.

It is somewhat curious that the persons who are told

to betake themselves to the stronghold are already prisoners, as we see by the eleventh verse. They are confined in a pit wherein is no water. There is no doubt a reference here to the hapless condition of Joseph, when his brethren conspired against his life, and cast him into an empty pit. Now if Reuben, who was anxious to save his brother's life, had gone stealthily to the edge of the pit while the rest were eating, and had called out to Joseph as he lay bound in the bottom, to save himself by flight from the danger he was in, would not the sarcasm of Reuben have been harder to bear than the cruelty of Simeon or Levi? And in what is the sinner's condition better than that of Joseph? He is deeply sunk in the pit of misery and strongly bound by the cords of sin. Yet the voice of warning comes to his ears, "Turn to the stronghold, O! prisoner." What stronghold? He is in a stronghold now. The fatal grasp of Satan is upon him and how shall he overcome this "strong man armed?" He cannot do it. Dear friends, have you not felt your own weakness when you have tried to overcome one single evil habit? How then shall the whole tendency of your nature be changed? It is true of the unconverted man that he is a prisoner. Sin is his gloomy dungeon and Satan is his cruel jailer. He may strive mightily to free himself, but his chains will only gall the deeper and clank the louder for all his struggles. Of what use is it then that an angel of light should come on swift wing to say as one did to Lot, "Escape for thy life?" The sinner is not simply dwelling in Sodom, but he is chained down there as in a vessel of wrath, and can not move hand or feet, while the fire is kindling beneath

him and the sulphurous clouds are gathering overhead.
How say ye to his soul,

“Flee as a bird to your mountain,
Thou that art weary of sin.”

The case of such an one is hard and bitter but not quite desperate. There is always a possibility while life remains that some other force or influence may intervene for his deliverance. When every frantic attempt at escape has only sunk him deeper in the mire of corruption, and he gives over his efforts, crying, “Lord save me, I perish,” then it is that his salvation is nearer than he supposed. When he is most thoroughly convinced of his own helplessness, then he is the fittest subject for help from above. So it comes to pass that when nearest despair he is nearest hope, and when he is weak then he is strong. Let us suppose that among the jails in the country there was one stronger, darker and with harder fare than all the rest, and yet from which, large numbers of prisoners yearly made good their escape. Such a prison house would be the Mecca of criminals. They would steal and kill, so to speak, with their faces toward it. And those who were received into its cells would not appear like ordinary criminals with downcast face and sullen manners. They would all be prisoners of hope. Thus it is with a world lying in the wicked one. The pit into which sinners are plunged is dark and deep; its walls cannot be scaled; its gloom cannot be measured, but it is a pit without water and so the wretched captives are not at once destroyed. They can exist for a little space and meanwhile there is abroad in the land a

Conqueror and Deliverer—one traveling in the greatness of his strength, whose appointed mission it is to say to the prisoners: “Go forth” and to them that are in darkness: “Show yourselves.” “Thus saith the Lord, even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered.” This is the stronghold to which you are commanded to turn yourselves in the day of sore trouble—

“The voice of free grace cries escape to the mountains.
For Adam’s lost race Christ hath opened a fountain;
For sin and uncleanness and every transgression,
His blood flows freely in streams of salvation.
Now Jesus our king reigns triumphantly glorious,
Over sin, death and hell he is more than victorious.
With shouting proclaim it, O trust in his passion,
He saves us most freely; O glorious salvation.”

But how shall the dwellers in darkness and the shadow of death, make known their need to the Lord of light and life? The metaphor allows but one way of seeking the Lord while he may be found, and that is, to call upon him while he is near. And he is not far from every one of us. Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. Therefore lift up your eyes and voice to the hills from whence your help cometh. He is quick to hear and prompt to answer such an appeal. He will incline to hear your cry and will take you up from the horrible pit and the miry clay and will set your feet upon a rock that is a stronghold more safe and sure than Gibraltar. The whole story of distress and desolation and entreaty and groping and hope and trust is told in burning words by

David as he lies panting and praying in the cave of Adullam :

“ To God my earnest voice I raise ;
 To God my voice imploring prays.
 Before his face I pour my tears
 And tell my sorrows in his ears.
 All unprotected lo, I stand,
 No friendly guardian at my hand,
 No place of flight or refuge near
 And none to whom my soul is dear.”

“ O Lord my Saviour now to thee,
 Without a hope besides I flee
 To thee my refuge from the strife
 My portion in the land of life.
 Then hear and heed my fervent cry
 For low with burning griefs I lie.
 Against my foes thy arm display,
 For I am weak but strong are they.”

Do you long for such an experience of God's mercy and do you fear that you cannot make it your own, because David was a great saint while you are a great sinner? How did David become a great saint? It was just simply by trusting in God. If *you trust* him as David did you will praise him as David did. The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in Him. It is His own voice that bids you trust—the same voice that said to the palsied man: “ Arise and walk,” that said to the leprous man: “ Be thou clean;” that said to the dead man: “ Lazarus, come forth.” Will you be more disobedient than palsy or leprosy or death itself? When he who is

called by Micah "The Tower of the flock, the Stronghold of the daughter of Zion," flings open the door of access to himself, saying, "Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion," can you be reckless of danger and heedless of your refuge? It must not, it shall not be.

By the memory of the bleeding victim whom wicked men slew and hanged on a tree, I beseech you not to crucify the Son of God afresh. By the love you bear to your own bodies and the interest you have in your own souls I adjure you not to lie supinely on your backs, hugging your chains, in the pit of corruption; while freedom and safety and happiness can be achieved in one fervent cry for help, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Let that prayer once come from the bottom of your heart and though your case were a thousand fold worse than that of imprisoned Peter, and though you were fettered in the lowest prison pit of Satan, with a fiend fastened on either side and four quaternions of devils to keep the watch, the Angel of his presence would smite your jailers dumb, and bring you past watch and ward to the open air and blessed light of liberty.

But this is not all. When the angel had led bewildered Peter one block beyond the prison, he forthwith departed and left him to work out the rest of his own deliverance with fear and trembling, and when he had considered the matter he went straight to the stronghold from whence his rescue came, that is, to the house of Mary, the mother of Mark, where many were gathered together, praying for him. Let his conduct be your model, when the mercy of God has struck the shackles from your souls and led you forth from the bondage of

corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. "Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope." Approach, enter, abide. Approach with reverent boldness, enter with holy confidence, abide with grateful praise. Approach, for it is written: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Enter, for: "So an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly." Abide, for: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out."

As thus explained the text would urge the captives of sin to flee to the stronghold of salvation on the ground of the danger there is in remaining. And in developing the thought I have taken it for granted that if you realized the danger, you would respond to the call. But it sometimes happens that men are foolish enough to adopt the line of argument that in struggling to get out of the slough of despond one only sinks the deeper, or in exchanging masters, suffers from a greater tyrant, or in adopting a severe course of treatment, finds the remedy worse than the disease. In the present case we are not left to a possible conjecture of better times and a forlorn hope of improved circumstances, for the text having opened with a note of warning closes with a comforting assurance. "Even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee." This promise is trustworthy in its character, magnificent in its extent, immediate in its fulfilment, and individual in its application. It is trustworthy, for it comes from a covenant keeping God. It is a most solemn asseveration on His part "Thus saith the Lord: I *declare* that I will render double unto thee."

Charles I. of England was born a king whose readiness in giving pledges was equalled only by his impudence in breaking them. Again and again did he break faith with his people, his parliament and his ministers, till his word became as little worth as that of the scurviest knave in the realm. And yet he kept his throne and head securely for years of perjury and plunder, simply because he was king and according to the proverb, "the king could do no wrong." That proverb is a noble expression of the universal faith that the ruler of a nation should be a model of truth and purity. "He that ruleth over men should be just, ruling in the fear of God." And why? Because earthly rule is a shadow of the heavenly, and the voice of the King of kings should find its echo in the mouth of every lesser potentate. That the shadow is distorted and the echo imperfect, does not prove the substance so. Rather the righteous indignation that at length lifted the head from the shoulders of Charles was an assertion, directly, that the king who did wrong in spite of his crown was not worthy of it, and, conversely, that the King who always was and ever will be Governor among the nations, is true and righteous altogether. Fear not then to take refuge in Jesus Christ, that mighty stronghold.

The history of nations and the word of God alike warn. "Put not your trust in princes nor lean upon an arm of flesh." But the word of God and the experience of men also tell us of the faithfulness of God. As Luther puts it :

" A mighty fortress is our God,
 A bulwark never failing,
 Our helper He amid the flood,
 Of mortal ills prevailing."

As for the magnificence of this promise I read: "He will render double." What this means may be gathered from a reference to other passages. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished: for she hath received of the Lord's hands double for all her sins." And again, "For your shame ye shall have double, and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion. Therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them." So the joy of the saved shall be twice as great as their grief has been. Paradise is more than restored, for to the possession of perfect bliss shall be added the memory of sin pardoned, sorrow laid aside, and death overcome. Even as it was with Job whose possessions were swept away in the trial of his patience and faith, but to whom they were restored in double measure—twice as much as he had before. So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning. Let us count it as joy when we fall into divers temptations. The heavier the cross, the brighter the crown. The harder the battle, the more glorious the triumph.

Further, that triumph is ours, even now and here. It is want of faith in God's promise that makes life so dark and hard. We ought to be just as sure of victory when rolled in the smoke of the battle-field as when from the height of the last day we shall see the enemy routed in eternal confusion.

At the battle of Bautzen, Napoleon was behind an earthwork overlooking the town when he heard the guns of Marshal Ney whom he had sent around to take the enemy in flank. Immediately after, a shell from the

enemy burst just over his head; but without paying any attention to this, he sat down and wrote to his wife that the battle was gained. So soon as he knew that his favorite general had reached the critical point he was confident of victory. Why then should we doubt the issue or tremble when some new trouble bursts over our head, since the crisis of our conflict was reached on Calvary by the Captain of our salvation? Marshal Ney may have been the bravest of the brave, but Jesus Christ is the Lord of Sabaoth and God of battles. When he says, "Even to-day do I declare that I will render double," we who believe his word are as sure of our reward as if we lay in Abraham's bosom.

Finally, the application of this promise is not alone to Pauls and Stephens, who are full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, not only to confessors and martyrs, not simply to the church at large, but it is "unto thee." Is it not a wonderful mark of discriminating love that the singular number is used here? The prisoners are exhorted in a body to flee to the stronghold but they are not received in a herd nor blessed in the lump. In our Father's house there are many mansions and there is room for all, a home for each. New York's railroad king may disburse a hundred thousand dollars to his loyal men and at first it seems to be a large sum, but when you divide it among twelve thousand employees—how it dwindles! But God gives the whole of his treasure to every one that believes. It is man's way to give grudgingly in small quantities that grow still smaller before they reach their object; it is God's way to take a few loaves and multiply them a thousand fold for the need of His hungry children. He who sent a special message to

Peter on the resurrection morning, sends a special message to each of you, and His message is: "Turn you to the stronghold ye prisoners of hope. Even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee."

JOHN THE GREAT.

“He shall be great in the sight of the Lord.”—*Luke. i. 15.*

THE acme of greatness, the flood mark of humanity, for the space of four thousand years, is personified in John the Baptist. Ezekiel singled out Noah, Job and Daniel, as preeminently “great in the sight of the Lord.” Moses, Abraham and Solomon are handed down to us as special types respectively of meekness, faith and splendor; David appears as the very king of poets and piety, Isaiah, as the essence and spirit of prophecy, and Elijah, as the very master of nature. All these are names of men mighty in word and deed, before the Lord. They are names to conjure with, and as such, are used by the inspired writer in his fervid appeal to the Hebrews. But a deeper spell than theirs, is wrought upon devout and discriminating minds at the mention of the son of Zacharias. For he has the testimony not of a Prophet or Apostle only, weighty as such testimony is, but in addition to this, he has that of an angel commissioned for this very purpose and even of Deity itself, in each person of the adorable Trinity. He was great in the sight or estimation of God the Father; he had the constant witness of the Spirit, for he was filled with the Holy Ghost from his birth; and the Son of God expressly declared of him that among men born of women, there had not risen a greater than he.

Men are very much in the habit of attaching the adjective "great" to their favorite heroes, and sometimes the title is appropriate, but not less often perhaps, it is altogether misapplied. Was Alexander *great*, who lived in butchery and died in drunkenness? Was Pompey *great*, who overcame a few armies of such soldiers as moved the contempt of Cæsar? Was the fourteenth Lewis *great*, whose generals won all his battles and whose ministers supplied all his statecraft? Even impostors and lunatics have not been lacking for worshippers. Many a muezzin lifts up his voice daily to cry, "There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his prophet," and there was recently published a life of Swedenborg, in the preface of which, his biographer does not hesitate to pronounce him the most gifted and extraordinary man that ever lived. Such testimony needs a good many grains of salt to make it palatable to honest and thoughtful minds, but there are cases in which new lustre is added to shining names by the well considered testimony of biographers. It is enough to mention the lives of Scott and Chalmers by their sons-in-law, and that of Arnold by the Dean of Westminster, and that of Hamilton by Arnott. Great men speak for great men in these volumes, and great is their glorying of them. Now if we receive with respect the witness of Lockhart and Hanna and Stanley and Arnott, yet the witness of God is greater. Surely then it is worth our while to inquire wherein consisted the greatness of that individual on whom the best of judges "pronounced the most splendid eulogy ever breathed over mortal man."

John the Baptist was great because he was chosen to be the hinge on which the church of the living God

swung round from the old to the new dispensation. In all time there has been but one church. The same household of faith that exists at present, was in existence when Abraham came out of Ur, and when Noah came out of the ark, and when Adam came out of the garden. The bondage of Egypt did not destroy it and it issued from the Babylonian captivity, as the three holy children came forth from the Babylonian furnace, without any trace of the withering flame to which it had been subjected. Neither did the coming of the Son of Man change its nature, for he came not to destroy but to fulfil. Well therefore did Luther respond to the taunt of his opponent, who asked him where his church was before the reformation. Said the great reformer, "Where was your face this morning before you washed it?" But although the church remains the same in all ages it presents a somewhat different appearance to human eyes at different epochs in its history. As the child of days is with difficulty recognized in the man of mature years, so the church without losing its identity developed from its primeval dispensation through the patriarchal, and the priestly, to its maturity under the name of Christian. Of all these changes, by far the greatest was ushered in, when for a second time the morning stars sang together and all the Sons of God shouted for joy at the birth in Bethlehem of Him whose name and authority are stamped indelibly upon the Church as it now stands.

As the change from the Old Testament to the New, was greater than the change from the captivity of Egypt or of Babylon, so the priest of this change was of more importance. The forerunner of Jesus occupies a

loftier position therefore, than Moses, the Mediator of Sinai, or Zerubabel, the restorer of the temple. He is the messenger who immediately precedes the Prince to announce his coming, and as such, holds a higher office than those who are distant types and faint shadows of good things to come. He is the friend of the royal Bridegroom whose heart thrills at the sound of the Bridegroom's voice, and as such, is brought into closer relationship than they of old time, with him whose nearness is the measure of every believer's glory. Abraham caught afar off a glimpse of Christ's day and was glad. Moses gloried in the revelation of a prophet to be raised up unto Israel, like unto himself. But how small a blessing was theirs compared to that of him who could see the heavens divide and the Celestial Dove descend upon God's Anointed; who could raise a hand that was counted worthy, not merely to loose the sandal from the foot of Messiah, but even to pour baptismal water upon his head; could raise that hand in gesture still more solemn and significant, and point him out to a sin-cursed earth, as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world? Had the old Priest of the course of Abiah lived to visit the bank of the Jordan on that day, amazement would have repeated the work of unbelief and stricken him dumb once more, at the steadfastness with which the word spoken by angels was kept after the lapse of so many years. "He shall be great in the sight of the Lord."

Again John the Baptist was great alike as master and as servant. For a brief period he held absolute control of the minds of men. He possessed in an eminent degree what multitudes have longed for, and but few have

ever attained, the magic power of words to rouse and sway the feelings of vast audiences. His method was simple and direct. He held in front of him the torch of truth whose rays both lighted the darkest hearts before him and scorched the baseness which their light revealed. Yet no one could resent his close and plain dealing, for the truth, and not the speaker was in the thoughts of those who looked and listened. As well might they quarrel with the sun for scattering the shades of night, or with their conscience for condemning the wrong, and approving the good, as to be angry with the burning and shining lights that showed them their need of repentance, and the warning voice that echoed through the wilderness of their neglected souls.

The people were willing for a season to rejoice in his light, and the worst of them, even Herod, did many things because of him, and heard him gladly. Whence came this marvelous influence that brought the stubborn soldiers, haughty Pharisees, sceptical Sadducees, infamous publicans and the indiscriminate rabble to the wilderness of Jordan confessing their sins and promising to forsake them? It came to John as the sure result of his many years of deep thought, of fervent prayer, of manful struggle, and of resolute self-mortification in the desert with wild beasts for his only companions, their skins for his scanty raiment, locusts and wild honey for his meager fare, and the Holy Spirit for his helper. When he came like a meteor, brilliant and brief, across the firmament of Judean life, he came as the ruler of his own spirit, whose greatness was truer and more permanent than that of Cyrus or Nebuchadnezzar, or of any conqueror whose greatest boast is only that he has taken

a city or enslaved a nation. Ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, ye men of every time, and inhabitants of every country, withhold not your homage from the preacher of repentance. It well befits the Master of himself, to exercise authority over others. Bear his reproofs with all meekness. Receive his baptism with all sincerity and stand ready to press with all your might into the coming Kingdom.

The character of John appears equally great when the splendor of his name grew pale, and the ranks of his disciples became thin at the approach of a greater than he. The test of greatness is submissiveness. The greatest of all that ever bore the human form was not ashamed to be the servant of all, and no small degree of this kind of grandeur belongs to the man who saw his popularity depart, without a sigh, his followers leave him, without a regret, and his cousin preferred before him, without one pang of jealousy. Nowhere among the words of mortal men, do we find language breathing a purer or more devoted spirit of magnanimity, than that which exhales from John's reply when some of his zealous supporters complained to him of the throngs that followed Christ and hung breathless upon the new Teacher's lips, even as a little before, they had thronged to his own preaching. John answered and said; "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from Heaven. He must increase but I must decrease. This, my joy, therefore, is fulfilled." Not Moses praying that the children of Israel may be spared and himself blotted from the Book of Life, not Paul willing to be accursed from Christ for the sake of his brethren, rises to such a pitch of greatness as this. How sublime is that joy which is fulfilled,—filled to the

brim, at being only the bridegroom's friend, and hearing his voice of tenderness addressed to another. Truly this man was great, great even in the sight of the Lord, transcendently great in the sight of men.

Again, John the Baptist was great alike as scholar and as teacher. He studied his lessons with no human classmate and under no human teacher. Yet his mission was to be discharged amid crowded throngs, and demanded a knowledge of the human heart in all its complex working. Was the desert a proper school to furnish such knowledge as this? Yet his lesson was learned so well that high and low, good and bad, old and young, were spell-bound and self-convicted under his teaching. He was ready with instruction and warning for men in every phase and condition of life. No mere gift of genius could accomplish this, how then did a lonely student deprived of books and of intercourse with men learn so correctly what was in man? The secret of it all lay in his thorough self-examination. The knowledge of one heart is the knowledge of all hearts. It was because John had the courage and fidelity to enter the closet of his own soul, and carry what he found there to God in penitence and prayer, that he possessed the key to unlock other hearts. And not John alone but every scholar who would benefit humanity must come to men with such a yearning cry as this, "Brethren, I beseech you—be as I am for I am as you are." Without this humbling self-knowledge, a man may graduate from school, college, and seminary in vain, but with it and naught else, the diligent scholar of a twenty years' course in the desert became great in the sight of the Lord to lay bare the hearts of men. It is one thing to learn a

lesson thoroughly, but a different thing to convey the knowledge thus gained to the minds of others. Yet John, the great Scholar, became John, the Great Teacher.

In the ancient Pagan world, amid a glittering galaxy of stars, perhaps Socrates was the star of greatest magnitude as a scholar. But Socrates as a teacher stands confessed a total failure. He could with ease establish his proposition, he could force the unwilling mind of a pupil through the labyrinth of argument to the desired conclusion, but the moment his back was turned, the pupil's mind broke away from the trammels of harsh logic and the only result of his pearls scattered freely before the swine of his generation, was to make them "turn again and rend him." Socrates lived before his time,—it is said. So did Galileo. So did John Huss. So did John Brown. So did *not* John the Baptist. Not that he was less in advance of the age in which he lived, than other reformers, but that he found his exact place and fitted to it. He did his work perfectly, which was simply to make his bow, arrest the attention of a mighty audience, and introduce to them the coming man. His words were like apples of gold in baskets of silver, because they were fitly spoken. Not that he, more than others, could escape martyrdom, but that he, more than they, finished the work that was given him to do. The meteor that blazes out brightly and then fades from the sky, is made a symbol of evanescence and incompleteness. Yet in the sight of its mistress, nature, the glory of the meteor is neither transient nor incomplete. It lasts just long enough to do its appointed duty. More than this cannot be said of the sun. So John the Baptist lived and preached long enough to do

his whole duty, and when his gory head was delivered over to the will of a shameless dancing girl, when as tradition says, his headless trunk was flung over the prison battlements, for dogs and vultures to devour, his appointed mission was rounded and complete. And though belittled in the sight of wicked men, "He was great in the sight of the Lord."

John the Baptist was great alike in prosperity and adversity. When his ministry was attended by thousands and the thoughts of many were being revealed by his "intensely practical and painfully heart-searching eloquence," he was neither puffed up by flattery, nor turned aside from his simplicity of speech. His words were as rude as his raiment, as plain as his daily fare. He rebuked greedy tax-gatherers for their exactions, he forbade rough soldiers to be lawless or discontented. He called the proud aristocracy a generation of vipers, and he told the boasters of Jewish blood, that the very stones under their feet were as likely as themselves to be called children of Abraham. Nay! when summoned to be court preacher to Herod the tetrarch, his language abated nothing of its wonted tone. He said bluntly to the monarch, whose word was life or death to him, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."

That this was not arrogance on his part, is shown by his behavior to Jesus. Had he been at all flushed with the popular applause, he would have received the Messiah as his disciple without hesitation, and baptized him as a matter of course. Instead of this, he shrank timidly back from such high honor, and confessed promptly what was plain to his piercing eye, that Jesus was holier and mightier than he. His message and baptism were for

sinner, whether in rags or in gay clothing, but when the Sinless One appears, he abdicated his authority in full view of his own disciples, to sit at the feet of Jesus and meekly learn of him. In this he was great, but this is not all. He is willing even to violate his deeply-felt sense of the fitness of things, and to proceed with what cannot but seem to him an unmeaning and useless rite, simply because the Master says: "Suffer it to be so." He will stultify himself, if need be, at the command of Christ, in sublime confidence that this is a safer guide than his own reason or intuition, according as it is written, "Yea let God be true but every man a liar."

It is such self-obliteration as this, that makes John, or Paul or Daniel, or any other person, great in the sight of the Lord. Some men are great in the day of triumph but weak and small in disaster. The truly great man must be not only simple in affluence and humble in success, but majestic in affliction and indomitable in failure. This was, in part, the basis of Coligni's claim to greatness. "In one respect," said he, "I may claim superiority over Alexander, over Scipio, over Cæsar. They won great battles, it is true. I have lost four great battles; and yet I show to the enemy a more formidable front than ever."

John was a light that burned with intense heat and shone with a bright glow in the gloomy night of imprisonment and death. Of the few brief notices which the sacred chronicle gives of him, the most touching and remarkable is that in which he is represented as calling two of his disciples whose devotion to him was not lessened by the desertion of others, nor shaken by the dangers they must incur around him, and sending them to

ask of Jesus, whose mighty works were reported to him in prison, if he were indeed the coming Messiah. The tone of this question is one of doubt and sadness, nor was it strange that he should be in the slough of despond.

As Farrar says, "To a rugged, passionate, untamed spirit like that of John, a prison was worse than death. He seemed to be neglected not only by God above but by the living Son of God on earth. John was pining in Herod's prison, while Jesus in the glad simplicity of his early Galilean ministry was preaching to rejoicing multitudes among the mountain lilies, or from the waves of the pleasant lake. Oh, why did his Father in Heaven and his friend on earth suffer him to languish in this soul clouding misery? Had not his life been innocent, had not his ministry been faithful, had not his testimony been true? Oh, why did not he to whom he had borne witness beyond Jordan, call down fire from heaven to shatter those foul and guilty towers? Among so many miracles might not one be spared to the unhappy kinsman, who had gone before his face to prepare his way before him. Why should not the young son of David rock with earthquake the foundation of these Idumean prisons, where many a noble captive had been unjustly slain, or send but one of his twelve legions of angels to liberate his forerunner and his friend, were it but to restore him to his desert solitude once more, content there to end his life among the wild beasts, so it were far from man's tyrannous infamy and under God's open sky? What wonder we say again if the eye of the caged eagle began to film?"

Yet the Baptist is great even in despondency and death. Whatever feelings of neglect were in his heart,

he nobly refused to give them utterance. Indeed their only importance seems to him to lie in the doubt they cast upon his fondly cherished belief, that his eye had seen and his finger pointed out the Lamb of God. It matters little what becomes of him, but it is matter of terrible importance whether or not he has indulged a misplaced hope in a Saviour from sin, and deceived others, as well as himself, into supposing that the long expected Messiah had really appeared. So he sends to ask, not if he may escape, not if he may die, but simply this; "Art thou he that should come or do we look for another."

How different is this conduct from that of Jonah when his mission seemed to be a lie and his faithless gourd abandoned him to the blaze of an Eastern sun. How different too from the selfish despondency of Elijah when the voice that on Carmel had rung with accents of scorn for God's enemies and of triumph for His friends, sunk, at the threat of an angry woman, into a wail of despair for the righteous cause, and of bitterness for the life which suffered such vicissitudes. How different even from the petulance of Moses, when he broke the sacred tables at the sight of the idolatrous multitude, or again at the waters of Meribah, when he chode with the children of Israel and forgot his faith in God. Verily, the history of the chosen people does not furnish a greater than John the Baptist, in the hour and power of darkness.

It is comforting to think that the illustrious captive's last days were solaced with ample confirmation of his wavering hopes with regard to the Messiah, for the answer which was returned must have satisfied his noble heart that his misgiving did both Jesus and himself injustice. Go and tell John that the Prince of Peace

who so exactly fills up the prophetic promise of Isaiah, is in very deed the One, to prepare whose way his voice has been lifted up in the wilderness. It is enough; though immured in a dungeon he is content. Though his eyes look upon the keen axe and the grim executioner, he can depart in peace for his eyes have also seen the salvation of God. Though his head be placed upon a charger and presented as a rare and luscious dish to feast the eyes of her whose sins he had denounced, yet shall her hate, her gibes, her insults injure herself alone. She may mutilate the dead visage whose living frown she dared not face, but John the Baptist is beyond her reach. Even his mangled body is tenderly and reverently laid away by loving hands and the soul which for thirty years has struggled to subdue and mortify the fleshly tenement, spurns it aside at length, and passes upward to be forever "great in the sight of the Lord."

“ Servant of God—well done,
 Rest from thy loved employ,
 The battle o’er, the victory won,
 Enter thy Master’s joy.

The cry at midnight came.
 He started up to hear.
 A mortal arrow pierced his frame,
 He fell but felt no fear.

His spirit with a bound,
 Left its encumbering clay.
 His tent at sunrise on the ground,
 A darkened ruin lay.”

VI.

THE SMITTEN SHEPHERD.

“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts: smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.”—*Zech.* xiii. 7.

THIS is an hard saying. The Bible tells in a perfectly simple and straight-forward manner of many sore judgments inflicted upon nations and individuals by the relentless severity of the Most High. That was a dreadful doom which was written on the plaster of the palace wall at Babylon when the “sound of revelry by night,” died away and the stillness of “terror by night” took its place. That was a heart-rending sentence which the prophet was commanded to pronounce concerning the king who might have been as a signet upon the hand of Jehovah. “Write ye this man childless.” That was an appalling command by which the Amalekites were devoted to the sword without distinction, without exception and without mercy. That was a startling requirement by which Jerusalem was held accountable for all the righteous blood that had been shed on the earth from the murder of Abel down. That is an ear-tingling blood-curdling history which recounts without apology or palliation the exact and literal execution of those ruthless decrees by which at one time the fountains of the great deep were broken up to blot out

the race of men. At another, the solid earth was suddenly opened to swallow down two hundred and fifty men as remorselessly as the angry Tay engulfed that entire train of passengers. At another, the firmament was compelled to carry and diffuse a death-dealing blast to destroy the host of Sennacherib, and at another, hell itself seemed to be laid under tribute to provide materials for the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Who can read without shuddering of the fiery serpents among the tents of Israel, of the many terrible scourges so often inflicted upon the people for the sins of their rulers, of the successive outrages perpetrated by the armies of Syria, Babylon, Egypt, Greece and Rome, of the rending of the kingdom and throne of David, of the bloody strife between brethren, of the long captivity and the final dispersion? But all these woes are directly ascribed to God by the sacred writers. Neither do they flinch from the writing, they do not dissemble, they do not gloss over, they do not attempt to explain or excuse or defend. On the contrary they call the Lord a consuming fire, a pitiless and inexorable Judge, a jealous devourer of the whole earth, an irreconcilable and deadly enemy of evil. In the face of such titles so well earned, who dares to say that God cannot or will not punish with everlasting destruction?

But the half has not been told. There is mention made in this book of a doom more dreadful, a sentence more heartrending, a command more appalling, a requirement more startling, a decree vastly more blood-curdling than any to which allusion has yet been made. And this awful judgment is ascribed to God, and to Him alone, as author, not only without compunction, but even

with pride and boasting. It is the judgment which is pronounced by the lips of a loving, gentle and well pleased Father upon an obedient, an innocent and an only child. "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts. Smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad."

Consider the force of this edict. It is a summons to divine justice to indemnify itself for the injury it has sustained. It means wrath unto the uttermost and punishment to the last jot of the law. It is the cry which calls an outraged attribute of Deity to rise up to the prey and glut its thirst for revenge. The insulted majesty of law has long been searching for a fit object on which to vent its fierceness. It has gathered all its terrors in bristling array; its rage has been pent up till heaven was ready to burst with vengeance, and at last the warrant issues forth. Open the flood-gates of fury! Let the overflowing scourge rush on in its desolating mission; loose the avalanche of indignation! Let it slip from its place in a moment to crush and to overwhelm. Pluck off the grapes of wrath! Let the vintage of blood be trampled out till it rise to the horse bridles. Roll back the windows of heaven! Let the storm break in all its strength over the head that is deprived alike of shelter and pillow. Waken the sword of retribution! Let the keen blade leap from its scabbard and bury itself in the bosom that is bared for the blow; let it pierce through the breast to the heart and through the heart to the very soul. Lift up the writhing victim thus impaled, to the brutal gaze of earth and hell. Let his dying struggles furnish matter for ridicule.

Let him die the death of a malefactor and his last end be like his. Let him look in vain on every side for sympathy. Let all refuge fail him and no man care for his soul, till the bitterest cry that ever was uttered be wrung from his anguish-torn spirit. "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger. For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me."

O, my friends, when we think that all this hue and cry after a justly proscribed outlaw, might be raised, and in truth ought to be raised, against us, who are guilty of the whole law, when we remember that every sin deserves the wrath and curse of God, and that our sins are as scarlet in His sight, do we not need to tremble?

A man stood in a fit of absent-mindedness before a shop window in a street of London. He was well known to be a tradesman of respectable position and irreproachable character. Suddenly the cry was raised, "Stop thief, stop thief," and the officers came running along. "Here I am," said he, "take me." "Why sir," they said, "we are not after you. What do you mean?" "I mean that I am a thief. Twenty years ago I robbed my master." Thus did conscience speak after a silence of twenty years.

What does conscience say to us as we hear the unexpected voice of God, "Awake, O sword, and smite?" We are guilty, we cannot conceal it. Shall the officers hale us to prison to rot there till we pay the uttermost farthing of that which we have stolen from our master, lo,

these years? No, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the sword is awaked, but not against us, the avalanche nods to its plunge, but we are removed from its path, the storm breaks overhead but we are protected, the sluices are opened, but we are on safe ground, the officers are in hot pursuit, but they pass us by unharmed, the winepress is trodden, but of the people there is none to stain his raiment.

Whom then is this sword to pierce? We learn from the text that it is at all events directed against a man. This is as it should be. If man sins, man must bear the penalty. No substitute of a different nature can be entertained.

There was a boy in a ragged school of Edinburg who broke an important rule. He was called up and ordered to strip for punishment. When his back was uncovered, he presented such a pitiful appearance, such a thin and wasted form, that the teacher hesitated, and looking round asked if any other boy was willing to take the flogging instead. At once a chubby and stout-hearted little fellow pulled off his coat and offered his own back to the rod. So the starved looking boy escaped, and yet justice was satisfied. It would not have answered the teacher's purpose if a dog had been brought in from the street to receive the whipping, and neither would it have done if some kind angel from heaven had come and offered to take the punishment, because neither of these could take the guilty child's place in the school. So in the larger school of humanity, it is both necessary and fitting that the penalty for human sin should be imposed upon one of human kind.

But who is the man that will set himself as a mark for

the arrows of the Almighty? Or if one can be found who is willing to be accursed from God for the sake of his kinsmen according to the flesh, where is the man who is capable of receiving the full measure of divine wrath? Why, the chastening touch of God's little finger laid on in love smote to the dust such giants as the upright Job, and the patient Jeremiah, and the much enduring David, and the fiery souled Elijah, and the great hearted John the Baptist. Where shall greater than these be found to bear up under God's heavy hand laid on in anger. These were utterly confounded when He forsook them for a small moment and hid His face in a little wrath. But if such men were wearied by footmen, who can hope to contend with horses? And if in a land of peace wherein they trusted, such men trembled, who will venture to face the lions that lurk in the thickets of Jordan? Even the angels who made proud war in heaven and kept the field for many days against archangels, yet when they felt the shock of God's "ten thousand thunders,"

"They astonished all resistance lost,
 All courage; down their idle weapons dropped;
 O'er shields and helms and helmed heads he rode
 Of thrones and mighty seraphim prostrate.
 Yet half His strength He put not forth, but checked
 His thunder in mid volley."

How then shall puny man sustain the fierceness of the wrath of the Almighty? "Run ye to and fro through the streets and see now and know and seek in the broad places, if ye can find a man" who is a worthy victim of eternal vengeance.

This is a question which only God can answer. I read

in the text, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd and against the man *that is my fellow*, saith the Lord of Hosts." If any man can be found who has been associated with God on equal terms, this man will be a proper burden bearer for the race of sinners. There is one such, and only one, who was "made in the likeness of men," yet "thought it not robbery to be equal with God." He is able to drain the cup of almighty wrath, but is he willing? Yes, to the very dregs. Will he suffer, the just for the unjust? "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." Will he tamely submit, not only to the waves and billows of God, but also to the insults of men? "He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearer is *dumb* so he openeth not his mouth." Will his courage falter or his strength give way? "He shall not fail or be discouraged till he send forth judgment unto victory."

Who is this mighty man? the Fellow of Jehovah? The text answers again, "He is a shepherd; *my* shepherd, saith the Lord of Hosts." No ordinary degree of fitness for the office is demanded of that shepherd who shall be the peculiar property and treasure of God. The shepherd after God's own heart, who possesses all the highest qualities for the place, of him and him only will Jehovah say "He is *my* shepherd and my fellow." Now, what are these qualities and who can fairly claim to possess them? There is a beautiful description of a true shepherd in the thirty-fourth chapter of Ezekiel. "I will feed my flock and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God,

I will seek that which was lost and bring again that which was driven away and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick." Again in the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, "Behold the Lord God will come with strong hand and his arm shall rule. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arms and carry them in his bosom and shall gently lead those that are with young."

These are the functions of a good shepherd, to rule, to feed, to watch, to restore, to strengthen, and to love his flock. But one qualification is omitted here. It is the highest of all and the one whose absence stamps any apparent shepherd as nothing but a hireling who takes the oversight of the flock for the sake of filthy lucre. This supreme qualification is a willingness to meet the hungry wolves in defense of the flock and to bear the brunt of danger, even unto death if need be. Thus Jacob understood it when he vindicated himself to Laban. "That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee. I bore the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. Thus I was, in the day the drought consumed me and the frost by night and my sleep departed from mine eyes." So Moses understood it of his responsibility for Israel. "Yet now if thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not blot *me*, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." So the youthful David understood it when he kept his father's sheep and there came a lion and a bear and took a lamb out of the flock, for he followed them and smote them and delivered his lamb at the risk of his life.

But Jacob and Moses and David were after all, only feeble types of God's true shepherd, worthy indeed to lead his people through the wilderness like a flock, or to feed them in Canaan with upright heart, but not worthy to lead them into the heavenly Canaan or feed them by the river of life. They were faithful under-shepherds, but the chief shepherd is he who speaks in the tenth of John's gospel. "The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. I am the good shepherd and I lay down my life for the sheep." Bear in mind that in the old Saxon, on which our language is built, God and good are the same word, so that the good shepherd is the same as the God shepherd.

The expression of Zechariah is to all intents and purposes identical with the expression in the gospel, and we see this prophet of the olden time pointing an index finger to Jesus of Nazareth and saying, "Behold the shepherd of God! Behold and smite." It is woeful to think that the very fact of his shepherdhood involved the necessity of his death. To be God's own shepherd, is to give his life a ransom for many. But he does not blench from the sacrifice. For this cause he came to this hour. So he calmly goeth before his flock to Gethsemane and they know his voice and follow him; sadly, for he has told them that he is going away from them and that they should be offended in him, and cast him off; that one should deny, another, betray him; sadly, for it is the hour and the power of darkness. It is night wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. They are gathering about him now fiercer than ravening wolves, stronger than bulls of Bashan, more ravenous than roaring lions, more unclean than savage

dogs, a great multitude of soldiers and priests and scribes with lanterns and torches and weapons; they are led by the son of perdition who, to make sure of his thirty silver pieces, betrays the Son of Man with a kiss, *and the kiss of Judas is the sword of God.* "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd and against the man that is my fellow. Smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered." And he, the godlike shepherd, is led as a lamb to the slaughter, while they, the timid sheep, are scattered every one to his own; scattered but not lost, else were his death in vain; not lost, for while one hand is raised to smite the shepherd, the other is turned back to shield the little ones. "Fear not little flock for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

The blow falls that is meant to destroy the flock but the Good Shepherd takes all its force into his own breast. He thinks not of his own suffering while they are in danger but all his care is for them. "If ye seek me let these go their way. Then they all forsook him and fled." No one of them rose far enough above selfish interests to enter into his feelings and abide by him in his doom. How true to the fact is the metaphor here? In the hour of security, the sheep attach themselves closely to their keeper; they come at his call, they eat from his hand, they lie down at his side; but in the hour of danger when the shepherd falls a prey to the wolves how frightened are the silly sheep; how they scatter in every direction with headlong haste to get away! The shepherd is torn with cruel fangs but no sheep thinks of coming to his aid; he looks around for succor, or at least for sympathy, but they are bent on saving themselves; he cries aloud in agony but they only flee the faster.

Thus the good shepherd was stricken, "smitten of God and afflicted and we hid as it were our faces from him. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned, every one, to his own way and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

Not only does the flock abandon the shepherd in his hour of sorest need, but his God deserts him also. Nay, more, his own Father takes pleasure in putting him to the sword. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." The very voice that spoke from the excellent glory "This is my beloved son" said also to the fatal weapon "Awake, and smite my shepherd."

When Cæsar was attacked by the conspirators and received blow after blow from enemies' hands till more than twenty gaping wounds were opened in his body, he bore up bravely till he felt the dagger of the well beloved Brutus. "Then burst his mighty heart." So also David as he fled from Absalom could endure the reproaches of Shimei, but when he learned that Ahithophel had counseled his dishonor and destruction, then he broke completely down :

"'Twas not a foe who did deride,
For that I could endure,
No hater who thus rose in pride,
Else would I hide secure.
But then it was my friend and guide,
We did as equals meet ;
We walked to God's house side by side
And blended counsel sweet."

Even so the Son of David was not dismayed by treachery nor desertion, nor malice, nor cruelty, nor condemnation, till his Father and Fellow and Guide with-

drew his face. Then he cried with an exceeding loud and bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Verily the sword is keen. It cuts deeply and unsparingly. How deeply, how keenly, we can never know. "It was the consummation and the concentration of all woe, beyond which there was and could be no deeper anguish for the soul."

This awful tragedy, wherein the voice of the Eternal calls upon the sword of inflexible justice to smite with all its force the Fellow of his throne, is enacted before our eyes upon the stage of earth, for what purpose? Is it to inform our minds or touch our sensibilities, to arouse our interest or kindle our admiration? It effects all this, to be sure, but its vital meaning is infinitely more than this, even the salvation of our souls. God spared not his own son but delivered him up to be crucified, that he might spare an afflicted and poor people, "as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." How affectingly is this indicated in the text! When his shepherd has been made an offering for sin, then he will turn his hand upon the little ones. That is, he will take them in hand, as we say, he will turn his attention to them, in order to thoroughly purge away their dross and remove every trace of alloy; or as it is in the context, to bring the remnant, the third part, the little ones, through the fire to refine them as silver is refined and try them as gold is tried; they shall call on my name and I will hear them. I will say, "It is my people, and they shall say the Lord is my God." "We see from this how careful the Good Shepherd is of the least and most despised of his flock. He will bless them so that the little one becomes a thousand, and the small one a strong nation."

The Jews cried out in the wilderness that their little

ones would become a prey, but the promise is rather that they shall exclusively possess the land of which their fathers were not worthy.

How often and how lovingly in the New Testament does the Shepherd refer to little ones? "Except ye become as little children;" "Whosoever shall give to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only," and "Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones," both shall have their reward. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." And "It is not the will of your father in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." Think of it. Here is the only and well beloved Son of God in the bosom of the Father and here on earth are some insignificant creatures, filthy and worthless. And God thrusts away from his arms the son of his love, degrades him below the angels, puts him to open shame, pierces him through with many sorrows, and suffers him to perish miserably that he may gather these wretched outcasts in his arms and carry them in his bosom.

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord."

"O my soul bless thou Jehovah,
All within me bless his name,
Bless Jehovah and forget not
All his mercies to proclaim.

Bless Jehovah all his creatures,
Ever under his control;
All throughout his vast dominion,
Bless Jehovah, O! my soul!"

VII.

THE ONLY SALVATION.

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”
--*Acts iv. 12.*

THIS is a very astonishing claim. We read in the papers, daily, advertisements of remedies which claim to offer a perfect cure from very many of “the ills that flesh is heir to,” and we read with a smile of pity or a sneer of contempt. But no quack in medicine was ever yet bold enough to claim for himself or his nostrum the power to reach the source of all disease in the system, and change the bitter fountain into a pure and wholesome spring, which should never become muddy or tainted.

What then is the proper measure of our pity or contempt for this unlearned and ignorant fisherman who stands forth in the presence of the Jewish supreme court to prescribe an absolute panacea, not only for diseases of the body, but also, and equally, for distress of the mind and even for the agony of a troubled conscience?

Salvation in its widest application, including deliverance from all oppression, relief from all pain, the satisfaction of every pure desire, and the banishment of all impurity, the perfection of moral and physical character, the symmetrical and complete development of body and soul into the likeness of the First Good, First Perfect, and

First Fair, this, the mere mention of which takes the breath away, is the plain import of these downright words. Was Peter mad in making such a claim for the name of his master? Was he a fool for denying similar power to any other?

As to his positive claim in the case, we must admit that Peter's experience and observation were remarkably well calculated to lead to such a conclusion. There stood the man beside him who yesterday sat at the beautiful gate of the temple, displaying his life-long lameness as a plea for charity. Peter had simply said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk," and the feet which had never done their office before stood firmly as he leaped upon them. Here was salvation for the body.

Again, when the two disciples walked to Emmaus, they were in great distress of mind over the prophecies which told of a glorious Messiah. They could not understand the death of Jesus, they trusted that it had been he who should redeem Israel, and lo! himself was stricken down. Then the stranger came, whose interpretation of the things concerning himself put a new face on the matter and chased the shadows from their countenances. Here was salvation for the mind. Peter must have been familiar with their story.

Then there was the memory of that "dark despairing night" when the Rock man denied his Master and went out to weep bitterly while his soul seemed sinking in the sea of remorse, and once more as on Galilee, the hand of Jesus was stretched out to save him from being swallowed up of despair. Here was salvation for the conscience.

As to the further idea that salvation includes a blessed immortality and likeness to God, Peter had seen the earthly body of Christ transfigured to outshine the sun, and his dead body refilled with life and received up into heaven, which things could not but be a sufficient pledge and symbol to him, that the good work begun in himself would be carried forward till he became worthy to stand by the side of his glorified Lord.

Was it folly in Peter that he believed all this? Nay, but he would have been a fool to doubt it, and this same test of experience may be used by us. We have all that Peter had, and more, to convince us of its truth. The weight of evidence has been increasing throughout the centuries. Still it is not on historical data mainly that I would rest the case. Rather I would say to every one, "Taste and see that the Lord is good : blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

Let your own experience be your best evidence. When you are sick and the doctor offers a remedy which is said to have cured thousands, you may believe that to be true after a fashion, but if it cures *you*, your faith is marvelously confirmed. When the sailor takes an observation on the high seas and makes out his exact latitude and longitude on the chart, he has nothing except his confidence in his nautical tables to persuade him that he knows his position on the ocean. But when by using the same tables, he crosses the waste of waters and brings his vessel into port he is possessed of irrefragable evidence of the truthfulness of those astronomical formulæ, by the help of which, he has ploughed a straight furrow in the pathless expanse to his destination.

In like manner the apostle urges us to ascertain the

worth of inspired computations. "Let every man *prove* his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself and not in another."

Thus, when the soul is buffeted about on the billows of trouble and doubt and fear, it has only the witness of others to cling to. But when it is brought at length by the help of heavenly observation to the desired haven of peace with God, then it does indeed feel assured that the glass of faith and the quadrant of inspiration are worthy of all confidence and abundantly able to give salvation. "Therefore being justified by faith, *we have peace* with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

So much for the positive side of this claim of Peter. There *is* salvation in the name of Christ. Every honest and patient soul that has accepted his testimony and guidance, even when the horizon was bounded on all sides by foaming waters, with no sure indication of the proper course to be pursued, and with a mighty tempest beating full upon it, *has* been brought without exception and without wreck to drop anchor in the waters of stillness and furl the sail in the harbor of God's peace.

But how about the negative side of this question? Is there truly no other name under heaven to conjure down the demons of storm and quicksand? Is Christ the *only* as well as the all-sufficient name? Is the gospel ship the only ark that bears its living freight in safety over the swelling tide, when the fountains of eternal wrath are broken up? Is the corner stone of Zion the only safe retreat when the pitiless hail sweeps down upon the refuge of lies, and the overflowing scourge inundates the hiding places of earth? Alas! the language of the text is too straightforward to allow the faintest hope of any

second name to drive away the legions of evil spirits that beset the souls of men. It is a hard and bitter truth to preach but it is confirmed by the voice of reason as well as of revelation. Every hope is vain, every attempt is futile that looks toward redemption for the soul, apart from the name of Christ. Every torch kindled from the strange fire of any other altar serves only to make the darkness visible.

Perhaps this will be more evident if we turn our attention to the various religions which have most widely prevailed and ask them if they hold the great secret which Job describes so powerfully. "The depth saith, It is not in me; and the sea saith, It is not with me. Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears. God understandeth the way thereof, and He knoweth the place thereof."

As a simple and decisive test of these religions, let us ask them in turn for a definition of the name of God. This will surely show each faith at its best, for it will in each case bring to view the loftiest conception of which the believing soul is capable; and it will give a fair test whether salvation can be found in any of them, since the God of belief is universally the goal of action, and to adore is to imitate.

Suppose we begin with Greece. Standing among the ruins of the Parthenon, the noblest temple that ever pointed heavenward,—Solomon's was unsightly compared to it,—some fragments of which form the chiefest attraction of the British Museum to-day, let us listen to the echoes of Divinity that still sigh mournfully among its desolate pillars. What is the loftiest ideal of Deity to which the wise men of the wise nation attained?

I hear a confused murmur of voices and a few rising above the rest become articulate. "He is the most ancient of all things, for he is without beginning." That is the voice of Thales. "He is air." That is Anaximenes. "He is a pure mind;" So speaks Anaxagoras. "He is air and mind;" That is Archelaus. "He is mind in a spherical form;"—Democritus. "He is a monad and the principle of good."—Pythagoras. That's the nearest guess yet. "He is an eternal circular fire;" Heraclitus. "He is the infinite and immovable principle in a spherical form;" Parmenides. "He is one and everything, the only eternal and infinite;" Zeno.

And is that all? Have they all spoken? Is there no nobler name in the Grecian mind than this? Then, verily, the world by wisdom knew not God, and the grandest results of the subtlest human thought after two thousand years, is a smooth flowing language and a few exquisite works of art. If Greece has spoken, it is not worth while to linger on the banks of the Tiber. Let us cross the continent to Medina and bend a listening ear at the tomb of the Arabian prophet. What saith Mohammed? The answer is brief and stern, "God is a despot, submit or die." That is clear cut at all events. There is no need of repetition. Moreover it is a powerful faith. It rouses to action. It tramples on impossibilities. Every faithful believer becomes a despot too. He rushes upon obstacles. He bears down opposition. He defies resistance and he offers but one alternative, "Receive Mohammed or receive the sword." That is why the Moslem has carried his victorious crescent from the Ganges to the Pillars of Hercules. He was the exponent of an energetic, indomitable will. Because the vital principle of

his religion was masterful and based on truth, therefore he was mighty to the pulling down of strongholds. This was his strength in the day of battle, and this was his weakness in the day of peace. "And hence," it has been well observed, "it has been proved that Mohammedanism can thrive only while it is aiming at conquest. Why? Because it is the proclamation of a mere Sovereign, who employs men to declare the fact that he is a Sovereign and to enforce it upon the world. It is not the proclamation of a great Moral Being who designs to raise His creatures out of their sensual and natural degradation; who reveals to them not merely that He is, but *what* He is; why He has created them, and what they have to do with Him. Unless this mighty chasm in the Mohammedan doctrine can be filled up, it must wither day by day, wither for all purposes of utility to mankind: it can leave nothing behind but a wretched carcass filling the air with the infection of its rottenness."

Pass on then to Persia and inquire at the lips of Zoroaster, What is God? The answer is substantially this; "God is light and in him is no darkness at all." Very beautiful and very true. No wonder the Persian faith was bound up at one time with a great portion of Asia, retained sufficient vitality to rise from the dust after five centuries of sleep, and reassert its supremacy. The eighth chapter of Gibbon's great work contains a brilliant description of this revolution: "But alas for the children of light and of the day! They failed to penetrate the symbolical character of their own definition and the inevitable result was first, the worship of the sun and stars, and then of the smallest flame kindled by their own hands." Pass now to the Indus, and ask the one hundred

and seventy-five millions who personify and adore its waters, what is their loftiest conception of God. The answer is contradictory. One of the common people will say wildly, "There are three hundred millions of Gods, how shall I describe them?" While the representative of the highest caste, himself a lesser deity, will respond that "*the* God of the Hindoo is a pure intelligence, whose eternal attitude is one of rest and his sole occupation the contemplation of himself." Salvation, or likeness to him, is only for the favored few whose circumstances permit them to retire into solitary meditation; and then become as nearly as possible absorbed into nothingness. This is to be lost, not saved, and this is the best that Brahminism has to offer. Its worst is too horrible to dwell upon.

Then let us climb the Himalayas and ask the dwellers in Thibet to explain their estimate of God. For all answer we are pointed to the grand Lama. Here, says the devout worshiper, dwells the spirit of Buddha. Look at *him*, think of him, and you will be changed at length into his image, which being interpreted, by a careful study of the system, amounts to this, "that there is in man, in humanity, a certain divine Intelligence, which, at different times, and in different places, manifests itself more or less completely, and which must have some one central manifestation. The human intellect is first felt to be the perfect organ of worship; finally its one object. This is Buddhism: this is the conviction which with more or less of confusion, is working in the hearts of six hundred millions of people on this globe of ours."

Pass still further eastward, scale the great wall, traverse the Celestial Empire and ask the disciples of Confucius to tell what is the mainspring of that theology which claims

such a venerable antiquity, and which has preserved the Chinese government intact for so many hundreds of dynasties. The answer is simple and sufficient, "A principle of *order* is that which we reverence beyond all other notions of divinity."

The effect of this worship is indeed to embalm society and place it apparently out of the reach of decay, but it is such salvation as the mummy shares which reposes behind the walls of a pyramid, indifferent to the flight of time indeed, but insensible also to the return of spring and incapable of growth; or as the fossil which the earth has enclosed and petrified, not as the seed that falls and dies, yet refuses to be holden of death, that pushes its way upward to the light and forward to the full measure of its perfect stature.

Thus have we accosted the chief religions of the world and such is the result. Let me say in passing that modern skepticism, which might feel slighted if it were left out of sight, when the principal faiths of the world are brought under notice, furnishes a striking proof of Solomon's aphorism, "There is nothing new under the sun." I remember with what electrical effect a converted Brahmin, stated in a meeting of the Evangelical Alliance held in New York City some years ago, that since his coming to this country he had found the opponents of Christianity urging with complacency and with effect objections to the truth of revelation, most of which had been exploded on the banks of the Ganges two thousand years ago.

We will not pause to ask whether salvation is found in unbelief, for the God of the infidel is without form and void; his faith is a system of negations, and his cherished

hope of salvation is to be sunk utterly, irrevocably, everlastingly in oblivion.

Faith after faith when questioned, yields a despairing answer, and sets its seal to the majestic and melancholy truth asserted by Christ, "Without me ye can do nothing."

And yet it is no light matter to accept this statement of the text, for it draws with it a momentous conclusion. If salvation is to be had only in the name of Jesus Christ, there is no escape from the awful and overwhelming thought that eternity shall echo with the myriad groans and agonies of those who are dropping into it by thousands in an hour.

"If we believe *that*, what is our duty? Manifestly to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

Taking this view of the matter how *dare* we remain idling away invaluable time, coddling ourselves with comforts, when untold numbers of our fellow creatures are ignorant of the only name that affords salvation?

How dare we take any ease when multitudes are thronging the way to the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone? If our ears have heard aright the joyful sound of salvation, how can our tongues be silent? Let him that heareth say come, and woe! to them that are at ease in Zion! Do you see them? the vast army of heathen who are rushing blindly on to destruction? Do you understand that hundreds of millions of poor souls are perishing without hope when a whisper of Jesus might save them? They are dying in ignorance, and you are possessed of knowledge! They are covered with darkness, and you are filled with light! They are steeped

in misery, and you are bathed in happiness! Does the common bond of humanity give them no claim upon you? If God's fulness meets your need shall not your fulness meet their need?

Do you only half realize your own salvation and one quarter believe in the salvability of others? Is the gospel of the name of God nothing but a name to you? Having a name to live are you destitute of vitality? Having a form of godliness, do you lack its power? Having the Master above you, the field before you and the sickle in your hand, are you redeeming the opportunity? Is your bosom filling with sheaves and your tongue with the harvest home? These are questions which ought to ring in our ears like the alarm of fire when at midnight the hoarse bell startles the sleeping city, and the devouring flame strikes a lurid light into our chambers. Whoever is thoroughly aroused by their warning appeal and perceives that souls are in jeopardy whom he might help to save, must not, can not, will not, fall back upon his soft bed and compose himself to slumber. He will start up and cry with Paul "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel."

It is not given to many to feel such burning zeal, but whenever it is given, let all men beware of putting obstacles in the way. Our dearest and best are none too good for the Master's service.

In a battle between the Royalists and the troops of Cornwall, a foster-father and seven brave sons sacrificed themselves for Sir Hector Maclean. Whenever one of his boys fell the old man would cry "Another for Hector," and thrust forward the next in age to fill his place at the right hand of his beloved chief, and before the

invincible Ironsides could reach that Highland leader they had to step over the dead bodies of eight devoted men who cheerfully laid down their lives and counted them well spent in defence of their chieftian.

The battle is raging with sin, and many a spear is lifted up against our blessed Lord. Where are the loving followers whose simple duty it is to stand up in His defence, to come up to his help against the mighty? Where are the parents to thrust their children forward and cry "another for Jesus?" Thank God there have been such! Dr. Durbin tells of an old Moravian woman who said on hearing that her first born son had gone to heaven through the missionary life, "Is Thomas dead, would to God that He would call John!" John too became a missionary; and *he* died. Then she said, "O that He would call William," and William went, and fell. Then the childless woman exclaimed, "Would that I had a thousand sons to give to God;" and would that the church had a thousand such mothers!

This then is the conclusion which I draw from the text that every one who learns of salvation through the name of Christ is under obligation to make it known to others. But this conclusion while it drives out every other consideration in certain cases, does not bind the conscience of every Christian in such wise as to compel him to become a foreign missionary in his own person. There are other duties and other claims equally sacred because equally enjoined by the Lord of the harvest.

The troops which on that hot July day stood silently in the wheat field beside the road that leads over the ridge from Gettysburg, were as truly obedient to the commanding General, and as truly helpful in gaining the

victory as the more honored heroes who lined the breastworks on the fatal slope, and who raised a bulwark with their bodies while they said to the mighty surges of an unrighteous rebellion, "Hitherto *but no further*, and *here* shall thy proud waves be stayed." In like manner it is necessary that many should remain behind when our missionaries go forth. The honor is less but the duty and responsibility are equally great.

Just here I find the necessity and the warrant for societies such as the one whose anniversary we celebrate to-day. They constitute the reserve force whose duty it is to stand to their arms and hold themselves in readiness to assist whenever help is most needed. Or to change the figure, they are the many who stand on the shore holding the rope while the bold and expert swimmer dashes into the surf to rescue the struggling wretches whose ship has driven upon the rocks.

There was a house on fire in a certain city and a multitude thronged the street to gaze with intense interest upon the attempts that were made to extinguish the flame and to save endangered lives. It was thought that all had escaped when a child appeared at a fourth story window screaming for help. The firemen at once planted a ladder and one of the boldest began to ascend. It was a perilous venture but he was used to danger and had made up his mind to extricate that child. Half way up he was enveloped in the smoke and flames that poured in dense volumes from the windows, scorching him badly and setting the ladder itself on fire. The people held their breath as they looked and feared that both were lost. But he struggled on and soon appeared above the furious blaze. Then he paused to get his breath. As

he looked down upon the raging flames and saw the very walls beginning to totter and felt the ladder yielding, his heart failed him and a mist came over his eyes. Then a fireman with great presence of mind sprang upon a hose truck and waving his trumpet to the crowd, cried out at the top of his voice, "*He falters, cheer him,—cheer him,*" and it seemed as if the shout that broke from a thousand throats had lifted that gallant man bodily up the ladder. For he stood by the child and took her in his arms and a second ladder being guided to his feet he descended safely to the ground.

Dear friends, we look off over the continent and across the sea, and we see the work of salvation arrested because the laborers are so few. From India, from Ethiopia, from the great West, there comes a Macedonian cry. If we do not feel an over-mastering impulse to go ourselves, at least we can send up a prayer that shall enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and we can send out a shout that shall echo from Alaska to Egypt, and from Egypt to Hindostan. We can cheer the hearts of lonely, weary, fainting missionaries, and spur them on to more successful labor in the full conviction that they are not alone in the work of faith; that *we* too are constrained by the love of Christ to judge "that if one died for all then were all dead;" and that "He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto him which died for them and rose again," who only hath immortality. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

VIII.

GOD'S WORD LIKE RAIN.

“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 forth 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.”—*Isaiah*, lv. 10, 11.

THREE are three meanings, or strictly speaking, three degrees of meaning, which may be attached to the phrase “my word,” as it occurs in the text. We may understand it as referring especially to the Lord Jesus Christ who is the “word made flesh.” This view is favored by the words, “*that which I please*” and, “*shall prosper*,” which recall the language of the tenth verse of the fifty-third chapter, “*It pleased the Lord to bruise him*” and “*the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand:*” or we may take it in its general sense as “every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord,” whether heard by all men, by a few men, by one man, by angels only, or not heard at all outside of the adorable Three: or again, it may be taken to mean the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which were given by the inspiration of God and may be called emphatically, His word. It matters little whether we restrict the meaning to particular utterances or expand it to include them all, or find in it a prophecy of redemption through the person of Christ; for in each case the

comparison will hold good that is there made between that word and the rain or snow. Since the Holy Ghost has thought good to draw out this comparison at some length, it will surely be within our province and worth our while to examine the points wherein the resemblance appears most striking.

Wherein then does the word of the Lord resemble rain or snow? As snow and rain are substantially the same in their effect and action, no attempt will be made to elaborate minute distinctions between them.

In the first place, God's word is like rain, because it is *from above*. This resemblance is not confined to the word alone. "Every good gift and every perfect boon is from above." It would have been easy for God to have brought water from the ocean to the springs by secret underground channels, but he chose to make the clouds and the winds his ministers, as it would seem, in order that men might be led to "look through nature up to nature's God." There is a rich suggestiveness about the fact that when the rain falls, accomplishing its immediate purpose, it is not lost forever but hastens on its way from surface pools to hidden veins and thence to springs and rivers and oceans, and so back to the clouds again, to repeat for the ten thousandth time its blessed fall from above.

Wonderful as are the achievements of man, the problem of perpetual motion has never been solved by any human expedient. When the water has filled and turned the mill wheel once, it cannot be wooed by mortal genius to kiss that wheel again; but with what infinite ease God's angel in the sun draws water from the level of the sea to fill the mill-race over and over as the years and

the wheels go round. How far below the ways of God are the proudest works of men? As with man's works, so with his thoughts and speech, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Man's words are "as water spilt on the ground which cannot be gathered up again," but God's words are like the rain which pauses not till it has returned to its source; and hereby we know that the Bible is from God, because it does not return to Him void but carries the trusting soul on its gracious current back to the very fountain from which it took its rise. If any one accept the Bible as God's word and act upon its teachings, his path shall be visibly upward till he looks upon the face of God by the side of the river of life.

Again, God's word is like rain, because its action is not governed by any known rule. Every attempt to forecast the weather for a single season is a miserable failure. The rainfall over a very large area is singularly equal from year to year, yet there is remarkable variety in its visits to particular spots. In one state there are forest fires and short crops, in another "the little springs run among the hills" and the barns overflow with plenty. But taking the year together, even in a single state, the whole amount of rain for each twelve months will be found about the same. So too, it is remarkable that the whole earth, speaking generally, is baptised with rain, while the rain falls not upon all parts at the same time, but in showers here and there. The same is true of each shower also. It is not laid on evenly, but irregularly, a drop here and a drop there, till the whole surface is saturated with moisture. So too, the rain is pleasant and

joyful in its effects, but dark and forbidding in its approach. Other points of apparent contradiction might be mentioned, but these are sufficient to show what a paradox the rainfall presents.

And is not this true likewise of God's word? Sometimes He speaks in tones of thunder, that are heard from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, and again His voice is so still and small that a single person only can discern it, in the depths of his soul. Sometimes there is "a sound of abundance of rain" when multitudes fall prostrate, as on Carmel, crying out "The Lord, he is *the* God," and again there is a quiet meeting of a few disciples in a small upper room, and the "word made flesh" appears and some doubting Thomas drops on his knees confessing for himself alone "My Lord and my God." Sometimes there is a dearth of hearing the word of the Lord, as in Italy, while in Scotland regiments of inquirers are taking the Kingdom of Heaven by violence. Perchance the heathen are withering on their stalks for lack of refreshing words from above and the chosen people are drenched with "precept upon precept, line upon line." Perchance again Canaan is consumed by drought and there is abundance of revelation in Egypt. Moreover when the incarnate Word approaches the earth as the exponent of all peace and good will among men, even his strange utterance is, "I am not come to send peace but a sword, to set men at variance and to make a man's bitterest foes, those of his own household." The case of individual experience also is checkered with afflictions that work out glory and rainbows of promise set in clouds that mutter of judgments.

Once more God's word is like rain because it is refreshing, cleansing and fertilizing.

“How beautiful is the rain
After the dust and heat,
In the broad and fiery street,
In the narrow lane.
How beautiful is the rain
In the country on every side,
When far and wide
Like a leopard's tawny and spotted hide
Stretches the plain.
To the dry grass and drier grain
How welcome is the rain!”

How gratefully the flowers and all the plants lift up their drooping heads in response to its reviving touch! Not less refreshing is it to parched and drooping human plants. When Israel was in the wilderness how delightfully refreshing a shower was felt to be. So David thought at least.

“O God when thou wast going
Before thy peoples' face,
And when the glorious marching
Was through the wilderness,
Earth trembled at thy presence
And rain from heaven fell,
Even Sinai shook before thee
Thou God of Israel.
O God, thou to thy people
Didst send a plenteous rain,
Thy heritage when weary
Thou didst refresh again.”

Correspondingly, in the eighty-fourth Psalm weary pilgrims Zionward are represented as refreshed by God's word in the sanctuary: "Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God."

One of the old church legends relates that as St. Dunstan was reading the scriptures with rapt attention one day in his cell, his harp which hung on a peg against the wall, sounded through sympathy with its master's feelings, or seemed to sound, although untouched by human hands; "for," says the credulous narrator, "an angel played on it the Psalm *Gaudeate animi*, Rejoice, O my soul." Call that a fable? It is an absolute fact reproduced again and again in every pious Bible student's experience; for as he draws water with joy from the wells of salvation in reading God's word, angelic fingers touch the chords of his soul and they vibrate "with grave sweet melody."

Then too, what a blessing of cleansing accompanies God's word. As the streets are swept clean of their accumulated filth by the energy of a sudden shower, and as the Augean stables were cleaned by simply turning a stream of water through them, so the deceitful and filthy heart is cleansed by the influence of God's word. "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." And when His farewell was spoken to the disciples, He said: "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you."

It is a grand thing to utter words which have a purifying effect upon men. The noblest eulogy ever pro-

nounced upon Addison was contained in the advice of Doctor Johnson to a young man, "Give days and nights to the study of Addison, if you would be master of the English tongue, or what is more worth, an honest man." At a banquet given to Ralph Waldo Emerson in Boston, one man rose and said that his whole life had been changed for the better, by reading a sentence in one of Emerson's essays, and therefore it was remarked that this should be selected for Emerson's epitaph. Fox declared in the House of Commons that Coleridge's essays in the *Morning Post* had led to the rupture of the treaty of Amiens; and when the illustrious author of the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," heard of this, he observed that if it had been said in cold blood instead of in the heat of debate, he should be proud to have the words inscribed upon his tomb.

If a page of Addison or a sentence of Emerson, or a few leaders of Coleridge are worthy of such praise, what shall we say of the Bible, whose every page is rich with thoughts which have found their way into the life-blood of thousands and moulded their character for all eternity? When some earnest soul on the threshold of manhood inquires of us how he may escape evil and obtain good, shall we direct him to sift all the volumes of Emerson or Addison or Coleridge for the single sentence that may help to purify his life? or shall we point him to "a more excellent way?" When he puts the question, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" shall we not answer, "By taking heed thereto according to God's word." Let others sound the praises of mortal eloquence and genius, but as for me, the song of David is my creed and my cry: "Concerning the

works of men, by the word of thy lips, I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer. Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not."

But the most noteworthy effect of God's word and the one emphasized in the text is the fruitfulness of which it is the occasion. All that is needed to make the earth a barren primeval rock, is to withhold the rain from falling: and all that is needed to change any desert into a garden is a copious rainfall. Wherever in the arid waste of Sahara an artesian well has been sunk, an oasis has invariably come into being, and if the project of turning a portion of that vast desert into another Mediterranean should ever be carried out, a dwelling by the sea of Sahara would be no less delightful than in the balmy air of sunny Florida. When for three and a half years the skies above Palestine were shut up at the prayer of Elijah, drouth and famine scourged the land flowing with milk and honey: when at his prayer again, "the heaven gave rain," then "the earth brought forth her fruit." Every farmer understands this. "Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth and hath long patience for it until he receive the early and latter rain." Now the earth rests under a curse for man's sake, and the fact that he who doomed it to barrenness of good, and to productiveness of evil, so far restrains the operation of the curse, as to give fertilizing showers, is entirely analogous to the fact that man himself, abject and fallen by reason of sin, is yet, through the vitalizing energy of God's word, made the recipient of showers of blessing by which even he may "have his fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

An illustration of this possible recovery is afforded by

the casting down and lifting up of Nebuchadnezzar. In his premonitory vision, the great tree which symbolized himself, was devoted to destruction by the "watcher and holy one" from heaven, yet the destruction was not to be complete. "Nevertheless," so the mandate was, "leave the stump of his roots in the earth even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field, and let it be wet with the dew of heaven." When Daniel interpreted the dream he did not explain why the stump was to be left among tender grass and wet with the falling dew, for it was a fact of natural history, familiar at least from the time of Job, that, under such circumstances, a tree would reproduce itself. "For there is hope of a tree if it be cut down that it will sprout again and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth and the stalk thereof die in the ground, yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant."

Even so Jehovah breathes a promise of restoration to His penitent people. "I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely. I will be as the dew unto Israel. He shall grow as the lily and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread and his beauty shall be as the olive tree."

Let it be understood that every victory over the curse has come through the ministry of God's word. Every step which the race has taken upward from barbarism is the result of listening to words spoken from heaven. Every deed of kindness and every glance of love, if not directly inspired by God's word owe their paternity to it, even when they are found among infidels or savages.

As a single specimen of the natural effect of that

word upon the world, take the history of England. There are two companion pictures in that history which lend themselves readily to such an illustration. Probably the highest points of English greatness have been reached under Elizabeth and Victoria. When Elizabeth was passing through the streets of London to her coronation, as Hume relates, "a boy who personated Truth was let down from one of the triumphal arches and presented to her a copy of the Bible. She received the book with the most gracious deportment; placed it next her bosom; and declared that amidst all the costly testimonies, which the city had that day given her, of their attachment, this present was by far the most precious and most acceptable." As a notable counterpart to this picture let me remind you of what happened some years ago. When a thoughtful African prince sent a request to the present sovereign of England to know by what means her realm had been elevated to such a pitch of grandeur, her answer was given in the shape of an elegantly bound copy of the Holy Scriptures. "Tell your master," said she to the ambassador, "that in this book is hidden the secret of England's greatness."

In the next place, God's word is like rain because it is *quiet in its operations*. To be quiet is not to be inefficient, but quite the contrary. The best soldiers are those who can advance to the charge in grim silence, depending not on noisy powder but on the noiseless steel. All the great forces work quietly. When the mighty sun, whose influence reaches so far and so forcibly, mounts upward to the Zenith, it is in absolute silence. The prophet Hosea seizes upon this natural feature, and with especial felicity for our present purpose connects it with

the falling rain as a symbol of the coming of Christ: "His going forth is prepared as the morning and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the former and latter rain unto the earth." The soft and silent way in which the dawn swells into midday and the rain comes down affords a remarkable figure of the manner in which God's words descend upon the hearts of men.

Gravitation is another mighty force whose work is done quietly. All the planets wheel in their orbits, subject to its potent sway, and they move in harmonious silence. Micah has set forth God's word as the centre of spiritual gravitation in that sublime passage which Isaiah himself did not hesitate to copy: "In the last days it shall come to pass that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the tops of the mountains and it shall be exalted above the hills, and people shall flow unto it, for the law shall go forth of Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." And Christ taking up this thought interprets this prophecy by the words: "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

The increase of plants by growth furnishes another example of a great force working silently. Massive foundations and huge boulders have been rent asunder by a little seed striking its roots into a crevice of the rock and swelling till the bars of adamant were broken. Such seems to have been the case with Lydia whose heart was not so hardened by commerce but that the seed falling from the hand of Paul found a crevice, where it sprouted and grew till all resistance was overcome, and so the Lord "opened" her heart by the quiet operation of his preached word.

But the most striking passage, aside from the text, where this truth is enforced is to be found in the opening notes of that swanlike song which closes the life of Moses: "Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass; because I will publish the name of the Lord." Could anything be more beautiful?

One day in the childhood of Alexander of Russia, his father Nicholas noticed that he was looking sad and thoughtful and he asked his son of what he was thinking. "Of the poor serfs," said the boy, "and when I get to be Czar I am going to set them free." Then Nicholas was troubled and all St. Petersburg with him. They asked the child how such a notion came into his head and what led him to feel so deep an interest in the welfare of the serfs. Mark well his answer. "Why, I got it from reading the Bible and hearing it explained, for it teaches me that all men are brothers." By command of the Czar the subject was then forbidden to be broached in the hearing of the Czarowitz and it was hoped that the influence and opinions which prevailed in the royal court would gradually correct the boyish notions of the young prince. But this expectation was vain. The early impressions of the little boy grew deeper and stronger like "the seed growing secretly," and when at last the great Nicholas died and Alexander was placed upon his father's throne, he called the wise statesmen of the land to his counsels, and a plan of emancipation was formed; and the imperial ukase went forth which abolished serfdom forever throughout the

Russian Empire. It is in this way that God works wonders, by the quiet but powerful operations of his word. The great fact that God has "made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth," lodged like an incorruptible seed in the heart of that young prince, germinated there, growing with his growth, and strengthening with his strength, till at last it budded and blossomed and brought forth the blessed fruit of liberty for millions of once despised and down-trodden slaves.

Again, God's word is like rain because of its copious supply. Consider the vast amount of water that remains after the thirst of nature is fully quenched, and that rolls to the sea through the channels of the St. Lawrence, the Mississippi and the Amazon on this Western Hemisphere, and of the Yenisei, the Volga, and the Zambesi in the old world. Think of the Nile, that mysterious river, that maintains its volume unimpaired without the aid of a single tributary through fifteen hundred miles of smiling verdure which, but for it, would be covered with yellow sand! Such is the stream flowing from the throne of God to bless mankind. It is fed mysteriously from the fountains of Deity, it fertilizes ground that would else be a desert, and it condescends to receive no tributary from human sources to swell its mighty and beneficent current. David makes much of this comparison in the sixty-fifth Psalm: "Thou visitest the earth and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness and thy paths drop fatness."

Then, too, how true it is, that God sends his word like his rain "on the just and the unjust." There is one

apparent exception to this. The Jews are like Gideon's fleece. Once they alone were wet with the dew of God's word, while all the world around was dry, but now they alone are parched while the rain-prophets of mercy traverse the globe exclaiming in the words of Jeremiah: "O earth, *earth*, EARTH, hear the word of the Lord;" and of Isaiah: "Ho, every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters!" But even the Jews shall be restored, when the "fulness of the Gentiles is come in."

Finally God's word is like rain because it is seasonable in its approach and consequently always in demand. The world has not yet outgrown the need of rain, and until it becomes independent of God's bountiful hand, it will be in need of communications from his mouth. It may be, as one has conjectured, that we shall outgrow the Bible and that when we get to heaven the only one to be seen, will lie near the throne just as now in a museum we have a lamp, exhumed from Herculaneum or Nineveh, and we look at it and say how poor a light it must have given, compared with our modern lamps. So perhaps the Bible which is a lamp to our feet in this world may excite our interest to all eternity by the contrast between its comparatively feeble light and the illumination of heaven. "But at least while time endures though the grass wither and the pyramids crumble, yet the word of our God shall stand," and even supposing the Bible to be superseded in heaven, we shall still be dependent on God's word. For the Bible is that word spoken as it were in lisping accents, to accommodate our childish minds; and when we grow to the stature of the perfect man, though we "put away childish things," we shall not put away our need of divine instructions. Increase

as we may in discernment, capacity, and retentiveness, we shall never trench on the prerogatives of Deity, nor be otherwise disposed toward God, than as the earth to the clouds, and the flowers to the sun. There are parts of the Bible which we cannot conceive the possibility of outgrowing. When shall the one hundred forty-sixth Psalm be inappropriate. "Praise ye the Lord. Praise the Lord O my soul. While I live will I praise the Lord. I will sing praises unto my God, while I have my being." The same thought is hymned by Addison.

" Through every period of my life,
 Thy goodness I'll pursue,
 And after death in distant worlds,
 The glorious theme renew.
 Through all eternity to thee,
 A joyful song I'll raise ;
 But O eternity's too short
 To show forth all thy praise."

Let me now urge upon you all, dear friends, the necessity of listening intently for the voice of God. "He that hath an ear, let him hear." "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord till he come and rain righteousness upon you." Bear with me also in pointing out the danger of receiving the grace of God in vain. There is a dreadful woe pronounced upon those who receive the advantages of God's word and yet produce nothing but evil. "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briars is

rejected and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." Beware of provoking God to command the clouds that they rain no rain upon you.

Further let me emphasize the responsibility resting heavily upon every one here to echo God's word, to gather up the sound as it falls on our favored ears, and transmit it to the ends of the earth. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." "The Lord spoke the word, great was the company of those that published it." Answering to this responsibility, Bible societies are formed and sustained. During the past year the society, of which the Greene County Bible Society is an auxiliary branch, has issued nearly a million and a half copies of the scriptures in whole or in part. I trust every one of you had some hand in that good work. If not, if any of you has not in this, or some other way, helped to report the "joyful sound" of salvation in ears to which it was "strange sweet music," then you have come short of your bounden duty and your most blessed privilege. O brethren! "As cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country."

There are two great commissions intrusted to men which together involve the establishment of universal peace and happiness throughout creation. One was given in Eden when God blessed the newly created race and delivered to them a title to the earth in fee simple, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it." The other was given at Bethany after God had come down to recreate the race in his own image, when he once more asserted his right to the "utmost parts of the earth for his possession," saying, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every

creature." The man who subdues the earth by causing two blades of grass to grow where only one grew before, is hailed as a public benefactor; what then shall be the honor of those who convey even a few drops of the river of life to irrigate some barren soul? Verily, "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." "Drop down ye heavens from above and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open and let them bring forth salvation and let righteousness spring up together." "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 forth out of my mouth. It shall not return unto me void but it shall accomplish that which I please and shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

IX.

GOD'S BUILDING.

"Ye are God's building."—1 *Cor.* iii. 9.

HOLY writ makes use of many tropes to convey truth. This is perhaps the best explanation of the remarkable facility with which the Bible lends itself to translation. Metaphors appeal with equal force to the savage and the savant. In no other way can knowledge be imparted to all classes so successfully as by using emblematic representations. For example, the close union of believers with Christ is forcibly taught by calling the church a body, of which Christ is the head, a bride, of whom Christ is the husband, and branches, of which Christ is the stock. Again its diversity of parts and community of interests are made strikingly apparent by calling it a city, a family, or a flock. We are impressed by its stability under the figure of a mountain or of a pillar, and by its productiveness under that of a vineyard. But all of these ideas, and more, by a singular felicity of language are combined in a single clause of the verse from which the text is taken. The chapter is replete with figures of speech, so that if they were all expurged there would be not a line remaining; but it seems as if a whole swarm of honey laden thoughts had made its hive in this ninth verse. "For we are laborers together with God, ye are God's husbandry, God's building."

By way of developing the truth contained in this lat-

ter title of the church, let us examine the meaning of the symbol employed. Perhaps we may thus obtain a fresher and more impressive view, than ordinary, of our relations to each other and to our divine Lord. Not to be technically minute, mention will be made of six things which pertain generally to buildings, viz: its Architect, plan, material, construction, magnitude and purpose.

Every building must have an architect, and in proportion to his skill will be the beauty and utility of the building. The architect mentioned in the text is God. When the Jews reproachfully asked, "Is not this the carpenter?" they thought an effectual bar was raised against all claims of Divinity on the part of Christ, but they were profoundly mistaken. He was indeed the Carpenter, the Architect, who laid the foundations of the earth when the morning stars sang together, and who appeared in humble guise upon his own footstool to lay the foundation of a nobler and more enduring structure.

The character of an architect may be inferred from what he does. When we look upon the cathedrals of London and Rome, called after the names of Peter and Paul, we are convinced that none but a master builder could produce such masterpieces. So the majesty, power and wisdom of God are conspicuous in his work of creation. When we consider the host of heaven we have an overwhelming sense of God's excellent glory. But wonderful as creation is to contemplate, it is by no means the crowning work of God. "A workman is known by his chips," and the material universe is composed, so to speak, of the chips struck from the mighty rocks and timbers which God was hewing into shape for the texture of a building which might be worthy to be

called with reverence his masterpiece. His name is excellent in all the earth and the heavens are bright with his glory and we may with manifest propriety speak of the universe as a home of many mansions prepared by a kind Creator for the dwelling place of his animate creatures. But if we stop at this point we shall be guilty of robbing God of his highest claim to worship. For this reason among others, I have a quarrel with any society such as that which has the past week been flaunting its insignia and mumbling its mummery in our city, whose acknowledgment of God ascribes to him no more exalted title than the Supreme Architect of the Universe. For the orbs that are marshaled through space by his omnipotent hand, vast and glorious and full of wonders though they be, are yet not fit to be reckoned as so many bricks in the far grander building referred to in the text. This will be more evident as we proceed.

The plan of this building is not such as would be adopted by another builder with whom uniformity means simply monotony and inconvenience. For the length and the breadth and the height of God's building are equal, that is to say, it is in the form of an exact cube. Such, by express command, was the shape of the most holy place in the tabernacle and temple and such is the description given of the holy city which John saw descending out of heaven from God. The meaning of this symbolic plan is in one word, perfection,—the perfection of order, stability and completeness.

God's method is not as man's. Buildings made with hands are necessarily imperfect, their shape depends upon circumstances, they are subject to variations and they call for constant repairs and additions. For example,

take the famous churches already mentioned. That of Rome, grew out of Michael Angelo's ambition to surpass the pagan Pantheon. Said he, "I'll hang the Pantheon in the air." This determined the shape of the dome and that of course dominated the building. The London church was rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren to make it correspond to a certain portico erected by Inigo Jones. Moreover his plan was altered to suit the whim of the Duke of York, afterward James II, who wanted the interior so arranged that he might conveniently introduce papal ceremonies when he should have the power. We are told that Wren shed tears when speaking of the change he was compelled to make. I suppose there was never yet a house built without changes either at the time or subsequently. But God's building is begun, continued, and ended on a plan of the utmost regularity, which is never in the least modified by circumstances, nor altered to suit the requirements of different generations. His design is an absolute model, admitting of no improvement and consequently of no imitation; neither a copy nor a continuation, but *sui generis*; as fair as it is unique and as lasting as beautiful; an immutable emblem of order, stability and completeness. He is the rock; his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment.

“O how unlike the complex works of man
Heaven's easy artless unincumbered plan.
No meretricious graces to beguile,
No clustering ornaments to clog the pile,
From ostentation as from weakness free,
It stands like the cerulean arch we see,
Majestic in its own simplicity.”

Two kinds of material compose God's building, the one supremely good, the other supremely bad. Says Paul to the Ephesians, "Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone," and Peter adds, "Ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house." When we think what it is to become the corner stone of this building, that it is to be subjected to the line and plummet of judgment, to be assailed by the hail sweeping down from above and the waters surging up from below; to be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, to be sunk in the mine of humiliation and made the only support of an accursed race, in plain English, to be exposed to the ingratitude of man, to the malice of devils and to the frown of God, all uniting their forces for a desperate assault, when we think of this it seems incredible that the eternal and ever blessed Father could bring himself to permit such shame and degradation to befall his well beloved Son. Rather let mankind sink into Tophet than be upheld by the prostrate form of the Son of God. But no, not so, but thus saith the Lord God, "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation; he that buildeth thereon shall not be in haste to flee." Then let us call upon our souls and all within us to bless and magnify the Lord for his unspeakable gift of such costly material to be employed for our support and safety.

Nor will our wonder and gratitude diminish when we think upon the worthless material chosen for the superstructure. His own Son to be the sure foundation and graceless rebels to be built upon him! Was ever before a building composed of such strange and diverse

elements? If it be abasement to the verge of infamy for Christ to become the corner stone, surely it is promotion to the verge of infinity, for sinful man to be joined with Him in such a fabric. Verily the architect who can utilize such unlikely materials and harmonize such discordant elements, bears not in vain the name of Wonderful and Counsellor. Verily, verily, his building shall stand the imperishable and unimpeachable monument of almighty power, transcendent skill, and infinite compassion.

It needs not in this connection to tell how the corner stone was laid by clothing God's Son with flesh and heaping the sins of a world upon his crucified person, but we may linger for a moment to describe the process by which the other stones are fitted to their places. First of all, they are imbedded in the quarry of sinful nature. Look, brethren, at the hole of the pit whence we are digged, and the rock whence we are hewn. By the hammer and fire of God's word, by the drill of precept upon precept, and the blasting volleyed thunder of the law we are riven from the state of nature. Then the chisel of chastisement wielded by a firm but loving hand cuts the rough blocks into the requisite proportions. Not all alike, but just as each is provided for in the plan, so the great Artificer shapes them out. The living stones may shrink from the mallet and cry out at the heavy and constant blows, but the work goes steadily on till all that is unsuitable and improper has been removed, and the precise pattern of the wise Master-builder, for each particular part, has been reproduced. Then the hand of Providence lays hold of the shapely stones and shifts them about hither and thither appar-

ently without aim but really in close pursuance of the great design, till at length they are polished after the similitude of a palace, and adjusted in the wall exactly where they belong.

Then they are fastened together by the influence of brotherly love, which emanates in a mysterious magnetic way from the chief corner stone, just as a powerful magnet imparts its virtue to each piece of iron which it touches and through these to others and so on along a series whose extent is limited only by the weakness of the original magnet. In this case there is no weakness. The love of God shed abroad from Christ through the lively stones of his spiritual temple, is no untempered mortar to relax its grip at the fury of stormy wind or angry flood, or great hailstones, but a cementing force that defies all opposition, so that stones and mortar, foundation and superstructure coalesce and constitute one homogeneous mass. When laid on this foundation rock, every individual believer becomes a partaker of its nature. The experience of every saved soul is similar to that of Peter. When Christ is revealed to it and confessed by it, then God says to that soul, "Thou art a rock and upon this bed rock I will build thee into my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." "Who shall separate us from the Love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Nay, there is not any creature able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Consider the magnitude of this building. A work is sometimes estimated by the length of time it takes to be executed. "Forty and six years," said the Jews,

“was this temple in building.” Five hundred years is counted well spent in erecting such an edifice as the cathedral of Milan or Cologne. Millions of years, say the geologists, were employed in preparing the earth for the habitation of man. But by what standard of measurement shall we compute the time during which God's building has already been in process of construction? It as far surpasses the reckoning of geologists for the preparation of this planet as their computation exceeds that of the Jews for the building of Herod's temple. How vast such a building must be.

Or judge by the number of workmen. If I were to tell you of a building in Philadelphia which has employed two thousand men for the last ten years, and which is surrounded by scaffolding containing more than a million feet of lumber, what an immense work you would conceive it to be! But such a city hall is as nothing, in comparison with God's building. Think of the workmen God employs. The Holy Ghost does not disdain to take part in this stupendous enterprise: legions of angels, whose powers can neither be described nor conceived, find here no lack of room to exert themselves, and myriads of human hands have lent their energies to bring it forward. Not that all are willing helpers, for as one has said, “Scholars, merchants, kings, heroes, tyrants, have labored for this cause without knowing it, but consciously or not, and willingly or not, they have been God's agents for the accomplishment of this task.” How colossal such a building must be!

Judge of its size by the amount of scaffolding demanded. For the nearest approach to an adequate unit of measurement will be found, perhaps, in the char-

acter and amount of this scaffolding, which is nothing less than all space and all time. It is a sublime thought, which the old theologians hand down to us, that all the stars in their courses and all the ages in their revolutions, have as their prime object, the furtherance of God's scheme of redemption. The incarnate Son of God spilling his own blood as the price of human salvation, is the central figure around which æons and systems revolve, as obedient and dependent satellites.

Time and space are terms of no small magnitude to our mortal comprehension. We stand in awe at the very thought of them. When we try to recall so recent an event as the Creation, bewilderment seizes us, when we look abroad upon the heavens, humility clothes us, but with God a thousand years are as one day and a thousand suns are as one clod of the valley. To Him ages and worlds are but the circumstantial beams and boards on which his workmen stand to prosecute their labors. They may baffle and confuse our weak faculties, just as the scaffolding prevents a good view of the growing building; but when the angel plants his feet on land and sea and swears that time shall be no longer; when the firmament is rolled up as a scroll and the earth cast aside like a worn out garment; in a word, when the scaffolding is taken down, then shall God's building appear in all its solid worth, "an eternal excellency, the joy of many generations."

We have noticed the Architect, plan, material, construction and magnitude of this building; notice now its purpose. No ordinary purpose will correspond to such unusual preparations. A palace implies a King, and a temple suggests a God. This building demands the

“Holiest among the mighty and the mightiest among the Holy.” The charge of wastefulness and folly has been preferred against the Architect of this building. “To what purpose,” exclaim the apostles of utility “is all this incalculable expense of time and space and care and energy? Why should the Triune God, and angels, planets, and human beings engage in such a work of supererogation? Especially, why should this small world and these insignificant creatures have so much attention, when, for aught we know, there are other spheres more important, and other creatures more numerous and needy, on whose behalf this great effort might more fitly be put forth?” The answer is not hard to find.

Put the question in another form. “To what purpose,” said the apostle of thrift among the twelve, “was this waste? This ointment might have been sold for much and given to the poor.” He forgot that giving to the poor was only a roundabout way of lending to the Lord, whereas the act he condemned was giving directly to the Lord. So to all objectors against the outlay on this building we can say, “The Master hath need of it.” The Lord himself hath chosen this building for his own abode. This is the purpose for which it is named and who will say it does not fitly correspond to the magnificence of the structure? As to that poor quibble that the earth affords too small a site for such a big foundation, and too straitened an arena for such a contest as is alleged to be waged between the powers of light and of darkness, let it be exploded by an illustration. Travel with me to Syria and pause at Gaugamela. Look around, the plain is not very large nor very fertile.

There are farms in this country that would sell for more than all the land in sight. Only a few miles of level sand! What right has this little spot to claim precedence of whole realms and continents? Because in the month of October, 331 B. C., there was laid here the foundation of an empire that embraced all Asia. Here was fought between the Greek and the Mede the decisive battle of Arbela.

The Rubicon, you know, was a small stream, and Marathon was a narrow plain and at Lodi it was only a bridge, but it does not take much ground, my brethren, to be the fulcrum on which Alexander, or Cæsar, or Napoleon, shall prop a throne to rule the world. Yes, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them and be their God. "But will God in very deed dwell with men?" How can we doubt it, when we believe that from eternity he has been ordering all things for this sole purpose? "Having made known unto us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ," of which the poet sang, as

"One far off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves."

One of the first reflections suggested by this subject is that believers are not simply passive in the making of God's building, "For we are laborers together with God." But this fact redounds more to the glory of the great Architect than to the honor of his assistants, for it is by his grace that we are permitted to be his helpers.

“Even he shall build the temple of the Lord and he shall bear the glory.”

Again we may learn that Bible symbols are not governed by the canons of human taste. As Trench has well remarked, “A city constituting a perfect cube is simply inconceivable to us, but the divine seer did not care that we should conceive it; he was only careful to express the fact that this is a city which shall never be moved. To this, as in so many other cases, how the idea would appear when it clothed itself in an outward form, whether it could so clothe itself at all, and if it could, whether it would find favor and allowance at the bar of taste, as satisfying the conditions of beauty, this was not a consideration at all. This subordination of art to religion indicates a slighter perception of beauty in the Hebrew than in the Greek perhaps, but superiority in other and more important matters, a deeper religious earnestness, a feeling that the essence is above the form, a conviction that truth is more than beauty, and that everything must be sacrificed to this.”

Further, we may find encouragement in reflecting upon the transformation of bad material into good. We are so often tempted to give up in despair at our repeated failures to expel indwelling sin; to cry out, “There is no soundness and no help in us. What is the use of continuing such a hopeless struggle?” If it depended on our own efforts to achieve a place in God’s building, we might very well despond; but we are not left to such bungling workmanship.

“There’s a Divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough hew them how we will,”

and again, they say, "best men are moulded out of faults," and a higher authority than Shakespeare declares, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help."

Still further we may reflect with profit upon the essential unity exhibited in God's building. As Jay says, "The parts of a temple are different, but they are all necessary. The door cannot say to the window, or the wall to the roof, I have no need of thee. Some parts are more near, and some more remote, some more conspicuous and some more concealed; but they all subserve their appointment; they all sustain the most intimate mutual relation, and by their junction form one perfect building. 'We are all one in Christ Jesus,' 'In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.'"

When we consider the magnitude of this building compared with the things that are seen, we may be allowed to indulge a desire to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven. Some one crossing the Atlantic said to his fellow passengers, "there is but a plank between us and Eternity." The same may be said by all who are making the voyage of life. Time and space are after all nothing but planks between us and Eternity. And the planks are growing rotten day by day. They cannot hold us up much longer. "As the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth there is but a step between me and death." That step must shortly be taken. The supports of this life are gradually giving way. Soon this body shall be lowered into its narrow bed and this soul shall take its plunge in the shoreless ocean. Dear brethren shall we tremble at this prospect?

God forbid! "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Finally, we may learn that the best use which can possibly be made of any building, is to set it apart for the occupancy of God. The splendid palace of Hampton Court was built by Cardinal Wolsey as a residence, but when it was completed its magnificence was such that he feared to incur the envy of both King and people by dwelling in it. So he gave it to his royal master. In like manner we should reflect that our redeemed bodies and our regenerated characters are structures too grand to be appropriated exclusively to our own use. Let us present them a living sacrifice to God, and deem ourselves happy if He will deign to occupy what his grace alone can render meet for such a royal guest. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost? and ye are not your own; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's."

Is there any one here who never surrendered his body to be a temple of the Holy Ghost? By the happiness of entertaining God and by the danger of refusing hospitality to Him, I charge you, let the vow of David be your vow this day: "Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes or slumber to mine eyelids until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob."

X.

OUR GOD.

“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.”—*Mark* xii. 30.

LOVE is the grandest passion of which any being is capable. It is also the commonest, for it is the mother passion from which, with its partner hate, all other affections of the mind take their rise. It may be described as a mixture of perception, desire and impulse. The mind first recognizes a character of loveliness, then feels a desire of possession, and then goes out in utter self-abnegation to spend itself upon the beloved object. This separation of love into its constituent parts is well adapted to assist in the exposition of the first table of the law as it is summed up in the words of the text. Our Lord here brings to view the highest expression of loveliness, which the human mind can apprehend, in the person of God, the infinite and eternal Jehovah. Moreover, it is implied that this object is within the reach of our possession, “*thy* God;” and finally we are called upon, in tones of authority from which there is no appeal, to thoroughly empty ourselves upon this most worthy object: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.” Thus we are called to contemplate God in this threefold aspect as the object of perception, desire and impulse. Let us consider to-day first;

Jehovah as the Lovable Object, and secondly, the possession of this Object. I shall leave the discussion of the third head for some future time.

In the preface to the ten commandments the divine Speaker announces His incommunicable name in order, as the catechism teaches, to impress the Israelites with the duty of careful obedience to His precepts. The same argument is employed repeatedly in scripture, notably in the nineteenth chapter of Leviticus, where, to the number of no less than sixteen times, the name of God is insisted upon as a reason for obedience. It is not difficult to understand that He, who was before all things, by whom all things exist, and for whose pleasure they are and were created, has a right to command the creatures of His hand, and a double right, if that were possible, when they become the people of His choice. The necessity and propriety of implicit obedience are manifest from the declaration of his mysterious name, but obedience and love are vastly different things, and not to be required, one would think, on precisely the same terms.

A slave may toil with diligence and obey with trembling, because he knows that his master has all power and authority over him, but he does not therefore love his master. Rather he fears and hates him, and longs to break away. If the owner of a slave should say to him, "You must love me because I can do with you as I please," he would play the fool. Such power may very well require prompt and unquestioning obedience, but could never be expected to enforce affection. Yet the Lord declares by the mouth of Hosea, "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love."

How comes it that God is set forth in the same breath as the absolute, arbitrary, despot of our lives, and the lovable object of our affections? The answer lies in this, that when, by the help of the Holy Spirit, we look upon God as revealed in this awful name, Jehovah, we perceive that he is not only the Creator of our bodies, but also the Inbreather of our souls. That is, we recognize together with the sovereignty of a Maker, the likeness of a Father, and we feel a strong affinity with Him in whose image we are made. Dulled and smothered as our souls are, by the walls of clay in which for the present we are imprisoned, it is not till we catch sight of infinite being in God that we are able to interpret aright the strange yearnings of our own imperishable natures. When the soul apprehends God as infinite and self-existent, it perceives in a flash, that here is the one and only object in all the universe that is truly worth loving. Perhaps we never could have understood this, if God had not been pleased to humble himself, to take on our nature and be found in fashion as a man. But with this positive proof that Deity and humanity have enough in common to permit their residence together in one person, and a human person at that, we have no difficulty in believing that we also are made partakers of the divine nature. We can look upon the invisible God, the irresponsible author of our being, the absolute disposer of our fortunes, and see and feel that He is altogether lovely.

Even the Pagans had some glimpse of this truth, for they named their highest conception of the Supreme not only the "First Good," and "First Perfect," but also, the "First Fair." To this same thought the apostle's

argument seems to refer when speaking to the disciples of Zeno and Epicurus, on Mars Hill, for he describes God as the source and maintainer of life; "In whom we live, and move, and have our being, as certain also of your own poets have said, 'for we are also his offspring.'" Now, if we are sprung from God, we ought to have a filial feeling toward him. But the fact that this feeling never did exist among Pagans, whose best account of the Godhead was, according to Plato, "That the mind could neither comprehend, nor language express him," and the further fact, that this feeling never does exist among the possessors of revelation until something more is known of Jehovah than His infinity and eternity, make it evident enough that somehow a great gulf has opened between us and the Father of our spirits, whereby dimness has come upon our spiritual vision, because He dwelleth in a land very far off; in plain speech, that we are, by nature, sinful creatures, who can feel no attraction toward perfect holiness, and rebellious subjects, who can take no delight in infinite justice, and doomed criminals who can derive no satisfaction from the prospect of eternal existence.

It is necessary therefore in order to draw out our souls toward God, that we recognize Him not only as the high and holy Inhabitant of Eternity, but also as the Almighty Interposer and Deliverer who brings us from the power of darkness, into the kingdom of his dear Son. This double character of creator and covenant God, has been derived, as one has said, "From the historical use and development of the name Jehovah. It was given as the seal of the covenant, as the ground of the great deliverance from Egyptian bondage." The national ex-

istence rested upon it. The vitality of Israel was guaranteed by the eternity of Israel's God. The bush that burnt and was not consumed, was the emblem of Him who gives and is none the poorer, who works unwearied, who pours forth life and light through all ages to all creatures and diminishes no whit the fulness of the fountain of life which is with Him. Here, then, is the first requisite for obeying the text, viz: the apprehension of Jehovah as the God of creation and of the covenant; Maker and Preserver of all things; to whom we are allied by affinities of nature and bound by invincible obligations.

But this apprehension by itself, is not enough. It might well make us tremble, it might even fill us with desire, but it could never make us love, or lose ourselves in, God. Let us therefore turn our attention to the fact of possession implied in the expression, "Thy God."

It is very remarkable that no one ventured to appropriate this title to his own use, by changing "thy" into "my," until the time of David. He seems to have been the first to say to God, in express terms, "Thou art *my* God." This was certainly not the fault of the language which the Lord used to his people. Scores of times He described himself as belonging to them. In one chapter the familiar formula is eight times repeated, "I am Jehovah, thy God." Over and over He calls himself the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, repeating the assurance separately with each name. Yet neither patriarch nor prophet, for thousands of years, ever gathered courage to say "O Lord thou art *my* God." Surely in this matter, they came short of their privilege, and their duty.

But how can mortals be said to possess God? In three ways at least. One is by faith, which enables the believer to appropriate God in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. "He that acknowledgeth the Son *hath* the Father also." "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." To an observing and reflecting mind, this is a staggering thought. When we consider the heavens the work of His fingers, the moon and the stars which take their laws from His lips; when we sum up what we know of this vast round world with its varied forms of life, and its many prodigies of nature, its volcanoes and cataracts, its mountains and oceans, and multiply all this by the myriads of spheres that people surrounding space,—and when on the other hand, we remark the brevity and frailty of human life, how subject it is to disease and decay, how long it is in maturing, how limited in its scope and how liable to premature cessation, and further, how inclined it is toward evil, and how averse from good, how full of selfishness, impiety and crime, *then* indeed our wonder passes all bounds. "Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him?" Is it not amazing that weak mortals in the presence of such power, grandeur, vastness, and duration, should be invested with dominion over all these things?

But this is a small part of his dignity. Although it is manifest that God, in putting all things in subjection under the representative man, is himself exempted from submission, yet He does not exempt himself from possession. It is very surprising that He should take any favorable notice of man; it is incomprehensible, that he should admit helpless rebels to his con-

fidence, and give them a share in his dominion. But he goes far beyond this, and allows them alliance with his family and a title to his person. He even volunteers a sure pledge of His good faith in promising the most unheard of favors. He covers with a thick veil the native glory of His co-equal Son, He wraps the pure essence of Deity round with the swaddling clothes of human flesh and He sends among men as an ambassador, in the express image of man, one who is the brightness of His own glory, and the express image of His own person.

We are called upon to believe that the Framer and Ruler of a universe appeared in fashion as one of us, that He confined His effulgent illimitable being within a mortal body and restricted the exercise of His omnipotence to an insignificant part of one of the smallest among the many worlds, that were made and governed by His power. We are to believe that this divine human person kept the law perfectly, and made atonement for sin, so that the way is reopened wherein men may pass from earth to heaven. If we can accept this in spite of its strangeness, its opposition to all the teachings of carnal sense and experience, then we have an appropriating faith, and God is our God forever. We can fall in contrite self-surrender before the Saviour of all men and cry out in tones of full conviction and well grounded confidence, "My Lord and my God." It is true, we have not the same evidence that Thomas had, when he used these words, but we have something better. We have that faith which is itself "the substance of things hoped for," and we have that added blessedness ascribed to those who "have not seen and yet have believed." "Therefore, being justified by faith we have peace with God

through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Another mode of possessing God is by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In the former dispensation God's dwelling was in the Holy of Holies, yet even this was sufficient to give Israel a peculiar claim upon God. Since the day of Pentecost, we have the spirit dwelling not only in the church at large, as a glorious temple built of living stones, but also in believers as individuals, whose single and several bodies become each a temple of the living God.

My brethren, let us rise to the full blessedness of the truth that our bodies are temples whose sacred fire, once kindled from heaven, never goes out in darkness; where God the Father and God the Son are always present in the person of God the Holy Ghost. Let us pray that we may be more mindful of this fact; that every thing which keeps us from realizing the abiding presence of God may be removed, and that every thought, feeling, and wish in our hearts may speedily be brought under the blessed control of the indwelling Spirit. Being filled with the Spirit and led of the Spirit and living in the Spirit let us resign ourselves to His guidance, obey his motions and walk in his paths. Having God himself for our God, let us keep that good thing committed unto us by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us. Thus we possess God in the person of Christ and in the Holy Spirit.

Still another way in which we may be said to possess God is by virtue of that covenant grant in His word wherein He makes over to us whatever He is and what-

ever He has to be ours freely and eternally. Such strong language I find in Fisher's catechism. Whatever He has which we can possibly need or use He puts at our disposal in the promise, "All things are yours." Whatever He is in one and all of the three persons, He gives to us. He is our Father, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier, as absolutely as if He had existed from all eternity for no other purpose. He makes over to us "All His glorious attributes and excellencies, His infinity to be the extent of our inheritance, His eternity to be the duration of our happiness, His unchangeableness to be the rock of our rest, His wisdom to direct us, His power to protect us, His holiness to sanctify us, His justice to justify and preserve us, His goodness to reward us and His truth to secure us in the accomplishment of all his promises."

What a large possession is ours! How indescribably great! The earth is but a point compared with the universe, the universe is but a point compared with what we know of God, and what we know of Him is but a point compared with that which is yet to be revealed: Eye hath not seen it, ear hath not heard it, heart of man hath not conceived it. And all this heritage which cannot be measured by thought nor outlined by imagination, is wrapped up and delivered over to believers in one little word, "*Thy* God." It can not be forfeited, or lost, or stolen, or alienated in any possible way. It is beyond the reach of moth and rust to corrupt and of thieves to break through and steal. It is "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto Salvation." Blessed are the people

that are in such a case; "Yea blessed are the people whose God is the Lord."

In conclusion two practical questions. The first is this. Do you perceive God as a very lovable Object? What is your thought of God? Your first instinctive thought? A dying child said, "Papa, when I get up to heaven and see God I'll just put my arms around His neck and kiss Him." Are you educating yourself up to this standard of what is truly lovable? God is a spirit; are you taking delight in the flesh? God is infinite; do you cling to the finite? Are you ready to bid the earth a glad farewell and say,

"Behold I go where I do know
Infinity to dwell?"

God is eternal. Do you train the tendrils of your heart around earthly props, or do you fasten upon the unseen and live by the powers of the world to come? Can you adopt the language of the old Scotch song:

"I am far frae my hame, and I'm weary aftenwhiles,
For the lang'd-for hame-bringing, and my Father's welcome
smiles,
I'll ne'er be fu' content, until my een do see
The gowden gates of heav'n an' my ain countrie.
The earth is fleck'd wi' flowers, mony-tinted fresh and gay;
The birdies warble blithely, for my Father made them sae;
But these sights an' these soun's will as naething be to me,
When I hear the angels singing in my ain countrie.
I've his gude word of promise, that some gladsome day the
king,
To his ain royal palace, his banished hame, will bring.
Wi' een an' wi' heart running owre we shall see
'The King in his beauty,' an' our ain countrie."

The second of these questions is perhaps more difficult to answer. Do you look upon God not only as supremely desirable but also as actually in your possession? Do you know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you, and do you act accordingly? Or, is Christ with you as he was with the disciples on the lake? They carried Christ, and yet they were in terror and despair. Not till the boat was settling for its last plunge, did they bethink themselves that the Saviour was on board.

I have recently read an account of an immense treasure possessed by the Sultan of Turkey, but not available for his use. It is called the "Treasure of Islam," and is made of the offerings of pilgrims at sacred shrines for many ages. It is designed for the defense of the Moslem faith only in the last extremity. To this nominal possession, but real destitution of the Sultan, the spiritual condition of these disciples on Galilee, and of many professing Christians to-day, may sadly be compared. There is an untold treasure in actual possession, but instead of drawing upon it for their daily need, they act as if it must be reserved for the very hour and article of dissolution. When they are reduced to the last extremity they will realize, so to speak, on their securities. When they enter the valley of the shadow of death they will cry mightily to God and His presence will be their safety. But they forget that the good Shepherd heals and feeds and guards his flock day by day. Is this your condition? O brethren, let us follow the example of David and appropriate God. Let us say with him, "For this God is *our* God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death."

XI.

OUR SUN AND SHIELD.

“For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”—*Psalm lxxxiv.* 11.

THE most dependent and the most defenseless of all creatures born into the world, is a human infant. There is not a beast in the field, a fowl in the air or a fish in the sea so unable to supply its own wants and to protect itself against its enemies. This is a commonplace, but I think it can be lifted from the level of a commonplace, by saying that the same thing is true of man at any period of his life. The grown up infant may display great activity in obtaining food and shelter, but will these things satisfy him as they do the brute? He may get books, friends, a pleasant home, wealth, power, and fame, but having these, can he lie down as contented as the full fed bear in his den? or as the mother bird on her nest? He may live in the midst of peace, or behind thick walls, but will he thus be rid of all enemies and of all sense of fear? He may win a name for courage so that no eye can meet his without quailing but will his own heart never sink? Can he ever reach such a pitch of conscious superiority to danger as is displayed by the lordly lion in the forest, or the war-horse pawing in the valley? There is but one answer to these questions.

Man has needs and foes of which the brutes know nothing, before which he stands powerless and unprotected. The birds twitter, the fish sport, and the beasts lie down without one ungratified longing, or one twinge of alarm, but man, proud man, the lord of creation forsooth! can not stifle his cravings, nor dismiss his fears. What then? Are we worse off than worms and insects? Undoubtedly we are, so long as we depend on our own resources. The author of the eighty-fourth Psalm has pondered this two-fold limitation. He has sounded the depth of his own need and measured the extent of his own danger. Looking away from himself he has found an all-sufficient portion in God. That is why in the opening of the Psalm his whole soul goes out to the sanctuary where he is wont to find so deep a sense of repose and safety: "Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God."

Sustained by the hope of such a refuge the ancient pilgrim to Zion found a well of spiritual comfort in the dreariest valley of Baca. He goes on from stage to stage of his journey, till he appears before God and pours out his heart in adoration. Nor does he wait long for the blessing. Communion with God fills him with light and gladness. The blessedness of the one day atones for all the wretchedness and surpasses all the joy of a thousand other days. He would rather be a servant here, than a sovereign elsewhere. Then he generalizes his experience and shows us God as the beneficent source of all good and the almighty defense against all evil. Thus God reveals himself to every sincere spiritual worshipper.

The text which embodies this result, consists of three clauses in which, according to the well known characteristics of Hebrew poetry, the same idea is repeated in different forms. This parallelism affords a convenient key to the measuring as well as to the structure of a passage. When we have grasped the notion that these several dresses are here employed to clothe the same truth, we have gone a great way toward a good understanding of this most impressive, instructive, and profound utterance of the Holy Spirit.

First of all, the thought is arrayed in the resplendent garments of Eastern imagery. "The Lord God is a sun and shield." This combination of metaphors is like that of colors in the rainbow, striking and splendid. The imagination revels in it. It appeals powerfully to our sense of the beautiful, both in nature and in art. Its first effect is surprise; then it piques the curiosity; then it stimulates thought; then it begins to gratify the taste; then it fires the soul with holy admiration; then it opens the door of investigation and brings the mind into a large place, and finally suffuses the heart with feeling and produces an outburst of gratitude to a kind Heavenly Father who condescends to convey his truth in a manner so exquisitely adapted to please as well as to instruct. But there are some minds which are not cast in a poetic mould. Wordsworth says of one,

" A primrose by the river's brim,
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more."

These also are God's children, and their hard matter-of-fact mental constitution is likewise his good gift. It

is just as needful as the other kind, and but for it the fancy would run to excess of riot. For such therefore the truth is put plainly and without a parable. "The Lord will give grace and glory." Lastly to render the knowledge of truth, whether received mainly through the fancy or through the judgment, of some practical use in the actual life we live in the flesh, the thought is stated in the shape of an inference that no good thing will be withheld from the upright, and then the Psalm concludes with an ascription of unspeakable blessedness to the man whose trust is in the Lord of Hosts. Let us now examine the thought of the text as expressed in this threefold form.

First, the Poetic Form, "The Lord God is a sun and shield." God is a sun. There is no other place in the Bible where God is called directly by this title, but there are several passages which imply the same thing. Its appropriateness is very plain. The first impression made by the sun is that of light. As a light bearer the sun is indispensable. Blindness is a great calamity, but even blindness does not fully express the deprivation of light. To be blind is bad enough, but to have seeing eyes and yet to have no light, is worse. No blind man ever realized the curse of darkness as did the Egyptians whose sense of it was that it might be felt. It was an overwhelming pressure holding every one in his place in motionless despair. What the absence of the sun was to Egypt and what the presence of the sun was to Goshen that the absence or presence of God is to the soul. He is "the master light of all our seeing." "In his light we see light clearly." Cut off from him we can not move hand or foot to help ourselves.

But the sun is the source also of fertility. Both the soil and the seed are softened by moisture, which the sun causes, and then warmed by its rays into action. How responsively all vegetation turns itself in dumb but eloquent acknowledgment toward the author of its existence. The root sprouting in the cellar reaches out feebly but persistently toward the nearest window in search of the sun; the flowers turn lovingly from East to West to follow his progress; vines can with difficulty be trained in any other direction, and even "the unwedgeable and gnarled oak" in its formation and growth obeys the same instinct. So entirely do all forms of life depend upon the sun, that if his rays were interrupted for a single month there is no living thing in earth, air or sea, that could survive. Such also is God to the life of the soul. In a material sense, we are wholly dependent upon His care, but it is especially in a spiritual sense that He is the source of all our life and energy. Wherever the warmth of His love does not penetrate, wherever His will is not the moving spring of life, there death reigns, a hideous despot.

The soul that shuts out the love of God is dead in trespasses and sins. It is like the abandoned shaft of some deep mine in the mountains, where even mosses and lichens refuse to grow, where the choke-damp loves to linger and the seasons roll without effecting any change. "But unto you that fear my name the sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall."

Another point of likeness is in the all pervasive force of gravitation. Something of this the ancients perceived. It made a deep impression upon the thoughtful David as

appears from that most familiar yet most mysterious nineteenth Psalm, where a close resemblance is suggested between the natural and revealed laws of God. There is nothing hid from the heat of the sun in His vast circuit, and the law of the Lord is equally potent to enlighten the mind, to convert the soul, and to rejoice the heart.

But it has been reserved for modern thinkers to appreciate the extent to which the sun controls the earth. The sun swings our world around on its orbit with unvarying precision and with inconceivable swiftness. "All our food and clothing are produced by absorption of solar rays." The sun is the ultimate source of water power, steam power, electric power and muscle power, in short of every power existing in the world. What a magnificent emblem of Him "in whom we live and move and have our being."

But why does not the Psalmist stop with this symbol? Why does he pass on from so grand an emblem to one conceived on a lower plane and marking so wide a difference?

The Lord God is a sun *and shield*. Is it not a violation of even poetic license to unite two such discordant figures in a single expression? Even if it were, the inspired penman would not hesitate. The grand aim of the sacred poet is to tell the truth. If rules of composition get in the way of this design, so much the worse for the rules. In this case, however, there is no clashing, but on the contrary the rule which requires a certain conformity in metaphors when combined, finds here a shining example. To the ancient, the sun was the highest symbol of nature, and the shield was the highest symbol of art. There is, therefore, no want of fitness in

combining them to indicate how truly God adapts himself to human need. What the shield meant when this Psalm was penned may be learned from another source. In the Iliad of Homer, a poem nearly as old as this Psalm, there is a famous description of the armor prepared for the great warrior, Achilles. Of that description more than a hundred lines are devoted to the shield and hardly half a dozen lines to the rest of the armor. All the cunning of Vulcan was employed in making the shield not only impenetrable but also beautiful. It contained numerous scenes of war and peace, wrought with surpassing artistic skill. While the first object was protection, there was combined with this, beauty of execution in the highest degree of excellence. It was at once a protection and a gem of art.

Now see how well this symbol, in both these respects, accords with the first. It is true the sun gives light, but it does so without any regard to capacity for light. It falls upon the unshrinking eye of the eagle, and upon the blinking owl with equal strength. But God is more than a sun, He is a shield. When His light strikes down the rapt Isaiah or the loving John, He lifts them up again and puts strength in them. When He reveals himself to Moses He puts His child in a cleft of the rock and covers him with His hand till the insufferable blaze of His glory is subdued enough for mortal eyes to look and live.

Again the sun warms but it does not measure its heat by the demand for it. The strength of its rays is never adjusted to the weakness of the objects on which they fall. Some plant may have a worm at its root against which it could battle successfully by the help of shade

and moisture; but the sun takes no note of this. A prophet may have sought shelter under the doomed plant, but neither for him will the sun slack its fiery stream. It beats down without pity even though Jonah should become angry and wish in himself to die.

“Strange that the sun should call into birth
All the fair flowers and fruits of earth,
To bid them perish and see them die,
While they cheer the soul, and gladden the eye.
At noon, its child is the pride of spring,
And at night, a shriveled and worthless thing.
To-day there is life and hope in its breath,
And to-morrow it shrinks to a useless death.
Strange doth it seem that the sun should joy
To give life alone that it may destroy.”

Therefore the sun is a defective symbol of God. He is a sun and shield. When the people faint and sink under the burden and heat of the day, then He becomes to them as the “shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” While he smites with one hand he upholds and comforts with the other. Dwell for a moment on the completeness of our protection when God is our shield. He is a defense against every form of evil. He saves us from ourselves. “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself but in me is thy help.” He saves us from our enemies. We may be wandering in a strange land or among suspicious and envious neighbors, like Abraham in Palestine, or David in Gath, but the promise still holds good. “Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.” Envious neighbors may be changed into open enemies, as they were with David and as they now are

with our missionaries in Egypt, but the sure memories of David are given to us, "Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me, I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about."

" The Lord before me still
I set and trust his love,
At my right hand he guards from ill
And nothing shall me move."

"Happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee."

Even when the eternal God rises up in wrath and launches the thunderbolts of vengeance against us, we may escape without a scar, for the Love of God interposes and receives in his own breast the weapons aimed at us. The sword of justice is awaked to smite with terrible power, but the shield of mercy catches the stroke, and turns it aside from us. For the Lord God is a sun and a shield.

Examine this shield, O Christian! See with what infinite skill it was prepared in the counsels of eternity. How ample are its proportions, how firm its temper and withal how beautiful to look upon. The shield of Achilles was boasted to be invulnerable, but it did not save him from the fatal arrow. Our shield will not suffer a hair of our heads to perish. The shield of Achilles was beautiful, but no work of art can compare with the work of our salvation wrought in Jesus Christ. When we look upon Him we see the perfection of beauty. Every incident in His earthly life appeals to our sense of the truly beautiful. We see Him healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf,

strength to the impotent, cleansing to the lepers, life to the dead and glad tidings to all. We see Him lying in the manger, working at the bench, teaching by the wayside, glorified on the mountain, prostrate in the garden, bound at the judgment seat, bleeding on the cross, bursting from the tomb and ascending into heaven. With what intense and devout interest we gaze upon this shield! We summon our friends to admire its beauty, we challenge the universe to produce the like, we call upon angels and devils to fall down and worship before it. Waxing bolder we appeal to the great Jehovah of Hosts to decide if this is not a sufficient protection against even the fierceness of His anger and the might of his omnipotence, "Behold, O God, our shield and look upon the face of thine annointed." And this frown is changed into a smile of approval, as He recognizes the face of his well beloved. In Him He sees no iniquity in Jacob. He takes away all iniquity and receives us graciously.

Notice in the second place, the didactic or promissory form of this text. "The Lord will give grace and glory." Everything good is here included. The favor of God in this life, and the glory of God in the life to come. What more could mortals ask or receive? Verily God is the beneficent source of all good. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the father of light." Again, "Salvation is not of works lest any man should boast." All that any one can honestly *earn* is punishment. "The wages of sin is death," while "the gift of God is eternal life." These are two doctrines clearly taught in this passage. Salvation is of the Lord and salvation is a gift. "We are saved by grace."

Further, grace and glory are here united. They are bound up in the same gift, and must be taken or refused together. They are wedded to each other by the Holy Spirit. To this heaven-made union, if I may so speak, three offsprings are born. One is the final perseverance of the saints; Grace must be followed by glory. "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." The second offspring of this wedlock, is the necessity of repentance and regeneration in this life. Glory must be preceded by grace, ye must be born again. To show the glory of God in eternity, we must have the grace of God in time. The third offspring is the identity of grace and glory. They are one and the same thing in different stages of development. Grace is the blossom and glory the fruit, says a wise author. "Man is the glory of this lower world, the soul is the glory of man, grace is the glory of the soul, and heaven is the glory of grace."

Notice, thirdly, the practical inference drawn from this conception of God: "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." There is no greater theme than God as the beneficent source of all good and as the almighty defense against all evil, but it is well to bear in mind, that although He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust, yet His benevolence does not shield the wicked from perdition. The Lord God is a sun to all, but He is a shield only to those that put their trust in Him and walk uprightly. All through the Psalms this integrity of walk and conversation is insisted upon. It is the keynote struck at the beginning of this multitudinous anthem of praise, and it runs through the

entire collection. Only the downright honesty of a sincere life is regarded by God as the proper evidence of grace in the heart and glory in prospect. If you desire grace here and glory hereafter, take that thought home with you and act upon it day by day. Deal fairly with your fellows, avoid all sharp practice. Abstain from all appearance of evil, live a life of simple integrity, provide things honest in the sight of all men and then expect the blessing of God upon your efforts. Be not afraid to ask Him for temporal as well as spiritual favors but do not repine if he keeps you poor in this world's goods. If your child asks you for an edged tool to play with or even to work with, you do not always grant his request. And if you ask God for what you think to be a fish but what He knows to be a scorpion He is too kind a Father to give it you. Learn, therefore, to be content with such things as you have, and never forget that the highest of all good lies in the favor and protection of God. While the multitude are clamoring for gifts, see that you covet earnestly the best gift.

I cannot dismiss this subject without calling your attention to a notable characteristic of the whole Bible of which this text affords an excellent example. I allude to that comprehensiveness of application which the Bible exhibits in adapting itself to all the requirements of human diversity and human advancement. This blessed book is intended for all sorts and conditions of men. The poet, the sage, and the plowman, the king, the slave, and the beggar, the Jew, the Gentile and the savage, the soldier, the sailor, and the mountaineer, it appeals to them, each and all, in their own peculiar sphere as surely and naturally as the feelings of hunger,

cold and weariness. There is no zone where the seed of the word may not find congenial soil, and bring forth a full harvest.

Not only is this true at the present, but it has been true for every day of the past thousand years. This is the only book that has kept pace with the march of the human intellect along the centuries. It is the oldest book in existence and it is the freshest book to be found on the shelves of the bookseller. Other volumes have had their day; this volume its millenium in the past, and bids fair to have them in the future.

The learned tomes of ancient scholars are monuments, not of human wisdom but of human folly, and the text books of modern science are almost as shortlived as the fashions in dress. Where is there one, in use ten years ago, which, without being revised is considered good authority to-day? Where is there one in use at present which any one except the author expects to see in use ten years hence? But He who is the same yesterday, to-day and forever, has given a revelation of his will which bears the severest test of time and progress. It comforted Moses in his day of trial, it found its way into the heart of the Ethiopian Eunuch in apostolic times and it satisfies the inmost soul of many a believer who is even now sinking in the struggle with the last enemy. The lowliest son of toil has found his labor lightened by it and the mightiest intellect that ever questioned nature has bowed in grateful submission to its teachings. David looked up to the starry heavens and spoke of God with reverence and with awe. Is there nothing supernatural in this?

The Lord God is a sun and shield to the ancient

Psalmist. In our day when the sun is discovered to be the centre of a vast system and the shield is personified in the Lord Jesus Christ, what deeper toned voice can we find for our sense of entire dependence and of absolute security? And when heaven and earth shall pass away, when the sun shall be blotted out of the sky and earthly princes shall no more anoint the shield for battle, then we may well believe this language will not be inappropriate. "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee, but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light and thy God, thy Glory. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself, for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

XII.

DANGER, DUTY, AND COMFORT.

“Behold, I come quickly : hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”—*Rev.* iii. 11.

THE believers of Philadelphia are described in the verses preceding the text as the objects of Christ's discriminating affection and the subjects of his preserving grace. Because they had kept his word and not denied his name he also would keep them as the apple of the eye. From the terror of masked inquisitors by night, and from the arrow of merciless soldiers by day, he would be their covenant shield; and no tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword, should ever be able to separate them from his almighty love. In view of his gracious commendation and strong pledge the present warning is not a little remarkable. Having assured them of his watchful care, he now bids them take care of themselves. Having recognized their fidelity in the severest trials, he warns them against backsliding. It is the old paradox. His promise of protection is not intended to make them careless, but quite the contrary. He spreads his wings over them but they are not to fall asleep in the nest. He sends forth his mighty angels to be their ministering spirits and guardians and “therefore,” says the apostle for this very reason, “we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard lest at any time

we should let them slip." It is a part of God's plan for our preservation from every ill, that He should warn us of our constant danger. He does not design to save his people by taking them out of the world, but by keeping them from the evil. For this purpose he hangs out a danger signal to be always before their eyes; that while they delight in his love they may not presume upon it, and while they confide in his promised salvation they may not neglect to work out their own salvation.

Let this warning then be laid to heart by every believer in Christ. There is danger of losing the crown. To this truth give all the scriptures witness. Our Saviour himself put it into three startling words when telling the Pharisees of the unexpected coming of his kingdom. "Remember Lot's wife." John is moved to utter it, contrary to his usual smoothness, in abrupt and broken speech. "Look to yourselves that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward." Peter goes beyond his ordinary vehemence to sound the same note of alarm. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." Paul is not content with one exhortation to beware of this danger, but he multiplies his admonitions and caps the climax by declaring to the Corinthians that so far from being exalted by the abundance of his revelations and his success as a preacher, he was constrained to buffet his body and bring it into bondage, lest after having preached to others he himself should be cast away.

Now, if John who wrote this Revelation, and Peter who had the positive assurance of the Saviour's all-prevailing intercession, and Paul who surpassed all workers

in his zeal and all dreamers in his visions, if such men tremble at times in apprehension of their danger, what degree of watchfulness can be too great for us who come so far short of their attainments in grace and holiness? And further, let us add, "if judgment first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Their fate will be wretched, indeed, but it will lack at least one ingredient which must embitter the cup of any lost soul that has tasted the heavenly gift, and the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come. The Bible teaches that some may be in the church and have the outward marks of a true believer, and much inward feeling of joy and hope, and yet all the time be deceiving themselves and others, with a name to live and a form of Godliness while the genuine spirit of life and piety is totally wanting.

What a miserable end it would be, if a sailor should keep his course safely through all the perils of the sea, through storm and calm, past rocks and shoals, in fogs and darkness for days and months, till the land was sighted and the harbor approached, and the tackle made ready to fasten the ship to the wharf, and the plank heaved up for the passage ashore, and the wife and children all gathered on the pier with glad smiles and outstretched arms, and then the ship should go down in the very port and carry all her crew to death! Alas, many shall seem to be on board the gospel ship and shall draw near the haven of eternal peace, who shall never drop their anchor within the veil nor receive the warm embrace of loved ones who are waiting, wives for

their husbands, and mothers for their children, there on the other shore. The thing for us to do in view of this possibility, my dear friends, is to make our calling and election sure, to examine ourselves whether we are in the faith, to gird up our loins and trim our lamp, and be like unto those that keep a constant watch against the coming of their enemy and for the coming of their Lord.

It will stimulate us to greater earnestness if we bear in mind what it is we are in danger of losing. It is nothing less than the crown itself. The victor at the Olympian games was crowned in token of the greatest honor that could be put upon him. When people choose a king they crown him, and that crown is the symbol of the greatest authority and dignity and splendor possible to be attained in that realm. All that is meant by a crown in this world, is here intended to be understood of the world to come. It means the highest, the noblest and the best that can possibly be had by the soul. To lose this crown is to lose heaven, to lose happiness, to come short of that glory which is the proper destiny of an immortal being. This is a loss without any compensation. When a child loses a toy it may be replaced; when a farmer loses a crop of wheat he may still have a good yield of corn, or he may hope for a better harvest next year; when a general loses a battle he may retreat and reform his line and retrieve his fortunes; when an arm or a limb is lost, life may still remain, and when life itself is lost, there is hope of a life beyond, but when the soul is lost, *all is lost*. There is no substitute, there is no equivalent, there is no recovery, there is no atonement, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.

This danger is not a remote one, it is very near to

some of us now. It is a very common thing for a soul to lose its crown. What do I say? Every second that passes, carries with it out into eternity, naked, shelterless, solitary, a human soul; and of the millions that die every month, how few there are concerning whose salvation we can indulge a well grounded hope!

Death comes so unexpectedly too. We do not dream that death is just at our elbow, till he lays his icy hand upon the heart and the silver cord is snapped and the golden bowl is shivered.

The danger is increased by the presence of spiritual enemies. It is bad enough to have a deceitful heart; this would lead us astray far enough and often enough without any assistance. But there are many cunning and powerful enemies seeking our ruin.

“ My soul be on thy guard,
Ten thousand foes arise,
The hosts of sin are pressing hard
To draw thee from the skies.”

There is the devil like a roaring hungry lion, what a terrible adversary is he; there are all his evil angels ready at our ears with a hundred plausible lies to entice us from the path of safety; and there are some of our fellow-creatures, who, instead of seeking their own salvation, are plotting our destruction.

“ For foes against me rise,
Oppressors seek my soul.
They set not God before their eyes,
Nor own his just control.”

We are all children of one mother, the earth, and one Father, even God, but how fearfully we bite and devour

one another! The vision of Mirza is a terrible reality. We are travelers on a bridge of seventy arches and the floor has so many rotten planks and gaping holes, that the crossing is very uncertain and many fall by the way, while not a few pilgrims go about to push their fellows into the dark river below, and even make fresh pitfalls to catch unwary feet.

Nevertheless all these enemies will fail of their purpose, if only we are true to Christ. "Who is he that shall harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?" The danger is great, but it may be met and overcome. The Captain of our salvation himself took this perilous journey and noted every dangerous feature. He was tempted in all points like as we are and in that he hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted. His message and direction to the feeble but firm representatives of the church of Philadelphia, threatened on every side and almost ready to be crushed, may be confidently accepted as the guide and safeguard of every hard-pressed believer; "*Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*"

The duty is thus made as plain as the danger. Let me say here once for all that we are not to understand the great Redeemer as making salvation dependent on human endurance. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." That is one side of the truth; the other side is, "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved." The full-orbed truth is given in that wonderful passage of Peter, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a living hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the

dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for *you who* are kept by the *power of God through faith* unto salvation." Still the command is as stringent as if every thing depended on our own efforts. "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life."

Having already mentioned in this letter to the church some particulars in which Philadelphia had gloriously maintained the truth, the Saviour now uses a general expression to cover the whole ground of their duty. It was in all probability from their adoption of this expression, that the martyrs of the Reformation were called, as we learn from Fox, the "Hold Fasters." It was perhaps in allusion to the same thing that the House of Orange adopted for its device the elliptical motto, "I will maintain." The particular application of this motto was left to circumstances, as for example, when the illustrious Prince of Orange, who is best known as William III. of England, embarked on that memorable voyage which ended so happily for Europe and the world, he flung to the gale his standard embroidered with the motto in massive letters, "I will maintain—the liberties of England and the Protestant religion." So the Christians of Philadelphia could fit this stirring call of their Master to any branch of Christian duty. At one juncture, it would be their great and pressing duty to hold fast the knowledge of saving truth. When apocryphal gospels should be fabricated and palmed off upon the church, then it would become them to "contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints." When a long rest from persecution should lead them to carelessness about the form of sound words, or forgetfulness

of their meaning, then it would behoove them to give more earnest heed to the things which they had heard "lest they should let them slip." At another time it would be especially necessary to have faith in this saving truth, and again, zeal in spreading it abroad, and again, patience, in enduring persecution on account of it.

In our day we need most of all, I think, to hold fast our belief in the Bible as the inspired word of God. The conflict has taken a very wide range in past ages; just now the enemy has concentrated his forces to push the attack on this blessed book. The attempt is first made to break down the outworks of our faith. The cry is, "Give up the theory of plenary inspiration. Admit that divine authority does not extend to the words of scripture." But if we permit them to break through this barrier the next attack will be directed against particular verses and paragraphs; and then whole books will be assailed, and, in the end, they will leave us no more than a single plank of the good old ship, on which we may drift without rudder, compass or chart, at the mercy of the sea, blown about by every wind of doctrine, and submerged by every tossing wave of sin. Against this danger there comes a warning voice, like the noise of many waters, saying, "Hold that fast which thou hast." It is like the cry of a captain whose ship is assailed by the enemy. He does not yield an inch of vantage ground but whenever he sees men clamber up the sides, and then through the port holes of his vessel, he shouts, "Stand by to repel boarders." He knows well enough that if the deck is abandoned, the ship is lost.

A few years ago Professor Christlieb of Bonn University proposed that we retreat from the outposts and de-

vote all our strength to fortifying the citadel. He is a great, and a wise and a good man, but I cannot allow any man however great or wise or good, to come between me and my risen Lord, who tells me to hold fast every jot and tittle of his holy word. Therefore I say to any one who draws near with an irreverent touch to shake my full and perfect confidence in this blessed book: "Hands off." My attitude in regard to the scriptures, is that of the psalmist, "Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be *right*." I care not whether the mutilator of the Bible be a declared enemy or a professed friend, my answer to each is one and the same.

At the battle of Gettysburg a mere boy was carrying the flag of a certain regiment, when a shot pierced him and he fell. The colors fell with him, and as the ample folds settled down upon his prostrate form, he reached out his arms convulsively and gathered the old flag to his bleeding breast. A comrade stepped up and laid hold of the banner, but the stiffening fingers held it fast. Then the comrade said, "Give me the flag." The lad's eyes were growing dim; he could not see who it was and he gasped out: "Friend or enemy?" "A friend," was the answer. "Then if you are a friend let—me—hold—it—till—I—die." That is the way I want to hold fast the Bible. May its oriflamme of hatred to evil float over my head in every conflict and its banner of love be furled above me at every feast. May the sound of its words cheer me on, like music in the march, and the sight of it beckon me forward to victory in the battle, and the memory of it wrap me round in the bivouac. And when the fatal dart at length strikes me down and my green tent is spread in yonder silent camp ground, may He that is Holy and

True make good his promise of victory over the last enemy, and He that hath the key of David, open to me a door of passage from the grave to His own presence where I shall not need the Holy Book to teach me of his will. But till that time shall fully come let no one seek to rob me of my Bible. If you are an enemy you cannot, and if you are a friend, you will not; therefore "let me hold it till I die."

I have talked about the danger and the duty, now let me open this word of infinite comfort: "Behold I come quickly." The speedy coming of Christ is the key note of the whole book of Revelation. It is an event to be dreaded by those who obey not his gospel but to be hailed with joy by those who do. In the days of his flesh he forewarned his hearers of the same thing. "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he cometh, shall find watching. But if that evil servant say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming," then he shall be cut asunder and doomed forever to weeping and gnashing of teeth.

In these letters to the churches the announcement has hitherto been a word of terrible import. Ephesus and Pergamus and Sardis are warned by it of impending judgment, but to Philadelphia, it is the assurance of approaching deliverance out of the hand of all enemies.

Nothing could be better calculated to encourage fainting hearts than this pledge of speedy succor. When the battle is first doubtful, then disastrous, and the enemy comes pouring in like a flood, then it is that the sight of the loved and trusted commander-in-chief rouses the wildest enthusiasm and turns defeat into victory. It was this that changed the day at Naseby. Do you remember

the stirring lines which Macaulay puts into the mouth of a sergeant of Ireton's regiment?

"They are here! They rush on! We are broken! We are gone!

Our left is borne before them like stubble on the blast.

O Lord, put forth thy might! O Lord, defend the right!

Stand back to back, in God's name, and fight it to the last.

Stout Skippon hath a wound; the centre hath given ground;

Hark! hark!—What means the trampling of horsemen on our rear?

Whose banner do I see, boys? 'Tis he, thank God, 'tis he, boys.

Bear up another minute: brave Oliver is here.

Their heads all stooping low, their points all in a row,

Like a whirlwind on the trees, like a deluge on the dykes,

Our cuirassiers have burst on the ranks of the Accurst,

And at a shock have scattered the forest of his pikes."

It was this that made all the difference at Cedar Creek, when the dark steed made famous by the lines of Buchanan Read, bore Sheridan down from Winchester to turn back the tide of flight and save the day. It was this that enabled the devoted garrison at Kenesaw to hold fast their position in spite of overwhelming numbers, when from the mountain tops, fifteen miles away, Sherman's approach was signaled. That signal has been set to music and sung in religious meetings all over the land.

"Behold I come quickly. Hold that fast which thou hast that no man take thy crown." But some one will say, "How is it that he comes *quickly*?" Nearly two

thousand years have rolled away since the fathers fell asleep, yet all things continue as they were. "Where is the promise of his coming?" My answer is two-fold. Christ came to the members of the Church of Philadelphia at death, and death always comes quickly. "Few and evil are my days," said the aged Jacob, and his words struck a chord that vibrates still in the heart of the oldest who sees his end approaching. "All life is as grass," says ancient Isaac. Yea; saith Moses, life is a "dream," "a flood," "a tale that is told," "a watch in the night."

"A few more years shall roll,
A few more seasons come,
And we shall be with those that rest
Asleep within the tomb."

Brethren, this is not a mournful thought. It will help us perhaps to overcome the fear of death if we think of it as only the coming of Jesus. There was a lovely maiden imprisoned in a gloomy castle. Her lover clothed himself in a disguise of such terrible appearance, that the very sight of him frightened the guards from their posts, and they reported to all that a monstrous dragon had seized and devoured the captive lady. But she recognized his voice when he burst open her dungeon door, and the hideous wrappings seemed to her a pleasant covering, when she felt the beat of that true heart against her own. Earth is such a castle and sin is such a dungeon, from which to rescue us the royal bridegroom comes disguised as death. When death knocks at the door of this our mortal tabernacle, let us listen for the whisper of our beloved, showing himself through the lattice and saying, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away."

Christ will come also in his own person, when, we cannot say, but we know it will be quickly. It will be only a little while till death overtakes us, and when we enter the spirit world, a thousand years will be as one day.

John heard the souls of martyrs cry from beneath the altar, "How long, O Lord, Holy and True, dost thou not avenge our blood?" And it was said unto them that they should rest yet "for a little season." That was eighteen hundred years ago, but the "little season" is not yet passed, the harvest of blood has not yet been fully gathered, and yet the great day of the Lord is near; it is near, and hasteth greatly, even as the light from stars, so far away from us that their light has not yet reached us, comes quickly.

The thing for us to do is to make ready for his coming which may occur at any moment. Let us summon our souls to put forth all their energies, to hold fast that which is committed to our trust. Let us quit ourselves like men for the trial and pain and sorrow. Let us remember that the only way to hold fast what we have is to get more, to go on from strength to strength. On the foundation stone of faith let us build up virtue, temperance, patience, gentleness, brotherly kindness, charity. Morning by morning let us gird our loins anew for the struggle. Evening by evening let us erect our Ebenezer, with trembling exultation saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." Let us set our houses in order and be ready to say "farewell to earth, all hail to heaven." Let the voice of our Master be always ringing in our ears, "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me." "Even so come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

XIII.

THE CALL TO THE MINISTRY.

“And some, pastors and teachers.” *Ephesians iv. 11.*

WHEN Napoleon Bonaparte solicited the Pope to grace the ceremony of his coronation, by placing the imperial crown upon his head, and the culmination of the gorgeous rite was reached, instead of humbly kneeling to receive the crown according to the programme, Napoleon, standing erect, took the glittering diadem into his own hands—and crowned himself. It is to be feared that some candidates for the holy ministry accept the imposition of presbyterial hands merely as a convenient form, or sanction, and thus set out upon the most momentous errand that ever engaged mortal or angelic messengers, without being sent. Against this Napoleonic pride of self appointment, our Lord cautioned his disciples more than once, but especially in his farewell address: “Ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain.”

The paragraph from which the text is taken shows that this same truth applies to church officers of every grade and in every age. “When he ascended upon high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some to be apostles and some prophets, and some, evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers.” Although the qualifications of a pastor and teacher being ordinary

and perpetual in their nature, differ somewhat from those of an apostle, which were miraculous and temporary, yet in both cases the office is created and bestowed by the same divine author.

Paul seems to have considered the gift of preaching to be greater than that of seeing visions or speaking unknown tongues. Be that as it may, the ministerial office exists among men simply and solely as the gift of Christ. "He gave some to be pastors and teachers." To investigate the purport of this statement is the duty before us. What is the meaning of this double term "pastors and teachers?" What moreover is the meaning of this indeterminate number "some?" Relying on the help of the Holy Spirit who alone can take of the things of Christ and show them unto us, I shall, as far as in me lies, by way of answer to these questions, describe the office of the gospel ministry and determine to whom this office is given.

The office is here called by a double title, pastor and teacher, which intimates that no single term is comprehensive enough to fully characterize a minister of the gospel. Pastor comes nearest perhaps to what is wanted, but even this fails to satisfy Paul. Therefore he adds another, namely, teacher. The use of this compound expression naturally suggests the inquiry, How many and what functions are attached to this office? A very good answer to this question, and a sufficient description of the office, may be given by mentioning the different titles bestowed upon it in scripture. Of these, I have found two and twenty, and probably a closer examination would reveal several others.

One of the most conspicuous pertains to the delivery of

the gospel as a message. A pastor is the Messenger of God, not simply to a congregation on the Sabbath, or in the weekly prayer-meeting, but to every one with whom he comes in contact. He is to bring good tidings of great joy to all people. Like the courier which Napoleon was wont to dispatch after each new victory, who ceased not to shout as he thundered along, "Glory to France. Marengo, or Jena, or Austerlitz, is won," so the messenger of Christ must be constantly repeating the angelic chorus, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." This honor belongs to all God's saints but it is the especial privilege of a clergyman. He need not wait for death to make him "equal to the angels," for in bearing this message he is their fellow and companion already. He is an angel. As such, he greets the church, as such, he represents it, and as such, the Master holds him responsible for the spiritual condition of those under his care. "To the angel of the church of Sardis, write; Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die."

This angel or messenger is also an ambassador to represent the majesty of Jehovah, who has a perfect right to command, though he condescends to plead with men. And such pleading—"As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God." On the other hand, he is a priest to plead with God for man. "Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar and let them say 'Spare thy people O Lord.'" Again, he is a watchman stationed on the high places of the church to keep a sharp look-out for enemies and give the people timely warning. So he watches for souls, as one that must give

account. In another view he is a witness who testifies to others of what God has done for his own soul; who looks abroad and describes what he sees—the surging tide of battle between truth and error, the triumph of light over darkness, the sure tokens of a coming judgment. When that judgment is finally set and the books are opened he will still be a witness, not now of God to man, but of man to God—a swift witness against all those who refused his earthly testimony.

He is a soldier too, called to endure hardships, and in many instances such hardships as the heroes of Valley Forge, or the victims of Andersonville did not encounter: a soldier, to fight against spiritual wickedness in high places: a soldier, to lead and inspire the ranks of Immanuel's army. So the list runs on. He is a fisher to catch men,—adapting his methods to their character and surroundings, using the cunning of a serpent to get them within reach of the gospel net. He is a shepherd to keep them when caught, to watch over them by day and by night, to face the ravening wolf in their behalf, to feed and shield them at the expense of all his energies,—even of life itself. He is a teacher to instruct them in the way of life, to increase their store of knowledge and to educate them toward the measure of the perfect man. He is a father to bear patiently with their imperfections, to correct their faults, and to rear them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. He is a man of God to live daily sermons, a preacher of righteousness, to voice the truth, and a laborer earning wages to show that he is not exempt from the curse. He is a bishop to oversee the Lord's work and give directions to it, yet a steward with derived authority, entrusted with

the gospel whose whole duty is summed up in blameless and incorrupt fidelity. He is a minister to serve the church, to seek not the property but the souls of his people, to sympathize with them in sickness, to comfort them in bereavement, to go hand in hand with them down to the verge of the river of death. His rank is equal to the highest, and on a level with the lowest in the social scale. He is a star, for glory, bedecking the firmament of God's eternal purpose, upheld in that high station by his almighty hand; he is an elder, to bear rule in the house of God; he is an assistant of Christ, an under rower in the gospel ship, as the term used in 1 Cor. iv. 1, imports, and to cap the anti-climax he is the veritable slave of all for Jesus' sake. Such is the office of the gospel ministry, as described in Holy Writ. Well may we adopt the language of the greatest that ever held it and say, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Certainly none, unless selected and qualified by Him who has all power in heaven and earth, through whose imparted strength we can do all things.

Let us then inquire to whom this office is given? To perform such various functions would seem to require, "Not one but all mankind's epitome." And in truth there is no other profession which demands so wide a range of natural and acquired ability on the part of its practicer. This I say, not in the way of boasting—God forbid—but like the great apostle to the Gentiles, "I magnify mine office." So far from scrupling to use words of eulogy in speaking of the cure of souls, I would lay it down as the necessary concomitant of a divine call to the ministry, to have a thorough-going respect for the office itself. Think what it is to be a gospel

minister. It is to stand as the representative of the eternal, immortal, invisible King, before immortal, invisible, judgment-bound souls. It is to be the conscious instrument of unspeakable torment or ineffable gladness. It is to dispense, in the name of Christ, promises exceeding great and precious which all the treasures of all the nations in the world could not make good, and to denounce judgments exceeding great and terrible, which all the power of all the armies in the world could neither avert nor support. It is to wield an influence for good or evil, which infinity alone can measure and nothing short of eternity can bound. It is to occupy a position which for lofty significance, transcendent interest and dread responsibility, finds a parallel in the attitude of the high-priest Aaron, in that supreme act of his typical life, when "he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stayed."

My young brethren, if a desire to ascertain more perfectly your warrant to engage in "the poorest of trades but the noblest of callings," has led you to request a discourse on this subject, let me urge it upon you as among the first and most essential ingredients of a call to the ministry, that you entertain the very highest conception of the importance and even grandeur of the work that is before you. Such a conception will humble rather than puff you up. You will shrink from the honor and the burden, as did Moses and Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Paul and Luther, but like these holy men, you will enter upon your task, emptied of self and filled with God, so as to make "full proof of your ministry."

Next in order, as indicating your call, I would mention some degree of aptitude for the work. Just as in nature,

so in grace, the adaptation of any object to any purpose, indicates a divine intention to have that particular object applied to that specific purpose. Sometimes a child is selected by his parents, to be educated for the ministry, because he is weak in body. No greater mistake could be made. The farm or the shop would be much more suitable and beneficial to the sickly child, while the severe and protracted physical strain encountered in preparing for the ministry calls for a healthy and vigorous frame. It is true, Robert Hall and Richard Baxter and some others in feeble health, have performed Herculean labors in the ministry, but it was because they possessed a force of character and a strength of will, that compelled the body to do and endure what would have crushed it, if animated by a less commanding genius.

As a rule, the back is fitted to the burden, and God calls no man to toil in His vineyard, whose physical condition is such that he needs to be ministered unto rather than to minister.

Then, too, there should be the sound mind in the sound body. The Bible is a book for children and wayfaring men, as well as for sages and philosophers. The humblest intellect may grasp enough of its meaning to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is one thing, however, to understand the Scriptures and apply them to your own case, but it is a vastly different thing to expound their teachings so as to convince, convert, and edify others.

The objection may be raised that many apostles, prophets and evangelists were ignorant men, but this objection misses the point in two ways. It forgets that these men were miraculously supplied with wisdom, and it

overlooks the fact that they all had special training for their work. What course of college study ever did for a student what the desert solitudes accomplished for John the Baptist, or what the company and counsel of Jesus did for the first disciples? Peter and James and Matthew had in them the stuff, mental and physical, out of which are made able ministers of the Gospel.

But the chief qualification by which the man of God is thoroughly furnished unto all good works, lies neither in the members nor in the brain; it has its seat in the heart. Piety, that instinctive uplifting of the soul from things mundane, to things supernal and divine; that sentiment of devotion which permeates the whole of life and keeps us ever conscious of the all-seeing eye; that habitual recognition of the Great God as the Author of our being, the Guide of our way, and the Controller of our destiny; that constant bringing of every thought into subjection to the obedience of Christ, whose we are and whom we serve; that inexhaustible fountain of grace and consolation which is in us a well of water springing up into everlasting life because it is evermore fed by the indwelling Spirit, the Comforter; *this* is the true sign, and, I may say, the only indispensable factor in the problem of a call to the ministry. When this piety exists with a mind that is able to distinguish between things that differ, and a body able to sustain the activities of the will, then there is evident what I would call a good degree of aptitude for the work.

To esteem and aptness, let me add *inclination*. The presence or absence of this can be detected whenever a need of laborers is made known. If through observation of different fields, or information obtained through the

press or public appeals by the church, there is borne in unto the soul, as it were the voice of God inquiring, "Whom shall we send and who will go for us?" and at once the impulse is felt and obeyed, to say "Here am I, send me," then there is good hope that the Master will respond, "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel. Therefore hear the word at my mouth and give them warning from me."

But this impulse must be capable of crystalizing into a most determined resolution. Even if assured, as Isaiah was, that the ears of all will be too heavy and their hearts too gross to receive your message; or if, like Saul, you are foretold how great things you must suffer for His name's sake, you must still have the hardihood to go forward and the faith that overcomes all obstacles.

When the explorer, Stanley, was enjoying the homage of Great Britain for his successful search after Livingstone, he received one morning a telegram directing him to make a second trip into the heart of the Dark Continent. So vivid and overpowering was his recollection of the sufferings and horrors which obedience to that dispatch must inevitably repeat, that his strong frame withered and sickened under the apprehension. For days he kept his bed, and it was only by pondering deeply the closing words of that terrible summons, that he roused himself to undertake the journey which has resulted in opening the way for the gospel from the Congo to the Equator. Those reviving words were something as follows: "Draw on me at sight for ten thousand pounds sterling, and a thousand more for every month of the journey."

To most of you, my dear friends, the lines will no

doubt fall in pleasant places. But if you are not willing to go to the ends of the earth at the command of your Master; to traverse the jungles of India, or the burning sands of Africa; to face the most dreadful scourges of tropical nature, and the most deadly hostility of savage man; to accept the poorest appointment on the Western frontier and labor with your hands to support your body; if you are not willing to bear, hope, believe, endure, *all things* in the service, and for the sake of your blessed Master, *you have no call to the ministry*. But lest you should faint and sink under such crushing requirements, you too have strengthening words to ponder. They are like this, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name I will do it. Go ye therefore, disciple all nations, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

The grand motive to seek the office of the ministry is love for the Lord Jesus Christ, and the decisive test of this love, the test which He himself proposed to Peter on a certain memorable occasion, is the care of His flock. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee dearly. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep." But the shepherd's care will not be true and tender unless he loves the flock. "And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also." How much shall we love our brethren? "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." How long shall we love them? "What man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost, *until he find it?*" How long shall Paul continue in

Corinth? Till every one of God's people that he can possibly reach in that wicked city, is discovered and brought into the fold. How long shall Isaiah preach to a blind people that have eyes, and to a deaf people that have ears, and that refuse to be converted and healed? "Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate." Therefore, let whoever is studying for the ministry, desire, and pray for, and cultivate, in addition to the things already specified, a mighty love for the souls of men. Let him count the possession of souls to be the greatest and most satisfying riches a man can have. When he takes the oversight of a congregation, let him yearn for souls, as Paul did when he wrote to the Galatians, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you," or to the Corinthians, "I seek not yours but you." Let him feel the burden of souls, as John Welch, who used to rise at midnight, unconscious of the biting cold, to wrestle for hours in prayer for the people of his charge; or as Rutherford, whose love for his congregation was stronger than death, and which broke from his dying lips in ejaculations which a poet has thus paraphrased:

"Fair Anworth by the Solway!
To me thou still art dear.
E'en from the verge of heaven
I drop for thee a tear.
O, if one soul from Anworth
Meet me at God's right hand,
My heaven will be two heavens
In Immanuel's land."

Wherever this deep abiding love of souls and desire for their salvation is felt by any one, there a strong presumption exists, that the chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls has chosen and ordained him to go and bring forth fruit; fruit that shall remain the eternal monument of his divine call.

Once more, the leadings of Providence in the matter of a call are indicated by circumstances. Since God orders all the events and affairs of life, it follows that a careful study of the situation in which one finds himself, especially when accompanied with fervent prayer for light, will be likely to result in a good understanding of the Lord's will in the matter. A celebrated divine put it very strongly to a young man who asked his advice, "Do not enter the ministry if you can help it." Jonah acted on this principle but he certainly carried it too far. When the call is made plain, there is no longer room for hesitation. Neither will it do to say, as some have said, "I am sure it is my duty because I hate it so." There must be pulling as well as pushing. Inclination must be felt, as well as the drawings of Providence. Whenever the Master says, "Follow me," He gives the willingness to follow, though sometimes not without a struggle. As in the matter of our salvation, so here. He works in us both to will and to do.

This matter of providential circumstance needs to be handled with great circumspection. Sometimes a youth feels an inclination to the ministry but suppresses it, and embarks in business and fails. That I would consider a providential circumstance. On the other hand, I once heard a preacher say he was perfectly sure of his call to the ministry, because he had tried every thing else he

could think of, without success. I think he interpreted his circumstances wrongly. He certainly was not a successful minister.

Sometimes God opens up a way to the ministry by closing up every other way, and sometimes He allows alluring openings to be presented, to try the sincerity of one whom He has called. In general, it may be remarked that no one is in danger of mistaking the leadings of Providence who casts himself wholly upon divine direction and commits himself unreservedly to divine disposal.

Now, I fancy some of you are thinking, "Is this all? Is there no more immediate operation of the Spirit of God upon souls to bring out His will? Is it merely a matter of admiration and taste and brawn and brains and benevolence and accident?" Let us go softly here. The terms I have used admit of greatly enlarged or greatly contracted meaning. As I have endeavored to define them, it will be no easy matter to meet their requirements. I wish to be understood as speaking of an esteem which tends, not to degenerate into admiration, but to deepen into reverence; of an aptitude which pervades soul and body more and more till it effects a complete adjustment of all our talents and capacities. When I speak of inclination, I mean a desire which stumbles not at poverty, toil, and danger, but offers itself a more than willing sacrifice. I mean a love for souls which is more than a benevolent feeling for humanity; it is a vehement longing for the conversion of the world. And when I talk of providential circumstances, I would inculcate an implicit faith and childlike dependence on the

“Divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will.”

Not one of these marks of fitness for the work can be had unless imparted by the hand of God. The assertion of John Newton is profoundly true: “He alone who made the world, can make a gospel minister.”

In closing, let me offer my congratulations to you who look forward to this thrice blessed work. I trust the Head of the Church has given to you, all, to be pastors and teachers after His own heart. I exhort you to make your calling and election to this office sure. Look upon it as the gift of Christ, as the greatest boon, next to your own salvation, which it is possible for God to bestow. If you have the slightest doubt on the subject of your call, ask God to enlighten you. If you have been weighing the question in the scales of human prudence, or seeking to determine it by any worldly rule, drop at once all such endeavors and say to God, “Make plain thy way before me.” If you take this course, I doubt not you will soon have occasion to rejoice with the Apostle, “Now we have received not the spirit of this world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us in God.”

XIV.

TRUTH.

“Buy the truth, and sell it not.”—*Proverbs* xxiii. 23.

THAT notable highway, the world's last and greatest wonder, which is suspended in mid air between New York and Brooklyn, occupies more space in its approaches than in the bridge proper. No one pauses, however, to observe this, but hastens at once to the highest point that he may form a better estimate of the noble structure as a whole, and enjoy the extended and magnificent view it affords. So you will pardon me, I think, if I omit the preliminaries of rhetorical engineering by which a great subject is usually entered upon, and take you at once to the tower of observation whence a clear view can be had of the wonderful bridge that spans the bottomless gulf of death, and connects this island of sorrow with the far off mainland of life. Let us take it for granted that there is such a thing as truth, and that it is to be had in the open market. Let us inquire merely wherein this commodity consists, what it costs, and how to deal with it so as to secure the largest profit.

No weightier apothegm was ever delivered than that of the wise man, “Buy the truth.” But what is truth? Pilate, you remember, asked this question of Christ. In so doing he knocked at the door of the palace of truth, and although the King himself stood ready to respond, he abruptly turned on his heel like some mischievous

boy who rings a door bell and runs away before the door can be opened. Let there be no child's play in our method of dealing with the subject. Let wrestling Jacob, not jesting Pilate, be our model. Let us grapple with the question and refuse to let it go without a blessing.

Truth is a term of large import. Its range is so broad that to find a satisfactory definition is difficult if not impossible. It has received various explanatory titles, especially from the poets. Keats and Mrs. Browning say, "Truth is beauty;" Ballou calls it "courage;" Sir Walter terms it, "the speech of a boy-youth;" Plato the Divine identifies it with "God," and Pythagoras with "God's daughter;" Coles dubs it "science," and Bailey at the other extreme hails it "love;" by Chaucer it is height, "the hiest thing a man may kepe;" but Emerson soars a flight higher and styles it "the summit of being;" while Milton in no unworthy strain sings of it as

" That golden key
That opes the palace of eternity."

All these epithets are beautiful and suggestive provided we already know what truth is, and it may do for poets to assume that truth can never be so well apprehended by tuition as by intuition. There is something divine within us that claims kinship with the truth and enables us to recognize it under many guises and even disguises. Still nine-tenths of those who are "of the truth," would be puzzled to analyze their conception of truth and say in what it consists. It will be well, therefore, for us to obtain some definition that really defines what we are talking about.

Now for all practical purposes the Bible is its own best dictionary. A text is often like Aaron's rod, one dry stick among a dozen; but take it and lay it up before the Lord over night, along with other texts, and in the morning you will find its inherent life has budded and blossomed and brought forth fruit. A slight comparison of familiar passages will show that truth as used here is synonymous with heavenly wisdom. In point of fact this is plain from the exegetical context, that is to say, the text has actually blossomed out in the very same verse in which it occurs. "Buy the truth and sell it not," *also*—that *also* is in italics; it is no part of the sacred word, it is only a hindrance; throw it out. "Buy the truth and sell it not; wisdom and instruction and understanding." Take these up in their logical order and note what an excellent description of truth they afford. Instruction as imparted by a teacher means that which may be learned by rote—facts, events, dates, statistics. These give to their possessor a well furnished mind. But this is only a fragment. Truth means understanding as well as instruction; that is, power to use the knowledge of facts, events, dates, statistics. Understanding bears the same relation to instruction that digestion bears to food; it assimilates information. Instruction makes a well furnished mind, understanding makes a well trained mind. Neither is this the whole truth. It is not even the most of truth. The best of all is, truth is wisdom. It is not simply knowledge or power to use knowledge, but this power using this knowledge for the highest end. First information, then ability, then character. A well stored memory, a well

trained intellect, a well ordered judgment, that is truth ; bud, blossom and ripe fruit.

Of course it goes without saying that such a mind, no matter where it begins to investigate, must come sooner or later to a knowledge of "the truth as it is in Jesus." He said, "every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." All roads in the old Roman empire radiated from and converged to the golden mile-stone that was planted in the forum of the capital. In the kingdom which is not of this world all the paths of knowledge take their significance and direction from the cross on which the incarnate Truth was crucified. This is the golden mile-stone to which are turned the footsteps of every loyal subject of the truth. It is the beginning of all measurements and the end of all approaches. Whoever fails to recognize the crucifixion as the keystone of history past, the dominant factor in the problem of life present, and the mightiest pledge of life to come, may be ever learning, indeed, but will never be able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Power to use this knowledge means power to become the sons of God ; and this power using this knowledge for the highest end means faith in the atonement of Christ openly confessed and daily exemplified. Truth always culminates in Christ. To illustrate this, imagine a chest full of jewels and gold sunk in mid-ocean. Attached to this chest and stretching out in every direction are golden chains. Linked to these and crossing them at intervals are other chains which surround the chest in a series of widening circles. Furthermore this network is interwoven in such a way as to form patterns all pointing inward and terminating at the centre. On

the shore the golden links in some places lie exposed, in others they are buried out of sight. If a single link be found, since it is connected with every other link, it affords a sure clew to the concentrated wealth of that deep-sunk coffer. By following up the clew, or by hauling in the net, the whole immense fortune might be secured. Such an ocean is eternity, and such a network is truth, ends and filaments of which lie along the shore of time, some in plain sight but the greater part to be reached only by hard and patient digging. If any searcher after truth discovers but one link let him pull mightily, or let him follow closely and he will find more truth. By one small link he is connected with every part of the vast system of truth. He may choose to keep near the shore and trace the connection between the links of the outermost circles and he will be the richer for that—he will call himself a scientist—but if he desires the ripest wisdom he must follow the lines that lead to the heart of the labyrinth where all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in the person of Christ. This exploit is one that far transcends the ability of the natural man. “Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?” The “deep, unfathomed caves” of this ocean will never yield up their secret gems to man until he is “endued with power from on high;” as it is written, “Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” “Then

shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord." "I am the truth . . . he that loveth me . . . I will manifest myself unto him."

The first requisite for a successful business enterprise is to know what to buy, and the second is like unto it, even to know what to pay. What is the market value of truth, such as I have described it? This question filled Job with eloquent despair. "Man knoweth not the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx or the sapphire. No mention shall be made of coral or of pearls; for the price of wisdom is above rubies." The text implies, however, that the article can be procured. The command is unlimited, "Buy." In commercial phrase that is to say, "make the best bargain you can, but buy." The gospel narrative tells of one who staggered at the amount demanded. He thought he would buy the truth, and he came to the right market, but when he had priced the goods he "went away sorrowful." He had enough money, too, for he was very rich, but it would take all his great possessions, and he refused to give so much in exchange for his soul. He went away *sorrowful*, but—he went away.

I stand in presence of a goodly company of youth whose sojourn in these classic halls is sufficient evidence that they seek the ripest wisdom. In some respects at least, you are like the young ruler. He was so eager in the pursuit of knowledge, that he came running to the great Teacher; so determined in his quest, that he burst through the crowd as if he would take the kingdom of truth by violence; yet so reverent in his enthusiasm, that he knelt at that Teacher's feet and humbly called

Him, Master. So attractive was he in appearance, so, apparently sincere, and so unconscious of evil in its grosser forms, that we read, "Jesus beholding him, loved him."

In fellowship with that affection, my heart goes out to you; nay,—it is the Master himself who bends an eye of tender regard upon you and sends one—like yourselves, a lover of truth—to voice his message, saying, "Go, speak in my name to these thy fellow students, and preach unto them the preaching that I bid thee." If I were to search the Bible through for a message that puts in smallest compass, the mightiest considerations adapted to your case and fit to be urged upon you at such a time could I find a precept more useful than this, "Buy the truth and sell it not?" O that your likeness to the young ruler may not be complete! God forbid that you should haggle about the price of wisdom, and turn back because the truth comes at a higher figure than you expected.

It is useless to deny that this commodity is expensive. He that would buy it must undergo labor like Hercules and meet danger like pearl-divers, and endure persecution like martyrs and make sacrifices like sailors in a storm. He must be ready to pay any price, take any risk and count the world well lost for truth. Let me specify some of the items in this cost:

In all its grades, truth costs *close and patient application*. Sir Isaac Newton declared that his great discoveries were made by "keeping the problem always before him." The inventions that have revolutionized society came about in the same way. The world will never pause to estimate the amount of steady, patient toil

expended to secure every one of the commonplace luxuries of life, but you and I must keep all these things and ponder them in our heart, if we are to engage in search of truth. When we wrap ourselves in a waterproof garment let us remember that Goodyear spent a fortune and a lifetime before he accidentally vulcanized a piece of rubber. Mark you, great discoveries have been, as it were, stumbled upon, but never by any except a patient toiler. When our Bible falls open at Romans I. 17, and we read that the just shall live by faith, let us remember that Luther wrestled in long agony before he chanced upon a copy of the scriptures, and almost equally long before he found in it the famous doctrine which at one blow smote the fetters from his soul and the sceptre from the papacy. Let this fact be a stimulus and encouragement to your labors. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

Courage also is a prime requisite in this business. Devotion to the truth may lead you to pine in a dungeon like Jeremiah, or it may lead you through a dungeon to a throne, like the son of Jacob. You may die on a scaffold amid curses and laughter like John Brown, or you may come to your grave in a ripe old age with your life-work fully accomplished and your name honored to the ends of the earth, like Wendell Phillips or Ashley Cooper; but in any case you will meet with much opposition and often be compelled to stand alone. It is not now the fashion to burn, hang or behead any one on account of his convictions, but there is no assurance that the old fashion will not be in vogue again; and apart

from loss of life or limb there is no lack of opportunity to inflict pain upon the conscientious truth-seeker. Every one who devotes himself to this business must lay his account to meet antagonistic forces as malignant and powerful as ever were fabled to guard the hiding place of some fairy treasure. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against world-rulers of darkness and hosts of wicked spirits."

More than this, you must be prepared for the opposition of friends whom you love better than life. Many a Samson has smitten his open foes hip and thigh with a great slaughter, to be undone by the friend of his bosom; and that, too, where the friend meant only kindness. The friendship of Delilah was not more deadly than that of Mary, Queen of Scots, or that of Geta, the Roman emperor. Robert Burns was led into his worst excess—the sin for which no apology can be attempted by his warmest admirer—through the influence of his dearest friend. Take the great example of all. We can well believe it took more real courage in the Saviour to rebuke the well-meant but Satanic suggestion of Peter, than to face the mob in the temple, or the soldiers in the garden, or the Sanhedrim in the palace.

But the most redoubtable antagonist of all is the truth itself; the cold, calm truth that looks severely down upon the fluctuations of opinion and passion, as the Sphinx regards the shifting sands of Egypt. Like that riddle of the ages, truth may be at different times half or wholly concealed from view; but whether completely obscured or laid bare in all its native majesty, it is insensible alike to the feelings of those who reverently inquire into

its meaning, and of those who chip off fragments in idle curiosity. To accept unwelcome truth for its own sake requires a higher degree of courage than to fight all human and hellish foes combined.

Show me a man who shrinks not from the charge of inconsistency, but alters his scheme of thinking and living, to accord with truth, as it is known in larger measure, and I will show you a hero indeed. Which was Luther's bravest act? defending the theses? burning the papal bull? defying the Imperial Diet? These were brave deeds, but a sublimer courage was needed to break his monastic vow and induce Catharine Bora to break hers.

Just now another illustration of this form of courage is attracting marked attention. The most widely and favorably known statesman in the world to-day is reviled, and lampooned, and hated with a venomous energy seldom surpassed, because he has accepted and undertaken to apply the despised truth, that the law of love is a power even in politics, and may be trusted to accomplish a task wherein brute force has proved an utter and ignominious failure. Whatever may be the issue to haughty England or unhappy Ireland of the present struggle in the British Parliament, the courage of Gladstone in placing himself by the fair form of truth, though spattered with filth and repudiated with scorn by the so called noble of the land, deserves the admiration of the civilized world, and may well be set before the rising generation of this giant republic, as a worthy example of truth purchased at unspeakable cost.

A third requisite to success in this mart where truth is bought and sold is zeal. Longfellow tells, in his recently published diary, that Agassiz, when on a visit

to him, burst into tears on account of his growing infirmities, saying, "I cannot work." The intense zeal of the great naturalist doubtless shortened his days, but without it, where would be his honor? Be zealous of truth, even if it cuts you off in the midst of your life. Better die early having accomplished somewhat, than live long for the mere sake of living.

It is not often that zeal kills, but if it were always so, it were better to pay the last farthing and die on the threshold of truth than to live forever in the tents of slothfulness. It is far better than the longest life of idle selfishness, to lie down with the great, the wise, the good, who in some true sense gave their lives for others.

Passing to a third inquiry, How are we to deal with truth so as to secure the largest returns from our investment? The answer is: "Sell it not." It is a lamentable fact that some dispose of their stock in the truth at a ruinous figure. They are generally such as pride themselves too much on their business qualities. Judas carried the bag because he was apt at business methods, but oh, what a poor bargain he drove with the chief priests when the god of this world took full possession of his dark heart! *The truth, for thirty bits! Sell it not, sell it not, SELL IT NOT!* How incisive and complete is that monition! What then? If you may not sell it, how shall you deal with it?

Deal with it *lovingly*. Refuse to sell because you prize the article for its own sake beyond the power of any purchaser. Love the truth, not merely in the pursuit, but in the possession—Shakespeare to the contrary notwithstanding. Love it with all your heart and soul. Love it so as to know it under any disguise, welcome it

in any condition, enthrone it in heart and life. Make it yours to have and to hold, to keep and to cherish in sickness and health, in poverty and wealth, in evil report and good report, through all chance and change, until death removes all danger of parting you from each other.

Louis XIV, the Magnificent, never did a more magnificent thing than when he received James the Exile with royal honors, lodged him in a palace, and provided him with ample means of sustaining his high pretensions; but this noble action is outdone when any humble heart harbors a proscribed truth.

Young men, if you feel the hot blood tingling in your veins at the tales of chivalry, let me commend to you a way in which all the enthusiasm of your nature may find legitimate exercise. Let Truth be the fair damsel in whose behalf you buckle on the armor of life. Scour the world in search of your treasure-trove. Batter down the dungeon doors of ignorance; grapple in mortal combat with the dragons of prejudice; run a tilt at outrance with the doughty knights of falsehood; proclaim war to the death with the proud champions of error; and when at last your labors meet with success, and the object of your fond desires and dreams and toils is found, perchance clothed in rags, and at home with outcasts, then let not your love be chilled or changed. Recognize the mistress of your soul. Banish the traces of her low estate. Make it your life long care to cherish her person, to win her affections, and to compel the homage of the world to her exalted beauty. Act over again the part of that ancient king, described by Tennyson:

“ Her arms across her breast she laid ;
She was more fair than words can say ;

Bare-footed came the beggar maid
Before the king, Cophetua.

In robes and crown the king stepped down
To meet and greet her on the way.
It is no wonder said his lords,
She is more beautiful than day.

So sweet a face, such angel grace,
In all that land had never been.
Cophetua swore a royal oath
This beggar maid shall be my *queen*."

Again, deal with truth *generously*. Sell it not, but *give* it. Keep it for yourself by sharing it with others. Like the widow's pot of oil it will suffice to fill all your neighbors' vessels and be no whit diminished in your own. Beware of the miser's mistake. You cannot hoard the truth. It is like the manna of the desert. You may gather what you need to use; beyond this it will breed worms. A farmer died near my home who had refused to sell his wheat for twenty years. He heaped it up in massive piles, and when he became food for worms the grain was found to be in the same condition. You need never attempt to make a "corner" in this market. You might as well fill a house with sunshine and then proceed to monopolize the light by drawing the curtains and bolting doors and shutters. You might as well take your knife and cut a sunbeam in two, hoping to carry off the severed piece and use it for a candle. The moment you sever its connection with the sun, that moment it flies your touch. It is so with truth. To keep what you have you must be constantly both giving out and taking in.

Once more, deal with truth *faithfully*. If you may neither sell nor hide it, then you must maintain and defend it against all comers. Tennyson has a grand Welsh motto laid in mosaic in the tiles of the entrance to his beautiful home: "The truth against the world." This implies that the world not only may be, but often is opposed to the truth. You may be so fortunate as to find yourself in a majority who are devoted to the truth. There is no objection to such a state of things, provided you settle it squarely in your own mind, not that you are going with the majority, but that the majority is going with you, and you are going with the truth. But in many cases you will not find the truth where Napoleon said it was—on the side of the heaviest battalions. You will be placed like Horatius at the bridge, with an army before you and only a friend or two at your side; or like Elijah on the summit of Carmel, alone for truth, and fronted by hundreds of prophets of Baal. In such a case truth becomes synonymous with duty, and courage, which is part of the cost price of truth, must be sublimated into fidelity. Buy the truth and sell it not. Be patient, and brave, and zealous in investigation; be cautious and honest in conclusion, and then take your stand for the truth like the Roman soldier whose bones were found in the sentry box at the gate of Herculaneum. If all is quiet, well and good, keep your post in quiet vigilance; if an uproar is made still keep your post and do your customary duty; if the mountains are heaved from their bases and the ocean is frightened from its bed, if Vesuvius hurls itself into the sea, and buries the city in its terrible eruption, keep your post and let the antiquaries of two thousand years hence, if only they will dig

deep enough in the dust and ashes of the past, find your very bones bearing unimpeachable witness to your fidelity to the truth.

“ God is our strength and refuge high,
A sure and present help is he,
When dark and troublous days are nigh ;
Hence free from fear our hearts shall be.
Though earthquakes move the world
And hills, 'midst seas be hurled,
The waters of the deep
In turmoil roar and leap,
And swelling shake the mountains steep.”

Do you tell me that the age of heroism is past? For as high an example of fidelity to duty as was ever supplied by Roman discipline or mediæval chivalry, I point you to that engineer who went down to death the first of last May in a landslide in the Mohawk valley. He knew another express would be along in two minutes from the west, and as his engine broke from the train and took the fatal plunge, with his hand on the reversed lever and his heart fixed on duty, he shouted back from the jaws of destruction, “Flag the other train, boys.” That was a deed worthy of the noblest Roman of them all. If old Rome honored the memory of Curtius who leaped into the Gulf on her behalf, then let modern Christendom revere the name of Edward Kennah as of one who counted not his life dear unto himself that he might save others. It was more than a deed of courage. It was more than self-sacrifice; it was utter self-forgetfulness through fidelity to duty. Be *thou* faithful unto death and thou shalt have a crown of life.

Have you bought the truth? I do not mean the truth of the binomial theorem, or of Kepler's laws or of Aristotle's syllogism, but the truth as it is in Jesus? If the heart of any student here sinks with the heavy conviction that an honest answer to this appeal must be a confession of ignorance on this topic, then allow me in all candor to remind you that you know nothing yet as you ought to know. Of what value is all your knowledge apart from the knowledge of eternal life? To what purpose do you labor to pile up a vast and varied store of learning? Yours is

"The toil
Of dropping buckets into empty wells
And growing old in drawing nothing up."

You may indeed take much satisfaction in digging after truth, but the sweets of such employment will turn to bitterness, when the thunders of Judgment are heard in your soul; and in most cases its folly will be demonstrated even in this life. In vain will you seek to quench your thirst at the well-springs of earthly truth. Over every such fountain might be inscribed the Saviour's words: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again." Only the highest truth *can* satisfy the soul.

I ask again: Have you bought the truth. If not, *now* is your opportunity. Now, while your hearts beat high with hope; now, while your limbs rejoice in strength; now, while your minds are fresh and vigorous and eager; *NOW* is the time to buy. Bear with me in redoubling this exhortation. The wisdom of this world, at best, will only half equip you for the struggle of life. A half truth is worse than a whole lie.

Near the town of Deerfield, the Housatonic railroad is laid in the face of a very steep hill. To save expense the workmen blasted a little way into the rock and used the fragments to level up the outer side. They filled the chinks with dirt and pounded it down, and laid one rail on the solid rock, and the other on this disjointed rubble and went their way. For a time the bed was firm, and a thousand trains thundered safely along. But about a year ago a heavy storm poured like a deluge down the sides of that hill. The soft earth was washed out from between the loose stones, and when the next train, with its hundreds of precious lives, leaned its weight upon that foundation, the outer rail sank far enough to precipitate the whole train with its precious burden, two hundred feet down to a doom of indescribable horror.

Dear friends, if you have been building the road-bed of your life's journey on such a rubble foundation, be sure of this: a day of storm is coming that will try every man's work, of what sort it is. Dig deeper, blast further in, and rest your whole weight on the living Rock of Ages.

Having learned the truth as it is in Jesus, are you done with study? Have you graduated from the college of the seven pillars? Suppose I were to find you on the shore with the chest of gold and jewels which you had just drawn from the sea, would you consider that you had only to sit down for the rest of your days and gloat over your good fortune? Or would you not rather tell me that your efforts had only begun? That untold treasure must be counted and accounted for, piece by piece. That sparkling diamond, fit for a king's ransom, must be cut and polished and set in a framework of

smaller gems, to be worn by the one whom you love best on earth. That mass of bullion must be molded into available currency and put into circulation. The mass of that agglomerated wealth must be invested in a way to bring in the greatest possible income.

Is it so, that riches to be enjoyed must be used and made productive? Even so deal with your treasure of truth. It must not be hid in a napkin nor buried in the earth, but *handled* and *invested* and applied to the uses of life, and made to multiply itself for the general good. It is not your very own to do with as you please. It is a sacred trust to be administered in the name of Christ, and, so far as you can reach them, for the redemption of those who are held in the bondage of corruption, of fear, and of falsehood. The number of such slaves can scarcely be overestimated. The poet says,

“ I sum up half mankind,
And add two thirds of the remaining half,
And find the total of their hopes and fears,
Dreams, empty dreams.”

But the Apostle John does not deal in fractions. He says, “ We know the *whole world* lieth in the wicked one.” To snatch the world from the lap of Satan is the work of Almighty Wisdom and Power. To assist in this glorious task is the high honor put upon all who know the truth. As Joseph bought up all the spare corn of Egypt, and held it for the salvation of a starving people, so let us buy the truth and sell it not until the whole world, now enthralled in ignorance and deceit by the prince of darkness and father of lies, shall be triumphantly enrolled under the banner of God.

Permit me, in closing, to adapt and apply to this banner of the cross, what Daniel Webster once said of the American flag. May that gorgeous ensign of redemption soon be known and honored throughout the whole earth ; full high advanced above all other standards, its arms and trophies gleaming in all the original lustre of Calvary, bearing for its motto, no such miserable interrogatory as, " What is all this worth ? " nor those other words of delusion and folly, " Liberty first and truth afterwards," but everywhere, spread all over in characters of living light, blazing on all its ample folds as they float over the land and the sea, and in every wind under the whole heavens, that other true sentiment dear to every Christian heart, " JESUS CHRIST, THE WAY AND THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE, THE SAME YESTERDAY, TO-DAY AND FOREVER."

XV.

CONVINCING THE WORLD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

“And when he is come, he will reprove the world . . . of righteousness, because I go to my father, and ye see me no more.”—*John*, xvi. 8-10.

THE great sin into which all other sins flow, and out of which they are drawn, in a circuit as complete and constant as that wherein the rivers run to the sea and back through the clouds to their fountains, is the sin of unbelief. “He that believeth not shall be damned.” That covers the whole ground. When the Holy Spirit convicts a man of sin, he convicts him of unbelief in the anointed Saviour from sin. And this conviction is not utter, until the soul, sinking and drowning—and yet forever forbidden to altogether sink and drown—in the Dead Sea of sin, looks up and catches a view of the Jerusalem heights of holiness in the person of a once crucified, but now exalted, Christ. To be down there in the depths, tasting the bitter waters of death, sharing the doom of Sodom, conscious of never-ending defilement and never-to-be-satisfied thirst, and never-dying remorse, is surely bad enough; but to look up and see the ample provision that was made for the salvation of all, and to see countless myriads of fellow-sinners embalmed, body and soul, in perfect and perpetual righteousness,—this multiplies woe a thousand-fold, and renders the notion of

a physical hell, with its fire and brimstone, absolutely desirable, if only by means of bodily torment to distract the mind and relieve it from the transports of fury engendered by such a contrast. If the picture is repulsive, let us bear in mind that it need never be more than a picture to us, in whom, thank God, sin has not yet finished its deadly work. In order that we may never behold righteousness from afar, as it appeared to Dives, let us now open our ears to the voice of that Spirit who spoke by Isaiah, saying, "Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness. I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry." Let us open our hearts to the work of the Spirit, who comes to reprove or convince the world of righteousness, because Christ, the Son, has returned to the bosom of the Father.

Two questions are suggested by the text: What is the righteousness here spoken of, and how is it attested by the coming of the Spirit?

I understand the Saviour to be speaking of his own vindication in the whole range of his personal and official character. That righteousness of which the world is to be convinced is the righteousness of Christ, manifested no less in his work than in his person. It means far more than his blameless life. The Holy Ghost was not needed from heaven to tell us that his character was good, his life innocent, and his purpose beneficent. His patient, yet majestic bearing, his living love and his dying prayer, were sufficient to force from the lips of such as Herod, Pilate, and the executioner himself, the confession of his perfect probity. - "I find no fault in

him, no, nor yet Herod." "Truly this was a righteous man."

Grand as these testimonies are, they fall short of our need. John Brown might be a good man, one of the kindest, bravest, truest, that ever lived; but his personal character would not avail to loosen one link of the chain that bound black millions in our land. It was the coming of the Holy Ghost upon the hearts and minds of men, it was the publication of "a fiery gospel writ in rows of burnished steel," that testified of the mission of this forerunner of freedom as of the old Baptist: "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John." Those who speak most highly of Christ as a man and teacher, may be found among the ranks of Unitarians and infidels. It would not be difficult to compile a volume of such testimonials of the most exalted, not to say extravagant, character, all of which are so much trash,—mere advertising puffs—so far as the proper effect on the lives of the witnesses themselves is concerned. Is it not strange that unbelievers should entertain and express so lofty an opinion of Christ's moral character, and yet remain unbelievers? Herod and Pilate, Judas and Josephus, Tacitus and Pliny, Celsus and Lucian, Porphyry and Julian, Chubb and Diderot, Rousseau and Napoleon, Goethe and Richter, Strauss and Parker, Bauer and Carlyle, Pecaut and Renan, and last and least, Robert Ingersoll, admire and extol Jesus Christ. He lived a beautiful life, say they. He spoke beautiful words. He meant well. Give him great credit. But that righteousness which Christ claimed, and which the coming of the Spirit is to establish, goes beyond personal character. It concerns his life work and his heavenly office. When

Jesus talked about his Father in the words which have been recorded for our profit, he not only said, "I have manifested thy name unto the world," but also, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." This work was the redemption of a lost race, and it required more than a perfect life. It demanded, and received, an atoning death. "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Let us, then, make a distinction between the person and work of Christ. It is possible for a man to be upright, and yet fail when tested in his work. John Law was honest, charitable and public-spirited, but his financial work was the ruin of himself and the nation he attempted to serve. A similar judgment must be pronounced upon the indefatigable old Frenchman, who has devoted all his energies to the cutting in twain of this western hemisphere by a stupendous ship canal. But the work of Christ was "finished," so that no one of the doomed race needed to perish for lack of a sufficient atonement. The reconciliation of God is complete, and the righteousness of Christ in achieving this work is one thing of which the world is to be convinced by the coming of the Spirit.

Let us make a further distinction. A man may be personally pure, and may accomplish a good work for himself and others, and yet be officially subject to blame. Oliver Cromwell was a good man, and he wrought well

for England, but he was a usurper. He new-modeled the army and new-modeled the State, but what shall we say of his grasping at supreme power, and seeking to transmit it to his son? To show, as with a lightning flash, his shortcoming in official righteousness, stand him up beside Washington! In character and achievement Cromwell was commendable, but in official position he was "a throned lie." Christ was righteous, not according to the standard of morality merely, nor yet by comparison with human examples, but divinely righteous as man, as Redeemer, and as Mediator.

What a vast distance between God, the infinite, eternal Creator, and man, the creature who lives but a few score years! And now man, by his sin, has erected across that distance a barrier which he cannot pass. Where shall one be found who has the will and the power to remove this barrier, and bring man again into fellowship with God? Christ undertakes and accomplishes this divine and gracious work. He unites the human and divine, and so brings God and man into fellowship; and the Holy Spirit comes to convince the world that this mysterious union has been effected; that Christ Jesus is the Mediator between God and man; that he loves man as he loves God; that he is the Son of God, the Fellow of Jehovah, the same in substance, equal in power and glory; and also the Son of man, subject to temptation, limited by time and place and circumstance, and that he is charged with a message of good-will, to the intent that any man may become a partaker with him of the divine nature and a possessor of the divine glory.

Without controversy, this is a tremendous claim. It will require very strong and clear evidence to establish

it firmly. The man who claimed the Tichborne estate in England produced evidence that would probably have put him in full possession had the claim been a moderate one. But an ancient family property and position in a great kingdom demanded infallible proof. Much more shall it be required of him who, in sober earnest, claims the earth, that he shall dispel every reasonable doubt of his title. Let us sift the evidence carefully, giving it neither more nor less than due weight. Nor is the process lengthy, for, to our surprise, he calls on his behalf one solitary Witness. "And when he is come, he will convince the world of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more."

With this Witness we have now to deal. So competent is he, and so fully possessed of Christ's confidence, that our Lord not only leaves the case in his hands, but himself goes away, as if it were already gained. Indeed, his claim is strengthened by his absence, for, on the supposition that he came forth from God to do a special work, the fact that he returned to the Father, and was seen no more on earth, is evidence that he has fully discharged his trust, else would God have sent him back again. "General," said an aide-de-camp, in the course of a famous battle, "General, Colonel —— sends me to report that he has taken a standard." No notice was taken of this communication by the pre-occupied General; so it was repeated: "*General, we have taken a standard.*" At once came the gruff response: "Then take another." When Jesus went up to report his victory over sin, death and hell, there was no standard left in all the ranks of the enemy. Lucifer had fallen from heaven like a shooting star. His blaze was quenched

in the gloom of the pit. His bolts were harmless henceforth, so that Christ could say: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."

Since, however, the disappearance of Christ would not avail to show either that he came from or went to God, we need some plain demonstration that, in coming and in working and in going, he had the sanction of the Father. This is afforded, in a very peculiar manner, by the coming of the Holy Ghost. It would have been very easy for Christ to cite the voice from heaven at his baptism, and again at his transfiguration, or the transfiguration itself, or the wonders he had wrought, or the crowning sign of his own resurrection, as conclusive proof of righteousness before God; for "who could do these miracles except God was with him?" Instead, he chose to hinge his whole case on the coming of the Spirit. When, therefore, the day of Pentecost arrived, and there came from heaven the sound of a rushing, mighty wind, and the appearance of tongues of fire, then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, voiced the convictions of the eleven as to the righteousness of Christ, saying, "This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses. Being, therefore, by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath poured forth this which ye see and hear."

"Thou hast, O Lord, with glory
 Ascended up again,
 And captive led captivity
 Triumphant in Thy train.
 To Thee have gifts been granted
 For men who did rebel,
 That so the Lord Jehovah
 In midst of them might dwell."

Here, then, is the argument for the righteousness of Christ. He said he was going into heaven, and would, in conjunction with the Father, send down a substitute, who should emphatically testify of him ; who should recall his teachings and explain them ; who should abide with the disciples, leading them and fitting them to lead others into the truth, till the whole world was convinced of his righteousness. Accordingly, Christ departs and the Spirit actually comes. He brings to the apostles a knowledge of Christ, attachment to Christ and reliance on Christ, such as they never had before. Surely the Son is righteous, even as the Father is righteous.

To make this very plain, let me use an illustration : A division commander, on a field of battle, says to his next in rank : " I am instructed to make over my command to you and report at headquarters." But the subordinate does not feel equal to the emergency. He has never had charge of a division, and the time is critical. The enemy is attacking in force and pressing hard for an advantage. It was all they both could do to hold their ground, and he fears instant and overwhelming disaster if left to his own resources. He would object, but the order is imperative. His senior sees that he is troubled, and takes him by the hand, saying : " Courage, old fellow. I'll tell the general just how it is, and I'll make him send you a brigade from the reserve. Look out for reinforcements. Good-bye." Then he parts from him like a thunderbolt, and disappears in the cloud of dust and smoke. And the lonely man, by whom the brunt of this terrible battle must now be borne, girds up his loins for the struggle and fights bravely on. If he can hold his position a little longer, and if his friend

gets safe to headquarters, and if, when there, his influence is great enough to secure the needed help, then victory will be his. How keenly he scans, from time to time, the crest of the hill, back of which he knows the reserve is posted! And when at length his patient courage is rewarded; when he sees a line of bayonets, and then a line of men, appearing over the slope; when he hears the shout of onset from those fresh forces, and the response of welcome from his own tired and wasted troops; when he feels the ground tremble under the steady and rapid foot-falls, and opens his ranks to give room for the charge, then he knows as well as if all the aides in the army had told him that his glorious old commander has overcome all obstacles and kept his parting pledge.

Thus, when Christ told of his departure, sorrow filled the hearts of his disciples, for their enemies were many and active and bitter; but when he promised reinforcements they bided their time at Jerusalem, girding on the panoply of prayer; and when the reinforcements came, when all the place was shaken by the rush of heavenly squadrons, then they had abundant evidence of his faithfulness who had promised, and of his righteousness who had performed.

Consider further the effect upon the disciples of the Spirit's coming. If Christ was righteous in speech, that effect must be greater than was wrought by his personal presence; for he said that it was expedient for them that he should go away in order that his Comforter might come. Unless, therefore, it appears that the Holy Ghost fitted the disciples for worship and work, better than Christ himself had done, his righteousness

stands impeached, and he is fairly open to the charge of forgery, when, in writing to the Laodiceans he signed himself, "The Amen, the faithful and true witness." What change for the better was wrought in the apostles by their Pentecostal experience? We are so familiar with the phenomenon that we need to pause and ponder, lest its startling significance should escape us. Never besides, in all the world's history, it may safely be asserted, was such a transformation wrought in mortal men, as came over Christ's disciples on that occasion. It is not so rare a thing for some man, of vast natural endowments, to spend much of his life in comparative indolence and inaction, because of sluggish temperament or unfavorable circumstances, and then leap, at a bound, into his proper place. Had the sword not pierced the lady of Ellerslie, William Wallace might have been unknown to fame. But for the slaughter at the Carron, Robert Bruce might have been no more than a belted earl. But for civil war in their respective countries, a middle-aged farmer in Huntingdonshire, England, and a middle-aged tanner in Galena, Illinois, would never have been known as each the greatest captain of his age. Unquestionably many a man of genius slumbers out a life of ignoble ease, because the clarion call of a great emergency never vibrated through his soul. Visit any cemetery, and you may read, with Gray's elegy in mind, names that might have vied with the greatest in the world's esteem. Still it remains true that man never was, and never could be, raised to deeds of which his natural powers were altogether incapable, except in the single instance recorded in the second chapter of Acts. The change there described is not simply the energetic

use of faculties already possessed, but the manifestation of powers then and there conferred, to the utmost extent, and beyond it, of what nature is capable—power to speak any language, power to heal the sick, power to cast out demons, power to raise the dead. From plain, unlettered fishermen, whose skill is exhausted in making a good haul of fish, and disposing of it to advantage, and whose knowledge is bounded by the rim of the Galilee basin, they spring up into princes of Israel, able to deal with men the world over, as they have dealt with the finny tribes of Gennesaret. From petty squabbles about precedence among twelve, they rise in a moment to contest the palm of superiority with the greatest, not only of their own age and race, but of all the earth in all ages. Call the roll of law-givers, statesmen and philosophers that have adorned humanity, and their very enemies will adjudge these lowly-born and meanly-nurtured men a place among the foremost.

But the most surprising change is not in their intellectual capacity, nor yet in their miraculous gifts. It is to be noted in their moral character. They were cowards, they were cruel, they were, in many respects, contemptible, though following Christ and learning of him. It seems incredible that any human being could eat and sleep for years in fellowship with Jesus and not grow like him in gentleness and magnanimity. Yet, of these chosen and favored associates, one was, and continued to be, a devil, and all the rest kept the level of superstition, bigotry and boorishness, on which the common herd of Judean peasants had grovelled for centuries. Such were they still on the forty-ninth day after the eventful Pass-over, at which their Leader was taken from them. One

day more has fully come, and what are they now? The noblest of mankind! They are capable of turning the world upside down, so great is the transformation wrought in themselves. They live in a new atmosphere; they breathe a different spirit. Before, they were scarcely fit to pour water on the hands of the least prophet of the old dispensation, now they can share in the writing of the New Testament, which, for moral grandeur—to say nothing of mental grasp and spiritual tone—immeasurably outranks all the combined productions of human genius and learning that ever were written. Formerly, the boldest of them trembled at the rebuke of a maid-servant, and all fled, panic stricken, at the approach of a few policemen, with the customary rabble at their heels; now they can stand, undismayed, before governors and kings, giving to every man that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them. This, too, at the risk of being used for torches to light up a tyrant's parade, or of being thrown, as so much cheap and useful flesh, to glut the stomachs of hungry wild beasts! "None of these things move them; neither count they their lives dear unto themselves, so that they may accomplish the ministry which they received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." If any one is to quake henceforth, let it be Felix on the judgment-seat, or the jailer, with sword in hand and keys at belt, or devils in hell, who believe and tremble at the bearing of these transfigured men. Verily it was a blessed thing for them—and for us—that Christ should depart, and send the Holy Comforter in his place! Verily, verily, the coming of the Spirit, after such a

fashion, is infallible proof of the righteousness of him who foretold the unparalleled event!

“He will convict the world.” Take the words in their broadest sense. Press them to their utmost meaning, and the chain of evidence only lengthens and strengthens by every test that is applied. The apostles “went everywhere preaching the word.” They carried it, in one generation, to the bounds of the known world. Their successors carried it to the “regions beyond” the pale of civilization, and the history of the Church is simply this text, writ large. Christ had in view not the Jews alone; nor was his intention limited by the extent of empire that satisfied the ambition of a Cæsar. Humanly speaking, the devil did a very impolitic thing when he showed the Son of man all the kingdoms of the world and all the glory of them. It was like Edward I. taking Bruce into Scotland with him, or like Hezekiah showing his treasures to the Babylonish ambassador, only to kindle the desire and determination of possession. All the nations, to the uttermost parts of the earth, are brought into the mind of the Son, as his rightful inheritance. Therefore he commissions his disciples to evangelize creation, and he promises the sure and all-sufficient help of the Spirit to win the world for him. Every advance that is made along the line of mission effort, every outpost established in savagedom, every translation of a soul from the kingdom of darkness to that of God’s dear Son, is the witness of the Spirit to the righteousness of Christ. Every disciple, in whom the Spirit dwells, must entertain the towering ambition to carry forward the glad tidings of salvation, till “all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the

Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him." That day of world-wide conviction is drawing near. The Church has heard the rustling of the many wings of heathen souls that fly as doves to their windows, and the old promise is brought to mind, "Lift up thine eyes round about and see. All they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons are coming from far, and thy daughters to be nursed at thy side." Soon the gospel of "the kingdom" shall be published among all nations for a witness unto them, and all creeds and symbols of faith shall be compressed into one brief, compendious confession of Christ. "And this is the name whereby he shall be called :

THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Brother men, what is your part in bringing about this grand consummation? Has the Holy Ghost *in you* borne unmistakable witness that Jesus Christ is now at God's right hand, exalted to be a Prince and Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins to all that will believe? Is the Spirit, *through you*, taking of the things of Christ and showing them unto the world? Are you helping to convict the world of the righteousness of Christ? Or are you a non-conductor of spiritual impulses, at best an insufficient conductor? When the electric current cannot pass readily along its intended channel, the result is sometimes appalling. It explodes in destructive lightning, or it kindles into a devouring blaze. The Holy Spirit must accomplish his appointed task, and, in doing so, he must work along the lines of human agency. Are you giving him an ample channel to flow out upon the world? Or, are you heaping up

wrath against the day of righteous retribution? It is a glorious and blessed privilege to electrify the world by the impact of a life full-charged with the righteousness of Christ; but it is a foolish and foolhardy policy to attempt to conceal and smother that divine flame by a life of worldliness and sin. For a time you may be unscathed, but the explosive forces are silently accumulating; they will ere long find a vent or make one. In an hour when you think not, the awful burst will come. May you never be made to realize the full force of the words once and again spoken to the Hebrews: "For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire."

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