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BY

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### TO THE READER.

Mr. Colton has reported my discourses during the past year ; and I take pleasure in certifying to the verbal accuracy with which he has reproduced them from my lips. In the revision, I have had occasion only to remove redundancies of expression, which were my own. These printed sermons may be relied upon, as being exactly what was pronounced from the pulpit ; with only such verbal corrections, made by myself, as were necessary for the press.

B. M. PALMER.

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## \*THE CHURCH, THE KINGDOM OF THE TRUTH.

JOHN XVIII: 37.—“*Pilate therefore said unto Him, art thou a King then? Jesus answered, thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.*”

The interview, here recorded, between Pilate and our Lord, possesses a varied interest to different classes of readers; a *romantic* interest, to those who are touched by the pathos of the story and the painful tragedy with which it closes—a *philosophic* interest, to those who observe the contact betwixt two distinct planes of thought, and are curious to know how the lower will be affected by the higher—a *spiritual* interest, to those who recognize the momentous issues which are involved, as the great sacrifice is about to be offered for the redemption of a lost world. We hold the breath in anxious suspense, that we may learn how the Master will put His own cause before a representative of the Gentile world. Such, Pilate unquestionably was. In his ambition and love of power, in the unscrupulousness with which he both grasped and retained it, and in the profligate sycophancy with which he courted the imperial favor, he was a fair type of the Roman Magistrate of the period; whilst his mocking skepticism only reflected the degradation into which Philosophy had sunk, in the contemptuous derision of all truth.

To such a man was Christ brought by his own people, upon the vague charge of claiming to be a King. Pilate's question goes at once to the bottom of the case, “Art thou the King of the Jews?” It was however equivocal in its form, and did not admit of a categorical answer. Either yes, or no, might have carried an impression which would be ruinously false. Our Lord properly insists upon an explanation of terms: “Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?” which may be understood thus—“do you ask this from a Roman point of view?” in which case an affirmative answer would present him as a rival of Cæsar: or “do you ask it from a Hebrew Theocratic point of view;” in which case the kingdom would be spiritual in its nature, and would involve no conflict with the reigning authorities. Pilate treats with scorn the suggestion that he could feel the slightest interest in anything connected with the Hebrew

\*Preached, Oct. 1st, 1876, at the dedication of the new Church Edifice of the Central Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, Rev. Dr. Brank, Pastor.

polity—"am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me; what hast thou done?" It is plain that Pilate understands the charge against Christ, as a Roman naturally would; and in asserting His Kingdom, Christ must accurately define its character: "My Kingdom is not of this world; if my Kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my Kingdom not from hence." The language cannot be misunderstood: Christ admits that He is a King, but not in the sense of the accusation against Him. His Kingdom is purely spiritual, and does not make Him either a rival or a foe of Augustus.

This running exposition brings us to the primary and exact meaning of the text, which is uttered more perfectly to define His Kingdom as being the Empire of the Truth—a Kingdom over the minds and hearts, over the thoughts and opinions, over the character and conduct of men, as these are modified and moulded by the Truth. No theme, my Hearers, is better suited to the occasion which draws us together this day. In the solemn dedication of this building to the service and worship of the Tri-une God, we recognize in the most impressive of all actions the declaration of our Lord that His "law is the Truth," and is upheld in the world by simple witness-bearing. The expansion of this great principle will lead to the consideration of several important particulars.

I. CHRIST HERE AFFIRMS THE REALITY AND THE UNITY OF TRUTH. The age in which He appeared was marked by universal skepticism. It is betrayed in the querulous challenge of Pilate, "What is truth?" Which, in the mildest interpretation, is nothing less than the wail of intellectual despair as to the possibility of knowing it. Men everywhere denied the existence of any such thing as truth; or what amounted to the same, that there were any criteria by which the certainty of that truth could be established. The possibility of knowledge being denied, nothing remained to men but opinions carrying with them greater or less degrees of probability; and he was derided as a bigot or a fool, who committed himself to any positive beliefs. It is not difficult to trace the causes which accomplished this sad result. Polytheism had thoroughly broken down under the weight of its own absurdity. The Roman conquests had brought together in the Pantheon the Gods of all the nations—and men laughed at the grotesque assemblage of thirty thousand divinities, dividing amongst them the religious homage of mankind. The refutation of idolatry was absolutely crushing. With the vulgar, religion had degenerated into a vain superstition; whilst with the higher classes, it gave place to unrestrained and mocking unbelief. In like manner, Philosophy had completed its cir-

cuit; and failing to answer the questions of the human soul, had collapsed in the prostration of utter skepticism. It was one proof of "the fulness of time," when Messiah must appear, that human invention was exhausted alike in philosophy and religion; and that in both, the confessed result was Nihilism. After centuries of subtle speculation men went about asking, "What is Truth;" and so despaired they of any answer, that they paused not long enough to hear the echo of their solemn question. It is needless to say that this destitution of all faith was followed by an equal deterioration in morals. Where there is no criterion of the true, there can be no standard of the good; and in the chaos of universal doubt and unbelief, virtue must also founder and perish. It was time that Heaven should send a teacher, if truth and virtue were to be preserved upon the earth; and the wisest of the heathen looked for the advent of One, whom the ancient oracles had dimly announced as the revealer of truth to men. In the fulness of time He came, and His word authoritatively ascertains to us both the *reality* and the *certainty* of truth; "to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." Notwithstanding the failure of human speculations, truth still has a substantive existence; and it is sufficiently dear to the heart of God, to bring the Son from Heaven that he may bear witness to it. As this truth exists, so it may be known; if not by the discovery of reason, at least by the testimony of faith.

But Christ affirms the *unity* of truth, not less than its *certainty*. He speaks of it as one and singular; it is "the truth." There is perhaps a mental instinct which leads us to search for the simple in the midst of the complex, for unity in the midst of apparent diversity. It is constantly assumed, even where it is not discovered; and the effort prematurely to trace it out, leads to many of the errors with which the history of science abounds. A fatal love of simplicity seduces sometimes the most cautious from the path of patient research; and crude theories are hastily adopted because they appear to resolve the many into one, and to yield the central principle or fact which is thought to lie at the heart and core of physical truth. With slender emphasis perhaps, our Lord does really by implication affirm this unity in Truth. However distributed in many departments over which we are compelled to travel successively, it is essentially one as soon as we rise high enough to view it as a comprehensive whole. But as the reality and certainty of truth depend upon its being constituted such by God, who is its Author; so is this unity perceived only in its relation to His blessed purposes and plans, in the unfoldings both of Providence and Grace.



II. THE TRUTH, OF WHICH CHRIST SPEAKS IN THE TEXT, IS DELIVERED TO US THROUGH REVELATION, AND IN THE FORM OF TESTIMONY. Knowledge is acquired by us in one or other of two ways: either by the discoveries of reason, in the sphere of the natural; or by the revelation which is made to faith, in the sphere of the super-natural. The two are entirely distinct; for they relate to different spheres, and are addressed to two distinct faculties of the soul. In Creation God throws out certain broad hints, the seeds of all the science which man shall ever construct. These he follows up in rational investigation, until, by observation, comparison, generalization and the like, the facts of nature are grouped in clusters, and our knowledge is cast into form to be both communicated and preserved. In all these researches, however, we touch only the outer works of God, the going forth of His power. But when we seek to contemplate Jehovah Himself and to know Him in the spiritual properties of His being, we rise to a higher plane to which reason alone is unable to conduct us. No analogies of the material universe can disclose to us the spirituality of God's essence, nor the mode of the Divine subsistence in the same, nor the working of any single attribute of His nature, nor the reconciliation of such as seem to be contradictory in the perfect harmony in which they must blend. Still less are we able to infer what may be the thoughts of His free mind, and the purposes of His sovereign will, as these are woven into the texture of all History and Providence; or to deduce the methods by which He will deal with the mighty problem of sin, in the combined administration of law and grace. These can be known only so far as God is pleased to reveal them. They lie in the depths of His counsel; and it would require intelligence that is infinite, to know them formed as yet only in the secret resolve of His own heart. But when God discloses them, this revelation places us at the original fountain of knowledge. It is absolute truth we receive, since He who speaks is the ultimate source of all being and light. We only need to ascertain whether it be God's revelation indeed, to dissipate every doubt in the certainty with which this knowledge is sealed upon the understanding.

Evidently, however, this revelation necessitates a witness, properly authenticated as such, whose sworn testimony is the basis of our faith. Here we begin to discover the resources of Divine wisdom, as they lay hid for ages within the mighty mysteries of Grace. Only as these came to be unfolded, was it known in Heaven or upon Earth how grand was the power of God in achieving the purposes of His love. So far forth as He was the Creator and Upholder of all worlds, the great Jehovah seemed careless of speech save by the works which he wrought. These he left

without interpretation, that Science might gather up the silent testimonies and proclaim "the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world which are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and God-head." (Rom., i: 20.) Beyond question, the rebuke is most awful which these words pronounce against the Science which fails to see God in His works. It is the shame of bastardy, which Science brands upon her own forehead, and the great scandal which tarnishes her proud name, that she is not, in every stage of her own progress, the interpreter of that God whom she finds in nature, and the witness of His being. But when Jehovah passes from Creation to Grace,—when He would open the secrets of His infinite heart, and reveal the exceeding riches of His glory, He must find a messenger whose personal testimony shall certify the record of these transcendent verities. But who is competent to announce these inner-most facts of God's nature and being, except He who came from the pavilion of the God-head, the middle person between the Father and the Spirit, who is of God and is very God, and whose peculiar name, "the Word," designates Him as the Revealer?

This is the official work of the Son, as He Himself proclaims: "All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." (Mat., xi: 27.) "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." (John, i: 18.) For this reason, in the opening of the message to the Seven Churches in the Apocalypse, Christ is styled with emphasis "the faithful witness;"—and again, "the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the Creation of God." (Rev., i: 5, and iii: 14.) With especial solemnity the sacred canon closes with this last reference to the witness upon whose personal veracity rests the entire dogmatic authority of the Scriptures, "He which testifieth these things, saith, surely I come quickly." It is the pledge of His truthfulness, that He will appear again to judge the world according to the record which He has delivered. It is a sufficient basis for our faith, that by His word we are to be tried in the last day, which is now delivered to us upon His authority as the word of our salvation. And because it is from first to last the testimony of a witness, it is delivered to us, through the Gospels, with the constant formula, "verily, verily, I say unto you." In the text, our Lord refers to His office as a witness-bearer, under circumstances peculiarly affecting. In the moment of His martyrdom, when His claims were about to be sealed with the sacrament of His own blood, He solemnly affirms "to this end was I born, and for this cause

came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." Nay, He makes this testimony, and the truth which it conveys, the foundation of the Kingdom claimed by Him as the Mediator. We shall find opportunity, in the sequel, to denote the significance of this fact, that Divine revelation is delivered to us in the form of personal testimony which is beyond impeachment.

It may be well to enlarge this last topic, by considering a little the competency of the witness whose testimony is given in the Scriptures. Without undue expansion, three points may be taken. *Christ, as Divine, knows perfectly the truths which He reveals.* And here is disclosed the supreme folly of the opinion, that any being less than God can be the Author of a revelation. The things to be taught lie wrapped within the folds of the Divine consciousness and thought: who can bring them forth, but a being who has that consciousness, and thinks those thoughts Himself? He must be God, who can lift up from the abysses of the Divine nature the truths which lie hidden in those eternal deeps: and the folly is self-convicted, which would get rid of Christ's supreme divinity by degrading His office into that of a mere teacher. His function was to bring that truth forth from its concealment within the Father's purpose and mind: and only He who could say "I and my Father are one," was equal to the disclosure.

Again, *Christ was officially commissioned to discharge this function of a Revealer.* Hence the constant reference of His works and of His doctrine, to the Father: "verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do; for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." (John, v: 19). "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me." "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works."—"The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." (Ibid. vii: 16, and xiv: 10, 24). Sent into the world to reveal and to accomplish His will in the redemption of a lost race, it was necessary that Christ should be authenticated by the Father as His agent; and in a sense most important and true, all the miracles wrought by Christ, and all the truths taught by Him, were also the works and the words of the Father, the seals by which the Son's commission as the Redeemer was attested. Our Lord therefore speaks not only with all the certainty of personal knowledge, but with the super-added authority of One whose office compels Him to speak;—the sanction of which, in turn, guarantees to us the truth of all that He shall utter.

Once more, *Christ is a competent witness to the truth, which He Himself*

creates in the facts of *His* personal history. One of the characteristics of Christianity, discriminating it from every system of false religion, is, that it founds upon facts which can be historically proved. It is not woven of mystic speculations couched in symbol and allegory, the fantastic dreams of visionary men in which fable and truth are commingled in forms utterly monstrous and grotesque. The Gospels, on the contrary, are veritable histories of a true and real person; and the actions which they record of Him yield us "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God," through which we are saved. The voluntary incarnation of the Son of God, His substitution in the place of His people, His vicarious sufferings and death, His resurrection and ascension into glory, the whole work of Redemption and Mediation—these are the facts which make the frame of the Gospel—and these are the facts to which Christ testifies in the Scriptures. He is a witness then, in the special sense that He is Himself the truth; which is in the process of becoming such, as it is worked out in His own life and death. You will observe here the necessary connexion which subsists between all the offices of Christ. A shallow theology asks us to accept Him only as a Teacher—as the best and highest of all the Prophets sent from before Jehovah's throne, but as nothing more. But what shall this Teacher tell? How shall He speak of redemption until it is wrought? Of pardon, until it is procured? or of salvation, until it is achieved? An invisible, but real, tie binds together the offices of Prophet, Priest and King: for when the Prophet unrolls His scroll, lo, there is written upon it exactly what the Priest has done, and the triumph of that Kingdom which is an everlasting Kingdom, because it is the Kingdom of the truth.

I cannot conclude this topic, without indicating the immense value of a Revelation which comes to us in this precise form of a *testimony*. It places all truth upon the same footing, as to the ground upon which it is received. The incomprehensible is accepted with as much ease and certainty, as the plain and demonstrable. The veracity of the witness is our guarantee; and we receive all that He delivers upon *His* knowledge of the facts, and not our own. Whether reason will ever be able to explore these mysteries or no, we accept them as true upon the testimony which is competent to declare them. And when faith rests simply upon the testimony, our conviction is as strong, and our confidence is as great, in the most impenetrable mysteries with which every Religion must abound, as in the propositions which are the most level to our apprehension. In this way alone, it becomes possible for finite man to grasp all truth—and to rest with entire delight in the high things which it is "the glory of God to conceal."

III. DIVINE TRUTH IS SELF-EVIDENCING, AND FINDS A BASIS FOR ITS RECEPTION IN THE ORIGINAL CONSTITUTION OF THE HUMAN SOUL. The argument from design to prove the existence of God, turns upon the innumerable adjustments in Nature to secure the accomplishment of proposed ends. The illustrations are found on every side, and fill to repletion the pages of every treatise on Natural Theology. But nowhere is the argument more forcible than in the adaptation of man's intellectual and moral powers to receive the truth which God reveals, and by which he becomes a subject both of Law and of Grace. For example, the being of God, no matter how the conception was originated, from the moment it is once entertained, is ineffaceable forever. I care not to explain it; the fact itself is sufficient for my purpose. God is not far from every one of us, in the sense that the thought of Him is too congenial with our nature to escape after it has been distinctly formed. For this reason, I have long since ceased to have any dread of purely Atheistic writings. There must be a conception of God in the very effort to disprove His being;—and the terms employed in the argument will but chisel the impression deeper upon the mind. It is one of the wonderful methods by which God provides for the proclamation of His truth, that even the profane swearer who tramples upon His name, and the Atheist who denies His being, bring their compelled testimony to the fact that “He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” In like manner, the distinction between right and wrong, which has its source in the nature of God, how it finds an echo in the human conscience—which thus becomes the organ of Law, in the necessary recognition of its authority! So again, that sense of justice, ineradicable within us, how it looks up to the justice which dwells in God; and accepts the doctrine of a future judgment, not only for the deeds wrought, but for the underlying character which they disclose! How marvellous, too, that no sense of guilt, nor feeling of personal unworthiness, can smother the conviction of God's conversableness with man, or of His placableness, which supports the whole doctrine of atonement and forgiveness as revealed in the Scriptures!

I resist a powerful temptation in refraining from a minute exposition of these and similar points, at which the revealed truth of God so easily attaches itself to the human mind and compels belief. It will be sufficient to add, that the doctrines which are the most difficult and mysterious, are precisely those which most directly challenge these necessary appetites of our spiritual nature. Thus, it comes to pass that where reason is most baffled in comprehending, there faith finds its easiest exercise in apprehending. The Gospel is, on all its sides, authenticated to us. Where

reason fails, faith most easily triumphs: the two are exactly co-ordinated, and shown to be equally necessary to the knowledge of things eternal and divine.

This power which lies in Divine truth to attest itself, by laying hold upon the entire nature of man, and addressing itself to his most sacred instincts, deserves to be illustrated far beyond what the limits of a single discourse will permit. In reality, there is not a department of our nature, in which the revelation God has given does not awake a distinct echo. There is not, for example, a law of the *understanding* whose requisitions it does not fulfil. It gives a cause sufficient for all the effects it denotes. It reveals a God, who is the Author of Creation—an atonement, which is the ground of pardon—a new life, which is the spring of holy obedience. Where the seal of mystery refuses to be broken, the reason is persuaded to acquiesce in the necessity of reserve. Both what is known and what is concealed, are made to confirm the assent which is yielded; and the most absolute faith is absolved from the charge of credulity. Reason herself pronounces that the testimony of God is the highest guarantee of truth; and that she would violate the most fundamental of her own laws, in refusing to accept a system which is incomprehensible only so far as it touches the infinite and divine.

It equally controls the *conscience*, since every utterance binds with the authority of law. When God speaks, He commands. Every disclosure of His will is, by virtue of His supremacy, an injunction. The offers even of Grace are obligatory; and the same authority, which subdued with its terrors on Mt. Sinai, enforces the gospel from Mt. Zion: "He that believeth is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John iii: 18.) This feature of divine truth is one of its most important seals. The doctrines from which the guilty shrink in absolute terror, and which therefore they seek most to impugn—such for instance, as the eternal punishment of the wicked in Hell—do nevertheless so compel the homage of conscience, that no sophistries have ever succeeded in cancelling the belief of them. Great as may be man's interest in suppressing these convictions, they will arise like spectres at a feast, and will not down at our bidding. Conscience must respond to the heavy indictment, and guilt must accept its doom from the justice which is inflexible, simply because it is unchangeably holy.

The truths of Revelation, again, go directly to the *heart*, in the engrossment of the affections. God is presented in the Gospel as a being to be loved: "glorious in holiness" indeed—but, for this reason, only the mere

worthy to be chosen and admired. He is seen in the person of Jesus Christ, veiling the splendors of the Deity so that they shall not terrify the soul which draws nigh to commune with Him as a Father. The counsels of eternal love are wrought out before our eyes, through the sufferings of Gethsemane and the Cross. Through the quickening of the Holy Spirit, we feel the first pulse of the new life in the actings of repentance and of faith, in the sense of adoption into God's family, in the pardon which is sealed upon the conscience, and in the sweet hope of eternal glory.

Nay more, this divine revelation searches down into the sphere of the *will*, and wakens it to all the activities of duty. We begin to know what is meant by "doing the truth" as, in our progressive sanctification, every portion of this truth is wrought into the soul, and finds expression in the outer life. What more certain evidence is there that the truth is meant for the soul, than that it speaks to every faculty of the soul and satisfies the desire of every appetite? If the impression in the wax just fits the die which makes it, do they not belong together? and is there any other proof, but the correspondence between them? So God, who made the soul with all its instincts and appetencies, reveals the truth by which those appetites are fed; and no better authentication is needed that the truth is from Him, than its own power to search into the nature of Man, and the basis already existing there for its hearty and honest reception.

IV. It falls within the scheme of this discourse to remark only further that THIS REVELATION TO WHICH CHRIST BEARS WITNESS, AS FINAL AND PERMANENT, IS REDUCED TO RECORD IN THE DIALECT OF MEN. You will not expect me, in this incidental connexion, to discuss the whole subject of Inspiration which it involves. It would indeed be a delightful excursus, had we time to point out here the connexion between the offices of the two persons in the God-head, the Son and the Spirit, in the composition of the sacred writings. It would be pleasant to see how the Son, as Revealer, lifts from concealment what eternally lay hid in the divine counsel—and how the Holy Spirit wrought the vast conception into the texture of finite and fallible minds, so that it could be rendered into speech and made intelligible to man. It would be instructive to trace the divine and the human elements, as they both enter into the structure of the Bible: Revelation by the Son giving the truth, which is divine; Inspiration by the Holy Spirit giving the expression, the human form in which it is clothed. It is a stupendous miracle, this secondary incarnation of the Son, appearing as the Revealer in the written word—this mysterious power of the Holy Spirit, whereby the truth, wholly transcendental in its nature, is both safely conceived in thought, and accurately represented in language.

Without probing the mystery, the grand result is enough—that “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;” borne forward, as the term implies, under an influence which, whilst it did not restrain the mind’s freedom, enabled it to hold in solution, as it were, the deep things of God; and to give those perfect utterances in which divine truth, according to the laws of human thought, chose at length permanently to crystallize.

Those who sneer at our reverence for the Bible as being the idolatry of a book, may readily understand the grounds upon which it is rendered. In the Scriptures we hear the voice of God. It is the testimony of “the faithful and true witness,” who tells us that He was born that He might utter it. It is the word of the Revealer, who came from the bosom of the Father in order to declare Him. The power of the Holy Ghost gives body and form to the truth in the Scriptures, even as by this power the body was prepared for the incarnate Lord. The words of the Father are delivered by the Son, through the power of the Spirit; if this be not enough to clothe the written Word with all the dogmatic authority we ascribe to it, it is hard to see how the claim to any prerogative can ever be established. By this authority, in all matters of religious belief, we are securely anchored amidst the tides of human speculation. Not even the ‘advanced thought’ of this boastful age, nor all the cant of progress, shall sweep the Christian from this safe anchorage. In the things pertaining to God, there can be no witness like to God Himself: and the certainty which this gives to our faith, is fully equal to that which flows from the demonstration of reason—nay, infinitely higher, as it is a divine confidence resting upon a divine support, and wrought within us by a divine power.

These principles have a direct application to the solemnities in which we are at this moment engaged. Our Lord in the text clearly defines His kingdom as the kingdom of the truth. It is this which makes it a kingdom not of this world. “The weapons of its warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” (II Cor., x: 4, 5.) Founded upon the truth, it can be maintained in no other way than by witness-bearing. Now my Brethren mark: THE VISIBLE CHURCH WITH HER ORDINANCES AND WORSHIP, WITH HER GOVERNMENT AND DISCIPLINE, WITH HER PASTORS AND TEACHERS, IS THE LOGICAL AND NECESSARY CONSEQUENCE OF THIS. You will hear with me a little in your patience, whilst in conclusion I trace this connexion.



*The Church, in her corporate existence simply, is a monumental proof of the truth out of which she springs.* How shall we account for the origin of such a society, and for its perpetuation through thousands of years amidst the changes which have shattered the most powerful organizations at its side? Blot out the fact of Redemption, and the foundation upon which she rests is removed. You describe the Church as the company of the redeemed, the fold in which the sheep are gathered. Chosen by the Father to eternal life, given in covenant to the Son, and purchased by His blood, they must needs be separated from the world out of which they have been taken. The constitution and laws under which they live, are necessary to distinguish them as "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that they should show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." (I Peter ii: 9, 10.) As "the Lord's portion," they are organized into a commonwealth, for the purpose of being educated for the inheritance which they shall hereafter enjoy. This then is the Kingdom of which Christ here speaks to Pilate, of which He says "now is my Kingdom not from hence;" a spiritual kingdom, which is administered through "the truth," of which Christ in His death and resurrection is both the author and the martyr-witness.

*The peculiar function of the Church, moreover, is to perpetuate this testimony which Christ has delivered.* As we have before seen, the truth is of a character to be known only by Revelation; and this is given to us upon the testimony of a Messenger, who comes from the bosom of the Father to declare it. Either this witness must abide on earth and bear His message to the generations which come and go; or His testimony must be taken up by some, who, in every age, are appointed to this function. It would be easy to show the unsuitableness of the first. It is inconsistent with the genius of a system calling only upon faith; and it would interfere with the whole economy of grace, requiring the administration of the Redeemer in Heaven. The Church, therefore, takes up this testimony of her ascended Head, and by His authority proclaims it to the end of time. As this Revelation, too, has been reduced to record by the stupendous agency of the Holy Ghost in inspiration, there is required a guardian for the sacred deposit. This solemn, yet precious, trust is discharged by the visible Church, whether it be under the old dispensation or the new. Saith the Apostle, "What advantage then hath the Jew, or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." (Rom. iii: 1, 2.) To keep with jealous

care these books committed to her trust, to translate them into all the tongues and dialects of men, to bear them to the nations scattered over the whole earth, to proclaim the salvation which they disclose, to expound the principles of law and grace upon which this salvation is based, to enforce with loving and faithful entreaty the offers and calls of the Gospel. this is the way in which the Church steps forth as a witness, in the name and stead of Him who hath ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, and giving gifts unto men." It is in this sense, Paul applies to the Church the grand designation of being "the pillar and ground of the truth." (I Tim., iii: 15.) It would be absurd to maintain that she *creates* the truth through her councils and by her decrees. for the truth is that which Christ alone has revealed. It is equally a self-contradiction to allege, that she can, through her interpretations, lend what Calvin terms "a borrowed certainty" to truths which would remain forever doubtful without her authority. The Church is "the pillar and ground of the truth," in so far as she takes up what Christ, her Head, has revealed; and holds it forth to the gaze of men, and proclaims its priceless hopes and joys to souls that are perishing in sin. If then the Savior's Kingdom is that of the truth, to be upheld and extended through the testimony of a witness, we see how the Church logically results as an organized body, fulfilling this function.

A true Ecclesiology has its foundation only in the doctrines of Grace: and it is historically true that they are always corrupted together.\* It matters little in which of the two the perversion shall begin; for by a logical connexion it soon extends to the other. The Church has her origin in the fact of Redemption, and this she is to realize in her history. Her entire constitution, both as to government and discipline, is moulded upon this idea. Her officers and laws, her ministry and ordinances, the functions assigned to her, her responsibility in all things to her unseen Head, the privileges which are secured in her charter, all are based upon the fact that she is "the body of Christ, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." (Eph., i: 23.) The instant she comes to be regarded simply as an organization with ghostly and mysterious powers of her own, claiming prerogatives exaggerated beyond proportion through the dimness in which they are viewed, the decay of her life begins; just because she has been taken out of her setting in the system of grace, which she has in charge to keep and to expound. Her office as a witness-bearer is beautifully illustrated in the consecrated emblem of the "golden Candlesticks"—giving forth the light communicated from a higher source, and reflecting it upon a world sitting in darkness. (Zech., iv: 11-14.) For the symbol is in-

complete until you see the form of the Son of Man in the midst of these Candlesticks, holding in his right hand the stars which are the angels of the Churches. (Rev., i: 12-20.)

It will not be deemed invidious to claim, for that portion of the Church Catholic which goes under the Presbyterian name, a conspicuous devotion to the system of doctrine revealed in God's blessed Word. Her Confession of Faith covers the whole circle of doctrine with a minuteness of statement, which many have criticized as unduly restraining liberty and independence of religious thought. Through her entire history, she has endeavoured to equip her ministry with that furniture of knowledge which will render it an able expounder of Divine truth. She has always required the instruction from her pulpits to be impartial and complete, "according to the proportion of faith." And her power in the world has been precisely measured by the fidelity with which she has clung to this, as her special vocation. Nor does she lean upon an uncertain hope: "for the word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb., iv: 12.) As the word of Revelation and the word of Inspiration, it is instinct with the power and life of its divine authorship. Therefore God Himself declares: "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." (Isa. lv: 11.) "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth." (Rom., i: 16.) By whomsoever received, the word becomes what Peter describes as "the incorruptible seed," of which we are "born again," springing up within us in all the fruits of Grace forever and forever. (I. Pet., i: 23.)

In the full persuasion of that ministry which Christ has committed to his Church, you, my brethren, have erected this superb structure; which, in the solemn prayer of dedication by your Pastor, has now been set apart to the exclusive service and worship of the Tri-une Jehovah. Its chambers and appointments betray the Protestant idea, which lays such stress upon the preaching of the word—not as contrasted with the spirit of worship and devotion—but affording, through the knowledge it imparts, the materials of that worship, and feeding the flame of a true devotion as it burns upon the altar of your hearts. "Enter," then, "into these gates with thanksgiving, and into these courts with praise." Here, "bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." May the Lord "make this place of His feet glorious," and cause "the voice of rejoicing

and salvation" to be heard in this "tabernacle of the righteous!" "For the Lord hath chosen Zion: He hath desired it for His habitation. This is His rest forever; here will He dwell. He will abundantly bless her provision, and satisfy her poor with bread. He will clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy." (Ps. cxxxii: 13-16.) And now that He hath "enlarged the place of your tent," what remains but the prayer that He "may lay your stones with fair colours, and lay your foundations with sapphires—that He may make your windows of agates, and your gates of carbuncles, and all your borders of precious stones; that all your children may be taught of the Lord, and that great may be the peace of your children. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord: and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."



## II.

### CONNEXION OF ATONEMENT WITH SANCTIFICATION.

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I JOHN 1: 7.—*“And the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.”*

Have you been accustomed, my Christian brethren, in reading this brief verse, to consider how completely it covers the entire circle of Christian doctrine, giving a perfect epitome of the gospel? “Jesus,” which means Saviour: “Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins.” (Matt. 1: 21.) The name discloses the nature of the work which our Lord came from the bosom of the Father to achieve. “Christ,” which means anointed—indicating his appointment to office, and the furniture of grace in His human nature to discharge the same. “His Son,” plainly setting before us the supreme divinity of our Lord, and the personal relation which he sustains in the mystery of the God-head. “The blood,” pointing to the atonement, whereby, through the offering of himself, he has taken away the sins of his people. “Cleanseth,” teaching us the efficacy of that atonement in securing the sanctification of his people. “From all sin,” showing how, at the last we shall be made perfectly “meet for the saints’ inheritance in light.” The whole gospel is shut up within two lines, just as you have seen the broadest landscape shut up within the camera of the artist; the gospel, not only in its theology, but in its practical development in the experience of the Christian on earth and in the expansion of all his hopes in the joys of the upper kingdom. If there be any feature in the structure of the Bible which fills me with more constant astonishment than any other, it is the folding within a single word the mysterious doctrines of Grace, so as to defy the most destructive criticism in its attempt to eliminate the truth from the record.

I presume every thoughtful Christian has paused over the words of this remarkable verse, and taken in the scope of the doctrine; but I should not wonder, if most readers had failed to see its admirable setting in the bosom of the context. Just read a moment with me. The Apostle says that “God is light”—light, which is here put as the symbol of his purity and holiness; light, the most diffused and penetrating of all created substances; light,

necessary as the condition of healthful growth, and even of life, both to plants and to animals; light, so pure and so clean, so incapable of defilement from anything that it touches—can there be, in all the analogies of the material world, a happier illustration of the purity and the holiness of God. “Now,” says John, “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” “If we say that we have fellowship with him whilst yet we walk in the darkness” of sin, we utter a manifest self-contradiction; for if God be light and we walk with God, we walk in the light; and therefore we cannot, at the same time, be walking in the darkness. Then, conversely, “if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.” There is not a more exquisite passage in all the Scriptures, to show the exact nature of Christian communion as flowing from joint fellowship with God, and the corresponding necessity of Christian recognition and fellowship; so that the refusal of it springs from an unscriptural, unevangelical spirit. It is exactly in this connection that the text follows, with the close copulative “and,” “and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” Most clearly, Paul feels the necessity of anticipating and removing an objection. How can we, who are sinners by consciousness and by confession—who never dare to bend the knee in the closet, or in the sanctuary, without beating the breast and saying “against thee, thee only, have we sinned”—how shall we, who are sinners after this sort, walk with Him who is the light? John answers by saying, “the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” When that blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God,” we are able, even with the sense of personal unworthiness, to walk with him who is the light, and in whom is no darkness at all.

We easily associate the blood of Jesus Christ with the pardon of sin and the acceptance of the believer; but the peculiarity of the text is, that the blood is here spoken of in its connection with holiness. What John affirms is, not that the blood of Jesus secures the pardon of sin; which is perfectly true, and constantly taught in sacred Scripture. But the special declaration is, that the blood of Jesus Christ “cleanseth from all sin.” To this single point I restrict your attention this morning: The connection which is affirmed in the text between the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that complete sanctification which will be attained by every believer, at the last, when he is transfigured into the perfect likeness of his Lord.

I. *Pardon and justification logically necessitate sanctification.* As I have just said, we are familiar with the connection between the blood of

Christ and pardon, between the blood of Christ and our acceptance with God. We understand how God sent His only beloved Son to take our place under the law which we had broken, and to bear the curse for us—working out the righteousness which is reckoned to us, and upon the ground of which we receive the pardon of sin and stand before His throne justified and clear. But then the question at once arises, is not this whole proceeding unreal? Does not God deal with us only by a fiction of law, when He justifies and saves by a righteousness which is not that of the sinner himself, but of a party acting on his behalf as a substitute? We are constrained to feel that “the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether,” and that He can render no decision except in accordance with the facts of the case. If then He accepts us as righteous, it is because we *are* righteous. Evidently there is one link wanting in this process. How shall the righteousness of this substitute, which is ours in *law*, become ours in *fact*—so that we shall have a clear right to plead it before God as the reason of our justification?

God may, in His sovereign mercy, reckon this righteousness of Christ to us, so that we shall be legally entitled to all the benefits thereof: but before these can be actually enjoyed, there must be a work of power within us; by which we are enabled to receive this righteousness, and thus to make it our own in *fact* as well as in *law*. It is just at this point the Scriptures introduce the agency of faith, as the instrument in our justification. By faith we appropriate the offered righteousness of Christ, and make it our own. It being our own *actually* as well as *legally*, God pronounces in accordance with the fact when He declares us righteous. It is no fiction of law, but a true verdict rendered by the law under the full satisfaction of all its claims.

But that mighty work wrought within the sinner by which he accepts this righteousness, is nothing less than the new birth itself—imparting the principle of spiritual life in which sanctification begins. Thus the blood which procures the pardon, secures also the new life in which this pardon must issue. Justification and sanctification, whilst they are logically distinct, are yet logically related. They are exactly co-ordinated as doctrines of Scripture, and as facts in Christian experience. In neither is it possible to have the one without its fellow. Acceptance with God draws after it, by necessary sequence, a meetness to enjoy His favor. There cannot be actual justification of the sinner before Him, without a new Creation. Along with the legal imputation of righteousness which the first requires, there goes forth a saving power by which the sinner is raised from his death in sin, and receives as his own the righteousness by which he is jus-



tified. The principle of Holiness is thus planted in the soul, which develops in the sanctification of the believer on Earth, and into everlasting glory hereafter in Heaven. Such is the connexion between the blood and the cleansing, which are so closely united in the text.

II. *The power of the Divine life will secure the final expulsion of sin from the Christian.* The true life of the soul is its holiness—the holiness in which it was created at the first by Jehovah—the holiness which man, in the transgression, lost—the holiness which Christ, the second Adam, has restored, having paid the forfeiture to the law. There is a sense therefore in which the soul dies: not by its dissolution, but by its separation from God—by losing that direction in which all its faculties originally moved, when every thought was a holy thought, and every affection knit closely to God and to His throne. This holiness, which Christ Jesus, as the second Adam, brings back to his people and restores by His Spirit, is the purchase of His blood. He died that we might live. He satisfied the law in our stead, that the life we had lost might be regained. You have the emblem of this through all nature, where life is constantly springing before your view out of the bosom of death itself. From the buried seed springs the germ of the plant, which derives its life from the death of that which gave it birth. It is the analogy by which the Apostle illustrates the mystery of the Resurrection—when that which is “sown in corruption will be raised in incorruption;” when what is “sown in weakness will be raised in power;” when what is “sown a natural body will be raised a spiritual body.” Out of this decaying flesh which we are compelled to bury out of our sight, there shall arise the Resurrection body—the immortal tenement in which the immortal Spirit will dwell through the ages of eternity. Out of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is intended by the word “blood” in the text, springs the life which he, as Redeemer, has recovered for his people, and which he restores by the agency of the Holy Ghost. This life is various in its degrees; and hence the greater, or less severity of the spiritual conflict through which believers pass. Just in proportion to the vigor of our life, is the power to beat down Satan and tread him beneath our feet. Just in proportion to this, are we able to rise superior to the temptations of this world and to look at the things which are unseen and eternal. No sadder mistake can be made, than to substitute human expedients for that alone which will make any Christian triumphant over the trials and temptations of Earth—the increase of that life which has been communicated by the Holy Ghost, from the Head in whom it is treasured in order that it may be dispensed. Nevertheless, although the degrees of this spiritual life may be thus various, the

end is certain ; it is that this life will expand through all the faculties and powers of man's whole nature, and he shall become again, in all the force of a spiritual emphasis "a living soul" before God. Because this life, which is the purchase of the Saviour's blood, will, in its possession of us, more and more expel the sin that exists, therefore it is that the blood of Jesus Christ stands connected with our sanctification. The life, diffusing itself through the whole nature, will at last make the soul more fit to stand in God's presence, to behold His face in peace, and to rejoice in His glory.

III. *The blood of Jesus has purchased the agency of the Holy Ghost, by whom the sinner is renewed and the believer is sanctified.* These persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in the mystery of the Divine communion, are the one only living and true God ; and yet, by reason of the personal distinction between the three, that subordination of office is possible between them, which you continually recognise in the Scriptures and which is necessary to the outworking of the scheme of Grace. The Son can say, by reason of His being the Son, "I and my Father are one ;" and yet, with reference to the subordination of office, he can say, "my Father is greater than I." Just as the Son is the Father's equal, whilst yet in His office He is subordinate—receiving a commission from him, acting under the authority of the same, and rendering up His trust to the Father, by whom it is accepted : so there is an equality between the Son and the Spirit, which is perfectly consistent with the official subordination of the one to the other. Our Saviour can say, as He does in the Gospel of John, "if I depart I will send Him unto you :—" "But the Comforter which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you"—showing the same relative subordination of the Spirit to Himself, which He acknowledges to the Father.

Now, the right to dispense that Spirit, the right to send Him to whomsoever He will, is a right which the Saviour claims as Mediator, and which is the purchase of His own death. Since it is through the power of the Holy Spirit alone that any of us have been renewed and sanctified ; since it is only by this power that any of us shall at last be glorified ; since it is through the constant indwelling of that Spirit that we shall continue to occupy our places of honor in Heaven—therefore it is that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from sin. The agent in this cleansing, is the Holy Ghost. That agency, in all the plenitude of its operations, is purchased with "the blood :—" and the connexion is not remote, but close, between the two.

IV. *In all the intercessions of our Lord in the presence of his Father*

*the whole argument turns upon the efficacy of the blood.* And now my brethren, need I say that the pleading in Jehovah's Court must be equal to the grace through which we are pardoned, and to the atonement by which we have been redeemed? Be ye sure of it, that if there is a grand proportion in all the works of nature, there is an equal symmetry between all the parts of the work of grace. If it required the resources of the infinite Son here upon the earth to work out our salvation, the argument which secures it to each of us must be an argument high and broad as the atonement by which it was procured. The very party by whom the atonement is wrought—who in redeeming a lost world, sounded the depths of the divine law, and comprehended its entire import—He is the being competent to stand before the throne of the Father, and plead the merit of his own sacrifice and death. I will put the thought in another way. Have you not a thousand times in your closet, felt your inability to argue your own cause adequately before God, even when the argument is constructed to your hand? You go before the throne and say, "for Christ's sake pardon my sin and blot out my transgression; for His sake who died and rose again for my justification, lift upon me the light of thy countenance and grant me thy salvation." You seek to stretch your thought over the precious atonement of your blessed Lord, in order that you may plead the mighty argument adequately before the throne of your Father. And then you break down and almost give up your prayer, which so feebly urges the plea by which you hope to prevail. But you turn your eye upward and behold the advocate there, who pleads after the manner recorded in the seventeenth chapter of the gospel of St. John; and you recognize at once that you have an advocate who can take in all the exigencies of your case, and, at the same time, measure the height of that transcendent argument by which he is to prevail with the Father. Do you venture to go into any human court with a great earthly interest at stake, without an advocate before the bar able to grasp all the points which are involved? My brethren, is there any language which shall express the absolute trust you repose in the effectual advocacy of Him who pleads for you in the chancery of Heaven? He has only to lift up those hands which were pierced by the spikes—He has only to disclose the wound in His side, out of which flowed the water and the blood—to draw down, according to the terms of the original covenant, all the blessings of salvation upon your head. Because the whole of Christ's pleading turns upon the blood; because through this pleading you and I are more and more sanctified; therefore it is that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. When he is speaking before the Father of the blood, strength is given to us in our weakness, courage in our conflict, and comfort in our sorrow.

V. In the fifth and last place, *our translation at last to Heaven is through the blood*. Did you ever try to think how abortive the gospel would be, if it changed only our legal relations and not also our actual character before God? Just for an instant break the logic which connects justification with sanctification, and carry the sinner with simple pardon up to the judgment bar, and what shall God do with him there? He cannot go to hell, because he is pardoned; he cannot go to heaven, because he is not holy. What shall be done with him? Nay, there must be something over and beyond the pardon. The logic of grace will draw something after it, which will enable the poor sinner upon whom the pardon has been pronounced to receive and rejoice in the blessings of God's love. If he is to go into God's presence and lie upon God's bosom, the sinner must be both renewed and sanctified. The stain of sin must be purged away, and he must appear without spot, or wrinkle, or blemish, or any such thing, before the throne. Hence the long discipline which the Holy Spirit uses, in order to take these dreadful wrinkles out of our character. You say the pressure is very hard. The wrinkle will never come out, until there has been a pressure that shall make it smooth. Therefore it is that God draws his harrow over us and we experience all that the word tribulation implies, that we may at last be able to say with Paul, "we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts." Oh, the preciousness of that last hour, when each one of us shall be alone with God and the Holy Ghost shall put the finishing touch upon our likeness to our blessed Head! I beg you, when you go to your chambers from this sanctuary, to sit down by yourselves and take in the full comfort of the thought. There is a point of time, before we cross that mysterious river which bounds this life—one instant, it may be longer or it may be shorter—one point of time to every child of God, when the Holy Spirit completes the work of faith and love, and makes the Christian like his Lord in every lineament and feature. When the saint has gone too far down into the dark valley to repeat any of God's secrets, there is a last look upon the cross, and a last exercise of faith, just before this faith is lost in sight, and hope in everlasting joy. All this is through the blood; without which there never had been the effective working of the Holy Spirit within us—there never had been purchased the crown and the rejoicing, and the glory which are to be made our reward for ever in the presence of God on high. Heaven is made to us a place of holiness and of blessedness, through the blood which cleanseth us from sin and makes us meet for its enjoyment.

What shall I say in concluding this discourse? Well, this: That Antinomianism is clean shut out. There is not any place for it in the gospel of our Lord; and no man who understands the nature and genius of the gospel will ever dare to say, "let us continue in sin that grace may abound." The very language convicts the utterer of the supremest ignorance. He has not learned what are the first elements of the gospel of the grace of God. He has overlooked the connection which grace has established between pardon and holiness; that wherever the righteousness of the Lord Jesus is embraced by the sinner, it is through a new life whose first manifestation is the faith which embraces it. We have no right to sever these things which God has connected together. The doctrines which God has united in this holy and blessed marriage, we may not be allowed to disjoin. The pulpit need have no fear in speaking of the completeness of the salvation which is made ours by faith in Jesus Christ. There can be no room for Antinomianism in this gospel, as soon as you understand that the blood which pardons is the blood which cleanses. If the blood which redeems is the blood which sanctifies, there can be no place in the gospel for that filthy and obscene doctrine, as Rowland Hill so appropriately calls it, which pollutes as well as caricatures the truth through which we are saved.

It may be asked, if "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," how comes it to pass that most Christians, as they move up and down through life, are such tattered and miserable examples of holiness? Ah, my brethren, it is this which brings the blush of shame upon all who are in the Church of God, and know anything of the power and sweetness of His love—that whereas in all things we ought to "adorn the doctrine of God and our Saviour," we do so totter in our walk and are often times so unseemly, that the men who look at us scarcely know whether we belong to Christ or to him that wars against Christ. Let it be borne in mind, however, that no system can be properly judged, until its results are completely ascertained. Let me say to those who object to all that is defective and wrong in the Church, that every true child of God, ragged and beggarly as he may seem in his apparel, will yet appear in "the fine linen clean and white, which is the righteousness of the Saints." There is not one poor trembling Christian upon the globe whom the Holy Ghost, before he is done with him, will not transform perfectly into the image of His Head and render "meet for the Saints' inheritance in light." Go on then with the objection. Throw your taunt down at the foot of the Church, all along as she struggles on her way up to the Kingdom. When you and I shall stand at last before the throne, you will find the Saints with their

robes washed white in this blood, and with a song of triumph upon their lips. God will so remove the blemish and the stain from each of them, and will so present them perfect in the image of His Son, that the lost in Hell will look with eternal envy upon the beauty with which they are crowned. Do not judge a system until you come to its end. Christianity is only working out its results, and, in thousands of instances, has only commenced its process. Wait for the consummation. Wait until you enjoy the vision which John had at Patmos, and behold ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands who chant the song forever: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, for He hath redeemed us to God by his blood out of every kindred and tongue, and people and nation." Then if there be room for it, file your exception and lay your indictment where it ought to be laid, at the foot of Him that sits upon the throne. Be at least fair toward God's poor struggling ones, who, in the midst of great infirmity are still striving to lead lives of holiness before God and of propriety before the world. Wait until the gospel has done its work, until grace has wrought out its result. Wait until the Holy Spirit has finished His task; and then, if you can put your finger upon spot or wrinkle in character or conduct, carry up the complaint to the Judge, that the promises of the eternal covenant have not been fulfilled to God's people. Until then the objection is premature. In that day of final vindication it is certain that every tongue shall be silent, except the tongue that shall tremble with praise in the exceeding fulness of its joy.



### III.

## ETERNAL LIFE, THE GIFT OF GOD.

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ROMANS VI: 23.—“*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*”

We are presented here with a double contrast—between the death and the life, between the wages and the gift. The lost and the saved start from the same point; but they move in opposite directions, to exactly opposite destinies. The one plunge downward through impenitency and sin, until God, in His wrath, suddenly cuts short the declension, and they are swallowed up in the pit that is bottomless. The other pass upward through incredible conflict and toil, until at length they gain eternal life at God's right hand in Heaven. This is the first contrast. Then the wicked, because they choose to remain under the law, work for death as their hire. They earn it, and they get it; it is their wages: the term in the original being that ordinarily employed with reference to the provisioning of an army, or to the stipend of a soldier under pay. On the other hand, eternal life is God's free gift: and now, my brethren, it is this last thought which I desire to emphasize this morning, rejoicing that I shall have nothing to say except what you constantly read in the Sacred Scriptures, and what I trust many of you distinctly realize in your own experience.

I. This life, which the Saint enjoys, here and hereafter, is seen to be a gift, from the fact that *God is under no antecedent necessity to provide salvation for any sinner of any class.* That government which is too weak to vindicate its own majesty may, perhaps, just as well be wiped out, that it may give place to one that is better; and it were the extreme of folly to suppose that God, in the administration of his law which is perfect, can ever be destitute of resources to vindicate its integrity. For His law, if perfect, must not only be complete in the statement of the creature's obligations, but must also be efficient in the penalty by which these are enforced. So that, if God has devised a scheme of mercy for man, it is with Him not a matter of necessity, but of choice. He never was compelled, as many crudely imagine, to provide a scheme of salvation before He could justly enforce the condemnation of the law under which the



guilty lie. The response, which conscience is continually making to the charge of guilt, proves the law to be holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. The argument is that of Paul himself, and in Paul's own words, by which he establishes the honor of the law from the sinner's opposition to it.—“And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death; for sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me: Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” (Rom. vii: 10–12.) That God exercised an absolute discretion, and lay under no compulsion in providing salvation for the sinner, is disclosed by the fact that He did make an actual discrimination betwixt two classes of transgressors. The first sinners of whom we have any knowledge, were those who rebelled against His authority in the immediate presence of His throne; and Paul tells us with great explicitness, “He took not on Him the nature of Angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.” (Heb. ii: 16.) Jude also tells us that “the Angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the Great Day.” (v: 6.) But if God was under a necessity to provide salvation for any sinner, He is bound, of course, to provide that salvation for all classes alike; and the historical fact that He has made a discrimination betwixt one order of beings who sinned in Heaven, and another order of beings who sinned upon Earth, shows that it was a free, and not a compelled act of His own will. Unquestionably there are just reasons for the discrimination which has been made, in this matter, between fallen Angels and fallen Men—reasons which God does not disclose to us in His word, and which, perhaps, we, in our present state, would be utterly incompetent to grasp; but which, when they are recognized by us in the light of His throne, will completely vindicate His course. Even they who suffer forever will be constrained, in the midst of their torture, to testify that the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good, under which they have been doomed. Because then, God is under no antecedent necessity to provide salvation for any sinner, be he Angel or Man, the eternal life bestowed upon us must be a free gift.

II. *This life is the spontaneous outworking of his own nature, which is love.* “For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John iii: 16). “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (I John iv: 10). It is, therefore, through the exuberance of His

love that this salvation was devised. Nay, the Scriptures seem everywhere to represent all life throughout the universe, whether it be of the body or of the soul, as flowing from the fulness of God's own being; just as though the infinite life which dwells in God as in the fountain, should on every side break into spray, and fill the universe with life. There is life in the air we breathe; life in every drop of the water which we drink; life, a world of life, upon every green leaf of the forest; life in an ascending scale, from the mote that floats in the sunbeam to the huge behemoth described by Job as "moving his tail like a cedar," whose "bones are as strong pieces of brass and like bars of iron," and who "trusteth that He can draw up Jordan into His mouth." (Job xl: 17-23). Analogy will justify the inference, that there is a like gradation in intellectual life and spiritual life;—from man at the bottom of the scale, through all the degrees, to the topmost being that bows before the throne in Heaven. Oh! How does God show His nature of love, in the fact that He has created myriads of beings—filling them not only with natural but with spiritual life, and preserving them in the beauty of that holiness, to worship Him forever! The self-existent Jehovah, rejoicing in the fulness of His own being and, most of all, in the fulness of His holiness, creates myriads of beings and fills the universe with them, that they may enjoy the blessedness of participation with Him in that which constitutes the glory of His own nature. But, my brethren, the argument which is the most touching to us, and which ought to be to all creatures the most convincing as to the spontaneity and greatness of the Divine love, is the act of restoring holiness to the sinner: after he has lost it—of quickening those who are spiritually dead, once more into spiritual life. After life had been given and was forfeited, after holiness was bestowed and had been lost, what but the most generous love could prompt the Deity to exercise His power in a new creation and in a special resurrection to spiritual life?

Just here, however, I should like to guard against an impression which may possibly be conveyed by this line of thought. I am far from suggesting that God's nature, which is love, works itself out under any necessary law of development which is compulsory, and which interferes with the perfect freedom of His own will. The most vicious fatalism which man can think, is the fatalism to which he sometimes has the audacity to subject even God Himself, when under any circumstances he is represented as helpless. And it is very noticeable that this most objectionable form in which fatalism was ever maintained, is chargeable upon those who can only protect human freedom at the expense of the Divine sovereignty—who, to secure man from the domination of fate, do not hesitate to put the

necessity upon God from which it would relieve the creature. Of the two, I would accept the fatalism that binds me, rather than admit the fatalism that shall bind God. No, my hearers, by whomsoever affirmed and however disguised, it is the most fatal of all errors to strip the Deity either of His personality or of His freedom. That God cannot be put under any law of development, is plain from the fact that this idea never can attach to a being who is confessedly perfect. It can attach only to a being who moves through successive changes, stage after stage, by progress and by growth, until He arrives at the maturity of His powers. You can predicate development of man, and of every other creature that grows up from infancy to maturity. But God always was what He is, absolutely without change, perfectly blessed in the consciousness of His own perfections, when in the solitude of His own eternity He filled immensity with His presence. The universe is simply the assertion of His sovereign will, and the product of His power. Why, my brethren, if God be perfect, His intelligence must be as broad, and His will as free, as shall fill up the idea of perfection. The perfect freedom of the perfect God exempts Him from the compulsion of necessity, and He cannot be put under the law of development, as many suppose.

Besides this, God's love, being infinite, can find countless beings upon whom it may be lavished; and His power being boundless, innumerable ways can be devised for the play of His affections, without shutting him up to the necessity of showing this love only in the way of redeeming the sinner. And the fact, that God had before Him the alternative of dealing with these creatures through His law—and that, in His own discretion, He did discriminate between two classes of beings—shows that whilst His nature is love, He is perfectly free in the choice of all the forms in which it shall be manifested. The gift, therefore, of eternal life through the outworking of this love, is seen to be perfectly spontaneous on His part.

III. *Even the Christian, so far from deserving eternal life, is in perpetual danger of forfeiting it after it has been bestowed.* The notion that the sinner can deserve eternal life, proceeds upon a misconception that is fundamental. It overlooks the fact that the sinner is dead in sin; and, by reason of this deadness, is incapable of holy affections or desires. The first desire after holiness, and the first endeavor after obedience, are the *fruit* of the spiritual life and, therefore, cannot be its *cause*; they are the *consequent*, and, therefore, cannot be the *antecedent*. But without pressing that thought, which ought to be conclusive, there is this other which I have suggested—that even when God, in His sovereign mercy, has implanted the germ of the new life, we infallibly lose it, if left to ourselves; and

there must be continually exercised the same grace in the preservation, which was exhibited in the first communication. If the sinner is renewed in the image of Christ, he must be kept in that state of holiness by the same power which, in the first instance, made him a new creature. How completely is the life of which the text speaks the pure gift of God, when, even after the germ has been implanted, we are ourselves incapable of its preservation; and God must come down in the fulness of His love for the protection of the Christian, just as at first for the redemption and salvation of the sinner. The whole work of the Spirit in our sanctification is conclusive evidence that the Spiritual life, from its inception to its consummation, is the free gift of God.

IV. This brings me to the last point upon which I will insist in this connection, and which seems to me to shut out all controversy: *this life must be the gift of God, from the very elements which constitute it.* Look, for example, at PARDON, the first thing which a condemned sinner needs. When, in our human courts, a criminal has been found guilty and is sentenced to death, from the instant the word issues from the lips of the judge the man is civilly and legally dead—not actually, because he still breathes; but his life is forfeited to the law, and is no longer in his own keeping. If the law suspends the execution of the sentence for a few allotted days or weeks, it is only from a merciful consideration of those solemn interests which need to be adjusted between the soul and God, ere it is brought before the bar of final Judgment. Pardon, therefore, may be construed negatively as the transgressor's life, since it recovers it from forfeiture and puts it again in his own keeping. But whenever it is conveyed, it is not what the criminal deserves or has earned, but what the Executive in the exercise of his own clemency chooses to bestow. So, my hearers, the soul that sins against God is, from the moment of the sin, under the condemnation of the law and is legally dead. Here is the testimony: "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." If pardon comes to this sinner then as the free gift of God, as the first element of the life, into the fulness of which it finally issues, it shows the whole to be equally gracious and free.

Look again at REGENERATION, or the NEW BIRTH. The spiritual life of the sinner is not only forfeited, but it is actually lost; it is extinguished by sin, just as physical life is extinguished by the noxious vapors in a deep mine. When, therefore, a new life is given, the movement must come from God and not from the creature who receives it. Just as when Jesus stood at the grave of Lazarus and said "come forth," the movement and

the life came alike from Him who was the Lord of the resurrection and the grave—and Lazarus, bound hand and foot with grave clothes in his tomb, was but the recipient of the favor. So in the communication of pardon, God renews through the Holy Ghost the spiritual life which has been lost: the sinner is only the recipient of the blessing, and God is seen to be absolutely free in its bestowal."

Look at another element of this eternal life, *THE COMMUNION WHICH THE SAINT HAS WITH GOD* and the tokens of the Divine favor which he enjoys. Why, my brethren, even in our human intercourse, the intimacy which shall characterize it, and the fervor and glow with which we will exhibit affection depend entirely upon our choice. In all the play of human love in the various relationships of life, it depends upon the will of the parties themselves how far the intercourse shall go, and with what degree of fervor it shall be expressed. How much more, when God opens His broad bosom and allows His child to lie there, shall it depend upon His volition alone—and we, in the acceptance of the favor, feel that we are debtors to His grace? Surely if God whispers to us the secrets of His love, it is from the free determination of His own will. If there be communion with God, and the tokens of His favor be lavished upon us, filling us with joy unutterable, it is simply because God is free to admit us to that intercourse and to bestow upon us these tokens of regard.

Look at another feature of the eternal life, *THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY*, and its adaptation to a spiritual existence. If God gives to us life, it must extend to every part of us. The life must come back to the body, as well as to the soul. It makes no difference what the difficulties are, as to the resurrection of the dead. Though you accumulate objections upon objections utterly insoluble by human reason, the necessities of Grace compel the resurrection. The dead must rise from their graves because Jesus, who is the author of their life, gives that life to the whole man. As the body is a part of us, a true constituent of our nature, it cannot be annihilated. There is a clear necessity, in the face of all the difficulties which press for solution, that our dead body shall rise again. Reason comprehends the necessity of the fact, even though it cannot explain the mode in which it is accomplished: and we rejoice in the assurance that by and by we shall stand in the completeness of our nature, body and soul, in the presence of the God whom we love. If there are any in this assembly who have been called to break their hearts over the graves of those who are dear to them, they will say that, of all the truths revealed in God's word, none can be sweeter than the assurance that we shall look again upon the faces of our dead, behold them in their bodily forms transfigured into

the likeness of Jesus Christ, and that in this spiritual body we shall see God and rejoice in His presence forever. As then the power is Divine by which the dead are raised from the tomb, and by which the natural is transfigured into the spiritual, it is plain that the exhibition of this power must depend simply upon the free exercise of the Divine will. So far as this element of the life is concerned, the restoration of the body which has been under the power of the grave, it is seen to be the gift of God.

So that, when we take up these separate elements which enter into eternal life, we find that they all depend upon the movement of God's will, and that He is free in the contribution of each; and the life which embraces them all, comes to us as the perfect expression of His generous love. "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Will you allow me, in this exposition, to dwell a moment on the clause "through Jesus Christ our Lord?" There are several reasons why this eternal life must come through Him as the channel. Pre-eminently, since *it belongs to the second person of the God-Head to be the immediate author of all creative acts.* The foundation of this great mystery lies in the constitution of the God-Head, and is therefore incomprehensible to mortals upon the earth. Still, reason may at least touch the border of the mystery, and rejoice in a truth which it apprehends, though it does not comprehend. There is a reason in the personal distinction of the Son, being from the Father as the only begotten, that He should be the immediate author of all creative acts. Whatever power may reside in God, in its efficient acting, shall always flow from the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit. Thus we see the power in its fountain head from which it issues; we see it in the immediate efficiency of Him who produces it from the depths of the God-Head; and we see it in the actual manipulation of it through the agency of the Holy Ghost; all these adorable persons, in the unity of the Divine nature, thus concurring in the free exercise of a prerogative which belongs to each. Whatever be the reason—and I only throw this out as skirting the edge of the mystery—whatever be the reason, there is the Scriptural fact. Says the Apostle, "by Him were all things created that are in Heaven and that are on Earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him, and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." (Col. i: 16, 17.) If then in the mystery of the Divine subsistence all power must spring from the Father through the agency of the Son, this must be true of the spiritual creation no less than of the natural, and Life Eternal must flow to us from the Father through His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Again, *Christ, as the Redeemer, has purchased this life and treasures it in Himself as the believer's heir.* Mark, this life is not only lost by the sinner, but it is forfeited to the law. The law covers it with its lien. The law folds it under its penalty. The life which was in the sinner, is now in the grip of the law. It is the law that thunders out the curse "the soul that sinneth it shall die," and it is the law which executes the stern enactment, when it casts body and soul into the second death. If this life is ever to be restored to man, it must be recovered from the law; somebody must lift the terrible forfeiture; some being must cancel the bond. This has been done by the substitute whom Divine mercy has provided—who, going under the curse in our stead, lifts the mortgage, cancels the bond, redeems the forfeiture, recovers the life, and treasures it in Himself, so that it shall flow forth, as from a full reservoir or fountain, to the generations of the redeemed as they shall be successively born into the world. In this sense the gift of life is through the Lord Jesus Christ.

It must be through the Lord Jesus Christ, further, *because he is the revealer of God, making known to us in Heaven the blessedness which constitutes the life.* Brethren, life is more than mere existence. In loose language, we use the two terms as though they were identical; and yet often we are compelled to make a distinction in our application of them in ordinary life. You put your finger, for example, upon some poor unfortunate, and say "he exists—that is all; he does not live." No man lives, in the full meaning of the word, who does not find every part of his nature vibrating to all that is congenial to it. A man may exist as the plant does, or the vegetable in your garden; but he does not live, in the broad sense in which the term applies to a being of intellect, of passion and of will, unless the life throbs all through him. There must be the pleasurable sensations afforded through the vital spirits in the enjoyment of physical life and vigor, which you see exhibited in the young of animals sporting in the bare enjoyment of animal life. So far as man's body is concerned, he is an animal; and the animal life must be attended with animal pleasure. Then, there is the superb joy which knowledge gives to the understanding; when a being whom God has honored as the reflection of Himself, shoots out a thought, in an instant of time, over the universe; gathering up the facts wherever God has concealed them, though they have been hidden for ages in the secret cabinets of nature. There is also the peace which comes to the conscience as the organ of law, from a sense of perfect reconciliation with God: "a conscience void of offence," which can look upon the face of the august throne and rejoice in its protection. There is love, ruling the heart by knitting the affections to objects that are

congenial. As the harp gives from each chord the note that is proper to it, whilst all blend in the full harmony of song—so love awakens with its gentle touch the music which always sleeps in the human soul. Finally, there is holiness in the will—when that will moves in harmony with the will of God, and carries out, with a sweet consent, the long hidden purposes of the Great Designer. Ah, brethren, this is life; and everything short of it is only existence. Hence the conflict which the believer experiences between the old man and the new man, when he “finds the law in his members warring against the law of the mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which is in his members.” (Rom. vii: 23.) But gradually the old man is crucified within him; he dies daily unto sin and draws nearer and nearer to the image of His Lord. But we do not reach the consummation of the life until we are translated to Heaven, where God takes the covering from His throne, and reveals to our gaze His unspeakable glory. It is worth all the dreadful battle with sin and with the world, to be forever refreshed by drinking of this wine of life which God pours from His own cup into ours. As Christ alone reveals to us forever this blessedness of God, we see how it must come, as the fullness of the Eternal Life, through Him alone.

In conclusion, this life which is the gift of God through Jesus Christ is, Eternal—for the reason *that it is a gift*, and the gifts of God are without repentance. It is not worked out under a probation of law, but is given of God in the fullness and in the spontaneity of His own love; and, the love which prompted Him in the first instance to bestow the life, will prompt Him to preserve it forever. It will be eternal also, *because it is conveyed to us upon a supernatural principle*; which, because it is supernatural, is independent and incapable of change. Not only is the motive constant with God to preserve the life which He has bestowed, but the principles upon which it is conveyed to us abide forever, and there can be no recall. And then it must be an eternal life, *because we inherit it*. Heirs of God! Oh, that we had power to sink down into the depths of this word! Heirs of God, joint heirs with Him who is the only begotten and the true heir of the Father! Joint heirs with Christ to “the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away”—“kept by the power of God through faith unto the salvation which is ready to be revealed in the last time.” There is thus a double exercise of divine power—in holding the inheritance in reservation for us, so that it cannot be stolen; and in keeping us for the inheritance, so that we cannot slip away from it. When, at length you and I lay our hand upon the inheritance, it will be by a title so perfect



that it never shall be made void through the ages of eternity. Heirs of God, through His Son, and by His blessed Spirit, and being made meet for the enjoyment of the inheritance, we hold it by a title which is indefeasible and perfect. The life, therefore will be eternal; coming to us as a gift, conveyed upon supernatural principles, and received by us as an inheritance which we shall possess forever and ever.

I must look at the minutes as they fit, and hasten to the close. I think you have in this Scripture a solution of the awful mystery of sin; that terrible evil which God, in the exercise of His sovereignty and wisdom, has allowed to happen: for surely you and I are not prepared to put a limitation upon God and to bring Him under that fatalism which I have already rebuked before you, by saying that there was no power with Him to have kept sin out of the universe, if He had so pleased. For reasons which He does not fully disclose, He has permitted rebellion to flaunt its horrid form before His throne above. He has allowed a new and dreadful edition of it to be issued upon the earth when, through the temptation of the devil, our first father sinned and brought his posterity into ruin. But the grand explanation of the mystery is, that where sin hath abounded grace hath super-abounded. Out of this stupendous evil springs the revelation of God's glorious love; which angels and men could never have known, unless God had been willing to be a redeemer. In view of the wisdom, power, love and grace which are seen in the scheme of redemption, we can put our hand upon our mouth and be still, where we cannot explain. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing;" and we who rejoice in this salvation can afford to give God the glory of our salvation, and to lay hold upon His strength whilst yet we are in the battle with sin and in the struggle with duty. Be encouraged. "He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ;" for "the gift of God is eternal life."

## EARNESTNESS IN SEEKING RELIGION.

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LUKE, XIII: 24.—“*Strive to enter in at the strait gate ; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*”

The human mind is impatient of restraint in the pursuit of knowledge. It presses forward in its inquiries unappalled by obstacles, unwearied in labors, and turns back reluctant and repining when it encounters resistance which cannot be overcome. It is, in large measure, this natural inquisitiveness which leads multitudes to pry into the secret purposes of God, and into those mysteries which reason cannot solve. Passing over God's revealed will, or being content with a superficial knowledge of it, they rashly obtrude into the things which God has reserved to Himself. I suppose it was this same prurient curiosity which prompted the question of the text. As our Lord was journeying towards Jerusalem, teaching as he went by the way and opening the nature of His Kingdom. He was interrupted by the impertinent question, “are there few that be saved?” And though a substantial answer is returned, it is conveyed in language which administers a most suitable rebuke. It is not difficult to expand the thought which lurks in the language. It is as though the Master had said: “Whether the saved be few, or whether they be many, is a matter of no practical consequence to you. The thing of first concern is to secure your own title to eternal life. Therefore, whilst I return the answer which satisfies the inquiry, I accompany it with the solemn admonition, “strive THOU to enter in at the straight gate; for many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” The general truth inculcated is that of **GREAT EARNESTNESS IN THE MATTER OF THE SOUL'S SALVATION.** The term which is employed, “strive,” is borrowed, as you will see in the original, from the Greek games. Those who entered upon the wrestling match, or who embarked in the race, were compelled to strain every muscle in order to gain the prize. In like manner, he who seeks to enter the Kingdom of God, pressing through the strait, that is to say, the narrow gate, must “strive.” He must embark in the effort all the energies of his nature, throwing his understanding, his affections and his will into the mighty struggle. Literally, **AGONIZE** to enter in at the strait gate, since there is such manifest danger of miscarriage in the enterprise. I desire to enforce this general thought in several particulars.

I. *Since all the persons of the God-head concur earnestly in securing and in applying this salvation, there must be a corresponding earnestness on the part of those who accept it.* The redemption and salvation of a lost world is presented in Scripture as the climax of all God's works, far surpassing in grandeur and in difficulty of execution the work of Creation itself. When Jehovah would create, he needed but to speak: "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." But the scheme of human Redemption originates only in the deep counsels of the God-head. The Father, the Son and the Spirit with deliberative wisdom devise the stupendous plan, all the parts of which they distribute betwixt themselves. The Father, as the first in the order of thought, represents the Divine Majesty itself, upholds the integrity of the violated law, provides the Surety who will undertake the sinner's cause, gives the commission which shall render valid all His acts, accepts the work of obedience which magnifies the law, and, through all the generations till the end of time, justifies and saves all who believe in His name. The Son, as being the only begotten of the Father, is properly the party who is sent upon this errand of mercy—going under the curse and bearing the penalty in the sinner's stead, interceding for him before His Father's Court, and in His mediatorial exaltation carrying out the purposes of grace to all the redeemed. The Holy Ghost also takes the life which Christ has purchased, and with it quickens the sinner who is dead—and dwelling in the believer, sanctifies him until he is meet for glory, into which he is translated at last to stand with joy in God's presence forever. The same concurrence between the three obtains undoubtedly in all the operations of the Deity; but in none is the personal agency of each distinctly traced, as in the work of our salvation. This gives a corresponding impression of the solemnity of the undertaking, and of the difficulties to be surmounted in its achievement. We understand why Paul should refer to it as the special disclosure of the Divine resources. This you will remember he does in different forms of expression, all of which throb with equal intensity of feeling: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the POWER of God unto salvation," (Rom. i: 16.) "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews, a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks, foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the POWER of God, and the WISDOM of God." (I Cor. i: 23, 24.) "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in Heavenly places might be known by the Church, the MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD." (Eph. iii: 10.) "Searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory

that should follow—WHICH THINGS THE ANGELS DESIRE TO LOOK INTO.” (I Pet. i: 11, 12.)

If then the Scriptures reveal the Persons of the God-head taking counsel together in devising the method of grace—if each of the three assumes a particular function in its execution, shall not this bind a proportional responsibility upon the sinner himself? If Jehovah be thus earnest in devising, executing and revealing a salvation procured at incredible cost, shall we receive its benefits without so much as a conscious endeavor to obtain them? Does it square with your notion of propriety or fitness, that a few lazy wishes, breaking only from the surface of the heart, should suffice to greet a system which God declares to be His own POWER and WISDOM unto salvation? Does not simple congruity require that the energies of a man's whole nature shall be evoked in receiving that which has drawn upon the Divine resources to achieve? There surely must be correspondence between the serious earnestness of God in providing this salvation, and the strength of purpose and desire with which the gracious boon is appropriated. When therefore a sinner lies at ease, simply wishing to be a Christian—wishing without resolving, and resolving without executing—he is guilty of an indecency which he would not venture without shame, to practise in any earthly interest. If God seems to draw heavily upon our patience, let it not be overlooked that we also have exceedingly taxed His forbearance. If He appears for a little to be deaf to our petitions, let it not be forgotten how deaf we also have been, through many years, to His calls. And in the midst of our despondency, let us take the encouragement of His promise—“the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.” (Habak, ii: 3.) We are met upon the threshold with this initial consideration of the earnestness of the God-head in our salvation, which lays upon man the duty of proportional seriousness on his part.

II. *In this crisis of our history, we must recognize that God deals with man as both rational and responsible.* In the beginning, “God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.” (Gen. i: 31.) This is the Lord's benediction upon all the works of the six days, just as He was about to consecrate the Seventh as a Rest unto Himself forever. Evidently there was no mark of imperfection upon any thing that came from His creative power. In reference to man, we know that he was made in God's image and after His likeness: which the New Testament distinctly interprets as consisting in “righteousness and true holiness.” (Eph. iv: 24). Man, therefore, created holy, and put upon his probation under law,

simply abused his own freedom when he transgressed and fell. No one can read the sad account given by inspiration in the book of Genesis, without perceiving that our first Father was just as voluntary in the commission of that first sin, as his guilty descendants are consciously voluntary in the sins which are charged against them. In the whole matter of sin, nothing is plainer from the testimony of conscience or of Scripture than that man is held responsible for the act and for the disposition which prompts it—and he is equally self-condemned at the bar of His judge, and at the lower tribunal in his own soul which anticipates the decree to be rendered in the last day. Indeed it were absurd and contradictory to think the contrary. In all His transactions with the creature, God must recognize the nature which He has given to each. If to man, created in His own image, He has entrusted the high prerogative of reason, there must attach responsibility fully equal to it in the depth of its solemnity. In no emergency will Jehovah contravene the fundamental law of our being, and which determines the relation in which we must stand to Him both here and hereafter. If therefore His sovereign mercy devises a salvation for the lost sinner, it must at some point distinctly recognize this responsibility; and bring into action all the faculties which are necessary to constitute him a subject of government or law. It would be fatal to any scheme of grace, should it infringe the claim which Divine justice holds in the infliction of the penalty, or impair the sense of obligation resting upon the human conscience. On the contrary, it is easy to place the finger upon the requisition in the Gospel, which establishes forever that God deals with us, in His mercy as well as in His wrath, according to our nature as rational, and therefore responsible beings. We are not craned up to Heaven by mechanical agencies, as a stone is lifted by levers and pulleys upon the pillars which support it: but the Gospel addresses our intelligence and our conscience, and we are made WILLING in the day of God's power.

If then it be indispensable, in the process of our salvation, to bring us to the most distinct consciousness of our responsibility, this should be made to mark the moment when we are quickened by the Holy Ghost into spiritual life. It is the moment when this conviction is the most likely to be obscured, from the fact that we are passive in Regeneration as simple recipients of the life which is communicated from above. All the more necessary therefore does it become, to keep from being smothered the sense of personal accountability. It is the precise juncture in our history when it behooves us to feel that there has been no intermission of our own activity, and that our entire agency has been drawn out in the acceptance

of Christ and of the righteousness by which we are justified. God therefore is pleased to call forth all the energies of our nature in pressing through the gate into His Kingdom, so as to compel the recognition of our responsibility just when we are most liable to lose the sight of it—and in that critical juncture so to stamp the conviction upon the soul, that it shall be ineffaceable throughout eternity. It is the most singular paradox in human experience, that the sense of personal activity should be strongest at the moment when we are most passive in the hands of sovereign grace, to be moulded anew in the image of Him who hath created us.

III. *The emotions with which we are exercised at this juncture, cannot be experienced without corresponding seriousness and earnestness of effort.* Take the emotion of *shame*. We have all felt it in our measure, when the Holy Spirit took off the thin covering under which sin disguises itself, and we came to see it in its real nature somewhat as God sees it. Job expresses the revulsion of feeling exactly: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Job xlii: 5, 6). Sin is in opposition to all that is fair and lovely in the holiness of God, and cannot be seen in its intrinsic deformity without loathing of soul. And when the desperate uncleanness is felt to be clinging to ourselves, the sense of shame will be equal to the disgust which it inspires. I may illustrate it by the horror and remorse which overtake a man upon the detection of some long hidden crime. The universal contempt and scorn which it draws upon his head, bear upon him with a pressure utterly intolerable. He rushes like another Cain from the presence of men, exclaiming "my punishment is greater than I can bear." The case of David shows the power in exposure to arouse a slumbering or debauched conscience; so that all self-respect is slain, and the criminal is unable to stand against the public verdict which is re-affirmed in the court of his own conscience. Even so the Holy Spirit removes the scales from our eyes, and we discover our terrible exposure to the scorn of all holy beings throughout the universe. Nay, we are made to feel the hot breath of the Divine displeasure itself. With no support from within, we shrink from the universal detestation with a sense of shame that would make Hell itself a refuge from the scorching rebuke pouring upon us from every side. If there come to us an offer of peace, can we under the pressure of this shame sit at ease, without a strenuous endeavor to turn aside the censure under which we are crushed?

Or take the sentiment of *jealousy*. Suddenly our hiding places are destroyed, and we find ourselves in the grasp of God's power, with the sense of guilt that opens to the Divine justice—can we awake to the greatness of the

peril, and not move heaven and earth in the convulsive effort to escape it? Could you be aroused at midnight to find your dwelling wrapped in sheets of flame, and still fold yourselves back to the sleep which has been just disturbed? Would not the instinct of fear cause you to bound from your bed, and to face any peril that would at least deliver you from the devouring fire? It is not in human nature to recognize a peril that is imminent, and be perfectly at ease. And when the Holy Ghost discloses to us our immediate exposure to the wrath which is eternal, the very fear will be a spur to effort such as shall exhaust the life within us.

So again, the more pleasant emotions of *hope* and *joy*; when, in the sweetness of trust, the believer rolls himself upon the bosom of Him who is all his salvation and all his desire. These affections in turn are inconsistent with any thing like insensibility or torpor. All the energies will be expended either in obtaining the favor of God, or else in boundless gratitude for it as already enjoyed.

IV. In passing through the strait gate, *the total change in character and in habits will compel a corresponding earnestness of purpose.*

The change is described, on its passive side, in terms the most impressive: it is called a resurrection from the dead, a new birth, and a new creation. On its active side, it will be best apprehended by considering the difficulties which must be surmounted. Regard, if you will, only those which depend upon the power of habit. The body, for example, will accustom itself to certain forms of animal indulgence, and will at last adjust itself to them as necessities; until, in breaking away from the bondage, we seem to be doing violence to the original constitution of our nature. And yet those habits which find expression in the outward act are, I apprehend, feeble in comparison with those which attach to our inner self. Our thoughts and our feelings, by their constant friction, wear at length the groove in which they will run forever; just as the waters of a mighty river, by their own flow, wash the channel in which they will sweep on to the ocean. The longer these thoughts are cherished, and these feelings are indulged, the wider and deeper the bed in which they will continue to flow. When at length the hand of arrest is laid upon them—when the man attempts to turn squarely round and reverse his whole career—when these thoughts must move with an opposite current—surely such a change cannot be wrought without a struggle. The principle of sin, so long rooted in our nature, will not suffer itself to be dislodged, and a complete revolution take place in our entire being, without a wrench that shall at least arouse us from indifference and cause us to fulfil the injunction of the text.

It increases the difficulty, that this change must be accomplished under the eye of enemies exceedingly powerful, and who are never so alert as when their prey is about to break the toils in which they are ensnared. Let us not underrate the power of the great adversary, from whose arts none are safe until God houses them in Heaven. That which renders the conflict so desperate, is, that Satan is but renewing through us the original warfare against Jehovah. Foiled in his first attempt, and now held "in everlasting chains under darkness to the judgment of the great day," he is impotent to renew the struggle against God, save as he renews it through us. It is this malignity of spirit, which gives significance to the temptations of the Devil. This reproduction of the old enmity against God, infuses bitterness into all his assaults upon the believer; and causes them so much the more to be dreaded, as the malignity is inveterate by which they are prompted. At what moment will he put his resources to a greater stretch, than when we are breaking from his grasp? If defeated in his purpose of evil, he is a second time conquered; and has lost the opportunity of wreaking revenge upon the foe who has doomed him to the torture of eternal despair. Not only then has the sinner that before him which will task his powers, in passing through this gate—but he must achieve it in the presence of a vigilant foe who is powerful to the last degree, and whose malice is stirred to its depths by the effort which is made to escape from his control. Well may the exhortation then be pressed, "strive to enter in at the strait gate."

V. Last of all, *this earnestness of effort is called for by the magnitude of the stake, and the uncertainty of the issue*: "For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." That stake is the soul—the soul endowed with an endless life, which life is to be spent either under the pressure of the curse, or else in the enjoyment of God's blessing forever. If the sinner be enlightened to see the magnitude of the stake, will not His efforts correspond with the greatness of the issue? How much we strive in our earthly concerns, when the whole fortune is imperilled—a fortune which will slip from our grasp, perhaps, the moment after we have secured it. In like manner, when a man comes to see what his soul is worth, what are the joys which God offers to him in Heaven, what the nature of the woe which he is called to escape—the nature of the issue will stimulate him to the utmost endeavor, that he may escape the wrath which threatens him upon the one hand, and obtain the prize which is offered to him upon the other.

And then the uncertainty of the issue. All around him he beholds those who have been engaged, like himself, in this endeavor; but who have



not passed through the gate, and have not entered the blessed Kingdom which is beyond. With all these religious desires now felt by him, the entrance is not absolutely sure, until the certainty is gained by the actual passage through the gate before him. And no mortal ever came out of that crisis the same man that he was when he embarked in the struggle. The nature of the stake is such, the effort which is put forth is such, the whole character of the issue is such, that the man is revolutionized, whatever be the issue. If he passes through the gate, he is another man, and "presses forward to the mark for the prize of His high calling in Christ Jesus." If he fail in the effort, the very failure changes him; and he becomes now far more compacted in sin, far more able to resist the influences of the Spirit, far less likely ever to renew the struggle, and far more likely to fall at last beneath the curse from which for a season he sought to be released.

Such, then, are the reasons which support the exhortation of the text, showing why this intense earnestness is demanded of those who would "enter in at the strait gate." And now, my hearers, let us look for a moment at the reason which our Lord assigns: "For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." If there be failure, it cannot lie with God. The fact that the scheme of redemption has been devised; the fact that He has sent His only begotten Son into the world as a Redeemer; the mission of the Holy Spirit to apply this redemption; the existence of the Church, with all her ordinances and appointments, to gather in and train for the Kingdom above—all show the perfect willingness of God to save, even to the uttermost, all who will come unto Him. The fault cannot lie with the terms upon which this salvation is offered, for these are exactly the same to all sinners everywhere; which are rejected by some, and are accepted by others. If the terms be the same to all to whom this Gospel comes, it is plain the failure must lie only with those who do not embrace them. There is, too, the plain testimony of God in His word, "ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:" "Come unto me, all ye that labour," says Christ, "and I will give you rest:" "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." These declarations, and they are but specimens of a large class, render it impossible that the failure can lie with any other party save those who find themselves without, when the door is shut.

If it be the fault of the seeker, let us look at one or two of the ways in which that failure will work itself out. For example, *multitudes wholly misconceive the nature of the salvation which they profess to seek.* What

they are after, is safety. What God means by salvation is deliverance from SIN; and if deliverance from Hell is included, it only follows as a consequent. The ruling thought in the Gospel is to deliver a man from the power of sin, and therefore from its curse and penalty. Multitudes, under a sense of danger, wish to be saved—that is to say, they wish to escape the curse, to be delivered from going down to Hell; but they have not had stirred in their hearts the first desire after holiness. Such are not seeking to pass through the gate at all. They desire to retain their sins, and yet be saved. It has been quaintly enough said that the gate, however narrow, is wide enough to let us through, but not the sins we would carry with us. It will let us through, but not our pride, nor our covetousness. We may go through the eye of the needle, but we must lay down these excrescences. Those must fail, who misconceive the nature of the salvation, or, are working for a different end than that which God proposes.

Again, *multitudes fail because, as I have been endeavoring to show, they are not really in earnest.* They offer a few prayers, and become weary; make a few efforts, and become disheartened. Is this the way a man attains any object in life? Do you get rich that way? Do you acquire knowledge that way? Do you secure the prizes of an honorable ambition that way? Can you sit down in your arm-chair and wish that you were rich, and wish that you were great, and wish that you were noble? Yet multitudes content themselves with an easy wish that they were Christians, without putting forth even a respectable effort to secure the good. When a man really desires an object, he consecrates his life to it. He may be baffled in a thousand schemes, and never becomes discouraged. You have illustrations of this in society, all around you—men who are thrown from the height of wealth, crushed beneath their own bankruptcy; who yet, with the energy which a strong desire begets, out of the debris of their fortune re-construct it anew—men of such purpose, of such power of thought and of action, that nothing is able to keep them down. It requires the consecration of a man's whole nature to secure, even upon earth, any great prize towards which he has addressed his affection. And shall God hold out the prizes which are to be our possession and joy forever, without a corresponding earnestness and exertion on our part?

Then, *multitudes fail to pass through this gate, because they seek to be holy before they seek to be pardoned.* Will you forgive a homely illustration? Suppose I attempt to go through that door, and put my hand on the hinge to make it turn on the lock. Why, I reverse the law of the door. Common sense would tell me that, if the door is to open at all, it must turn upon its hinge; and I must lay my hand upon the lock, and turn it in the

right way. Now, when a man seeks to lop off this vice, and to subdue that passion—to become good, as he calls it—and does not seek, in the first instance, the pardon of his sins and forgiveness before God through the blood of the cross, he is guilty of precisely the same folly. He is at the strait gate, perhaps; but he does not open it after the law of the gate. He does not in any wise submit himself to the conditions of the Gospel. This Gospel comes to the sinner and says, “believe—that is what you are to do; trust—that is what you are to do; put out your hand; let God lay the salvation upon it; take it as God’s free gift; draw it up to your bosom; hide it in the depths of your soul; make it yours by an acceptance of it.” And you turn around and say to God, “all this I cannot understand; but I will put myself through a disinfecting process; I will purge myself of this desire, that vain glory, this pride; and when I get my heart mellowed and softened so that I am not ashamed to present it before you, then I will take this righteousness.” If you can do all that without a Savior, why not the rest? Why bring him down from the bosom of the Father to die for sin, and to satisfy the claims of the law, if you can yourself meet the exactions of justice? Oh no, what the sinner needs is pardon; and when pardoned, the life which has been begotten within Him by the Holy Spirit, will work itself out in the fruits of holiness. Because men go about, working out their own righteousness, and do not submit themselves to the righteousness of God, therefore with all their striving, they do not pass through the strait gate. They reverse the Divine order, putting the first last, and the last first.

In applying these thoughts, there are three things I wish to say. In the first place, my Christian brethren, if we find our religion rather difficult to keep, are you surprised at it? Does not the command “strive,” apply to us after we pass through the gate, all along until we enter the Kingdom above? With such a nature as we still carry about with us; with these indwelling remains of sin; with this watchful foe, possessed of such vast resources, always harassing and tempting us; is it strange that we must, through an incredible conflict, at last win the prize and achieve the victory? No, let us rather feel that the piety which is easy to keep, is a piety not worth the having; that a religion that does not put a man to effort, which does not inure him to conflict, is not the religion of which the Scriptures speak. They who, after a profession of religion, settle down on their lees, expecting to pass easily along, to drift with the current, without the consciousness of toil—have such passed through the strait gate at all? Have they learned the secret that rest comes only after labor, and victory after the battle?

To the impenitent I say, it is not enough that you have a few religious desires, or that those desires express themselves in a few religious wishes. Your whole nature must be in action, to enter the Kingdom of God. "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

I will submit one test of real earnestness in this matter. Are you prepared to make this the supreme business of your life, until it is accomplished? You pray, and your prayers do not seem to be heard. You struggle, and your struggle seems to be in vain. You continue it a week, and you are a little disheartened; you continue it a month, and you are still more disheartened. If you are really in earnest, what do you propose to do? Do you intend to say to Almighty God, "I tried it a week, or I tried it a month, without success. I will try it one week or one month longer, and then, if the result is not what I desire, I will give up the struggle." If you are able to permit any such thought, depend upon it, you have never had any heart in the business at all. But if your purpose is formed—though your life should be lengthened to the life of Methuselah, and through nine hundred and seventy-four of the nine hundred and seventy-five years you should apparently be baffled in all your efforts to secure God's favor,—yet, by virtue of the magnitude of the stake, and of the interests which are imperilled, you will continue to strive, even though it should be in the last day of the last year of that lengthened life that the gate shall be opened unto you: then I have to say—that never, since the world was made, has a soul honestly sought God's favor, that did not eventually obtain it. All the forces of Hell cannot arrest the progress of that man, whose supreme business in life is to seek reconciliation with God, in passing from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan to God.

May God give us this tenacity of will, this power to adhere to an aim, until the end is secured. Then shall we be like the great wrestler at the brook, Jabbok, who wrestled with the angel until the dawning of the day, declaring "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me;" and the blessing came upon him who yet halted upon his thigh.



## V.

### CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS.

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1 JOHN, I: 9.—*“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

On the coming Sabbath, the Lord's people will gather around the Sacramental board in obedience of the command, “this do in remembrance of me.” Of course, during the intervening days there will be no little searching of heart amongst us; and with some, possibly, great misgiving as to their spiritual qualification to approach that holy ordinance and to hold fellowship with Christ in His death. It may be, too, that some in this assembly are seriously debating the question, whether they should not now come out from the world in the open profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and are simply restrained by the apprehension that they may not yet have experienced the pardon of their sins or the acceptance of their persons before God. To both these classes, then, and indeed, to every one at all concerned about the salvation of the soul, the assurance of the text must come with exceeding preciousness: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Let us, my brethren, place ourselves at the very opening of this remarkable verse, and follow the language through to the end; gathering up at the close the immense proposition which it declares.

“IF WE CONFESS.” In no less than three languages, the Greek, the Latin and the English, the term which is employed to express this idea of confession is, literally “speaking together.” There are two parties, God of the one part, and we of the other; and we and He unite in a concurrent declaration in regard to sin. I do not know how the idea of confession could be better put. Enlightened by the Holy Spirit, man comes to look at sin from God's point of view, and pronounces upon it just as God pronounces. God, construing sin in the light of His own holiness, declares it the abominable thing which His soul hateth. The sinner, under the convictions of conscience, feels the terribleness of it in his own experience, and, running upon this line, unites with God in the declaration that sin is

that abominable thing which every soul ought to hate. Obviously, then, two things are involved in confession.

There must be a *clear perception of the true nature of sin*—the looking upon the *inside* of it, as well as upon the *outside*. I trust you will forgive me if, in the endeavor to put the thought in fresh terms before you, I use language which seems quaint and homely. But the grand mistake of the world is, that they content themselves with a superficial view of sin. They look upon it only in its consequences. They hear the Divine anathema, "the soul that sinneth it shall die;" and, regarding sin in its purely external aspects, they feel in a measure and confess its dreadfulness. But God looks at sin as it is. He sees it in its intrinsic vileness. An honest confession is made by the sinner, when the Holy Spirit opens his eye to take the same view—not as broad, nor as deep, as that of God, nor marked with the same terrible abhorrence, but a view nevertheless which is true, because it discovers the intrinsic deformity of sin as opposed to all that is beautiful, and excellent, and holy, in the character of God.

*This confession involves also an open pronouncement against sin before the tribunal of conscience.* God declares against it, "the soul that sinneth it shall die." His justice pronounces the decree which it deserves. And now the sinner's conscience, which but reflects the tribunal upon which Jehovah sits above, pronounces the same condemnation. Enlightened by the Holy Spirit, it not only sees it to be the transgression of the law, but feels the wrongness of that deviation, and it pronounces accordingly.

True confession of sin will always be known therefore by certain characteristic features. *It must be spontaneous.* Ah! how often is the confession extorted in the moment of peril, or in what is regarded as the hour of mortal sickness. When a man is confronted immediately with God's justice, and feels that the stern vengeance of the law is about to apprehend him, he makes the last compromise with God by performing this last act of homage to the majesty of the law, in confessing the sins against it. But the instant the pressure is removed, or the gracious Deliverer lifts him from the "dust of death," he rolls the sin again as a sweet morsel under his tongue, and with the old delusion, says "it is not a little one?" He goes on as before, breaking God's law and trampling under foot the judgment of his own conscience. The confession spoken of in the text, is not a confession extorted from the sinner under the pressure of circumstances; nor is it a mercenary bid made in view of benefits which he hopes will accrue. It is the honest judgment which the man renders from the actual sight of the thing. The Holy Spirit shows him the sin in its awfulness and in its deformity; and he pronounces against it as a thing to be dreaded

and abhorred. The resentment of the man's whole nature has been aroused ; which is pointed against sin in all its forms, with the determination that it shall be slain :

“ Oh, how I hate those lusts of mine  
That crucified my God ;  
Those sins that pierced and nailed His flesh  
Fast to the fatal wood.

Yes, my Redeemer, they shall die,  
My heart has so decreed :  
Nor will I spare the guilty things  
That made my Saviour bleed.”

*Confession must also be minute and circumstantial.* It would amuse, if it were not unutterably sad, to see how freely men will confess to the charge of sin in the bulk, when they draw back from all the details which make up the aggregate. It is easy enough to account for it. “ *All* have sinned and come short of the glory of God ; ” each can therefore stand before his fellows, and own to general depravity without a blush, because in this he is no worse than his neighbor. Standing upon the same plane and under the same condemnation, they can afford to acknowledge it without shame. But when it comes to the specifications which make up the general indictment, as, for example, to lying and stealing, to fraud and perjury—when it comes to the different counts which establish the general charge, when the points are reached upon which men differ one from another. Hence, they are not as free in the acknowledgment of specific sins, as in regard to sin in the bulk. If you will notice the context, you will see with what precision the Apostle passes from the general to the particular : “ The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all SIN. If we say that we have no SIN, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” But when we come to the duty of confession, the reference must be to individual and particular acts of sin : “ If we confess our SINS He is faithful and just to forgive us our SINS, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” We must see the sins one by one, just in so far as memory shall reproduce them. Why, my hearers, it is by the recognition of particular offences that we are brought to a sense of guilt as sinners in general. “ I had not known sin but by the law,” says the Apostle ; “ for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” (Rom. vii: 7.) Perceiving the deviation of these from the standard of rectitude, we come at the definition of all sin—that it is “ the transgression of the law ; ” and that the law must cover it with the penalty, and vindicate itself. Confession, therefore, to be the confession of the text, must not only be spontaneous, as springing from a



true view of sin; but it must be minute and circumstantial, just in so far as the memory is able to pass them in defile before the eye.

*But this confession must also be truthful and sincere.* What if God should bring you and me before His bar, and hold us to a strict account just for our prayers and nothing else! I am very much afraid, brethren, that we should not be found free from the charge of falsehood, even in these. Have you ever thought of it? How often, before the throne of grace, have we uttered that which is not true? We are under the strongest temptation to utter in our petitions and in our confessions, not the feelings which we actually have, but those which we know we ought to have. The habit too, of employing the language of inspiration as the vehicle of our own thoughts and desires—which when discreetly indulged lends such unction to our prayers—becomes at times a snare. The language, when first employed, was the language of intense emotion; but when rashly appropriated by us without a corresponding depth of feeling, it is not an act of true devotion, but becomes the offering of the fool before God. For example, a Christian will venture to say in his prayer, “rivers of waters run down mine eyes because they keep not thy law.” Well enough, if this strong language expresses the feeling of his heart, as it did that of David. But if the quotation has been mechanical, without any true grief of soul for the profligacy and wickedness which it bewails, is not the utterance a falsehood? And is the guilt materially lessened, when the fault is seen to be that of heedlessness rather than of misrepresentation? Shall the Omniscient God be approached with such levity of spirit, that no care is taken to make the language the true expression of the thought? Truthfulness requires that we pass no deception upon ourselves, by the use of terms, even though they be drawn from the Sacred Book, which exaggerate the feeling it should be our effort exactly to ascertain. When we come to confess, we must tell God the precise truth, as we know it to be. He, at least, will penetrate the disguise when a beggarly spirit attempts to hide its poverty beneath this rich and unctuous phraseology. Alas, that it should beguile us into the belief that our condition is better than it is!

Confession if it be *spontaneous, minute and truthful, will of course be accompanied with sentiments of shame and repentance*; as when Job says, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” In true confession, all the powers of man’s nature are concentrated. There is the judgment, recognizing the standard of right, and distinctly perceiving all the deviations from it. There is the conscience, which feels these deviations to be wrong; and out of this conviction will flow this heartfelt

shame. This will necessarily excite in the soul of the true penitent a righteous and burning indignation against that which robs God of His honor, and himself of peace. Brethren, let us not evaporate the strength out of the Gospel, until nothing is left but a little pious sentiment. There is such a thing as a holy hatred. There is such a thing in a good man's breast as a cultivated resentment. Conscience may, and should be educated to look down, not only with pity, but with horror and indignation upon what is felt to be wrong. And the more robust and sinewy the character becomes, the more will these generous resentments flame forth against sin in all its forms. Whenever we bow with true repentance before the throne of grace, there is this holy anger against Satan—this abhorrence of what is unholy and impure within ourselves—and this purging of the conscience in honest confessions of it all before Him who is able to forgive.

What then shall follow upon confession? What, my hearers would our logic construct as the next utterance? You and I would say, "if we confess our sins, he is *merciful* and *gracious* to forgive us our sins." Could we, with a distinct conviction of our unworthiness, appeal to the justice and to the fidelity of God? Would there be no apprehension that if God should deal with our sin according to these attributes, we must be banished from His presence and from the glory of His power? Would not human reason base its plea upon the ground that God is "merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth?" But the Apostle, with his clear insight into the nature of the Gospel as building upon the nature and perfections of the God-head, finds the sinner's assurance of forgiveness in those strong attributes which lie in the depths of Jehovah's character: "If we confess our sins, he is **Faithful** and **Just** to forgive us our sins." The term implies that God is dealing officially with us, and is constrained to recognize the proprieties and the duties of His office.

But if faithful and just, faithful and just to what? I answer *faithful and just to Himself*—just to His own nature, as the "light in which there is no darkness at all." This is the definition which the Apostle gives of the Divine character, only two verses preceding the text: meaning to declare, that when God saves the sinner He saves him in consistency with His own holiness; and will not allow His mercy or His pity to outrun the limit of His justice or His truth. It is just this which makes the Gospel of the Lord Jesus so precious to us. A religion that builds upon sentiment, will it stand the hour of fierce trial when we are arraigned before the bar to be judged? A hope that founds upon mere tenderness, will it abide when we are passing through the iron gate and are confronting the destinies of

the eternal world? In that solemn crisis we want a hope into which God puts His own strength and makes it robust. We want a hope that is strong because it is imbedded in His justice—striking its roots down into the whole character of the Deity; and making you feel that you are safe, even when He takes the covering from His throne and reveals all that is awful in His majesty and dreadful in His holiness. The Christian, when he makes his confession, builds his hope upon the knowledge that God will be just to Himself—that He will not save him from the guilt which he deplors, except as in it He preserves untarnished the glory of His own name. The believer cannot separate the honor of God from His own salvation. It is inconceivable to him that the one can be possessed at the hazard of the other; and his joy is, that Jehovah will magnify Himself in this deliverance from sin and from hell. Since this salvation does harmonize with the integrity of Jehovah, the hope is as precious as the foundation is secure.

Again, *God is faithful to His own purposes of grace, and to His own word of promise.* What is this promise? “And thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea:” (Mic. vii: 19). “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” (Isa. i: 18). God remembers it: and when the poor sinner comes with those scarlet sins and with that crimson guilt, and spreads them in confession before His eye, He is faithful to His promise. He washes the scarlet and the crimson in the atoning blood of the Redeemer, and the man is clothed with “the fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints.”

*God, too, is just to His own Son, by whom this redemption has been achieved.* It was in the mysterious communion of the God-head, in the deep counsels of the adorable Three, amidst the awful solitudes of their own eternity, the method was devised for the salvation of the lost—in the execution of which a separate function was assigned to each of the contracting parties. And now when the Son, in conformity with the stipulations under which He brought Himself, lays aside the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, descends to this earth, “takes upon Him, not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham,” is “made under the law to redeem them that were under the law,” rises from the grave in which are buried all the sins of His people, stands before His Father’s throne to plead for them on the ground of His atoning blood—is not God constrained, in justice to that Son, to pardon the sinner? Ah, my brother, if you are troubled about your sin, here is the ground of your hope: that Jesus pleads the merit of that blood which was shed for your

redemption; and He, who administers the law, is constrained in justice to the sufferings and death of this great Advocate, to pronounce your absolution from guilt. "Faithful and just:" just to Himself and to His own attributes—faithful to His word of promise—faithful and just to His own suffering and dying Son—God will be "faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

"TO FORGIVE US OUR SINS." Now what is the connection between the confession and the forgiveness? It is important to the last degree that we shall make no mistake just here. Obviously, *the confession is not the procuring cause of the forgiveness*. This can be shown from two considerations. The first is, that confession on the part of the sinner is just as original an obligation, as was the obedience in which he has failed. When therefore, having disobeyed the law, he confesses the wrong, he has done nothing which deserves credit at God's hands. He was originally under a supreme obligation to obey. If he fails, then he is under a corresponding obligation to acknowledge the indebtedness. The two things are tied inseparably together. Whatever the obligation upon the conscience of the creature to obey, equally holds the transgressor to repentance before God. And if the obedience would not merit eternal life, aside from the Divine promise to that effect, neither does the confession of disobedience draw after it this great boon.

The second consideration is, that it would subvert the very idea of repentance and confession to admit a causal efficiency in procuring forgiveness. When you kneel in your closet and say to God, "I have broken thy law and deserve to die," do you tell the truth or not? If you did not utter what you felt to be the truth, then you convict yourself of being a prevaricating witness, and deserve to be sent to hell for your perjury. If, on the other hand, you felt the statement to be true, I desire to know why it is not just as true after you said it, as before. It was true before you uttered the words, and it was true when you uttered the words: upon what principle does it become totally false, the moment the acknowledgment is made? What virtue can there be in the simple admission of a certain fact, which shall instantly cancel that fact and convert the truth into a lie? Upon this ground, as well as the preceding, there can be no *causal*, but only an *instrumental* connection between the confession and the forgiveness.

Allow me to enlarge this important distinction a little. In the exercise of repentance and of faith, we are simply accepting salvation which has been acquired for us through the death and resurrection of our blessed

Lord. But as moral beings endowed with intelligence and will, these faculties must be brought into action just at the point where this salvation is actually applied and secured to us as our own. In the conveyance of the pardon which silences our guilty fears, we are brought into accord with Him who has wrought out the salvation, in the conscious and willing reception of it. Here is the sphere of human agency, and where the sense of personal responsibility is fully met. Under the renewing power of the Holy Ghost, we accept by faith the righteousness of Christ which is offered to us in the Gospel as our own: and by repentance we cleave between ourselves, and the sins which we have laid upon the scape-goat that they may be borne away from us forever.

The reflex benefits of confession upon the penitent himself will more clearly illustrate its real, though instrumental, connexion with forgiveness. For example; *confession deepens upon the soul the sense of guilt*: and for the simple reason, that we are compelled to frame a judgment, in order to render a confession, of sin. There is often a vague sense of sin resting upon the conscience, which is inoperative since it never takes a definite shape. Now let a man go down upon his knees to acknowledge this before God, and he is obliged to form a clear conception and to frame a definite judgment in regard to it. The clearer the conception, and the more definite the judgment in regard to sin, the deeper will be the sense of guilt. This is marvellously increased by the necessity of putting the thought and the feeling into language, and of holding it up in a solemn address before the great God. The reflex benefit of prayer is largely due to the operation of these two influences. It is a fearfully solemn act, when we render a judicial opinion against ourselves--and then carry it up to record in the court of Heaven, in a confession made in terms of the deepest solemnity and awe.

*In confession, also, we are brought to a distinct issue with ourselves in regard to sin.* Ah! the trouble with men is not that of thoughtlessness and total indifference. I defy you to take the soul under the shadow of God's throne, and not sometimes tremble. There is not a sinner in this house to-day, old or young, who has not again and again trembled before the bar of his own conscience. But the difficulty consists in bringing them to a clear determination--in persuading them to make an immediate issue with their sin--so that they may say "other lords besides Thee have had dominion over us, but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy name." It is in this the advantage chiefly lies, of those protracted religious services through which communities are carried days and weeks together: that the mind is held steadily to one theme until it takes possession of

every thought—rescuing one from the hurry and bustle and pre-occupation of the world, and giving him time to reach a decision before his conscience and before God. A like pressure is felt by the penitent in his confession of sin and guilt. He knows that he is a hypocrite, if there is not in his soul an honest purpose to abandon the sin confessed. That purpose, through the weakness of human nature, may be defeated afterwards in an hour of temptation. The purpose, though sincere is weak, and yields to the overwhelming current which shall presently bear against it. Nevertheless, the resolution was sincere at the moment it was formed; and without it the confession could never have been made. And often as the purpose may break down, the great battle with sin is not wholly abandoned so long as the necessity is felt of surrendering the sin which is forgiven.

Further than this, *in confession we are precisely at the point where faith must be brought into requisition.* The expectation of forgiveness being grounded upon God's gift, faith must stretch out its hand and grasp it in the promise. Thus it is, experimentally as well as doctrinally, there can be no repenting where there is no believing; and there can be no believing, where there is no repenting. The two belong together, as the positive and negative poles of the same truth; the integrity of which is destroyed, the instant you cleave them apart.

In this *instrumental* connexion of confession with forgiveness, it is plain how the sinner's responsibility is fully recognized, and he is brought into co-operation with God in the matter of his salvation. The pardon then, which was procured only through the vicarious sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, the sinner's substitute, is now by the Holy Spirit sealed upon his conscience in the peace of God which passeth understanding. It will not be amiss to dwell a little upon a distinction of great importance, and which is often overlooked: A man may be in a state of pardon, whilst the sense of it may not immediately rest upon his spirit. He is actually absolved from guilt, and recognized before the law as righteous; and yet he may not instantly feel the comfort and the joy which flow from the fact. Take an illustration. Here is a man condemned to die in your Parish Prison. A petition is largely signed in the community, on his behalf; upon which he is pardoned by the Executive. But no comfort comes to him until that pardon is carried into his cell, and the parchment is held before his eye. So long as it remains a secret with the officers of the law, though safe from the sentence of execution, he is still under the oppressive apprehension of it, and there can be no peace to his troubled heart. Just so, until the Divine pardon has been sealed upon the sinner's heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, he has no experience of joy in regard to it. Does not this explain the different states in our own religious life? To-day, we rejoice in the sense

of God's favor; and to-morrow darkness is upon the face of His throne, and we have no evidence of our acceptance before Him. In these seasons of spiritual darkness in which you cannot read your title to eternal life, has God reversed His absolution of you, remanding you to the curse of the law from which His grace had delivered you? Are you bound again under sentence of wrath, because you cannot rejoice in the assurance of His love? No, no, the sun shines just as brightly, though it be behind the clouds; which only need to be dispersed, that you may be glad again in his beams. It is in the humble confession of sin, that the Holy Ghost usually seals a sense of pardon upon us—this being the frame of soul in which we can most easily receive the boon which sovereign mercy bestows.

We have not yet exhausted this verbal exposition; for He, who "is faithful and just to forgive our sins," will also CLEANSE US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS." Salvation necessarily includes the change in our legal condition when we pass from a state of wrath into one of favor, and the change in our actual character when we are restored to the Divine image. These are its two factors, the two branches which unite to form the trunk. The one is the complement of the other, and the removal of either would be the destruction of both. Let us see how, in covenant faithfulness, God accomplishes the sanctification of all whom He has pardoned.

First of all, *by implanting the principle of holiness*. In fidelity to His own truth, He cannot judicially proclaim the sinner clean, without rendering him actually such. Holiness therefore will be planted in its germ; which will be developed after the law of the spiritual life, until it leavens the whole nature and makes it pure before God. Nor can the sinner be said to be saved, until he is so transformed as to be capable of enjoying the Divine favor which pardon secures. In all the progressive stages of the work, what is presently attained becomes the prophecy of what is still to be reached, and the final result only gathers into one grand consummation all the experiences which preceded. The faithfulness therefore to forgive, is the faithfulness also to renew.

There is, again, *the stimulus of the new life, through the constant indwelling of the Holy Ghost*. How stupendous the claim, which the child of God is obliged to set up! "The Comforter, that He may abide with you forever:" "the Spirit of truth, which dwelleth with you and shall be in you:" "for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them." (John, xiv: 16, 17, and II Cor. vi: 16.) It is not strange that a sense of unfaithfulness to so high a trust, smothers our assertion of it before the world; and still less strange that the world

should hold to a rigorous responsibility those who venture to affirm it. In the face of our own shame and of the world's scorn, we must declare the Holy Ghost's abode even in the feeblest and unworthiest of the Lord's redeemed. With amazing power He quickens every faculty, and diffuses the spiritual life through the entire nature. Whatever resistance He may experience must be finally overcome; and through a chequered history, the believer at last be made perfect in righteousness.

There is, further, *the mortification of sin in constant acts of repentance.* Herein consists the *negative* side of our sanctification, as the preceding topic presents the *positive*. They are disclosed in their conjunction by the Apostle, "that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Eph. iv: 22, 24.) The one is crucified day by day, whilst the other grows up to "the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus." In this daily mortification of sin in acts of repentance and confession, we become more and more cleansed from sin and abound in the fruits of holiness before God.

*The effect of joy upon the soul, under a sense of pardon, should not be overlooked.* Even under the discipline of sorrow which our sin provokes, we cannot but admire the preponderance of happiness in human life. Its influence is incalculable in the formation of character, as the soil from which spring the sweet and tender traits by which life is adorned. If then in confession the joys of pardon are sealed upon the heart, we can see how the forgiveness and the cleansing are coupled in our experience.

Finally, *through the whole process just described fixed habits of holiness are established.* The gradual confirmation which we experience, is both a prophecy and a promise—having their fulfilment at death, as sanctification itself issues in glory forever, and the last fruit of grace is enjoyed in the human soul.

What a Gospel is this which the Christian receives, and which the sinner declines! Pardon is secured upon the ground of perfect satisfaction to the justice and law of God, and is sealed upon the conscience in the moment of repentance. Confession is but the repudiation of that which the soul itself abhors; and forgiveness issues at length in complete deliverance from the sin which has been so thoroughly disowned. What salvation could be more secure in its foundation, or more precious in its results! It is offered to-day without money and without price, to all who will accept it: and in every hour of gloom or of conflict we have the gracious assurance, "if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."





## VI.

### CHRIST'S SACRIFICE NOT REPEATED.

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HEBREWS IX: 27, 28:—“*And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*”

These words convey an argument for the efficacy of Christ's atonement which is as unique as it is conclusive. It is drawn from the singleness of Christ's death, as expressed by the apostle in his Epistle to the Romans; “in that He died, He died unto sin ONCE.” Throughout the context in which this sentiment is imbedded, we find Paul presenting an elaborate comparison between Christianity and Judaism, particularly upon two points. The first is the oneness of the sacrifice under the Christian dispensation, as compared with the repeated sacrifices every year under the old law; and secondly, the comparison between the perpetual priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ and the constant succession of priests of the Aaronic order. The devout Jew was accustomed to dwell with complacency upon the Divine commission of Moses, and upon the fact that their entire ritual was ordained of God. You remember how the Jews replied to the man to whom Christ restored his sight: “We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.” (John ix: 29). It appeared to the Jew of Christ's day a fatal objection against Christianity that, at one single sweep, all the sacrifices, however various, of the old economy were set aside; whilst, on the other hand, it appeared to be a religion without a sacrifice and without a priest. The apostle just plants himself upon these facts, and undertakes from them to show the transitory and disciplinary character of Judaism, and the superiority of Christianity as its consummation. “You allege,” says Paul to the Jew with whom he is arguing, “that the sacrifices of the Mosaic economy were sacrifices constantly repeated. This only shows that they had no natural efficacy to take away sin; and, of course, the entire system to which they belong must be transitory, and designed merely to prepare for a better that should supervene. You complain against Christianity that its sacrifice was offered but

once, and is never afterwards repeated. This fact shows the sacrifice to be perfect; and the system of grace, to which that perfect sacrifice belongs, to be a system which is final and permanent."

The position, you perceive, is impregnable. And now Paul takes advantage of it to enter into a detailed examination of the Hebrew sacrifices, showing the inherent defect which lies in them all, and the specific end for which they were originally appointed. Those sacrifices of the old economy were only meant to expiate ceremonial offences; and they never had a particle of virtue to purge the conscience of the transgressor from moral guilt. They "could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;" they "stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation." "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh"—that being the end for which they were ordained—"how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. ix: 9, 10, 13, 14). Nay, so far were these Hebrew sacrifices from possessing any efficacy to take away sin, they were rather the memorials of sin, compelling the transgressor to renew his confessions, and to implore repeated absolution. It is expressed in the third verse of the next chapter: "But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin." (Heb. x: 3, 4). In the very nature of things, bulls and goats never can become the substitute for man under law, and make expiation for human guilt; for the simple reason that these are beasts, having no rational soul, and, therefore, cannot take the place of men whom God has made in His image, but who have fallen into sin. These bulls and goats and calves can be nothing more than types to foreshadow the perfect sacrifice in the end of the world, in the person of one who can take the sinner's place under the law, who can die the sinner's death, who can cancel the sinner's guilt, and who will offer himself up once for all to take away sin. The imperfection of these Hebrew sacrifices being proved by their constant repetition—then by parity of reasoning, if the Lord Jesus, by His sacrifice did make expiation for human guilt, of course, it cannot be repeated. Thus the apostle seizes the fact, that this death of Jesus Christ was a death but once accomplished, in order to establish the perfect nature of the atonement as the reliance of the sinner's hope.

I might, my hearers, very properly at this point diverge upon the his-

torical fact that, ever since the appearance and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, God has historically abrogated animal sacrifices; making it providentially impossible that they shall again be brought into competition with the one perfect sacrifice offered by His own Son. Consider the fact a moment, for I do not propose to dwell upon it. From the beginning, through a period of more than four thousand years—yea, six thousand, if you take the longer instead of the shorter chronology—the only lawful way in which a sinner could approach God in worship, was through animal sacrifice. God enjoined it upon our first father immediately after the fall, in the garden of Eden and prior to his expulsion. It was practised by Abel and by Seth and by Enos, through whom the succession of a pious seed was perpetuated. It was renewed by Noah when, as the second father of the race, he came forth from the Ark, and offered sacrifices upon the mountain where the Ark rested. It was continued by all the Patriarchs both before the flood and after the flood, by the judges and by the kings, and was recognized by the prophets up to the time of our Lord's appearance. The whole system of animal sacrifices was definitely explained to Abraham, the friend of God, when in the act of offering up his own son, Isaac, the Lord caused the ram to be arrested in the thicket by his horns—bringing the higher and the lower types of Christ side by side, in order that they might explain each other. Animal sacrifices were perpetuated from the day that Adam fell in the garden, up to the very moment that the Saviour cried upon the cross "it is finished" and gave up the ghost. And then, after a brief reprieve of forty years to see whether Israel would receive the redemption which had been provided, the Hebrew nationality was destroyed. God turned Jerusalem upside down like a dish; wiped it out; sowed the land with salt; and, for eighteen hundred years, has rendered it simply impossible that a Jew shall ever, according to his law, offer animal sacrifices to God. In all the generations and in all the parts of the earth alike, they are compelled to commute by giving money for the lamb. Look at the significance of the fact. The one only nation of all the nations upon the earth, to whom God had ordained animal sacrifices, from the moment these had fulfilled their typical signification in the appearance of His incarnate Son, is so situated in His Providence that, through the history of the new testament dispensation, they have been restrained, against their own view of the case and against their desire, from offering the sacrifices of their own law. Upon the other nations of the earth, unto whom God had not by express law appointed these sacrifices, this singular restraint does not appear to have been imposed.

Contenting myself with the bare suggestion of a fact which, in its

doctrinal significance, is exceedingly interesting and important, I turn this morning to the striking argument which is employed in the text. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." The argument is this: there is only *one* death; there is only *one* judgment; therefore, there can only be *one* sacrifice. Now, my hearers, let us examine this argument articulately, for it has several joints.

I. First of all, *the argument proceeds upon the assumption that death is never visited upon man except for a breach of the law.* The pulpit is not required to enter into any discussion with the geologists about the fossil remains of animals and of birds that are found in the rocks long anterior, as they allege, to the creation of man. Without discussing the premises of their argument, it is a sufficient reply to the conclusion, that, whatever may be God's mode of dealing with animals and with birds, it is an immense logical jump from them to man—to postulate that the great Jehovah deals with those creatures, which are destitute of a rational soul, upon identically the same principles with those whom He has made in His own image and after His own likeness. If it be further alleged, as by the physiologists, for example, that when you come to examine the structure of man's body, you discover that all the parts tend naturally to decay—indicating that from the beginning God intended the machine to wear itself out through its own friction—I have only to reply, that historically death was not visited upon a single member of the human race until after the transgression of the law. In the text, do you not perceive how the apostle puts death and judgment together? "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." What is the logical connection between these two terms, death and judgment, unless it be that the death proceeds upon the same moral conditions as the judgment? There can be no judgment of such a being as man, except upon moral grounds. If the death is here associated with the judgment, the death must be visited upon man in the same way. Then see how Paul reasons in regard to it, in the fifth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans: "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." No proposition seems to me plainer than that, when God creates a moral being, as man is, and puts Him under the jurisdiction of law, He, in the very act pledges Himself to deal with that being upon principles of law. Therefore, in the covenant that was formed with man in the garden, death is made the penalty of disobedience: "Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." The simple conditions of the covenant involve the principle, that the probation under which man is placed is to be determined by the character of his

own act. It is not a question as to the power that resides in God to inflict death; but whether, having made man in His image and responsible for His acts, holding Him before the bar of judgment for the deeds He has done—whether, under such a constitution, God does not expressly bind Himself to deal with that creature according to the law He has established. It is, therefore, assumed in the argument of Paul in the text, and it runs through all his discussions wherever he touches this topic, that death is never visited upon any member of our race except for a breach of the law. Whatever God may choose to do with beings which have no souls, it is altogether presumptuous to carry the argument over from them to man, whom He has endowed with intelligence and will, and therefore accountable under law for His actions. This, then, is the first joint in the argument.

II. The second is, that *this penalty never can be visited but once*. It is a common principle, I believe, of human law. In whatever form the penalty be inflicted for crime, it lies in the very nature of justice that it shall not be twice exacted. The principle upon which this proceeds, is perfectly obvious. The law is always supposed to possess resources sufficient for its own vindication; and those resources are always expressed in the penalty. It would be an ignominious confession on the part of any government, to allege that it is destitute of power to vindicate its own majesty. Now, since the law has resources by which to maintain its own supremacy, the penalty is inflicted but once; and a second infliction would be a confession of defect. It is true that under human governments this is not fully realized, from the difficulty of graduating punishment exactly to crime. But the fiction is still pleasant to human vanity, that it can construct a government capable of protecting itself by adequate penalties. Certainly the principle upon which it proceeds is sound, and the instant you ascend from a government confessedly defective to one absolutely perfect, the principle must hold altogether. A perfect law must have the resources to vindicate itself; which, on this very account, must not exact twice upon the same subject, and for the same offence.

III. *See the bearing of this upon the one death and the one sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.* It is perfectly clear that Jesus Christ was a man; it is historically certain that he died; and, upon the principle already laid down He could not die except under a judicial sentence. There is no principle by which you can account for the death of Christ, unless He died under the law through its penal sentence. He must, therefore, have died judicially, either for His own sin or the sins of others. He did not die for His own sins; for the testimony is explicit that He was "holy, harmless, undefiled,

and separate from sinners." Three times the Father, with audible voice, proclaimed from the excellent glory that He was free from fault. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." At His baptism and at the period of the transfiguration—which, like a parenthesis, embraces the three years' ministry of our Lord—and then in the last week, the week of His passion, when in the presence of all the multitude, He said "now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but from this cause came I unto this hour: Father glorify Thy name:" Then came there a voice from the excellent glory, saying: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." (John, xii: 28.) With this accumulated testimony as to the perfect sinlessness of our Lord, it follows, by inevitable consequence, that He died for the sins of others; and if He died but once, as the Apostle affirms in the text, then the expiation which He made for the sins of these others, is a perfect expiation, and there is no need of any other atonement until the end of time.

That the Lord Jesus Christ did die but once, may be shown by pressing either term of this alternative. If He did not make perfect satisfaction for sin in that death, then He remains under its power. Failing to exhaust the penalty of the law, the penalty holds Him. Not making a perfect satisfaction for the sins of those for whom He undertook, He remains even yet under the power of the grave, and the death cannot be inflicted the second time. Or if He did make perfect expiation for the sins of men, upon the principle that the penalty of the law can be exacted but once, it is impossible that He shall die again. Upon either of the two suppositions, the Lord Jesus Christ, dying under the penalty of the law, did, if He died but once, prove thereby that His satisfaction for sin was perfect.

IV. There remains but one other point in the argument to render it conclusive; *this Jesus who died under judicial sentence, rose again and lives forever, in order to complete for his people the salvation which He has purchased through His death.* "As it is appointed unto man once to die, and after this the judgment," so was Christ offered once to bear the sins of many, that He might appear the second time without sin unto salvation to all them that look for His appearing. The death, which was but once, is in the text closely connected with His resurrection and perpetuated life. In his epistle to the Romans, Paul puts the two facts together because of their indissoluble connection: "knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died under sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God." (Rom. vi. 9.) In like manner the Apostle Peter, in his

celebrated discourse in the streets of Jerusalem, recorded for us in the second chapter of the book of Acts, said: "whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that He should be holden of it." (Acts ii: 24.) My brethren, the principle is perfectly patent to us. If the Lord Jesus died under judicial sentence, and did meet the exactions of justice, then there is a judicial necessity that He shall rise again: if he died under sentence of law, He rises under sentence of law. It is not a question of simple power. It is not whether God, the Father, is able to raise Him from the dead; nor whether the Son, by virtue of his own divinity, can reclaim the life which for a season He had laid down. The whole process being judicial, must be carried to its termination; if the law is satisfied, if justice is met, if the curse is exhausted, then, in the language of Peter, it is not possible morally that He shall be holden of death any longer, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ becomes the clearest and the strongest of all necessities. It is for this reason that in the whole preaching of the Apostles, and also in the canonical epistles, such stress is laid upon the resurrection of our Lord; it being the point of departure in all their public discussions and discourses. He rose from the dead because this law had no power to hold Him under the curse, from which He is forever absolved. His resurrection life, which He now enjoys in the presence and at the right hand of His Father, is the pledge to all whom He has redeemed, of their perfect salvation. When He comes the second time, He will not appear to bear the sins of many; but He will come without sin, to consummate the salvation which He has already purchased upon the cross.

But He will appear only to them that look for Him. This implies that we embrace the promise of His second coming as a great and precious truth. For, as the first advent was the great promise of the Old Testament, so is the second advent the great promise of the New Testament. Both testaments are the revelation of our Lord—prophecy holding Him up as the appointed sacrifice who should take away sin, under the old dispensation—prophecy lifting Him up in the new dispensation, as having "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." With His own voice He will call us from the tomb, and make us partakers of His resurrection. Being raised from the dead, we shall ascend with Him to the glory which He has prepared for us at the Father's right hand. We are looking for His appearing with great longing of soul, knowing that our salvation is imperfectly accomplished until that appearing. For brethren, there shall be no redemption of the body from the power of the grave, until that second coming. There shall be no reunion



of the body with the immortal spirit, until that second coming. There will be no entrance of the complete man into the blessedness and glory of Heaven, until we ascend in his train and sit down with Him upon His throne. We look for His appearing, by living for it and preparing for it; so that, when He shall be revealed in flaming fire, it will not be to take vengeance upon us, but to gather us in his arms and present us before the Father, spotless and without rebuke.

The personal absence of Christ from the earth, we sometimes feel to be a cause of mourning. I question if ever there was a Christian, that did not long with his eyes to see his Lord; who did not feel that it would be a joy, if he could only look upon the blessed form which was nailed to the tree on his behalf, and upon which the sins of a guilty world were laid. There are moments of Christian tenderness, when, if that Lord were only revealed in bodily presence, we would embrace Him with the same instinct of affection as Mary after the resurrection; and to whom he said, "touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father." And yet there is a precious significance in our Lord's absence from the earth. He is absent as the great Apostle and High Priest of our profession, going into the presence of His Father, and taking possession of the glory in our name, making ready the mansions in which we are hereafter to dwell; and according to His promise, he will come again to take us to himself, that where He is we may be also. He is absent from the earth, in order that He may fulfill his mediatorial work in His effectual intercessions before the Father's throne, and in the exercise of that mediatorial authority through which He gives the Spirit for our renewal and sanctification. When the whole work is achieved, our Lord will come, and we shall see Him with our eyes; and we shall know the blessedness which shall be our portion forever, because we share it with Him who has purchased it with His own blood. "Beloved now, are we the Sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John iii: 2.)

And now, my brethren, this ordinance Christ has instituted, in order to represent to us the complete atonement which He has made. The Lord's supper is not a sacrifice; it is the memorial of a sacrifice; "This do in remembrance of me." Because it is the perpetual memorial of a sacrifice, it is the perpetual proof of the perfection of the sacrifice. We remember a thing that is in the past; and this death of the Lord Jesus, is in the past, because it can never be duplicated. In the observance of the supper, we are testifying of the completeness of the expiation which our Lord, by His sufferings and death, has made for sin. How sublime should

be our trust! I ask you to observe this ordinance to-day in the light of this fact: that you are celebrating before the world the perfect atonement for sin, by your sacramental act proclaiming your faith in it as a perfect sacrifice. You are laying your hand upon it and confessing your sin; feeling that your guilt will, through this blood, be perfectly and forever removed. You are testifying as God's anointed witness before the world, that there is no need to go about the earth to find sacrifices by which sin shall be expiated. What a gospel to proclaim to impenitent men; and how fervent, and how full of faith should be our pleadings with them to embrace it! Let us, as we gather around the cross to-day, say, with the Apostle, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." God grant, as we gather around these precious emblems, we may find them the power of God, and the wisdom of God to our own salvation!



## VII.

### THE SIN OF UNBELIEF.

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JOHN, III: 18.—“*He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*”

It is impossible to read the New Testament, even superficially, without recognizing the prominence assigned to Faith. John, the forerunner testifies of Christ, as He that should come after, in whom all were commanded to believe. The Apostles, who were later, in all their writings insist upon the necessity, nature and office of faith. Whilst Christ Himself, between the two, with all His characteristic reserve when speaking of Himself, does not hesitate to say to the cavilling Jews, “if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins.” Indeed, if in any simple act we draw upon every part of the Christian scheme, it is in the exercise of faith. By faith we are justified; through faith we are sanctified; and from faith we enter into glory.

Of course, unbelief is the exact opposite of this. Faith, in the last analysis, is simply the soul’s adhesion to Christ under the drawing of the Spirit, and upon the warrant of the Gospel offer. The ascent to this repose will be by successive stages, more or less swiftly accomplished in different cases. There must be, for example a sense of guilt and weakness, coupled with an earnest desire for deliverance. There must be a clear discovery of the Saviour’s sufficiency and suitableness in His person and offices, and a full recognition of the tender which the Gospel makes. With these necessary and antecedent convictions, the soul receives Christ and rests upon Him alone for salvation. Faith is not therefore an exercise of the understanding alone, but also of the affections. It is *trust* as well as *credence*. Says John the Evangelist, “as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” (John i: 12.) In like manner, Philip said to the Eunuch desiring to be baptized, “if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.” (Acts viii: 37.) With still greater explicitness, Paul testifies, “if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart, man believeth unto righteousness, and with the

mouth, confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. x: 9, 10.) Now, unbelief reverses all this; it is simply declining to receive Christ as our own Saviour. We distinguish it from disbelief, which discredits the record in which this salvation is announced; whilst unbelief pretermits the salvation itself, through practical indifference. It may spring from several distinct sources; from failure to see our wretchedness and guilt, so as to feel no need of a Saviour; or from not discovering the precise suitableness of this salvation to our necessities; or from not recognizing the freeness and fulness of the Gospel offer. But whatever be the antecedent cause, unbelief is at last the withholding our trust and love from Christ the Redeemer.

In the text, this unbelief is invested with peculiar condemning power: and my purpose will be to inquire into THE SPECIAL MALIGNITY OF THIS SIN, that it should so immediately put the soul under sentence of wrath—"He that believeth is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already."

I. *Equally with other sins, it is committed directly against the authority and command of God.* The impression widely prevails that unbelief is an offence against our own interest, but not against God. Men freely admit the folly of it, but not the sin. As the Gospel is the message of God's grace to the sinners, it is conceded to be unwise to decline its merciful provisions; but then the regret is limited to this. It is simply the remorse of the spendthrift who has wasted his patrimony,—the bitter tears of Esau after selling his birthright. But the self-reproach of those who madly prejudice their own interest, is a very different mental affection from the feeling of guilt which attaches to the violation of right. It should be understood however that the offers of salvation are none the less authoritative, because they spring from the mercy of God. Every Divine utterance carries with it the sanction of law; which is plainly recognized by David, when he covers the entire revelation of Jehovah under the terms "statutes," "judgments," "commandments," "precepts," "testimony" and the like—words clearly denoting the power in all revealed truth to bind the conscience.

If then nothing more could be found in the Bible but the statement of salvation through Christ, with an intimation of God's desire that men should avail themselves of the offer,—this should have all the force of a positive injunction. It is the will of the Ruler which constitutes the law—nothing is wanted but the promulgation through which the knowledge of this will is conveyed. God, as the Creator, is the sole proprietor of His creatures; and the virtue of His supremacy flows into every form of

expression in which His will is disclosed. But, my hearers, Christ is not simply offered to us in the Gospel, as the Saviour of sinners; but we are expressly commanded to receive Him as such: and this command is as imperative as any to be found in the Decalogue. On three distinct occasions, during the earthly ministry of our Lord, did the Father testify with audible voice from Heaven, authenticating him as His messenger to men. At His baptism in the Jordan, as “He went up out of the water, lo, the heavens were opened, and the Spirit of God descended like a dove, lighting upon Him: and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Mat. iii: 16, 17.) Again, at His transfiguration upon the Mount, just before His decease, “there came a cloud and overshadowed them; and there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, this is my beloved Son—hear him.” (Luke, ix: 34, 35.) During the week of His passion, when His soul was troubled and He prayed “Father, glorify thy name”—“there came a voice from Heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” (John, xii: 27, 28.) And the Apostle, Peter, who was one of the three who entered into the cloud upon the mount of Transfiguration, thus refers to the voice—“for He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, ‘this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased:’ and this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount.” (II Pet., i: 17, 18). In addition then to “the miracles and wonders and signs which God did by Him and by which Jesus of Nazereth was approved of God,” (Acts ii: 22,) here is “the voice of words” laying the Divine command upon us, exactly as in the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai. If the promulgation of Jehovah’s will made law in the one case, shall the equally explicit command be less binding in the other? The disposition to set aside the Divine authority in a single injunction, will abrogate an entire code. The law, being one in its spirit and in the power by which it is enforced, is as completely destroyed in a single infringement, as though all its precepts were defied and dishonored. “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” (James ii: 10.) He therefore, who withholds trust from the Redeemer, violates directly the injunction of Him that spake from Heaven, “**HEAR HIM.**”

By a method a little more circuitous, unbelief can be equally shown to be contradictory to the law. In man’s fallen state, the obedience is no longer possible, which was originally enjoined: “The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” (Rom. viii: 7). There must be the new creature in Christ Jesus,

before the principle of obedience is restored by which the law shall be again honored. But this involves at once the necessity of faith in Christ, and the aid of the Holy Spirit whom He bestows. The whole authority of the law, therefore, binds upon the sinner the duty of faith, if only as means to an end. The law, which cannot be relaxed, must enjoin whatever is necessary to its own observance: and in withholding faith, which is indispensable to our obedience, we sin against its authority as clearly as though we had violated one or all of its special requirements. This view of unbelief, as a sin against law, is fundamental, and constitutes the guilt which is charged against it in the text. Other considerations that remain to be adduced, simply increase the enormity of the offence and justify the condemnation with which it is rewarded.

II. *Unbelief is likewise a sin directed against the love of God.* This reverses the view which has been already presented. It has the advantage of taking the sinner upon his own admission, when he says that his offence is only against grace. We reply, so much the worse: it is a darker crime to sin against *love*, than to sin against *law*. Even the Heathen placed ingratitude in the front before all human vices; and the judgment of mankind has always pronounced the severest censure upon him who can be insensible to the claims of a benefactor. Measure by this principle the guilt of him who trifles with the Saviour. Is the peril small, from which He came to redeem? Alas! it was to pluck the soul out of the jaws of hell. Was the price trivial, by which the purchase was made? Alas, "he hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." Even the cold word of Scripture seems to throb with emotion, when it speaks of the love of God in the gift of His Son. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii: 16.) "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (I John, iii: 16; and iv: 10.) "God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. v: 8). The Lord Jesus came from heaven to be the exponent of God's love to sinful men, to show its depth, and to open the channel for its eternal outflow upon the redeemed. In rejecting Him, therefore, we turn away from God in the most persuasive revelation of Himself. The aggravation of this offence is more than hinted by our Lord in the Parable of the Husbandmen; to whom last of all the householders sent his son, saying, "they will reverence my Son." (Mat. xxi; 37). The presumption was most reasonable, that the fruits of the vine-

yard would not be withheld from the lawful heir : and reason must equally estimate the guilt of those who trample under foot the Son of God "whom He hath appointed heir of all things." (Heb. i: 2). If it be a sin to trample upon the authority of God, it is a crime to trample upon His affections. The climax of resistance would seem to be reached, when we sin directly against the *heart* of Infinite Love.

III. *Unbelief is an offence against each Person of the God-head, in their official distinction and work.* It is committed against the Father, who sent His Son and sealed Him as the Mediator—who accepted this work at His hands, and gave the proof in His resurrection and ascension to glory—who discharges the function of Supreme Lawgiver, in holding the sinner under the penalty until he accepts this righteousness of his surety, and in fully justifying the believer the moment by faith he appropriates it as his own. In the refusal to embrace Christ as his personal Saviour, the unbeliever, plants himself in opposition to the office and work of the Father, which in the Covenant of Grace, He assumed as His personal function.

It is even more obviously an offence against the Son. All His offices are rejected ; His sacrifice is disallowed ; His grace is despised ; His offers are declined ; His person is spurned. The enormity of this crime against the Person and work of our blessed Lord, provokes the searching exclamation of the Apostle—"Of how much severe punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace!" (Heb. x: 29.) How little does the sinner understand the malignity of that indifference to Christ—which, according to the judgment here rendered, not only pretermits the Saviour's claims, but is an open assault upon His person and a profanation of His blood!

Even this does not exhaust its criminality ; for it is equally a sin against the Holy Spirit. This person of the God-head not only concurs with the other two in devising the scheme of salvation, but He discharges offices peculiar to Himself. His agency is concerned in the conception of the man Jesus, (Luke i: 35)—in anointing him to His work, as Mediator, (Isa. xlii: 1, and lxi: 1, and Luke iv. 14, and John iii: 34,)—in effecting His resurrection from the grave, (Rom. viii: 2,)—in sanctifying the offering He rendered for sin, (Heb. ix. 14,)—and in applying this redemption, in the whole work of renewing, sanctifying and glorifying the sinner. What estimate can we form of the malignity of unbelief, when it is seen to be directed against the separate agency of each Person of the adorable



Trinity, as these unite in their Personal distinction to execute the scheme of mercy! Well may it be said, "This is THE condemnation!" With good reason is he "condemned ALREADY, who hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

IV. *The guilt of unbelief is further disclosed, in that it offends against a rich dispensation of mercy.* It would be easy to draw these out in such array as should overwhelm the sinner with the conviction of his insensibility before God.

Consider, for example, the gracious Providence which has occupied itself with the care and guardianship of us to the present moment—concerning itself not only with our life as a whole, but descending into the details of every passing day and hour, and marshalling the mercies with which each shall be filled. It must surely be a hard heart which can review all these without feeling "that the goodness of God leadeth to repentance." (Rom. ii: 4.) There is the Church, also, with her living ministry and teaching ordinances, and quiet influence diffused over society at large. Consider the power which lodges in the testimony of her thousands of members, supported by the blameless lives which are open to the most sceptical criticism. Let the mind dwell upon the marvellous intermingling of the wicked with the pious, in all the relations of the family, the place of business, and the social reunion. What a pressure of example and of prayer is brought to bear upon the soul which stands out in resistance of Christ, and yet is unable to disentangle itself from the web of Christian influence all around it!

Measure, if you can, the resistance which unbelief must make against the motives which press upon it—motives drawn from the vanity of earth, the wants of the soul, the pains of hell, and the joys of heaven. Appeals are made to self-protection and to gratitude. Three worlds are searched for arguments to bear upon the sinner's decision, all which are stifled in the dogged apathy which listens without being moved. We measure the resistance of an object by the force necessary to overcome it. By this principle estimate the power to withstand in a sinner's heart. Not only is it unmoved by this three-fold battery drawn from all the worlds of matter and of spirit, but it requires the positive agency of the Holy Ghost, as the great power of God, to lift it out of the indifference in which it is securely intrenched. It yields at last to nothing short of Omnipotent grace itself. The inveteracy of opposition against this varied machinery of Providence and Grace, puts a stamp of reprobation upon unbelief which should cause it to be abhorred and forsaken.

V. Its utter malignity however is not seen, *until we come to view it as*

a course of hostility against God. It is too often regarded as a single act, or at most as only a congeries of acts. Even under this aspect it is sufficiently dreadful, considering the frequency with which this act is repeated. As often as the religious sentiment is stirred, or the thought of Christ occurs to us, just so often the issue is joined, and we either receive or reject Him. Not a prayer is heard, nor a hymn sung, nor a sermon preached, but the tender of salvation is made in each, which is either consciously or unconsciously repelled. The law of association is constantly swaying the current of our thoughts and feelings, whether we give attention or not to their quick succession; and in a thousand instances of which we are never aware, it summons the cross before us with the necessary alternative of accepting or rejecting the great salvation. If then we should be held responsible for the individual instances in which we have turned away from Christ, they fill so much of the record of our life as to make up nearly a continuity of this form of sin.

But unbelief is a *principle* as well as an *act*—always operative with a continuous force, which is not fictitious, but most dreadfully real. The principle abides, even when it is not developed in outward acts. It lies behind in the secret disposition, which is the spring of all action and gives it complexion. For the existence of this we are responsible, and must plead guilty before God. In this view, we are chargeable with unbelief at all times, so long as the disposition exists which would prompt the act. In deepest sleep, or when the thoughts are absorbed in worldly care, it is the sleep or the preoccupation of an unbeliever. A tiger is as much a tiger when he sleeps, or when he is gorged with his prey, as when the ferocity of his nature is fully aroused. The generic disposition, which forms his characteristic, is there,—a constant quantity. Whether it be dormant, or in full activity, is more an accident than otherwise. So the sinner's attitude towards God is one of abiding hostility, whether it break forth in open insurrection or not; and the unbelieving temper which would reject the Saviour at any given time, will reject Him at all times—and with this continuous rejection we accordingly stand accused at the bar of final judgment.

VI. *Unbelief places us in an attitude entirely false, and is just so far the more hateful to God.* Remember that the unbelief, whose essential business I am now trying to expose, is the disposition to decline the salvation of the Gospel. How can this be, without a degree of pride and self-righteousness, utterly astounding in the presence of facts which condemn both? In a world abounding in iniquity, and with the seeds of it developing in every human breast, can it be that a single sinner shall be found

who feels that pardon and the new birth are not needed by him? Can the transgressor assume this independence of God, without knowing that it is unreal and false? The case is even worse, if the self-deception is so complete that the falsehood is unrecognized. The fallacy is of a kind that can easily be pierced, and could not maintain its hold without a voluntary withdrawing of the eyes from the light. It is a terrific charge—would to God that it were a mistaken one—that a man's whole life in this world should be a delusion and a sham, a falsehood before men, and a fraud upon Jehovah. What can be said more, than that it is disreputable to the sinner, and should at once fill him with penitence and shame.

Alas, it is an exposure like this, which will cause the wicked to “awake to shame and everlasting contempt.” (Dan. xii: 2). The thin disguises here thrown over their sin, will be torn rudely aside—and the real character will be disclosed to them, exactly as God has always viewed it. “He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul,” saith Wisdom. (Prov. viii: 36); and no small part of this wrong consists in the dishonor put upon a man's own character, whose whole life has been a deception and a lie. Let the unconverted hear the unpleasant truth—that no creature can be indifferent towards God, or neglect the calls of His mercy, except upon grounds which reflect upon himself the most humiliating of all accusations, the charge of habitual untruthfulness to himself, to the world, and to God.

In depicting the enormity of this sin, I have carefully employed language almost judicial in its calmness, rather than that of strong denunciation, in the hope that the impression made may be the deeper. I would not mar the effect designed to be produced, by any suspicion that passion has dictated the discourse rather than reason. The appeal is now confidently made to your judgment, whether it is possible to exaggerate the guilt of this offence. Just review the elements which compose it. Unbelief sins against *law*, with the strongest defiance of authority; inasmuch as it is levelled not so much against the *enactment*, as against the *person* of the Lawgiver Himself. It is a sin against *love*, committed with shameless insensibility; inasmuch as it is directed against the sweetest revelation of God, not in acts or words of kindness, but in the exhibition of His infinite heart. Not content with all this rudeness to Jehovah in His authority and grace, it profanely intrudes into the awful sanctity of the Divine Communion, and tramples upon the official work of each Person of the God-head. It stands with an attitude of proud resistance against the whole economy of Providence and the entire dispensation of Grace—setting at

nought the combined arrangements of both to bring the soul into reconciliation with God. It is not simply a chain of connected, but single, acts of resistance; it is in itself the principle of disobedience and hostility against God; which vitiates the character throughout, and makes the very frame of the spirit to be sin. And with a haughty independence of superior help, it makes the sinner's whole life a hollow fraud in the sight of all who have power to detect the imposture. Aggregate these specifications into one guilt, and then pronounce your own judgment as to the malignity of unbelief.

And yet, my hearers, does any crime less disturb the consciences of impenitent men? The Scriptures describe it as the sin of sins, the one comprehensive crime, the hinge upon which the condemnation will turn at the last day—the great charge being not that men have sinned, so much as that they have declined the salvation from sin which God has provided. In the face of all this, the sin which men most fail to lay to heart is this of unbelief. Not till the Holy Spirit enters upon His work of conviction, do the scales fall from the eyes so as to disclose the malignity of that opposition which will trample upon mercy and love and grace, no less than upon justice and upon law. If any doubt the truth of this statement, let him go through any community and charge the fact of sinfulness upon men indiscriminately as they are met. Whilst the accusation will be universally admitted, in not one of a thousand instances will the evidence be drawn from their treatment of Christ. The appeal is made to the law, and if there has been a decent respect to its requirements in the outward letter, men wrap themselves up in the conceit of their own goodness and decline the offices of a Saviour to redeem. Whilst this cold indifference to Him who died to take away sin, is the climax of opposition to the authority of God, and seals the soul under wrath forever. Perhaps no better proof exists of a genuine repentance, than the tender grief which is felt for so obstinate a rejection of a precious Saviour. It is in the sight of His cross, the first tears of godly sorrow are ever shed,—as the smitten sinner cries with a broken heart, “Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.”



## VIII.

### OFFENCE OF THE CROSS, UNREASONABLE.

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I CORINTHIANS, i: 23: "*But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.*"

It is plainly intimated here, not only that the opposition to the Cross is universal, but that the forms of that opposition are diverse. To the Jew the Cross is simply a scandal, a rock of offence over which he stumbles. The Jew, you perceive, has nothing to urge against a supernatural revelation; nor against the doctrines of mediation, redemption, sacrifice, atonement and priesthood—for all these belong to his own system and constitute its boast. But the trouble with the Jew is that all these are assumed by Christianity into itself, and thus Judaism is vacated; by which all his religious associations are offended, and he is led to reject the Cross. On the other hand, to the contemplative and rationalistic Greek the Cross is supreme folly. Accustomed to rely upon the deductions of his own reason, he is unwilling to substitute faith for philosophy, and devotion for speculation. All events that occur are, in his judgment, bound together in one eternal sequence; and he is unwilling to abandon his dogma of philosophic necessity, for the free and responsible will of a personal God: and so he comes to reject the Gospel. Whilst, in opposition to both these classes, as Paul goes on to say, "unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

Here, then, are three classes who take different views of the Cross of Christ. I select these words this morning not merely to announce, nor even to emphasize, this fact; but in order to show, if possible, that the offence of the Cross, by whomsoever entertained, is to the last degree unreasonable. On the contrary, the Cross brings such facts to light, and discloses such principles in operation, that philosophy ought to be upon the alert to receive it: and true science, when it comes to understand that revelation is the climax of all the truth which it is seeking to attain, ought to be in the front to accept this rejected and despised Gospel of our blessed Lord. The considerations to be urged must, of course, be large and general, rather than minute and particular. But I hope to succeed in showing that the thinkers of our race—the men who sit in the chairs of

science and in the schools of philosophy—the men who assume pre-eminence as the lovers and seekers of wisdom—are the men above all others who ought to embrace the Gospel and to cling to the Cross of the Redeemer. They should be the champions of Christianity, whom pride of reason ranges amongst the most stubborn of its foes.

I. *The incarnation, which is involved in the crucifixion, demonstrates the being and presence of a personal God*: a truth made so plain and so real to us by this very incarnation, that we find it difficult to sympathize with those who are not positively possessed of it. In the Schools of Grecian thought, Jehovah is little else than a FIRST, BUT IMPERSONAL CAUSE—a central knot into which are gathered up all the forces that you find in nature; and which, being loosened from it, distribute themselves throughout the material world and accomplish their respective missions; and modern thought lapses into the same vague Pantheism, just in proportion as it breaks away from Divine revelation. It is not my purpose this morning to discuss, how far this definition of God will suit the ends of a true philosophy, or of a true science; how far the assumption that God is nothing but the supreme force or the sum of all the forces in nature, will answer the ends of philosophic thought and scientific investigation. I may be allowed to say, as I pass along, that I think there is margin enough just here for the Christian Theist to unmask all his batteries and to deploy all his forces, and to wage a most ruinous warfare against that form of scepticism which puts on the guise of Pantheism. But however that view of the Divine being may suit the region of pure speculation, it is plainly unsatisfactory for the purposes of religion. And here pardon me if, in a parenthesis, I assert that this religious element is one of the necessary co-factors in man's being: just as essential to his constitution as that part of him which is animal, the body; which we will not allow even death and the grave to destroy, and which Christianity herself so assumes to be necessary to man as to provide for it a final resurrection. Just as the intellectual element is necessary to constitute man the being that he is, so is the religious element; that which makes him capable of worship, that which brings him into the presence of the awful God in all the manifestations of His power, that which causes him to rank with the Angels around the throne in glory, and to raise, with his articulate speech, the song with which these, the elder Sons of God, make the arches of Heaven forever to ring.

What shall be said, my hearers, of that thing which calls itself philosophy, and that other thing which calls itself science, which not only discount man's religious nature, but even sneer at that which, beyond all else, makes him most like his God and brings him into nearest fellowship

and communion with his Maker? Premitting, however, this line of thought as being not exactly fitted to the discussions of the pulpit, I desire to say that if man be a religious being, then he must have a personal God. It is only a personal being, who can be to man, in the exercise of his religious nature, the object either of affection, or of worship. If religion requires us to love and to worship, then the being who is loved, and the being who is worshipped, must be more than a force; he must be more than the aggregation of force; he must stand revealed to human thought, as a being in personal relations with the creatures whom he has formed; a being, endowed with intelligence, with thought, with affections and with will, whom man can approach with a loving heart, and to whom he can render the obeisance of an honest and spiritual worship.

Now the incarnation brings this personal God in his being and in his presence, distinctly before the human eye; and therefore it is that all systems of religion, the Jewish, the Hindoo, and the heathen, have their incarnations. The first of these three having incarnations that were true, yet transitory; the other two having incarnations that were only the shadows of the true, and altogether unreal. But all of them alike are founded upon that original revelation which was made in the beginning of the ages, of the coming time when God should appear upon earth as man. "The word was with God, and the word was God:" "And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John, i: 1-14.)

What I wish to say, in bringing this line of thought to its close, is that the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ is the only incarnation which is substantive and true. It is *the* incarnation; of which all the others are the shadows and the types. This incarnation of God in Christ is real, inasmuch as there was an actual assumption of human nature in both its constituent parts, a true body and a reasonable soul. Unlike the incarnations of the heathen mythology, in which the gods only put on the disguise of men and were a mere delusion to the eye for a little time, and then vanished into air, the Lord Jesus put on the whole of our humanity. He assumed a body which was real, which had the natural appetites of hunger and thirst, which could be oppressed with weariness and overcome with sleep, just like that of any other man. He took also a true and living soul, with all the affections and sensibilities that belong to man's spiritual nature. He assumed this entire humanity under the precise condition through which we come into possession of ours, by a proper and veritable birth of a true mother; differing from our own simply in that birth of a true mother being effected by the supernatural conception



of the Holy Ghost, so that the entail of original sin should be estopped from him. Thus he, a true man in body and in spirit, being devoid of the taint of sin, could afford to become the representative of sinners under the law and satisfy divine justice on their behalf. Christ then was really man, not only in the constituents of that nature which he assumed—not only by the law of birth, as we ourselves become men—but as passing through a real life to a real death, and enjoying a real resurrection. For even we, who with so much groaning and distress, go down, in the dark hour of our fate, beneath the power of death, are assured that we shall hear a voice by and by, and shall rise with a new and with a spiritual body from the tomb.

Now, my hearers, if the incarnation bridges this dreadful chasm between the infinite and the finite, brings the great God down to the plane of human thought, and ascertains to us the fact that He is a personal being, with a personal will and with personal affections, I submit if philosophy ought not to accept the truth. I desire to know why a wise man shall treat the Cross with disdain, when that Cross reveals to him what his philosophy never could discover, nor his science ever reach. The form too in which this knowledge is conveyed, is precisely that which religion requires. It is not a mere doctrine, a philosophic dogma; but it is certified as a great central fact, resting upon a historical basis, and capable of historical proof. It is not enough for our religion, that we can think God as a possible reality. We wish the great truth ascertained to us as fact: that God in the person of His incarnate Son may be presented for our adoration on earth, and for our enjoyment and praise in the kingdom of His glory.

I do not know, how thinking men dispose of this idea. To me, apart from the question of personal salvation—apart from the virtue of that blood which purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God—apart from the glorious pardon which, in the moment of conscious guilt and sin, I am able to embrace—there is a transcendent glory in the Cross as the revelation of God; the word made flesh and dwelling among us, so that we behold His glory as of the only begotten of the Father. If I were allowed in my obscurity to address the intellect of the earth, I would summon that intellect to do this last honor to itself by rendering this last homage of its recognition and worship at the feet of this manifested God. May Heaven protect us from that hour of intellectual darkness, when we can shut out the Cross of Jesus Christ, upon which God has revealed to us the reality of His personal being, and the glory of His love.

II. *The Cross discloses to us the universal reign of law.* Wherever we turn, there is law; and the proudest triumph of our modern science is

the ascertainment of this fact. So that when facts which are irregular emerge into view, we instantly assume them to be covered by laws which are already known to us, or else we remand them to some law of their own which can account for their being. The same holds true in the intellectual domain. Every thought, and every desire, is capable of analysis. Though swifter than the lightning, it can be tracked in its course; and though woven into a tangled web, it can be resolved. In the world of mind it holds true that with patient investigation we can trace each thought and each emotion to its birth. And surely in the sphere of conscience the law of the right shall obtain with an uncontrolled supremacy, as the law of the true obtains in the sphere of the reason. Now, my brethren, the Cross is the public attestation of this, for the atonement founds upon law; upon law so perfect, law so blessed, law so holy, as to be forever incapable of repeal or change. You have only to point to Him who hangs upon the tree, to see the highest illustration of the supremacy of moral law. Even when God would pour out His divine charities upon the world, He must respect His law. When He would open the sluices, and let out all His pity and compassion and grace upon a wrecked universe, He must hold fast the integrity of His throne, and administer His government in righteousness and in truth. Even to save a universe, God, being before the creatures whom He has formed, and in Himself infinitely more glorious than all, must preserve the integrity of His own nature, and the harmony of His own attributes. You would say antecedently that, if there could be the remission of the penalty and the abatement of the curse by so much as the breadth of a hair, it would be in favor of Him who through all eternity had lain in that Father's bosom, His delight. And yet this Son, whom He sends from His own bosom, and for whom He prepares a body, must be made a curse for us; for it is written, "cursed is every one that hangeth upon the tree." "He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

When the man of science ranges through all nature, proclaiming that wherever he goes he finds a law; law in the air, in the waters, in the earth—presiding over every province alike—when the philosopher comes with his deductions, and affirms the same principle in the domain of the spirit—and when this book stands by the side of both, and confirms the generalization which they have made by a generalization of its own, which is broader and more clearly marked than either of the two—I submit to your candor whether the man of science and the philosopher are not the last upon the earth who shall discredit this Gospel, with its crowning testimony of the universal prevalence of law. Let the scientist go down into

these fossils that are hid in the womb of the earth, and point me to the reign of law there; let him point his finger to those stars as they sweep in space, and describe the laws which prevail in the heavens above; I will rise upon the testimony of these Scriptures to a plane which is higher, and point my finger to the eternal throne, upon which the Triune Jehovah sits, the law-giver from whom all these laws of the material universe emanate, and whose supreme power administers them whereon they operate. I charge upon the man who recoils from the proclamation of universal law through the Cross of Christ, that it cannot be philosophic nor scientific to accept a law which has no lawgiver—to admit a government, where there is no throne—to recognize order and design, and power and force everywhere without a will, personal and responsible, from which all that force can proceed. I insist that even the laws of science demand that we shall ascend by, and up, and along those forces, whether in the material or in the intellectual world, until at last we reach the supreme and the personal will of which these forces are but the expression.

III. *The Cross presents the only solution of the problem of mercy.* My hearers, we encounter in every direction the stubborn fact of sin. There it is, lying across every man's path; and no sophistry, no degenerate casuistry can displace the stubborn reality of that sin which exists all over the earth wherever we turn. Now what is to be done with this sin in the empire of law? True, law might have its sweep. You might give it scope. You might say "lift the barriers and let the tremendous current of justice run, until it hurries generations upon generations, as they are born under this law of sin, into an eternal hell." But oh, the alternative is awful; and you cannot put your mind upon it, without being convulsed to the very centre of your being. Will you speak of pardon, and say that God will forgive? Then reconcile pardon with justice. Make forgiveness square with the holiness and with the truth of God, who has sworn that the wicked shall be cast into hell with all the nations that forget Him. Ah! when this greatest of all problems was presented before the senate of the angels, no wonder there was silence in Heaven as the challenge came from the lips of the Lawgiver, "who shall go for us, and whom shall I send." None of the celestial hosts could answer this appeal, until a voice came from the bosom of the Father itself, from that middle Person sitting between the two in the mystery of the God-head, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, 'I delight to do thy will, oh my God.'"

When man too comes to deal with this mighty problem of sin and of mercy—man, who has the audacity, without the wisdom, to decide that

which oppressed the intelligence of angels,—just see the miserable shifts to which he, in his blindness, is driven: either, upon the one hand, to deny the essential nature of sin and resolve it all into infirmity and defect, contrary to the most positive judgments of conscience herself; or, on the other hand, maintaining that the sufferings of this short life are reformatory, and will bring these wicked back to God's favor in the enjoyment of their purity once more. How strangely is the fact overlooked, that these sufferings fall in far greater measure upon the righteous than upon the wicked—itsself fatal to the hypothesis! How singular, too, that these sufferings, which are merely reformatory and disciplinary, in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of each thousand, fail to reform! That is a marvellous dispensation, which appoints suffering to make men better; when, in the overwhelming proportion of instances, the reformation fails to be accomplished—and the parties who are put under the discipline are exasperated, and become far more compacted in sin than before. Above all, what will the theory do with the still more tremendous fact that no provision is made for the sin, which is not removed but remains forever?

Look now at the Cross, and see what Jesus does by His sufferings and death. He takes away the sin: He takes it away in its punishment, when He grants a free pardon to the sinner, "thy sins, which are many, be forgiven thee; go in peace;" He takes sin away in its being, when, by gradual sanctification, the man's nature becomes more and more pure—until the Holy Spirit removes the last vestige of corruption, and transfigures the believer into His Lord's likeness forever. Oh! philosopher, standing upon the platform of your reason and rejoicing in your deductions, bow with reverence before that which explains to you the central problem in human history. Until you, with your science, can tell me what becomes of sin, I hold to the Cross, and say with the Apostle "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Galatians iv: 14.) The fact which is the most stubborn of all facts, cannot be ignored. The fact, which is the most stubborn of all facts, must come into your philosophy. If that philosophy undertakes to dispense with this religion. And because this Cross solves the problem of mercy, it is entitled to the homage of the loftiest intellect, and should command the obedience and the worship of every honest heart. It will be in view of all this that the shame will be ours which the Scriptures declare to be the promotion of fools, if, at the judgment, we be found despisers of that which explains all that man most wants to know in the facts of his personal history.

IV. *The Cross of Jesus Christ lays the foundation of an adequate and*

*acceptable worship unto God.* Worship! Those little springs near the summit of the mountains, distilling through the crevices of the rock those pearly drops of water, what shall become of them? And as they trickle down the mountain side, what shall become of them? And when at the mountain's base, the little stream rushes over its pebbly bed, making in its mimic waterfalls music in the ears of angels and of God, what shall become of it? When, at length, the myriads of fountains upon the mountain tops, and the thousands of mountain streamlets gather in the bed of this majestic river, increasing in volume as it rolls from the far north and girdles our own city, what shall become of it? Into the Gulf its waters are emptied at last, and find their outlet in the boundless ocean, which is beyond. I have, under an emblem, given to you a picture of what is equally true in the bosom of a man. These thoughts, can you count them? How they spring like sparks of electricity from the battery of mind! How they fly out upon other minds, lighting up fires which burn through all time and illuminate the earth! These desires rolling in man's breast, like the waves of the ocean; for man's heart—what is it but a broad sea, heaving under the ground-swell from beneath, and tossing the foam upon its waves forever?

Now, what becomes of these thoughts, of these affections, of these desires with which thousands upon thousands of human bosoms are swelling everywhere? Where shall man's thoughts pour their flood—into what shall man's affections empty themselves, if not at last into WORSHIP, the consummation of all mental and moral activity? Here on earth man embalms his thoughts, and pours the affections and desires of his soul in worship at the mercy seat. When he passes through the eternal gates he mingles with the chaunters that are around the throne; alternating with them the strophe and the antistrophe of the immortal song. The redeemed of earth go up to heaven, out of the conflict, and pressure, and curse of sin; and gathering the nearest around the throne and person of their Head, they give the key-note of the new song of Moses and the Lamb—teaching the very angels how they shall praise the redeeming love and pardoning mercy of God in Christ: “for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God, kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth.” (Rev. v: 9.) And the Angels, the Cherubim, and the Seraphim, who have always burned in their spotless purity before the throne, must take a lower key, with a less grateful recognition of their personal interest in the great redemption—“worthy is the Lamb that was slain.” Although recapitulated into His blessed family and made

constituent members of his household, still they are unable to say "He hath redeemed us with His own blood;" but only this, "worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

But, my brethren, this worship in which human thought and human desire continually pour themselves, how inadequate it is, not only on this poor earth, but even in heaven! Where is the confession of sin that ever rose to the height of its guilt? Where is the praise upon human, nay, upon angelic lips, that ever mounted the scale of God's merit? But we turn to the Cross, and there we have a sacrifice, and of course, a priest. The worship is founded upon the one, and is conducted through the other. Eternal provision is made for the worship which shall be worthy of man to utter, and which shall be worthy of God to receive. When the High Priest of our profession takes the worship of these contrite hearts upon the earth, and the worship of the glorified as they gather round His throne—when He pours it all into His own golden censer, and lights the incense from the altar of burnt offering upon which He "offered Himself once for all in the end of the world to take away sin."—when, with that unspeakable dialect which is known only to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost in the eternal and most intimate communion of the God-Head, He, the advocate, goes through the veil into "the holiest of all," and there speaks to God the praise of the creature on earth, or of the creature in heaven,—then is laid a foundation for their worship and their praise.

Sneer then at the Cross if you will; but remember upon that Cross hangs the sacrifice which makes worship possible to the creature, and acceptable to the God to whom it is presented. Sneer if you will at the sufferer's form, quivering there in its anguish upon its ragged spikes; who will come down from that Cross, and with his resumed life shall appear eternally in the presence of the Father, as the channel through which our worship shall ascend in a manner which God can afford to accept. My brethren, the Cross—how precious it is!—under all the aspects in which you choose to view it, how precious the Cross, and how precious the faith which clings to the Cross! Faith, so often dishonored in the presence of reason, faith in her modesty so often called to veil her eyes as inferior to the deductions of science, whilst yet this faith rests upon the sure testimony of Him who made the universe, and knows all that it contains! Faith, so far from being subordinate to reason, is her perfection and her glory; bringing to man a knowledge immeasurably beyond the highest which can be interpreted by the oracles of nature.

Would to God I could persuade every soul in this house to look at the

Saviour under these views, and to rejoice in the provisions of God's love as they are set forth in the sufferings of the Cross. Understand then that to be a Christian is to be God's dear child,—however weak and however failing, yet always growing, always struggling upwards, gaining more and more the mastery over self and sin and the world, until we “attain the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” Whether it be in the weakness of our spiritual infancy, or in the maturity of our expanded powers, in all the stages of our progress, we are the dear children of our Father in Heaven, made after his image by renewing grace, and permitted to look up into His face and to love forever. Glorious privilege! And you may have it at the taking. I offer it to you in the great name of the Father Almighty, in the name of the dear sufferer by whom it was purchased, in the name of that Divine Spirit who may at this moment be touching the chords of your heart. To you, if you will but accept it, I offer the privilege of sitting down upon the mount of God; and whilst eternal ages roll, of feeling within only the throb of grateful love to Him who “first loved us.”

## IX.

### CHRIST'S LOVE TO HIS PEOPLE.

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JOHN, xv: 9 :—“ *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.*”

There is an amazing depth in the Gospel of John, which renders it almost hopeless of exposition. The other Evangelists, indeed, present a perfect portraiture of our Lord—throwing, with artistic skill, feature after feature upon the canvas. They record His miracles with historical precision, and recite His parables and fragmentary discourses with touching simplicity and beauty. Yet their representation, as compared with that of John, is largely external. They present the figure of Christ before the eye with such singular attractiveness, that we instantly admire and adore. But John nestles in the Lord's very bosom, and creeps into the Saviour's heart; whence his gentle voice breathes as from an oracle the words of love which are ever found in that Saviour's heart. So that, reading the New Testament, we pass through the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, very much as the priest of old passed through the holy place; until in John we find the holy of holies of the Bible, its innermost shrine.

The transparent clearness of John's style, to a certain extent, also deceives us. A superficial reading takes in the import of the words so that we seem to understand, until we begin to reflect; and the longer we read, the more the deeps open before us—until, at length, thought and reason are swallowed up in the vastness of the revelation of this mystic and secret. It is as though one should stand and look up into the clear blue sky above; which parts before the eye, and the sight is nowhere hindered, but pierces onward and upward, until vision and fancy are lost in the immensity of space. Just so, you and I kneel at the edge of one of those sublime utterances of Christ, which are reported by John; and as we look, we seem to gaze into the very depths of eternity. To take up, then, these thoughts, to pass them through the prism of our analysis, and then to throw them into logical forms, would seem almost profane in its coldness. Yet it is the hard condition of all earthly knowledge thus to analyze and to explore; and our only hope is afterwards to re-combine the elements which we have separated, and to glow with a warmer devotion than before. The text is a beautiful illustration of this: “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.” How simple the statement, and yet how deep the sentiment! One can never exhaust its fulness.

Evidently, there are two senses in which the Father may be said to love



the Son : either, as He is the only begotten in the mystery of the adorable Trinity ; or else, as the incarnate Word, achieving here upon earth the work of our redemption. The first entirely surpasses our conception. Who can "find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven ; what canst thou do? Deeper than hell ; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." (Job, xi : 7, 8, 9). It is just as impossible for the finite to comprehend the holy commerce of the three, as it is to penetrate the undivided essence of the one. It would seem rather to be the other, which our Lord intends in the text. For, in the verse immediately following, He refers to the obedience which He Himself rendered to the Father, in the discharge of His mediatorial functions : "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love ; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love." Under this view, then, my hearers, let us attempt to consider UPON WHAT GROUNDS THE FATHER LOVES CHRIST, THE MEDIATOR ; opening the way for us to see how UPON PRECISELY THE SAME GROUNDS CHRIST LOVES HIS PEOPLE. "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you."

I. *The Father has infinite delight in the Lord Jesus Christ, as He is the representative and type of what human nature in its perfection is.* At the Creation, God saw all His works that they were good ; and He pronounced this benediction with a peculiar emphasis after the work of the sixth day, when He had made man "in His own image and after His own likeness." He had created the earth as an august temple, and placed man within it as the high priest to conduct its worship ; that, looking all around upon nature, He might gather her beauties upon the mirror of his own soul, and then cast the reflection back upon God in solemn and holy chants of praise. But sin reversed all this, and man was himself the gloomiest wreck of the whole. In this emergency the Lord Christ intervenes, taking upon Him our nature ; and, "being found in fashion as a man," He presents Himself before the eye of His Father, the perfect man. His understanding, how clear ! His affections, how pure ! His will, how constant and free ! His conscience, how clean ! What exact symmetry in all His powers ! How enduring in suffering ! How patient in toil ! How gentle, without weakness ! How forgiving, without meanness ! And so, as the typical man, as the true ideal of the race to which you and I belong, He stood before His Father and represented humanity in its original glory ; and the Father renewed the joy which He felt at the creation, when He looked upon this representative of Himself, and "behold it was very good."

In like manner Christians are dear to Christ, because they also represent human nature in its restoration. The life which has been implanted within them by the power of the Holy Ghost, is developed—so that, from being

babes in Christ, they become at length perfect men in Christ Jesus. In all the stages of their growth in grace, they approach nearer to their type; continuing, through all the ages, that which Jesus Christ began upon the earth—representing to angels above what human nature is when the Holy Spirit dwells within it, and what human nature shall be made to be when that Spirit has completed his work upon all its powers. Ah, my brethren; take the thought home to your own comfort, that Jesus has a true sympathy with you in your struggles to be good. Everywhere else man finds himself rejected, despised, when he comes with confessions of unworthiness and of shame. But when we kneel at the mercy seat, this typical representative of our race yields a sympathy as real with us in our *sins*, as in our *sorrows*. No other being in all this vast universe is able to put a loving and a helpful arm around us, in the moments when we sin; and still more, in the moments of our penitence when we confess the shame with which we are overwhelmed. The blessed Redeemer, because He is the true typical man, has a sympathy with you and with me in our battle with sin, in our struggles with temptation, in our resistance of the world and of Satan; and all the more, because He sees what He has Himself restored, and what is the continuation upon earth of that which He, in His flesh commenced. “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.”

II. *The Father delights in the Lord Jesus Christ, because of His obedience.* I am persuaded that we look at the law too much in its external aspect, as merely mapping out the relations in which we stand to society and to God, and prescribing various classes of duties. All perfectly true, in so far as this law becomes the chart of human conduct: but then we are in this, standing outside of the law, viewing it only in its power of direction and of rule. As soon however as you enter within the law itself, you discover that in its interior aspect it is Jehovah's solemn assertion of Himself, construing His own perfections to human thought. Hence, obedience must be estimated—not only as the doing of a right external thing in obedience to an express command—but as being the hearty response of our own nature to the perfections of God. There is an external aspect to the obedience, as well as an external aspect to the law which commands the obedience. The obedience which rises into the majesty of worship, is the obedience which God recognizes as the echo of His own voice in the exposition of Himself. As he stamps, one by one, and all together, the perfections of His nature upon statute and upon sanction, we, in our sphere of obedience, respond in our thought and in our affection to all that we discover. Upon this ground, the obedience of the Lord Jesus is continually presented in Scripture as the object of the Father's delight. “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I

might take it again: \* \* \* this commandment have I received of my Father." (John x: 17, 18.) Throughout His earthly ministry, he refers the glory of His miracles, and the glory of His doctrines, to the Father that sent Him; recognizing that subordination of office which, in the economy of redemption, he sustains to Him.

Just so, does the Lord Jesus delight in the obedience of His people. True, it is short and imperfect; and God and we alone know how honest and how deep are the confessions which we pour into his ear at the mercy seat, over the imperfection of that obedience which we render. Therefore it is, that we are not scorched and withered by the revilings of the world; for when, with its serpent tongue, it hisses in our ear its rebuke and scorn, ah! we have gone down, far deeper than they have ever been able to object against us, into the meanness of our sin. Long before they brought the indictment, we have spread it in tears before the eye of our Father in Heaven; until he has sweetly said, "thy sins which are many be forgiven thee, go in peace." Thus we stand erect, even when the world stones us with its bitter accusations and inuendos. Short and imperfect as we confess it to be, it is nevertheless obedience; an obedience generous and free, an obedience which springs from the principle of love implanted in the soul, an obedience which is the true response of our rectified nature to all that the law reveals to us of God. Our divine Lord and Master loves us for our obedience, precisely on the same ground that the Father loved Him for His obedience. And then, our obedience is a continuation of that which Christ began, and by which He "magnified the law and made it honorable." Have you forgotten how the Lord identifies Himself with His people, making them the representatives of Himself in His person, in His work, and in His cause here upon the earth? The feeblest of believers in the feebleness of his walk does yet—in so far as he renders an obedience which is the response of his own soul to the nature of God as revealed in the law—continue in its manifestation before the world that glorious righteousness by which the law of God was perfectly honored through Christ Himself.

III. *The Father loves the Mediator, for His amazing sacrifice in the redemption of a lost world.* There is a generosity in self-sacrifice, which always appeals to the sensibilities of the good; and in none of its forms, however low, as you view them upon the earth, are you able to withhold your eulogy. It may be the self-sacrifice of the mother, who, through anxiety and toil, by day and by night, sacrifices her comfort and her ease for her child. It may be the self-sacrifice of the father, shown in the labors which are perpetually exacting upon his feeble frame through a long life, just that he may leave an inheritance for his offspring and emancipate

them from the toil by which his own body has been racked. It may be the self-sacrifice of the patriot, who willingly surrenders life and fortune for the redemption and independence of his country. Or it may be the self-sacrifice of the missionary, who, leaving home and its endearments, and even the sound of his native tongue, goes to the ends of the earth, if haply he may cause the desert to bloom as the garden of the Lord. But wherever you find the spirit of self-abnegation, you find that upon which human praise is continually poured. But, my brethren, where was there ever self-sacrifice like that of our Lord; so free, there being no compulsory necessity upon Him to offer Himself a substitute for the guilty; so extreme in its condescension, for "He took not upon Him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham," "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." (Philippians ii: 7, 8.) How agonizing too, the sufferings he endured; sufferings which can never be measured by human thought, nor expressed in human language, until you have penetrated the mystery of that word uttered upon the Cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" And a sacrifice rendered for sinners, who had completely forfeited every claim upon His forbearance or His mercy. Look at the self-abnegation of our blessed Lord, when He laid aside the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, and not only came into the world which His power had built and assumed the condition of a creature, but actually went under the law and endured the curse and shame of sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. And now, shall not the generosity of this sacrifice of our Lord for a wretched and doomed world, appeal with all its force to the magnanimity of the eternal Father? How shall the great God fail to regard his Son with anything less than infinite delight, when He contemplates the nobleness of that sacrifice which he offered up once for all, in the end of the world, to take away sin.

Brethren, shall we not be allowed to say in the presence of the world that, just in so far as we are Christians at all, are we animated by this principle of self-abnegation and sacrifice? Why, your Christian life began with the solemn consecration of yourself to Him who bought you with His precious blood. The language which burst from your heart in the moment when you embraced your Lord, was the language of Paul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do." It was the language of him of old declaring, "other Lords besides Thee have had dominion over us; but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy name." (Isaiah xxvi: 13.) "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Joshua xxiv: 15.) Step by

step, as you track your experience from the beginning to the close, is it marked by this principle of self-renunciation in giving to God the praise of your salvation. The spiritual life which is breathed into you, is the life of Christ which the Holy Spirit imparts. The strength by which you perform duty and resist temptation and secure triumph, is the strength which the Saviour gives through the power of the Holy Ghost. And the glory upon which we enter at the last, as we rise into the presence of our Lord, is the glory which the Saviour has gone before and prepared for them that love Him. The language of all Christian experience in all the ages, whether on earth or in heaven, will be, "not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy name be the glory." The Lord, with His eye of omniscience looking into the depths of the Christian heart, discovers there this principle of sacrifice. It imparts a glory even to this ragged, ravelled work of ours, over which we weep tears of penitence and shame; and causes the great Redeemer to hold it up before His eye, and give us His blessing. Imperfect as the work may be, it is a work of sacrifice like His own; perpetuating upon the earth the principle of self-abnegation which the Lord Himself so conspicuously illustrated. Hence, Paul says in the first chapter of his epistle to the Colossians; "who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church." (Colossians i: 24.) Never did you give a cup of cold water to a disciple in the name of a disciple,—never did you practice economy in your home, or upon your person, that you might have something to give to the cause of Jesus,—never did you sacrifice a feeling of resentment under the wrongs which you suffer in life, but the Lord upon His throne looks upon it as the manifestation of the same Spirit which moved him, "though He was rich, for our sakes to become poor, that we through His poverty might be rich." (II Cor. viii: 9.) Brethren, take your shame, if God appoints it as your lot, and bind it upon you for a crown. Take your sufferings, if God appoints these to you, and, like Paul of old, glory in your tribulation. If your home be made a charnel house, where you are surrounded more by the memories of your dead than by living forms beautiful to the eye, rejoice in that you are sharers of your Lord's work in sacrifice; holding it up in memorial before the eyes of men, and causing them to recognize the principle for which the Saviour was most loved by the Father.

IV. *The Father has inexpressible delight in the Lord Jesus, as the Head in whom is restored the unity of the Creation.* Sin, just like a cruel blade, which cuts between bone and sinew, flesh and marrow, how divisive it is! What a fearful schism has it wrought upon this earth of ours! It has not only separated man from God, but it has put barriers between

man and all God's creatures. The open schism between man and the angels, some have thought to be symbolized in the Cherubim and flaming sword turning every way, which guarded the tree of life; lest man should put the climax to his apostacy, and dare the power of God in eating of the sacramental tree after his fall. It was most certainly intimated, when man was driven from paradise; each footfall of the guilty pair, as they wandered from the beautiful Eden, waking up the echoes of a vacant world. It is this schism between man and the very beasts of the earth, which compels the former to retain his jurisdiction over the latter, only through an everlasting contest of mental power with physical force. But in that exigency, when sin had dislocated this earth and set all parts of it awry, the Lord Jesus came. Behold Him in His swift condescension, as He passes through all the grades of intellectual being, until he finds man down there at the very bottom of the scale; plainly showing that in his entire descent through these intervening grades, He took them all up and folded them within Himself, and thus, by virtue of His very incarnation, becomes the head of the whole Creation of God. I cannot go largely into it as a doctrine, touching it only by a side reference here; but every intelligent reader of the Scriptures knows how constantly this headship of the Lord Jesus, which He has acquired as the Redeemer, is emphasized. "He raised Him from the dead," says Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians, "and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all." (Ephesians i: 20, 21, 22, 23.) Again he writes to the Colossians, "Ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power." (Colossians ii: 10.) Or, as Peter puts it: "who is gone into Heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him." (I Peter iii: 22.) And is not Christ a beauty in His Father's eye, when He recovers the universe from the divisive influences of sin, and binds all in a holy unity again; presenting Himself before the Father as the representative of the whole creation, made one by redeeming grace, as before it was one by creative power?

What does the Church symbolize in her spiritual unity, but this great idea which the Lord Jesus has accomplished and which He means to perpetuate through us? Even the visible Church with all her imperfections, with all the discords which spring up in her bosom, strives to realize the same in her visible unity—mind clashing with mind and thought separating from thought, yet all fused together into spiritual and blessed oneness

whenever you gather around the Lord's table and touch those sacramental emblems—the only spot upon the earth where all controversies are composed, and all varieties of opinion are reconciled. For this our Lord prays, in the memorable words: “that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: \* \* \* and the glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one.” (John xvii: 21, 22.) Thus, my brethren, does the Lord Jesus delight in us, even as the Father delights in Him; because we are exhibiting His glory as the head over all things to the Church, wielding universal authority to the praise of His Father's name.

V. *The Father delights infinitely in Christ, as working out the revelation of His mercy, grace and love.* Perhaps it is true that wherever there is thought, there is speech. The two seem in all history, as far as we can trace it, to be strangely co-ordinated. Thought is always tending to its expression. Thought leaps out and puts on a form, that it may go here and there and everywhere through nature, and touch the object which has excited it. Thought must have its eyes with which it can look upon other minds, and a tongue with which it can break the silence and hold communion with other souls. There is an infinite fitness that the great God who thinks, who is the fountain and origin of all thought, should speak. But oh! with what a dialect does He utter the immortal thoughts passing through His mind! He creates worlds upon worlds, filling all space with these orbs which are the objects of our scientific investigation; and He creates the little violet which blooms and gives forth its perfume beneath your feet, as you are about to tread upon it unseen. These are the silent types, through which the great Jehovah speaks to the universe His immortal thoughts. Like those pages that are prepared for the blind, stars, worlds, mountains, oceans, seas, animals, plants, minerals, are the raised type over which the blind pass the little finger with its delicate touch, and putting letter to letter, read out the thought. Shall you, shall I, allow a sceptical science to separate the works of God from Him who is their author? Or are these sciences, which constitute the glory of our day, but the open paths by which we ascend beyond nature up to nature's God? We will re-write the line of England's pantheistic poet, when he says “the proper study of mankind is man;” and with our version of the truth, say, rather with the first answer of our own catechism, “man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” We will wage war against the divorce, which men attempt, between the works of God and the God who made the works. These are God's thoughts, expressed in type which the eye shall trace and which the finger shall feel. Like the immortal Newton, who, when he had placed his scaling

ladder against the skies in his astronomical investigations, rose above them in the heights of scientific induction, and closed his immortal demonstration with the scholium, "there is a God." But, my brethren, God may express His power in the works of creation; or His thoughts of goodness and purposes of will, in the acts of Providence; or He may utter His truth and His justice in the law: but that larger opening of the infinite heart, through which He shall pour out forever upon the universe the treasures of His love, calls for a personal manifestation. The Son, who alone understood the nature of the Father and could reveal it, comes from the bosom of that Father to declare Him; and because of this revelation, the Father loves Him.

I should like, if I had time, to dwell upon another shade of the thought: that Christ Jesus is far more than a prophet, simply uttering with the lips to us that God is merciful and that God is gracious; but that He went into the working-house and forge of His own passion, and there amidst the fires of sacrifice, wrought out the principle of grace and forever incorporated it with law as an element of God's moral government forever and forever—potentially working out the mercy so that it shall be an historical verity, and therefore more easily comprehended by us and more perfectly wrought into our individual experience. Just as the Father loves Christ for that, Christ, in His turn, looks upon His Church and loves her for the same. That Church stands before the Redeemer, not only as the fruit of His sacrifice, but the precious memorial of the mercy, grace and love which lay at the foundation of that sacrifice.

Will you allow me to hurry to a conclusion by dwelling for a moment upon the peculiar import of the word "As" in the text? It is the particle of comparison: "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." Oh! how it teaches us *the reality of Christ's love* to His people! For, as the Father's love to Him was a real love, of which He, the Son, had an inward consciousness, so it is our privilege to have an abiding persuasion of the Redeemer's love to us. Christ's love to His Church is as real, as the love which the Father has to Him.

See again, how it depicts *the nature of this love*. The Father's love to Christ was a *personal* love; and Christ's love to His sheep is equally individual. This is the sweetness of it: that when we were bleating in the cold, alone off yonder upon the distant mountain, the Good Shepherd knew His own, and He called us by name and we were made to follow. "I am the Good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine, and they shall hear my voice." (John, x: 14, 16).

It is a *free* love, founded upon no foresight of goodness in us, for when



we were in our blood He passed by and said unto us "live." See how the Apostle puts it: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Rom. v: 10).

The Father's love to the Son is an *infinite* love, and *unchangeable* in its duration. So is the love which Christ has for His people, a love that is boundless and without change. It is sweetly said of Him, that "having loved His own, He loved them to the end." Brethren, where is the end? Look! Let the clouds part before your eye beyond the horizon of time, and gaze down the vistas of what we call eternity, piercing with your view through the ages as they heap upon the ages—say, when will you come to the end? As long as eternity lasts, or the throne abides upon which He sits, shall this Redeemer, having begun to love, love to the end. And so love and heaven are alike secure to us—conquerors while here, and rejoicing in the triumph of conquerors there.

And then *the love of the Father to Christ was the impulsive spring of all the obedience which He rendered to His Father's will*: And so Christ's love to us is the fountain and source of all the obedience which we seek to offer. Oh! This mechanical morality—taking the dry shell of a thing, and shutting up thought and feeling and desire and will and purpose in that external mould, and taking the brick after it has been burnt in the kiln, and holding it up before the great God and saying that this is obedience! Why, nothing is obedience that does not spring from the heart,—just as these waters, which the Almighty has brewed in the womb of the earth, spring from the fountains which He has placed on a thousand hill-sides. Obedience is voluntary; obedience is the homage of the will spontaneously rendered to God; the free echo which man's nature gives to the voice of God as interpreted to Him in the law. As the Father's love to the Son was the spring of all that Son's obedience, so does Christ's love for us command our obedience in its turn. We love Him, because He has loved us; and all duty is sweet, and toil is pleasure, when it is sanctified by the love from which it springs.

My unconverted friend, it is a great pleasure, even though the thing be badly done, to preach God's precious Gospel to you. I take you to record that my habit is rather to woo you, if I may, with its attractive voices, rather than to hold up the glittering sword and hurl against you the anathemas of the judgment. Would to heaven, I had persuasion enough in my voice, to-day, to bring you to an acceptance with us of these immense privileges! Oh, that you with us could be made willing in this, the day of His power, to hold communion with the Father and with the Son and with the eternal Spirit! and to know, as no other can teach it to you, except the Divine Spirit Himself, what is that love of Christ to the believer, which He compares to the Father's love to Himself!

## X.

### CHRISTIANS SOMETIMES LEFT TO THEMSELVES.

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II CHRONICLES, xxxi: 31.—*“How be it, in the business of the Ambassadors of the Princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.”*

Hezekiah, you will remember, came to the throne of Judah about seven hundred and twenty-five years before Christ; and about the time when the schismatical house of Judah was entirely destroyed by the Assyrians, who were then in the height of their glory. Hezekiah himself, was a wise and pious prince, and his reign was distinguished as one of religious reformation. He not only reformed the abuses of previous reigns, but he abolished the high places of idolatrous worship throughout the land, re-instituted the Hebrew festivals, and made conspicuous manifestation of his zeal in breaking to pieces the brazen serpent; which, from being an interesting historical relic, had become an object of superstitious reverence. Having entered into an alliance with the Egyptian power, and emboldened by the singular prosperity of his kingdom, Hezekiah undertook to throw off the badge of servitude which had been imposed in the days of his father, Ahaz, by the Assyrians, in the form of an annual tribute. Disappointed, however, in the succor which he expected from Egypt, when Sennacherib presented himself before Jerusalem with a prodigious army, Hezekiah was compelled to retrieve his error by the payment of an enormous fine; which drained the royal exchequer and also the treasury of the temple, and compelled the king even to strip the gold which was upon the posts and upon the doors of the temple. Sennacherib, for a time thus pacified, turn his arms against Egypt; carrying out the Asiatic policy, which did not allow more than a single great empire to exist at a time, and which knew nothing of the balance of power between contemporaneous kingdoms which so peculiarly distinguishes our modern history. Having gained the keys of the Empire of Egypt, Sennacherib retraces his steps with the determination of effectually subjugating Judah; in order that there might not be a hostile power intervening between his own country and that of Egypt, which he had now under his control. In this great peril, Hezekiah addresses himself in prayer to God; and, inasmuch as Sennacherib, in the flatulence of his

pride, had undertaken to revile Jehovah, the God of Israel, we are not surprised that he immediately received through the Prophet the promise of supernatural aid. Sennacherib was compelled, with a large portion of his forces, to return precipitately to his own country, which was being invaded by Tirhaka, the King of Ethiopia; whilst the portion of the army left in the siege of Jerusalem, was in a single night destroyed by one of those astounding judgments by which God knew so well to protect His people and to destroy His enemies. The Prophet's prediction was thus literally fulfilled: The spoils that were gathered from the camp of the Assyrians, to a large extent, re-imbursed Hezekiah with the wealth of which he had been robbed. The surrounding nations, glad that the Assyrian power was in some degree crippled through the agency of Judah, brought gifts unto the Lord to Jerusalem and presents to Hezekiah, King of Judah; so that he was magnified in the sight of the nations from henceforth.

Now occurs another incident, with which the text stands in more immediate connection. Hezekiah was sick nigh unto death. He turns his face to the wall and prays for a continuance of life—a prayer prompted not merely by the instinct which leads all of us to cling to life, but springing from the most exalted patriotism. The times, you perceive, were exceedingly critical. The old quarrel between Assyria and Judah was simply suspended, and Hezekiah knew perfectly well that there could be no peace until one or the other was utterly destroyed. Moreover, his death just at this juncture would expose Judah to all the perils of a doubtful succession; for his son and successor, Manasseh, was not as yet born. The prophet, therefore, brings to Hezekiah the promise that fifteen years shall be added to his life; and a public sign as to the fulfillment of this promise was afforded, in the recession of the shadow ten degrees upon the dial of Ahaz.

My brethren, you would expect a good man like Hezekiah, in the reception of so many favors directly from the hand of God, to be overwhelmed with gratitude and to bow, in profound humility, before the author of all these mercies. Ah! what a lesson does it teach us of human frailty, even with the best! What an illustration of the utter deceitfulness of the human heart! The very next line in the story is, that Hezekiah did not humble himself before the Lord for all this, but was proud and lifted up. "But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up." The particular instance in which this pride was exhibited, was at the arrival of the deputation from distant Babylon, bringing the congratulations of that empire to him upon his recovery from his sickness, and with Chaldean curiosity inquiring into the astronomical

wonder which had been wrought in the land—how it came to pass, that the shadow could go backward ten degrees upon the dial of Ahaz. To these deputies Hezekiah exhibited all the treasures of his kingdom; rejoicing in the vastness of his possessions, and doubtless influenced by carnal policy in effecting a league with these Babylonians—thus breaking away from that simple dependence upon the power of Jehovah, which had already so marvelously interposed in his behalf. The prophet Isaiah, therefore, comes to Hezekiah and tells him that he shall find the punishment of his pride through these very Babylonians, to whom those treasures were exhibited—a prediction all the more remarkable because, at this particular moment, the Babylonians were a feeble dependency of the Assyrian Empire, and had just seized the opportunity, when the Assyrian power was partially paralyzed, to assert their national independence: which they were enabled to preserve and to enjoy until, in their turn, they also became the conquerors of the East. It is with this the text stands connected. “How be it, in the business of the Ambassadors of the Princes of Babylon, who sent unto Him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.” Hezekiah falls into this pride and vain-glory, through the temporary desertion of God. God “left him”—left him for the purpose of trying him, that he might know all that was in his heart. We are thus brought abreast of a great truth taught in Scripture, and a great fact recognized in Christian experience: that God, for a little, does sometimes withdraw His supporting and guiding grace, to the express end that His people may learn their weakness through their dismal fall. I have said that this truth is taught in Scripture. Turn, if you please to the eighth chapter of the book of Deuteronomy, second and sixteenth verses: “And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no:” “Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that He might humble thee, and that He might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end.” With this we should also compare the solemn testimony of the Apostle James: “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.—Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.” (James i: 12, 13, 14.) Are we able, then, to explain this procedure of God by any general and

recognized principles of His moral government? It is the solution of this problem that I now propose. There are great and ascertained principles in the administration of God's grace, which enable us to understand why He should sometimes leave us to ourselves, to try us, that we may know all that is in our hearts.

I. *He does this in order to bring plainly into view the sovereignty of His own power, in immediate connection with the entireness of man's responsibility.* Why, here are the two poles of all Christian experience: Nay rather, here are the two factors which enter into all history—God's power upon the one hand, man's agency and responsibility upon the other. These two are not to be viewed apart, but as exactly co-ordinated. In their mutual influence, the one upon the other, they together accomplish what we call history, whether it be the history of the individual or the history of the nation. The being of God is a truth very near to us, and the proofs around us are exceeding abundant. But it is not always easy to trace the interposition of Divine power, and to recognize the agency of God in everything that happens. Hence the tendency in science to swallow up the ideas of a personal God, and of a controlling providence, in what it chooses to term the necessary laws and the secret forces of nature. When we look out upon nature, there is the agency of God, it is true; but that agency, to a large extent, obscured and hidden from us in the uniformity of its operations. The more successful we are in explaining, by natural and secondary causes, all the facts which our senses observe, the further do we put from us the intervention of God, and fail to realize His personal presence and His immediate power in all that occurs. This is the tendency in all our speculative thinking. But you perceive that it is a tendency which must be restrained and prevented in the sphere of religion; for religion contemplates us in our immediate dependence upon God, and religion is fed in the soul by a personal communion with God. Now, if God should make His grace a constant quantity in any man's experience, instead of that variable influence which is now exerted upon us and now withheld—if this communication of grace came without variation, we would construe the kingdom of Grace precisely as the kingdom of Nature, a government by mechanical laws merely; and God Himself would be too far from us, for the purposes either of fellowship or worship. It becomes necessary, therefore, in the religious sphere, that God shall be in closer personal communication with us; showing that He is no debtor to man, but always a free giver of all that He bestows; and, to carry this fact into every man's experience, the Lord sometimes withholds the grace which at other times He affords, and even leaves the believer to himself for a little, in order to try him, that he may know what is in his heart.

Look now at the other term, which enters into the composition of all history. Man is by no means a machine. He is not governed by mechanical laws. He is intelligent and responsible, and his will must be a necessary factor in all human acts. I certainly need not pause to demonstrate this, for it is upborne by the consciousness of every rational being over the earth. Every man knows that his acts, as he performs them, are his own. They are his own, because they are the product of his personal will; and therefore he must be held to the strictest personal responsibility for the same. But along the line of this human activity, in immediate connection with the exercise of this human will as it enters into the production of these human acts, lie the solemn and ordaining purposes of Almighty God. Man, in the consciousness of his perfect freeness, nevertheless works out the fixed, if not declared, purposes of the Supreme Ruler. It may not be possible for us to see how these apparently opposing facts blend harmoniously together, nor how they are complementary to each other. But if there be a God, He must will; and if there be a creature like man, created in God's image, then, all through the complex result there must be the co-ordination of these two agencies. The fixed and eternal purpose of God lies in the bosom of all history, somewhat as the thread we sometimes let down into a given solution—and around which the most perfect crystals exactly form, in their own shape, whether rhomboid, cube, or prism. I do not pretend to explain the combination of the two in the production of a common result. But most certainly there runs this thread of God's personal will through the acts which the creature performs. In the perfect consciousness of his own freedom, and under the motives which prompt at every turn, he simply works out the end which God ordained from the beginning.

You perceive then, inasmuch as grace works through the powers of the human soul, that grace must be so given as to bring every man distinctly to the recognition of his own responsibility. The communication of grace is intermittent, in order to show the Divine sovereignty—giving it now, withholding it then—so that, in the giving upon the one hand, and in the withholding upon the other, we shall know that the great God acts simply according to His own will in both. If He gives grace upon any condition to the creature, that condition is simply the measure of His own fidelity. In the reception of the grace, man distinctly recognizes the office which is assigned to him. The Lord, therefore, according to the declaration of the text, sometimes leaves His own people, in order to bring distinctly to view the sovereignty of His power and the entireness of human responsibility.

II. *The Lord does this also, in order to reveal to us the terribleness of sin and the deceitfulness of the human heart.* Says Jeremiah: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah, xvii: 9.) And, my brethren, the deceitfulness of that heart is ascertained to us in the fact that the motives, which we think are the purest, oftentimes are disclosed to the eye of God as motives which are base and for which we deserve to be punished. You have an illustration in the text. Unquestionably Hezekiah regarded himself, in the exhibition of these treasures to the ambassadors of Babylon, as only manifesting to them a regal courtesy; and was scarcely conscious of the secret pride, which prompted him to make the disclosure. Far less did he understand the subtle carnal policy which was leading him into alliances with Egypt upon the one hand, and with Babylon upon the other; forming a combination capable of coping with that Assyria, which hitherto had been too strong for each of them alone. Hezekiah little understood that these were the secret motives which determined him in opening his treasury and exhibiting the wealth of his kingdom to these deputies from Babylon. Ah! When the moralists of the world shower their censures upon the children of sin, for there is a way to stone men in this day, that is about as severe as that under the old Hebrew law, when the sinner was carried into the field and was stoned to death, with stones hurled from the hand—I say when the proud moralists of the world are absolutely stoning with their censures and rebukes the children of sin, they seldom reflect how far they are hedged in from the same sin by providential restraints which God has thrown around them, or else by the communications of His grace. The seeds of all sin lie in this fallen nature of ours. It is the prerogative of God alone to look into the naked heart and see the germ of all sin in the breast even of the best of our race. Man's consciousness is very far from revealing that within him which is only in the germ and not developed into the plant. Therefore, that man may know what is in him, God will sometimes leave him to himself. Evidently, the language of the text is not to be understood as implying ignorance on the part of Jehovah, but ignorance on the part of the creature. It is because God does read the heart, and knows the secret sin that lies undeveloped there, that the creature is abandoned to himself. The secret sin is allowed to transpire in the life, that the Christian may know exactly what manner of man he is. In the measurement of our own weakness, we best comprehend the reality of sin, and the utter treachery of our own hearts. And with the knowledge of this comes a more hearty dependence upon Divine grace and strength.

III. *God leaves the believer often to himself, in order to diversify the operations of his grace in the different phases of Christian experience.* Perhaps the most wonderful fact in all nature, is the variety of combinations from principles so few in number. Science is more and more resolving what we call the elements in nature; and yet, out of these which you can count upon the fingers, this whole globe of ours is composed. How few, except the initiated, even suspect that the common coal which burns within their grate, is the same in substance with the beautiful diamond which glitters upon the breast of beauty? Who would suspect that the leaves of the rose growing in the garden, will yield, upon scientific analysis, the same elements which are found in the rocky boulders which volcanic agency has thrown up on the mountain sides? How wonderful that God should build this beautiful earth by simply combining, in myriads upon myriads of diverse forms, the very few elements which science recognizes as at the foundation of nature! The six and twenty letters which are upon your child's primer, why we make all the books out of them. You may cast and re-cast, combine and re-combine the few letters of the alphabet, until you store libraries upon libraries with the volumes freighted with all the wealth of human thought. What wonderful power there is in combination! There are but a few features upon the human face, and they shall stand in every case substantially in the same relation; but God will put a difference between them, not exceeding perhaps the breadth of a hair, and give you the variety of countenances that is found in this assembly to-day. And is it surprising that he should, out of the same substantive exercises of soul, create this vast diversity of religious experience? All of us have the same faith, the same repentance, the same humility, the same love and personal consecration to Him who has redeemed us; but these combine in such endless variety as to yield thousands upon thousands of diversified religious histories. Even the same man has not the same history through two consecutive days of his life. So that when he passes into the eternal world, and reads that history under the light of God's own throne, he will be filled with wonder at the marvels of grace illustrated in his individual history just like the kaleidoscope, turn it round as often at you will, the same stones will dispose themselves ever into new shapes. Break the instrument; count the stones; you can hold them in the palm of your hand; yet, throw them back as before, and you may turn it for a lifetime, and never have the repetition of the same image.

Now, in order that religious experience may present before his eye, and before the angels in heaven, this rich diversity, God is pleased to give and



then to withhold, communicating and withdrawing, under just such circumstances as shall make our personal history exactly what it is. We may be alike in all the substantial features that constitute the Christian, and yet so different, that every man can become the teacher of his brother. There is not a child of God upon the earth who, if he will but tell the story of his heart, cannot illustrate the mighty methods of God's grace to the profoundest of theologians. To diversify this religious history and bring out Christian experience in all the forms in which it can be manifested, God is pleased to do that of which the text speaks; leaving the Christian oftentimes to himself, to know what is in his heart.

IV. *God does this that He may justify before the Universe all His sharp discipline of His children.* It is exceedingly perilous to explain God's providence whilst we are passing through any given dispensation. Every man carries within him the consciousness that he deserves God's judgments; and there is a superstitious tendency, even in the good, to interpret what they suffer as judgments from the hand of God. And then, in our uncharitableness as we look around us in life, we are disposed to construe the sufferings of others as penal visitations for the sins which they have committed. So it was with the friends of Job. They were comforters only so long as they sat in silence around the patriarch; but as soon as they undertook with the voice of words to console, they misconstrued all his relations to God—and bitterly accused him of secret and aggravated sin, without which these extraordinary sufferings could never have been inflicted. So men came to our Lord in the days of his flesh, and told Him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices—and of those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, as being sinners above all that dwelt in Jerusalem—to whom our Lord turned with His sharp rebuke and said: "I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke xiii: 1-5.)

Ah! brethren, it must needs be hard to explain the Divine chastisements, so long as we are in the bosom of them. For, in the first place, who is there that knows himself? Where is the man who knows his power to sin? Who has ever measured the ingratitude of his transgressions against the God of all his mercies? Yet, until we have a perfect knowledge of ourselves, we have not the rule by which to estimate the discipline under which God places us. No man has the right to say that God afflicts beyond his proportion; for he is not competent to ascertain this, unless he knows himself precisely as God knows him. But there is a difficulty superior even to this; for we know not all the purposes of God in our creation, nor in the creation of the race to which we belong, nor even of

the generation of which we are a part. In our ignorance of all this, no man is able to tell how the thread of his personal history is woven into the web of God's universal Providence. Neither you, nor I, can tell why God should, in fatherly discipline, afflict us as He does; because we do not know the necessity which may exist in us for the same. But, if this difficulty were overpassed, we do not know how our afflictions are made to profit others—nor the extent to which we are bound up with thousands around us, in the delicate complications of life. We must wait until we sit upon the mount of God, and there read the secrets of His providence, as interpreted in their fulfilment, before we can comprehend either the wisdom or the love of God's dealings with His Saints upon the earth.

Yet, brethren, just in so far as the Christian is conscious of personal unworthiness—just in so far as, by overt transgression, he shall prove his unworthiness to others around him—is God justified before the whole universe in all the pains which He sends upon the children of men. Therefore He permits us sometimes to act ourselves out, without restraint from Him. He allows the evil principles to be developed, which lie dormant in the soul. When these are realized in the life, we come in some measure to understand ourselves and one another; and are prepared to bow before God's throne and say to Him, in the severest of His chastisements, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth, do that which is right?" "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Without professing at all to exhaust this subject, you perceive that I have presented four general suggestions which go to illustrate the doctrine of the text. First, that God brings distinctly into view the sovereignty of His own power, and the entireness of human responsibility, and these in their direct relationship to each other. Second, that He brings pungently to our notice the reality of our sin, and the deceitfulness of our own hearts. Third, that He diversifies the operations of His grace, in all the different forms in which Christian experience is presented. And lastly, He vindicates even in this present life, to our conscience, and before the world, the discipline with which He chooses to exercise His people upon the earth.

There are two conclusions which I rapidly deduce from this subject. The first is that *the glory of our preservation is all due to God, and the shame of our miscarriages is all due to ourselves*, "who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation—ready to be revealed in the last time." (I Peter i: 5.)

If saved against the temptations of the world, if saved under the assault

of the adversary, if preserved from the treachery of our own hearts, we must give all the glory to Him, and take the shame of what is amiss to ourselves: "Not unto us, but unto Thy name be all the glory." That we may be educated to this form of worship, therefore we experience just what the text reveals; and we pronounce God to be faithful and true, not merely because of our general confidence in His rectoral justice, but because we have an immediate knowledge of it in our daily life.

The second inference is that there is a bright, as well as a dark side to this cloud. It is like the cloud which guided the Israelites across the Red Sea and through the desert, turning its dark side to those who were the enemies of God's people, and its bright side to those whom God recognized as in covenant with Him. If God leaves us, it is only for a time. If God leaves us, it is only for a gracious purpose. It is only to try us, that we may ourselves know all that is in our heart. But His leaving is the pledge of His returning. If for a season He abandons us, He will surely follow it with returning and restoring mercies. The grace withdrawn is the grace again communicated. We shall find, notwithstanding all, that we are "kept by His power unto the salvation which is ready to be revealed in the last time." This is the sweetness of Divine Grace, that it takes everything against us and turns it into a covenant pledge of our salvation. The very sin with which we struggle, is made to contribute to our advancement in holiness. Our miscarriages and falls are made to work out a more complete deliverance from the bondage of sin. Just as Peter was allowed to fall in order that, after his conversion, he might strengthen the brethren. David also, and all the Saints of God through all the ages—through their falls and through their restorations—learned more of the abounding riches of God's grace, and thus stand up as witnesses of the completeness of our salvation. Brethren, let us trust in Him who is pledged to keep us. Let us lift up the prayer of David, "search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me!" It is through this self-knowledge that we become strong in faith and in the power of God, more competent to glorify Him upon earth, and to enjoy Him hereafter in heaven.

## XI.

### SELF-CONSECRATION TO GOD.

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ROMANS XII: 1.—“*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*”

A more compact and massive argument can nowhere be found than that in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans. Its object is to show how God can “be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.” (Rom. iii: 26.) In doing this, the Apostle undertakes clearly to prove that the righteousness, through which the believer is justified before God, turns upon the same eternal principles of justice and of law, with the sin through which we were at first brought under condemnation. The obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ is reckoned to us in precisely the same way as was the transgression of the first Adam; and we become righteous through the imputation of the one, just as we become guilty through the offence of the other.

Of course such a scheme of doctrine is exposed to the plausible objection that it ministers to licentiousness. Better, says the objector, continue in sin, in order that grace may abound—which line of objection Paul successfully overthrows by showing that it is, in its very terms, self-contradictory. “How shall we, that are dead to sin live any longer therein.” (Romans vi: 2.) Of course, in the application of a discourse exposed to this form of assault, he will be led to insist with more than usual emphasis upon the necessity of personal holiness. The text is the hinge of the transition, as you perceive by the conjunction “therefore.” “I beseech you *therefore, brethren*”—that is to say, by all that has preceded in the argument, by the very freeness and fulness of the salvation which is provided and which is offered to you in the gospel—by and in consequence of all this, “I beseech you, brethren, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

Three points appear to me to exhaust the contents of this passage. First, *the duty of entire self-consecration to God*, suggested, in the text under the figure of a sacrifice. Secondly, *the attributes by which this sacrifice is defined*; it is a *living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God*; and the service thereof is perfectly *reasonable*. Thirdly, *the pathos of the*

*appeal* with which the Apostle carries the argument home to the conscience: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, *by the mercies of God.*"

The question, however, arises upon the threshold of our discussion, what is the particular import of the word "bodies," in the text? It would contradict the whole genius of the gospel, as well as every utterance of this Apostle, here and elsewhere, to regard him as intimating God's satisfaction in any service which is simply external. He cannot therefore mean the body exclusively, or the body without reference to the soul which animates it. The expression falls clearly under that rhetorical figure in which the part is made to stand for the whole, and is equivalent simply to this: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that ye present YOURSELVES a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." But, if so, why does he not express the thought precisely thus? If he means, not the body simply, but the whole man, with all the powers both of body and of soul, why does he not use an expression as large as the thought?

There are perhaps two reasons which will sufficiently explain this. As he is employing the figure of the ancient sacrifices to express the idea of self-consecration, the analogy requires that he shall adhere to the term "bodies." Those sacrifices, under both the Jewish economy and the Pagan systems, consisted of the bodies of animals slain and laid upon the altar; and the figure is but consistently maintained in the term employed—"I beseech you therefore, brethren, that ye present your *bodies.*" The second reason is more satisfactory. The body is the organ of the soul. It is the instrument which the soul uses, and which is necessary for the interpretation of its exercises. If, therefore, we are to lead lives of holiness before our fellowmen, it must not be simply the holiness of the spirit, the holiness of our thoughts and of our affections, but it must be a holiness which the soul shall express through the body. If sanctification extends to this, it includes all. If it embrace the organs and members of the body, it expresses the completeness of the consecration with which we devote ourselves to the service of God.

In the further exposition, however, of these words I desire to suggest three thoughts.

I. *The language implies a restraint imposed upon our natural desires, which calls for self-denial, effort and pain.* The Hebrew sacrifice cost something. Whether it be the bull or the lamb, or as in the case of the poor, only a dove or a pigeon, the worshipper was so much the poorer by his offering. The very term includes expenditure and cost. The worshipper is, in the sacrifice, divested of something, be it more or less, which he before had in possession. This idea the Apostle seizes. All the service

which you render to God, and which is expressed through the body, must be characterized by self-denial, by effort and even by pain; which shall constitute the offering, a sacrifice. I imagine, my hearers, that as I utter these sentences, you drift along with me upon their current without any protest; and yet I fear that neither you who hear, nor I who speak, have an adequate conception of the sweep of the principle which I have announced; that nothing, which a man carries up to God in the form of sacrifice, is a sacrifice unless it cost him something. There must be expenditure in the offering.

See how the principle applies. God is the real owner of all our possessions. Popularly, as between man and man, we talk of this and the other thing as being ours; yet, when we enlarge the circle of our thought, everything is God's. We, with all the faculties that we possess, with all the gifts He has bestowed, and with all that we acquire through the exercise of those gifts, all alike belong to the great proprietor, God. In the use of our substance, we understand from the Scriptures that God deals with a large generosity towards us. Putting us in trust as His stewards, He is pleased to invest us with a wide discretion, and allows a large percentage upon His property. It is lawful to indulge our tastes in the enjoyment of the beautiful, to live in comfortable homes, to adorn those homes with works of art and of vertu as our means may allow;—provided it is all done under the recognition of the principle that we are simply using that which God allows to us, as His stewards. When, therefore, we give of our substance to extend the Redeemer's kingdom throughout the earth, I submit the question—is it enough that we shall put the finger into the vest pocket and feel for the little change may be there, which perhaps on the next day we would spend with as much thoughtlessness and indifference upon some trifle of the earth? Is that a sacrifice? Do those contributions we make without self-denial, mark the gift as that which we owe to God? Do you thereby testify, in what you bestow, that you recognize all that remains as being God's property? Nay, my brethren, no man gives to the cause of God that which Jehovah will recognize as a sacrifice, unless we come to feel the pressure of the gift, as that which cost us self-denial and effort in order to make it.

Apply the principle to God's claim upon our time. One seventh of it, by positive statute, God challenges to Himself. No human being has the right to that seventh day. No being can appropriate the Sabbath for his pleasure, or for his interest, without positive robbery of God. It is as much a theft, as though you should thrust your hand into my pocket and divest me of the money which is contained there. In addition to the

weekly sabbath, some portion of our time, if we are God's followers, we owe to Him in acts of private worship. Now, it may often be inconvenient to us to give to God that portion of the time which He challenges as His own; and I fear that, with a too easy conscience, Christians imagine themselves justified in violating the Sabbath whenever, by peculiar circumstances it becomes inconvenient for them to obey God in the matter. How few who are accustomed to travel, stop in their journey on the Sabbath day wherever it catches them, because it is the Lord's day? On the contrary how many arrange their plans, so as to spend that day upon the road which should be occupied with the worship of God in the sanctuary? But, is that worth anything to God, which cost us nothing? Are we to filch God's Sabbath from Him, whenever it is convenient for us to appropriate it? Or shall we, at the sacrifice of comfort, or of interest, render to our Maker that portion of time which he claims? You see the principle; I am only illustrating it.

So with regard to labor in the Master's Kingdom. Those of this church who are engaged every Sabbath afternoon in teaching the mission schools of this city, it is with no little sacrifice that you engage in this form of labor. It would be both pleasant and profitable to reserve these sacred hours for your own improvement in knowledge and piety; but this is precisely the feature which makes it acceptable to God. And now, let me say for your comfort that, if you should fail in realizing the conversion of a single soul in these Sabbath services; if, after toiling years upon years, it should seem to your eye to be entirely a failure—our Blessed Father, who looks down upon the work of faith and labor of love rendered to Him through so much sacrifice of comfort and of ease, accepts it at your hands; and in it all you have been rendering your bodies "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

There is danger, however, that this principle may be pushed into asceticism; and I must be allowed to fence it in this direction. If even such a man as Paul felt it necessary to "keep his body under," surely there must be moderation in the enjoyment of objects of sense. Even where the pursuit is lawful and the pleasure sinless, it is not right for any Christian to swim in sensual delight. He must find, even in innocent engagements, the point of arrest. He must ascertain precisely where to pause, in order that his body may be presented an offering of a sweet savour unto God, and not be simply an instrument of personal and sensual gratification. Now, the fundamental idea in asceticism is, that these bodily penalties are an atonement for sin. They are acts of will worship, in which we seek to make amends for defects and omissions of duty. But the principle asserted

here, is that there must be deliberation and expenditure in all that we offer in sacrifice to God—not as imparting to it value or merit, but as entering into the nature of sacrifice itself. However difficult it may be to determine these questions of casuistry in actual life, they can only be settled in the light of general principles—this being one of prime importance, which can never be safely overlooked.

II. *As the body is the organ of our practical activity, the expression in the text covers the whole of our personal obedience to the will of God.* All the emotions of the soul transpire through the bodily organs. The face is the mirror upon which are reflected our thoughts, whether they be pleasurable or painful. The tongue syllables the heart. The stormy passions of our nature flash from the eye, just as the lightning that gleams upon the bosom of a black cloud. The hands and the feet are the instruments by which we perform our deeds of charity or malevolence. In a word, the body is the organ of the soul. It is the instrument by and through which the soul shall work out its desires—the organ by which it comes into contact with other souls. Hence, if there be holy affections, the soul can only interpret them through the body as the instrument through which the expression is rendered. When, therefore, Paul uses the language, “I beseech you that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice,” he means to suggest the whole obedience which we render to the divine will, and which we make patent to others only as we illustrate it in our external life.

III. *The organs and senses of the body constitute the medium of our worship.* Under the Hebrew economy and also under Pagan systems, worship was mediated chiefly through the sacrifice. It was by the offering of the victim, as the substitute for the transgressor, that the worshipper acknowledged God’s justice and holiness, and confessed his own obligation to punishment as a sinner. It was through the presentation of this sacrifice, first slain by the priests and then burnt upon the altar, that he acknowledged his repentance and found acceptance before high heaven. The Apostle transfers this particular idea in the text to the Christian system. “Present your bodies a living sacrifice”—that is to say, through the senses and through the members of your body, conduct and offer that worship to your Father which is in heaven. It is not enough that we shall restrain the ear and the eye and the hand from that which is evil; but we are to utter before God all the worship which can be gathered, through these faculties, from the universe which He has built. All the visions of beauty which the eye drinks in, all the harmonics of sound which fill the ear with inexpressible delight, all delicacies of taste which



we recognize by the palate, all the odors of smell, are to be embalmed in song. When God created this earth of ours, He saw that it was good and rejoiced in the workmanship of His hands. Yet, the praise which it offers to the Creator is inarticulate and dumb. What is needed on this earth, so beautiful as it came from the hands of the Creator, is a priest who shall go up and down its avenues, and gather up in his golden censer this silent praise. Let the beautiful scenery which we trace upon the sky, let mountain and vale, and hill and dale and stream, everything which the senses recognize and which fills the soul with delight, be turned into worship. Let man impregnate all this beauty of external earth with his own reason. Let him look out with his eye upon exquisite landscapes, and breathe into them the sacred and deep sentiment of his own soul, which they provoke. Then let his tongue utter all this praise; which is the praise, not only of his own affections and his own emotions, but also the praise of this dumb earth, upon which he is placed as the interpreter, to understand its meaning and to speak its worship. How grand, how beautiful is the mission of man upon the earth! and what need there is that man, in the fulfilment of his priestly function, should cultivate all the high faculties of his nature—not his reason alone, but his sensibilities and his tastes; so that in the exercise of them all he may become the voice, as well as the reason, which shall gather it all up and present it as an offering before God!

Ah, my brethren, how much is this worship hindered on earth, by the oppressive sense of our unworthiness and sin! When we would pour this voice of praise into the ear of Jehovah, there rushes over us the overwhelming sense of our defilement, and our guilt. The voice is dumb within us; it becomes easier, under this conviction, to breathe the acknowledgement of our sin and to smite the breast and cry, "God be merciful to us." There is thus in the best of us, all through our earthly history, a strange and wicked suspension of this high worship which we should offer to God in the pouring forth of our praise. Our sin rests like a slab-stone upon the buoyant and joyous exercises of the heart; and we are rendered, to a certain extent, incapable of the worship which is our privilege. Is it not a joy to remember that our blessed God is preparing the place and the time, when there shall be no sin in us—when the very last stain will be purged by that blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel? There is reserved for us a long life of joy in His presence; where this part of our worship, which we so inadequately render here upon the earth, shall be the constant employment of the soul forever and forevermore.

Let us now turn to the attributes by which this sacrifice is defined. "Present your bodies a *living* sacrifice;" as opposed to the dead bodies which, under both the Hebrew and the Pagan systems, were offered upon the altars of the Deity. We are to bring our bodies indeed, our bodies as they interpret the soul; but they are not to be as the dead bodies of animals whose blood has been shed, in order that they may be consumed by the fire.

A *living* sacrifice again, to indicate the constant and perennial nature of the service. My brethren, when a believer has consecrated himself to God, everything becomes with him an act of worship. Perhaps I repeat this thought from the pulpit oftener than I should. Yet its preciousness will not suffer it to become trite. The established order in the scheme of Grace is to accept first the *person* of the believer, and then his *work*: so that from the moment of the new birth until the Christian enters into the presence of the divine glory above, his entire earthly life is a psalm of praise to the living God. We worship when we are awake; we worship when we are asleep; we worship when we eat; we worship when we are hungry. Even our toil is worship; however insignificant the employments which may occupy our time and thoughts. The clerk behind the counter, when he is measuring tape to the customer—the mother, when she is in her nursery attending to the petty details of household care, and ministering to the smallest wants of her child—are worshipping God just as truly, if they be themselves in their inner soul consecrated to God's service, as they worship God to-day, sitting in His house, listening to His truth, and sending up their hearts in silent praise to Him who has redeemed them. How sweet to think that wherever we are, at home or abroad, on the earth or on the sea, awake or asleep, we are priests unto God, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, offering worship to the God of our salvation!

A *living* sacrifice, further in the sense that it springs from the spiritual life which the Holy Ghost has implanted in the soul; and the Holy Spirit, who has quickened us and made us new creatures in Christ Jesus, makes the worship which we render instinct with life.

It is also a *holy* sacrifice, and this in two senses: in the sense, that it is separated to God's use, which is the Old Testament sense, to a large degree, of the word "holy." When, for example, the lamb was separated as the paschal sacrifice from the flock, from that moment of separation it was regarded as holy unto the Lord. Now, when we present these bodies as separated to God's service, in that act of separation they are considered holy. But they are especially holy in the sense that the spirit expresses, through these bodily and external acts, its own spiritual and holy desires and worship.

It is further a sacrifice, "*acceptable unto God.*" Acceptable unto God, because these living bodies, expressive of living homage, are substituted for the carnal sacrifices of the old dispensation. No more can the blood of bulls and of goats take away sin; but we present our bodies, "a living sacrifice," now peculiarly acceptable to God, because in accordance with the change which He has wrought, and because in harmony with the Spirit and genius of the New Testament economy. And especially acceptable to God, because they are rendered in obedience to the Divine command and in accordance with the Spiritual nature of Him who desires to be worshipped only in spirit and in truth.

"Which," says the Apostle, "is your *reasonable service.*" Ah! this is the rational worship. The worship of Almighty God by bulls and by goats is in itself irrational: and therefore Paul says in his epistle to the Hebrews: "For the law having the shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." (Hebrew, x: 1, 2, 3, 4.) The blood of bulls and of goats, which was but the image of the true, is withdrawn; in order that we may present ourselves "a living sacrifice, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service." The worship is pervaded with the intelligence which God has given to man; and is suitable to the nature of a being, whom God made originally in His image and after His likeness.

It only remains, in conclusion, to say a word upon the appeal which the Apostle makes in the text: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, *by the mercies of God.*" The Divine mercy is, of course, a single attribute; but the manifestations of it are so various, that it is here presented in the plural. There is the mercy which God exhibited in devising the scheme of redemption—the mercy which took a special form, when He selected His own Son and made Him a substitute for the guilty—the mercy which is exhibited in another aspect, when we are individually called from darkness to light and from the kingdom of Satan unto God—the mercy which appears again in another shape, when God graciously forgives the defects and shortcomings even of the Christian, and which at last provides heaven as the eternal home in which He is to dwell. Ranging his eye over all these diverse manifestations of the one mercy of God, the Apostle pathetically

tically appeals to the conscience and the heart by holding them all up before us, and saying "I beseech you, by all these mercies, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice."

Ah! My hearers, if we could but hear it, there should be no power within us to resist it. I simply submit the thought to the unconverted in this assembly, whether any thing can be stranger to the angels, looking down from heaven, than man's utter insensibility to the exhibitions which God makes of His tenderness and of his love. Why, for one statement which you find in the Bible of God's wrath, you shall find a hundred of His love, and of His compassion, and of His grace. It ought to have been enough if God, having provided redemption for a lost world, had simply made the overture in stately grandeur, and in cold language offered salvation to your acceptance. But how strangely does the great God seem to lay aside all this stateliness, and plead tenderly and urgently with you to accept the mercy which His love has provided! I am almost afraid to utter the thought which is occurring to me at this moment—that God, in offering salvation of the sinner, seems careful not to bruise the sinner in the approaches of His mercy; but rather in the generosity of His own great nature, is tender in the very offer of pardon to the man who has broken His law. When He comes to him with the offers of mercy, with the arguments of grace, with the suggestions of kindness, He does it with a forbearance and with a gentleness which ought itself, if there were no higher considerations, to melt the most obstinate heart. It is a perpetual amazement to me, how a sinner, is able to stand out against the Divine magnanimity. God is gracious, not only in what he does, but in the way he does it; laying aside his stateliness and his grandeur, bending from His throne and whispering into your ear these calls of mercy. How do you manage to steel your hearts against this combined majesty and magnanimity of God? I am sure that if I had an enemy upon the earth who, in seeking reconciliation with me, should exhibit so much of generosity, I would break down before Him under the exhibition: and it is only because your eyes are blind to it, and your ears are deaf to it, and you do not take in the nature of God's tenderness while He pleads with you, that you are able to resist it. Hence the pathos which lies in the Apostle's appeal to you to-day, "I BESEECH YOU THEREFORE, BRETHREN, BY THE MERCIES OF GOD, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."



## XII.

### PERPETUITY OF THE DIVINE LAW.

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I CORINTHIANS, IX: 21: "*Being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ.*"

It is of the first importance, in the interests both of doctrinal and of practical religion, to determine precisely the believer's relation to the Divine law. On the one hand stands the justiciary, insisting that we can be saved only by the closeness of our own personal obedience. When pressed, with the testimony of Scripture, as, for example, "therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin;" (Romans, iii: 20,) or this testimony: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." (Ephesians, ii: 8.) Or this testimony: "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth"—(Romans, x: 4) when pressed with testimonies of this sort, he retreats but a single step, affirming that the grace, which in the Scriptures stands opposed to works, consists simply in bringing in a new and modified law—a law so far retrenched and diminished in its demands as to come within the enfeebled abilities of the sinner, and in which the terms of acceptance are a sincere though an imperfect obedience. Or, as it is sometimes expressed, faith and repentance, viewed simply as acts of the creature, are accepted by God in lieu of the comprehensive obedience which was originally enjoined—a theory, which, whilst it professes to honor the grace of the Gospel, still retains the legal principle without abatement.

On the other side, stands the antinomian; contending that, as the Lord Jesus Christ has fulfilled all righteousness, He has, for those who are in Him by faith, forever abrogated the Divine law;—that, upon the principle where there is no law there can be no transgression, God, looking at the believer, sees in him no defect—that, however his acts may be against the letter and against the spirit of the law, yet, as done by him, they are not of the nature of sin. These paradoxes may indeed admit of explanation, regarding them only as exaggerated statements of the believer's right relation to the Lord Jesus Christ; but they are couched in language singularly susceptible of misconstruction, and, in the sense intended by the antinomian, they are absolutely fatal to the holiness and, therefore, to the salvation of man.

Here are the two extremes, of antinomianism upon the one hand, and of legalism upon the other, between which Christianity lies exposed to a double assault; exactly as the Master himself, in the days of his flesh, was crucified between two thieves. Multitudes, however, who do not fall upon either of these extremes, yet, in so far as they are swayed either way, become careless and loose in their walk, or else are under bondage of soul, not understanding nor appreciating their liberty in Christ Jesus. It is, therefore, of the first consequence to us, both as to our safety and comfort, that we shall perceive precisely the relation in which, as Christians, we stand to the Divine law; which I conceive to be represented in the text, with the most singular felicity of language—"being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ." Considerable light will be thrown upon this passage, if you consider the peculiar circumstances under which it was uttered. The Church at Corinth, like all the churches gathered in the Apostolic age, embraced proselytes both from Judaism and Paganism. Contentions, therefore, might be expected to arise betwixt elements so heterogeneous. To compose these strifes, Paul, in this chapter, expounds the doctrine of Christian charity, and enforces it by his own example. He tells, in the immediate context, how he accommodated himself to the prejudices and to the frailties of men. "Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." (I Corinthians, ix: 20, 21, 22.) In order, however, that he may not be misconstrued as having no principles for his guidance, the Apostle throws into a parenthesis the words of the text, "being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ." As though He would say, "in all this, I by no means forget the eternal and necessary distinction between right and wrong. I am far from failing to recognize the integrity and supremacy of God's law; but, then, as a redeemed sinner, I obey this law of God as it is the law of Jesus Christ, given to Him as a Mediator, and appropriated as the law of His empire—and I render obedience to it, as the law of Jesus Christ, with the full consciousness of that gracious liberty which belongs to the Lord's freemen.

The text, then, embraces two propositions: That the believer is not without law to God; and yet this law is in some degree modified, as the law of Jesus Christ. I would delight to embrace both in a single discourse, if, at a single sitting, you could indulge me with the time necessary

for their complete explication. But as this is not possible, I shall this morning restrict your attention to the first of these propositions, leaving the second to be articulately discussed on next sabbath. I am, therefore, this morning TO AFFIRM, AGAINST THE ANTINOMIAN, THE SUPREME AND ETERNAL AUTHORITY OF GOD'S LAW OVER BELIEVERS AS WELL AS OVER OTHERS. No change wrought in their character by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the new birth—no change wrought in their relations, when adopted into God's family and made the children and the heirs of God through Christ—no principles of grace incorporated with the moral government of God, modifying it in its practical exercise—can ever absolve the Christian from its control. At all times, and in all places, whatever be the extension of our privileges, we are compelled to say that we are "*not without law to God.*"

I. *The law of God, as the perfect revelation of the Divine character and attributes, can never be withdrawn.* The law was the original revelation of God to the creature. Man, when created in his Maker's image, was created under the law which he was thenceforward bound to obey. We are not to suppose man created with the intellectual and moral powers which belong to him, and afterwards, by a second and arbitrary exercise of the Divine will, brought under the jurisdiction of law. On the contrary, in the endowment of reason itself he was constituted a subject of law; and in the very exercise of this high prerogative, he cannot but recognize his personal obligation to obey it. The law created the moral atmosphere which man breathed in his primitive holiness. In its requirements, it was indispensable to the very first operation of conscience. The fundamental distinction betwixt right and wrong cannot be predicated, without reference to the standard by which they are determined. The law is just as indispensable to the moral nature of man, as the air which we breathe is necessary to the lungs. If the lungs were made for the air, and the air for the lungs, just as truly was the law made for the intellect, the conscience and the will of man; since without it these faculties could not possibly discharge their respective functions, nor be brought into action of any kind. It makes no difference how we come at the knowledge of it; whether through detailed statements, as upon Mount Sinai, when the law was given in writing to Moses—or whether it be simply engraved upon our nature, as upon that of Adam at the creation. Whatever may be the mode in which it is recognized by us, just in so far is it a revelation of God to us. The attributes of justice, holiness, goodness and truth are stamped upon the law as a whole, and upon each individual part. They are impressed upon every precept and commandment, and just as distinctly upon the penalty



which is their sanction. The law being therefore the transcript of the Divine character, it is simply absurd to think or speak of it as cancelled.

This thought will draw deeper if you remember that it is not simply *one* revelation of God, but that it is the *primary* revelation; and, as such, it is indispensable as the basis of all subsequent disclosures. Why, my hearers, cut the connection between the Gospel and the law, and there is not a word in the dialect of grace intelligible to man. There is not a solitary feature in the Gospel, which does not found upon the eternal and unchangeable law which God originally gave to the creature. If this Gospel proclaims, "without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sin," it is because the life is in the blood, and the law has said, "the soul that sinneth it shall die." There is no significance in the doctrine of atonement, except as the law, originally engraved upon man in his creation and afterwards thundered from Mount Sinai, demands "obedience even unto death." If then the law be this revelation of God; if it be the primary revelation, upon which all after disclosures of the Divine character are made; if cancelling the law would annul the Gospel, which meets its claims and requisitions—then, my brethren, the law must stand. It must stand before the eye of the angels in heaven, just as it stands before the eye of men upon the earth. Exalt man never so high in his privileges; lift him up so that he shall join the hierarchy of the skies; let him sit upon the very stepping-stones of the eternal throne; let him look with a purged eye upon the glory of God's face; yet must this law of God, unchangeable as the Divine nature itself, remain the permanent and fundamental revelation upon which all knowledge of God forever depends. This, then, is the first point against the antinomian.

II. *The law, as the perfect exposition of the creature's relations and responsibilities, can never be cancelled.* It not only reveals God, but it binds the creature. Now, no believer ever gets out of that category. Whatever grace may make of him, he still remains a creature of God. On earth, struggling with indwelling sin, purged from the last defilement of it as he passes up to glory, occupied with all the enjoyments of eternal blessedness at God's right hand, he is still a creature; and being a creature, this law must eternally bind him in the exposition of his duties—not merely unfolding them by didactic statement, but authoritatively enjoining them upon his conscience. Let it be noted too, in its bearing upon this issue, that the law of God is *one* and *singular*. Just because there is one God, there is one law. There can no more be two laws essentially distinct in the universe, than there can be two Gods. God, in the very conception that you form of Him, excludes the idea of a rival. He stands alone, in

the solemnity and stateliness of His own grandeur. He fills immensity with His presence, the same yesterday, to-day and forever. You cannot multiply Him by two, or multiply Him by three, without in the multiplication, cancelling the notion itself of a God.

Now, my hearers, the law flows out from the nature of God, and is the simple expression of His attributes and character ; and thus, in its essence, this law is one and singular throughout the domain over which God's empire sweeps. It is one law over angels in heaven, one law over man upon the earth, one law over devils and apostate angels in hell—one law as to its substance, however in its details modified to suit the circumstances of these different classes. Wherever the creature is, there is the creature's obligation. The law which states the creaturehood of man or of angels or of devils—and the law which expounds the duties which, as creatures, they owe to God—must be, in that broad aspect of it, one and the same law. In its wonderful elasticity, it must and may be adapted to the varying situations of each ; it will be narrower or broader in its scope, and will be modified so as to express the peculiar duties obligatory upon each. Well, then, this one law, which is one just because God is one, and which springs from His very nature, the antinomian tells you is abrogated in regard to the believer, whilst it remains in force over all other beings in the universe. Why, you might just as well talk of partitioning off this air which we breathe to-day, appropriating as exclusively ours that which is the common property of the race. We might just as well undertake to run up walls of separation until they touch the orb of the sun, and cause his rays to slant only upon that territory which we call our own—as to talk of breaking the unity and destroying the universality of that law which, as the exposition of God's nature, and the statement of the creature's obligations, is necessarily one and the same.

The antinomian may endeavor to parry this by saying that the law, though not absolutely abrogated, is to a particular class suspended in its operation. The gloss is easily met by the reply that the Mediator, according to His Father's grant, rules over all creatures alike. Angels and principalities and powers have been made subject to Him. Holy beings throughout the universe have been recapitulated into one spiritual body, with redeemed sinners here upon the earth, of which Jesus Christ is the head. Even the apostate angels, and those of our race who are shut up in the devil's prison house, are placed under the mediatorial authority and dominion of this Lord and Saviour. So that if, as Mediator, He has all beings in all worlds under His jurisdiction, it is idle to talk about cancelling this law of the Mediator in reference to one class, whilst it shall be in

practical and incessant operation over all other classes throughout His dominion.

III. I draw within narrower limits the lines of this discussion, by saying that *the law existed as a rule, before it existed as a covenant; and the abrogation of it under the one aspect, is far from inferring its abrogation under the other.* Those of you who are well read upon religious subjects, perceive that I am touching, as with the point of a needle, the fallacy upon which the whole Antinomian system rests. They found their doctrine upon such passages as these: "We are not under the law, but under grace." (Romans vi: 14.) "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law; by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." (Ibid vii: 4.) And those difficult verses in the Epistle of John: "Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin because he is born of God." (I John, iii: 7, 8, 9.) There it is, says the antinomian, in plain English. The believer is no longer under law, but under grace. He cannot sin because God's seed remaineth in him. We cannot have a more striking illustration of the serious errors into which we plunge, the moment we disregard the correspondencies and relations of truth. Why, my hearers, truth is one—one as the light is one, one as the air is one, one as Jehovah, the author of it, is one: and it is only because we, in our finiteness as creatures, are unable to see truth in that perfect circle which it fills, that we fail to see it in its unity. It is because we see only a small segment of this circle that we are thrown into confusion, taking up one part of truth and throwing it against another part of truth, running off with a little portion of it here and a little there, and converting it, by its separation from the rest, into falsehood and making it the poison of the soul. Just as God brings the various elements together to compose the food we eat, from which, by secret distillation, we extract the poison that destroys myriads of our race; so does man with a subtle chemistry separate truth from truth, turning it into a lie by which the soul is effectually destroyed.

The law, as God originally ordained it, sustains a two-fold relation to man. It was given to him as *the rule of his conduct*, and then it was made *the covenant of life*. In its covenant form, God constituted Adam the representative of his race, made his probation limited, and gave the

promise of life everlasting to him and to his posterity upon the condition of perfect obedience to its requirements. We know that Adam failed in this trust. In consequence of this, the law in its covenant form is made void, its promises are vacated, and all the descendants of Adam by ordinary generation lie under the penalty of death threatened against the transgressor. In this exigency, God was pleased, in infinite mercy, to introduce another covenant, which we call the covenant of redemption or the covenant of grace, of which the Lord Jesus is the head. He renders an obedience in their stead, which is reckoned to them for their justification; embracing which by faith, they stand complete in their acceptance before God. But, does the abrogation of the law, in its covenant form, cancel the law in its relation as the rule of conduct? The two are perfectly distinct in the order of thought, and in the order of time. You can conceive of man existing without that covenant; you cannot conceive of him living without a rule given to him for his direction. You cannot separate man having intelligence, conscience, affections and will, from the law under which he was placed—under which he was not simply placed, but under which he was in the beginning created. Blot out the law, and you cancel his moral nature along with it. There is nothing for his conscience to recognize; there is nothing for his heart to embrace; there is nothing for his will to achieve. In the operation of all these faculties, he recognizes the law which brings him in relation to God as Creator, whom he must obey, whom he must love, whom he must serve, whom he must constantly worship and adore. In the spontaneous obedience which flows from him with all the regularity of thought, and in the solemn worship which rolls up as incense acceptable unto God, he is recognizing the necessary, eternal relation in which he stands, as a moral and intelligent being, under the law of his Creator. But God could have created Adam with these faculties and under these obligations, making no promise of eternal life as the gracious reward of obedience, nor limiting the period during which this probation should continue. It was an act of sovereign goodness to reduce this law from its first form as a simple rule of life, and to make it the positive covenant upon which man's eternal happiness should turn. The fact, therefore, that these two exist apart in our thought; the fact that they exist apart in the order of time; the fact that we are able to conceive of the one without the existence of the other; and above all, the remains of that law still engraved upon our nature after the fall, show that these two are entirely separate, the one from the other. When, therefore, the antinomian arrays the passages which affirm the abrogation of the law as a covenant, it is a gross paralogism to infer its

abrogation also as a rule. The law existed as a rule, before it existed as a covenant. It exists as a rule still, when it no longer performs the function of the covenant. Thus, you perceive, the whole ground upon which the antinomian stands is struck from beneath his feet. The law existed as a rule, before it existed as a covenant; and the abrogation of the one is by no means equivalent to the destruction of the other.

IV. *The law is always necessary as the guide of our nature.* We take a very partial and, I think, low view of the law, when we look upon it simply as a schedule of duties, directing how we shall act in this and that and the other particular of life. It is all this, and it is immeasurably more. It was the standard of character, before it became the director of conduct; and this function will be required just as much in heaven hereafter, as now upon the earth. That perfect law which flows from the nature of God, which is the revelation of his attributes, and the delineation of the creature's obligations, after it has been fulfilled by our Lord Jesus Christ in His glorious obedience, is hung up forever against the walls of heaven as the eternal standard to which all moral and religious character is to be referred, of all classes of intelligent creatures throughout the eternity that is to come. As the chronometer at Greenwich, or at Washington, is the measure of time upon all the degrees of longitude east or west, and to which must be referred all instruments that measure time over the earth; so God's law is the only unerring standard of obligation and of right—the moral chronometer which measures the beat of the human conscience and of the human heart by the will of the Supreme Ruler, and times the obligations of the creature by the claims of the Creator. There this law remains upon the walls of heaven, through the ages which in their ceaseless flow swell into eternity, the standard of right, the guide of character, the test of what the creature's nature ought to be. Under this aspect, it is simply inconceivable that the law of God should ever be cancelled.

V. *The crowning proof of the perpetual obligation of the Divine law is found in the exact obedience which was required of Jesus Christ, in achieving human redemption.* "He was made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Oh! that we should become so familiarized to this stupendous fact as to cease to be moved by its grandeur! God's only begotten, who had always been the Father's delight, "the brightness of that Father's glory, and the express image of his person," rejoicing with Him in the intimate and blessed fellowship of the three within the pavilion of light—amidst the silence of angels He responds to that Father's

appeal, "who shall go for us, and whom shall I send." In the sweep of His condescension, He passes through all the grades of intellectual being, down to man at the bottom of the scale, that they all might be recapitulated in Him their blessed Head forever. Therefore the significance of the declaration, that He must render an obedience which is unto death. I wish that I could take the time to show the completeness of this obedience of our blessed Head—how it swept over the whole area of the law and gathered up into itself every command and every precept—how it fathomed the uttermost depths of this law of His Father, and rendered an obedience not only to the precepts, but also to the penalty—an obedience which, offered to all parts of the law alike, exhausted its contents.

Ah! my hearers, here is an argument which crowns the discussion; that if Jesus Christ must obey the law to the last iota of it; if he must obey the law, feeling the pressure of its curse; if he must exclaim, in the hour of His anguish, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me;" and die at last of a heart broken under the desertion of His Father; this shuts out the hope that any creature, in all the universe of God, shall ever escape from the jurisdiction of the law. If there was an instance in which that law might have been abated, and in which the sufferer might have been spared the infliction of the curse, it was when God's own Son undertook for our redemption to obey His Father's will. But He exclaims upon the threshold of his great agony: "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? But for this cause came I unto this hour." Press the fact upon your understanding until its import is fully felt, that Christ is the only being of our race who was born expressly to die; that He alone, in that death, experienced all the pangs of Divine justice; that He alone took the cup from His Father's hand, drinking it to its dregs, and exclaiming in the sorrow that broke His heart, "it is finished." If this was demanded of Him who was Himself "Holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners," how much more of us? If this "obedience unto death" was indispensable in order that the law should be satisfied as a covenant, is not personal obedience as much required of us in order that the law may be fulfilled as a rule?

I submit the case now to your judgment. I constitute you the panel before whom the cause shall be tried, and who shall render a true verdict. Is it possible that God—remaining the perfect being that He is, and man-possessing, through God's gift, those faculties by which he can recognize, admire and adore his Creator—is it possible that there can be an abolition of that first revelation, through which the creature apprehends the Creator

and renders obedience and worship to his blessed name? On the contrary, let us lay deep in our hearts the conviction that this law can never be cancelled; and let it be a comfort as well as a conviction with us, that its supremacy ever abides. I would not reproduce, lest the utterance should seem trite to you, that splendid eulogium which Richard Hooker pronounced upon law; when he represented it as residing in the very bosom of the Deity, and as being the harmony of the universe, spreading its broad shield, under whose protection all beings in all worlds live in secure dependence upon him who administers it. It would be as sad to be without a God, as without a law: and fearfully as it may thunder its anathemas against the guilty, when the conscience is pacified through the sprinkling of Christ's precious blood, we can rejoice even in its terrors. God is love, though God be dreadful—dreadful in His attributes, dreadful in His power, dreadful in His solemn rule over all beings and in all worlds; yet is He none the less an object of delight and of affection to the believer. Reconciled to Him through the atoning sacrifice of His Son, adopted into His family as His sons and His daughters, we can look even into the terrors of His holiness, and rejoice in Him who is our salvation and our desire. "Clouds and darkness may be round about Him," yet we know that "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne," and "mercy and truth shall go before His face." In all the darkness of that cloud in which God hides His majesty, we still love and adore Him. In all the darkness of that providence with which He shrouds our earthly history, and oftentimes burthens the affections of our heart, we still love and adore Him. In like manner are we able to rejoice in the terrors of the law, even in its exactions at the day of judgment. I say it for God's redeemed, in all the ages upon this guilty earth, that if there be a cause of congratulation to them it is the coming judgment; when the throne shall be placed upon the clouds and the books shall be opened, and all the deeds which have ever been done shall be arraigned for trial. The oppressed and bruised upon the earth can make their appeal to that hour and to that throne: and no man is weak, who is able to place himself against the solemn and certain justice which shall be administered in that day. Let us uphold this perfect and blessed law of the great God; and comfort our hearts with the assurance that, through His infinite grace, we do not quail before its terrors, but rejoice in its protection both here and hereafter.

## XIII.

### THE LAW, AS THE RULE OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM.

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1 CORINTHIANS, IX: 21: "*Being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ.*"

In the discourse of last Sabbath, I attempted to enforce the first of these two propositions, showing what is meant by the expression "being not without law to God." It becomes necessary that I shall, this morning, discuss the second of these propositions, by showing what is meant by being "under the law to Christ." Evidently the two are distinct, for if the first affirms the perpetuity of God's law, so that, under no circumstances, can it be cancelled; the second clearly implies that the believer's relations are in so far changed to it, that he obeys it in the hands of Jesus Christ as the rule of His Mediatorial kingdom.

When we turn to the Scriptures, we find clear evidence that Christ possesses a kingdom which is His own. For example the Prophet Daniel, in the seventh chapter of his prophecy: "I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting kingdom, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." (Daniel vii: 13, 14.) Again the Prophet Isaiah, in the ninth chapter of his prophecy: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this." (Isaiah ix: 6, 7.) So David in the second Psalm, speaking the language of Jehovah: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give



thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." (Psalm ii: 6, 7, 8.) In reference to this kingdom our Lord said, whilst giving His commission to His Apostles, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth: Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." (Mat. xxviii: 18, 19.) He defines the nature of this kingdom when, standing before Pilate, He declares: "My kingdom is not of this world; if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence." (John xviii: 36.)

If you will examine the language of these passages, which are but specimens of a very large class relating to the kingly authority and office of the Lord Jesus Christ, you will discover that they refer not to that essential kingdom which belongs to Him in His Divine nature simply, as the eternal and only begotten Son of the Father; but it is that kingdom which belongs to Him, as He is the Mediator, the kingdom which He administers in His complex person as the Godman, a kingdom delegated to Him by the Father, conveyed by special grant in the eternal covenant of redemption, a kingdom which He has Himself purchased by suffering and by blood, a kingdom, the immediate subjects of which are the redeemed whom He has bought with His own blood, and whom He renews and sanctifies by His indwelling Spirit. If then Christ, the Mediator, in His complex person as both God and man, possesses this kingdom, by what law does He administer it? The answer to this question carries us into the very heart of the discussion of this discourse. I answer that **THE LAW OF CHRIST'S MEDIATORIAL KINGDOM IS THAT ORIGINAL LAW OF HIS FATHER, UNDER WHICH THE CREATURE WAS, IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, PLACED—THE LAW WHICH HE HIMSELF, AS THE SINNER'S SUBSTITUTE, OBEYED AND SATISFIED—AND WHICH, UPON THIS GROUND, HE TAKES AND BINDS FOREVER UPON THE CONSCIENCES AND UPON THE HEARTS OF HIS SUBJECTS.** Two or three suggestions will be sufficient to establish this position.

In the first place, *there is the antecedent presumption that Christ, in the administration of His empire, will take a law which already exists; provided it be perfect in its scope, be the exact measure of the Ruler's claims, and the exact exposition of the creature's duties.* Just such a law, as I endeavored on last Sabbath to establish, is presented in the law of God—the law under which man was, in the first instance, created; the law which was engraved upon man's nature as a moral and intelligent being, according to the testimony which you will find in the nineteenth psalm: "The law

of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." (Psalm xix: 7, 8, 9.) Now if, from the beginning, there existed a perfect law, covering the entire nature of the creature, stating to him his exact obligations, and providing the sphere of duty in which he must move, it would be a work of supererogation if Christ should enact another, so long as this already existing under the ordination of His Father is exactly adapted to His ends.

In all the operations of the Deity, whether it be in nature, in providence or in grace, you observe two co-ordinated facts; the most profuse exhibition of goodness, wisdom and power everywhere, in the production of beings and in loading them with benefits; and yet, parallel with this, and as it were, checking and qualifying it, a wise economy of power which never in a single instance wastes itself upon an unnecessary act. Throughout all nature, amidst the most scrutinizing investigations of science—in all the study of history, as it unfolds to us the workings of Divine providence—you shall never detect a single instance in which Jehovah repeats Himself. Equally true is the proposition in the kingdom of grace, as unfolded in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Upon this principle that there is, in the exercise of infinite power in every direction, this singular reserve and economy of force, how can you explain the fact that the Lord Jesus shall enact a second law, under which He places His Mediatorial empire, when there already exists a law perfect in all its parts, a law which is the exact guide of a man's conduct, and the exact test of the creature's nature, and which has already been recognized by the consciences of His subjects? Let this go for what it is worth. It is only presumptive; but as an initial consideration, it is of value in opening the line of thought which I desire to pursue a little further.

In the next place, *you reach the same conclusion by the exhaustion of all the suppositions that are possible in the case.* If Christ, as the Mediator, enacts a law which shall be peculiar to His kingdom, it cannot be *superior* to the original law under which God created man, and which He engraved upon man's nature; for the simple reason that this law, as originally promulgated, was a perfect law, according to the testimony which I have just recited. On the other hand, this new law of the kingdom of grace cannot be *inferior* to that which God appointed for the government of the creature, without defeating the very end had in view in the work of redemption. Why, my brethren, what is the necessity for the "obedi-

ence unto death" of the Lord Jesus Christ? Simply this: That the law under which the sinner now lies condemned, is a law which cannot be relaxed—a law which must exact of its subjects a perfect and constant obedience, and must punish disobedience with death. Because this law exists, because this law is so perfect in its provisions that it cannot be repealed, therefore the necessity that Christ, if He is to be a Saviour at all, must put Himself under it, undergo the penalty, and thus rescue the transgressor. What a self-contradiction if, after satisfying the law in its utmost demands, He should cut down its requirements when He makes it the law of His kingdom and binds it upon the conscience of His subjects! If there was a necessity, in the case of the Redeemer himself, that the law should be preserved in its entirety, does not the same necessity exist for keeping the law without retrenchment, when it comes to be applied to the conscience and life and destiny of the subjects of His empire? If then it cannot be a law *superior* to that which God originally enjoined; nor yet *inferior* in its scope, without undermining the very work of redemption itself—if it be neither above nor below, they must perfectly coincide. You lay the one law over upon the other, and the correspondence is perfect. The requirements in the one case cover the requirements in the other: and the exact coincidence between the two is only another form of saying that Christ adopts the original law of His Father, which the Apostle here calls the law of God, and makes it the law of His kingdom and binds it upon the conscience of His redeemed.

But I pass from these considerations, which are rather presumptive than otherwise, to a third, which I think conclusive. *A just law is that which exactly defines the claims of the ruler, as well as the duties and responsibilities of the subject.* Well, the original law of God is that which sets forth the claims of Jesus Christ, which have been simply transferred from itself to Him. No other law than that which Christ satisfied to its very last requirement, can express Christ's claims upon His redeemed; since, in His vicarious obedience, He has bought up their obligations and has transferred them to Himself. Whatever claim the law originally held in its grasp, Christ now holds in His hands as the redeemer of His elect; and holds, for the very purpose of enforcing it upon His subjects.

It is worth our while to look at this with some attention. When God created man at the first, He endowed him with the property of immortality. "Let us make man in our image and after our likeness," was the language of the councillors when the THREE sat down to ordain the existence of such a being. And this utterance, "in our image and after our likeness," how deep and hidden a foundation does it lay for the doctrine

of the soul's immortality and for the co-ordinate doctrine of the resurrection of the body in the last day! But, without pressing this testimony as carrying with it the proof that the life with which man was endowed was an endless life, which he could never alienate, and which God would never destroy—without pressing the significance of this language, it is enough to say that the moment such a being is placed under the jurisdiction of law, there arises the necessity of protecting the Divine rights and of sustaining the interests of the Divine government. If man, under probation, is left to the freedom of his own will—either upon the one hand to stand, or upon the other hand to fall—how shall Jehovah adequately protect himself against defection and disobedience? How shall this Supreme Ruler, administering the affairs of His broad universe, protect its interests against the disobedience and presumption of man? Surely there is a necessity that something should be found in the creature, which the Law can attach as the pledge of the obedience which he owes. Some property must be given to man as his inalienable endowment, upon which the law can take its lien; and thereby make itself whole, against infraction of duty or violation of the commandment. The endowment which God gave to man for this purpose, was his immortality. Upon this endless being the law lays its mortgage; and the instant man transgressed, the bond was put in suit, the mortgage was foreclosed, and the whole being of the transgressor is brought under forfeiture to the penalty. In these principles, what a foundation is laid for those doctrines against which men sometimes, in their madness, rage! Your sensibilities recoil from the dreadful truth, that the punishment of the damned is eternal. Why, my hearers, if, in the very constitution of His government, God gave man this endless being in order that the law could have that upon which it could lay its hold; if, by transgression, this endless life is forfeited to the penalty;—I demand of you to state how the sinner shall be extricated, except the forfeit be redeemed? There must be some process of law, answerable to that under which the sinner is condemned, before he can be lifted from the pressure of the curse, and be made the heir of everlasting life.

This is exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ does. He is “made under the law, to redeem them that are under the law;” He lifts this bond; He cancels this mortgage; He becomes, before the throne of His Father, responsible for your obedience and for mine. For you and for me He goes down into the depths of that curse, for He was made a curse for us; as it is written “cursed is every one that hangeth upon a tree.” “He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Having, then, as the true and proper substitute for

His people, endured the wrath which they had incurred, and rendered the obedience in which they had failed, he has satisfied all the terms of the law and transfers its claims to himself. It is the principle of suretyship as applied every day in commercial transactions. A note is cancelled in law, whether it be paid by the principal or by the endorser; but in the latter case a new obligation is contracted, and the surety holds the paper in evidence of his just claim against the party whom he has befriended. In like manner, the law, which Christ has satisfied for His people, becomes the written instrument certifying to the transfer of its claims to the surety by whom they have been discharged. If then the law of the Redeemer's kingdom must express the claims which He has upon the gratitude and service of His subjects, where shall it be found save in that very law whose requirements He has satisfied, under which the sinner was himself created and against which he is a transgressor? The proof is perfect, that the law of Christ's kingdom is the original law of God: "Being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ."

If this be sufficiently established, it will be necessary to consider THE SPECIFIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO. What is exactly the distinction between the two forms of statement in the text: "Being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ." What modification passes over our relations to the law, when it is made the law of Christ and the rule of His mediatorial kingdom?

I. *The first difference between the two is that the former holds us under wrath; whilst the latter is void of condemning power.* Ever since the fall, the whole race has been under the curse. The law turns only this aspect to the transgressor. It has no voice with which to speak, except "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." (Romans, i, 18.) Or this: "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile." (Romans, ii: 9); Or this: "for as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Galatians, iii: 10.) Just as with a man under sentence of death in your parish prison. The law turns no side to him but the penalty. All his rights and privileges have been forfeited, and the law holds his life in its grasp. If he is spared through days in the darkness and confinement of his dungeon, it is only an act of mercy to give him time to adjust his account with the great God before whose tribunal he is shortly to appear. Until he shall be relieved from the pressure of the curse, he can lay claim to no privileges or rights as these

are guaranteed by the law which he has broken. The law, therefore, is full of unutterable terror to the sinner. Wherever he turns, it is to the mount which burns with fire. Wherever he looks, it is unto blackness and darkness and tempest. Whatever he hears, it is the voice of words declaring "the soul that sinneth it shall die." The soul is filled with dread, which nothing can relieve so long as it remains under the penalty which it has incurred.

But when the Lord Jesus Christ takes that law, with its penalty fulfilled, and binds it upon the conscience of His people, do you not see that though in its substance identical with the law of God, yet, as it is the law of Jesus Christ, it has no power to utter a word of wrath or to proclaim a curse against the Christian? If it be the law which Christ, for the sinner, has satisfied, then the Redeemer cannot bind it with its penalty upon your head, and upon mine, without instantly vacating the whole work which He has achieved. His work of redemption consists in satisfying that penalty, and taking it away. When, therefore, He takes the law and binds it upon the Christian, it is the law without the penalty. It is the law whose penalty has been fulfilled by Him who is our representative and head, and it is, therefore, a law which is void of condemning power. You and I can afford to look upon it as the law of Jesus Christ, without any alarm. This, then, is one difference between the law as, upon the one hand, the law of God, and upon the other, as the law of Jesus Christ.

II. *The law, so long as it is the instrument of justification, must be to the sinner a bondage; whereas the law of Jesus Christ is enforced upon those who are already accepted before God.* As long as man was holy, there was no friction in his obedience. The holiness of his nature was in harmony with the requirements of the law, and obedience was an instinct. But the instant man becomes a sinner, his whole nature is dislocated: then comes the terrific friction, and all the obedience which he, a sinner, strives to render, is an obedience constrained and slavish.

Take then the position of the legalist, to which I adverted in the opening sentences of my last Sabbath's discourse. Affirm, as he does, that the grace which the Gospel unfolds consists simply in mitigating the law; in paring down its requirements, so as to bring them within the diminished ability of the sinner. Well, under that aspect of it, the law, so long as it remains the instrument of our justification, must be a yoke of bondage. How far has this law been retrenched? How much does grace cut it down? As it originally stood, it was perfect—as God originally uttered it to the human conscience, it called for an obedience not only to the letter, but to the spirit,\* of the commandment. We can understand that. But

if the law has been razeed—if Jehovah, in the exercise of His sovereignty, has cut it down so as to bring it nearer to the level of man's strength—how much is it reduced? Until this point is settled, there cannot be a particle of comfort to one who undertakes to obtain eternal life upon the footing of his own obedience. He must know precisely the limits of indulgence, before he can ascertain that his obedience comes up to what is demanded of him. You may answer that it is cut down, until it is brought within the diminished ability of the sinner. Very well, my hearers, if there be any ability in the sinner at all to render the kind of obedience which this holy and perfect law originally demanded—not entering upon that line of thought, which would estop the whole discussion—I ask how much ability remains to him? Where is the man who dares to affirm before the tribunal of his own conscience, much less before the tribunal of the heart-searching God, that he has rendered obedience up to the measure of His ability? Well, if you do not know how much God has cut down the law, and if you do not know how high your ability rises, supposing you have any in the case, I desire to know how there is to be a particle of comfort to you, or how you can rejoice in the hope of everlasting glory? Must not the law be to you always a bondage? Not until you stand before the tribunal and receive the sentence of approval, can you know whether you stand accepted before God, or not.

Now turn the leaf and look at the other side. Christ, who is the “brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His person,” undertakes for the sinner, goes under the law for him, renders an obedience which is absolutely perfect, and which therefore, the law must accept; nay, which God the Father has already accepted, in that He has raised Christ from the dead, and placed Him at His right hand in glory. This vicarious righteousness is offered to you and to me, for our acceptance; and, upon the taking of it, we are, upon the testimony of God and the testimony of our own conscience, perfectly “accepted in the Beloved.” Not a doubt rests upon the believer's mind, in those moments when his faith is in active exercise, that he is a child of God, and stands approved before the Divine bar. We are, therefore, never tortured with apprehension lest the obedience, which we render to the law of Jesus Christ, should fail of its end. However this obedience may fall short of the requirements of the law as it originally stood,—constituting therefore, no ground upon which we can be justified before God—yet it is perfectly adequate to prove that we are in Christ by a personal faith, and therefore approved and accepted before God. Defective as it may be in its varying proportions, it is still the measure of our sanctification. Thus, my hearers, the law of Jesus Christ

being void of condemning power, and being no longer to us the instrument of justification, is a yoke that is easy, and a burden that is light. And we rejoice continually in its provisions, and we are not tormented with fear lest we should come short of everlasting life.

III. *This law of God, as originally promulgated, comes from Him as the Supreme Ruler of the universe; whilst the law of Jesus Christ comes from God, as He is the Father and the Redeemer of His people.* In the first case it is naked law, stern, unrelenting, absolute. The only aspect in which it views the creature, is the aspect of a subject. It pays no regard to the sinner's inability to keep its commandments. It makes no provision for disabilities, which have been contracted by the sinner through the fall. It does not undertake to rectify man's nature, so as to bring it again into harmony with its requirements. All that it does, is to hold up the Divine claims and to say to the transgressor, "if you come short in a single particular, you must die the death." How terrible! Even Moses, mediator as he was between God and Israel, could not but fear and quake when he touched the mountain; and how shall we, without a mediator, be able to endure the terrors of a law which we have violated, and which has not a word of compassion or of grace to utter in our ears?

But the law of Jesus Christ, the Mediator, looks upon man as fallen, and yet as redeemed, and makes provision for all his shortcomings and defects. Whatever may be the exigencies in the believer's case, this law of Jesus Christ, unlike that absolute law which came first from the will of the Father, undertakes to meet them. Why, my brethren, it is in the exercise of His kingly office that the Lord Jesus Christ, by His Holy Spirit, quickens us who were dead in trespasses and sins, and makes us new creatures in Him. That new birth, through which we pass into the possession of spiritual life, comes to us in the exercise of this kingly office of the Lord Jesus; the Holy Ghost being His Spirit, sent by Him to renew, sanctify, and glorify all whom He has redeemed with His precious blood. Through the entire history of the Christian, until the moment when he is caught up into the clouds to meet his Lord in the air, the grace which is treasured up in Jesus, as the Head, shall be measured out to him according to his need. Are we ignorant? The Lord Jesus draws upon the treasures of His knowledge, and enlightens our darkened minds by His Spirit, bringing all things to our remembrance whatsoever He has said, and so revealing to us the truth, that we have no need that any man shall teach us. Are we encumbered by sins and surrounded with temptations? The Lord knoweth how to deliver them that are His; and in every temptation, it is the language of His promise that He will make a way of escape.



Even the Peter who denied him with curses, was lifted up from the degradation and ruin of his fall, that when converted he might strengthen the brethren to the end of the world.

Whatever grace the believer needs, until the moment when he enters into the world of light above, is provided in the administration of this kingdom and covered by this law of Jesus Christ. Do you not see clearly the difference between the two? The one is law, judging, condemning, anathematizing; the other contemplates you in your ruin, lifts you up with loving tenderness, and provides the strength and the grace which you may require until your pilgrimage is finished upon the earth.

IV. There is a fourth difference; *they differ in their sanctions.* I will not insult your understandings by undertaking to show that law consists of two things, both of which are essential to its formal nature. There must be the precept to guide, and there must be the sanction to bind. Remove either the one or the other, and you destroy law as law. The precept, without the penalty, may be the most blessed and wise counsel; but it is not law, unless it be enforced by authority which is lodged in the penalty as its sanction. When the precept goes before and blazes out the path of duty, the penalty must come after, and bind the obligation upon the conscience and hold the man responsible for his sin.

If then law, viewed as law, must always have a sanction, it is easy to distinguish between these two. The penalty, by which God enforced His law, was death. As soon as the creature was put upon trial, the warning was given "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." It is reiterated through the Scriptures, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." Just because of this, Paul affirms, in reference to redeeming grace, "without the shedding of blood there can be no remission." The law demands the life, and the blood is the life. Therefore, without a sacrifice, without an atonement, without a priest, there could never be salvation. The sanction therefore, with which God originally fenced His law, was eternal death—not death in the sense of dissolution, but death immeasurably more dreadful than is involved in the idea of destruction. It would be no adequate sanction of the perfect and blessed law of God, to disintegrate and annihilate the creature. It might be the shorter method of getting rid of the problem; but it would be no vindication of the majesty of God and the holiness of His law, just to blot out the worm that has lifted itself against the divine authority. No, the creature must live, and yet he must die. He must live in order that he may die, and die forever. His being must be elongated, drawn out through the ages that make up eternity, in order that in all the points and moments that make up those

ages, the being that lives may be the being that dies. That is the death, the second death, the eternal death, the death of the soul, the death that separates the soul from communion with God and shuts it up to sin and to suffering forever. Such is the penalty of the law, as God originally gave it to the creature.

But the law of Jesus Christ is the law of a father; it is the law of a redeemer; it is the law of Him who comes from the bosom of the Father to show that God is love. "He so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whomsoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." "Herein," says the Apostle, "is love, not that we loved him, but that He first loved us and gave his Son to die for us." The law under which the Mediator administers his kingdom, must be a law befitting the character of the empire. It must be a law that shall bring out the fatherhood of God. It must be a law whose sanction consists in paternal chastisement. There you have the difference in the sanctions of the two laws. You may read it in the eighty-ninth Psalm: "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David." And you will find an exposition beautifully corresponding with this, in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews: "For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live?"

Oh, my brethren, the deep difference as to the sanction by which the two laws are enforced! I am not certain but that, by and by, in the light of eternity, when Christ shall expound His kingdom and all its laws to us, we shall discover that the real sanctions of His law are the promises of His grace. The kingdom which He establishes, is the kingdom of grace. The laws which He promulgates, are the laws of grace. The dealings of His hand with His people, are the dealings of His grace. It may be that underneath these chastisements, which come to us through promise, and which are therefore the pledges of our sonship, we shall find the sanctions which uphold the majesty of the Saviour's kingdom to be those eternal

promises of grace by which the heart of the Christian is comforted in this world, and which issue in the splendid inheritance of the world of joy above. Oh the difference between the law of God, and the law of Christ! Can you pass from the one to the other, without feeling the force of the two propositions: "Being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ?"

V. In the fifth and last place, *the law of Jesus Christ is accompanied with most precious love tokens*; by which we are both refreshed and brought into nearer fellowship with Him. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them," says Christ, "he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." That obedience which could not buy God's favor back, after it was forfeited—that obedience which was too short for the man to cover himself, and too narrow for a man to wrap himself—that obedience which, when stretched to its utmost, left him yet exposed to the intense cold of God's righteous displeasure—that obedience, in short which fails to justify, is yet sufficient to prove that we are in Christ by faith, and that we have accepted the terms of the Gospel; and as it is developed more and more in our experience, it is sufficient to show how far we have grown up to "the measure of the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus." As it is the law of grace which Christ administers, there is nothing to hinder the King of grace from dropping down from His throne those tokens by which we are assured of His favor, and by which the heart is daily refreshed. Thus it is, the way of duty is made the way of peace. However rugged the path might otherwise be, it is carpeted with the roses by which our King makes it smooth to our feet. "He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall he lift up the head." (Ps. cx: 7).

It will be seen from this entire discussion, that **THE CHRISTIAN LIES UNDER INCREASED OBLIGATIONS TO OBEY THE DIVINE LAW.** The antinomian theory is not only refuted—it is reversed. As intelligent creatures, we rest under the law originally imposed, and there can be no absolution from its necessary claims. Our union with Christ does not impair the consciousness of our own individuality. We are not merged into Him, so as by a sort of apotheosis to lose the distinction of our own personality. The original responsibility therefore remains untouched to keep God's commandment, just as though grace had never intervened to save us from the penalty incurred by transgression.

In addition to this, as redeemed sinners, we owe obedience to the law

of our Saviour—an obedience impelled by gratitude, directed by love, and springing out of the fulness of spiritual life imparted by the Holy Ghost—an obedience measured by the intrinsic value of the soul, and by the price paid for its redemption—an obedience increasing in depth and fervor, the external test of our advancing holiness. If the first obligation cannot be shaken off by the moral nature which demands it, neither can the second by the spiritual life which finds expression through it. And if the two exactly coincide,—so as to be one in substance, and two only in form,—then surely the obligation of Christians to obedience is not relaxed, but duplicated. They “are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that they should show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light.” (I Pet. ii: 9.) It is a frightful perversion of Christian liberty, to make it the charter of licentiousness. No more fatal leprosy can strike the fair body of the Church, than to corrupt her very holiness into the ministry of sin. It will be as rottenness in her bones, to confound these opposites and to mingle them as one in her own practice. Let us rather adjudge antinomianism to the double condemnation of being not only an apostacy from God, but the disowning likewise of the distinguishing properties of our own nature. It not only rejects God, but it denies man. It destroys the conscience, it obliterates the reason, it calcines the heart. It leaves nowhere in the universe a God to be worshipped, nor an intelligent creature who can bow before His altar with the offerings of thanksgiving and of praise.

A second inference may justly be drawn, that THE SECRET OF ALL CHRISTIAN COMFORT AND JOY IS THIS GOSPEL MYSTERY, THE LAW OF GOD AS IT IS TO US THE LAW OF JESUS CHRIST. Legalism is the vice of our fallen nature; it clings even to the Christian, like original sin itself. I cannot here go down into the foundation of this melancholy confession, and show how the fact roots itself in the very constitution of beings who are made under law. But, oh, how difficult it is to take in the idea of grace! We pervert the gospel of our Lord, from being a charter of privileges, into a schedule of duties. We lose the sense of our freedom in Christ, and come to an obedience of His law which is slavish and brings the soul again under bondage. Only the Holy Ghost can adequately reveal to us the distinction between the two propositions of the text. Only He can make us know it as a fact, no less than as a doctrine—to know it by experience as well as through instruction. All Christian liberty hinges upon this. It is to understand in what sense we “are dead to the law by the body of Christ; that we should be married to another,

even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God:" "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." (Rom. vii: 4, and viii: 3, 4.) What an emancipation it is, when we come to see that our obedience is not the price of our salvation, but the expression of love to Him who has already procured it; not the condition of our justification, but the evidence that we are already justified.

Thus the freedom and cheerfulness of our obedience to the law of Christ becomes one of the best evidences of a converted state. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." (John xv: 5.) And when our obedience is seen to be the fruit springing from the life within us, it becomes the proof of our engrafting into Christ—that we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph. ii: 10.) "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."—(Gal. v: 1.) "As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God." (I Pet. ii: 16.)

## XIV.

### SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS GROUNDED IN IGNORANCE.

ROMANS, X : 3, 4.—“*For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*”

To appreciate the force of this passage, it will be necessary to take it in its logical connection. The Apostle lays the foundation of his great argument for gratuitous justification, by showing both Jews and Gentiles to be “concluded under sin.” The Jew, he represents as being condemned by that written law which he recognizes ; the Gentile, by the law which is engraved upon his nature : “For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves : which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.” (Romans, ii : 14, 15.) Thus he ascends to his first and negative conclusion : “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight.” (Romans, iii : 20.)

He then brings into contrast *another* righteousness : not another in the sense that the matter of it is different, for obedience to law constitutes the substance of all righteousness, by whomsoever achieved ; but another righteousness, in the sense that it is wrought by another party than the sinner himself, and is secured to him by a method entirely different from that by which he acquires his own. This other righteousness, inasmuch as it is wrought by the incarnate son of God, under the appointment of the Father, is styled by pre-eminence the RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD ; and, because it is appropriated by faith and thereby made the sinner's own, it is elsewhere called the RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH. The consideration of which leads the Apostle to his second and positive conclusion : “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the

law." (Romans, iii : 28.) This line of thought carries us to the close of the third chapter of this epistle.

In the fourth, he instances the cases of Abraham and of David, both of them representatives of the Church under different dispensations—the one being taken from the patriarchal age, the other from the bosom of the theocratic economy—in order to show that under all systems alike it has been God's method to justify the sinner by faith and not by works. In the fifth chapter, he elaborates the great principle upon which this whole proceeding turns, and runs a close parallel between Adam and Christ ; the disobedience of the one being reckoned for condemnation, and the obedience of the other being reckoned for righteousness or justification, upon identically the same principle of covenant relationship and federal representation.

In the sixth and seventh chapters he rebuts the specious objection against this doctrine, that it tends to licentiousness of practice : in which, with admirable skill, the Apostle shows the charge to be self-contradictory in the very terms in which it is couched ; and that, in point of fact, our sanctification is secured by grace, just as truly as our justification—divorce from the law being indispensably necessary to either result. In the eighth chapter he sums up the benefits which accrue from this doctrine, in language which stirs the heart like the sound of a trumpet. And from the eighth to the twelfth chapter, he establishes the catholicity of this truth—it being the ground upon which Jew and Gentile are accepted before God.

"Christ is the end of the law for righteousness," simply in this sense : that Christ proposes to do for the guilty precisely that which the law proposed to do for the holy. As I represented in my discourse on last Sabbath, the law originally sustained a two-fold relation to man. It was, first, the perfect and unerring standard of rectitude and the test both of character and of conduct ; and then, it was made the instrument of life. That is to say, upon the condition of perfect obedience rendered to this law for an assigned period, God offered to confirm man in a state of holiness and to advance him to higher degrees of felicity. Thus the law had, to holy Adam, righteousness for its end. His obedience would constitute the matter of that righteousness ; and confirmation in a state of righteousness would be his reward. But, upon the introduction of sin, this entire scheme was frustrated. Henceforth the law is not for righteousness, but for condemnation. It has no voice with which to speak to the sinner, except to accuse and to condemn. In this emergency, the Lord Jesus interposes on the sinner's behalf, comes under the law, obeys and suffers in his

room, and works out a righteousness by which he shall be justified. This is that *other* righteousness, contra-distinguished from the righteousness of the sinner himself, which, in the text, is denominated "GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS." We are presented here with two opposing systems, with their opposing watch-words; law and obedience upon the one hand, faith and Christ upon the other. As regards this matter of justification, the sinner has only to say 'Christ is my law and faith is my obedience.'

Now of this "righteousness of God," Paul, in the text declares the Jews to be profoundly ignorant; and, in consequence of this ignorance, substituting their own righteousness in its stead: "For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." He does not launch into violent invective against his people, as though he rejoiced in the anathemas he must pronounce. Rather, like Jeremiah of old, who, in the utterance of like judgments, exclaimed "my bowels! my bowels! I am pained at my very heart," (Jer. iv: 19,) this Apostle expresses his passionate sympathy for those who are so deluded. "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." (Romans, ix: 1-3.) "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." (Rom. x: 1-4.) He bears testimony to the fact that they possess a vehement religious zeal; but alas! a zeal entirely misdirected. Intent upon a ritual righteousness, or at least an obedience which should be strictly personal, they failed to see that Christ and His imputed righteousness, were the scope of their own law. I apprehend, my hearers, that the Apostle, in this language, strikes at the fundamental difficulty experienced by the sinner in accepting the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ—a difficulty which is both real and formidable; and which, therefore, we are never justified in simply overwhelming with invective. Let us endeavor this morning fully to understand it; that our pity and our prayer may be stirred for the sinner, who can only be delivered from it by the power of the Holy Ghost.



I. *The sinner has no adequate conception of God's holiness, of the necessary opposition of His nature to sin; and fails therefore, to see the necessity for an atoning sacrifice.* Holiness is ascribed to God in a sense altogether peculiar. "Who shall not fear Thee, oh Lord God of Hosts, for Thou only art holy?" (Rev. xv : 4.) Holiness is an attribute of God, in the same sense that being belongs to Him. You cannot think God, except as one who is; nor can you think God, except as one who is holy. The idea of existence lies at the foundation of your conception of God, *physically* considered, if you will allow that word to be used; and His holiness lies at the root of your conception of God, *morally* considered. You cannot have a God, unless He is from everlasting to everlasting, the same yesterday, to-day and forever; and you cannot have a God, unless this eternally existing being is also necessarily and unchangeably holy.

But holiness is a word without meaning, except to a being who possesses it in its principle or essence, although it may be in very varying degrees. It can be known only through the sensibilities and instincts of a holy nature; just as without taste, however perfect the external organs of perception may be, a man never perceives the beautiful. All the objects in nature may be seen by the eye; but if the æsthetic element be wanting, there is no sentiment of beauty. There is color, for example, but not the beauty of color. There is form and shape, but not the exquisite proportion in form which delights the soul. Myriads of objects range under the vision; but they are not grouped into a landscape, so that each shall have relation to the whole, and be bound together in the unity of conception. Exactly, then, as natural taste is necessary to the perception of the beautiful, must there be a spiritual taste in order to the perception of holiness. One may have natural notions of right and wrong; that is, he may perceive the agreement, or the disagreement, between a given action and the standard by which it is tried; whilst yet he may fail entirely to see the moral beauty which is in rectitude. Without a spiritual discernment of the interior holiness of what is right, he apprehends the *rightness*, but not the *holiness*, of the right. It is therefore only through the yearnings and aspirations and recoilings of the new nature planted within us by the Holy Ghost, that we have any adequate knowledge of the holiness which the Scriptures ascribe to God.

See the application to the case in hand. The sinner, without a proper sense of the Divine purity, fails to recognize its necessary antagonism to all sin. He sees no reason why God may not, in the exercise of His sovereignty, suspend his opposition, or at least modify its degree. He

does not feel the necessity for an atonement, in order to pardon. Hence the immediate effort to establish a future righteousness, without reference to the past. Let us suppose a sinner brought under conviction for sin, but having no knowledge of any plan of reconciliation with God, to be invited by Jehovah to a conference in order to a settlement of the dispute. What has the sinner in this case to propose? Why, my brethren, just exactly what every sinner, over the face of the earth, does propose to God. He says the past is beyond my reach; I can only offer for it my honest sorrow. But cover that past with a gracious amnesty, and then I will give you an obedience for the future? What shall God reply to this? Why simply, that the remedy proposed does not go to the root of the case; that the sinner altogether fails to comprehend the nature of the difficulty. To say nothing of the absurdity of God's suspending His immutability, or His justice, or His truth, even though His law should be the arbitrary expression of His will, what is the sinner to reply when God says to him, my very nature puts me in antagonism to sin. You, therefore, ask an impossibility when you ask me to cancel the past without an atonement; until these sins which you have committed are actually taken out of the way, there is no possibility that I shall bestow upon you my favor. The sinner labors under a fundamental mistake, when he supposes God's opposition to sin to be one of mere *will*, which can be altered whenever He shall so please. In his utter ignorance of the essential antagonism of God's nature to sin, he sees no necessity for the cross, or for the costly sacrifice offered thereon for the redemption of a lost world.

II. *The sinner has no conception of his sins as being the emanations of an unholy nature; and, consequently, fails to recognize the need of Regeneration.* He is conscious that his acts are his own; that the sinfulness of those acts, is his own; that the guilt which they bring upon him, is his own; and that he must bear the punishment for the same. But he does not, until enlightened by the Holy Spirit, understand that his particular transgressions are the symbols of an unholy nature—that they are but the streams flowing out from the full fountain; and that what he needs, is to have the fountain cleansed in order to make the stream flowing from it pure. When, therefore, the transgressor promises that he will obey in the future if God will only pardon the past, he is proposing to himself an utter impossibility. How can a holy God look with approval upon a being with an unholy heart? And how can a sinner, retaining that unholiness of nature, venture to pledge a constant succession of holy acts? The sinfulness of his nature will go out into the acts, and taint them with defilement. Oh! the strange fallacy which men impose upon

themselves, in thinking that one dead in sin shall bring his dead works before the living God, as the ground upon which he is to be justified !

Do you not see that this reverses the whole order of grace, and goes back to the principle of the covenant of works? When God placed man under the law, His command was, "obey and live." A being who is upon his trial, can only receive the Divine approval through the works of obedience which he shall render. The order of the covenant of grace is "live and obey." But the sinner, incapable of apprehending the distinction, goes back to the principle of the covenant of works—and undertakes to bring his dead works, works that are themselves under the condemnation of God's law, as the ground upon which he shall stand personally accepted before God. He precisely inverts the Divine method. According to the first covenant, the *work* must be accepted; and then the *person*, upon the ground of the work. In the economy of grace, the *person* is first accepted, and then the *work* for the sake of the person. What a comfort it is to God's people to know that when they are, through the Lord Jesus Christ, accepted in their persons before God, all the works which they perform, however in themselves imperfect, are yet approved by heaven as the evidences of a gracious state ! But the sinner, failing to see the significance of his acts as the expression of a defiled and sinful nature, cannot recognize the necessity of that spiritual change which is wrought by the holy Spirit, in the new birth.

III. *The sense of personal responsibility under which we lie as creatures of law, renders it difficult to apprehend the principle of being justified through the obedience of another.* In announcing this thought, I am touching the exact difficulty in the case of every convinced sinner in accepting the salvation of the gospel. There is no moral sentiment deeper in man than the sense of personal responsibility. Without it there could be no subjection under any law, whether human or divine; and it is constantly increased by the operations of natural conscience. See the difficulty. Here is a sinner under the conviction of guilt. He feels that in a thousand instances he has broken God's law, and that he is exposed to the penalty. Now the gospel comes to him, and proposes that he shall be saved by an obedience which is not his own, which has been wrought by another, and is simply offered to him for his acceptance. Laboring under this sense of personal responsibility of which I have just spoken, he has no idea of pardon except through some offset which he himself shall be able to bring. It is he, who has sinned; it is he, who is obnoxious to punishment; it is he, upon whom the suffering must be inflicted. Under the deep conviction of these fundamental facts, he sees no escape from

this condemnation, unless he is able to offer something which is his own, in compensation for the violation of his duty. When, therefore, the Gospel tells him that he must give up all this—that the righteousness by which he is to be justified is not his own righteousness, but the righteousness of another which is offered without money and without price—the sinner finds it impossible to take in even the idea. The very proposition seems to offend the sense of personal accountability. The man does not perceive how in accepting the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, his own responsibility is discharged. The law in the sternness of its demand, seems to hold him back from the gospel which woos his embrace.

Suggestions may be offered which would, intellectually at least, ease this difficulty. It would be easy to say that, whatever be the difficulties in the case, God has never offered to justify or save any descendant of Adam, since the beginning of time, through a righteousness strictly individual and personal. Go back to the garden of Eden; go back to the covenant of works; go back to the very first son that was born of the first father; and through all dispensations, from Eden down to the judgment day, God never did propose to save one solitary being of the human race except through the righteousness of a legal Representative and Head. From the first, it was a federal obedience imputed in law, through which all the children of men were to stand accepted before God. However then the sinner may stumble over the doctrine of a vicarious obedience, it is not a difficulty peculiar to the Gospel, but one which has existed from the beginning of the creation.

It would be easy also to show that this righteousness of Christ, being the righteousness of a Mediator, cannot be used in any other way than that which the Gospel proposes. If it be the righteousness of a Mediator, it must apply to mediatorial ends. It has no place in the Divine economy, other than this. Christ does not need this obedience, or this righteousness, for Himself; since as God, He is above the law—and, as man, He never separately existed to be under the law's jurisdiction. It is an obedience which He rendered as the God-man, representing His people who were given to Him in the covenant of grace. The only use, therefore, which can possibly be made of it, is to reckon it to His people whom He represented in that covenant, and for whom He shed His precious blood upon the Cross.

It would be easy to enlarge these points. It is sufficient however to add that the Holy Spirit practically shuts up the sinner to a single issue. The sinner says: 'I cannot think of any other relations except those which are determined by the law; I cannot understand how I am to be

absolved from condemnation unless through an obedience which is my own. God replies to him: 'You were originally placed under the law, with the most favorable conditions. In your original holiness, when you were able to keep those conditions, you failed in your trust and broke the law and came under its condemnation. Now I come to you as the author of grace, with the offer of a righteousness which will meet the demands of the law which you have violated—the righteousness of one whom I have appointed in your stead, to endure the curse, and to render the obedience. The issue is distinctly before you. Your accountability under law is to find its expression, in accepting this other righteousness. Your personal agency is to be exercised in the free election with which you choose this other righteousness. Your whole responsibility now lies in casting your own righteousness behind your back as filthy rags, and saying with Paul 'I desire to be found in Christ, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness of God which is by faith.' But my hearers, until this act has been performed—until, by Divine power given by the Holy Spirit, the sinner does actually submit his will to the will of God, in the repudiation of his own righteousness—until his eyes have been opened to behold the beauty that is in the Redeemer, and his whole heart goes out in an act of sublime trust in Him—the sinner will fail to see how his personal responsibility is preserved in the economy of grace, and he will continue to stumble over the simplicity of the offer made to him in the Gospel.

IV. *There is the impossibility, again, of the sinner's comprehending the nature of faith, and its office in our salvation.* The fact is that, until the man is born of the Spirit, he does not understand the dialect of the Gospel. All the terms, in which eternal life is offered to his acceptance, are in an unknown tongue. I will illustrate this by dwelling simply upon this article of faith. Did you ever attempt to explain faith to a sinner under conviction of guilt? You urge the Gospel command, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." He turns upon you with the question, "what is it to believe?" Now did you ever try to explain that, and did you ever succeed? You may have used interchangeable terms. You may have gone to the testimony of Scripture and said: "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." You may have answered as Philip did to the eunuch, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." You may have sought to explain the word faith, by substituting the word trust. By the interchange of synonyms, you may have sought to exhibit faith as an operation of the heart, no less than of the under-

standing. But what clearer idea did you convey with all this elucidation? It is like the effort to explain a perfectly simple idea, behind which it is impossible for any one to get. It is just one of those truths which can only be explained by the Holy Spirit, as He incorporates it with our experience. The instant, however, a man is able to exercise this faith, he comprehends it. The moment his eyes see the beauty that is in Christ, it becomes easy to love—and in love is involved the trust which is the essence of faith. But until it has been brought practically to his knowledge through an experience of the faith, there is no interpretation of it in other terms which can possibly explain it.

There is a vast difference between understanding a verbal proposition as such, and comprehending the truth which is contained within it. Here for example, is a man born blind. You may, by education, bring him to understand the various theories by which light is explained. He will discourse with perfect accuracy about the angles of incidence, and the angles of reflection, and the like, and yet he shall not have the faintest conception of the light itself, about which he is discoursing. He will know all about it; but he cannot tell what the thing is in itself, until you take the scales from his eyes, and let him gaze upon the glory with which the Creator has been pleased to flood the earth. Just so, the sinner may construct the whole science of theology, and be able to illustrate every constituent principle thereof—he may talk fluently of the holiness of God, yet he shall not have the first idea of what that holiness is, or a true conception of the sin which is its opposite. He may indeed frame a definition of sin, and tell you that it is a transgression of the law; but he has no eye with which to see its vileness, and cannot feel the necessity on the part of God to visit it with His holy displeasure.

V. *This proposition of the Gospel to save the sinner through the righteousness of another, crosses the very instinct of self-preservation.* Throw a man from the top of a spire, and, though he fall through vacancy, every muscle and every sinew will be stretched to its utmost tension. He has been grasping at the empty air, through the whole descent. Let a man fall overboard at sea, and he catches at every floating straw. Surely not through the operation of reason; for that reason would teach how utterly absurd was the hope of salvation by these means. It is the movement of instinct.

Just so it is, when we are confronted with the peril of eternal damnation. When the mouth of the pit is uncovered, and the sinner sees the smoke of the torment ascending, and hears the wailings of the lost;—when the powers of the world to come bear down upon his soul, and the

wrath of God threatens to burst upon his head in an eternal storm—he will move heaven and earth in the great convulsion, to save his soul from death. Now the Gospel comes to him in this very agony of effort, in the moment when he is putting forth every nerve and every sinew, every faculty and every principle of his nature, to save himself—it is just then that the Gospel comes and tells him to give over all this, and to allow himself to be saved by another. Christ tells him to abandon all these efforts at self-salvation, and to trust nakedly to his grace. If you think it an easy thing to hang all your interests upon a word, just let the time of trial come to you and you will find how hard it is. Feel, as you never felt before, all the glories of the upper kingdom and all the terrors of hell; under the combined pressure of both these worlds, find yourselves summoned simply to an act of trust in the word of another; and see how that cuts across the principle of self-preservation and how difficult it is to do. I am only explaining how it comes to pass that men, in their natural state, are ignorant of the righteousness of God; and how, as Paul describes it, “they go about to establish their own righteousness and do not submit themselves to the righteousness of God.”

VI. Last of all, *this method of salvation, through the obedience of another, is repelled by our pride and love of independence.* We desire to achieve salvation at our own charges—in the consciousness of our own strength, to extricate ourselves from the peril—to be able to stand in the presence of angels and before the throne of Jehovah, and to feel that we are indebted to nothing save to the energy of our own will for it all—ah! this is what the carnal heart craves. My brethren, is it a slander falling from my lips upon my race? Why, you cannot look anywhere around you without detecting this desire of independence as to the providence of Him who is our Creator and preserver. What does it mean, this rising up in the morning and never thanking God for the sleep of the night? What does it mean, when a man has experienced a resurrection from that which is itself the image of death, and never acknowledges it to the great God “in whom he lives and moves and has his being?” What does it mean, when you sit down at your tables loaded with blessings, and never in your heart thank “the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift?” Like the beasts of the field, which eat the grass and always look down to the earth out of which the grass springs, and never to the heavens from which the power comes that makes the grass to grow: Oh! how do men, in their audacious attempt to be independent of God, sink themselves to the level of the brutes of the earth!

Here is the grand difficulty with impenitent men, when they are brought under conviction for sin; that they will not submit their will to God's will, and their choice to God's choice—fighting with the intellect all the mysteries of the Gospel, and striving to substitute another scheme of salvation for that which the wisdom of God has devised. Hence Paul uses, with the precision of philosophy itself, exactly the word that he ought to have used, when he says "they have not *submitted* themselves unto the righteousness of God." It is this which is demanded of you, in the renunciation of this false independence, to accept God's salvation and submit your will to His will. It is in the exercise of this will, whereby we choose the righteousness of Christ rather than our own, we are to find the full expression of our own personal agency and the full sense of our legal responsibility.

My hearers, here are the two systems before you. There are no others possible, not even in thought. Every one of us must choose between the two; and there is not one listening to the sound of my voice, who is not at this moment actually making that choice. You can be saved only by your own righteousness, or by the righteousness of another. Now I ask you to pause, before you decide; to weigh the interests which are involved, and to make the choice which wisdom will approve. I ask, in the name of this book and of him who is the author of it, which do you intelligently choose to-day? Do you mean to go upon the line of your own works, until you get to the judgment bar? Oh! with the confession ever ringing upon your lips, that you have "sinned and come short of the glory of God," what a dependence is that?

I will put the thought in another form. When you stand before that bar, you must appear under the banner either of the one representative or of the other? Which will you choose to be your head! When you appear before that tribunal, it must be in the name of the FIRST ADAM or in the name of the SECOND ADAM. If any of you imagine that, independent of both, you will stand upon your individual merit and be saved by the works of your own hand, God will reply that, from the beginning, it was never His purpose to save any of you that way. You must answer to the roll call. The two representatives are there; and you must answer to your name, as you range under the one banner or under the other. Which will you choose? Will you stand by that old bankrupt? or will you rejoice in the mercy and grace of him who as the second Adam, is "the Lord our Righteousness?" "The first Adam was made a living



soul ;" that is what the Bible tells you of him. "The second Adam was made a quickening spirit." My hearers, it is better to abide by the last, than by the first. The glory of the second Adam is, that he is "a quickening spirit;" quickening us by his holy spirit dwelling within us, and communicating the life which shall be ours throughout an eternity of joy. Choose, but choose wisely; for the issues involved in it will never be changed.

## XV.

### CHRIST'S RESTORING WORK.

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PSALM, LXIX : 4—“ *Then I restored that which I took not away.*”

We cannot err in interpreting this psalm of the suffering Messiah. The language throughout, though grounded in the experience of David as a type, finds no exhaustion of its meaning except in “the pangs of our expiring Lord.” No psalm, unless it be the twenty-second, is more frequently or more directly referred, in the New Testament, to the Lord Jesus Christ. You may take the following citations as illustrations. Christ is here prophetically represented as saying “they that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty.” (V. 4.) In the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel of John, this language is re-produced: “But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, they hated me without a cause.” In the twenty-second and twenty-third verses of this psalm it is written: “Let their table become a snare before them; and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake.” Which is cited by the Apostle Paul, in the eleventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, “And David saith, let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recompense unto them: let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.” Again, in the twenty-first verse of the psalm, we read, “They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink;” which, in the twenty-seventh chapter of the Gospel of Mathew, is historically stated: “They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when He had tasted thereof He would not drink. \* \* \* \* And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink.”

Under this view, the text can only be explained of the perfect sinlessness of our Lord Jesus Christ, whilst bearing the iniquity of us all. Though not responsible for the breach which sin had made upon the harmony of the Universe, He comes to restore the same. It is a theme singularly suitable for our sacramental meditations this day; and, without

further preface, I proceed to show, in at least five particulars, THIS RESTORING WORK OF OUR REDEEMER. "Then I restored that which I took not away."

I. *He restores, to the law of God, the honor of which sin had robbed it.* The law is too often regarded in the light of a code—a collection of particular statutes, resting simply upon the Divine will. Even under this aspect it is sufficiently glorious; for "the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good;" and what can be more majestic than God's solemn assertion of His supreme and universal dominion? But, in a higher view, the law is God's expression of Himself—the first concrete revelation of His character and of His attributes. In it we not only see what Jehovah claims, but what He is; and obedience to it is, in reality, the homage which the soul pays to the excellence and glory of Jehovah.

Law is, therefore, strictly a relative term. It pre-supposes a Being from whom this revelation proceeds, and who stands in the relation of a Ruler and a Judge. It pre-supposes other beings upon whom this revelation terminates, and who stand in the relation of subjects capable of rendering a response to it. Now, my hearers, the glory of the law consists in the perfect impression which it produces of the Divine image, upon the heart that is prepared to receive it. As in the Daguerrean art, the pencil of light produces, upon the plate prepared for it within the camera, the perfect fac-simile of ourselves; every strand of hair re-produced, the very arch of the brow, the precise character of the eyes, the exact expression of the lips, the form and posture of the whole body: just so the law, as a pencil of light beaming directly from Jehovah Himself, produces upon a holy heart the perfect impression of God's character. The highest view of obedience is not, therefore, as a congeries of independent acts calling for a separate energy, but the spontaneous out-giving of the virtue and holiness of the creature—just as the essence and life of the flower is exhaled in the fragrance. Thus obedience becomes the constant worship of the soul toward God. But, alas! sin intervened and darkened man's nature; and now, because the sinner's heart is opaque, there is no reflection of God. Whilst the law beams as before, pouring down the revelation of the Divine glory, there is no image produced; and thus the law is robbed of its honor.

Jesus Christ, in His incarnation, appears as the typical and representative man; and renders an obedience, the true ideal of that which was originally due. Nay more—assuming the nature of man, who is the lowest of those intelligent beings of whom we have any knowledge, He includes the inter-

vening grades ; and, His obedience is the ideal of that which was due from all the creatures. He gathers the light of this law of God upon the mirror of His heart, and reflects from His perfect human soul the exact likeness of God's holiness. He ascends to Heaven with this typical and representative obedience, and holds it up before the Father, and before the holy angels, and before all the redeemed in glory ; that through eternity, they may behold the moral excellence of Jehovah, and the honor of the law, which is the exposition of it.

It would lead me into too much detail, if I should undertake this morning to dwell upon the peculiar properties of this obedience of Christ, which render it so transcendently glorious. Yet without a glance at these, we shall perhaps fail to see how Christ restores to the law that which He took not away. Look, if you please, at the *voluntariness* of Christ's obedience—voluntary, not in the sense that it is cheerfully rendered—but in the higher sense that it was wholly optional with Him either to render or to withhold it. Look, again, at its *universality*—an obedience to the whole law, as strictly rendered to the penalty as to the precept ; which cannot be affirmed of the obedience of any other being, except of the Redeemer Himself. Or look at the *completeness of this obedience* ; enabling the Saviour to say “it is finished,” and give up the ghost—an obedience which was rounded within a period, and held up in its entirety as the perfect measure of the law in all its exactions ; whereas the obedience of all other beings in heaven and upon earth, is an obedience forever continuing and never brought to a conclusion. Look at it as the *obedience of the God-man* ; who, by virtue of the hypostatic union, brings all the perfections of His divine nature to flood with glory all that was accomplished in the human. And, lastly, look at this obedience as *it is re-produced in all the redeemed* ; who, by virtue of it, are justified forever in the sight of God. And then say if this typical being, including all creatures in that human nature which He has assumed, does not, by this ideal righteousness, render to the law the honor which was originally due from angels and from men.

Nay, my brethren, this obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ is forever exhibited in heaven from the throne upon which the Mediator sits, as determining the nature and measure of that obedience which, through all eternity, the law will continue to exact of those who are under its jurisdiction. Well might the prophet, therefore, say, “the Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake ; He will magnify the law, and make it honorable.” (Isa. xlii: 21.) Rendering an obedience which is greater than the aggregate obedience of all the beings that God ever created, and which, because of its ideal and typical character, stands over against the law as

the exact exposition of it, the Redeemer may truly say "then I restored that which I took not away."

II. *Cognate with this, our Lord Jesus Christ has restored to His people that image of God from which they have fallen.* This image is partly NATURAL, consisting in the faculties of intelligence and of will with which man was endowed; but principally MORAL, in the direction and bent of these powers in righteousness and holiness. Paul says in his epistle to the Ephesians: "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Sin defaces the natural image of God, impairing and corrupting those powers with which, as intelligent and accountable beings, we are endowed; and it has destroyed that original purity of nature, in which this moral image was found. But Christ, as I have already shown, reproduces this lost image in Himself—typical of what man was at the first, and of what man shall be made through grace to be in the kingdom of glory. In Him, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," there is found once more a perfect reflection of that image of God which was stamped upon man at the beginning.

This is not all. He proceeds now to transfer this image from Himself to us, through the agency of the Holy Ghost. This Person of the adorable Godhead, who in the original creation was the author of all beauty as well as of all life, becomes the Quickener, to breathe once more the life of God into the soul which is dead in sin. And this life, which He communicates in the new birth, is the life which Christ has redeemed from forfeiture under the law; and which makes all those to whom it is dispensed to become "new creatures in Christ Jesus." Oh, the brightness of Divine truth, when you place the doctrines of Grace together, so that they reflect each upon the other! "New creatures in Christ Jesus"! What is it short of a new creation, when the dead sinner lives again by the power of a life breathed into him from so divine a Head! Verily, he may exclaim with Paul: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live—yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. ii: 20).

From this point begins the whole work of sanctification, which is but the expansion of this life of Christ in the believer's soul. Even the truth which is the instrument of this sanctification, is the word of Christ, For however boundless the Spirit's knowledge, as co-equal with the Father and the Son, He is restricted in His revelation to those things which Christ said and wrought upon the earth. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you:" "He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever

He shall hear, that shall He speak : ” “ He shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you.” (John, xiv : 26, and xvi : 13, 14). Thus, by the Holy Ghost, are we “ born again—not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever.” (I Pet. i : 23). As an artist transfers the image of a living person upon the canvas before him, so does the Holy Spirit complete in us the likeness to our blessed Lord. The features which belong to Him are copied in us, and become the attributes with which our own religious character is adorned. In the whole process of sanctification He is the pattern after which it is wrought, whom the Apostle describes as “ the brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of His person.” (Heb. i : 3). The graces of the Spirit,—“ love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance,”—are but the features of resemblance to Christ our Head, who is thus more and more “ formed in us the hope of glory.” As these first exist in Him, they are transferred to us—the Holy Ghost looking ever upon the original in Him, whilst producing the copy in us. They are not, therefore, merely personal qualities, which we may claim as our own ; but their chief glory consists in being the reproduction of Christ’s image within us—which is but the image of God from which man so grievously fell in the first transgression.

This image, restored at the new birth, continues to be brightened by the indwelling Spirit ; until that supreme office is discharged when, at death He transfigures the believer and makes him “ meet for the Saints’ inheritance in light.” And what my brethren shall be said more ? Only this : that, on and forever, the redeemed in Heaven shall sit by the side of their Lord—rejoicing in the open vision of His face, through which they are “ changed into His image from glory to glory.” “ Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be ; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him as He is.” (I. John iii : 2.) Have we the mental enlargement to take in the grandeur of the conception ? It is not only the image of God in the soul, which sin had defaced and destroyed ; but it is that image graciously renewed and effectively preserved within us by the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Ghost ; and, grander still, it is this recovered image of God glorified in us forever—as in the splendor of the upper Kingdom, we enjoy “ the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Surely in this prophetic Psalm, the Messiah may anticipate his future triumph in the words, “ then I restored that which I took not away.”

III. *Christ has restored permanency and stability to the Divine Govern-*

*ment, assailed by the rebellion of man.* In the Fall, there was collision of will. Not that Jehovah's throne was shaken ; for there were resources in the law itself by which its majesty should be vindicated. Like the waves which break into feeble foam at the base of an island rock, and in their sullen roar confess their defeat—so must every creature rebellion break before Omnipotent power, which remains impregnable in its own steadfastness forever. But as there had been the conflict, it must have no issue but to strengthen that which had been so vainly assailed. The history of the collision itself must furnish evidence that the foundations of law were only more firmly established, through the rebellion it had extinguished.

Perhaps, we have never tasked ourselves to consider the majesty of power which the Almighty has displayed in His treatment of fallen man. It was not the first, but the second rebellion, which had broken the repose of the Universe. When the Angels unfurled the standard of revolt in Heaven, the audacity and the guilt were almost immeasurable. But Jehovah seemed content with the simple exhibition of His power and His Holiness. The guilty angels were hurled from the glory of His presence into everlasting fire, which is expressly said to have been prepared for *them*. (Mat. xxv: 41.) But this was all the development of the Divine resources which the first rebellion called forth. It was sufficient, and it was awful ; but it was not the completest exhibition of power that was possible with God. The second rebellion ensued, hinging upon the first. It was the insurrection of a race inferior in degree, and who were solicited to the act by the earlier transgressors. These, perhaps, were mitigations which made mercy possible. At any rate, in the sublime consciousness of His strength, God would not repeat simply the exhibition of his power ; but, in the grandeur of His own repose, made the revelation of His grace in the bosom of His justice. It had been so easy for Him to overthrow a conspiracy which was stronger, that He could afford in this to cherish thoughts of pity. Power is never felt to be so strong, as when it is serene in its action. Whilst the law laid its arrest upon the transgressor, a Redeemer stepped from the bosom of the Deity, and stooped beneath the curse to bear it away forever. "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out !" (Rom. xi: 33.) In the very moment, when to the eye of the creature, the heavens and the earth were shaken to their centre, Jehovah saw fit to bring out the hidden attributes of His character, and to show Himself the God of love ! Just then, in the majestic consciousness of His power to deal with all sin, He chose to produce from the

depths of His own heart the mystery of grace—to exhibit the boundless stretch of His compassion, and the infinite reach of His love.

This display of mercy would, of course, be no evidence of power, unless truth and justice were conserved. But in the methods by which Grace achieved the wonderous reconciliation, not the shadow of suspicion could rest upon the integrity of the Divine Government. There were resources of wisdom by which, in the mighty plan, “mercy and truth should meet together, righteousness and peace should kiss each other.” (Ps. lxxxv : 10.) In every case, the extension of executive pardon has been an act of grace founded solely upon “the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” By this, “God’s righteousness is declared; that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” (Rom. iii : 26.) All the redeemed who upon the earth tell the story of the Cross, and all the glorified who in Heaven chaunt the song, “worthy is the Lamb that was slain,” are witnesses of God how deep He has driven the pillars of His Empire, and how impregnable it stands even under an administration of mercy.

My brethren, do you not sometimes rejoice in the atonement of our Lord, beyond the interest you feel in it because of your own personal salvation? This indeed would be ground enough for all the praise your hearts could render to Him who has “redeemed you to God by His blood, and has made you unto God kings and priests.” (Rev. v : 9.) Yet there is a view opening beyond this, so glorious in its majesty, that the mere selfishness of our own individual interest is lost in contemplating the total results of our Lord’s mediatorial work. It is, that “He appeared in the end of the world to PUT AWAY SIN by the sacrifice of Himself.” (Heb. ix : 26.) In that hour, when He hung, a wailing man upon the tree, He “finished the transgression and MADE AN END OF SINS.” (Dan. ix : 24.) In His death was sealed the death of sin, that it should not continue its ravages upon the universe of God. Provision was made for its final banishment to the pit of eternal darkness, where Satan and his angels are held in chains unto the judgment of the great day. When the consummation of this scheme of Grace is reached, the decree, which banishes the wicked from the presence of God and the glory of His power, will emancipate all worlds through God’s wide empire from the future contact and defilement of sin. Glorious jubilee of grace! when Christ shall come with the clouds of Heaven and shall sit upon the throne of His glory—when He shall pronounce upon sin its just doom, and bind it in prison forever—when the triumphant Conqueror shall proclaim the universal reign of righteousness and peace, in the complete establishment and supremacy of law, forever exempt from trial and assault.



Does not Christ then, by His work of redemption, establish upon eternal foundations the throne of His Father? Having solved the problem of grace, He solved it for all eternity. The last and complete disclosure of the Divine perfections and will has been made to His creatures under trial. Law has fulfilled all its functions, in the revelation of the Law-giver. Henceforth sin is to be known only in Hell, where it is imprisoned forever. Angels and the Redeemed, confirmed in holiness and blessedness forever, will never bring their will in competition with the Divine supremacy, but will express the whole energy of their nature in obedience and worship. The history of time has been dark, stained and scarred by the marks of sin; but, thanks to God, the history is short. Eternity will succeed, "unmeasured by the flight of years;" and its history will be bright with the holiness of God, reflected in the character and life of the myriads upon myriads who shall walk before Him in white. Well may Jesus say, "I restored that which I took not away." He had no agency in our mad assault against the authority and power of His Father. But He came as the sinner's representative to restore that which the sinner had attempted to destroy. We sought to undermine the throne of Jehovah and bring it to its fall. Christ has rendered it impossible that this throne shall ever be assailed through the eternity to come.

IV. *The Lord Jesus has restored the broken fellowship between the creatures.* Sin is essentially divisive. Its schismatic tendency was disclosed in Eden, even from the first. The fiery Cherubim, guarding the way of the tree of life, lest the sinner should touch sacrilegiously the seal of the covenant he had broken, was an emblem alike of man's separation from God and from all holy beings in the universe. They held the flaming sword and turned its glittering blade to the guilty, as willing instruments to execute the penalty which disobedience had incurred. And where in human history have you found an exhibition of sin, which did not interpose fences and bars against human fellowship? It drives men in their selfishness, to break down or to overleap all the defences of law—and, in the promotion of individual interests, to disintegrate society, and bring order and government to an end. But Christ comes as the restorer of this broken fellowship; and in the completion of the scheme of grace, we see saints and angels responding to each other in the parts they severally sustain in the chaunts of the heavenly temple.

It is a glorious truth indeed, to announce the harmony of the creatures as the corollary of reconciliation with God. It is a marvellous triumph of grace to subdue the schism which sin has made. But the marvel will be singularly enhanced, if you will consider the method by which this uni-

versal reconciliation is accomplished. We might suppose it enough that man should be made holy, and thus be fitted to hold communion again with the angels of God. The mutual attraction would be deemed sufficient to explain their gravitation to each other and their joint participation in the worship and fellowship of heaven. Can it be that "grace doth much more abound" even above this? Yes, my hearers, the Redeemer not only restores the fellowship, but renders it impossible that it should ever be broken again, by bringing angels and the redeemed into one body in Himself. "Having made peace through the blood of His Cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." (Col. i: 20.) "God hath highly exalted Him and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth." (Phil. ii: 9, 10.) The recapitulation of all holy beings in Christ, constituting one spiritual body of which He is the Head, is affirmed in too many scriptures for me this morning to cite. "For this cause, I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." (Eph. iii: 14, 15.) "When He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." (Ibid i: 20, 23.)

Let this testimony suffice for the fact itself, that we may give ourselves to adoring wonder of the riches of grace which it displays. Saints and angels not only brought into one, but into one in Christ! How indissoluble, then, the bonds of fellowship established between them! Each must be dis severed from their common Head, before he can be separated from the other. And how is this fellowship glorified, as a fellowship in Christ—reflecting the communion which each is permitted to hold with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ! (I. John, i: 3.) If we meditate upon the broad and sure foundation which is laid for the fellowship in heaven, between those who shall forever be the members of one glorious body in Christ, we are as much astonished at the method of grace, as at the grace itself. Grace ripens into glory before our view, when its privileges are secured to us upon a tenure, and by a method, which constitute us sharers in our Lord's exaltation and reward.

V. Last of all, *Jesus restores the channels through which the Divine*

*benevolence may eternally flow to those whom He has redeemed.* There is an obstinate and wilful determination with men to cast themselves upon the general goodness of the Deity, irrespective of His justice or His holiness. When the Scriptures insist upon faith in Christ and repentance of sin, as necessary conditions of the Divine favor,—with an audacity which would be sublime, if it were not so wicked, they are accused of putting limitations upon the infinite perfections of Jehovah. It is construed as an impeachment of His prerogative, and a diminution of His glory, to insist that He must regard the character of His subjects in the dispensation of His favor. How strange a perversion of God's greatness and majesty, if it be viewed as disabling Him from all moral discrimination between those who approach His throne! How monstrous the inference from the infiniteness of the Divine wisdom and power, that His love must flow without distinction to all His creatures, even though they should be in rebellion against His authority!

Unquestionably God is infinite in all His perfections; and it would be a treasonable thought that should venture to impose human limitations upon any one of them. But may He not be allowed some discretion in their exercise? May there not be obstructions to the outflow of His benevolence, which shall need to be removed? What if the holiness and justice of God should themselves interpose barriers, which shall require all the resources of grace to take down? Ah, my impenitent friends, if you could but know how entirely you are indebted to this grace, for all the blessings you enjoy! The dispensation under which you live, is a dispensation of mercy. You have not been left hopelessly under the curse of the broken law. In the very hour of the Fall, a promise of redemption broke in upon the despair, which else would have shrouded this earth in darkness forever. Had not a scheme of grace supervened, the creature might have lived his brief span—but life would have been unmitigated torture, anticipatory of the deeper terrors of the Hell which should succeed. At the very moment the sinner is trampling under foot the Cross of the Saviour, he owes to the suffering and passion of that Cross the bread which he eats from day to day, the clothing with which he invests his form, and all the comforts and joys of domestic life and love.

But Christ comes and opens these closed channels. By His expiatory sufferings and death, He removes the obstructions interposed by Divine justice. Nay, in the greatness of His charity, He makes the channel broader and deeper than it was before; and the fulness of the Father's love may flow in an eternal stream upon those who were guilty and lost, but are now in Him the recipients of blessedness and joy in God's presence and kingdom forever.

In these five particulars, Christ restored that which He took not away. He restores, to the law, the honor of which sin had robbed it. He restores to His people that image of God from which they had fallen. He restores stability to God's throne, that it shall be incapable of assault through all the eternity to come. He restores the broken fellowship between the creatures, and heals forever in Himself the schism which sin had made. He opens again the channels through which the divine favor may flow forever to the redeemed in heaven. In view of all which we can put a deeper emphasis upon the declaration of the text, "then I restored that which I took not away."

Would that I could persuade the unconverted in this house, of their indebtedness to the Gospel! Would that I had power to put the thought in such language as would melt the heart! What can uninspired man say, that shall be half so impressive as Paul's tender argument in the second of Romans? "Or, despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" If the appeal to our generous gratitude should fail of effect, what shall the reckoning be hereafter at the judgment? Alas! only consider that the Redeemer shall then be the judge; who must exact the penalty of all who have spurned His mercy, "treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." (Rom. ii: 5.) Even the devils have never sinned against the Divine mercy, or taken license from His grace to trample upon His law. The sinner's utter insensibility to the goodness of God is the perpetual scandal of this apostate earth. If the last proof be demanded of the hardness of the sinner's heart, let it be found in this fatal insensibility to all the benevolence and tenderness of God in the Gospel of His Son.

I do not care to speak now of God's terrors. I do not allude, to-day, to that judgment which He will pronounce upon the guilty before His bar. But when the very breath you draw, is the gift of His kindness—when every beat of your pulse is the testimony to His patience—when the common comforts and joys of life are the blessings of His constant providence—how can a being, with intelligence to know and with heart to feel, fail to respond to the magnanimity which loads the criminal with benefits who only deserves to be loaded with chains! With all our familiarity with the dreadful fact, indignation and shame mingle with astonishment in overwhelming the mind that contemplates it. "Be astonished, O ye Heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith

the Lord : for my people have committed two evils—they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." (Jer. ii : 12, 13.) Year after year, until you come to grey hairs, almost standing in the presence of the Judge, yet reckless of all these obligations under which you lie to the charity of God—Oh sinner, it is a fearful indictment ! I beseech you to measure its import. And whilst God's children gather, to-day, around their Master's board, consider your debt to the Saviour's cross which makes all this goodness possible to you—and let this goodness of God lead you, at last, to the repentance which you have so long withheld.

But however it shall be with others, my brethren in the Lord, let us rejoice in the mercy of our Redeemer ; and as we sit at His table, let us praise Him for "the great salvation." One of the sweetest aspects of grace is that it makes the things to be for us, which before were against us. It is the work of the Restorer to take the sin which we mourn, but which He has forgiven, and make it quicken our pace in the journey to heaven. Our miscarriages and falls, over which we have wept as wounds inflicted upon Him, He makes to contribute strength and courage to us in the conflicts which yet remain. The accusations of the injured law, which He has satisfied, become in His hand the pledges of our final salvation. When we shall presently hold communion with Him through His body broken and His blood shed, let us rejoice not only in the grace by which we are saved, but also in the tender and loving way in which that grace commends and secures to us the blessings of eternal life. Though we come weeping to His table, under the memory of our grievous shortcomings and sins, the Restorer bids us rejoice in His power to blot them out forever, and to fill us with blessedness unspeakable and full of glory.

## XVI.

### DEATH OF BELIEVERS NO EVIDENCE AGAINST THEIR JUSTIFICATION.

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ROMANS VIII: 10, 11: "*And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*"

In the first verse of this chapter, the Apostle re-affirms the conclusion of his great argument touching the completeness of our justification in Christ. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." That our justification, if it be accomplished at all, must be "perfect and entire, wanting nothing," might be assumed from the forensic import of the term. Before our human tribunals an indictment is either sustained in the condemnation of the criminal, or else it is cancelled in his acquittal. There is no mean between the two. So a sinner must either be proved guilty before God, or else he must be entirely absolved from the penalty. He is simply weighed in the scales of justice: and if it be found that the Lord Jesus Christ has satisfied the law on his behalf, and if, by a proper faith, he has made that righteousness of Christ his own, then the sinner is not only discharged from punishment in the pardon which is conferred, but he stands erect before the court. He is accepted in his person before God, as one entitled to the divine favor.

Against this conclusion, so particularly established by the Apostle in the preceding argument, a plausible objection may be urged, drawn from the believer's subjection to temporal death. Paul had previously insisted upon the universal prevalence of death, as proof of the universal guilt of the race. "Sin," says he, "entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Rom., v: 12.) Now, urges the objector, it is notorious that believers die as certainly, and as universally, as other men. The last record made of Adam was that "he died;" and it is the last record of all his descendants, believers and unbelievers alike. The Christian, just as any other man, is borne to his dark and silent resting place, and is there "clothed with all the dishonors of corruption." He cannot plead exemption from that stern decree, which

proclaims "dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return." With what consistency therefore, urges the objector—death having been assumed as the evidence of guilt—with what consistency can the Apostle now say of these dying Christians, "there is no condemnation?"

This difficulty, rather hinted than formally stated by the Apostle, is unequivocally met in the language of the text. "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But, if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

The reply, you perceive, is two-fold: that it is, in the case of the believer, *only the death of the body*; and that *the dominion of death even over this, is temporary*. It might be expanded in terms like these: the death, which the law penally inflicts upon the transgressor, falls upon his WHOLE being. It falls upon the body, separating it from the soul, and resolving it into its original elements,—which is *temporal* death. It cuts the soul off from communion with God, who is the only source of holiness,—which is *spiritual* death. It turns the wicked into hell to drink the wine of the wrath of God,—which is *eternal* death. The two last of these, however, are estopped from the Christian. He is no longer spiritually dead, being quickened into life by the power of the Holy Ghost in the moment of the new birth; and he is forever delivered from the lake of fire, which is "the *second* death." It is only the body that dies; and the restriction of death to this proves that it is not penally inflicted and, therefore, concludes nothing against the completeness of our justification. Moreover the body remains under the power of death, only for a time. After an assigned period, it shall be raised with power and great glory. This temporary death, so far from disproving our justification in the sight of God, at the most only obscures the evidence of it for a season, to be proclaimed more signally hereafter.

I would be delighted, my hearers, if I could present both parts of this connected argument before you this morning, if you had patience to sit during the time which would be necessary for the discussion. As this however cannot be, I must submit to the necessity of presenting only the first to you at this time—reserving the second for your consideration on the next Sabbath. Observe, then, precisely the issue which is joined. Paul says there is no condemnation to the believer. There *is* condemnation to the believer, says the objector, because the believer dies. No, rejoins the Apostle, it is only his body that dies, not the soul. WHY THEN DOES THE CHRISTIAN DIE AT ALL? WHY, IN HIS JUSTIFICATION, IS

NOT DEATH AS IMMEDIATELY AND COMPLETELY REVERSED TO THE BODY, AS IT IS TO THE SOUL? In answering these questions, I shall hope to satisfy you that this arrangement is consonant with all the principles of grace—that it really discloses that equity and truth upon which the whole moral government of God is based—nay, anomalous as it may appear, that it is required by the adjustments of the Gospel scheme itself.

I. *The body is the instrument with which we sin, and through which that sin is made patent to the observation of others.* I do not care to speculate as to the physical condition of other beings, in other parts of God's immense universe; or to inquire with what organs they communicate with each other. Certainly that organ with man, is his body; which is made the medium of communication with the whole outside world. As one of the most impressive of modern writers\* has put the thought, it is by the body the soul comes out and takes possession of a world foreign to itself. It steps through these five doors which the five senses supply, and walks up and down the paths of the material universe, and gathers up the knowledge which otherwise it could not acquire. If we could conceive of the human race possessing souls without bodies, each would be an independent world shut up within itself. It might have its thoughts and its desires, its affections and its passions, its purposes and its aims; all of which might be known to the omniscient God, but could never transpire to the knowledge of any other. If it were not for the eye leering with jealousy, or flashing with revenge—if it were not for the hand dealing in violence or fraud—if it were not for the feet swift to shed blood—if it were not for the tongue tripping with the vocables of the pit—the soul might be full of sin, but of sin never revealed to others to the dishonor of God. The body is the organ through which alone they are made patent to the world. Being therefore the instrument with which we sin, and by which we make public proclamation of it, it dishonors God; and it is fit that He shall put upon it the mark of His holy displeasure.

Not only this. The body is not merely the *instrument* with which we sin, but in many cases it is the *immediate provocative* of that sin. The germ, certainly the occasion, of many overt sins is found in the flesh. What do you say of gluttony, of drunkenness, of sensuality in all its forms? sins committed, indeed, by the soul,—because it is only of a living agent, possessing intelligence and conscience and will, that you can predicate sin at all,—but committed by that being as he is in the body. The body therefore, under any aspect of the case, is thoroughly implicated with all the sins which a man commits. It is the pillar upon which those sins are

\*Isaac Taylor.



written with our own finger, before the eye of the universe. It is through the organs of this body the dismal secret transpires; and others come to know that we are rebels against the law, and against the grace, of our heavenly Father.

Let it, however, be carefully noted that, in the whole process of the sinner's salvation, God takes care to disclose the severity and unchangeableness of His holiness. Indeed, without any demonstration of the fact, we would antecedently expect that everywhere upon the scheme of grace God would make it appear that, whilst He is a Redeemer and a Saviour, He redeems and saves in perfect consistency with His immaculate purity. Examine, if you please, the details of the method by which the sinner is saved from the condemnation of the divine law, and see how Jehovah is at pains to prove His justice and His truth. How fit is it then that, in applying this salvation, through every stage of our experience, God should put the mark of His holiness; as though it were the seal of State giving confirmation to all the provisions of grace.

How does He do this? By those sufferings and sorrows, through which He accomplishes His precious and sanctifying discipline. This word, which I have used, imports as much. Discipline, whilst it is reformatory, looking to the improvement of the culprit, is at the same time, vindicatory of the Law-giver and the Judge. If, with one of its eyes, it looks to the present and eternal advantage of the criminal, must it not also, with its other eye, look to the vindication of the Great Ruler? so that, under all the forms of process, His holiness shall be proclaimed, while the sinner is saved. This explains, in large degree, those sufferings which in a mysterious providence are accumulated upon the righteous. It is not an exhaustive exposition of those intense and multiplied afflictions, to say that they are exclusively designed for the immediate benefit of the sufferer himself. They are also intended as a solemn protest against the sin, which remains within those whose sanctification is but partially accomplished. By just so much as the Christian character of the sufferer is ascertained, by so much is the Divine protest against all sinfulness the more pronounced. If the evidence be complete of his acceptance in the Beloved; if he bear, in his hand, the white stone in which the new name is written;—by so much is the testimony the more unequivocal of God's hatred of all sin, in whomsoever it may chance to be found.

Does not observation prove that the severest sorrows are often apportioned to those who are apparently the most holy, and who, therefore, to human view stand least in need of this peculiar discipline? Of course, in no case "will the Lord lay upon man more than is right," and there

are no chastisements which we do not richly deserve. It is only contended, that discipline often contemplates something beyond the individual benefit of those who receive it. And the fact that God so frequently rolls His heaviest waves over those whom He most loves and approves, is a clear manifestation of that holiness which cannot look upon sin with allowance. Death now is but the final act, in which this gracious discipline terminates forever. We follow the Christian through his earthly career, to the moment when he is borne upward by angels into the bosom of the Redeemer—and to the last we read in his sufferings, and with still greater emphasis in the death in which they terminate, the solemn assertion of God's necessary holiness in the very pardon which He extends to the guilty and the lost.

I do not know, my brethren, how others are affected by this view : but to me it appears a ground of thanksgiving, to be made witnesses thus to the excellency and glory of Jehovah. Would any of you rejoice in the blessings of Grace, if their bestowment should cloud with suspicion the character of that Redeemer whom we love so tenderly ? Rather, welcome the pain and the sorrow which testify the immaculate holiness in God, which is itself the pledge of our own sanctification. Who will not esteem it a privilege, by short-lived distress, to silence the slander which ventures to suggest that God tarnishes His purity by His grace to the sinner, and compromises His integrity in the pardon which He confers ?

II. *It is not the design of Grace to take evil out of the world, as to its being ; but only to destroy its penal character, and to convert it into an instrument of spiritual discipline.* It is a mistaken view of Grace, to suppose the contrary. Take poverty, for example : I speak of poverty that is truly such, the poverty that grinds. Unquestionably it is, in itself, a sore evil under the sun. Undoubtedly it was, at the first, penally inflicted—and is comprehended within the curse which doomed the earth to briars and thorns, and man himself to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. But is poverty taken out of the lot of the pious ? “ Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him.” (James, ii : 5.) Does not this poverty haunt them like a lean and hungry spectre, griping them with its cares, and consuming them with its toils ? Grace does not remove poverty from the children of God, but transfigures it. It no longer comes upon the Christian as a judicial curse, but as paternal chastisement. It weans the affections from the weak and beggarly elements of this world ; and teaches the child of God, by constant and severe self-denial, to live as a stranger and a pilgrim on earth, looking to the crown which is

imperishable at God's right hand in heaven. Just so, with all the other evils in life—with pain, and sickness, and bereavement, and loss—with even our sensitive appetites, hunger and thirst and lust. Does God take any of them away from the Christian? Are they not all made instruments of greater or less torture to the child of God? But, are they not all overruled by the sovereignty and power of divine grace, so that the believer shall become purified and made meet for the saints' inheritance in light? Death then falls precisely into this category. Nay, it is the generic term in which all the others are included. When God visits death upon the body of the Christian, therefore, it no more concludes against the completeness of his acceptance in the Lord Jesus, than does his hunger, or his thirst, or his sickness, or his pain, or his poverty, or any other of the thousand evils with which God afflicts this life, and through which he prepares us for the blessedness of heaven.

III. *The body of the Christian must die in order to its sanctification, that it may be fitted for the world of glory.* The body is a constituent part of us. It is the union of matter and spirit that places man precisely where he is found in the scale of being. Because man has a reasonable soul, therefore he is distinguished from the brutes beneath him. Because this reasonable soul dwells in a body of flesh, therefore is man discriminated from the angels above him. We are justified therefore in paying a due respect to each constituent part of our essential being. I, for one, have not a particle of sympathy with the transcendental spiritualism, which affects to disparage or to despise the body. Is it not as truly the product of creative power as the soul, and does not the Psalmist declare that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made;" and that "in God's book all our members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them?" (Psalm cxxxix: 14, 16.) Is not this body as truly redeemed by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the soul dwelling within it? Is it not, equally with the soul, an heir of glory at God's right hand hereafter? The sentiment, which is excited within us whenever we behold beauty of form and of countenance, is instinctive and natural. There is a principle in our nature which leads us to cherish and adorn the body, so that it shall be rendered attractive to our own eyes and to the eyes of others around us in life. Within proper limits, it is a healthful instinct; and becomes sinful only when pushed into the self-idolatory which lavishes upon the creature that homage which is due only to the Creator. This natural reverence for the body the Apostle uses, in a glorified form, when he pleads for our physical purity on the ground that the body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, being sanctified by

His indwelling; and that to abuse it to purposes of sin would really involve us in the guilt of sacrilege. (I Cor. vi: 15, 19).

But alas! my hearers, this body is already defiled by sin. If then it is to be united with the spirit and enter upon the joys of the Upper Kingdom, it must be sanctified no less than the soul itself. This sanctification, however, must be adapted to its nature—it must be a *material* sanctification. You will discover too, a complete analogy between the change which Grace accomplishes in the soul, and that which is wrought upon the body, in fitting both for Heaven. The foundation of all holiness is laid in the new life which is imparted to the soul, when quickened by the Holy Ghost in the act of regeneration. The body is disintegrated in the grave, returning to the dust of which it was originally composed, that a new life may be communicated to it in the morning of the resurrection. It is through the agency of the same Divine Spirit, the change is effected in both. If the Holy Ghost breathes into the soul the life which is treasured in Christ, the Redeemer—He no less quickens the mouldering body anew in Christ, who is the Resurrection and the Life. In both alike this blessed agent continues forever to abide—expanding, diffusing this life through the faculties and members of both—until at length it brightens with both into the glory of God's presence beyond.

To all this transfiguration of the body, death is first necessary. As under the old Dispensation, a house infected with leprosy was first dismantled—stone being taken from stone, and beam from beam—and was not rebuilt, until each part had been carefully scraped, so as to remove the fretting disease; so God takes down “the earthly house of this tabernacle”—limb from limb and joint from joint—until it has gone back to the dust from which it was first fashioned. In the grave, as His laboratory. He purges it of the stain of sin—and rebuilds it a *spiritual* body, the fit receptacle of a glorified spirit, and a suitable organ for the spiritual employments and joys of the spiritual world. “Flesh and blood,” says the Apostle, “cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.” “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” (I Cor. xv: 50, 53, 54). As the basis of all these wonderful utterances, you have from his inspired lips the weighty proposition “there is a *natural* body, and there is a *spiritual* body.” (Ibid. v. 44) We may be incompetent here to determine the properties of the latter. But the believer shall certainly realize both, as the one is hereafter trans-

figured into the other. For hear the Apostle further, "as we have borne the image of the Earthy, we shall also bear the image of the Heavenly. (V. 49). United with "the first Adam," who was only "a living soul," we fell with him under the power of that death in which his life was extinguished. But united by grace with "the second Adam," we shall find Him to be "a quickening spirit"—as truly in the resurrection of the body, as in the renewal and sanctification of the soul. The Holy Ghost will keep His constant and precious vigil over our sleeping dust, until our glorified forms shall be raised to be forever with the Lord.

Just then because soul and body are necessary to constitute us men, we must in both be redeemed by the blood of Jesus, and must in both be sanctified by the power of the Holy Ghost. The same necessity exists for the one, as for the other: or else the corruptible shall never put on incorruption, and shall be forever barred from the kingdom of God. In death is laid the foundation of this material sanctification, in which the fretting leprosy of sin is removed from our flesh; and the spiritual house is built up, in which the glory of God may be revealed forever.

IV. *The sudden translation of believers without death, would subvert the principle of grace, which is the ground principle of the whole gospel scheme.* I certainly need not elaborate the proposition, that faith underlies every act of our religious life. Why, my hearers, the salvation which was accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ would never have been known to us, but for God's testimony which we receive by faith. There could be no appropriation of Christ's righteousness so as to make it our own, if it were not for a divine faith wrought within us by the Holy Ghost. Nay, the very truths which form the ribs of the Christian system, are incomprehensible by human reason. From their nature, as truths which concern the infinite and the eternal, they lift themselves above the orbit in which the human mind makes its sweep. How can these mysteries of God be known except through the operation of faith—a principle, therefore, which in the very constitution of the human soul is co-ordinated with reason; nay, in one sense the superior power, as furnishing the antecedent data upon which the processes of reasoning themselves are founded. It is this principle of faith which guides and rules through the whole Gospel as it is applied to us by the Holy Ghost. Says Paul, "the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Gal. ii: 20.) Says the same Apostle, "without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. (Heb. xi: 6.)

Now, my brethren, see how this faith is brought to its severest test in the moment of the believer's death. The very first movement of the new life within him was an act of faith, resting upon the atonement of his blessed Lord; and so being justified by that faith, he came to have peace with God. All the succeeding steps of the Christian course have been repetitions of this act of faith, until he reaches that step which must be the last. Just then, amidst the agonies of dissolving life, must he commend his departing spirit, as did the Master before him, saying: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit:" and just then, as the parting breath bears the spirit upward, must he resign the perishing body to the covenant faithfulness of Him who says "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction." (Hos. xiii: 14.) At the last, faith in Christ, and in the promises of His covenant is put to the severest test; as the spirit breaks away from the body to which it is accustomed, and lays it in the tomb until the morning of the resurrection.

Then see how it is as to the unconverted. God has written His will in His word. Whether men will believe this revelation or not, God gives them nothing else; and He will hold them to a stern responsibility for their choice in the case. He shuts up the sinner to the testimony of His word; and so resolved is He to hold him to simple faith in this testimony, that He will put no visible difference betwixt the righteous and the wicked in this life, nor until they shall reach the judgment bar. Rich, full, free as may be the evidence which God affords to His children of their adoption into His family, it is a secret which is hid within the folds of their own experience. In the outward appearance, the saint and the sinner move along arm in arm, and hand in hand; both subjected to the same trials, passing through the same temptations, undergoing the same conflicts, and at last sinking under the power of the last enemy, which is death.

Suppose now that, like Enoch and Elijah, every Christian was taken up bodily from earth into heaven, would there not be the constant intervention of the supernatural; which, however necessary to establish the scheme of grace, would be utterly inconsistent with the working of it, superseding the faith which God requires in His written word? However then we may mourn over the obscuration of the evidence of our salvation by the great trial of death, we can see a reason for the dispensation. God, by this arrangement, sustains to the end that principle of faith, upon which the sinner must stand for his salvation.

V. *The successive translation of believers, without dying, would anticipate the decisions of the judgment day, and rob the resurrection morn of its glory.* Of course, should God put this visible distinction betwixt them

and the wicked, we would all know, in this world, the eternal destinies of both. My hearers, could we bear it? Could either the righteous or the wicked endure, in this world, the full revelation of the issues of eternity? As long as we are upon the earth, we must exist in the midst of human relationships and must be clothed with these human sympathies. I cannot allow myself to push the thought into its details. The specifications would be too painful for me to utter or for you to hear. But each one of you is competent to do this for himself. Would not these premature discoveries of the issues of the judgment and eternity, disintegrate society and unfit every human being for the earthly duty which he is to perform here? Would not the pious, looking at the glory that is beyond as a matter of sense, be so deadened to earthly things by a species of paralysis, as to be unable to take up the trusts and duties of this world? And would not the wicked by the constant inspection of all those mighty mysteries, be hardened into utter insensibility and thus be unfit for repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ? Beings, who are constructed for one sphere, cannot prematurely assume the responsibilities and conditions of another sphere. Before the translation from the sphere below to the sphere above, there must be an adjustment of the powers which belong to us, fitting us for the duties and relations which we must sustain in the presence of God there.

Then, too, the day of resurrection and of judgment is the day of our Saviour's formal and public vindication—a vindication rendered necessary by the very grace of which he is the author, and which men abuse as though it were a license to sin. The correspondence is minute between the Saviour's humiliation and exaltation. But I can only pause to say, that the day of resurrection and of judgment is the day of our Lord's solemn coronation; when, in the presence of the assembled universe, the crown of glory is placed upon His head. Shall this glory be given to us piece-meal? As generation after generation disappears through the gates of death, shall we anticipate in detail the decisions of that solemn judgment? Or, my hearers, shall God shut up all those destinies, until He, who has power to open the book, and to break the seals thereof, shall "sit upon the throne of His glory," and shall pronounce the sentences from which there can be no appeal throughout the ages of eternity?

Upon all these grounds, however the present evidence of our acceptance in Christ may be obscured by our subjection to temporal death, yet the arrangement is in perfect harmony with all the principles of the gospel of the grace of God.

There is, my hearers, a natural and indescribable horror attaching to death. The reckless flippancy, with which men allow themselves to speak of a doom in itself so dreadful, is unspeakably revolting. Think of all the shame and humiliation of one's last illness; when human strength gives way and even "the great Cæsar cries out, like a sick girl, give me some drink." Think of the closing of the eye upon this beautiful world. Think of the spirit within, like an imprisoned bird, beating against the bars of its cage to find some egress in obeying the summons which calls it upward. Think of the gurgling sound of escaping life, of the solemn stretching of the body to its death stature, of the folding of the hands upon the breast, of being lowered into the dark earth. Think of the sod with its sullen thud falling, like a half-muttered curse, upon the bosom of the dead—and then of lying in the dank sweat of the grave, until we go back to the dust of which we are fashioned. Oh God! by that instinct of life which Thou hast planted within us, the doom is dreadful which Thou hast pronounced upon sinning man!

My hearers, it would be intolerable, were it not for a Divine light shed upon these dismal thoughts from the holy scriptures. Were it not for the eye of faith with which we are able to see all this in the light of Divine Revelation, our souls would be oppressed with fright and horror. But when we come to think that we are only lying where Jesus lay—that He, the blessed Lord, went down before us and laid His own covenant as the pillow upon which our throbbing heads might rest in the sweet, deep sleep of the tomb; that we lie there only that we may pass through a sanctification, making the body "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light;" that it is kept in waiting only for a little time, to adorn the hour of our Lord's triumph when He "shall come to be glorified in His saints, and admired in them that believe; I solemnly declare, in view of all this, one finds courage even to die. Hence the triumphant challenge breaks from the believer's lips in the agony of nature's last hour, "oh death where is thy sting, oh grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks to be to God which giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord." Glory to God, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, for these pæans of victory, with which even in death, the Saints seize the immortal crown which they wear as conquerors in Heaven forever! Thus it is we are made "more than conquerors through Him that loved us." For we are "persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor power, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. viii: 38, 39.)



Oh, impenitent men, do you not see the difference between those who fall asleep in Jesus, and those who are plunged into the deep death from which there is to be no release through the ages to come? Ah, that you could appreciate it in time to seize the salvation! My dear hearers, this world is nothing; all its kingdoms are nothing; its conflicts are nothing. The soul, eternity, God, redemption! Oh, when these cease to be mere sounding words, and become to you absorbing realities—then will you find that it is worth all the pain and sorrow you have ever known, if these have taught you to look upon the things which are unseen and eternal. If there be anything that is certain to you, it is death. If there be any certainty beyond death, it is that you shall rise again. And they who rise, rise to stand either at the right hand or at the left hand of the Judge. They rise either to hear the voice saying “come ye blessed of my Father,” or the voice saying “depart ye cursed into everlasting fire.” I beseech you by the difference in the resurrection, as well as the difference in the death, and still more by the difference between the righteous and the wicked in the solemn judgment—that you will to-day lay hold upon life, as it is offered to you in the Gospel. But remember, “he that being often reprovèd, hardeneth his heart, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy.” (Prov. xxix: 1.)

## XVII.

### DEATH OF BELIEVERS NO EVIDENCE AGAINST THEIR JUSTIFICATION.—CONTINUED.

ROMANS VIII : 10, 11 : “ *And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin ; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*”

The repetition of these words, this morning, admonishes you of the resumption of the theme partially discussed last Sabbath. The broken thread is easily taken up. The Apostle had affirmed the completeness of our justification by faith in Jesus Christ ; “ there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” Against this conclusion it is plausibly urged that death is the penalty of sin, and believers die as certainly and as universally as other men. But, rejoins the Apostle, *it is only the body that dies* ; which is so far from exhausting the penalty originally declared against sin, that it concludes nothing against our acceptance before God. This, you will remember, is the point which was discussed on the last Sabbath. Moreover, adds Paul, even *this dominion of death over the body is brief*. It is this second branch of the reply, which we are now to consider.

Clearly, the death of the body is no evidence against our justification, if it has the promise of a resurrection. This the Apostle then proceeds to establish in verses from the eighteenth to the twenty-third, inclusive ; in which by a brilliant personification he introduces the whole creation as looking, with eager anticipation, for “ the manifestation of the sons of God.” What this ‘ manifestation ’ was in the mind of the Apostle, abundantly appears—when “ they which have the first fruits of the Spirit groan within themselves, waiting for the adoption, to-wit, the redemption of their body.” Death may for a little obscure and postpone the evidence of the believer’s salvation ; but it will be more signally and publicly declared hereafter. What the Holy Spirit assures to the Christian himself, when He “ bears witness with his Spirit that He is a child of God,”—will, by the resurrection of the body in the last day, be assured to the universe at large.

It is remarkable what emphasis is put in the New Testament upon the

Resurrection. Paul preached it on Mars' Hill; and by it proved the superiority of Christianity over the vain superstitions, by whose symbols he was surrounded: "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent; because He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained: whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised him from the dead. And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, and others said, we will hear thee again of this matter." (Acts xvii: 30, 32.) Peter preached it in the streets of Jerusalem, and by it convicted the Jews of guilt in "crucifying the Lord of glory;" whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death—because it was not possible that He should be holden of it. \* \* \* He (David,) seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." (See Acts ii: 23–32, throughout.) Indeed, in all the recorded apologetic discourses of the Apostles, the fact of Christ's resurrection was made the point of departure; in the argument proving His Messiahship, this was the key-stone of the arch. Its importance, as a single doctrine, is constantly assumed; but still more, its significance as essential to the integrity of the Christian scheme; while, as a practical truth, it is urged as fraught with comfort to the persecuted and distressed. "For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body (body of humiliation) that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, (the body of His glory,) according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." (Phil. iii: 20, 21.) "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God—and the dead in Christ shall rise first; \* \* \* wherefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thes. iv: 14–18.)

We shall feel no surprise at this stress laid upon the Resurrection as the signature of the whole scheme of grace, when we reflect that our associations are as truly with the body as with the spirit which is its tenant. In fact, we know nothing of our own spirits, save as they act through our bodily organs; and we hold communion with the spirits of others, only through the bodily powers which they and we possess in common. Hence in thinking of our deceased friends, we never figure them as pure spirits—

for the sufficient reason that we have not the data upon which to frame the conception. We are under the necessity of reproducing them in the flesh, and with the forms in which we knew them upon earth. In this guise, they seem once more to mingle the current of their lives with our own; and under the combined power of memory and imagination, they are as real to our thought as though they actually subsisted. At the same time, death works a strange transfiguration in the forms which are thus reproduced. With a sanctifying virtue, it glorifies the beloved image standing before us, as it were, against the back ground of the past. Every fault which may have marred the symmetry of the character, is either eliminated or else transmuted into a virtue. Every blemish which may have blurred the beauty of the form, is painted out from the picture, or is touched with the pencil into a feature of loveliness. This combined power of reproducing, and yet of glorifying, the bodily presence of our dear dead, I construe as a prophecy and a pledge, which God has imbedded in our very constitution, of that Resurrection which is promised in His word. If any deny that it is possible, we reply by this typical image of it produced by our own thought, which answers to it as the shadow to the substance. So that, in the face of all the objections by which it may be theoretically assailed, it is a truth the most easily received and the most tenaciously held. I may be allowed to say in passing, however great the outcry against the mysteries of the Gospel, the fact is that they are precisely the truths the most easily and firmly believed. Account for it as we may, there is the incontrovertible fact—the things which transcend the province of reason, and which can only be accepted by faith, are borne in upon us with a conviction as strong as the conclusions which are sealed by the most rigorous demonstration. Surround, for example, the doctrine of the Resurrection with all the difficulties suggested by the most inventive scepticism, yet it could not be eliminated from the Sacred Record without making a chasm which would form a strong presumption against its inspiration. If it were not there, we should feel such a sense of defect as would render us more than suspicious of its divine origin. The resurrection of the body is so exactly correlated with the soul's immortality, that we perceive at once how, through ignorance of it, the heathen notions of a future state should be unsatisfactory and vague.

I do not propose, however, to discuss now the whole doctrine of the Resurrection; but only to enlarge the two grounds upon which it is based in the text, to-wit: *the connexion between the believer and Christ, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.* Let us examine, a little in detail, both branches of the argument.

I. THE BODY OF THE SAINT WILL BE RAISED, BECAUSE EQUALLY REDEEMED BY CHRIST AND EQUALLY, WITH THE SOUL, UNITED TO HIM. It is remarkable that, in the text, there should be a double reference to the resurrection of our Lord: "if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead will also quicken your mortal bodies." Why this circumlocution, in a book so remarkable for its terseness as the Bible? The Apostle's thought would seem to be sufficiently expressed, had he written "if the Spirit of God dwell in you, God will also quicken your mortal bodies." In place, however, of this well-known appellative, he uses, in both instances, the unusual periphrasis, "He that raised up Jesus from the dead." The reason is that, in both these clauses, he is directing the mind of the reader, not to the *efficient*, but to the *formal*, cause of the resurrection. He means to tell us, not *how* we are to be raised, but *why*. This is to be found in the relation we sustain to the Lord Jesus; and, to impress it more strongly, it is twice repeated in close connexion. The truth is precious enough to be elucidated with some fulness.

(1.) *The body, as a constituent part of us, must be as truly redeemed by Christ as the soul.* The complex nature of man, consisting both of matter and spirit, I had occasion to establish in the preceding discourse. It will be sufficient, therefore, only to remind you of what was delivered in that connection. Indeed, so necessary are both these dissimilar elements to the constitution of man, that the destruction of either would be equivalent to his annihilation. The destruction of his animal part would merge him into the class of being which is purely spiritual, and he would cease to be man. The destruction of the soul would equally degrade him to the level of the brute; and he would no longer exist as an intermediate link, binding the world of sense to the world of intelligence and thought. The separation, therefore, between the soul and the body is unnatural; and hence the horror of death which we all constitutionally and instinctively feel. It may be safely assumed that whatever is natural to us, soothes and delights. The pleasure which is given, forms a part of the Creator's original design—the nature within us being fitted to the nature without—the one returning exactly the response which the other awakens. Look, for example, at sleep, the very counterfeit and image of death—coming upon us with its stealthy and muffled tread, benumbing the faculties, sealing up the senses one by one, until we are securely locked in utter unconciousness. Yet though it come in death's own mask, and counterfeits death's own triumph, how sweetly it drowns us with the deliciousness of repose. It was a part of our original constitution, whereby

the flagging energies should be repaired ; and therefore it is welcomed as "tired nature's sweet restorer." But death supervened upon the economy which was at first established ; and because it unnaturally divides what God put together, the recoil from his approach is instinctive and universal. No stronger proof is needed that the body is an essential part of our complex being, than the anguish felt in its parting from the soul.

If then Christ came to redeem man, this grace must extend to the body no less than to the spirit. He could not, otherwise, be redeemed *as man*. The "true body" and the "reasonable soul" being united in him, it would be anomalous if the one-half of his complex nature should lie under the curse, from which the other half has been effectually delivered. The conclusion is irresistible that if the one has been redeemed, so must the other : and neither of the two can remain under the power of death, from which both alike have been released. As the body, however, perishes before our eyes, there is no escape from the contradiction but in the assurance of the resurrection. Admitting the fact of temporal death, the believer's resurrection becomes the corollary of his redemption : since only in this is the dominion of death overturned, and the triumph of redeeming grace assured and proclaimed.

(2.) *Christ assumed human nature, body as well as soul, and we are united to Him in both.* "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself, likewise took part of the same ; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil—and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily He took not upon Him the nature of angels, but He took upon Him the seed of Abraham." (Heb. ii: 14-16.) The testimony is emphatic : He "partook of flesh and blood"—to the end that He might undergo the death, which was to be the death of death. Without this incarnation, He could not have been a Saviour. In the body He must suffer ; in the body He must die ; with the body He must descend into the tomb ; in the body He must rise upon the third day ; with the body He must ascend visibly into heaven, and with it He must come again and sit upon the throne of universal judgment.

In all this, however, He acts not as an individual person, but as the Representative and Head of His people. "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." (Romans, vi: 5.) "Now is Christ risen from the dead," says the Apostle, "and become the first fruits of them tha

slept. (I Cor. xv: 20.) But the first fruits is the pledge of the harvest, being a portion of it — “Christ the first fruits; afterward, they that are Christ’s at His coming.” (Ibid, v. 23.) His ascension into heaven includes our own: and in His glorified form is treasured the life, which will render immortal and glorious the bodies of all His redeemed. The short triumph of death over the believer’s flesh is apparent rather than real. It may turn the soul out of the body, and the body into the grave; but it has no power to separate either the one, or the other, from the life which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Our bodies, slumbering in the tomb, are still united with the body of Christ living and glorified in heaven; and must in due time be quickened into the spiritual body,” to be forever with Him in His glory. The resurrection of the Saint therefore results from his vital union with his Lord, according to the testimony which declares that “we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.” (Eph. v: 30.)

(3.) *The curse of sin has fallen upon the body, as well as upon the soul, equally necessitating its redemption.* In the double denunciation which God pronounced upon man, after the Fall, the curse came upon male and female, the two grand divisions of the entire race; and it was, in both, put distinctly upon the flesh. In all the generations, the woman bows beneath the curse of sorrow—and man, beneath the curse of toil. “In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children,” is spoken to the one; and to the other, “cursed is the ground for thy sake—in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou return unto the ground.” (Gen. iii: 16–18.)

If the body, as a constituent part of our being, must share in the redemption of the entire man, how much stronger becomes the argument when the curse of the broken law is visibly impressed upon it? If too it be thoroughly implicated in all the sins which are committed, as the instrument of the soul, the necessity for its redemption is so much the more apparent. In this connexion, it may well challenge your attention that the Apostle not only affirms the resurrection of the body, but distinctly assigns this to the operation of Grace: “Ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the ADOPTION, to-wit, the REDEMPTION of our body.” (Rom. viii: 23.) The language of grace describes what is wrought upon the flesh, precisely as it describes what is accomplished in the spirit. If the Christian may claim adoption into God’s family, it is the privilege of his body no less than of the soul. Should the evidence of this be hidden for a time, he must “wait” for it through the long night in which it sleeps in the grave, until “the manifestation of the Sons of God.” To make

the assurance of this resurrection doubly sure, this "adoption" of the body is identified with its "redemption." The use of the same terminology places the body and the soul in the same relation to the work of the Saviour: and makes the life of both to be the life which He has recovered from forfeiture under the law, as the Redeemer of both.

(4.) *The Scriptures bear special testimony to the redemption of the body, and to its union with Christ.* However inconclusive our reasoning may be, no doubt can cloud the testimony of the inspired word. Hear the proclamation from the lips of the great prophet of the Old Testament: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my; dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." (Isa. xxvi: 19.) Turn next to the great Apostle of the New Testament. In Romans i: 3, 4, he speaks "concerning Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." So then the Sonship of our blessed Lord was for a little obscured, when he was made subject to death and was buried in the tomb. But that Sonship was declared with the greater power, by His resurrection from the dead on the third day. Parallel with this put the testimony in Romans viii: 19, 23: from which it appears that they, who are sons of God by adopting love, must wait for the manifestation of their sonship also. The comparison between the two makes it evident, not only that the resurrection is included in the believer's "adoption" and "redemption," but that as the public proof of both, it will wipe out the suspicion which death may have cast upon either.

In the remarkable passage, in which the Apostle illustrates the conjugal relation by that subsisting between Christ and the Church, he declares explicitly that "we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones." (Eph. v: 30.) Language could not more accurately define our union with Christ in the body, which must cause it to share in His resurrection and life. The same fact is affirmed in I Cor. vi: 15—where the force of the argument for bodily purity turns upon our union with Christ in the flesh: "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid." The exhortation is directed against a sin of the flesh; which is shown to be the profanation of that which had been rendered sacred by its union with the Redeemer. The inference then cannot be evaded: if the body be redeemed and united with Christ, its death must be temporary, and the resurrection is a necessity.



II. We turn now to the second branch of Paul's dual argument: THE BODY OF THE SAINT WILL BE RAISED, BECAUSE OF THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY GHOST. Here again, as before, observe the double reference to the fact itself: "if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." The reason is obvious. He points to the agency of the Holy Spirit, by which the resurrection is accomplished; and as His indwelling presence is the guarantee of it, he puts upon the statement the emphasis of a quick repetition. What then is the import of the Holy Spirit's indwelling, which makes it pledge the resurrection of the body?

(1.) *Because it is the Holy Ghost's prerogative to impart life.* The reserve of the Scriptures is so great upon the internal relations of the God-head, as to forbid all human speculation. There can be no haughtier presumption, than the attempt to tear away the veil beneath which God is pleased in this life to conceal any thing from our gaze. Even the glorious mystery of His triune subsistence is unfolded to us, only in its connection with the scheme of redemption; and only so far as may elucidate the principles upon which a sinner's religion is based. The instant it becomes the subject of mere speculative inquiry, it is shrouded in impenetrable darkness. Still, with all this reserve, there are sufficient hints of a distinct function assigned to each, in all their joint operations. The office of the Holy Ghost is that of a *quickenner*. Whilst the Son immediately creates, so that "the things which are seen are not made of things which do appear; the Holy Ghost efficiently communicates life to the creature, in every form in which that life is found. At the original creation, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." (Gen. i: 2.) His quickening energy diffused life and movement through the inert chaos, by which the elements separated themselves in the successive works of the six days. We may not evaporate the statement, as though "the Spirit of God" means only the Divine breath; any more than we can sink "the Word of God" into the Divine voice. These peculiar names of the two Divine persons are derived from the functions of their respective offices. The efficient Creator of all things is styled "the Word," because His power brings the universe into being as immediately as by a call of the voice. And so the efficient life-giver is styled the Spirit, because the breath is at once the sign of life, and the medium by which it exists.

It exalts our conceptions of His blessed agency, to recognize in the Holy Spirit the source of life in its manifold operations and forms. He is the author of physical life: from the atom which floats in the sunbeam

and is descried only through the microscope, to the angel whom John standing in the sun—all have their life, as it is given and is upheld by Him whose office it is to quicken. Not less is He the author of intellectual life, in all the grades of being in all worlds. He who paves, with his ponderous logic, the more than Roman highway upon which thought and truth travel together through the universe; and the swift genius which soars upon its wing, until it perches upon the stars and sings with poetry and song to the listening and entranced centuries; all this strength of reason and brilliancy of imagination owe their triumphs to the informing and actuating energy of the Spirit of God. And how this Holy Ghost breathes into the sinner the breath of spiritual life by which he becomes a “new creature in Christ Jesus,” it is the blessed privilege of the pulpit constantly to unfold. If then life is to be restored to the body, after temporary subjection to death, it can only be through the agency of Him whose function it is to bestow it wherever it is found.

(2.) *The Holy Ghost is the bond by which the believer is united with Jesus Christ.* We have already seen how this union, in body and soul, with His Divine Head, is the real ground of the resurrection. But then how is this union effected? The first movement must be from the Redeemer, to the being whom He has purchased as His own. The Holy Ghost, under His commission and seal, applies the salvation which has been procured. He lifts the sinner from the hole of the pit into which he is fallen, renews him after the image of Christ, and then dwells within him as the Spirit of holiness, until it shall expand into the glory and joy of the heavenly state. This is the way by which Christ comes to be found in us, “the hope of glory.” But the instinctive movement of the new nature thus begotten within us, is toward Christ as the object of its trust and love: and thus by faith we are found in Christ. These then are the reciprocal bonds by which the believer and his Lord are brought together as one party. Christ in us by the Holy Spirit, for sanctification; and we in Christ by faith, for justification; these are the two poles, which united complete the circuit of grace, the two parts which compose the salvation revealed to us in the gospel.

But if the Holy Ghost be the bond uniting the body as well as the soul to Christ, we see at once how His indwelling within the believer becomes the pledge of the resurrection. Hence, throughout the Scriptures, the body is represented as given in trust to the Holy Spirit, until the Lord shall come again to be glorified in His risen Saints. He keeps a perpetual vigil over it, as it slumbers in the grave. Like the body of Wiclif it may be reduced to ashes—and these may be thrown into the Avon, which shall

bear them into the Severn, and the Severn into the Thames, and the Thames into the broad ocean—or it may be like the dust which is blown to the four corners of the earth—yet will the Omnipresent Spirit guard the sacred treasure, and build again the body which is declared to be the member of Christ.

(3.) *The body of the Saint is the temple of the Holy Ghost dwelling within it.* “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” (1 Cor. iii: 16, 17.) “What! Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own.” (Ibid. vi: 19.) By the urgency of the same truth, does the Apostle dissuade from idolatrous and sinful associations; “for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” (II Cor. vi: 16.)

But a temple may be in ruins; and these ruins may impress the imagination even more than when the proud structure stood before the eye in its stately grandeur. The traveler, who views the prostrate columns and the broken arches, amid the ruins of Palmyra or of Thebes, feels his heart oppressed with the gloom which, like a shroud, wraps within its folds the faded past. And the body, dismantled and dissolving in the grave, is a temple still, though it be a temple in ruins. Even there, the Holy Spirit dwells in the dust to which it is reduced at last: who must restore it in more than its former splendor, as the temple in which His glory may abide forever.

(4.) *The Holy Spirit is the sanctifier; and, by virtue of this office, will raise the bodies of them that sleep in Jesus.* In last Sabbath's discourse I had occasion to show the nature of that sanctification which the bodies of the redeemed must undergo, as well as the necessity for it, and the method by which it is wrought. It is only required to follow out the thought, from this point, into its logical results. In the scheme of grace, the work of sanctification falls within the Holy Spirit's province of applying to the sinner the redemption of Christ. This then relates the body, as well as the soul, to his office and influence. But as this sanctification can be accomplished only by the disintegration of the flesh into its separate particles, the reconstruction of them into the living form once more is the only evidence that the work is completed. This yields the resurrection; and what is more, it yields a resurrection in glory. Thus upon its own line of proof, the sanctification of the body must issue in its glorifica-

tion, precisely as when the Divine Spirit works out the same result for the soul which is its tenant. And for this we have the special testimony of the Written Word: "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory, it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory." (I Cor. xv: 42-44, 54.) In the resurrection of our Lord and Head, we have the model of this wonderful transfiguration: "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." (Phil. III: 21.) The Holy Ghost, who dwells within the believer as the Spirit of holiness, will at last reveal Himself also as the Spirit of glory.

Two important inferences press for our acceptance, from this discourse.

(1.) *These moral grounds of the resurrection satisfy us of its certainty, and bear us over all the difficulties by which it is invested.* It requires little invention to perplex the discussion of this mysterious subject, with questions which admit of no satisfactory reply. Not however, because no answer is possible; but simply that, for the present, it is unknown to us. All the objections which have ever been urged against the resurrection of the body, are objections drawn from our ignorance, not from our knowledge—a consideration well suited to moderate the dogmatism which sometimes pronounces against its possibility. I feel no solicitude for the truth of the doctrine, or for the possibility of the fact, in view either of the physical, or the metaphysical, difficulties which assail it from the side either of science or philosophy. Men may enlarge, as they please, upon what they call the constitution of nature, and the opposition which the resurrection encounters from this source. Who can tell us what are the potencies and possibilities which lie hid within this very constitution, to be evolved as matters of science under the new conditions necessary to their development? Considering the numerous and exquisite analogies in nature which seem prophetic of the resurrection, it would be unsafe to assume that we have reached the boundary of all knowledge in regard to this constitution of nature itself. If a reply so conjectural as this, be declined—it is wholesome to rejoin, that a mere hypothesis is often sufficient to dislodge an objection which is founded upon the confessed limitations of our knowledge.

But what if the Resurrection should fall outside of the present order of

things, which our science so positively assumes to be inviolable? The end shall have come, when "the trumpet shall sound, and all who are in their graves shall come forth." Where then is the force of objections drawn from a system, which is being dissolved at the very moment the event occurs to which it is thought to be opposed? If there be no provision in the constitution of nature, by which the resurrection shall emerge out of its ruins—who will be bold enough to say it cannot be provided for in the new order and condition of things which shall supervene upon the old? The resurrection clearly belongs to that new system of nature, in which, "according to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (II Pet. iii: 13.) It is sufficient for us, that the resources of God's power are equal to the exigencies of the case. And with His testimony, we are not oppressed by the consideration of any difficulties that shall be too great for His omnipotence. But when it is further seen that the entire scheme of Grace is overthrown without the resurrection, the moral necessity thus established becomes the proof upon which the mind reposes with the absolute certainty of its accomplishment.

(2.) *The comfort is precious which flows from this truth, in view of death both to ourselves and to those whom we love.* Let us learn to lay the victory over against the defeat. What harm can death to one who is vitally united to Him "who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel?" (II Tim., i: 10:) Even in the grave, the body is still the "member of Christ:" and He, who styles Himself "The Resurrection and the Life," treasures both in His own glorified form, to be given in due season to all them that sleep in Him. Hear His royal proclamation: "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." (Rev. i: 18.) The horrible darkness of the grave is dispelled; for when He arose, He left the halo of His presence to disperse the gloom forever to His people. And the blessed Spirit too, does He not dwell within us, even in the grave? In His solemn watch over our sleeping dust, the promise of the Resurrection burns like a funeral taper in His hand—and the loneliness, as well as the darkness, of the tomb is broken to the Saint forever.

In those hours of bereavement, when we kneel at the fresh made grave and break our hearts over what they hide from our sight—is it not pleasant to remember that they, whom we mourn, are not there? As they stepped down into the cold river, their feet rested upon the twelve stones of the covenant, and they followed the ark as it was borne upon the

shoulders of the priests,—until the Shining Ones conveyed them into the presence of the throne, before which they are now veiled in holy worship. And the body which is so dear to us, as the organ and interpreter of the soul, only sleeps till the morning breaks and “the shadows flee away.” With all the sense of pain and loss, can we not “comfort one another with these words?”

“Hark! to the solemn bell,  
Mournfully pealing;  
What do its wailings tell,  
On the ear stealing?  
Seem they not thus to say,  
Loved ones have passed away?  
Ashes with ashes lay,  
List to its pealing.

“When in their lonely bed,  
Loved ones are lying;  
When joyful wings are spread,  
To Heaven flying:  
Would we to sin and pain,  
Call back their souls again,  
Weave round their hearts the chain  
Severed in dying?

“No, dearest Jesus, no;  
To thee, their Saviour,  
Let their free spirits go,  
Ransomed forever:  
Heirs of unending joy,  
Theirs is the victory;  
Thine let the glory be,  
Now and forever.”

Come then, O death, with all thy terrors! Wrap around thy spectral form all the gloom and darkness of the grave! Put thy cold hand upon us, and send the freeze even to the heart till it cease to throb! What, if we welcome thee with the language of triumph! Thou art at last our friend, to lead us over the brook to the home where our Lord is! “Oh death, where is thy sting! Oh grave, where is thy victory!” With this challenge sealed upon our lips, even as we fall beneath his shaft, we bless God for the privilege of death.



## XVIII.

### CHRIST'S JOY FULFILLED IN US.

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JOHN XVII, 3: "*And these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.*"

About two months since I opened a discourse by remarking the difficulty of expounding the Gospel of John, notwithstanding the transparent simplicity of his style. The reasons for this are two. In the first place, John is a seer. He arrives at truth by intuition, not by argument. He does not reason, he simply sees. And it is fitting that the Apostle who lay upon Jesus' bosom, and who is called the Disciple whom Jesus loved, should apprehend the truth quite as much through the sympathy of the affections as by the exercise of the understanding. In the highest and purest sense of the word, John was the mystic of the Apostolic college, as Paul was the logician. The latter goes down with his massive reasoning into the bosom of the law, and seizes the eternal principles of justice and of right, and holds them up before the eyes of men; and then he lays the whole work of Jesus Christ over against these, and establishes the fact of our justification in the sight of God. But the representation, you perceive, is external; we are able to apply the rule and the square to the whole of his reasoning, and thus to take the dimensions of his argument. We rise from the discussion with the assurance of having grasped, in all their majesty and proportion, the principles which were involved,—simply because they were presented to the logical understanding, and we have been able to go around the argument upon the four sides of the square. But John resembles more one of the prophets of the Old Testament, whom the Holy Spirit lifts to an elevated plane in order that he may just open his eyes and see; and, when he has seen, that he may stand forth as a witness and testify. He may not inaptly be styled the Ezekiel of the New Testament, whose words are symbols, obscurely understood by those whose experience does not rise to the level of his own. Upon this ground, there is an inherent difficulty in expounding his writings

Again, John, beyond all the writers of the New Testament, is a reporter of Christ's words: and what must be the words of such a being as Christ!



He, the sinless man ! whose judgment was never warped by prejudice ; whose reason was never blinded by passion ; whose power, of thought, of feeling and of action stand in the harmony of a perfect agreement, no one of them by the breadth of a hair overlapping the other. He, the Great Prophet too ! Not as Isaiah, with all his fire ; nor as Jeremiah, with all his pathos ; nor as Ezekiel, with all his ecstasy : but as the Head of the entire Prophetic Dispensation, from Enoch down to Malachi ; all of whom were implicitly contained in Him, and each severally deriving inspiration from Him. Not only this, but the very God, coming from the bosom of the Father, that he may reveal Him ! What shall be the words of this Revealer, but flashes of light from the person and being of Jehovah,—swifter than the lightning, more dazzling than the sun ? Look at the sun rising from the lap of the morning, gilding the mountain's top, sloping down its steep descent, filling every crevice in its side, and throwing at last a broad glory over a hemisphere—lighting up the clouds and unsubstantial air until they seem solid with the glory with which they are filled. Yet the sun is only God's work, while Jesus Christ is God himself.

Ah ! When He grasps one of the vast thoughts of God, and does that mighty miracle before us, of imprisoning it in a human word—and then sets that word in a book—what depth shall not that word have ? How shall it not part beneath our gaze, and let us down into the very abysses from which it was at first drawn up ? I have a long while ago got past the need of any external argument for the divinity of Jesus Christ. If a man tell me that Christ is not God—but only a man, or at best an angel, or perhaps a gifted prophet, I turn away from those cold speculations which chill the soul as with a polar atmosphere, and walk up and down in this warm Gospel of the beloved disciple. As I bend down my ear to these verses, I find them throbbing with the pulse of infinite life and love ; until it seems as though the echoes were rolling up from the deep eternity in which Jehovah dwells. We cease to reason ; thought glides into devotion ; and we feel that we are about ready to step from the heaven of John's Gospel, into the heaven of John's Apocalypse.

My hearers, I come to you this morning with one of these Christ-words : “ And these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” Christ's joy ! What mortal shall expound it ? Who shall mount into the consciousness of such a being as the God-man. so as to delineate His joy ? Who can stretch his thought around His complex person and take up the two lobes of His nature, who is presented in Scripture as the Christ of God ; and feel that he measures his consciousness, and is able to interpret Him to human thought ? And, if he should.

must not such a mortal die from sheer ecstasy? It seems wicked to take a strong word, like this in the text, and break it into fragments, just because we are incapable of comprehending it as a whole; as sometimes we take a pure beam of the sun and pass it through the prism. Sometimes, when we have counted the colors of the spectrum, pronouncing which are the heat rays, and which are the color rays, we conclude that after all we have added little to our knowledge, and find it best to combine all again, and send the white light forth upon its blessed mission to chase darkness and gloom from the earth. So, after we have analyzed this joy of our Redeemer, we may conclude that it is better to mass the fragments again into the one single idea, and share in the joy until we are intoxicated with it. Let me, then, present what I have to say this morning under four specifications.

I. *Look at the joy of Christ, in the consciousness of His sinless rectitude.* Even we, in our measure, can appreciate that subtle joy which steals through every fibre of our nature, under the consciousness of doing that which is right—and still more, under the consciousness of being that which is right. Just to the extent that one's moral nature has been cultivated, is the consciousness of rectitude, even though it be partial, a source of unutterable satisfaction. I scarcely know how to illustrate this, unless I compare it to the physical pleasure which diffuses itself over the whole body from the bare possession of physical life and health. Look at the young of animals,—not excepting your own children, as they sport around your knee at the fireside—how, in their gambols they exhibit a strange delight which thrills through every nerve and every muscle, from the simple fact that they live. The glow of health diffuses itself over the whole frame, as a source of exquisite pleasure. Were you ever sick? After a little, you feel it to be worth even the pain and the peril of sickness, to enjoy the luxury of convalescence; when God pours the tide of life back upon you, which had been receding, and which you feel tingling to your fingers' ends.

Well, carry the analogy, from the natural world into the spiritual, and see if there be not such a thing as the life of the soul, and the health of the soul. If a man feel within himself the power to do battle with the temptations of life, to spring over its trials and its sorrows—shall he not possess, in the bare consciousness of this spiritual vigor, a superb joy? I can only picture the thing to you by the illustration which I have employed: and then ask, what must have been the joy of our Lord in the consciousness of His own rectitude—in the serene consciousness of His holiness as God, and then, lying over against this, the sweet consciousness of His

sinlessness as man? It is written of Him, that He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." There was in Him the sense of perfect purity in both natures, as these were united in His mysterious person, which nothing could disturb. Deep as was the agitation of His spirit under the sin which was laid upon Him and for which He came to atone—and great as may have been His recoil from the sins of others with which He came in daily contact—there was a calm beneath in the hidden depths of His soul, which nothing could vex. Just as the ocean which appears to be stirred throughout, when the storm lifts up the waves and dashes them against the stars: and yet there are deeper depths, where the mermaids sing in the grottoes of pearl and know nothing of the boisterous battle which is waged upon the surface. Such a peace pervaded the whole life and thought of our Redeemer upon earth, in the sublime consciousness of His perfect purity and rectitude. I apprehend that we find here, in part at least, the secret of His frequent retirement from the bustling crowd; sometimes in the little family at Bethany, but still more often on the lonely mountain—where, in secret meditation, He spreads out His thought over the great work which He must discharge, yet infinitely full of joy in the perfect consciousness of His own obedience to His Father's will.

My brethren, are we able, on this earth, to share in this joy of our Lord? See how it comes to us through the rectification of our nature; when God's blessed spirit quickens us into spiritual life, and there comes upon us the first sweet sense of its possession.

Perhaps the first evidence of birth into the kingdom of God, is the blind instinctive joy which comes into the heart from the first possession of spiritual life. We do not instantly analyze it. That is to be tracked afterwards in the experience which lies beyond. But at the first, when the Holy Spirit overshadows us with His quickening energy, there is an inexpressible thrill of joy through the whole nature which has thus been made alive from a state of spiritual death.

Afterwards, this divine life deepens in the soul, in our progressive sanctification; until we come to the consummation of it, when, in the supreme hour, the Holy Spirit puts forth His divine energy once more, and changes grace into glory. When the life which He gave in the second birth, expands in the third—through which we are born into heaven and into glory—oh, then is Christ's joy fulfilled within us, the joy which springs from the possession of spiritual life and health; and of life and health diffused through the whole spirit and taking possession of

every faculty. "These things I speak in the world, that they might have *my joy fulfilled* in themselves."

II. *There is the joy of Christ, in the anticipation of His finished work.* One feels a strange pleasure when his work is done, and he can hold it up before his eye and look at it as the embodiment of himself. In proportion as the work is great and in its execution drew upon all the resources of our being, is the gratification supreme when it is finished. The vanity of authorship finds its explanation, perhaps its excuse, just here. It is surely a pardonable affection with which one looks upon the lines in which are treasured, not only the labor of many years, but the whole essence and virtue of his intellect and thought. The inventor, too, who holds before his eye a perfected machine, goes back in memory to the first rude conception formed in his mind, and traces the steps by which it gradually took shape, until now he rejoices in the glory of its completion. A man's work, upon which he has expended thought and care, is the reproduction of himself. With an honest pride he bequeathes it to the generations after him, and hopes through the wit of this invention to secure a name which posterity "will not willingly let die."

Apply the principle, so as by it to measure the joy of our Lord in the contemplation of His finished work. My hearers, what a work was His! It was to look out upon a lost world, and to redeem it. It was to heal forever the dreadful schism which sin had made in the universe, by throwing Himself into the breach and drawing the creatures to Him as their blessed Head. By His Spirit He lifted the sinner out of the hole of the pit in which he was fallen, and made him by faith the member of His own living body. He stretched forth His hand until it touched the angels in light, and recapitulated them in Himself—that by the blessed union of all in Him, an eternal foundation might be laid for the fellowship of the creatures. What a work was that of Christ, when He rendered an obedience even unto death, and laid this over against the law of His Father, as its absolute measure! In His body of glory, He went up into the presence of the Throne; and held before the Judge, who was pronouncing the decrees, a righteousness which is a perfect commentary upon a perfect law. If the law be glorious upon which Jehovah has stamped the majesty of His being, what shall the exposition be which stands over against it as the exact counterpart and interpretation thereof? What a work is that of Christ when, sitting upon the right hand of the Father on high, He shall impress the grace of which He is the author upon the substance and body of the law of God!—so that throughout eternity, it shall be the law of inflexible justice and truth tempered with infinite grace and love. It was in the

anticipation of these results, that our Lord utters His joy in the opening verses of this chapter from which the text is taken: "I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." (John, xvii: 4, 5.) We are told of the stern joy which is felt by the brave on the eve of battle—the deep excitement of one's nature, which is not manifested in tremors of the body, but in exhilaration of the spirit—that marvelous stiffening of one's energies, when a tremendous issue is to be closed within an hour, and the whole nature is summoned to meet the crisis. Even such an illustration as this may help us to understand a little how the Master, just as He enters within the edge of the dark cloud of His passion, was able to project Himself over the abyss of suffering and death, and to seize by a blissful anticipation the glory which lay beyond. He thought not of the shadows of Gethsemane nor the deeper horrors of Calvary, but of the glory which He had with the Father before the world was.

Is this a joy in which we, my brethren, shall be able to share? When the Spirit of Christ reveals to us the righteousness of our Head through which we are to become just before God, do we not in that disclosure behold its glory, and its perfect adaptation to our own necessity? And when the hand of appropriation has been laid upon it which makes it our own, is there not a sense of the sweetness of possession? It is a law of our nature to rejoice in what we acquire. We are constantly thrust from within, to lay hold upon the things which are without. The little child is happy in the possession even of the toys which it calls its own. It is this, I suppose, that lies at the foundation of that peace which we have in believing—the sense of possessing a righteousness which is ours simply because we are conscious that we have taken it. It was not ours in the doing of it, and this we fully know; but it is ours in the receiving of it, which our consciousness attests with equal distinctness. We have been enabled to put forth our two hands, to grasp it and to draw it up to our own breast. It is ours to plead against the accusations of conscience, whose sharp rebukes are at once silenced. It is ours to rest upon in the hour of death; when the curtain is drawn aside, revealing to us the awful realities of the spiritual world. It is ours to hold up before the Judge; when we stand at His bar, to answer to all the challenges of the law we have broken. It is ours, the robe of righteousness in which to wrap the soul, as we sit in the presence and kingdom of our Father above. Yes, in the moment that, by a divine faith, we appropriate this righteousness of Jesus Christ, it becomes our own, with as true a sense of proprietorship as

though we had wrought it for ourselves. In this joy of possession which fills the heart of the believer, the joy of Christ is fulfilled.

III. *Christ has a joy in His fellowship with the God-head.* I touch here what I cannot explain. No creature may intrude into the pavilion in which Jehovah dwells, so as to penetrate the mystery of the Divine subsistence and communion. But we do know, from the hints given us in Scripture, that in the distinction of persons, there is an exchange between the three of infinite and divine affection. So far as we are able to appreciate this play of a divine and boundless love between the Father, Son, and Spirit, are we able to comprehend the blessedness of Jehovah. Without undertaking, however, to compass this divine joy of Christ, as the Eternal Son, in His communion with the Father and with the Spirit, look upon Him as incarnate. How close a fellowship, even as man here on earth, did He have with His Father, enabling Him to say to Philip, "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" (John xiv: 9, 10.) In holy communion with that Father He poured out His soul in prayer, for strength to accomplish His blessed will: A communion with the Father, which perhaps is best measured to us by the agony which He experienced when at death He exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It is with special significance we read in the sufferings of our Lord, that the element of sorrow which broke His heart, was the turning away from Him of His Father's face, to bear alone the pressure of the curse. What then must have been the joy of the sinless Redeemer in His communion with His Father above—until that moment of anguish, when as the sinner's substitute, He must feel God's judicial displeasure resting upon his soul!

Is this then a joy, in which it is possible for us to share? The Apostle answers in the words, "Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." (I John, i: 3.) We, by the Holy Spirit, have the witness of our adoption into God's family, which enables us to say, "Our Father which art in heaven!" "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father." (Romans, viii: 15) Just so often as in the closet you and I are able to say "Our Father which art in heaven," we hold a communion with Him as real as that of a child with his parent upon earth. When this is consummated beyond the grave,—and we, through our living union with Christ, draw nearer and nearer to the Father and have larger and broader views of His glory,—then will it appear that our communion with God is immeasurably closer through our blessed Head.

than could have been enjoyed through all eternity apart from Him. The loftiest being, whom the power of God ever made, could never of himself come so near to the eternal Father, as those whom the Saviour folds within His arms—when as the High Priest of the assembled church He conducts their worship in the heavenly temple. There will be, through Christ Jesus, a continuous revelation of the eternal Father to the redeemed in heaven; through which they shall hold fellowship with Him even as they hold fellowship with His Son. Thus here, and hereafter, do we participate in the Saviour's joy, which He feels in the communion of the God-head.

IV. *There is the joy of Christ, in the expectation of His reward.* This began with His resurrection, through which He was judicially absolved from the curse which He had borne for guilty man; and through which He was declared with power to be the Son of God. (Rom. i: 4.) Then followed His ascension into heaven; the symbol, not only of the acceptance of His finished work, but of His supremacy as the king and head of His people. The next stage is His session at the Father's right hand in glory; where, as Mediator, He enjoys the sense of His Father's approval forever. He has, moreover, a fulness of reward in that innumerable company of which John speaks, the ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, which no man hath numbered or can number, gathered around His person, and given to Him as the purchase of His death. And the climax of this reward is found in His glorious Headship over the creatures; angels and men brought together into one body in Him, and constituted the universal Church—over which He shall preside in the glory of that righteousness which this book declares to be the illumination of heaven; for "the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." (Revelation xxi: 23.) Looking at this reward, our Lord feels the joy which comes through the near anticipation of it.

You and I share in the joy of this reward, for we shall be sharers in the possession thereof." "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." "Father I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." (John xvi: 2, 3, Ibid xvi: 24.) Says the Apostle, "Heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." (Romans viii: 17.) I do not suppose that heaven can be paraphrased. There is no

form of speech in which its blessedness can be described. Even the holy seer, as he looked through the telescope and saw the heavenly city, and the walls, and the gates, could only describe its glory by enumerating the stones of which these were built. (See Rev. xxi: 19-21.) He takes up the jasper, and the amethyst, and the sardonyx, and other precious and brilliant stones, and these were the types under which even the inspired John represents the blessedness and joy of heaven. And because these words of his are only symbols, this gorgeous description does not materialize it to our conception. We walk the streets that are paved with gold; we pass through the gates, "every several gate being one pearl;" we look upon the river of life and upon the trees which grow upon either bank; yet it is no sensual Mohammedan Paradise to us. We take up no gross and material conception of heaven, from all this symbolic description; just because it is symbolic, and we penetrate at once the hidden meaning it is intended to suggest. As allegory and fable are the mere vesture of the truth, the mere shell or rind in which it is held—which fall aside and leave us the naked truth of which they were only the symbols; so we forget all these material images of the heavenly world, and the mind is filled only with the idea of its excessive glory. This heaven shall be ours. As truly as we have a home upon the earth—yes, more certain than this, since many of God's children have not where to lay their head—as certain as we have a chamber in which to lie at night, a bed upon which to stretch our weary forms, a pillow upon which to lay our aching head; shall there be a prepared home for all the redeemed in Christ, in which perhaps we shall be gathered at last in families. Heaven is in part interpreted to us through our lacerated affections upon earth, when those who made up the family below have gone before us to constitute the family above. It makes the passage through the dark vale a little light to us, when we can see the beloved forms sitting upon the door-steps of these heavenly mansions, waiting for our coming, that we may also take possession of the home. There is a comfort even in parting with our dead, when we can view them as dwelling in the house which is to be theirs and ours, in the presence of our Master.

My hearers, Luther was right when he said that the glory of the Gospel lay in its personal pronouns. Says Thomas, when his unbelief has been overcome, "My Lord and my God." Christ teaches His own upon the earth to say "our Father which art in Heaven." We find the delightful comfort to our heart that the great God, who upholds all worlds by His power, stands to us in this tender relation. You and I have a child's



right to lay upon the heart of that Father every care that burthens this present life, and every sorrow that pricks us with its thorn. There is not a thought which God's child may not speak to his Father here upon the earth—not a care which we may not lay upon His broad and gracious heart—not a sorrow which we may not throw upon Him; for “like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.” (Psalm ciii: 13.) and so, because we can say “our Father which art in Heaven,” “my Lord and my God,” the Gospel is precious. It makes over this God, infinite in His perfections and blessed in His nature, as the saint's everlasting portion and reward.

Then, conversely, see how Christ identifies Himself with His people. “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.” (John, xiv: 27.) That peace which filled the Saviour's heart like a cloud of glory, He makes over to us. I put this verse in the fourteenth of John, by the side of that description in the Gospel of Luke, when the Lord Jesus went through the clouds into heaven, “He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.” (Luke, xxiv: 50, 51) The last look which the church had of her Lord, was with His arms stretched out in benediction over her head. When His feet stood upon the clouds of the ascension, ere He wrapped those clouds around His form to be hid from their sight, He is seen in the attitude of one pouring blessings upon His people. Through all the ages since then, until the trumpet shall sound and this Jesus shall come again to “be glorified in His saints and admired in them that believe,” He may be conceived as standing with His arm outstretched over His straggling Church upon the earth—blessing every son and daughter of His within her bosom—blessing them in their conflicts, in their moments of temptation, and in their seasons of bitter sorrow. The Lord's blessing, the blessing that “maketh rich and addeth no sorrow thereto,” is dripping from the fingers of our ascended Lord, as He sits upon the throne of His glory and pleads our cause in the presence of His Father. “My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.” And now is there a word stronger than this? When He has taken possession of the joy, shall He not, as His outstretched and priestly arms are pouring benedictions upon His Church—shall not that benediction come in the utterance of this word “my joy I give unto you, that your joy may be full.”

Brethren, let us rise to the height of our privileges. Let us lift ourselves up to the majesty of our calling. Let our countenances beam with

such happiness, springing from this sense of acceptance in Jesus Christ. as shall make those around us covet our joy. Then let us say to them in language which shall woo their hearts, "come with us and we will do you good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." There is not a poor staggering Christian, who is giving way under this trial and that, whom the Lord will not make to pass through the gates of pearl, as more than conqueror, by the power of His grace. It is glorious to be God's children in heaven; and there is a glory in being God's children upon the earth. Let the world mock at our hopes, and cast contempt upon our joys. Greater is He that is for us, than all that be against us. With the foot put upon the world, and with the eye fixed upon the prize which Christ holds out from His throne above, we will press forward to the glory which is to be our portion beyond the grave. Our wish is that we could persuade the unconverted of the comfort which fills our hearts in the possession of these hopes; so that they might at last sit down with us upon the mount of God, and sing the praise of Him who hath redeemed us with His blood.



## XIX.

### NECESSITY OF CHRIST'S DEPARTURE FROM EARTH.

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JOHN, xvi: 7: "*Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is expedient for you that I go away.*"

The intercourse of the disciples with our Lord was exceedingly intimate. It is not strange, therefore, that they were filled with grief at the announcement of His early departure. They had been gathered into a religious school, in which they were required to break all the associations of the past; the chasm of which could only be filled as He should drop His precious truths into their minds, or stir their hearts with deep and tender affections. They were also a feeble band, exposed to perils and persecutions as they go forth to stem the current of religious opinion and faith throughout the world; and they felt their dependence upon the Master both for guidance and protection. He, too, was the bond of that little society, by which it was held together; and in its threatened disintegration, each felt that He was exposed to the desolation of unutterable loneliness. Yet our Lord rebukes, in terms of singular pathos, that personal love which broke forth in excessive grief, as being somewhat earthly in its character: "But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. \* \* \* If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father; for my Father is greater than I." (John, xiv: 28; xvi: 5, 6.)

In the text, He lifts them to a higher plane; shows that henceforward they are no more to "know Him after the flesh;" that it was even necessary for them, that He should leave the earth and go to His Father and their Father, to His God and to their God. The topic, therefore, which solicits your attention, this morning, is THE NECESSITY, IN THE SCHEME OF GRACE, FOR OUR LORD'S DEPARTURE FROM EARTH INTO HEAVEN—which I trust we shall find full of instruction and of comfort to ourselves.

I. *Christ's departure from earth was necessary as the proof that His work of sacrifice was finished—incapable, therefore, either of being supplemented or repeated.* It was for this work of sacrifice He became incarnate, as you find in the fortieth psalm: "sacrifice and offering thou

didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God." To which sentiment Paul responds in the second chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. \* \* \* \* Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Hence, in the opening words of our Lord's high priestly prayer, as recorded in the s venteenth of John, he says: "I have glorified Thee upon the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." How significantly this fact of his finished sacrifice is sealed by the word which escaped from His lips in His dying agonies upon the Cross, when He cried with a loud voice "it is finished," and gave up the ghost.

And now, my brethren, if His work be finished, how shall He remain any longer upon the earth? For the same reason that we depart when our work is done, must He go into the presence of His Father as soon as His work is finished: not simply that He may enjoy the reward which was promised to Him, and about which I will speak presently; but that, in His bodily absence from the earth, the Church throughout the ages might have public and formal testimony that His sacrifice was complete—so that it could not be repeated by another, nor could He Himself make any addition thereto. Bear in mind that through all previous history, both among the Jews and among the Heathen, the repetition of sacrifices was just as familiar to the mind as the sacrifices themselves. There was not a people upon the globe, which had not their altars and priests and sacrifices; and there was not a religion known upon the earth, Jewish or Heathen, in which the incompetency of those sacrifices to take away sin did not compel their constant repetition. Now, should the Lord Jesus Christ remain upon the earth, where would be the evidence that His offering was a perfect sacrifice, complete in itself, incapable of addition and of repetition? But the instant the whole is withdrawn from the earth, and neither Priest, nor victim, nor altar remains to be seen, the demonstration is conclusive, in the very withdrawal of the service, of the completeness of the sacrifice which He had offered upon the Cross.

II. *Christ's translation to heaven proved the Father's acceptance of the atonement, thereby authenticating it to our faith.* Faith in Christ implies the acceptance of His person, as well as complete trust in His work. It is defined in our standards, to be "a saving grace whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as He is offered to us in the Gospel." Faith, therefore, is more than belief. It is the actual reception into our hearts of the personal Christ, and it is the actual repose of the soul upon His finished work. But then, my brethren, faith is not credulity; it must have a warrant for its exercise. Above all other facts, must this be authenticated to the faith of the Church, when Christ offers the sacrifice of Himself as an atonement for the sins of the world.

Now the question arises, if Christ did in His death make atonement for sin, how shall this be authenticated to man throughout all the generations that shall live upon the earth? Obviously, by the resurrection and ascension of Christ, as these two belong the one to the other, the two poles of the same truth. When Christ died, He died under law: "He was made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." The penalty being judicially inflicted upon Him by the Father as the administrator of law, He can only rise from the dead through a judicial acquittal. I speak not now of the power necessary to achieve the resurrection, but of the ground upon which it shall rest; and this is the fact that, in dying, Christ satisfied the law, exhausted the penalty, and rose, therefore, from the tomb by a righteous and legal necessity. In going into the grave, He carried our sins there; in His resurrection, He left them, no more to be charged as the ground of His condemnation or our own. He could not have risen from that tomb, with the sins He carried there. If those sins yet attach to Him, they have power to detain Him in the grave.

The resurrection, therefore, is the public and crowning evidence of the efficiency of His death in expiating the sins of His people, and of His complete absolution from the curse of the law. When He rose and ascended into the presence of His Father, He rose and ascended without sin. It is significant of this, that in the promise of our Lord's second coming, it is said that He shall "come without sin, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in them that believe." He must come from heaven without sin, because in His ascension to His Father He went up without sin; and without sin He sits upon the Father's right hand in glory. Thus does our Lord's departure attest the official acceptance of His work, and authenticate it as the ground of our salvation.

III. *Christ's removal from the earth becomes the pledge of our sanc-*

tification; teaching that sin is to be taken away from the believer as to its being, no less than its guilt. The scheme of grace contemplates in its final result the removal of sin, as well as its pardon. Hence Daniel, fixing in the seventy weeks the period of the Messiah's advent, declares that He comes "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." (Daniel, ix: 24.) This the Apostle reproduces in the ninth chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews, when he speaks of Christ as "appearing once in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." There must be, in the scheme of grace, as completed, the abolishment of sin in the individual believer and in the collective Church; so that at last it shall have no existence anywhere, save in that world of despair in which it is imprisoned by God's justice forever. Hence, John, in the close of the Apocalypse, tells us that "death and hell were cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death." (Revelation, xx: 14.) And Peter, as in prophetic vision he sees the heavens rolled together as a scroll, and the elements melting with fervent heat, declares: "nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (II Peter, iii: 13.) Ah, my hearers, take no scant view of the proportions of the Redeemer's work. Its final aim is not only to deliver the individual Christian from the condemnation, the dominion, and at last from the being of sin; but to purge the universal church, so that through all the ages it shall never come into contact with the presence and defilement of sin. Only in hell, where reigns in awful gloom the second death, shall sin ever more be known in the universe of God.

Now, under the old Dispensation, this removal of sin was symbolized in various forms. There was the burnt offering, upon which the High Priest confessed the sins of the people, and which was consumed by fire from heaven to the very last hair—thereby intimating that justice is satisfied in the destruction of the sin which draws down the displeasure of God against the transgressor. The very sin being consumed together with the sin offering, shall never afterwards come forth from its ashes to accuse and condemn the believer. Also when the High Priest confessed the sins of Israel upon the head of the scapegoat; which was driven by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness, and there left—teaching that the sins which are laid upon Christ, are borne away where they shall never afterwards be charged against Him or against His people.

How shall this fact, which is so conspicuously illustrated under the symbols of the old economy, be adumbrated under the new? What shall

be the symbol standing before the eye of the Church through all time, by which it shall be known that sin is abolished—that when it shall at last be shut up in its own place, it shall never again escape to ravage and destroy? Simply by the withdrawal of Him upon whom the sins were laid. The Lord Jesus rises from the tomb, and the eyes of the Church follow Him in His immortal ascension until He “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;” evincing to His people that they, in their ascension by the same path, shall leave their sin behind, and be delivered from the dominion, presence and being of that which was their torment upon earth.

IV. *The life of our Lord, after the resurrection, was held upon a tenure by which it could not be subject to the conditions of a state of probation and of trial.* When He came from the bosom of His Father, He appeared as the sinner's representative. As such he is brought under the law, and subjects Himself to that condition of trial—nay, rather of condemnation—under which the principal is found. Hence, supernaturally conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, so as to estop the entail of original sin, He yet could partake truly of our nature only by a natural birth. He was subject to the discipline of childhood and of youth, exactly as we are. It is conspicuously noted that He went down with His parents and was subject to them; and the silence of history is not broken from this utterance until in the maturity of His age He takes upon Him the office of a public teacher. He was subject to hunger and to thirst—needing, as other men, the refreshment of rest and of sleep. He was, above all others of the race, “the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;” for it is written that “his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.” (Isaiah, lii: 14.)

The reason of this is obvious. He came into this world, taking the place of the sinner. Putatively a sinner, because He represented and undertook for sinners, He goes under the pressure of the curse, and therefore of all the infirmities and evils which afflict the lot of those who are under the condemnation of the law. But the moment He rose from the dead under His Father's acquittal, it is impossible that His life shall be held upon the same tenure as before. His resurrection life is assured by the law whose claims have been completely satisfied. Upon this ground, it distinctly guarantees to Him the unassailable enjoyment and possession of this life, never to be subject to change, but always to be held by Him upon the ground of a legal right, and a right which the law itself formally and judicially affirms. See how Paul expresses it in the sixth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans; “knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him: for in that he



died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." And, if by the mouth of two witnesses a truth must be established, let Peter speak in the streets of Jerusalem and say in our hearing to-day: "whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." (Acts, ii: 24.) The moment the decree from the Father's lips pronounced His acquittal from the condemnation under which He died, that acquittal unlocked the chains by which He was bound under the curse, and there was a moral necessity for His resurrection.

Accordingly, you are struck, in the evangelic history, with certain marked differences between the conditions of Christ's life and body, before and after the resurrection. When He stood in Mary's presence, to whom the first revelation was made of the risen Lord, as she was about reverentially to embrace Him, He says "touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God and to your God." (John, xx: 17.) During those forty days, however the glory of our Lord's risen body may have been obscured, yet was a peculiar sanction thrown around His person. He abstains from the old familiar intercourse with His disciples, and only appears upon each eighth day when they were assembled to engage in the worship of God. With emphasis it is said, again and again, of these Sabbath services and of Christ's approach, that when they were within and "the doors were shut," Christ suddenly appeared in the midst of them. All through those forty days, and none the less on the day when His sacred feet pressed the Mount of Olives, and He ascended visibly in the sight of His disciples, that risen body of our Lord exhibited other properties than those of gross matter, and seemed to be exempt from the laws by which material bodies are controlled. If then Christ, after His resurrection, has a life which is held under a different tenure than before; if He has a body exempt from the conditions and restraints which are imposed upon ours; would it not be anomalous for Him to survive upon the earth, commingling a state of trial with a state of reward; and subjecting that peculiar life and that risen body to conditions, from which both are exempt by the tenure upon which both are held? On this ground there was a real necessity for our Lord's disappearance from the earth, and His entrance bodily into glory.

V. *Christ must needs go to heaven as the representative of His people, in their name and on their behalf to take possession of their home.* "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where

I am, there ye may be also." John, xiv: 2, 3.) In all these high transactions our Lord acted as a public person. When He hung upon the tree, He represented His people, bearing their sins in His own body. When He went down into the grave, He went as the representative and head of His people, carrying their sins which He had expiated upon the Cross, that He might leave them in the darkness and silence of the tomb. And when He rose from the dead upon the morning of the third day, according to the testimony of Paul himself He was "the first fruits of them that slept." (I Corinthians, xv: 20.) When He ascended into heaven He went to their Father as well as to His Father, to their God as well as to His God, that amongst His Father's many mansions He might prepare the place intended for each of His redeemed. Hence, Paul in the sixth chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews, says: "whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." Thus does our Lord, by His ascension, make the sharp distinction between this present life as one of toil, of service and of discipline, and the life to come as one of reward and of glory.

VI. *Our Lord's departure from the earth is necessary in order to make room for the advent and dispensation of the Holy Ghost.* This thought is specified in the words following the text: "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." If the unity of the divine essence is not broken by the distinction of persons in which it subsists, so, again, must these three, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, have perfect communion of will, the one with the other. It would not be difficult to show, in all the joint operations of the Deity, in creation and in providence, the concurrent functions of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost—more conspicuously exhibited in the scheme of grace, than in the other works of the Deity. But, what is more pertinent to my purpose, not only is there this concurrence of the Three in all the works of the Godhead, but their functions hang the one upon the other; so that in their separate offices there is a due subordination and inter-dependence. Christ the Son—and as the Son, the Father's equal, able to say "I and my Father are one"—does not hesitate always to represent Himself as "He that was sent." He refers His doctrines to the Father, and His works to the Father; declaring that the Father dwelleth in Him and He in the Father. Thus, in His subordination as the Son, He cannot enter upon the functions of His office until the Father, as representative of the Godhead and the administrator of the law, warrants the execution of the scheme of redemption. The validity of the Redeemer's work depends upon its being executed in accordance with the will of the lawgiver; who

calls for one voluntarily to step forth and become the sinner's substitute, and then gives the commission which authorizes him to assume and to discharge that sinner's legal obligations.

Precisely similar is the subordination between the Son and the Holy Spirit. Not until the Lord Jesus accomplishes our salvation, is there room for the Spirit's work in the application of the scheme. Hence John tells us, in the seventh chapter of his Gospel, that "in the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink: he that believeth on me, as the Scriptures hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." This enigmatical expression the Evangelist immediately interprets, by adding: "But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." Such is the connection between the work of Christ and that of the Holy Ghost, that in His ascension to heaven our Lord lays the command upon his disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until they should receive "the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of me." (Acts, i: 4.) This promise, you will remember, was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when "suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting; and there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them." (Acts, ii: 2, 3.) In order that this Spirit may have his sphere in which to work, the Lord removes from earth, and turns the minds of his people from his personal presence to the expectation of that Spirit who is to be His representative here; and who will abide in the believer, and in the Church, as the Spirit of obedience, as the Spirit of prayer, as the Spirit of consolation and as the Spirit of glory. That the Holy Ghost may be sent in the plenitude of His operations to fulfill this work of power, our Lord must withdraw from the sight of His disciples, and be seen no more "until the times of restitution of all things."

These six points, which I have specified, are the important and leading suggestions which I have to make. And yet, my brethren, there are two or three subordinate propositions which ought not to be omitted, and upon which you will allow me just to touch without any attempt at their expansion.

For example, *could the circle of doctrine be complete in regard to Christ Himself*, unless He withdraws from the earth and goes to heaven? Does the office of a priest consist only in the offering of sacrifice? Must he not likewise present his supplications, together with the blood which he has shed upon the altar? And shall not the High Priest of our profession

go through the veil into "the holiest of all," to fulfill the type of the old economy? Must He not appear, as our intercessor, before the throne and in the presence of His Father; and with the mute eloquence of His wounds obtain for us the blessings which were the purchase of His death? Is not Christ the King, as well as the Priest, of the Church? and must He not "sit at the right hand of the Majesty on high," in the administration of His mediatorial empire? And how shall this be, if He continues a prisoner in the flesh upon earth? That the circle of doctrine may be complete, our Lord must withdraw from our sight and enter into glory.

It is important however to observe that the way in which Christ, the Revealer, makes known divine truth, is not by speech. Let this strike the blow of death upon all that scheme of thought, which seeks to satisfy the Gospel representation of Christ by maintaining that He is only a prophet. He *is* a prophet. He is the one prophet, in whom all other prophets are found and from whom all other prophets spring. But our Lord is the Prophet, in the high sense that He is the truth. He gives it an objective reality, by working it out in the positive facts of His personal history. Other prophets open their lips and speak, and so they teach. Our Lord teaches by His acts. He works out a scheme of redemption and makes it a fact. He comes from the bosom of His Father and takes upon Him a human form, and so teaches the doctrine of the incarnation. In like manner, He can only teach the mediatorial reign, by assuming the empire and stretching His sceptre over the Church. He must go, therefore, where the throne is, and grasp the sceptre; and so work out the fact, that it shall be a truth which can be proclaimed in speech. On this ground Christ must withdraw from the earth and go into the presence of His Father.

Again: Christ's departure into heaven is necessary *to establish the catholicity and spirituality of the Gospel dispensation.* All the religions, heathen and Jewish, then known upon the earth, were national religions, —tied to a particular locality by ordinances and statutes which were necessary to their existence. Christ comes, and breaks down these "middle walls of partition." He obliterates the distinction between Jew and Gentile, barbarian and Greek, bond and free; and proclaims a spiritual and universal Church, every part of which is gathered and knit to Himself as the Head of all. But if He had to this day walked up and down the streets of Jerusalem, and was known only as a Jew,—how could you and I feel that His Kingdom is spiritual, and His Church universal? Ah, brethren, on the throne where He sits at the right hand of His Father, every part of that Church is equally near to Him. He is nearer to us in

heaven, than if we had to cross continents and seas to look upon His face. Every one of us can bow down in the closet before Him "whom, having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." To establish the catholicity of His Church, our Lord withdraws from the earth and places Himself before our thought at the right hand of His Father.

Still further: *Christ's removal from our sight runs the principle of faith in His person, through both dispensations alike.* The great promise in the Old Economy was the coming of Messiah, held forth in type and prophecy to the faith of ancient Israel; and the sin, which filled up the measure of their guilt, was the rejection of Him when He did appear. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." (John, i: 11.) In this case what could the Lord of the Vineyard do, but to "let it out to other husbandmen which shall render Him the fruits in their seasons?" (Mat. xxi: 41.) Throughout the Old Dispensation, "the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy," (Rev. xix: 10); and this testimony was addressed exclusively to the faith of the waiting Church. Equally so, the great prophetic promise of the New Testament is Christ's second "appearing to them that look for Him, without sin unto salvation." (Heb., ix: 28.) Take but one out of countless examples: "For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men—teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." (Titus, ii: 11-13.)

But how shall Christ be to us the object of faith, whilst in bodily presence He is the object of sense? His withdrawal, therefore, is to this end—that, like Moses, we may "endure as seeing Him that is invisible." (Heb. xi: 27.) It is the property of faith to be "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Ibid. xi: 1.) "The trial of our faith," says Peter, is to "be found unto praise and honor and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." He must therefore be withdrawn, in order to become an object of faith; and in the re-appearing of Him who is withdrawn, we shall "receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls." (I Peter, i: 7-9.)

Finally, *what a double assurance we have of our glorification*—one assurance resting upon our Lord's ascension as the forerunner; and the other assurance resting upon the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. How is it possible that we shall remain the mortal things that we are in this house to-day? How is it possible that this frame shall always be dust, made of

dust and going back to dust, if the Holy Ghost dwell in the very flesh of the believer; and if, in the very flesh he be a "member of Christ's body, of His flesh and of His bones?" We plant our faith upon the dual doctrine of the Lord in glory, and of His representative, the Holy Spirit, dwelling in us—giving double assurance to God's children that they shall pass victorious through all the conflicts with sin, be emancipated at last from the dominion and bondage of death, and in the fulness of glory be with their Head in the kingdom above. For He "shall change the body of our humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto the body of His glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (Philippians, iii: 21.) This risen body of our Lord becomes not only the pledge, but the very model and pattern by which these "vile bodies" are to be fashioned and made glorious.

My brethren, the power of Christianity lies in the eternal life of its author. It was not born of speculation. It is not a theosophy. It is a religion grounded upon facts. Its truths have had an historic unfolding. The Church is an immortal body, because her Head personally lives - lives a life which He holds under the guarantee of law, and which can never be alienated from Him or from His people. This Church of the Lord Jesus may be struck with the leprosy of error, and her fair form may be torn by factions and by schisms: still the life, which is in her Head, will flow with new and increasing tides upon her—and when He puts forth His healing hand, her flesh although it be the flesh of a leper, "shall come again as the flesh of a little child." It is the only society upon this earth which is immortal—the only "kingdom which cannot be moved." It is from everlasting, as it existed in the thought and purpose of the great Designer; it is to everlasting, as it shall be the sanctified and glorified Church looking upon His face in splendor and in triumph forever. My hearers, what is earthly dominion and power which are continually thrusting their impertinencies upon us every day that we live, compared with the glory of this kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, given by the Father when He said, "I have set my King upon my holy Hill of Zion?" Ah! let it be our joy, if Christ hath made us the subjects of this kingdom and participants in its glory. Let not our faith stagger at the discouragements under which the Church shall labor; for, like her Head, she shall triumph; and in her Head, she shall be transfigured in glory forever and forever.



## XX.

### TESTIMONY OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

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JOHN IX, 25 : " *One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.*"

There is a marked progress in the history of our Lord upon earth. His teachings, for example, were at the first conveyed in brief but suggestive parables, which revealed the truth, indeed, but revealed it under a veil. They were the seeds in which was contained the germ of the whole Gospel; which however did not appear to view so as to be fully understood, until the development came in the later facts of His life. But these parables subsequently expanded into large and articulated discourse, in which Christ distinctly announced His Messiahship and unfolded the nature of His kingdom. Just so with the miracles which He wrought. They became more and more grand as the end drew near,—evincing a larger control over nature, until, at length, stretching beyond the grave, He brought back the spirits which had fled these mortal shores.

The miracle with which the text stands connected, belongs to this class. The fact lies, of course, entirely outside of my department of knowledge; but it is stated, upon authority which I suppose to be reliable, that medical annals do not reveal a single instance of sight restored by natural means to one born blind. If the statement be true, this miracle is magnified in our view; and is placed along with those miracles of our Lord when, standing in the gate of the City of Nain or at the tomb of Lazarus, by a single word He restores the dead to life. It is recorded with circumstantial minuteness, and is particularly interesting upon two accounts. Partly, because it lays the foundation of that exquisite discourse which is contained in the next chapter. The treatment which this ex-communicated blind man received at the hands of the Jews, afforded the occasion for the contrast which our Lord presents between the true and the false shepherds of His flock; and for the presentation of Himself as the door through whom all enter into His fold, and as the true shepherd who knows His sheep and is known of them. It is interesting, perhaps still more, as disclosing the growing opposition of the Jews to His person and to His



doctrine, and their stubborn prejudice in resisting all kinds of evidence. After ineffectual attempts to invalidate the miracle, they determine at length to crush everything under the weight of ecclesiastical authority. The text occurs in that stage of the discussion, when all efforts to lessen the miracle had been overthrown by the testimony of the parents. "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: but by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not." Then they bring him who had been the subject of the miracle a second time before them, saying "Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner"—construed to be a sinner because He had wrought this work of blessing upon the Sabbath day—to which the man replies, "whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." Whatever inferences they choose to draw from the miracle, he is prepared to depose, with all the positiveness of certain knowledge, as to the facts developed in his own case. "A little while ago my eyes were sealed in blindness, and now I am able to behold everything in the beautiful light of the sun."

I propose to employ these words in order to show THE NECESSITY AND VALUE OF THIS TESTIMONY OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN ATTESTATION OF OUR RELIGIOUS FEELINGS—that it is just as reliable in the religious, as in the natural, sphere; and is just as much to be credited in determining the question whether we have experienced a change of heart, as in reference to any other fact which is brought under its cognizance. I do not think I depart from the spirit of the passage, in making this particular use of it. The miracles of our Lord were all typical in their character; seizing the infirmities and diseases which are incident to the body, as representing the deeper evil which sin has inflicted upon the soul. The miraculous cures wrought upon the flesh, were but symbols of the still deeper cure which Divine Grace operates upon the spirit. So that what the blind man says in the text as to the restoration of natural sight, God's children are permitted to say in reference to spiritual sight.

I. *The testimony of consciousness lies at the foundation of all reasoning and of all knowledge; and, from the necessity of the case, must be credited.* The simple proposition is sufficient for those who are acquainted with the constitution of the human mind, and with the laws by which all its operations are controlled. But to those who are not familiar with the details of mental science, a word or two may be allowed in exposition. For example, some one says to you, "our mutual friend A. B. is to-day in this city." You naturally inquire, "how do you know this?" The answer is, "I saw him with my own eyes,"—and you are satisfied. In point of

fact, no evidence is deemed more conclusive, by most persons, than that which is furnished through the senses. How few are aware, that the certainty of this conclusion rests upon principles which are attested simply by their own consciousness. A given impression must first be made upon the senses by the object presented from without; then the sensations, upon which perception depends, must be instantly and necessarily recognized as our own sensations; and finally we are compelled by a constitutional law to acknowledge the reality of whatsoever may offer to us this evidence of its being. These elements must concur in all the knowledge which is acquired of the external world. The subject knowing, and the object known, must be brought into relations with each other. The mind perceives by means of impressions made upon the bodily organs; and it must be conscious of its own affections which are thereby produced. The process will of course be more or less complicated, according to the number and variety of mental operations which are involved. In the illustration employed a moment since, where a friend was recognized upon the street, we have not only the impression upon the eye of the beholder, the verification of these sensations as experienced by himself, and the conviction as to the reality of the object seen—but there is also the reproduction of a past image of this friend as known before, and a comparison between the two appearances so as to determine the identity of both. In all this complex mental action, an attendant consciousness verified the several experiences and compelled reliance upon the evidence which was furnished by the senses.

In like manner the longest and most perplexed train of reasoning leans upon, and is vouched for, by certain elementary principles which we accept simply from the necessity of accepting them. Take mathematical reasoning, which is regarded as the most certain and conclusive; and you find upon analysis that the demonstration depends upon a few axioms which were assumed in the outset; axioms, however, which are accepted upon the bare statement, and which cannot be declined except by an act of self-stultification. Every one of the problems of geometry is proved by reference to principles as elementary as these: that the whole is greater than a part; that the two halves are equal to the whole; that two things which are equal to a third, are equal to each other. Upon these axiomatic truths, which are received from necessity upon the first statement, all the force of mathematical reasoning depends. In every case of deductive reasoning we are pushed back to certain elementary and fundamental principles, so simple that we are unable to press behind them; as, for example, that every effect must have a cause, and that there is power in the cause to produce the

effect. These elementary principles, these fundamental beliefs, underlie every process of reasoning. They are the starting points from which it proceeds, and they are the final tests by which every conclusion is assured to the understanding.

With this statement of the facts, just suppose a man determining to ignore his consciousness, not to accept its testimony in reference to the external world; and at once he is plunged into universal scepticism and doubt. He digs a moat around his own mind, rendering it impossible that it shall pass over from within to the things which are without. Shall we then except religious experience from this universal law of consciousness? Pray, then, how shall there be any experience at all? If conscious that we have passed through a given change, that our religious feelings of to-day are not our religious feelings of yesterday, that we have passed "from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God"—if conscious that there has been a complete revolution in our affections, so that the things which we once hated we now love, I ask upon what ground are we to shut out these facts of religious experience from this law of testimony, when we are depending upon it for all knowledge upon every subject under the sun?

II. This presumptive argument will be strengthened, if you consider that, *in the whole process of salvation, the Holy Ghost acts by the laws, and through the powers, of the human soul.* The methods of the Spirit's working are mysterious enough. Our Lord says: "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John iii: 8.) But however mysterious may be His operations, He never sets aside, or violates, the fundamental laws of man's spiritual economy. How it is that He quickens the mind, we know not; but that he conducts that quickened mind, in all of its movements, according to the laws which govern mind, we do know. We know that He presents spiritual truth before the mind to enlighten and to influence it, precisely as natural truth is presented in the natural sphere. Hence Peter does not hesitate to use this remarkable language in the first chapter of his first epistle: "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." This word, therefore, which reveals to man God's truth is, so to speak, the seed of the new life; and when the Holy Spirit quickens the soul from spiritual death into spiritual life, it is by the instrumentality of this word of truth—which, like the seed, contains the germ of the living experience which is to emerge from it. How it is again that the Holy Spirit turns the current of our affec-

tions so that, in an instant of time, they shall flow in a direction the very opposite to that in which they flowed before, we know not. But that he controls those affections according to the law of the affections, by evermore presenting before us objects which are suited to excite them, we do know from experience. Again, by what mysterious power the Holy Spirit magnetizes the will, so as to make us "willing in the day of His power"—by what method He changes "the carnal mind which is enmity against God, which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be,"—you and I cannot tell. But that every choice put forth by that will is determined by motives which sway it, we do know from the testimony of our own consciousness.

We are conducted then to this inquiry—if in the analysis of our religious history we find nowhere the Holy Spirit crushing down any single power, nor any where interfering with the laws of our spiritual nature, must not this law of consciousness, which is the fundamental law underlying all the rest, be recognized by that Spirit also? If He does not interfere with the laws of thought, with the laws which govern the affections, with the law which controls the decisions of the will, must He not, *a fortiori*, recognize the law of consciousness, which is primary and indispensable to the working of all the rest? Thus, what I presented just now as an overwhelming presumption, is converted by this second consideration into positive certainty.

III. I pass to an argument which is purely moral: *that the Christian is of no value as a witness for the Gospel, except through the testimony of his own consciousness.* The Scriptures are full of statements as to the witness-bearing of God's people. Says the Apostle: "Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart." (II Cor. iii: 3.) In like manner, in the twelfth chapter of his epistle to the Romans, he exhorts: "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Why? "That ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Hence Peter says to those to whom his epistle is addressed, that they must be "ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you." (I Peter iii: 15.) Our own salvation may be to us the end of all our efforts; but, my brethren, the end which God has in view, is by no means exhausted in the accomplishment of our individual salvation. Beyond all this, He is looking to the manifestation of His own glory. Paul declares that he "preached among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, to the intent that now unto

the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Ephesians, 3, 10, 11.)

If then we are witnesses for this Gospel—if it be our vocation, just as soon as we are brought into the kingdom of God, to ascend the witness stand and "show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus"—I ask how is this to be done, unless we depose as to what we individually know? We may go forth as heralds, simply proclaiming the words which are found in the Bible; we may preach the great salvation as it lies in the words of this Book, and thus become officially, or unofficially, heralds of salvation; but we are not witnesses until we can say "what this Book declares we know here, in our own bosom, to be true." If the Book says "therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," the Christian must respond that "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, doth keep his heart and mind through Christ Jesus." Thus it is, recognizing the facts embraced in our own experience, we stand before the world as witnesses for divine grace. But in order to this, we must be able to affirm our own identity, as the sinner that was lost and the sinner that was saved. We must be able to say "He brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." (Ps. xl: 2.) We must be able to say with the blind man in the text, "one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." If then we may not rely upon what our consciousness affirms in the matters which pertain to godliness, our entire vocation, as Christians before the world, is gone.

IV. *Consciousness simply deposes to matters of fact, and within this sphere is perfectly trustworthy.* Our speculations are in the sphere of the reason, and we may push them far and wide, as we may; and their value will turn upon the accuracy with which we have proceeded from premises to conclusions. But when it comes to the question, what we think and how we feel, that belongs to consciousness. The thought may be a right thought, or a wrong thought; the feeling may be righteous, or it may be sinful; the conclusion reached by our reasoning may be true, or it may be false: but the fact that we do think and feel thus and so, lies wholly within us as a matter of knowledge and is certified to us by simple consciousness. Now I ask, when these facts relate to religious feeling and to religious thought, upon what principle are we to exempt them from the operation of a law, which embraces under its jurisdiction facts and nothing

else? The case is too plain to require elaboration, and may be dismissed with this simple suggestion of it.

V. *No danger of deception, from the bias of self-love or of interest, can absolve from the duty and necessity of trusting our consciousness in religious experience.* There are many around us who feel that they are different men and women from what they were—who, when they reflect upon what passes within their own bosoms, are compelled to say “I am not what I was.” Their aims in life are different. The motives which influence their actions, are different: Their religious affections are changed. The things which once delighted them, are now distasteful. It is now their meat and drink to discharge the duties which were once utterly uncongenial. They can say “that whereas I was blind, now I see.” The question then arises, as to the duty of avowing all this—of uniting with God’s people, to swell the solemn and public testimony which is rolling its echoes over this apostate globe, as to the power of Jesus Christ to forgive sins. When alas! a sudden recoil bears them away from the decision which had almost been reached.

Sometimes the plea is founded upon a *false humility*. If they stand forth in the presence of men, and unite their fortunes with the Church of God, will not this involve an assumption of excellence inconsistent with modesty? It so happens too that at this stage of their religious history, there is a new and almost crushing sense of personal unworthiness, which is really shocked at what seems a presumptuous claim on their part. The fallacy lies in the supposition, that the acknowledgment of Christ before the world is a pretension to goodness which forms a ground for boasting. What does a man profess, when he unites with God’s people? Only that he is a sinner—that his heart is so wicked that he has no power in himself to think one good thought, or to exhibit one holy affection. In the act by which he is united publicly with the Church, he solemnly proclaims that “in him, that is, in his flesh, dwelleth no good thing;” that he stands condemned before the bar of God, and before the tribunal of his own conscience; and that he is covered with shame and confusion of face in the acknowledgment of it before his Maker and before the world. He can only add that he is a sinner saved by the power and sovereignty of Divine grace, whom infinite mercy has plucked as a brand from the burning. The only tone of cheerfulness in his melancholy utterance, is the plea of penitence—that being brought to the knowledge of his sins, he is able to lay them in this confession upon the Lord Jesus-Christ, as his substitute under the law to expiate his guilt.

After this exposition, what is there in such a confession to scandalize the

modesty of the most diffident upon earth? What is there of self-righteousness in penitential pleadings which strip one so bare of personal merit, and cast him so entirely upon the free mercy of God in Christ? When the Christian thus publicly smites upon his breast and cries "God be merciful to me a sinner," what is there of assumption in that? Is not the humility misplaced, which shrinks from the avowal of a Christian hope, as involving a claim to superior goodness and virtue; when the entire language and attitude is that of dependence upon divine and sovereign grace?

Others who are not troubled with this difficulty, recoil from the *responsibility* of bearing witness to the grace which has wrought the supposed change. On this point I desire to speak tenderly. It is a commendable instinct, which at first shrinks from the assumption of important trusts. It is by a sentiment of virtue that one quivers for a moment, whilst incurring a new responsibility. The trepidation does not of necessity imply indecision or want of purpose. Here, for example, is the young bride—and I use the illustration because of its familiarity, coming home to every one of us—with every affection of her heart, like a separate fibre, attaching to the man of her choice; and yet, in the moment when before the altar the irrevocable vow is to be finally sealed, the timid heart leaps back from the venture, and would perhaps retract the pledge if it could be done without dishonor. It belongs to a noble nature—all the more as the nature is the more noble—to feel the tremors of a mysterious fear in girding on new and solemn trusts. He is to be watched with suspicion, who confesses to no painful sensibility when called to the exercise of functions which draw largely upon the confidence and esteem of his fellow-men. It is the very signature of a villain to be able to wrap the robes of office around him, without a respectful appreciation of the duties which are involved, and without a considerate distrust of his competency to fulfill the same. It is therefore a timidity to be respected, which trembles at the responsibility of a public Christian profession.

Having made this admission in order to propitiate any who may find it descriptive of themselves, I solicit your attention to a feature of the case, which is generally overlooked. You feel the pressure of the responsibility of deciding *for* Christ; is it not strange that you do not equally feel the responsibility of deciding *against* Christ? "He that is not with me is against me;" and "ne that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." (Mat. xii: 30.) Oh my hearers, whose lips utter these words of discrimination, which throw the whole human race upon the one side, or upon the other side, of that separating line? You are afraid to announce yourself for Christ. You are afraid of the responsibility of taking His cause

upon your heart and speaking for His name and for His glory ; but you do not shrink from the responsibility of locking the great secret up in your own bosom, and, by withholding the testimony, placing yourself with those who are arrayed against His authority. I wonder when men are so oppressed with the hazard of favoring religion, that they are not impressed with the still greater peril of deciding against it. Surely, it is because the one has never been set over against the other, that this amazing inconsistency can be charged upon a rational being. If then any of you should be conscious of this timidity in acknowledging a change which the Holy Spirit has really wrought within you, I ask whether you are not displaying a recklessness in your very fear, which astounds the angels ? Do you display such rashness in any other sphere ? Your bodily senses have often deceived you ; but you are not withheld by this consideration from trusting in their testimony. Error has often crept into your reasoning, and you have drifted to conclusions which are palpably false ; but you have never thought it necessary on this account to distrust all the operations of your mind. All that can be inferred from these mistakes, is the necessity of greater caution in the formation of our judgments. Just so, in the working out of our religious history, the dangers to which we are exposed should enforce the greater caution and earnestness in the interpretation of our experience, but do not justify a chronic state of doubt and of indecision. If conscious of this religious feeling, or of that religious state, we may examine and re-examine the record and satisfy ourselves that we have read it aright—but nothing remains but to accept the testimony and to rest upon it, precisely as in every other department of human life and thought.

This then is the practical conclusion of this discourse. I speak to those among you who have been under the power of a religious influence ; whom God's Spirit has awakened from apathy, and caused to feel "the powers of the world to come." Once, the fact that you were sinners did not disturb you. Does it now move your nature to its depths, and cause you to lift your heart in prayer to God to save you from the ruin into which you have fallen ? Once, you could reason with a cold logic upon the necessity of God's punishing the guilty ; but you never trembled in view of that fearful day, when He should say "Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire." Is your soul now stirred to its depths, lest you should incur the wrath to come ? Do you see the vileanness of sin ; so that, apart from its punishment, you feel it to be wretchedness enough just to know your sin, and the dreadfulfulness of your separation from God ? Do you see



a beauty in the holiness of God which causes you to love Him? Or does the awful blaze of that holiness only terrify you—the flashings out of His light and of His glory dazzling your eyes and filling your soul with despair? Have you got past this fear, and can you now look with a clear eye upon “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” and say “he is all my salvation and all my desire; whom have I in heaven but thee and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.” Then what remains, if inwardly conscious that you have passed from death to life, but to take up the responsibilities of the change—to go out with the blind man before the Pharisees of the world, and say “whether He be a sinner or no, I know not; but one thing I do know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see?”

It does not make a particle of difference whether you can explain the change or not; whether you can see how this, and that, was accomplished by His power. For the Holy Spirit works so completely by the laws of our nature, so completely in and upon, and through its powers and faculties, that we often find it difficult to distinguish between what is due to His agency and what to our own, in the compound result. It does not, therefore, concern you, whether you are able to explain the mode of the new birth. Nor does it matter, whether the evidence of this change broke upon you suddenly, or dawned upon you like the morning with its first faint streak upon the eastern sky, deepening afterwards into the light of the midday sun. The change itself is always instantaneous; for there can be no middle between death and life, no mean between darkness and light, no middle between enmity and love. Right between the two the line is drawn, which is seen by the eye of God. But the evidence to us that we have passed over this line, from the one condition to the other, may dawn as gently as the light which steals forth from the pavilion of night.

Let all that pass; and come simply to the fact, whether this change has or has not taken place within you. Surely, we ought to be able, upon the testimony of consciousness, to say “I do trust in the atonement of Jesus Christ as the sole ground of my hope in the sight of God—I do repent of sin, and say, in the language of Job, “I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.” (Job. xlii: 6.) This faith, indeed, you may be required to prove to others, by doing the works which spring from faith. That repentance may need to be established to the satisfaction of your fellow-men by “the fruits which are meet for repentance.” But the evidence, upon which you determine that you do believe in Christ, and do repent of sin, is just the testimony of consciousness. Just as you may prove to another that you are happy, by pointing to the signs of the happi-

ness—by saying, “could I laugh with the laughter which is sign of joy, unless I were happy within? But you do not need either the smile or the laughter, to satisfy yourself that your heart is full of happiness to the overflowing. You may have to point to your sighs and your tears, to prove to others that you are wretched; but you need neither the sighs nor the tears, to convince yourself that your heart is clouded with sorrow. These are facts—facts which are known to you through your own consciousness. How do you know that you love your wife? How do you know that you love your children? If the love of these human relations be challenged, you answer “why I *know* that I love them;” whilst the evidence which shall satisfy others, is that work of labor and of sacrifice by which you are seeking to promote their good. Precisely so, in the religious sphere, as to the question, whether we do trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, whether we do exercise repentance towards God, whether we have an honest hatred of sin and seek to be delivered from its dominion and power. These are simply facts lying within our own experience; and which, therefore, rest upon the testimony of consciousness.

I trust there are those in this congregation to-day, to whom these words apply; and if there be, I beg you to look at the simplicity of this issue. My counsel is, that you clear up every step as you go; and by all means settle this as the first and most important—whether you have indeed undergone a change of heart. Do not rest, until you have knowledge of this great fact. Then openly avow it; assume all the responsibility it involves; and then, if you please, in your after life bring the tests of conversion as they lie in God’s word, and apply them as searchingly as possible. Go down again and again to the foundations of your hope, and see whether you have truly built upon the rock that is laid “in Zion, a chief cornerstone, elect, precious.” Every re-examination of that hope will only strengthen you in the possession and joy of it, and make the evidence of it brighter and clearer. But after all, you will be driven back, by the necessities of your moral and spiritual constitution, to rely upon your own knowledge of the fact, as lying in your experience, that you have passed “from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God.” Oh that God’s Spirit would multiply the witnesses a thousand fold amongst us, who shall give testimony to the sweetness and power of His saying grace!



## XXI.

### GOD JUST, YET A SAVIOUR.

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ISAIAH XLV, 21: "*There is no God else beside Me; a just God and a Saviour: there is none beside Me.*"

These words not only embody a remarkable sentiment, but they occur in a striking connexion. Isaiah by inspiration had predicted the rise of the Persian Empire, a full century and a half before it emerged into view. This prediction was not conveyed in the vague and general style peculiar to Prophecy, but with singular minuteness. Cyrus is mentioned by name: the ascendancy he should acquire over the Babylonians, and the office he should discharge in the restoration of the captive Jews to their own land and city, are circumstantially unfolded. In this chapter, Jehovah points to this prophecy as a clear proof of His prescience and sovereignty, and therefore of His Deity. He challenges the idol Gods to establish their claims by a prediction as full and unambiguous as this: "Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a God that cannot save. Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: Who hath declared this from ancient time? have not I, the Lord?" (Isai. xlv: 20, 21.) As there is no reply to the challenge, Jehovah proceeds to render the verdict in His own favor, "there is no God else beside Me."

The language in which this decision is proclaimed, covers a new and very satisfactory line of proof,—“there is no God else beside Me, A JUST GOD AND A SAVIOUR.” The union of justice and mercy in His character and dealings affords as conclusive proof of His Deity, as either prophecy or miracles. These fall within the external department of evidence, whilst that falls within the internal. I institute no comparison between the two, nor do I decide which produces the stronger conviction upon the mind. The external evidences are the more popular, because they are more level to the natural apprehension; and for this reason they are indispensable in reasoning with the pronounced unbeliever and skeptic. The internal evidences, on the other hand, require a certain degree of culture,—and

some of them, a spiritual preparation—to be fully appreciated. When they are both felt in their force, the latter evidence is the most satisfactory in establishing the faith which both are equally efficient to produce.

I am concerned now to show that THE REVELATION OF GOD AS BOTH MERCIFUL AND JUST, IS THE HIGHEST PROOF THAT HE ALONE IS GOD. The ascent to this demonstration will be by the four following propositions :

*Whoever claims to be the Supreme Being, must be unchangeably just and holy :*

*These attributes appear, to human reason, to raise an insuperable bar to the salvation of a sinner :*

*Notwithstanding this, God is seen, in the plan of Redemption, to save sinners without compromising any of His perfections :*

*The fundamental conditions of this scheme could never be fulfilled, except by a Being such as the Scriptures represent God to be.*

These propositions open a wide range of topics ; through which I hope to pass with sufficient swiftness, not to fatigue the discussion.

I. In establishing the first, THAT THE SUPREME BEING MUST BE IMMUTABLY JUST AND HOLY, I will employ no abstract reasoning—but will adduce an argument similar to that by which, *a posteriori*, we prove the existence and unity of God: *I reason from the existence of moral distinctions, in the minds of men.* If we attend to what passes within our own bosoms, we discover some things upon which we look with complacency, and others upon which we look with dissatisfaction. Some actions which we perform, we at once pronounce commendable—and some feelings which stir our hearts, command instantly our approval: whilst, again, other actions and other feelings move immediate and stern displeasure. Observation teaches that this is true of our fellow-men, no less than of ourselves: experience and observation establish it as universal. Says Paul: “When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing, one another.” (Rom. ii: 14, 15).

But the question arises, whence have we this distinction between right and wrong, which is thus universally recognized? If it be alleged, as by some, to be a distinction purely arbitrary and the creation of human law, it is sufficient to reply that human law is itself a creation,—and can suggest no ideas save those which first exist in the mind of the law-giver. It will be necessary then to account for the occurrence of these moral discriminations to him who has succeeded in embodying the same in the statutes

which he has ordained. The difficulty is only pushed one degree further back ; for it is quite as easy to explain these distinctions in their universal diffusion through the race, as in the law which is supposed to give the first expression of them. Indeed, this theory of Hobbes is precisely akin to the sneering infidelity which, a century ago, attributed all religion to priestcraft. Pray then, one exclaims, whence comes the Priest ? and how did the religious notions happen to get into his brain ? and how shall we explain the religious susceptibility in the masses, which so readily embraces, and so tenaciously retains, the religious systems which are fraudulently imposed ? Plainly, it is the old Hindoo Cosmogony over again—in the world resting upon the horn of a bull, and the bull upon the back of a turtle, and the turtle upon nothing at all. The same vicious circle is found in the reasoning here. All morality, it is said, is the creature of human prudence, and is dependent upon human legislation. Then it becomes needful to explain its rise in the conceptions of the law-giver : and when he has impressed it upon the code which he promulgates, we must inquire how it comes to be instantly absorbed by the human race, under all the degrees of culture which are found upon earth.

The simple truth is, that the distinction between right and wrong is eternal and immutable. It springs directly from the nature of God ; that being right which is conformed to His will, and that being wrong which is opposed thereto. If the distinction be immediately and universally recognized, it is because God, in the beginning, made man “in His image and after His likeness,” and therefore capable of these moral and religious impressions. The nature of God is the ultimate ground of all morality ; and the will of God, however expressed,—whether in written statutes or in the nature which He has planted within us—is the standard to which it must ever be referred. If this be so, then the only alternative is to deny that there is any fundamental difference between right and wrong, which is contradicted by universal human consciousness—or else the God, whose nature is the ground upon which the distinction rests, is immutably holy and just and true.

II. THESE ATTRIBUTES SEEM, TO HUMAN REASON, TO INTERPOSE AN INVINCIBLE BAR TO THE SALVATION OF SINNERS. It is easy to see how such a God shall reward the good ; but upon the supposition of transgression, how shall He save the wicked ? This difficulty is two-fold, as it respects the Divine office and character. How shall God, as the lawgiver, dispense with the penalty which the sinner has incurred ? And how shall God, in his holiness, have any commerce with the impure ? Various theories have been projected in solution of this double problem.

(1.) It has been suggested that, *in the exercise of mere sovereignty, God may remit the penalty, and grant a general amnesty to transgressors.* The foundation of this theory is the analogy from human governments. The reasoning is sufficiently plausible; if these, which are confessedly defective, may remit punishment, how much more may God in His absolute supremacy, being responsible to no power higher than His own? The analogy however fails in two particulars. *First*, this discretion vested in the Executive, is a plain acknowledgment of defect; the analogy cannot therefore carry to the Divine Government, which is perfect. The vagueness and generality of human laws render it impossible to provide for every case which may arise under their administration; nor can they accurately distinguish between the shades of guilt in similar offences. To meet this difficulty, a dispensing power is granted to the Executive, in certain cases, to set aside a judicial decision, and thus to release the prisoner from punishment. It is a necessary, though awkward, arrangement to meet the imperfections of earthly legislation; in which, law through its very hardness operates injustice, and oppresses where it was designed to protect. But if, in a given case, it could be shown that the law was framed expressly to meet it, there could be no suspension of the penalty without the entire overthrow of justice, and the direct subversion of authority. What is here supposed, is exactly true of the Divine Government. The Omniscience of the lawgiver stretched through all the ages, foresaw every contingency that could possibly arise, and tracked the operation of the statute in every case to which it should apply. The reason thus does not exist for the interposition of executive clemency, as in an earthly kingdom—and the analogy fails between the two.

*Secondly*, the collision never takes place between the judicial and executive departments, without a jar which threatens the security of all government amongst men. In evidence of which, see the jealousy with which the exercise of this discretionary power is watched by every good citizen of the land. It is intuitively perceived that the findings of the Courts cannot be frequently and loosely set aside, without disjoining society and shaking the whole fabric of government into ruin. Can this be supposed for a moment, in the administration of Jehovah? And is it not fallacious, to run such an imperfection over from the human kingdoms into the Divine? The theory is a calumny, which postulates such a collision as possible in the wise and perfect government of the Most High.

(2.) It is argued by others, *that God may pardon the sinner upon his bare repentance.* What, if it should turn out that there can be no repentance anterior to the pardon, which it is supposed to procure? The very

sentence under which the sinner is condemned, is that of spiritual death. How shall the sinner "dead in trespass and sins," put forth this act of spiritual life which repentance implies? The contradiction is too obvious to be overlooked. In the Divine plan, it is in the application of the pardon that the Holy Ghost infuses the spiritual life, whose instinctive movement is faith in Christ and repentance toward God.

But passing this by as only a most awkward embarrassment, repentance is not atonement. It does not cancel past guilt; nay rather it is the affirmation of it. Instead of bleaching the sin, it is rather the dye which sets the dismal color fast. What shall be done with this guilt? Supposing the sinner ever so penitent for past sin, and ever so competent to abstain from its commission hereafter, what disposal shall be made of it, consistently with God's justice which condemns it, and with God's truth which affirms it shall be punished? Evidently, this hypothesis goes to pieces, under the double difficulty which presses upon it.

(3.) It is surmised again, *that God may inflict the penalty in part*, either in the sufferings of this life, or of purgatory in the world to come. This you perceive to be the essence of what is known as the theory of Universalism. Two replies instantly occur, both of which require to be silenced. The *first* exposes it as a different penalty from that which God originally appointed as the sanction of his law. The punishment which the law in the beginning threatened against transgression, was *death*—"the soul that sinneth, it shall die"—and this death must be eternal, unless God interpose the power of His grace to lift us up to life again. By what authority does man undertake to substitute an enactment of his own, in place of that which Jehovah has solemnly ordained? Or, if it be alleged that the change is made by the Lawgiver Himself, how shall this comport with that immutability of purpose and of character which we have been compelled to ascribe to Him? And what vindication is there of justice, when the penalty is thus reduced after it has been incurred? At this juncture, the surrender of the penalty is subversive of the law: and this is nothing less than the overthrow of all government, and the removal of all protection and security to the creature.

The *second* reply is, that the enormity of an offence is not measured by the capacity of the transgressor, be it more or less, but by the magnitude of the interests to be protected. The principle might be profusely illustrated, if it were necessary to establish what no one will be disposed to deny. Life is a most precious gift of God to man; it is therefore held a sacred trust, and murder is a crime visited with the highest penalty of human law. In like manner, treason strikes directly against the majesty of



the State, and at a single blow destroys all the complex interests of society. It therefore passes under the heaviest human censure, as the gravest of public crimes. But sin is an offence against all the interests of the Universe and of God. Its enormity is to be measured only by the infinite perfections of Jehovah, against which it is directly levelled, as well as by the majesty of that blessed law which is the adequate interpretation of these. It is a gross error to estimate its guilt by the finite strength of the sinner. The attempt which is made upon the life of the Divine holiness itself, is none the less base because the powerless shaft fell beneath the stars above which Jehovah sits upon the throne of His glory. The punishment of such a crime as this treason against the majesty of the God-head, must be proportioned to its aggravation; which, in the case of finite beings must be eternal in its duration.

Thus, reason suggests no way in which God can be "just and yet a Saviour." Nor, on the other hand, does nature make any provision for cleansing the defiled. It is, however, a difficulty which must be surmounted. How can a Being of immaculate purity hold communion with a polluted sinner? How can the Lawgiver look upon that sinner with displeasure, after he has been pardoned? How can God, possessing a moral nature, be indifferent? These interrogatories draw the meshes of the argument too close to admit of any escape. God must either love, or hate, or be indifferent—for these three exhaust all the suppositions which are possible; and not one of the three can obtain upon the theory of a partial infliction, and a partial remission, of the original penalty. The infliction necessitates the admission of its justice; the remission confesses that justice has been wronged in the pretermission. Both unite in the condemnation of the hypothesis which I am discountenancing.

III. NOTWITHSTANDING THESE DIFFICULTIES, GOD IS SEEN IN THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION TO SAVE THE SINNER, WITHOUT COMPROMISING ANY OF HIS ATTRIBUTES. This salvation turns upon the principle of *substitution*, as its pivot—transferring the punishment to another, so that the sin is avenged whilst the transgressor is saved. "Slain in the guilty sinner's stead"—this is the eye of the whole gospel, the feature which gives expression:

"Paschal Lamb, by God appointed,  
All our sins on Thee were laid;  
By almighty love anointed,  
Thou hast full atonement made.

All Thy people are forgiven  
Through the merit of Thy blood;  
Opened is the gate of heaven;  
Peace is made 'twixt man and God."

But this idea of substitution is original with God ; no other being could have framed the thought. There is nothing in the law which could have suggested it, but rather everything to forbid the conception. There was nothing in the previous administration of Jehovah to render it probable, if its possibility had even been admitted. On the contrary, the summary execution of the apostate angels furnished a precedent, which must have extinguished the thought as soon as it arose. Law, as such, knows nothing of pardon. It recognizes only obedience or punishment. The incorporation within it of the principle of mercy would operate its dissolution, and render it useless as a regulative standard. It is therefore of pure grace, that God proposes to men the pardon of sin ; whilst infinite wisdom was required to reconcile this with the justice which demands the execution of the sinner. The method of reconciliation is found in the substitution of "the just for the unjust ;" "for He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin ; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (II Cor. v. 21.) Apart from the details of the work of grace, the proposition is a paradox—that the innocent should suffer in order that the guilty may escape. The scheme therefore, in its conception, is lifted far above the range of a creature's thought ; and is seen at a glance to unite all the perfections of God, in its consummation.

But should the idea occur to the creature, where is this substitute to be found ? Observe, three conditions must of necessity meet in him : (1,) he must have power over his own life, both to lay it down and to take it again ; (2,) He must be above law so as to owe no obedience for himself ; (3,) He must possess infinite resources, to enable him to meet the exactions of infinite justice. None of these conditions can be found in the creature. Were all the hosts of heaven convened in solemn congress, only a deep and oppressive silence could meet the challenge of Jehovah, "whom shall I send, and who will go for us ?" Nor could this awful silence be broken, except by "a voice from the excellent glory," saying "Here am I. send me." (Isa. vi. 8.) We must ascend above all grades of being in heaven itself, and enter within the pavilion of the God-head, before we should find Him who is capable of assuming the sinner's responsibilities. The Eternal Son, lying in the bosom of the Father, is able to respond "Lo I come ; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God." (Ps. xl. 7, 8.) He can fulfil each of the conditions named above. As to the first, He says with emphasis : "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have

I received of my Father." (John x: 17, 18.) As to the second, "God sent His Son, made of a woman, MADE UNDER THE LAW, to redeem that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Gal. iv: 4, 5.) Thus through a vicarious obedience, we may be justified before God, without introducing the vicious principle of supererogation which is subversive of all responsibility, and with this, of all morality. As to the third, it is written of Him that "being in the form of God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." (Phil. ii: 6, 8.)

But when the substitute is found competent to assume the mighty trust, the difficulties are not fully surmounted. Nay rather, we have run against others which are fearfully antagonistic. It is man that sinned, and it is man who must suffer, whilst this substitute is Divine. How grandly these obstacles are swept away by the incarnation of the Son of God, and by the union of the two natures in the Mediator's person,—all this is as familiar as a mother's lullaby to those who are acquainted with the gospel of our salvation. "The Word was made flesh," says John. (Ch. i. 14.) "Forasmuch," says Paul, "as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same." (Heb. ii. 14.) In this human nature, He can bear the sinner's guilt and die the sinner's death; whilst yet the glory of His Divinity can fill His obedience with inconceivable lustre, and impart to all His work of sacrifice an infinite merit. Besides all these adaptations to the office He has assumed, He is bound by a close moral tie to His seed given Him in the Covenant of His Father, making Him their kinsman in law, and vesting in Him the right of their redemption. Thus fitted to appear in their behalf, He endures the curse for them; justice and law are satisfied in His vicarious death, and pardon is secured. In His perfect obedience He "brings in everlasting righteousness;" and through Him the guilty are pronounced to be just, by infinite Truth itself. The sinner is saved, and not one perfection of God is soiled in the process. On the contrary, all the Divine attributes stand forth in the revelation of a new and peculiar glory, through the work of Him who has "magnified the law and made it honorable." (Isa. xlii: 21.)

The scheme of grace provides not only for the pardon of the sinner, but also for the sanctification of the believer. If in the former the truth and justice of God are maintained, equally in the latter is the Divine holiness manifested. The Holy Ghost applies the redemption of Christ, by quick-

ening the soul which is dead in sin—and then by dwelling in the Christian, as the spirit of consolation, of obedience and of glory; “in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.” (Eph. i: 13, 14.) The sinner conformed again to the image of God, is fitted to hold communion with His Father in Heaven; whose consummate purity is vindicated from all reproach, in the stupendous change by which the sinner is transformed into the glorified saint. Thus against all the melancholy forebodings in the case, God is seen to “be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” (Rom. iii: 26.)

IV. THE FUNDAMENTAL CONDITIONS OF THIS SCHEME COULD NEVER BE FULFILLED, EXCEPT BY A BEING SUCH AS THE SCRIPTURES REPRESENT JEHOVAH TO BE. This last proposition gathers into a knot all that precedes, and concludes the discussion. Not to expand a topic so fruitful of suggestions, two observations will suffice.

(1.) *The Being, who devises and executes such a salvation, must unite in Himself all the attributes of wisdom, power, justice, goodness, holiness and truth.* Each of these is indispensable to the scheme, and must pre-exist in the author by whom it is contrived. But where are they all united, except in the God of the Bible? If we search through the ancient mythology, the Gods disclosed in it are but personifications of a single trait. Apollo represents the quality of wisdom; Mars, that of power; Jupiter presiding over the senate of the Gods upon Mount Olympus, the abstract idea of supremacy or rule. Nay, so far had heathen theology sunk below a comprehensive conception of the one living and true God, that it was compelled to invent a class of female Deities complementary to the male, in order to represent the softer, as well as the sterner, aspects of the same attribute. Independent of revelation, the Gods of human invention are but exaggerations of the finite; and the limitation is seen most conspicuously in the restriction of each deity to the representation of a single idea. A Pantheon of Divinities is necessary to complete the circle of attributes which belong essentially to the Deity. The whole wisdom of the heathen world is surpassed by the knowledge of the Sabbath School child, who is able to repeat the answer to the fourth question of the Catechism; “God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.” Surely, the spirituality of the Divine essence had dropped out of their knowledge, before the Deity could be pictured through “the wood of their graven image;” and the multiplication of Gods arose simply from inability to combine diversity of

traits with unity of being. The Scriptures alone present in one the assemblage of properties, which fill out the idea of a God. In Him they exist in the most beautiful proportion; and the revelation is chiefly made through grace, in the work of redemption by Jesus Christ our Lord.

(2.) Again, *it is a scheme which can be executed only by a Triune God.* The parts are so various, and the offices to be discharged are in such antithesis, that they cannot be consolidated upon a single agent. How, for example, can one and the same person, at one and the same moment, be the representative both of God and the sinner? How can he administer the law, and yet be subject under its authority? How can he both provide the justifying righteousness, and pronounce the justifying decree? How can he be at once the sacrifice upon the altar, and pour down the fire from heaven by which it is consumed? These functions stand in the relation of contrast, and must from their antagonism be distributed to different persons in the God-head. The moment we accept the testimony of Holy Scripture, the collision ceases. The Father sends; the Son is sent. The Father holds in His hands the reins of universal empire; the Son comes under the law, and makes atonement for the guilty. The scheme compels the recognition of these two persons, the Father and Son, in the unity of the God-head.

The same incongruity appears in the attempt to merge the offices of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. It needs the two, to provide and to apply the grace. Christ in His state of glory, "exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour," cannot be subjected to the rebuffs which the Spirit encounters in "convincing of sin, of righteousness and of judgment." It would be a strange commingling of exaltation and humiliation, to be at the same instant "sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high," and also in contact as the Sanctifier with all the defilement of a sinner's heart. These specifications need not be extended. Salvation by grace pre-supposes and builds upon this distinction of persons in the unity of the God-head: and it is the severe consistency of logic which binds the two together, in the acceptance and in the rejection alike. If the one holds, so must the other; if the one be discarded, it drags its fellow along with it.

The conclusion from the whole is, that to be revealed as a "just God and a Saviour" is the highest evidence that Jehovah alone is God, and all the Gods of the heathen are idols. The Bible authenticates itself as an inspired Revelation, by the nature of the truths it communicates to man. The existence of the sun is not more clearly proved by the glory of its beams, than is the existence of the one only living God established by the union of justice and mercy in the work of human redemption.

The text, by its very terms, seals a double claim upon the conscience. Jehovah is entitled to the service, love and worship of all His creatures, as *He is God alone*, and as *He is a Saviour*. The appeal, in either case, is to the sense of dependence, and to the sentiment of gratitude. It is just as preposterous to achieve independence of the Divine authority, as of the Divine providence. If there be no escape from God's presence, there can be none from His control. The folly of the attempt is clearly enough perceived in the one, whilst men are strangely blind to it in the other. What would be thought of the husbandman who should go into his fields, defiantly resolving to secure a rich harvest without the Divine concurrence and aid? He sows the ground with good seed, and fosters with assiduous care the growth of the plant. But who imparted to the soil those particular elements, which chemical analysis proves to have been taken up as constituents of the grain, "it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain?" Who placed within the seed the germ of the future plant, and who presides over the conditions under which it shall be pushed into life by a mysterious resurrection? What, if God should respond to this insane boast of independence, by locking up His cisterns in the sky—with holding the early and the latter rain which "watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater?" What, if God should draw His curtains over the sun, by whose genial heat "the precious fruits of the earth are brought forth" for the use of man and beast? Or what if his fiery heat be made to glare forth, burning up every green thing and turning "the rain of the land into powder and dust?" Who ever heard of madness like 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." (James v : 7). Nay, such is man's dependence upon God's providence, that all "wait upon Him who giveth them their meat in due season." The song of the reapers must shout the harvest home in words like these: "Thou visitest the earth and waterest it; Thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: Thou preparest them corn, when Thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly; Thou settlest the furrows thereof; Thou makest it soft with showers; Thou blessest the springing thereof. Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness; and Thy paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness; and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing." (Ps. lxxv : 9-13).

Who will point out the difference in principle between the insanity

which rejects the providence of God, and that which despises His law and His grace? Whether He thunder in tones of wrath from burning Sinai, or whispers His love from gentle Zion, the voice is the voice of Jehovah—and sooner or later, the one sound or the other must enter the ears of men. If the din and clatter of this world be sufficient to drown it for a little, there will be a great stillness at the judgment when “every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world shall become guilty before God.” The impenitent scoffer is fond of throwing the taunt of fanaticism against the people of God, who live “as seeing Him who is invisible.” It is well that a holy pity suppresses the sarcasm, which would retort the accusation with its crushing weight upon him who ventures the dangerous fling. The wildest religious frenzy never dreamed of folly equal to that of refusing obedience and worship to Him who gives us the air we breathe, the bread we eat, the water we drink—who plants within us those affections which throw their tender charm over human life, and whose careful providence opens the sluices through which is poured into the soul the full tide of earthly joy. No: may God save all of us from fanaticism so desperate and deadly as this! And since “in Him we live, and move, and have our being,” let us apply our hearts to that wisdom, the beginning of which is the fear of the Lord.

## XXII.

### EVIDENCES OF CONVERSION.

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I JOHN, III : 19 : *"Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him."*

Two Sabbaths since I attempted to show the necessity of relying upon the testimony of consciousness, in certifying the facts of religious experience—that indeed without it there could be no experience of any sort—and therefore that it must be credited upon the question of a change of heart, as upon any other fact brought under its cognizance. I do not propose now to cover that line of thought, but rather to add what may be supplemental. In the near prospect of another communion season, I desire to aid those who may be "halting between two opinions" in coming to an intelligent decision as to their duty. It would be a great joy to know, that a single timid believer has thereby been determined to confess openly before the world that Redeemer, in whom he is secretly trusting.

Undoubtedly, there is an antecedent question to be settled. Do those, who are meditating this important step, possess the one spiritual qualification which is required? "verily, verily," says our Lord to Nicodemus, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." (John, iii : 3). The difficult point to settle, is precisely this: and those who are called to deal with inquiring souls, are aware [how hard it is to dislodge men from indecision just here. It may be ascertained that a certain change has been experienced; but the doubt remains, whether this change amounts to what is meant by "the new birth." Consciousness discloses clearly enough that we are in possession of such and such feelings, the full significance of which it may not be so easy to interpret. The evidences of conversion are laid down in Scripture explicitly enough. Indeed the epistle, from which the text is taken, is invaluable as the manual of these. But when they come to be applied, they seem to be covered with a mist. The trouble is that these tests themselves must be subjected to scrutiny, before the application of them can be either certain or safe. For example, is love to God assumed to be an unequivocal mark of a regenerate state? It must first be inquired, whether this love founds upon a com-



plete view of the Divine character; or whether some necessary attribute has been eliminated, rendering us guilty of mental idolatry and directing our love to a very different being from the God of the Scriptures. Again—if love to the brethren be made the discriminating test, it must first be ascertained whether this may not be a simply natural affection grounded upon those natural virtues which may exist in the unconverted, without a particle of grace. Thus we may pass around the entire circle of these proofs of a gracious state, only to find that we must press behind the mere existence of a given affection and determine its quality, before we can infer from it the reality of a spiritual change. On this account, so many despair of being able to make a safe interpretation of their experience. Whatever the comfort which they secretly draw from it, they feel justified in withholding a public profession of that which they cannot succeed in extricating from uncertainty and doubt. Allow me therefore to lay down two or three canons, which may possibly be of practical service in this direction.

I. *This is a single issue, and should be carefully separated from all collateral questions.* In the new birth, the sinner is transported into a world where at first every thing is strange. Like the blind man to whom Jesus restored sight, they “see men as trees walking.” Vision is enjoyed, but it is indistinct. Experience must teach both distance and proportion, so that they may understand more perfectly the states of their own consciousness, and give to each its relative importance. In the confused state, too, of the young convert’s mind, there is a commingling of elements which are dissimilar, and which belong to different stages of our religious history. How often is it said, “I feel the power of divine truth, but I fear that my convictions in regard to it are not deep enough.” The only proper question to be asked at this period, is whether those convictions are of the right sort: it is their character, rather than their degree, which should be scrutinized, when the point in debate is whether the mind has really been enlightened, and the conscience properly aroused, by the Holy Ghost. In like manner, the acknowledgment of love to God and the Saviour, is often clouded by the complaint of its feebleness and inconstancy. “I feel,” says the young Christian, “that I do love God; but it is a love which falls so far short of His infinite merit, that I cannot think of it without shame.” Alas! where is the saint upon earth, or perhaps in heaven itself, who will not be compelled to the same admission! But the real question now is, whether there be any love at all in the heart which thus pours forth its confession, and whether this love be true in its kind. Precisely so with the exercise of faith in the Redeemer: “I do trust in

Him alone for salvation," exclaims the penitent; "but the faith is so feeble, that it should be named only to discard it."

These utterances we hear every day from the lips of those who begin to feel "the powers of the world to come," but have not yet learned to read intelligently their own experience. The mistake consists in confounding justification with sanctification—in applying the tests of the latter in order to determine the former. By and by, the question will arise with deepening significance, how far am I advanced in holiness—how nearly do I approach the image of Jesus Christ as reflected in God's blessed word? In determining the degree of our sanctification, it will be important to ascertain the measure of our faith, as well as the fervor and constancy of our love. But what we desire to know, at the outset, is the fact of our acceptance before God as evidenced to us in the possession of spiritual life. It is therefore the bare existence of gracious affections within the soul which we are first required to establish, and not the degree in which any one of them may as yet be developed. It will clear the subject of much of its difficulty to distinguish between these two things, and to confine the examination to the one point which is under adjudication. Are we born again? Has the Holy Ghost made us new creatures in Christ Jesus? These are the questions to be answered: and in the solution, there must be a rigorous application of the tests of a regenerate state, as these are laid down for our guidance in the sacred Scriptures. But confusion more and more perplexing must arise, so long as we fail to distinguish the things which differ, and apply the wrong tests to the wrong thing.

II. *We must interpret our religious character by the general tenor and drift of our spiritual exercises, and not by those which are occasional and discordant.* For reasons which we can partially comprehend in this life, and for deeper reasons which remain to be expounded beyond the grave, it does not please God to consummate the work of grace in the moment of the new birth. On the contrary, the sad lament breaks from the lips of every Christian upon earth, in the very words of the Apostle of old: "for the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. \* \* \* I find then a law that, when I would do good, evil is present with me." The battle between the two principles of holiness and sin is protracted and fierce, and often wrings from the heart which is oppressed a wail like to that of despair: "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death." (Rom. vii: 19-24.) We are born of grace, just as we are born of nature: and our first condi-

tion must be that of babes. The law of growth holds in the one kingdom, as in the other: through which we develop from the feebleness of infancy "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (Eph. iv: 13.) "As new born babes we desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby;" (I Pet. ii: 2) "but strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discover both good and evil." (Heb., v: 14).

In this process of development and of discipline, how is it to be expected that our religious feelings shall be constant, and our Christian experience of unvarying complexion? "The old man must be put off, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;" "the new man must be put on, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Eph. iv: 22, 24.) "They that are Christ's" can say with Paul, "we die daily"—as "the flesh is crucified with its affections and lusts." (Gal. v: 24.) How then, in the midst of this bitter warfare between contending elements, shall we decide upon the true character as it appears before the eye of Jehovah? Paul himself, in the very description of the battle, lays down the discriminating touch-stone: "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. \* \* \* So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." (Rom. vii: 20, 25.) The real person is identified with the nature which has been renewed. The old nature, which is to be crucified and destroyed, is reckoned as a foreign element—something without the man, which clings to him with fearful tenacity indeed, but which will finally slough away and be no more an encumbrance and a torment. The true character is estimated by what the true person does, and not by the caricatures and distortions of that which counterfeits his being and his presence. The general flow of the current unfolds the source from which it issues; the breakwater which momentarily detains it, is thereby revealed as both foreign and antagonistic. Huge boulders may by volcanic forces be thrown up, interrupting the continuity of earth's surface; but they are, at last, insignificant and discordant features in the landscape which charms the eye. The explosion of human passion, or the severe temptations of the world, may often bring to view much hidden sinfulness, affording melancholy proof of the incompleteness of our sanctification, whilst it by no means concludes against the reality of a state of grace.

This distinction between the habitual and the casual, is recognized by us daily in the judgments we form of our fellow-men. Here, for example is a man habitually mild and amiable. You infer that he is constitutionally

such, from the constancy with which these traits are exhibited. If however, under strong provocation, he should be betrayed into violent anger, this does not affect your previous and permanent judgment. The instinct of justice guides you to the distinction which explains the anomaly. These ebullitions of temper reveal a defect, of which perhaps you were not before apprized; but then they are not characteristic of the man, and you discount them in the general estimate. Just so, in the interpretation of religious character. The adultery and murder of David, as well as the cowardice and baseness of Peter, were enormous crimes; but they are not to be separated from the "bitter weeping," and the wail of penitence with which they were confessed before God, and shown thereby to be interruptive and discordant—huge sins thrown up transversely, breaking the continuity of the life, and presenting a complete section in which the true character is seen to be in utter opposition to these "deceitful lusts."

III. *We must distinguish between the principle and the emotion which flows from it.* It is unfortunate that the emotions should be so universally accepted as the test by which religious character is to be determined. But though unfortunate, it is by no means strange. These frames of feeling thrust themselves obtrusively upon our notice. Their vividness renders them distinct, like the flame which is the more conspicuous against the black night. Other things may call for search, before they are known; but these leap from all concealment and challenge recognition. The deception is thus easily imposed, that what is so self-evident must be the easiest criterion to detect the hidden and obscure. And yet of all the kinds of evidence, this derived from the feelings is the least satisfactory.

Who does not know, for instance, how the emotions depend upon natural temperament? Here are two men side by side, members it may be, of the same household—the one cold and phlegmatic, like the green wood of the forest incapable of ignition in the intensest heat of the furnace; the other mercurial and lively, with the sparkle of the sea or of the stars; how preposterous to apply the same law of feeling to beings who are constitutionally so different?

How largely, again, are these affections modified, even in the same person, by the condition of physical health or disease, and by all the variety of circumstances by which he may chance to be surrounded? Those who pride themselves upon evenness of temper and wonder at the impatience of others, need perhaps only to be rubbed a little against the hair to become as fretful as the porcupine. Can these feelings be made the tests of character, which themselves fluctuate with all the accidents of the passing hour?

Look too at the law of reaction, which measures the degree of depression precisely by the degree of previous exhilaration. Our emotions ebb and flow, like the tides of the ocean. With a deep swell they roll over us and we go down beneath the flood, as ships are buried in the yawning chasm of the deep; then they recede, leaving us empty and dry, like those ships when they are stranded upon the beach. It is indeed a merciful provision, to keep us from being worn out by the constant attrition. These emotions of ours are too sharp, and would soon cut through the scabbard, if they were not sometimes allowed to go to sleep. But before they can serve as discriminating tests, it must be known whether the tide is upon the flood, or upon its retreat to the heart of the sea in which it is so mysteriously engulfed. Many a child of God has written bitter things against himself, wilting beneath accusations not brought against him by the Father in heaven, simply because the self-inspection happened to be at a moment of exhaustion, when all the stimulus in nature could not rouse the flagging mind to intense action of any sort.

Besides all this, there is no standard of measurement for these emotions. Who can tell how high the mercury must rise in the tube, before we are warranted to believe that all within us is right before God? And where is the degree marked upon the scale, below which it may not safely be allowed to sink? Surely, there is no accurate discrimination of Christian character, where reliance is placed solely upon tests which are so fluctuating and so arbitrary as the feelings. The judgment therefore which is based upon these, must be unsafe to the last degree.

Putting all these objections aside, however, I would have you consider that Religion is as truly a matter of *principle* as of *feeling*. The virtue of a plant must be found in the root, before it is discovered in the bloom or in the fruit. In deciding whether or not we are God's children, the evidence must be sought in the hidden depths of the character, as well as in the lively affections which spring out and come to the surface. The tests to be applied must be as different as the varieties of Christian experience with which the Church is diversified. The Holy Ghost may choose to enter the soul by the door of the understanding, and to impress truth powerfully upon the mind; in which case the predominant cast of the experience will be *intellectual*. Or, He may fasten upon the conscience such a sense of right and duty as to control the will; and experimental religion will be reflected upon the world under the aspect of stern *principle*. It is only in other cases, that He will gain access through the sympathies and affections, and the type of experience will be the *emotional*. In estimating these varieties of christian character, we need a test which

will dip beneath the surface, and detect the sacred principle from which all true feeling takes its rise.

Whilst however true piety may exist in the heart as a principle, the occasion may be wanting for its exhibition in any given form of feeling. Take, in illustration of this, a child at school. During the long and weary term, how the affections cling to the dear but distant home with a sickness of longing, from which none die indeed, but so many have suffered! As the time of return draws nigh, how the young heart beats in eager anticipation of the joy! In the journey homeward, how each familiar object is greeted with the welcome, as it seems to wear the face, of an old friend! At last, upon the threshold, locked in the embrace of father, mother, brother and sister, how the breast becomes too narrow to hold the heart throbbing with the pulse of its great joy! And for days that follow, with a strange effervescence of feeling the feet move only to the motion of a dance, and the voice trills the notes of music and of song. After a little, however, there is a subsidence of these lively affections; which begin to move with an equable flow, in the old currents as before. The question then naturally arises—was the love any greater during all this effervescence, when it was bubbling to the surface with this intensity of endearment? Or, is the love diminished when it has sunk to its ordinary level and seems to hide itself again in the deep places of the soul? The reply to this double question is found readily in the distinction which we are compelled to draw between the *principle* and the *emotion* of love. The *principle* was always there, sound and vigorous, in the heart; which, upon a fit occasion, was manifested in the suitable *emotion*.

Illustrations of this distinction offer themselves in every relation and condition of life. One other will perhaps be justified by the importance of the topic. A mother of six or eight children bends with maternal anxiety over the sick couch of one of them. How strangely are the rest forgotten, while the thoughts and the affections seem to be absorbed by the one who is in distress! Let health be restored; and the little favorite goes back to its old place in the nest, and must be satisfied with its own share of affection and care. Does this mother, in point of fact, love that child any more in the one case, or any less in the other? Is it not a complete solution to say, that whilst maternal love is a constant quantity, its exhibitions will vary with the occasions which draw it from concealment. The live coal, smouldering under the ashes, only requires to be shaken from its encumbrance and to be fanned by the breeze, in order to glow with all its brilliancy and to burn with all its heat.

Let the same practical sense which guides us to this distinction in the

common affairs of life, direct its application in the religious sphere. Whilst our frames of feeling are variable, dependent upon a thousand conditions, the principle of true religion may be healthy and strong in the depths of the soul. And there are seasons of gracious discipline, when our spiritual life appears to go down into the roots of our character, to nourish and strengthen it; from which it will afterward flow upward, and cover the tree with graceful foliage and with wholesome fruit.

IV. *Present duty is all that we are summoned to decide, leaving the uncertainties of the future to the providence and grace of God.* This caution is by no means useless. Man's forethought strives constantly to make provision for the future, which too often becomes to us a temptation and a snare. It is common to hear the excuse urged against a public profession of religion, "if I could only be sure that these convictions and feelings would continue, I would gladly assume the responsibilities which are involved in the proclamation of my Christian hopes—but I am so afraid of apostacy, that it will be more safe to decline the obligation at once." Alas! that it should not be seen how such a position contravenes the law of faith, which is fundamental in the kingdom of grace! "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," is the warning—and "as thy days so shall thy strength be," is the promise—which in all ages are addressed to the Israel of God. Paul's enumeration of this principle is emphatic; "the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Gal. ii: 20.) "Our life is hid with Christ in God;" it must therefore be drawn from Him in the constant communications of His grace. This truth is sealed in the petition which our Lord framed and puts upon our lips, "give us day by day our daily bread." He who waits upon the threshold of the Church, until he can accumulate a stock of grace which shall insure him against the contingencies of the future, will find himself driven back upon the simple pledge of the Redeemer, "my grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." (II Cor. xii: 9.) With this assurance, we can afford to remit the future with all its uncertainties to Him to whom it properly belongs—"being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in us, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Phil. i: 9.)

It may seem superfluous to say all this; but, in reality, there is a strong pressure on the other side, to keep us from the performance of immediate duty in confessing Christ before men. There is not only the false humility which shrinks from what is construed as a pretension to merit; there is not only the weakness which shrinks from the responsibility of a public

avowal of our hopes; there is not only the dread of future apostacy, in which we shall be driven to an equally public retraction of these professions; but there is also the awkwardness in the first attempt to discharge duties to which we are unaccustomed. It is astonishing how light a straw will turn the scales which are hanging in the balance. For example, one has just surmounted his difficulties, and is about ready to proclaim his faith to all mankind, when suddenly it occurs to him that he must then erect the family altar, and become the priest of his own household in the offices of daily worship. The embarrassment in taking up this one duty, is sufficient perhaps to topple over all his pious resolves—and he remains, as before, in the company of those who, not being with Christ, are declared to be against Him. From these, and other like causes, it is so difficult to induce men to change front before the world, even after their own convictions of truth and duty are strong within. The indecision is never overcome, until the folly is apparent of seeking to insure against the future; which therefore is left in the hands of God, with the earnest purpose to perform, at least, the duty of the present hour.

Under the protection of these preliminary cautions, let us look at some of the evidences of a gracious state. Before any attempt to enumerate these, it may be important to suggest that, in the outset of our religious career, they cannot all be expected distinctly to meet. These evidences are diversified in form by all the relations in which we stand to God and to men, as well as by all the circumstances with which we may happen to be surrounded. The experience of no person can be instantly developed upon all points alike. Opportunity may not have served to draw out some specific test; which perhaps, in another case, would prove the most searching that could be applied. For example, the spirit of forgiveness may, in certain circumstances, be the most discriminating of all practical tests; whilst it may happen to another, to know that not an individual exists to whom he cherishes ought of unkindness or resentment. Plainly then, we should not ignore the evidences of conversion which we do discover, because of the absence of others which are not found simply from want of opportunity to develop them. This consideration will guide me in presenting only those evidences which are broad and general, and which must meet more or less clearly in every regenerate person. Those which are more minute and special, are best treated in the concrete cases where they arise, as questions simply of Christian casuistry.

I. *The first sign of a converted state is often the removal of the burden of guilt.* The distress which is felt under conviction of sin, differs in



degree in different cases. Sometimes it rises into positive anguish, leading to the border of despair or of mental derangement. Again, it takes the form of unrest, smothering the enjoyments which might otherwise brighten human life. But the burden of sin is felt in all. If removed, this must be ascribed to one of two causes; either the Holy Spirit has withdrawn His gracious influence, and the sinner has lapsed into his previous apathy; or the peace which springs from pardon is beginning to be sealed upon the conscience, discharging it from the sense of guilt. Surely, it is possible to decide which of the two suppositions is to be accepted. If the former, then the old indifference to the whole subject will too painfully disclose that we are still "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." If however with our anxiety deepening for the salvation of the soul, the burden is clean gone—if, as often happens, we strive in our alarm to bring the burden back, and fail in the effort—if we turn the sharp points of the law upon the conscience, without the anguish which they were wont to produce—if we can meditate upon all that is severe in God's justice, and all that is dreadful in God's holiness, without a pulse of the old terror; what can be inferred but that the Saviour has whispered to us the word of pardon, "thy sins which are many be forgiven thee, go in peace?" If pardoned the condition can be none other than that of peace; "therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. v: 1.) The special promise of the Saviour was conveyed in His parting benediction; "peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you—let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John xiv: 27.) How shall the Holy Spirit seal the Divine pardon upon the human soul, but by breathing into it the Saviour's peace, which sweetly steals over every sense and drowns every fear? This may not be the completest proof of spiritual life; but it is precious, as being the first which breaks upon the darkness of the sinner, a presumption which is soon strengthened into the hope, and finally into the assurance, of his acceptance with God.

II. A more satisfactory evidence is furnished in *the subjection of the carnal mind, and in the substitution of the reigning power of love*. The opposition of the sinner's heart to holiness and God is expressed with fearful emphasis by the Apostle; "because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Rom. viii: 7.) Mark the language; the carnal mind is not simply inimical, but it is enmity itself. The former might be temporary and accidental; in the latter, enmity is seen to be its nature or essence. And the proof is the more certain and easy to be applied, because of the negative form in which

it is put—"for it is not subject to the law of God." There is not a degree of depravity which is not here comprehended. The enmity may rise into fury, and find utterance in blasphemy and rage; or it may sleep but half discovered in the heart, simply feeling no complacency in the Divine perfections, rendering no obedience to the Divine commands, refusing all recognition of the Divine providence and grace. In all the gradations in which it is found, it is still the carnal mind and universally characteristic of those who are "without God and without hope in the world."

A more complete transformation cannot be conceived than when this bitter and essential opposition is displaced by love, putting the heart in full sympathy with the Creator and Redeemer. Our Lord summed all obedience in love. He, who loves God with all his heart, fulfils the commands of the first table; he, who loves his neighbor as himself, equally covers the precepts of the second table. By the judgment of the Master, the sum of all religion as taught in the Law and the Prophets, is found in this one principle of love. It is a love too neither mawkish nor sentimental, but healthy and robust in all its actings—capable of honest resentment against falsehood and sin in all its forms, and regulated by the Spirit of holiness from whom it proceeds. Is it not possible to decide whether we are predominantly under the control of this gracious principle? With painful acknowledgment of many defects, we may still be constrained to testify to the supremacy of this love within us; and thus with modest boldness to claim our true place in the family of God.

III. A decisive test of the new birth is found in *the easy recognition of Christ and the atonement, as contradistinguished from the attempt to deal with God absolute through His law.* The opposition of the sinner is most pronounced against the grace of the gospel and the religious experience grounded upon it. Indeed there is a natural incapacity to comprehend the principle, or to understand the language in which it is revealed. The conscience responds to the challenge and to the denunciation of law, with startling fidelity; and all the natural instincts prompt to the construction of a religion of our own, upon the basis of naked law. The spirit of legalism clings to us, therefore, with all the tenacity of original sin itself; and it requires the omnipotent and creative power of Divine grace, to root out of the heart a principle which has coiled itself into every fold of our nature.

I cannot, in this connexion, elaborate the statement. It must suffice to say that the choice with us lies between naked theism and Christianity: or, to express the thought more precisely, between natural and revealed religion, the religion of law or the religion of grace. When therefore the

sinner is led out of the former into the latter, the very transition proves him to be in a state of grace and accepted before God. Only those enlightened by the Holy Ghost and renewed in heart, are able to desire with Paul that they "may win Christ and be found in Him, not having their own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." (Phil. iii: 9.) Men may entertain pleasant thoughts of the Divine majesty, and be dazzled by the Divine glory; but when the soul is pressed with a sense of sin, it cries for a Mediator, almost in the language of Israel to Moses at the foot of burning Sinai, "speak thou with us and we will hear, but let not God speak with us lest we die." (Ex. xx. 19). The first movement of a renewed soul is to Christ as the Redeemer, and the Cross becomes the symbol of all that is precious to its hope. It is with deep significance that our Lord said to His disciples in their overwhelming sorrow, "ye believe in God, believe also in me." (John xiv: 1.) The instinctive recourse of the sinner to the blood of atonement, is the unfailing sign of the new life implanted by the Quickener.

IV. Springing out of this, is the evidence furnished in *the exercise of faith and in the actings of true repentance*. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," is the message of grace to every sinner, and it is a message sealed with a promise. Even were the connection between faith and salvation wholly unexplained, the Divine veracity pledges to us the result. We know upon this testimony, that whosoever believeth hath everlasting life. In confirmation of this, faith, as a spiritual movement, indicates the life out of which it springs. Precisely as natural life precedes the breath through which it is afterwards maintained—so the Divine life antedates the faith, which nevertheless draws upon the original source for all the communications by which that life is fed in the human soul. In the constant exercise of this faith, then, is found the proof that "Christ liveth in us;" and the hope is sealed by the peace and joy which we continue to have, in believing.

We but reverse the medal in order to read the inscriptions of our sorrow for sin, on the other side. Repentance is a twin grace with faith. It is the new life in its dealing with sin, cutting loose from it—repudiating it with an honest hatred of its vileness, and with a sincere grief that it should ever have been ours. In this double movement, towards the Saviour in the one direction, and away from sin in the other direction, we have the constant proof of spiritual life in its very action. It only needs the concurrent testimony of the Holy Spirit, "bearing witness with our spirits," to comfort us with "the full assurance of hope unto the end."

This question of simple fact admits of being fully determined. That such and such feelings exist in our bosoms, is matter of knowledge. It only remains to ascertain their precise quality, by the tests which are given for this purpose in the word of God. Turning aside from all collateral issues and adhering to the one point which it is necessary to establish, our conscience gives testimony to the character of our affections as truly as to their bare existence. We are thus borne to a reasonable certainty that we are "new creatures in Christ Jesus." This becomes more and more confirmed, as we are enabled by grace to bring forth the fruits of holiness; and is wrought into a full and abiding assurance by the immediate witness of the Holy Ghost.

How many considerations press each one of us to an early and final settlement of this momentous issue! There is the loss of so much comfort and joy, which spring only from an ascertained hope of our salvation in Jesus Christ. Even though we should be saved at last, it is an irrecoverable loss to have missed all that peace and comfort, which perform so important a part in educating the saint for the enjoyments of heaven. There is, again, the loss of a grand opportunity to glorify our Lord by the testimony we should have given to the sweetness and power of His grace. Angels may move with a stronger wing over a broader ministry, in the kingdom above; but the office is assigned to the redeemed to pitch the "new song," unto "Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood." (Rev. i: 5.) And though it may be a testimony which will be joyfully rendered in heaven, it is none the less a lost opportunity if it be not rendered on earth, where it might have led others to the knowledge of the same peace and joy with ourselves. Add to this the danger of falling into a morbid condition, which will effectually disable from all settlement of this question, and shut us up in a state of chronic indecision and doubt. It is sad to think of such a cloud settling over the heart, never to be lifted perhaps until it is dispelled by the voice of the Saviour sitting upon His judgment throne. The consequences of unbelief are sometimes sufficiently dreadful in this life; and they are none the less penalties for transgression, simply because they come upon us through the operation of known laws under which the human spirit is controlled. Oh, ye that waver, in this house to-day, listen to the voice of Israel's ancient prophet: "how long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him." With interests at stake which are so immense, conclude this controversy with God; and proclaim your decision in the words of Joshua of old, "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."



## XXIII.

### THE FRUITS OF REDEMPTION, CERTAIN.

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ISA. LIII: 11. *“He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.”*

Isaiah has been styled “the Evangelical Prophet,” partly from the fullness of his predictions of the Messiah, and partly from the unction of his utterances. His prophecy is so minute and circumstantial that, when laid over against the fulfilment, it reads almost like history; and his language dripping with grace, sounds to the ear as though it were borrowed from one of the gospels of the New Testament. He is pre-eminent among the Prophets, as Paul was pre-eminent at a later day among the Apostles. The other Prophets flung out predictions, which were flashes of light going back into the darkness again; whilst Isaiah hangs as the morning star upon the edge of the dawn.

This chapter too juts out from his writings, the condensation and sum of the whole. It was the passage read by the Eunuch as he travelled from the feast at Jerusalem to his Ethiopian home; and to expound which Philip, the Evangelist, was supernaturally directed to join himself to his chariot. How could it fail, indeed, to arrest the attention of every pious Jew, containing within it the double mystery of the suffering and of the glorified Messiah? What pathos lies in his description of the first! “Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: \* \* He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with His stripes we are healed. \* \* He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth.” Hardly could the meekness of our suffering Lord be more touchingly described by the historian himself, even though he had looked with Peter into the High Priest’s palace, and had seen the buffetting and scorn with which He was treated. But suddenly the picture is reversed; and the happy issue of all this anguish is revealed in colors bright with joy and glory; “when thou shalt make His soul an offering of sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.”

In this connexion the words of the text are found. “He shall see of the

travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied ;” setting forth in a two-fold assertion, THE CERTAINTY OF THE FRUIT OF CHRIST’S REDEEMING WORK and HIS COMPLACENT SATISFACTION IN THE SAME. These topics will afford suitable material for our sacramental meditations, this morning.

I. WHAT THEN ARE THE GROUNDS OF CERTAINTY THAT CHRIST WILL SEE OF THE TRAVAIL OF HIS SOUL ? ”

1. *The whole plan was fixed in the purpose of the unchangeable God.* It is surprising how minute is our knowledge of the scheme of grace, beyond what might seem necessary to the operation of simple faith. In order that this faith may be a rational faith, the principles are in a measure laid bare upon which the entire system proceeds. So that reason comes to the support of faith in the approval which it is constrained to render, of the basis upon which it rests. It is true, from the nature of the agents by whom this gospel is devised and wrought, there must be an inner sanctuary in which faith alone erects its shrine, and at the entrance to which proud reason must veil itself in adoring worship. It is true, the grace through which the sinner is saved can be discovered only in the stream which issues from the fountain, and not in the hidden springs by which that fountain is fed ; and that it is not possible to go down into the depths of the Divine nature, to comprehend fully the union of justice and mercy as a perfection of Jehovah Himself. Yet under these admitted limitations, it is marvellous how God has been pleased to gratify the cravings of intellect within us, as well as to draw upon the energies of obedience and of love.

But even if it had been otherwise, and a cloud of mystery had enveloped the whole gospel—if we could see no foundation for its support but the Divine will simply—still it should be sufficient to know that it has been deliberately formed, and is the result of “counsel and of might.” It might be unintelligible to us both in its principles and in its methods, and only discovered in its blessed results,—still if it is a matter of covenant as well as of counsel, between the persons of the God-head, in which each assumes His appropriate part, and is pledged in faithfulness to discharge His function ; how shall this fail to give security to the whole ? If this plan be further eternal in its origin, for the execution of which the earth itself and men were created ; and if it be fixed in the purposes of Him whose will is as incapable of change as His power is incapable of defeat : surely these are guarantees which secure to it success at the end. It is inconceivable that the Redeemer, after fulfilling the severe conditions of His work, should be deprived of the reward, in face of all the stipulations by which it was eternally secured to Him.

2. *Redemption cannot fail of its end, because it so fully reflects the*

*Divine glory.* From the necessity of the case, this must be the ultimate ground of all the Divine acts. However supreme Jehovah may be, He is never capricious. His sovereignty does not imply that His movements are arbitrary. His perfections are such that whatever He does, He does with reason; and that reason is always sufficient, whether it be disclosed or withheld. If "He giveth not account of any of His matters," it is because His wisdom and goodness are pledges of the propriety of His course; and which justify all in saying with David, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." (Ps. xxxix: 9.) But with such a Being as Jehovah, from what shall this reason be drawn, except from the consideration of His own glory? How shall it be worthy of Him, unless it be derived from Himself? If his counsels are from eternity, how shall the motive prompting the same be eternal, unless it be developed from his own perfections?

This glory is conspicuously revealed in the redemption of sinners by our blessed Lord. It is seen in the conception of the mighty plan. It is seen in the methods by which this plan was accomplished. It is seen in the results which are attained. Take it up as an abstract conception; see all the articulations of the scheme; consider the parts of the complex whole; view it in perspective, as its various sections are thrown upon the trestle board of the great Designer: and it becomes at once "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." Pursue the plan in the methods of its working; trace the several stages of its development; and you exclaim with the Apostle as he enumerates the same, "great is the mystery of Godliness!" Gather up the results as these are found in the experience of saints on earth and in heaven; and you are in the temple which "hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

I cannot pause to illustrate each of these particulars. Let one cover the whole. God's glory is seen in the work of creation, and that too in a wonderfully ascending scale. After worlds had been formed upon worlds and had been flung into space, wheeling in their stupendous orbits,—it was an immense ascent in the display of wisdom and of power when God made an intelligent soul to become an inhabitant of any of these worlds. Matter is inert. It is the passive recipient of properties impressed upon it, and which are developed only under the conditions prescribed for their action. The whole process is mechanical, without the possibility of resistance to the control of Him who has ordained it all. But personality and will are free: and in the creation of responsible mind, there is the peril of collision with Him who made it. There was an immense advance from



the creation of matter to that of mind; and speaking after the manner of man, there was an immense venture. Alas! is it not seen in the apostasy of Angels, unfurling the standard of revolt in the very presence of Jehovah, and daring the battle with Almightyness itself? Was not the evil reproduced on earth, when feebler man imitated the first rebellion? and through all the generations from the first transgressor, do not his guilty descendants lift their will in opposition to the supremacy of Him whose right to rule is absolute?

Ah! what a glory is this of the gospel, which composes the dreadful strife and makes the sinner "willing in the day of God's power?" What a sublime triumph does grace achieve in sweetly controlling the creature's will, without trenching upon its freedom—but rather rendering the obedience and the service, the spontaneous homage which the creature himself pays to authority and law? Redemption is plainly then the climax of all Jehovah's works; and crowns with a lustre of its own, the glory which shines through them all. Shall it be obscured, at the very last, by the disappointment of Christ in not "seeing of the travail of His soul? Can it be supposed that the purpose of the Most High will allow itself to be defeated, just at the point where all His other works find the consummation of their glory? Were it only to preserve and to enlarge this glory, the Lord Jesus must reap the fruit of His toil in the salvation of His seed.

3. *The redeemed are secure to Christ, as His mediatorial reward forever.* "The Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance." (Deut. xxxii: 9.) These are the terms in which the thought is expressed by Moses in the Old Testament. Paul, in the New Testament, after describing the voluntary humiliation of our Lord, adds these words: "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, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. ii: 9-11.) I know not which of the two testimonies is the more subduing. The eye suffuses under the touching tenderness of the first; the heart is stirred by the majestic grandeur of the second. That God, who made all things by the word of His power, and to whom therefore all things belong, should appear to turn away from all His vast possessions and accept His redeemed people as His "portion"—this portion, too, measured out by lot, as determining the inheritance which falls to Him: surely, the insensibility must be extreme, which does not melt under a representation of God's love like

this ! And in whom can the statement be verified, except in the Redeemer of men—to whom Jacob belongs by covenant right, as the gift by inheritance from the Father, and the purchase of His own blood ? Can He then afford to lose the reward of His obedience and suffering ? Or shall He “ see of the travail of His soul,” in the possession of His redeemed as His portion and His joy forever ?

“ But God shall raise His head  
O'er all the sons of men,  
And make Him see a numerous seed,  
To recompense His pain.

“ I'll give Him, saith the Lord  
A portion with the strong ;  
He shall possess a large reward,  
And hold His honors long.”

4. *Christ holds in His hand the legal discharge of all His people from guilt and condemnation.* He rose from the grave by virtue of His judicial acquittal, as the substitute and representative of His people. It is not sufficient to refer this simply to the exercise of omnipotent power. As He went into the grave under sentence of law, He can come forth only under a removal of the penalty. The whole proceeding is judicial ; and the important feature in His resurrection is not the power by which it was accomplished, but the ground upon which that power was put forth. Peter points to this when he says : “ Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death—because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.” (Acts ii: 24.) Paul testifies to the same, when He writes : “ Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more ; death hath no more dominion over Him : for in that He died, He died unto sin once—but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God.” (Rom. vi : 9, 10.) The principle set forth in these passages, is obvious. Christ died as our substitute under the law, “ the Lord having laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” (Isa. liii: 6). His resurrection, therefore, under a legal release from the penalty, was the proof that the claims of law were satisfied, and that the sins of His people were cancelled. But as the sins He bore, were their sins—only laid upon Him as their representative, in order to be expiated—His discharge from the curse, was their discharge. He ascends to heaven as the trustee of His people ; and continues to hold in His hand this discharge from condemnation, as the ground upon which He intercedes before the Father, and sues out their individual title to life eternal.

Do not these forms of law, so punctually observed, guarantee the

sure possession of all the privileges and rights which they have laboriously obtained? How could justice be more committed to their enforcement, than by the long judicial process instituted in conformity with its demand? There is nothing more inconceivable, than that a being uncondemned should perish under a just and holy government, such as that of Jehovah. It would be a crime under a human administration, confessedly imperfect. The simple supposition of it would be blasphemy against the law which is declared to be "holy and just and good." If then the great Trustee above holds in his hand the full discharge from guilt of all His redeemed, their salvation must proceed through its successive stages till it be consummated in glory.

5. It only adds another link to the chain, that *Christ is invested with full mediatorial authority and power to apply this redemption.* It is written in the second Psalm: "I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree—the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." (Ps. ii: 6-8.) Again—"The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning." (Ps. cx: 1-3.) Do you ask, my hearers, of whom the prophet speaketh this, and what is the interpretation thereof? Let the New Testament explain the utterances of the Old. Peter makes the application in Acts ii: 32-36: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens; but he saith himself, the Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." The same witness testifieth again: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." (Acts v: 30, 31.)

The most desponding must feel the swelling of a new hope within them, in the intelligent perusal of words like these. It is not the language of promise simply, in the evasion of which such perverse ingenuity is so often displayed. But it is the laying bare before the eye the whole

machinery of grace, by which its last result is reached in the experience of the saint. The sin-bearer, who lay in the tomb, is "exalted to be a PRINCE AND A SAVIOUR." The whole administration of providence is committed to this king in Zion, that He may subordinate every thing to the sanctification of His people. The whole agency of the Holy Ghost, from the moment in which He quickens the sinner in the new birth, to the moment in which He translates the believer into the kingdom of glory, is an agency wielded by the Saviour as the King and Head of His redeemed people. Invested with all the offices necessary to accomplish their salvation, and with full authority to execute them, what can arrest the consummation of His work, when "He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in them that believe?" Seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, must He not, as King, see the fruit of that anguish which, as Priest, He endured. "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied."

6. *The external evidence of this is cumulative, as the saints in their generations are gathered in heaven.* It would be a bold denial, to say that none of our race is permitted to look upon the face of God's throne in peace. From Seth and Enoch, to Noah before the flood—from Abraham "the friend of God," to John the Baptist the fore-runner of our Lord—from John and Peter and Paul who were witnesses of the risen Saviour, to the last son of Adam who shall believe in their testimony—there is "a great cloud of witnesses" to the fact that Christ hath "seen of the travail of His soul." "I beheld," says John, "and, lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." (Rev. vii: 9, 10.) And how has the number been increased, since the day when the holy seer himself sat down in the blessed company, and helped to swell the note of praise "to Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood?" (Rev. i: 5).

How many accessions to this glorified throng are we permitted to witness, who watch around the bed of the dying Saint, and hear his voice saying: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." (II Tim. iv: 7, 8.) Blessed be God, who thus freshens the evidence to His people of their certain salvation! Each Saint who goes upward, leaving this testi-

mony of an assured hope behind, pledges thereby the faithfulness of God to all who remain upon earth. The right of one redeemed soul, is the right of every redeemed soul. The ground upon which one ascends to heaven, is the ground upon which they all shall ascend. It is all the redeemed, or it is none; for all stand alike upon the same footing, "being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Rom. iii: 24.) It is a merciful provision of His love, that our hope of salvation should be strengthened on earth by this cumulative proof, furnished in the translation of the righteous, that Christ will indeed "see of the travail of His soul."

II. The text affirms also THE COMPLACENT SATISFACTION OF THE REDEEMER IN BEHOLDING THE FRUIT OF HIS SUFFERING. In the prophetic words, "He shall be satisfied," we have the calm anticipation of what, in the fulfilment is expressed with throbbing exultation: "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee. \* \* I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." (John xvii: 1, 4, 5.) Nothing separates Him now from His reward, but Gethsemane and its dark shades—nothing, but Calvary, and the shameful cross with its black form against the sky—nothing, but the tomb and the deep humiliation of its embrace. He looks beyond it all, to the joy which was to be His portion forever. As He enters within the cloud which was to darken ere long into His Father's judicial withdrawal from Him, the clear note rings upon the ear of a triumphant issue from it all, when He "shall see of the travail of His soul, and SHALL BE SATISFIED." Let us penetrate the secret of this mysterious joy.

1. *There is the satisfaction arising from the success of His work.* I prefer to start from the lowest human ground of our Lord's delight; simply because he was "partaker of flesh and blood" in order to be "made like unto His brethren in all things." (Heb. ii: 14, 17.)

When a great conception fills the mind, gradually taking shape until, after months and years of anxious toil, it is wrought into successful achievement—perhaps the ecstasy of this is known only to him who has felt it. But it is not difficult to appreciate it, by the power of sympathy, as being one of the most complete and absorbing pleasures known upon earth. To be permitted to finish what we have begun—to find in it the realization of all our hopes and dreams—to know that it is a perfect triumph over untold obstacles and discouragements which hindered the execution—to feel that

life has not been a failure with us, but that a memorial of our patience and of our success will go down to posterity in the work which we have finished; it is the joy of few alone, but always accepted as a full reward for the toil.

It is only necessary to point the application to the case before us. Christ's work, what it was, I will not pause to unfold. How glorious in its aim, how painful in its accomplishment, what entire consecration of every power it demanded, how triumphant in its execution—all this fills the story which is told us in the gospels. By just so much as we are able to hold fellowship with Christ in His sufferings and death, will be the breadth of our sympathy in His joy, as He looks upon His seed and is satisfied."

2. A higher source of pleasure was found by Him, in *the installation of truth and right in their final and absolute supremacy over the universe.* The sentiment of justice in the human soul is one feature of resemblance to Him, in whose image and after whose likeness man was at first fashioned. Defaced by sin, it has not been destroyed. It remains, even in its perversion, as the point to which the law can attach itself in the jurisdiction it will not consent to abdicate. It is necessary as the instinct which will lead us to the cross of a redeemer, and which will interpret the declaration "without shedding of blood is no remission." Its protest against human oppression and wrong, affords a measure of protection against the lust of dominion which builds its thrones upon the wreck of human happiness and hope. Thanks be to God, it is a principle of our nature which cannot be eliminated. It will survive in the bosoms of men, to mourn over the ascendancy of evil and to rejoice in the triumph of right. In proportion as the heart is cultivated, will be its detestation of wrong, and its admiration of righteousness; and it is one of the peculiar sorrows of this life, to be always disappointed in the overthrow of virtue, and to mourn when "judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off—when truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter." (Isa. lix: 14.) Whose heart has not sickened, again and again, in beholding the brutal revelry of lust and crime, with which injustice and wrong celebrate their victories over innocence and truth.

Great then will be the Redeemer's joy, who terminates forever the struggle between holiness and sin in that moment "when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father,"—"that God may be all in all." (I Cor. xv: 24, 28.) The significance of this world's history lies just here, that it is the theatre of grace; in which the united resources of wisdom, justice, and mercy have solved the problem of sin and will

banish it from the universe, save when it is held for restraint and punishment forever. The conflict, which opened with the apostacy of the angels and was transferred to earth in the seduction and rebellion of man, finds its close in the triumph of Him who hath bound Satan and cast him into the lake of fire. Sin can display no new inventions with which to oppose government and law. Rebellion has exhausted its resources. Divine patience has reached the limit which Divine sovereignty had assigned. Iniquity is dethroned; righteousness is supreme. Who should rejoice in this universal reign of holiness and truth, more than He whose work of redemption has accomplished the grand result, in that He hath "made an end of sin," and "brought in everlasting righteousness?"

3. Another permanent result of grace will be *the healing the schism of sin, and blending all beings in harmony forever.* The history of man from the beginning has been the record of strife. This gives point to the description of the Millennial period as the reign of universal security and peace; "the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid: \* \* the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Isa. xi: 7, 9.) This strange reconciliation of hereditary enmities, is the work of Him who "is our peace;" and who, having first healed the breach between man and God, may properly signalize His triumph by healing likewise the breach between man and man; "they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Isa. ii: 4.)

The divisive power of sin is however manifested upon a broader scale, in the schism it created between men and angels: and the final blending of these into one spiritual body of which Christ Jesus is the Head, is the special and final triumph of Divine grace. The full exposition of this cannot be attempted here, at the heel of a discourse. It must suffice only to remind you of the passages of Scripture, in which the fact of this reconciliation is affirmed. Passing entirely by the numerous testimonies to Christ's universal headship "not only in this world, but also in that which is to come,"—let this declaration answer as to the method, by which the broad reconciliation of all the creatures is effected: "having made peace through the blood of His Cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." (Col. i: 20.) Can this amazing result be achieved, without affording satisfaction to its gracious author? Shall not the Redeemer, remembering the pains

by which it was procured, rejoice in this millennial glory of His Church, not only on earth, but also in heaven, not only in time, but also in eternity? Well, may it be written of Him, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied."

IV. Finally, *there will be His joy in fellowship with His saints in glory.* If the spiritual import of the Lord's Supper did not absorb every thought, we would be the more touched by the infusion of human tenderness into the words "this do in remembrance of me." Did our blessed Lord, standing upon the skirt of His great agony, feel no human craving for the solace to be found in the remembrances of human friendship? I know perfectly well how subordinate to their higher import, must be this interpretation of these solemn words; nor would I dare to place it except as the outer fringe, upon the border of the great truth which they express. Nevertheless, one would not wholly discard it, who hears the Saviour in His prayer, a little later—"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." (John xvii: 24.) Shall the Redeemer so long for human fellowship, even in His glory,—and is there no pleasure felt in its actual possession? Surely, the fulness of this reciprocal fellowship will be no slight element of His mediatorial reward. He shall "see His seed" forever with Him in His kingdom. He shall be forever "satisfied."

Behold then, my brethren, the ground of your safety in Jesus Christ. It is not that we have loved Him, but that "He first loved us." (I John iv: 19.) "Having loved His own, He loved them to the end." (John xiii: 1.) "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His." (II Tim., ii: 19.) Here is the ground of the saints preservation—not that he is strong in himself, but that he is "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (I Pet. i: 5.) And the clasp which secures the whole, is the covenant engagement of the Father to the Son, that "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." Let our penitential sorrow around this table to-day, by which we have fellowship with Christ in His sufferings, be the pledge to us that "He will see of the travail of His soul in our complete salvation at last."

What a glow suffuses our Christian toil, if we too like our master are to see the fruit of it and be satisfied! Not more truly are we partakers of Christ's sufferings, than of His reward; and the declaration of the text will be true of our service, as of His. In no case, will the surrender of personal ease, or the endurance of toil, or the patient suffering of discipline,



pass without its just remuneration. Let us take up our work, in whatever sphere it may lie—and whilst bearing the heat and burden of the day, let us be cheered by “the great recompense of reward,” when we too shall see of all our travail and shall be satisfied.

With what willingness should we surrender our loved ones who have died in the Lord, that He who has loved them even unto death may look upon them and be repaid for all His anguish! Amidst the laceration of these earthly affections, let us learn to take the loss and the pain and the sorrow as our portion, that those who lie upon the Saviour’s bosom may have the peace and the joy as their portion forever. Nay rather, let us rise to a higher sympathy, and feel a little of the Saviour’s triumph; as He looks upon the joy of His redeemed “beholding His glory which the Father has given Him.” The selfishness of human grief is lost, as soon as we catch a glimpse of the glory which is the portion of the Lord and of His people beyond.

## XXIV.

### CHRIST'S FRIENDSHIP.

JOHN, xv : 15 : "*Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth ; but I have called you friends.*"

This passage plainly affirms the change operated by grace in the legal relations of the believer. Whilst he can never be absolved from the obligation of obedience, this obedience is no longer that of a servant, but of a son. Important however as this change is, and clearly involved in the fact of our adoption, I pretermitt its discussion now, that I may dwell upon THE INESTIMABLE PRIVILEGE OF THIS FRIENDSHIP OF CHRIST, which is promised in the text. We may be helped to appreciate it, by considering some of the characteristics which make it of such priceless value to the Christian.

I. I signalize the fact that *it is bestowed upon us, with the antecedent knowledge of all that is within us.* Human friendship is founded largely upon ignorance. Certain traits in others win upon our esteem, then upon our confidence and love. But in the intimacy which ensues, the veil of reserve is cast aside ; and we awake to the discovery that the qualities, which we so much admired, were only assumed. If they do not disappear from the view, they dwarf into smaller proportions ; or else they are counterpoised by vices and defects, of which we had not the faintest suspicion. We feel the chill of disappointment, and the first coolness begins, —like the thin ice which forms upon the margin of the water just where it kisses the shore. This deepens into alienation and final estrangement : it is well, if it does not end in disgust or in open rupture and strife. Thus, the path of almost every man is strown with the wrecks of broken friendships. If through an open window in the breast the whole character of each was exposed to view, who can doubt, in the present sinful condition of our race, that society would fall to pieces at every joint, or that the ties of friendship would never have been formed ?

In the contrast, then, how precious becomes the friendship of Christ, in view of His antecedent knowledge of every thing within us ? When His love fastened itself upon us, all was plain before His omniscient eye.

There are no future discoveries to fill Him with surprise. In our worst miscarriages, there are no revelations to Him of what before was shrouded in darkness. It is not amiss to put the thought in words and hold it up to our faith, that Christ's love is not founded, like our own, upon imperfect knowledge of those upon whom it is bestowed. It is not shaken by the disclosure of faults which He saw in us from the beginning. The tokens of His favor He may withhold, in the exercise of gracious discipline, that He may amend that which needs correction. But the friendship itself is unchangeable, resting upon His knowledge of what we are by nature, and of what He means His grace shall make us to be. We may therefore cast ourselves upon it in every emergency, without a suspicion of its constancy.

II. *Christ's friendship is disinterested and spontaneous.* I will not undertake to say that human friendship finds its origin in self-interest. It is only true thus far, that by a necessity of nature we are driven out from ourselves to form the ties which relate us to others. Beyond the operation of this social instinct, I do not care to press the charge which might so easily run into calumny of the race to which we belong. The sweetest friendships on earth are those which have sprung up we know not how, and in whose origin there could not have been the taint of conscious selfishness. But this at least may be affirmed, that no human friendship was ever long sustained in which there was not mutual advantage. In the hurry of life, and under the pressure of its cares, there must be a measure of profit in the very sentiment we indulge, in order that it may have consistency and body. Who, for example, has not outgrown many of the friendships of his childhood? Even where they have not lapsed, through our removal to other scenes in which they are forgotten,—should we remain in the bosom of all the associations which clustered about the home of our childhood,—still it is seldom that the friend of our youth is the friend of our manhood. The kindest recollections of those early playmates may abide with us through life. But we and they do not expand alike, in our march to maturity; nor are we and they cast into moulds which sufficiently correspond. Thus it is, friendships drop through as soon as they cease to be of reciprocal benefit. When one no longer is able to echo back the voice of the other, they become too burdensome to be sustained, and simply perish; or if they survive, exist only in memory of what once was grateful and sweet.

Christ's friendship, on the contrary, rests upon nothing outside of Himself. "God is Love;" and Christ comes from the bosom of the Father to reveal this love. In the vast congregation of men and angels, He

comes to expound this love in doctrine, and to illustrate it in act. From the depths of the Divine nature, this love wells up and flows over upon the creature. It is not restrained from overtaking the guilty and the lost, through the grace by which they are redeemed and saved. The absolute spontaneity of Christ's friendship for His people, though the feature which makes it indescribably precious, is almost beyond the reach of our conception. Human love is so conspicuously generated by the good qualities which first attract our admiration, that this love, which springs only from the exuberance of God's own goodness, baffles our reason. Yet this is the secret of its immutability. Founded only upon His own nature, and conditioned upon nothing but His own purposes and resources which are infinite, it must remain "from everlasting to everlasting," without "variableness, or shadow of turning." It is a friendship in which immense benefits accrue to us; but whose eternal root is found in the nature of Him who says in the text, "I call you not servants, but I have called you friends."

III. *Christ's friendship is unimpeachable in the evidence both of its reality and extent.* This cannot be affirmed of human friendship, even the purest. We find instances, indeed, of the most heroic devotion in which "love is strong as death." The wife will cling to her husband in the midst of degradation and shame, showing that "many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." What passionate energy is there in parental love, grappling to the child with hooks of steel, enduring toil with patience, and making sacrifices with cheerfulness, to promote his welfare,—not recoiling from his wretchedness and despair, in the vain endeavour to alleviate it? Even in these cases, however, where the demonstration of love lifts it above suspicion, it is still love that is bounded within limits. We cannot wholly suppress the fear, that it might break under the weight of too many exactions. It is, at best, the love of beings who are finite and confessedly sinful. Imperfection is stamped upon all they do: and whilst sometimes rising to self-abnegation almost godlike, it is still finite even in its grandeur. How, for example, is old age haunted by the spectral apprehension of living to be a burden to children, who are only too happy to reciprocate the kindness and care which they received in early years? Those, too, who linger through chronic disease,—how the dark thought will sometimes throw its shadow upon the soul, that love may find its soft edge worn away by the constant and menial offices which it is their misfortune to require? It is not that the love is seriously suspected, which ministers to every want: or that its daily protestations of pleasure in the service rendered, are not believed.

It is but the sensitiveness of suffering or of fear, which shrinks at the remembrance that love itself is bounded by limits, and must not be pressed with exactions which are too severe.

But the friendship of our Lord is established upon evidence which cannot be impeached. It is proved by all that He endured on <sup>our</sup> own behalf, to save our souls from death. The contrast in this particular with all human love, is emphasized in Scripture: "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." (Rom. v: 6-10.) Mark the contrast running through the texture of this passage. Human love does not warm to cold and stern rectitude, so as to die for it—though possibly the venture might be made in favor of the goodness overflowing with all that is generous and kind. But God's love rises above the highest reach of human conception, in that Christ "died for the ungodly," "died for us while we were yet sinners," "reconciled us when we were enemies." "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" "When we were polluted in our blood, He passed by, and said unto us, live." (Ezek. xvi: 6.) When we were bristling in rebellion against His authority, He turned not away His favor from us; but "made His soul an offering for sin," and redeemed us from the curse of the law. "Hereby," says John, perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us." Again, "in this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (I John iii: 16, and iv: 9, 10.) Well may the Scripture say, in view of all this, "God COMMENDETH His love toward us." It rests upon proof which cannot be resisted. It is love infinite in its scope, and may be drawn upon without fear of its exhaustion.

IV. *Christ's friendship is precious, because of His competency to sympathize.* In earthly sorrow we encounter this strange contradiction,—that we cannot bear it alone, and yet that we recoil from human sympathy. In the first moments of grief, we ask only for solitude and silence. The privilege of communion with past memories is too precious to be shared with any other. We shut ourselves within the pavilion of our own thought,

and feel the step of the most tender friendship to be an intrusion upon the sanctity of our woe. The words of condolence rasp the ear they were intended to soothe; and the chafed spirit breaks forth in the petulant exclamation of Job, "miserable comforters are ye all!" But how soon the burden becomes too heavy to be borne; and, like the same patriarch, the sufferer wildly challenges again this rejected sympathy, "have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me!" (Job xix: 21.) Few of us in this house to-day, who have not had the painful experience of what I have just described. The inadequacy of human sympathy to measure and to relieve our anguish, drives us from its touch as though it were a new and keener torture—until the loneliness becomes frightful, and comfort is sought in the bare communication of our grief.

Happy will it be for us, in this extremity, to know the preciousness of the Redeemer's sympathy—who, as God, "knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust;" and who, as man, "hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows!" Doubly competent is Christ to be a sympathizing friend, from this absolute knowledge which belongs to Him in the one nature, and from this actual experience of suffering, in the other. For though he did not sustain every human relation, He knew sorrow in its innermost essence, in bearing the sin which put into it all its bitterness. It is impossible that we should know sorrow on earth, as Christ knew it who "hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." (Gal. iii: 13.) On this account, because He knew sorrow as springing out of God's judicial displeasure against sin, He is styled "the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." He is able therefore, from this exhaustive experience, to feel the weight which rests upon the heart of the mourner. "It behoved Him," says the Apostle, "to be made in all things like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." And again, "for we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. ii: 17, and iv: 15.) I would digress too far, should I attempt to present all the grounds of our Lord's perfect sympathy with His people. This general statement will suffice to justify the cheerfulness with which every trouble is confided to His care.

V. *Christ Jesus is an ever-present and eternal friend.* The changes of life interrupt often the continuity of human friendship. Sometimes we are so separated in space, that the labor of sustaining it overpasses the profit. The threads are constantly breaking in the web of our earthly

associations; and he who would preserve those associations entire, finds himself driven to recover many a stitch which has been dropped. But Jesus is a friend, whose presence costs us nothing but a thought. A sigh or a wish borne upon the breath of prayer brings Him to our side, with all the sympathy and love which belong to His priestly office.

Even the loneliness of death is broken, when He, who is the Resurrection and the Life, leads us down into the dark valley and teaches us the song of victory: "Oh Death, where is thy sting? Oh Grave, where is thy victory?" Earthly friends hand us from ledge to ledge in that steep descent; but they reach at length the point beyond which no foot is permitted to return. Dark and lonely is the journey thence, if we be not cheered by the presence of Him who hath "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light in the Gospel."

Throughout the ages, too, which unfold in the vast eternity beyond, Jesus will abide, the everlasting portion and joy of His redeemed. It is He who will introduce us to "the innumerable company of angels," the "elder sons of God," who dwell forever in their Father's home. It is He, who will bear us through the shining ranks of Cherubim and Seraphim, and "present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." It is He, upon whom as upon a pivot will turn the communion we shall hold with God, even the Father; and through Him, the Head, will be conducted all the worship in which we have churchly fellowship with angels in "the temple not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." It is the only friendship that outlives the changes of time, and moves parallel with eternity itself.

Such are the *qualities* of the Saviour's friendship, the due contemplation of which must endear Him in our esteem. Let us however turn the subject over on its other side, and consider how He discharges the *offices* of this friendship.

Did it ever happen to any of you to be unexpectedly plucked up out of the society in which you had always lived, and thrown suddenly upon a strange community whose habits were foreign to your own? At least you have had the ordinary experience of the traveler dropped into a crowded city, and feeling the oppressive solitude of a throng in which no heart beat in unison with your own. Recall the feelings which, in that hour of desolation, forced you to exclaim, "Oh, for one heart-friend to break this solitude more lonely than of the forest or of the desert! Sit down then, and recount the offices which you desired that friend to fulfil.

Perhaps, the first function of a friend is to refresh us with his company.

There is a luxury in silent meditation, when fresh thoughts come rippling over us from the broad sea of truth. But how much is this pleasure enhanced, when these thoughts are shared with other minds, giving back their pleasure as the echo of our own? Perhaps, no great conception was ever formed in the mind of genius, which did not struggle to embody itself in speech,—that it might go travelling down the ages with the rapid pace of the explorer, or with the solemn march of a conqueror. And who has not felt the throb of strong emotions beating against the solid ribs, until they find vent and pour themselves into other hearts? The first solace of friendship is companionship; for “as iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.” (Prov. xxvii: 17.) See the illustration of this in the joy which a letter brings, bearing the signature of those distant from us. Did your hand never tremble, so that you could not at once break the seal? The heart that loves you is shut up within its folds; and in the wild anticipation of its greeting, you are almost unable to release it from confinement. And when the page lies open before you, how the eye swims over it from top to bottom, in the greedy wish to drink in all the joy at once? Then the capricious heart lingers upon paragraph and line, as though by sweet delay to suck out the last drop of love that clings to the word which tells it. Such are the transports of the soul enjoying communion with its fellow.

Well, my brethren, Christ is a friend, with whom it is easy to keep company. We have but to think Him, and He is present at our side. We can make Him the sharer of every thought and of every feeling, pouring into His ear the confidences which we dare not trust to the keeping of mortal man. In prayer we draw nigh to Him with a closeness of approach that belongs to no other; for it is independent of the embarrassments even of speech, and we touch Him directly by the power of simple thought. He tells us in return the secrets of His heart, and we enjoy on earth the foretaste of that communion which makes the blessedness of heaven itself. “If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” (John, xiv: 23.) “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” (Rev. iii: 20.) Promises like these lie open upon every page of the Bible, inviting us to unrestrained fellowship with our blessed Lord, and through Him with our Father in heaven. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant.” (Ps. xxv: 14.)

*We need a friend's counsels, no less than his company.* The trouble



however is often, that the perplexities which embarrass us are not easy to unfold. Sometimes they arise from our own fault, the recitation of which overwhelms us with shame. Sometimes they involve the interests, or feelings, or character of another, constituting a trust which is sacred. The dilemma is often painful. The pressure of anxiety is too great for our unaided strength, and yet we shrink from disclosures which put us under the power of others. We want caution and silence in the friend, to whom the dangerous communication is at last made; nor will it be divulged, until we are assured of the prudence which can, at least, make our secret his own. After this, we want a solid *judgment*, whose decisions shall be to us the oracles of wisdom. I need not say how liable reason is to be swayed by passion; so that, under the influence of strong feeling, we distrust the conclusions which we ourselves reach. Nor, again, how these decisions waver; so that we would steady them by the opinions of a calmer mind than our own.

Well then, Christ is just the friend, upon whose counsel we can always rely. His is just the silence and the prudence, for which we have been seeking. He has never betrayed the secret of a single suffering heart: "a bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench." The sorrows of His people are His own, and He will bear them upon His heart. It is written of Him, "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arm and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." (Isa. xl: 11.) And what shall be said of His *wisdom*, but that it is infinite? This wisdom He is pledged to impart. Nay, it is already unfolded in the counsels He has left us in His Written Word: counsels not given in hard and technical rules, inflexible and therefore often useless in their application—but embalmed in comprehensive and elastic principles, which descend into all the details of human life and apply to every department of human conduct. They are counsels, whose depth of wisdom has never yet been sounded by the extremest line of human necessity—exhaustless and fresh to-day, as though they had never been drawn upon by sixty centuries of human want and woe. They are counsels, which never fail to open their treasures to the voice of prayer; and which the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, is ever ready to expound to those whom Christ calls His friends. "For all things," saith He, "that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." How this direct communication is to be accomplished, is also explained: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

Wonderful and gracious then are the methods by which the Saviour fulfils this office of "Counsellor" to His people.

*We require also a friend's rebukes.* I trust, my hearers, we have all outgrown the silly sentiment, that love is blind. A blind friend is precisely what no wise man desires. If no more be required of a friend than to be the echo of our own egotism, or the reflection of our foolish vanity, we can always find one of undeviating fidelity by simply looking in a mirror. True friendship has a higher aim than of mere flattery. Its office is to make us better by its faithful admonitions—to warn us of faults which a blinding self-esteem might fail to discover—to bevel off the sharp angles of our character, rendering it more sightly and comfortable to others. Yet this is the greatest peril which human friendship ever encounters. Needful as the admonition may be, how few have the grace either to convey or to receive it? It is a fearful hazard to expose the best of us to the loss of any portion of our self-respect. And since the rebuke cannot but inflict pain, what delicacy is demanded of those who attempt the perilous responsibility? How much tact is required in the choice of time and place, and in the method of approach—that the humiliation may not be greater than there is strength to bear, and the whole force of character be destroyed in the pious effort at correction? Even with these dangers, friendship must be true to its office of admonition; and there are few of us who have not been helped by its criticism, sometimes delivered in playful banter, and sometimes with a tearful seriousness.

With what supernatural tenderness does our Lord convey the rebukes which His friendship must utter! At one moment they are borne to us in the silent workings of His Providence, interpreted by its timeliness—so that the meaning is clear enough to us, whilst unexplained to others. The dispensations of Providence are thus, oftentimes, the confidential whispers of our Lord, bending from His throne of power, and breathing the secret into the ear with such caution that the faintest sound does not betray it to those around. The key is to be found in our experience alone. The movement of Divine Providence fits in so exactly with the struggles and with the triumphs of our own heart, that we know as well what it says to us, as though an audible voice had spoken to the outward sense. But the self-application of the providence takes away anything like offensive personality. It was clearly an admonition to us, but only as we ourselves assumed it to be true. It may have searched the spirit to the core, but our own hand drove in the probe. We are humbled, but not offended. It is moreover a secret betwixt our Lord and ourselves—and there is a sense of gratitude for the caution and prudence with which He has guarded us from exposure to shame. We are humbled, but not degraded.

Nor is the delicacy less, when these rebukes are contained in the Scriptures. For they are couched in terms which are comprehensive and universal; and the same self-application, as in the other case, robs the rebuke of its offence. As this is done under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, it is with a gentleness which prevents all abrasion of the human spirit. The oil and wine are poured into the wound which is made, so that "there is a healing of our error." "Let the righteous smite me," saith David, "it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head." (Ps. cxli: 5.) But oh, what deeper significance lies in these words, when they are transferred to the reproofs of Christ himself—as these are administered to us out of His Word by His gracious Spirit, "the other comforter," His deputy and vicar in the Church on earth!

Last of all, *we need in a friend substantial aid*: "Woe to him that is alone, when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up." (Eecl. iv: 11.) Here, alas, is where the insufficiency of human friendship is most discovered. It is but a small part of man's distress, which man has power to relieve. In the vast majority of cases in which suffering appeals for help, human friendship is restricted to offices of sympathy alone. We cannot pass the limits of our own personality, and so get into the being of another, as to put ourselves beneath his burden. Along with this acknowledgment of defect in all creature sympathy, turn to what the Apostle says of the assistance yielded by the Holy Ghost, in Rom. viii: 26; "likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities"—*helpeth*, scarcely the equivalent of the triple compound in the original; rather the Spirit also layeth hold upon our weaknesses, together with us, and on the other side, as our opposite, to lift the end that is too heavy for us. It is an awkward paraphrase enough; but it combines the three ideas which the Apostle puts into the Holy Spirit's "help." Let us grapple, for a moment, with this helpfulness of our Lord's friendship, in which it outstrips every other known upon earth—this power He has to be in us, by the indwelling of His Spirit, and so to be our strength in every time of weakness. Look at His offices, and see how they cover every human want. He is the Prophet; what floods of light may He not pour upon the darkness of man, and fill him with such knowledge of God as shall sink sorrows into trifles light as air! He is the Priest; how may He not sprinkle us with His blood washing out the guilt and stain of sin, and filling us with the peace which "passeth understanding!" He is the King; how may he not adjust the burdens of life to our strength, and so fill us with courage as to make us "glory in tribulation!" Not only did the measurement of our strength

precede the apportionment of the burden, He knows the purpose of the infliction, and what supplies of grace are needed to secure the end in view. Nor can He, as Intercessor, sue out the grace His people need, without pledging His kingly troth to apply the same through His Spirit, to whose function it properly belongs.

Behind all this, however, lies the ultimate fact that Christ is the responsible surety of His people, having undertaken to stand for them in the economy of grace. How little do we appreciate the thoroughness of His consecration, as our substitute under the law! In being "made sin for us," He took upon Himself not only the guilt to atone, but the shame to endure. "Shame hath covered my face," He exclaims; "reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness." (Ps. lxxix: 20.) Where is the earthly friend capable of devotion like this? Who would choose to be clothed with dishonor as a garment, that his friend might sit in scarlet amongst the princes of the land. Let us accept the suretyship of our Lord with the honesty in which He assumes it. Let us learn to lay our sorrows and our cares upon Him, just as we do our sins. If for our sin we receive righteousness in exchange; so for trouble and grief, let us take the comfort and repose which His benediction breathes into the soul. In His dying, it was He for us—in His rising and ascending, it was He for us—in His reign and glory, it is still He for us. He is the helpful friend, in that He bears all the burdens which a true faith will lay upon Him; and no spirit ever yet fainted under the trials of life, which fully cast its burden on the Lord.

It is clear that we must have friendship on earth; and what is enjoyed in merely human relations, is but the type of that which Christ proffers in the text. The insatiable craving of the soul for fellowship, and the sense of defect in all that is earthly,—both point to some being, in whose perfect sympathy and love we shall find absolute repose. In Christ Jesus are united both the source and the channel of every blessing which the heart can crave. Because He is Divine, the resources of His love are infinite; because He is human, the connexion is complete for the bestowment of His favors.

Two demands are however properly made upon us:

1. *A broad confidence in Him* answering to His claims and to the benefits which He confers. Suspicion is the assassin of love. Every other wrong may be forgiven,—injustice, caprice, unkindness; but distrust is the poison of a serpent's tooth, which turns kindness into gall. This is the reciprocation our Lord asks of us, simply a generous trust in Him as "the friend that sticketh closer than a brother:" a trust rising with the

emergencies which try it—a trust unshaken in times of darkness and peril, lifting itself above doubt, and filling the heart with hope in the face of despondency and fear.

2. He asks, again, of His people *their obedient service*. He is our Lord and Maker; and no condescension can impair His claim. He is entitled to our worship, as the form into which our service and our love should together flow. The obedience of a son is as entire as the obedience of a servant; whilst the filial affection with which it is rendered, lifts it to a higher grade and makes it the noblest homage which can be paid to law. This reverential and loving obedience is the only offering we can bring to Him who hath redeemed us with His blood. Blessed be His name! In receiving it at our hands, the reciprocity is acknowledged as complete—"I WILL SUP WITH HIM, AND HE WITH ME."

## XXV.

### FREEDOM THROUGH CHRIST.

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JOHN VIII: 36: "*If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*"

A comparison is here implied, the more important to be noticed as being the pivot upon which the interpretation turns. Our Lord had addressed to the multitude such proofs of His Divine mission, that many were brought to a superficial belief in Him. From the ease with which they soon arrayed themselves against him, and from the severity of his subsequent denunciation, it could not have been an acquiescence in His claims as the Saviour of the world; but only as a Prophet, standing in the line of succession with those whom God had sent in earlier years to Israel. To these half-persuaded partisans Christ delivered a caution, which served as the probe to reveal their self-deception. "If ye continue in my words, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (vv. 31, 32.) Here a discordant note was struck. Their Jewish pride resents this intimation of a state of bondage from which they needed to be released. With some asperity of tone, they reply "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, ye shall be made free?" (v. 33.) These words are generally construed as springing from a misunderstanding of our Lord's meaning, whereby they are at cross-purposes with Him through the entire dialogue. They are supposed wilfully to pervert the Saviour's reference to spiritual freedom, and to understand Him as speaking of political bondage. This interpretation, however, assumes the unparalleled effrontery, in these respondents, of outraging the notorious facts of their national history; exposing themselves to a crushing refutation, by the simple citation of what was written upon many a sad page in the national record. Had the bitter bondage in Egypt been forgotten, from which they were "brought forth with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders." (Deut. xxvi: 8). Was the dreary captivity in Babylon overlooked, when Israel hung their harps upon the willows and refused to sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" (Ps. cxxxvii: 1-4.) Were not the people, at

this very moment, chafing under the Roman yoke—destined ere long to develop into fanatical resistance against the legions of Titus, which amidst untold horrors “ploughed Zion as a field and made Jerusalem to be heaps?” (Mic. iii: 12.) During the whole interval from the Babylonian to the Roman bondage, how brief and troubled was the period of Maccabean dignity and independence? In fact, through its entire history, Palestine lay in the trough of the sea between contending empires, tossed upon the billows from one to another, and compelled to mingle its fortunes with each of them in turn.

The shifts which are required to evade the pressure of these interrogatories, show how difficult it is to maintain the consistency of this interpretation; and I think it may be dismissed as wholly unnecessary. The Jews had always gloried in their descent from Abraham. In the terms of the covenant made with him, Jehovah had promised to be a God to his seed: (Gen. xvii: 7), in virtue of which, they claimed the Divine favor, and eternal life as their inheritance. It is not necessary therefore to suppose, on their part, a misconception of the Lord's meaning. The offence of His words lay just here, in the implied assault upon these very pretensions. Why should he insinuate that they did not know the truth, seeing that “unto them were committed the oracles of God?” (Rom. iii: 2.) How should He intimate that they needed to be made free, “to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises?” (Rom. ix: 4.) With a clear insight into the import of Christ's language, they resent exactly what it was intended to convey: and their retort, “We be Abraham's seed and were never in bondage,” expressly denied their need either of His truth or of His freedom, as securing salvation to them. The Saviour rejoins with the statement of a broad principle, which could not be denied,—that “whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.” (v. 34.) It is the same principle afterwards announced by Paul, “know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness.” (Rom. vi: 16.) If then by their practice they were seen to be the slaves of sin, this would be a bondage from which they would require to be emancipated, even though they were the seed of Abraham. An apt illustration of this is furnished in the domestic history of this Patriarch himself; to which there follows a covert allusion, (v. 35,) most fully expanded in the fourth chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. “It is written, Abraham had two sons; the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman, was born after the flesh; but he of the free-

woman, was by promise. Which things, adds the Apostle, are an allegory." (Gal. iv: 22-24.) That is to say—in the historical symbolism of the Old Testament, Ishmael becomes the representative of such as are externally connected with God's people, whilst destitute of true piety; and of whom "the Scripture saith, cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman." (Ibid. v. 30.) Isaac, on the other hand, the child of promise, the lawfully begotten heir of his father, is the historical representative of those who, through all the ages, have the faith and do the works of Abraham: "of whom it was said, in Isaac shall thy seed be called." (Heb. xi: 18.) Plainly then, they, like Ishmael, might be in the house of Abraham, and still like Ishmael be servants in that house; and this could only be determined by ascertaining whether they rendered the obedience of Isaac, or perversely mocked like Ishmael.

One point only remains to complete the exposition of this passage, and to open the path of this discourse. Isaac was an express type of the Lord Jesus Christ. This whole Patriarchal history—upon which all these proud theocratic Jewish pretensions rest—simply teaches this truth; that in Christ, the New Testament Isaac, "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," resides the power to convey real freedom to those who are in bondage to sin. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." I do not propose to discuss before you, this morning, the Nature of this Spiritual Liberty,\* except as it may be incidentally involved; but rather to inquire HOW IT DEVOLVES UPON CHRIST, AS THE SON, TO BESTOW THIS FREEDOM. This divides, of course, into the question, first, of PREROGATIVE—and then, of COMPETENCY OR POWER: from both which combined, it will be easy to infer the REALITY of the freedom conveyed. These then are the lines of thought, which I shall seek to present.

I. *Christ Jesus, as the only begotten Son and heir, holds all the franchises of His Father's house; which therefore it is His sole prerogative to convey.* You perceive at once the principle which determines the case, that no being can convey rights which do not inhere in himself. As the freedom, which the gospel confers, is that which comes through adoption into the family of God, it can only be bestowed with the concurrence and sanction of Him who completely fills the relation of a Son, and is the sole proprietor of the title and of all the privileges it imports. He, who is "the only begotten," must so occupy the filial relation, as to exclude every

\* This too, it is fully considered in Sermon No. 20 of the series published last year; which, together with this and another to follow next week, will present a complete discussion of the subject.



other—except those with whom He may consent to share its immunities, secured through His grant and formal conveyance. It is His PREROGATIVE, as the SON, to bestow the freedom which depends upon sonship. This deserves a fuller exposition at my hands.

When man was first created and placed upon probation, all his relations to God were determined simply by the law. Had he remained steadfast in obedience, he would have been advanced, according to the terms of that covenant, to higher blessedness and glory: but still he must have remained only a subject. His rights and privileges would have been those of a subject—his obedience, however cheerful and ready, would have been that of a subject—and the communion of Jehovah with him, though full of blessing as a reward, would have been the comparatively distant fellowship of a ruler with the subjects of his realm. Precisely so the holy angels stand before the throne upon the footing of their obedience, and hold all their dignities and trusts by legal statute. These “principalities and powers,” whilst perhaps the highest created dignitaries, are but honored subjects whose relations with the king are mediated only through the law. Under such an administration the exhibition of justice and truth, of holiness and power, is wonderful enough; but, from the character of these attributes, they hold the worshipper at a distance from the throne, rendering the homage which is due to majesty.

But “God is love.” This is the name by which He would be known to His creatures, for it discloses His nature. His eternal purpose was, under an administration of grace, to unfold His tenderness, His mercy and His love; and through this deeper revelation of Himself to draw us up to a higher plane—to lift us out of the condition of mere subjects, and to “put us among the children,” by adopting us into His family as His sons and daughters. It is evident that in this higher sphere of love, the freedom enjoyed will be greater, and the communion more intimate, than was possible under a dispensation of naked law. It is exactly the distinction indicated by our Lord in the contrast between the servant and the son: “the servant abideth not in the house forever, but the Son abideth ever. If the son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” “Henceforth,” saith He in another place, “I call you not servants, but I have called you friends.” (John xv: 15.) The son is indeed subordinate, but it is not the subjection of a servant. Obedience is due from him, but it is the obedience of affection as well as of duty. He is upon the same grade and possesses the same nature with the father—with the right of access always into his presence, and enjoying a fellowship as unrestrained as reciprocal love can inspire. In the matter of personal freedom the contrast is

deepest, both as to the right upon which it is grounded, and as to the degree in which it is exercised. The very terms, servant and subject, imply restraint. The freedom is bounded and measured, and it rests simply upon the will of the ruler. The law is the criterion of both. The liberty of the son has its ground in nature, and is regulated by the affections of nature. It is unchangeable in its rights, and in the love by which its movements are controlled.

The question arises just here, how shall this adoption be carried into effect, and this freedom of sons be actually conveyed? If this relation be preoccupied by Him who, as the only-begotten, completely fills it, how is the creature to be lifted into a joint participation of its benefits? You perceive that the sonship must be a real sonship, if the real freedom of that relation is to be conferred. It is not a question whether the term son, may not be applied in a lower and a figured sense to both angels and men. As fashioned in God's likeness and after His image, they may be so designated upon the strength of this natural resemblance. In the perfect holiness in which they were both created, may be found a moral reason for the title. But in the absolute sense in which the term Son is used in the text, there is but ONE who can claim it as His own. It is He whose other designation in the economy of the God-head, is the WORD: "in the beginning was the WORD, and the WORD was with God, and the WORD was God." (John ii: 1." He, whose deity and whose personal distinction in the God-head are here both affirmed, is the SON. As such, He holds this precious and boundless freedom, as His own franchise. If conveyed through grace to others, it must be with His consent as His prerogative to bestow; and this bestowal must be through a living union effected between Himself and them. He is the Son, and the freedom is His to enjoy. He gives it to whom He will, and unites them with Himself, in order to the conveyance. Adoption therefore depends upon the legislation of the Father who decrees it, upon the agency of the Holy Ghost by whom it is effectively wrought, whilst its formal ground is in this personal union of Christ with His people.

The method\* by which this whole scheme of grace is accomplished, is too large to be unfolded here—and fortunately it is the old, sweet story of the gospel. Its grand outline may be traced in three sentences. The first step, of course, is the incarnation of the Son of God; whereby He acquired the right of a kinsman to represent us under the law, and to expiate our guilt. The second step is the commission of the Holy Spirit to apply this redemption in quickening the dead sinner, so that he is spiritually born into the family of God. The third step is the development of faith into the act by

which Christ is received as a Saviour, and His righteousness is made our own. When these reciprocal bonds are exchanged—in the Holy Spirit coming from Christ, and the appropriating faith which proceeds from us—we are made one with our Lord, not only in law, but in fact. We are actual partakers of His life and of His righteousness; and by this union become through Him the children of the Most High: “To as many as received Him, to them gave He POWER TO BECOME THE SONS OF GOD, even to them that believe on His name.” (John i: 12.) I desire your attention to the fact, that through the life-giving power of the Holy Ghost we are by faith *united* with Christ. This term marks the preservation of our own personality. We are not absorbed into Christ with the loss of our own identity, which would be a blasphemous apotheosis of the creature. But in the full consciousness of our individuality, we are brought into union with Christ as the members of His body—escaping the perils of a destructive deification, on the one hand, and sharing the privileges of a living Sonship, on the other.

In the work of human redemption, this freedom is applied just where it is most difficult—to those who are condemned under a righteous law, from whose curse they must be extricated. But the principle of grace being once wrought out, the boundless resources of Divine wisdom can surely extend its application, in ways unknown to us, to beings who have never sinned. So that in Christ Jesus who is the Head of all principality and power, “angels and authorities and powers,” which “are made subject unto Him,” may be lifted out of a merely distant and legal relationship, into the higher freedom which the Son alone can confer. What a grand consummation of grace, when it shall be infused into the whole administration of law; and when the Universe of holy beings shall constitute one Church in Christ, and shall forever rejoice in the freedom of a true and blessed Sonship before God!

II. Having considered the PREROGATIVE, let us turn our thoughts to the POWER of the SON, to bestow this freedom of which the text speaks. Evidently Christ, as the Son, is *the heir of all the resources of His Father which are infinite*. The Son cannot be separated from the heir—they are co-ordinates. Paul proves from this Christ's superiority over Moses: “Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ, as a Son, over His own house—whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.” (Heb. iii: 5, 6.) Again, in Romans viii: 17, “if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ—if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glo-

rified together." Heirship founding then upon the relations of nature, carries along the dignity, the station, the privileges, the rights, the resources and the power of the father, so that they inhere as legitimately in the son. Christ is the only begotten Son of the Eternal Father. He, as the heir, has the authority to share the privileges of this station with those whom He shall choose to unite with Himself: and wields all the power necessary to carry His purpose into effect. All difficulties disappear, like the mist, before infinite wisdom, power and love. It is not requisite that we shall understand the method of its accomplishment. The bare existence of these resources in the Son, becomes the guarantee for the result: so that we bow with the most entire docility before the proclamation, "if the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

Not only in His divine and eternal relation with the Father, is the Son competent to bestow this freedom; but to *Him as Mediator, all power is assigned for this express end.* It is not only an original power, inherent in Him as a Divine person—but it is a power delegated to Him in His complex person as the God-man, and in the exercise of His office as Mediator. "All things," says Christ, "are delivered unto me of my Father." (Mat. xi: 27.) Again, "the Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into His hands." (John iii: 35.) With greater precision, He claims this universal rule in the moment of His ascension, and bases upon it the charter and commission of His Church: "all power is given unto me in heaven and on earth; go ye therefore and teach all nations." (Mat. xxviii: 18.) In His discussion with the Jews, Christ affirms the same jurisdiction; "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son." And to show that this power vests in Him as the Mediator, it is almost immediately added, "and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man." (John v: 22, 27.) Upon the strength of this right, He builds his Priestly prayer to the Father; "as thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given Him." (John xvii: 2.) It is useless to weigh the proposition down with other testimonies, of which there are so many, affirming his headship over all things, in heaven and on earth.

This Mediatorial dominion, of course, founds upon the two-fold nature in which it is wielded. As God and the Son, He is that person by whose efficiency all the Divine works are immediately wrought. Such is the fact revealed to us in Scripture, whether our philosophy can rise to the height of its explanation or not. Creation and Providence are directly relegated to the second Person of the God-head, as His official function:

“All things were made by Him—and without Him was not anything made that was made.” (John i: 3.) “For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him, and by Him all things consist.” (Col. i: 16, 17.) Testimony could not be more specific, as to Christ’s agency in the work of creation. But it is not more decisive than what Paul affirms of His Providential control, when he speaks of His “upholding all things by the word of His power.” (Heb. i: 3.) In these two departments of the Divine activity, Creation and Providence, the Son is the immediate efficient by whom this activity is produced before the view. If one might dare to speculate upon a subject so awful in its mystery, the personal distinction and property of the Second Person is to be directly *of* the First through an eternal begetting. Why should it not be His peculiar function in the economy of the God-head, to be the exponent of the Divine energy in all things—so that by the distribution of offices, power should always be *from* the Father, *by* the Son, and *through* the Holy Spirit? This may possibly be an overbold speculation, in a matter which is too high for human reason; but whether admitted or rejected, the fact remains under inspired attestation that, in every department of which we have knowledge, the Divine activity has been immediately exercised through the agency of the Son. If then a new exhibition of power is to be made upon a higher plane than before, through whom should it be wrought, save through Him who has always been the exponent of the Divine energy? If a revelation of God’s glory is to be afforded, higher than that of His power in creation, of His wisdom in Providence, and of His justice in law—if the sweetest attributes of grace, of compassion and of love, are to be revealed in the redemption of an apostate world, to which of the adorable Three does the analogy point for the responsible task, but to Him whose office it has always been to reveal the Father? To Christ, the Mediator, through His Divine nature, belongs the power to work out and to bestow this freedom, which has its origin in the activity of grace.

The same is true of the other term in our Lord’s Mediatorial person. To Him, as man, is the power given to confer all the blessings involved in the decree of adoption. Familiar as the precious statement is, ever and anon it breaks over us with a startling freshness—that the poor nature of a creature—and of such a creature as man—and of a nature bruised and fallen by sin, and lying under the curse of heaven; that such a nature should be lifted out of ruin, and should be united with the Son of God in procuring and in dispensing the infinite riches of Divine Grace! “Oh,

the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" We receive the truth upon the declaration of Scripture, that God "hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance to all men, in that He hath raised him from the dead." (Acts xvii: 31.) The Mediator will sit upon the judgment throne; and the sentences of destiny will issue from the human lips which once uttered the gracious words of the text. In that nature in which He represented us under the law, will He be rewarded with the administration of law. Because He hath magnified it and made it honorable, (Isa. xlii: 31.) "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." (Acts v: 31.) To the Mediator, in His human nature no less than the Divine,—to the Mediator in His complex person as Human and Divine,—is committed the administration of the grace which as Mediator He has achieved. In the exercise of this office, in both natures alike, He possesses the power, as well as the right, to be the source of all blessedness and freedom to His people forever.

III. With *prerogative* and *power* united in the Son, must not the freedom which He bestows be a REAL FREEDOM? This thought is emphasized in the text: "if the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free INDEED. This adverb in the original is derived from the word, which means *to be*. The idea is as plain as it is forcible: ye shall be free, in the very essence and being of that which freedom implies. It shall not be a freedom in name only, or a freedom that is but a shadow of the true; but a freedom in the actuality of the thing itself, in the reality and essence of the blessedness thereof.

For example—is it an element of true freedom to be delivered from *the bondage of the law's penalty against sin*? How completely is this cancelled in the death of Him who has exhausted it in our behalf? It is scarcely necessary to amplify the thought. The last vestige of liberty is gone from the criminal under sentence of death, who is shut within stone walls and is loaded with chains, awaiting the hour of execution. This is but a picture of the sinner, already condemned, with the penalty openly proclaimed, and only reprieved through the patience and forbearance of God. But when Christ, the substitute, dies that sinner's death, satisfies the justice which denounced it, and exchanges for his transgression an obedience which is perfect,—the reversal is complete. The freedom conferred is not simply release from fetters, not simply discharge from a

penalty—but it is the establishment of the franchise upon the ground of strict and immutable justice, and the creation of a title to its enjoyment which is indefeasible forever. Say then, as to this element, if Christ doth not make us free indeed?

Again: is it a feature of the freedom which is real, that *the obedience shall not be for hire*? How wonderful that Christ should have fulfilled the law as the instrument of our justification, thereby converting it for us into a rule of life and standard of personal character! Here comes the sharp distinction of the Apostle between law and grace: “and if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.” (Rom. xi: 6.) The antagonism is essential: and it is just our Lord’s contrast between the servant and the Son. Under a dispensation of pure law, the obedience is that of a servant. It may be cordially rendered: but the basis on which it rests, is that of service for wages. The subject holds his life, and every blessing, upon the footing of obedience. In that covenant, the law was to be the instrument of justification and to be rewarded with life everlasting. But when we are already “justified through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus,” (Rom. iii: 24,) the law is simply a directory for guidance; and the obedience to it is disinterested and generous. It is not priced at such and such a value, and receiving its due—but it is a free and loving conformity of the life and character to a perfect and unerring standard.

Again: if *the obedience*, which is not only perfect in rectitude, but *gushing with affection*, be the mark of highest freedom,—how truly does the Holy Spirit make this our choice, by rendering our nature congenial with our duty? He is freest, who does what He wants; and who wants exactly what the original law of his unperverted nature prompts. What choice is so voluntary, as that which springs from love? and what love is so pure, as that begotten by the Holy Spirit in the renewed soul? It is not only the rightfulness of the obedience then, though this be no mean evidence of the freedom of a rectified nature; but it is the heartfulness of the obedience, which in the generous flow of the affections sweeps away upon its own flood every embarrassment and antagonism. What freedom can be greater than that of the heart, in the rush of its own desires, and in the spontaneity of its own obedience?

Again, *does freedom find itself cramped by a hard code of technical and inexorable rules for the practice*? Behold what scope is given for its action in the large and comprehensive principles of the gospel, which Christ has instituted as the discipline of His kingdom. Bewildered in

determining questions of duty, the feeble Christian sometimes regrets that there is no book of Leviticus in the New Testament, affording specific directions for the minutest details of human life. A rubrical service, however, belongs only to an elementary and preparatory dispensation, and was given to the Church as a yoke to be borne. The Apostle Paul writes, "even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world." (Gal. iv: 3.) He contrasts with it the liberty which we have in Christ: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." (Gal. v: 1.) Even Peter, the Apostle to the Circumcision, declares the burden of Jewish ordinances to have been always "a yoke upon the neck, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear." (Acts xv: 10.) The freedom of the Christian economy is conspicuously marked by the substitution of catholic principles for these narrow and technical canons: in the application of which to every concrete case as it arises, is found no small part of the training by which we are prepared for the broader ministry of heaven.

Parallel with this, is the large freedom of the Christian Church in being delivered from *the bondage of an exacting ritual in the worship of God*. It is no longer required to "observe days, and months, and times and years," "the weak and beggarly elements" of an earlier bondage. (Gal. iv: 9, 10.) In place of all this, we have the promise of the indwelling Spirit to animate the worship which springs freely from the heart, as the limpid water gushes from the cleft in the mountain side. The old wish of Moses is realized, when he cried "would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!" (Num. xi: 29.) For is it not written, "ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." (I Pet. ii: 9.) We are all made kings and priests unto God, through living union with Christ our Lord. Each Christian is anointed to bear testimony to His grace, and to proclaim His free salvation. "Let Him that heareth say, come." (Rev. xxii: 17.) All are priests to offer "the calves of the lips" upon the altar of a free worship; which is erected not upon this mountain, nor in that Jerusalem, but wherever "the true worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." (John iv: 21-24.) It is a grand freedom to "lift up holy hands" everywhere upon the earth; with no priest to mediate our worship, but the great High Priest who "hath passed into the heavens," and "ever liveth to make intercession for us." (Heb. vii: 25.)



Can he, further, be perfect in freedom, *who wears the shackles of ignorance and doubt?* What shall be said of the triumph of him who, through the illumination of the Holy Ghost, is brought to the certitude of faith resting upon the testimony of Jehovah Himself? Put the two in their proper contrast: on the one side, the anguish of mental travail, wrestling with ignorance and struggling with doubt, in the effort to bring truth to the birth, on the other side, the lofty repose of the soul in "the full assurance of understanding," grasping the truth in the reality and certainty of its possession. The breadth of the interval between the two extremes, measures the greatness of that freedom which rests upon the certain knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." (John i: 18.) In this revelation which He makes through the word and by His Spirit, the Son doth "make us free indeed."

Finally; it is the very purpose of adoption to confer *the freedom of perfect fellowship with God*. Neither the servant in the house, nor the subject in the kingdom, can claim the unfettered intercourse of a son with his father. The relationship is more distant, and the voice cannot speak in confidential whispers over the intervening space. But the child lies upon the parental bosom. "Son, thou art ever with me," says the father in the parable. (Luke xv: 31.) And our Lord declares, "the servant abideth not in the house forever, but the Son abideth ever." (John viii: 35.) But what imagery shall delineate the boldness of utterance, when God doth "send forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father?" (Gal. iv: 6.) It is the free intercourse of those who are sons. It is an intercourse mediated through Christ Jesus, who interprets us to God even as He reveals God to us—taking our human thoughts and human words upon His own human lips, and uttering them to the Father in the Divine speech of the Eternal Three within the pavilion. We moan in these poor utterances of the earth, not knowing how to shoot our wishes beyond the pavement of stars where the throne is—and lo! the blessed Mediator gathers them in His censer, and wafts them upward in His intercession; and thus we pray and are heard.

Under all these aspects we see the *reality* of the freedom which the Son bestows. My brethren, how exalted the privilege of being "the Lord's freeman!" It is more than deliverance from the guilt, and shame, and peril of sin; it is exaltation to a new position of highest dignity, in being called the sons of God. It is the wide, free joy of being such in the expe-

rience of all that is actual in the freedom of this relation. It is the glory of sharing in the honor of Him who is the sole proprietor of the title as "the only-begotten of the Father." It is the certainty of our title, as coming to us through a most gracious inheritance. It is the freedom, in every lowly prayer to lift up the soul to God with the assurance of being heard. It is the freedom, in every season of doubt to rise above all distrust and care, and to cast the burden upon the Lord. It is the freedom, in the cold loneliness of death, to grasp the warm hand of the "elder Brother," who bears us down the gloomy descent, and seals the chant of victory upon our lips to be borne with the parting breath into the ear of angels. It is the freedom to move with courage through the gates of pearl, and to march with the firm step of a conqueror in the golden streets of the city where God's palace is. It is the freedom, to enjoy a splendid introduction to all the joys of that upper kingdom by the Son Himself, who is the heir to all its glories. Free from sin, free from the law, free from the curse, free from doubt and fear, free through the Son; this is the liberty wherewith Christ hath made His people free! Ah! what folly to seek it anywhere but in Him! Who can hope to find it in the lawlessness of his wayward spirit; or in the deceitful promises of a world, "the grace of the fashion of which perisheth" in our sight! Speak thou, O Lord, the word which shall deliver every bound soul before thee this day, into the freedom of adopting grace—"Thou shalt call me, my Father, and shalt not turn away from me." (Jer. iii: 19.)



## XXVI.

### FREEDOM BY THE TRUTH.

JOHN VIII: 32: "*And the truth shall make you free.*"

The Gospel may be likened to a majestic temple, with its colonnades, its chambers, and its corridors, presenting at every turn new wonders to the sight. It stands before the eye, the triumph of architectural design—every arch and every pillar disclosing a fresh thought of the artist, inviting further admiration and study. Not one of its themes can be exhausted. The gleam upon their surface is more than enough to delight the soul throughout this earthly life; while the unfathomed depths conceal the knowledge which shall mark the spirit's intellectual progress through the ages of its eternal expansion.

Thus I have attempted to show that the Gospel though a *law*, is a law of *liberty*; and that in the co-ordination of these terms is found the distinction betwixt *liberty* and *licentiousness*. I have indicated the leading particulars in which this freedom of the Gospel consists; and have pressed the superadded obligation which this imposes, of a strict and conscientious obedience. Upon this side, the discussion seemed complete. But there remained another aspect in which the subject might be viewed—the *source from which this spiritual liberty proceeds*. I sought therefore to show that it is the sole *prerogative* of Christ, as the Son, to convey it—and that His *power* as Mediator, was competent to the task. I propose now to complete the discussion by exhibiting THE TRUTH AS THE INSTRUMENTAL AGENCY BY WHICH THE RESULT IS ACHIEVED.

Every careful reader of the Scriptures has noticed the emphasis which is put upon the truth. Our Lord recognizes its office in the sanctification of His people, when He prays to the Father "sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." (John xvii: 17.) In like manner, the Apostle Peter exhorts Christians to brotherly love, "seeing they have purified their souls in obeying the truth." (I Pet. i: 22.) With even deeper suggestiveness, the same Apostle hints to us the connection of the truth with the mystery of the New Birth; "being born again, not of corruptible seed,

but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." (Ibid, v: 23.) And now in the text is plainly declared its agency in working out our spiritual liberty; "then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, if ye continue in my words, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John viii: 31, 32.)

These passages clearly teach that however direct may be the power which the Holy Ghost exerts upon the human spirit, there is no setting aside of the attributes which determine its responsibility before God. Indeed it might be assumed as one of the postulates of the Divine government, that whatever may be the changes in the methods of His Providence, there can be no reversal of his original design, nor of the constitution and nature given to any being at the first. The laws of matter, for example, are simply the uniform modes in which the properties He in the beginning impressed upon matter, are seen to operate. And He will, in no case, deviate from these except in the miracle; where, for a high moral purpose, His power is brought directly into view, just as in the acts of creation itself. Neither will God overthrow the nature of spirit, in the government of spirit. Thus, if man, in the exercise of intelligence and will, fell from his original holiness, he must be in the conscious possession of the same attributes in every stage of his salvation from sin. Whilst therefore the immediate impact of the Holy Ghost upon the human soul, cannot be denied—whilst His power is invincible in all His saving operations—yet in no case does He overbear or crush down the faculties, which are necessary to constitute man the being that he is. On the contrary, He acts directly and omnipotently upon them all in their necessary conjunction. He quickens the intellect; He purges the affections; He rectifies the conscience; He renews the will; and He works upon each by the method which is appropriate to each. He enlivens and enlightens the understanding by the truth: He changes the affections by the presentation of goodness: He controls the will by motives which decide the choice. A Divine virtue goes from him, actuating each power alike—but in this very actuation, directs its movement according to the law originally appointed for its guidance.

Another preliminary observation may be indulged. The discovery of truth to man does not unveil every mystery to his reason. God, who is "unsearchable in His judgments," is the object revealed to us. All therefore that is incomprehensible in His nature, must be looked for still in a Revelation. Otherwise, He is destroyed in the discovery of Himself. I pray you not to be startled by the paradox I employ; unless it be to recog-

nize the fundamental difficulty with every form of rationalism, which undertakes to measure, by the line of human thought, the revelation of God proper to be made to His creatures. It is simply that it deprives us of a God altogether, and renders worship an absurdity. A God who can be measured, is no God at all; and a God who transcends the limits of human thought, must always be incomprehensible. With all that revelation may unfold, Jehovah must ever remain to us "past finding out."

These cautions clear the way for inquiry as to THE INSTRUMENTAL AGENCY OF THE TRUTH IN MAKING CHRIST'S PEOPLE FREE.

1. *Truth is indispensable to the knowledge of Christ and of his work, and therefore to the operation of our faith in both.* The stretch, my hearers, is immense between the bondage of the sinner and "the glorious liberty of the children of God." It will not be useless repetition, to denote the several stages into which it may be divided. First, there is the bondage of the *criminal*. There is no exaggeration of the sinner's wretchedness in describing it under that term. Alas! he is a criminal, not only as lying under indictment, but as lying under condemnation, of law. The case has already been issued before the Court, and sentence has been found. "The wages of sin is death," and the fact of sin being established alike before the tribunal of conscience and of God, the condemnation follows by necessity of law. Nothing remains but the dread execution. The patience of God may grant a short reprieve; but this only adds another shade to the sadness of the case. It is the awfulness of the law's delay in exacting the forfeiture of life, under a sense of the solemnity which will not suffer justice to resemble vengeance in its haste. There may be a deep insensibility in man to the fact of his guilt; but it is only the drugged insensibility of the prisoner, who sleeps in his dungeon and hears not the clanking of his own fetters, which chain him to the stone of his cell.

How shall this prisoner be restored to the freedom which has been forfeited through guilt? Is it enough that the angel of the Lord shall smite him, as he smote Peter, on his side and lead him through the wards into the open world again? Alas! naked power will not suffice to loose the manacles with which the sinner is bound. The Divine law surrounds him, like the atmosphere, with its universal presence; and there can be no escape from arrest by the penalty incurred. Freedom must come to him in legal form, by a full discharge from guilt and re-investiture of all the rights as they stood before forfeiture under the curse. He must be able to walk forth in the light of day under the protection of that law from whose grasp he has just been rescued, and must be assured in the posses-

sion of all his privileges by that very justice which before he had outraged. Clothing the thought in theological language, this criminal needs pardon to set him free from guilt, and a declaration of righteousness which shall be the ground of his title—which are the two terms that enter into the sinner's justification before God. This introduces us at once to the work and office of Jesus Christ, who “was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” (II Cor. v: 21.) I am not required, in this connexion, to enumerate the offices which the Redeemer was called to discharge, nor to show how perfectly the claims of justice are satisfied in the righteousness which makes the sinner free from condemnation and from guilt. But it is necessary to ask, what could all this avail in bringing salvation to us if the knowledge of it were withheld? How should faith appropriate this righteousness and make it ours, but for the tender of it in the Gospel to all who will accept it? We see then the need of the truth, “setting forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.” (Rom. iii: 25.)

Again, there is the bondage of a *slave*—more free than the prisoner, but restrained in every movement by the will of the master. It is the bondage of the sinner, who seeks with scant obedience to satisfy the rigorous exactions of the Divine law; and who finds that obedience a task, rendered in the spirit of hire rather than of love. The heavy pressure of this bondage is perhaps best known to those, whom God's grace has taught a better way; but who, in moments of darkness, seek again to lay the foundation of their hope in that old covenant, which has no voice except to say, “cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” (Gal. iii: 10.) How blessed, on the other hand, is the freedom of those who, “being justified by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,” (Rom. iii: 24,) keep God's commandments through the natural energy of the new life within the soul—the simple instinct of the new nature begotten by the Holy Spirit, when “after God they were created in righteousness and true holiness.” (Eph. iv: 24.) But must not the truth come and tell us this? that “the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death \* \* the righteousness of the law being fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.” (Rom. viii: 2, 4.) Thus, through the truth, is the servant permitted to rejoice in the freedom of a son.

Is it not a bondage, again, when a fatal *paralysis seizes the limbs* and holds them in helpless imbecility? What term more fitly expresses the

inability to all good, of one who is "dead in trespasses and sins? And need you be told through whom that utter helplessness is removed? "When we were without strength," says the Apostle, "in due time Christ died for the ungodly." (Rom. v: 6.) Even of old, this was mentioned by the prophet: "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." (Isa. xlv: 24.) The combination of the two explains the mystery; for where shall strength be sought by the sinner, save in the righteousness which gives him claim upon all the resources of Jehovah Himself? The bondage of helplessness is gone as soon as one can lean upon the promise, "my grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." (II Cor. xii: 9.) But then one needs to read this in the Scriptures of truth. There can be no embrace of the Saviour, unless He is held up to our sight. The truth of His atoning sacrifice must be delivered to us, before we can lay our sins upon the altar of Burnt-Offering and receive our discharge from the sense of guilt. We must through the truth know Him as our Righteousness, before we are emancipated from the slavery of a legal obedience. The truth must disclose to us the secret of our strength, before we can "glory in our infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon us;" or before we can utter the paradox, "when I am weak then am I strong." But with the truth of all this set home upon the heart by the Holy Ghost, we "have no longer the spirit of bondage again to fear; but we have the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." (Rom. viii: 15.)

2. *The truth is necessary to the knowledge of sin, in order to escape its thralldom.* "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick," (Mat. ix: 12,) is the pointed application of a proverb to this very case, made by the Master Himself. Until the sense of guilt is felt in the conscience, what should induce a man to seek pardon? Until the shame and disease of the dreadful leprosy take hold upon the spirit, why should it be bowed by an agony of desire to be healed? The first prerequisite to repentance and reformation is the persuasion of the reality and dreadfulness of sin, as charged upon us by the law of God. The disclosure is painful to the last degree; but there will be no cry for relief until the pangs of conviction are felt,

"And guilt lies heavy on the soul,  
A vast oppressive load."

There must be an intellectual apprehension of sin, such as comes through a formal definition of it. "Sin," says John, "is the transgression of the law;" (I John iii: 4,) "by the law," says Paul, "is the knowledge of sin;" "for where no law is, there is no transgression." (Rom. iii: 20,



and iv: 15.) These are simple and intelligible propositions. They place the law before us as the standard of rectitude, the formal nature of sin being found in every deviation from the same. But then we need to have this definition of sin, as the basis upon which all our knowledge of its properties shall rest. We must have this abstract idea of sin, underlying every estimate of its vileness and every effort to escape from its burden.

After this knowledge of sin as a matter of formal definition, comes the perception of its deformity by comparison with that which is its opposite. There must be a standard of beauty, as well as of truth; and whilst the judgment denounces sin because of its falsehood, the affections must equally shrink from its pollution. So long as sin is viewed simply as contravening the Divine authority, the enormity of it does not take hold upon the conscience. The Holy Spirit must therefore discover the law to us, not only as the expression of the Divine will, but as the reflection of the Divine character. In the "transgression of the law," there is not only insult to the Divine majesty, but injury and wrong to the Divine nature. We impinge against every perfection which makes God "glorious in holiness;" and in this is disclosed to us the exceeding sinfulness of sin (Rom. vii: 13).

Clearly, there can be no conviction of sin leading to genuine repentance, until we have seen it in its opposition to the "beauty of holiness." When the Holy Spirit "opens our eyes to behold wondrous things out of God's law," (Ps. cxix: 18,) the chief marvel is the revelation of God in the glory of His holiness. The sinner is overwhelmed with awe, and then filled with fear and shame in contrasting with it his own vileness and guilt. Like Isaiah who saw the Lord in His temple, he exclaims, "woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." (Isa. vi: 5.) Still more when this "glory of God is seen in the face of Jesus Christ"—when in the stupendous work of human redemption we behold the beauty of justice in its union with mercy, of holiness in its union with love, of law in its union with grace—it is in the presence of these tender and winning attributes, the soul is penetrated with a sense of the Divine loveliness which causes sin to be loathed with a detestation unutterable. When to this is added the more human side of holiness as seen in the life and character of our incarnate Lord upon earth, the beauty of Godliness attracts the heart and lifts its purest desires to heaven for deliverance from the bondage of that sin which is now felt to be oppressive.

All these disclosures are made through the truth; which is thus seen

to be as necessary to the operations of the conscience and heart, as to the action of the mind. In fact not one faculty of man's complex nature can be brought into play, except as the truth creates around it the atmosphere which it must breathe in order to live and move. Like the oxygen in the air, truth sustains the soul in its activity, without which there would not be a pulse of life. If then freedom is conveyed by the Son, it is mediated through the truth—"ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

3. *It is through Revelation alone we have the knowledge of God; by assimilation to whose image, we are made free from the power of sin.* It has not been easy to compress into a brief sentence the three converging lines of thought, necessary to the completeness of the idea. It will be less difficult to disengage and to expand them. You will recognize them as follows: that personal holiness, through which we are delivered from the prevalency of sin, is indispensable to spiritual freedom—that the whole work of sanctification is but the process of assimilation to the image of God—that this assimilation depends upon vision, which can only be enjoyed through the truth of Revelation. The elaboration of each of these propositions would render the discussion more formal than I desire.

The first will be accepted upon the bare statement. We are delivered from the guilt and punishment of sin, in justification; which being simply a legal judgment, is completed in the decree which sets aside the penalty. We are delivered from the stain and power of sin, in sanctification; which being a change wrought upon the character and conduct, is progressive until death. We are delivered at length from the presence and being of sin, in glorification; which is the instantaneous transformation necessary for the enjoyment of heaven. These are connected together in the scheme of grace, and each is an indispensable element of our salvation. The freedom is not complete, so long as we groan under the presence and power of sin. Yet our experience constantly echoes the mournful complaint of Paul: "I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. \* \* I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death! (Rom. vii: 21-24.) This deliverance so passionately desired, is not instantaneous. The same Apostle describes the process: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, (Christ) that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." (Rom. vi: 6.) "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." (Gal. v: 24.) In like manner, he exhorts

“that ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts—and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” (Eph. iv: 22–24.) “Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.” (II Cor. iv: 16.) In this daily advance in personal holiness, there is a corresponding weakening of the power of sin—which forms no small part of the freedom that the Son bestows.

The second and third points are closely blended in the testimony of the Apostle John: “beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.” (I John, iii: 2.) It is one of the great laws of our nature, that we grow like the objects which we habitually contemplate. So fixed a property is it, that in Heaven it is the law of our development in glory, as on earth it is the law of our growth in grace. God reveals Himself through Jesus Christ; who is seen with the eye of faith now, and with the eye of sense hereafter. “Whom having not seen,” says Peter, “ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” (I Pet. i: 8.) I cite this passage as showing the office of faith under this dispensation of grace, equivalent to sight hereafter in the kingdom of glory. The assimilation to the Divine image which is effected through both, is thus set forth by the Apostle in a contrasted statement: “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (II Cor. iii: 18.) “But now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face.” (I Cor. xiii: 12.) By the vision of faith, we are assimilated to God’s image in holiness; and by the vision of sense, we are assimilated to Him in glory. In the two, our freedom in Christ Jesus is pushed through every conceivable gradation, until it is made perfect in the inheritance of joy above.

Is not the agency of the truth conspicuous in the whole transformation? By the law of our moral nature, we become holy as we become like to that image of God in which we were at first created. It was in that resemblance that man’s holiness consisted at the first: it is in that resemblance as it is restored by grace, our holiness must still be found. But the truth is the medium through which this Divine holiness is disclosed. Just as the light is the necessary medium through which a perfect image is photographed upon a prepared plate, so through the truth as it is opened and applied by the Holy Ghost, is the holiness of God reproduced upon the human soul—but of course in a copy as far below the splendor of the

original, as the picture upon paper is inferior to the living feature and form which it faintly represents. Hence in the text our Lord connects the freedom which He bestows, with the truth as the instrument which He employs. Under all the forms which truth may adopt,—whether by symbols speaking to the senses, or by the technical phraseology of the most abstract science,—it is the medium necessary to this transfiguration into the likeness of our Head. And in holy Scripture, we are permitted to see how this language of grace is constructed, by which the truth is conveyed in its purifying power from God to the human soul.

4. *The truth delivers from the bondage of ignorance, and from the anguish of doubt.* Granted intelligence on the part of the creature, and the objects of inquiry scattered every where in nature—and we can appreciate the happiness which may flow from knowledge on the one hand, and the distress which will spring from ignorance upon the other. The appetite for knowledge is insatiable; and we can scarcely tell in this world which is greater, the pain of the hunger or the pleasure of appeasing it. The conditions of knowledge too are here exceedingly severe. With self-denial and with labor we plod through wearisome investigation, whilst every step is taken at the hazard of mistake and error. In proportion to the majesty of the subjects involved, and the importance of the conclusions reached, will be the torture of doubt under which the mind feels its way through the mist and the gloom darkening its research. What a relief, if an authenticated disclosure should supersede all this painful and uncertain discovery of truth! What a contrast, if the sun should suddenly burst with all its brightness from the bosom of darkness, and turn the night to day! But it would be no greater transition than when a clear Revelation from Heaven breaks upon the ignorance of a sinful world, and lights it up at once with the knowledge of God and of His truth.

The certainty, moreover, of those convictions which rest upon a Divine testimony, delivers from the anguish of doubt. “The Amen,” “the faithful and true witness,” reveals the truth directly from the Father to the children of his love; and a Divine faith, implanted by the Holy Spirit, grasps it with all the strength of conviction which could be produced by the demonstration of reason. How the range of vision widens, too, as faith lifts us up to the recognition of the incomprehensible and the infinite! “They shall mount up with wings as eagles,” saith the Prophet. (Isa. xl: 31.) Through the testimony of God in Revelation, we are borne as in a chariot of cloud, above the obstructions of sense and the infirmities of reason, to the apprehension of mysteries that lie far beyond our ability to comprehend. With the certitude of faith simply accepting upon the

warrant of a Divine testimony, the thirst of the soul for truth is assuaged with draughts taken just where it bursts from the eternal fountain. In the intellectual repose which is enjoyed through faith in an inspired revelation, we are able to see the part which the truth performs in securing to us the freedom we have in Christ Jesus, our Lord; a freedom which, in this direction, is perfected only in heaven, where knowledge will be like sight. Just as the eye opens and takes in every object which lies within the horizon; so will the mind open to absorb all the knowledge lying within its capacity. And with the enlargement of its powers, will be the widening of its horizon of knowledge; and still it will be only to look, in order to see and to know forever and forever. In eternity no less than in time, the perfection of knowledge will be the perfection of freedom.

5. *The truth is the medium of intercourse with God, and the warrant of all the hopes we cherish of the eternal future.* In the freedom which springs from sonship, there must be "the spirit of sons whereby we cry, Abba, Father." (Gal. iv: 6.) It is the characteristic which distinguishes the relation from that of a servant; for the Apostle immediately adds, "wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." (Ibid. v: 7.) But how shall this fellowship be maintained, except through the truth? God may indeed hear the thoughts, as they arise in the mind and before they put on the clothing of speech; but what shall be the mould in which these thoughts are fashioned, save the truth which gives them birth? And how shall God breathe His thoughts into the mind of the creature, but through the revelation of them by His word and Spirit? It is needless to dilate upon the connected statement—that in the freedom of real sonship, there must be sweet and unconstrained fellowship; and that this intercourse can only be mediated by the truth, through which Jehovah communicates the knowledge of Himself to the creature.

Nor can hope be cherished of that which lies in the future, except through the revelation which unfolds to us the objects of desire. "We are saved by hope," says Paul; "but hope that is seen is not hope, for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." (Rom. viii: 24, 25.) Of course, there must be the apprehension of the future good, by the power of that faith which is "the substance of things hoped for." (Heb. xi: 1.) We are able to "wait with patience," only because the object is made real to us through faith. And it is the office of the truth to disclose that upon which the faith fastens; becoming thus the guarantee, upon which this faith builds its certain expectation. Through the truth as the medium.

and with the eye of faith as the organ, "we look at the things which are not seen"—having "our citizenship in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." (Phil. iii: 20, 21.) As the son anticipates the possessions which are to be his, through the will of the father by whom they are bequeathed; so do God's dear children, through the truth which reveals them, anticipate the joys which shall be theirs when they shall enter upon "the inheritance of the saints in light." Most surely then, if it be the prerogative of the Son to make us free, the emancipation is effected through the truth as the charter under which its immunities are held.

The practical question to each of us is, have we this freedom conferred by the Son through the truth? It fills one with melancholy astonishment, to what numbers on earth those "words seem as idle tales." Is it not enough to freeze the soul with terror to be told of the law and its curse, and of the bondage of fear, of shame and of guilt under which the transgressor is brought? Is it not enough to fill that soul with the transport of delight, to be told of redemption from it all by one who is able to pay the ransom which the law demands? Ought it not to stir the heart to its depth, to be told of the freedom which exalts the creature above the condition of a servant to be a son in the family of God? And how should the pulse of a sanctified ambition beat within us, to be told of the privileges to be enjoyed in heaven—where the saints shall receive the patent of a true nobility as the peers of the angels in glory? Alas! that men should listen to the story, with no sense of its reality—but exactly as they read of genii and fairies, in the wild romances intended to amuse the hours of childhood! There can be no greater proof of the blindness of a sinner's mind, or of the hardness of a sinner's heart, than this utter insensibility to all that is fearful in sin, to all that is tender in grace, and to all that is triumphant in glory!

Let me only add that, if there be progress in the freedom which the Saviour confers, there is a corresponding development in the bondage of the sinner. Held under the curse, he adds transgression to sin, until "his own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins." (Prov. v: 22.) He passes through a fearful education for the pit: and when meet for his doom, he is "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." (II Thes. i: 9.) It is a grief to me that my voice is so powerless to persuade. I can only set the contrast before you, and leave

you to choose between the two extremes. Here, on the one side, is freedom—freedom from the curse, freedom from sin, freedom from shame and fear, freedom from ignorance and doubt, freedom in Christ to commune with God, and a freedom which issues at last in all the blessedness and joy of heaven. There, on the other side, is bondage—the bondage of sin, the bondage of Satan, the bondage of the world, the bondage of guilt and sorrow and despair, the bondage which issues at last in “the blackness of darkness” forever and ever. Oh, choose! and choose wisely between the two! Before the judge shall pronounce the irreversible decree, “bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the lake of fire,” accept the freedom which the Son offers to you through the truth.

## XXVII.

### TRUTH, THE LAW OF THE INTELLECT.

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JOHN XII: 48, 49: "*The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, He gave me commandment, what I should say and what I should speak.*"

The faculties necessary to a responsible agent are intelligence, conscience, affections and will. Without knowledge to direct, human action would be simply mechanical; without the power of censure, it would be destitute of morality; without the sympathies of the heart, there could be no play of motives; and without the power to determine, there would be only dead inertia. If then all these be necessary in the definition of such a being as man, we may expect each to be placed under its own law for regulation and guidance. Accordingly we find that God has set truth over against the intellect, as the rule of its exercise—rectitude over against the conscience, as the law of its action—love over against the heart, as the spring of its impulses—and obedience over against the will, as the expression of its energy. It may perhaps diversify the form of Pulpit instruction in a way not wholly unprofitable, if I attempt in several discourses to show how the gospel covers this psychological field, which a single sentence has sufficed to map before you in its broad outline. If Christianity addresses itself thus to every department of our nature, it appeals to your consideration and acceptance with an eloquence which ought to be irresistible. In the present discourse, I shall restrict your attention to the first of these four topics: and my object will be to show that, IN THE ETERNAL RELATION WHICH IT SUSTAINS TO THE UNDERSTANDING, GOD'S REVEALED TRUTH CARRIES WITH IT THE BINDING AND COMMANDING AUTHORITY OF LAW.

The principle is not simply embodied in the text, but is delivered with unusual solemnity. As the close of our Lord's ministry was fast approaching, a judicial verdict is rendered against the unbelieving Jews, in the fearful words uttered by the prophet against an earlier generation: "therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their heart; that they should not see



with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory and spake of Him." (vv. 39-41.) But though the offence was so aggravated, Christ will not now stand forth as accuser or judge, but only as redeemer and saviour: "if any man hear my words and believe not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, He gave me commandment what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me so I speak." (vv. 47-50.)

The truth then which Christ delivers under the commission and authority of His Father, is the law under which the creature will be tried at the final judgment. It is spoken with emphasis now, as a protest against human unbelief; and it will be the standard according to which the decisions of the last day will be rendered. Under what form of statement could the binding power of the truth be more distinctly set forth? A fair exposition of the text yields to us the theme which I have already announced—**TRUTH, THE LAW OF THE INTELLECT.**

Consider, if you will.

I. *That the probation, both of law and of grace, under which man is put, extends to the intellect as to every other faculty of his nature.* A singular confusion of thought prevails in the world, touching this point. It is quietly assumed that when man was placed upon the trial of his obedience, the decision of the will was alone involved. The test being the restriction from a particular act, to which a determination of the will was first necessary, it is inferred that every other faculty was exempted from pressure. One would scarcely be disposed to attack seriously such an absurdity, if it were harmless in its result. But leading to one of the most fatal of all practical errors, the denial of responsibility for our opinions and beliefs, there is an imperious necessity for its exposure.

Will any of you, my hearers, undertake to explain how a decision of the will is to be reached in any case, without calling into play the other powers of the soul? In order to any determination, must there not first be a movement of desire? and in order to the least exercise of the affections, must there not be the perception of a supposed good? Are not these the connected links of one chain? And though the spark is only emitted at the end of the chain, must not the electric current run through all the links in order to be visible at the last? Or, dropping the figure, do any

of you require to be told that the soul of man is an indivisible unit? that these various faculties of thought, feeling and action are not separate parts of which the soul is compounded, but only different modes in which the one undivided spirit displays its life? I am almost ashamed to dwell upon what is so elementary. But when we distinguish between the intellect, the conscience, the will, the memory, the taste, and the like—these are only the different aspects under which we view the operations of the one spirit in man. Intellect, for example, is the soul knowing; conscience is the same soul rendering moral judgments; taste is the soul discriminating between the beautiful and the vile; memory is the soul reproducing the past from its own records—and so throughout the list in which these various powers are classified. It follows from this unity of the soul and the co-ordination of its powers, that man's probation, whether of law or grace, must embrace them all. He cannot be put on trial as to his will, without being also on trial as to the affections by which that will is influenced; nor without being on trial as to the understanding, the eye with which the heart looks out upon objects and sees their complexion. If it be the design of probation to determine our relations to God, why are not these ascertained by rejection of the Divine testimony as well as by disobedience of the Divine command? Yet the one is the operation of the mind; the other, of the heart. Character is equally proved in both: whilst the two so completely interlace, that unbelief may spring from the distastefulness of the truth to the heart, just as disobedience may originate in deception practised upon the understanding.

The probation of the intellect is established from the fact, that without it man could not be put upon any form of trial before God. How shall any test be prescribed, without addressing his intelligence? How shall the temptation be felt, if there be no knowledge of the suggestions which it makes? How shall the temptation be repelled, without consideration of the reasons therefor? Whether man shall stand or fall, all his powers are implicated in the struggle; and it is hard to say against which the strain is the greatest. In all the statements of man's condition as a sinner, the Scriptures lay as much stress upon the darkness of the mind as upon the hardness of the heart. And in the work of restoration to the Divine image, the illumination of the mind is as important a function of the Holy Ghost as the renewal of the will. Surely, if all our faculties share equally in the effects of the Fall, they were equally upon trial before God in the first Covenant. The darkness of the understanding is as truly the degradation of this part of our nature,—as the corruption of the conscience, and the estrangement of the heart, are the depravation of these. The intellect

therefore is subjected to proof, whether it will acknowledge the authority of God, as truly as the conscience or the will. But, of course, the character of the test will be determined by the nature of that which is to be proved. If authority confronts the will—and goodness, the affections—and rectitude, the conscience—truth must be the touchstone of the understanding.

Upon these principles, what becomes of the assertion that men are not accountable for their beliefs? There must be guilt in withholding the homage which truth has the right to exact. A complete responsibility for our mental acts must be admitted, if the binding authority of truth be acknowledged. For this reason, I have been careful to establish this correlation of our faculties, and to show that they are placed jointly upon trial during a state of probation.

It is alleged however that belief is *involuntary*—depending not upon volition, but upon evidence. If this be sufficient, belief follows of necessity without the power to restrain it; if insufficient, there is no power to compel it. Being thus involuntary, it is held to be irresponsible. This is the citadel of the error, from which it must be dislodged. The reasoning employed is so plausible, that it captivates the unwary who have not a suspicion of its fallacy. It fascinates with the glitter of its speciousness. The conclusion is reached by a logic so short and decisive, that it is handed about as unanswerable,—begetting in its advocates a confidence so entire, as to forestall the investigation which I propose now to institute.

*Is it true, in the first place, that we are not held to account for what is involuntary?* What can be more spontaneous than our emotions? Yet, before every tribunal these are held to give character to the external act. Whether a blow be given in sudden anger, or with malicious premeditation—this determines the nature of the crime as between manslaughter and murder. The punishment, though graded, is administered to both upon the ground that, however involuntary the emotions may be, the citizen is bound to control such as may work injury to society. Must not the perfect law of God proceed one step further, and hold us responsible for the existence of any feeling which it would be dangerous to indulge? In this particular, we may reason by analogy from our feelings to our convictions. Society holds us responsible for the avowal and practice of every opinion injurious to its interests. Must not the law of God, whose inquisition is deeper, convict us of guilt in cherishing opinions which are hurtful in their tendency? Is it, for example, any excuse for thuggery, that it is practised as a religious homage to an imaginary deity? Human law, with a jurisdiction extending only to the outward act, very properly

decrees that no amount of sincerity can protect the assassin, who prowls through the earth even under the sanction of religion. The Divine law claims a wider scope, and condemns the false and bloody creed which sends its votary forth to deeds of secret murder.

In the next place, *our beliefs like our emotions, are not beyond our control.* The quiet assumption of this is the fallacy, which gives currency to the error I am seeking to explode. We term these involuntary, because they arise *immediately* under the conditions necessary to produce them, and without the intervention of our choice. The sentiment of the beautiful, for example, and of the sublime—or the emotion of love, or the passion of anger,—can be aroused only by the presence, actual or imaginary, of their appropriate objects. They arise spontaneously out of pre-existing states of mind; and no direct exercise of the will can either beget or repress them. It is however too much to infer that there can be no control of them, simply because that control is not immediate and direct. On the contrary, since a necessary connexion exists between these and the antecedent conditions out of which they arise, the certainty of this connexion indicates precisely where this control is lodged—and with it, of course, our responsibility. We have only to change the conditions upon which they depend, and by the very law of connexion before spoken of it is positively certain they will not be originated. By a decision of the will, we can refuse to contemplate the beautiful, and then no power can produce the sentiment. By an effort of the will, we can compel our thoughts to dwell upon the virtues of others, until the emotion of love is engendered; or upon the sorrows of others, until the sentiment of pity is evoked. A wicked heart throwing off restraint and fear before God, may fill the mind with prejudice against the truth, so as to bar its admission. It is along this line that our responsibility lies, in reference to our beliefs. If the evidence which God has furnished be sufficient to convince,—then man is responsible for all the prejudice which resists it, for all the dislike that repels it, for all the apathy which is indifferent to it, and for all the enmity which persecutes it. Involuntary as belief may be, in accordance with the fundamental law which regulates mental action, yet man is held responsible for every obstruction which his own sinfulness has thrown in the way of the truth—for every influence, of whatever sort, which he has allowed to interfere with its free action—and therefore for the absence of that faith which this truth should legitimately have produced.

Once more—the delusion, as to the irresponsibility of our beliefs is fostered, *by failing to notice the distinction between the kinds of evidence by which different truths are supported.* “I cannot help assenting to the

proposition that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, says one. If then I fail to believe in the doctrines of Revelation, it is because the evidence is not overwhelming, as in the other case. And as I deserve no credit for the belief in the one, so I am free from censure for unbelief in the other." The complaint is, that the evidence does not compel assent on moral subjects—as in mathematics, for instance. It would be a sufficient rejoinder, that of necessity the evidence must be adapted to the nature of that which is to be proved; and that no other kind of evidence can be employed; or if it should, it could bring no conviction to the mind. Mathematical demonstration would be as unsuited to the topics of moral science, as moral reasoning would be out of place in the science of numbers and quantity. The insufficiency therefore of moral evidence cannot be made out by contrasting it with the demonstration of positive science, simply because the comparison betwixt the two is irrelevant.

Should this rejoinder be deemed evasive, then it may be urged that probable evidence is that employed in all the transactions of daily life—its sufficiency being practically acknowledged in the immense interests which are suspended on it—and in the application of which, men hold themselves answerable for every misjudgment. In our courts of justice, in the halls of legislation, at the hustings, in the marts of commerce, in medical science and art—in short, in every department of human thought and duty, we are thrown upon just that kind of evidence which is claimed to be so unsatisfactory in the sphere of religion. If the physician is held responsible for a false diagnosis, if the lawyer be answerable for a misconstruction of the statute, if the statesman be ruled out of office for ignorance of the economics of society, if the merchant loses his fortune through a mistake as to the balance of trade; if all these must act upon probable evidence, and are compelled to pay the penalty of error in construing the same, how is man to be held irresponsible for his convictions in matters where the Lord has given His own testimony in assurance of the truth?

In addition to all, it will not be amiss to remark that the evidence on moral subjects cannot be made irresistible, without destroying the probation both of law and grace upon which man is placed before God. A certain margin must be left for the possibility of prejudice and passion, that it may be shown whether the subject of law will use due diligence and candor in ascertaining his duty—just as there must be a margin to show whether, with the knowledge of his duty, he will perform it.

Gathering up then all these thoughts, it is seen that the understanding is upon trial before God equally with the other faculties—that there must be a complete responsibility for the opinions and beliefs which we cherish,

and that the truth possesses authority to enforce this responsibility, as being the law to the intellect.

II. *Divine truth is delivered to us through a direct Revelation, which gives to it the binding authority of law.* Truth indeed is impressed every where upon the universe. In the beauty of color and in the symmetry of form, the eye may drink in lessons fitting man to offer his priestly worship upon the altars of nature, to the God of nature. Then there are deeper truths, which from the creation God has locked within the very frame of the earth; holding it in ward, until science should come in the after ages and release the secret to the knowledge of mankind. Under the severe inquisition of physical science, law has been evolved out of law in almost endless succession; and force has been found concealed within force—more ethereal and therefore more intense at each gradation—suggesting to us the great Designer behind and beneath them all, in the majesty of Divine repose, touching the secret spring which sets in motion the vast machinery that bewilders us with its confusion and noise.

Important however as this natural truth may be, and even necessary to the advancement of our material interests, still it does not involve the destinies of the immortal soul. Whatever may be its value as the chief factor in human civilization, it is not the kind of truth upon which human probation turns. It is left therefore to be ascertained through investigation and discovery. It is truth which lies within the domain of natural thought; and which the mind acquires in the exercise of its powers, by observation, comparison, induction, classification, and the like. But when we pass from natural to moral and religious truth, its supreme importance, as determining our duty here and our destiny hereafter, requires that it should be ascertained to us in a way far more authoritative. This therefore is disclosed by a direct revelation, authenticated as such by proofs conclusive to the most sluggish understanding. This fact I urge as giving to religious truth the force of law. It is not left to the chances of discovery, to the hazard of being overlooked, or to the caprice which may accept or reject it: but it comes directly from God, sealed with the sanction of His authority, and must command those to whom it speaks. Natural truth encounters no antipathies, awakens no resentments, wars against no prejudices: but spiritual truth brings us face to face with those duties which we owe to God, against whom the sinner is in flagrant rebellion. It encounters the opposition of a heart which would rejoice in its overthrow, and must be armed with authority to command its submission.

The fundamental mistake of rationalism, in all its forms and degrees, consists in ignoring this distinction. It undertakes to deal with the truths

of revelation, precisely as with those of science. If the latter are overtaken by natural investigation and discovery, so may the former. It claims the power to leap instantly from the plane of God's works to the knowledge of His essence and being. When this bold effort is baffled, it denies the obligation to receive any truth which it has not the power to originate, or at least the capacity to comprehend. The absurdity of such a pretension ought to be apparent on its face. Grand as may be the works of God, in which "are clearly seen His eternal power and God-head," they are nevertheless external to Him. They are thrown out, as it were, from the palm of His hand. In contemplating them, we are far from being conducted into His interior nature, so as to behold the awful mystery of His uncreated existence, or the chain of purposes to be developed in His providence and grace. Shut out from the pavilion of light in which Jehovah dwells, how can we know Him in the absolute spirituality of His substance or being? Or how shall we detect the thoughts of His infinite mind, and the boundless affections heaving with their mighty tides in His infinite heart?

By the very import of the term, the infinite God transcends the reach of human investigation. He can only be known as He shall Himself remove the veil from His own majesty, by which it is concealed from the gaze of angels and men—and by a direct revelation disclose the glory of His own perfections. If this be admitted, then such a disclosure must be held as binding upon the creature. The necessity of the case compels us to receive from God the knowledge of His character and will, which can be obtained in no other way. As it is the revelation of the Creator to His creatures, it comes with all the authority of the original proprietor. Because it is an act of perfect condescension, it binds us with the sanction of a holy gratitude. And because He is light, therefore must we accept revelation as the direct emanation of its rays—and as being the pledge of that knowledge, with which He will flood the mind in the kingdom of His glory.

We accept the truths of Divine revelation, not because we understand them, but because of the testimony upon which they are delivered to us. Those statements which are quite level with our reason, and those mysteries which hide themselves in the clouds of Heaven, are received alike upon a "thus saith the Lord." The docility with which we bow to the authority of revealed truth, is but a part of that homage which we owe to God in all the departments of our nature. We give Him the homage of the heart in our love, the homage of the will in our obedience, and the homage of the understanding in our faith. We bring the intellect with

all its power to search and to know, that with a blessed submission it may bow to the authoritative utterances of Him whose "law is the truth."

III. *The magisterial authority of the truth is further seen, in its being essential to the discipline by which man is fitted for another state of being.* Certainly this world is not our home. It has no significance except in its relation to the life beyond the grave. The shortness of our stay here, the changes constantly occurring in our associations, the limits within which the spirit finds itself restrained, and the intense yearning after that which is beyond—all these point to a higher sphere where the earthly shadows never fall.

"Beyond the flight of time,  
 Beyond the reign of death,  
 There surely is some blessed clime  
 Where life is not a breath;  
 Nor life's affections, transient fire—  
 Whose sparks fly upward and expire."

The present is but a discipline for the life to come; and to this discipline the truth is necessary. Under the moral constitution which God has ordained, character is something to be acquired. A nature may be given: but, as in the case both of angels and men, it is put upon probation that, in the exercise of its properties and affections, individual character may be formed. The original tendency or impulse develops, through the operation of a personal will, into the external act; and becomes thereby an exponent of the being whose choice has thus been expressed. Having obtained this outlet through the agency of the creature himself, it becomes an active power enforcing its control by constant repetition, until, it concretes into the permanent habit; and the whole nature crystallizes into the fixed external form of what we call character.

This may enable us to understand the necessity and the nature of that discipline with which we are exercised under a dispensation of grace. The Holy Spirit in the new birth implants within us right affections and desires: but, as in the case of physical growth, these must be drawn out in the practice of daily duties. The development, of course, is not mechanical as with the properties of blind matter; but, in accordance with the laws of our spiritual nature, through the exercise of the judgment and the will. It is thus Christian character is formed. And when it is remembered that this is to abide without change forever, no discipline can be too severe which produces the perfect crystal, from every angle and from every plane of which the Divine glory is eternally to be reflected.

In all this formation of character, how is the agency of the truth to



be ignored? Through its revelations, God Himself is made known to human thought; all the principles of His government and the methods of His grace are unveiled; the service of the heavenly world is disclosed; and the discipline explained, by which we are fitted for immortal destinies. Two features of Divine revelation are thus explained to us. The first is, that truth is never presented to us in the form of abstract knowledge, but always in connexion with practice. It is necessary that we should be let into the mystery of the adorable Trinity, and then into that of the incarnation of the Son, and then into the operation of the Divine Spirit upon the human soul, in order to embrace the salvation which the Gospel reveals to the sinner. But the curtain falls upon all these disclosures, as soon as further knowledge is not needed in the exercise of saving faith in the Redeemer. The principle which rules in the sphere of practical religion, is faith; and to this everything is subordinated. Truth is therefore revealed as the basis on which faith rests; and the revelation is arrested, just where further discoveries would interfere with its free action. The second feature referred to, is the immovable mystery which rests upon much that Revelation unfolds. The reason of this has been partially anticipated in what I have already said. The arrest of information at the precise point where the curiosity is most piqued, leaves a veil whose withdrawal might clear up much of the mystery. But in addition to this, truth would hardly subserve the end of a moral discipline, unless it should conduct us to such intellectual docility as would prepare us for the grand disclosures which are to flood the soul in eternity. The knowledge of God afforded here is not intended to be exhaustive of all that He is able to communicate. It is only preparatory to higher revelations, which from their grandeur will require the most expanded receptive power in the creature to absorb. The teachings of the Bible are moulded upon this idea. If your child, startled by the thunder or blinded by the lightning, should demand of you the explanation of these phenomena—could you hope to open the mystery to his infantile capacity? What resource have you, but to drop such words as will allay the present thirst of the mind, and by their very suggestiveness pledge the answer which is to come hereafter? Thus God lets down His truth in words that teach indeed, but perform the higher function of disciplining the spirit for the state which is to be a state of perfect knowledge as well as reward.

Can you now separate authority from this important function of the truth? Must it not be armed with prerogative to command the attention which it addresses? If this life be simply educational for another which is final and unchangeable, this dogmatic authority of the truth becomes

a thing most awful to contemplate. Whether it speak with the voice of instruction, or with the voice of persuasion, or with the voice of warning, the majesty of its tone is the majesty of law.

IV. *The truth must possess this binding force, because it is spoken to sinners justly condemned under the law they have broken.* Sweep away every other utterance of mine this day, as belonging to the region of speculative thought, this at least must stand. All rights have been forfeited through the original transgression. The Scriptures are addressed to beings who lie beneath the penalty, and to whom every utterance of God is doubly authoritative. I say, doubly authoritative: because on the one hand, it follows from the absoluteness and supremacy of Jehovah that every word which He speaks must bind the conscience of the creature; and because, on the other hand, as felons under sentence of law, even the shadow of right to resist His will is lost to our guilty race.

If then God who is "rich in mercy" shall see fit to reveal a way of escape out of this ruin—if He shall, in the sovereignty of His grace, devise and propose a complete salvation, shall not the sinner be held answerable for his treatment of the truth which discloses it? If the testimony be rejected and the offered salvation be declined, does not the original rebellion assume the complexion of contumacy, and bring a superadded guilt upon the soul? The gospel comes with the announcement of free and sovereign grace; and the ingratitude which marks its rejection, stamps its own deep disgrace upon the heart which is capable of its baseness. The sinner who will not hear God's voice when He speaks of pardon and salvation, is simply mad. The most common prudence would teach him to embrace these proposals of mercy, and to throw his whole destiny upon the issues of Jehovah's truth.

I trust, my hearers, that you have been borne upon the current of this discussion to the conviction that the truth is ordained of God as the LAW TO THE INTELLECT. The admission however forces upon us the solemnity of our individual attitude towards this truth. It is a fearful responsibility to have a soul endowed with this power of intelligence, and to find ourselves in a world which is but a vast whispering gallery circling around with the voices of God's truth; voices which speak from the sparkling dew upon the grass beneath our feet, and from the sparkling star above our head—voices heard in the hoarse surge of the sea, and in the murmuring wind which dallies with the leaves and with the flowers—voices which come up from sea, earth and air, and wake the echoes of this vast temple of nature in which man should worship God. But more solemn still, if

God gathers us to Himself in the bosom of the cloud, and speaks to us face to face in His word, as of old to Moses upon the mount. Ah, how gentle is the tone which would win us with its love! How full of pathos, when His pity speaks of sin; and His grace, of the pardon which mercy has procured! How these precious utterances of the Gospel range over the breadth of our nature, and speak to all the necessities of the spirit!

What then is it our purpose to do with all this truth? Does the understanding recognize the authority with which it speaks? Does reason veil her face, and bow with the reverence of worship before the mysteries in which are hid all the treasures of grace? It is no small thing, that we come together every seventh day, and listen to these reverberations from the eternal world rolling upon the ear in the deep thunders of God's inspired truth. If, at this moment, any of you be smothering this truth in the silent but stubborn resistance of your unbelief,—I make the appeal to you, in the name and by the authority of this injured truth, to pause and consider. On this holy Sabbath, which throws itself between the weeks and jars the world into a momentary silence, I ask you to weigh the immense responsibility which the knowledge of God's truth brings with it. It is eternal like its author, you cannot kill it. Its authority is supreme, you cannot evade it. Woe, the day! when this truth shall burst from the cloud, and overwhelm the unbeliever in darkness forever! Sinner, did you ever think of it? "The blackness of darkness" is but the excess of light in the full revelation of the glory of God, which shall fill the soul, unprepared for its reception, with eternal blindness!

## XXVIII.

### JUSTICE, THE LAW OF THE CONSCIENCE.

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ROMANS II: 14, 15: "*For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, not having the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing, one another.*"

When we speak of man as a moral being, we mean that he is under government and law—not an automaton, whose delicate mechanism is moved by pressure from without—but a being intelligent and conscious, self-prompting and self-moving within his sphere, recognizing the spontaneity of his own actions, and to whom a clear sense of responsibility attaches. If the question arises what is essential to the nature of such a being, the answer is found not in any single faculty,—such as the understanding, or the affections, or the will, or the conscience—but in the complement of them all. Each is indispensable to the service and worship of Almighty God, and therefore necessary to the character of those by whom this homage is rendered. The understanding is required, to take in the truth through which God is revealed. The affections afford the motive power by which we are swayed; hence often compared to the wings of a bird beating the air, or to the sails of a ship filled with the breeze. The will as the determining faculty, gathering up everything in its final decision, becomes the immediate spring of the creature's activity. Whilst lying behind all these is the conscience; which judicially pronounces betwixt right and wrong, and seals upon the transgressor the sense of ill-desert and guilt.

This conscience is pre-eminently the moral faculty in man; and therefore, above all others, it is the organ of law. It is the pivot upon which all morality turns, and from which arises the sense of obligation and duty. For this reason, it becomes the differentiating property by which man is distinguished from the beast of the field. In the brute creation, for example, we discover something which, though we term it instinct, marvellously resembles thought. They have unmistakeable affections which, though embraced within a narrow circle, do certainly sway the external

actions. They develop that wonderful attribute of will, which even man, in the supremacy of his dominion, finds sufficiently hard to control. But we cannot detect in the brute the slightest approach to conscience—that secret power which witnesses to the rectitude or turpitude of human actions, and which with judicial authority fills the human spirit with the sense of approval or of blame. There may be, indeed, a certain training of the brute to a mechanical and artificial course, working through natural association upon its fears; but you can never implant, nor can you evoke, a recognition of obligation, nor a response to the idea of duty. There is nothing in the nature of the brute to which the feeling of responsibility can attach. There is the entire absence of what we call the conscience; which, as the moral faculty, is distinctively the organ of the law in man, in its double function of witness and judge pronouncing upon the propriety and impropriety of all that he feels and does.

But wherever in nature we discover a given organ, we know there are corresponding objects upon which its function may be performed. The eye, for example, would be placed uselessly in its socket, if myriads of objects without did not solicit its notice, and if the light were not afforded as the medium through which they might be seen. The co-ordination between the three renders vision one of our most constant and most diversified enjoyments; and it would be idle to discuss upon which of the three the joint result most depends. The intellect, again, would be only an encumbrance, if God had not set over against it His own immutable truth, with an authoritative revelation mediating between the two,—so that truth embraced by the understanding becomes our knowledge. Precisely in the same way, Conscience would wield a barren sceptre and assert its supremacy in vain, if the Divine rectitude were not appointed as its law. For as all moral distinctions have their origin in the nature of God, the Divine rectitude must be the standard to which conscience refers all its decisions. The sense of justice therefore which God has imbedded in the human soul,—and which, though often perverted and beclouded, can never be eliminated,—is but the echo of that justice which dwells among the high and necessary attributes of Jehovah Himself.

My object, this morning, will be to expand this simple thought. As in the preceding discourse I endeavoured to show the truth in its commanding power as the Law of the Intellect, so now I wish to exhibit **THE RIGHT** as being equally **THE LAW OF THE CONSCIENCE**. If in the one case, Jehovah brings out His immense thought and polarizes the human understanding, that like a true magnet it may always point to His truth

and find the magnetic meridian in which it shall securely rest:—so, in the other case, does the justice which dwells in God electrify the conscience which it finds in man; under the sanction of whose awful authority, it too becomes the judge in the lower earthly court, who shall try the causes and render the decrees to be adjudged and pronounced with deeper solemnity in the judgment of the last day. Are not the topics worthy of being conjoined? TRUTH, THE LAW OF THE INTELLECT; JUSTICE, THE LAW OF THE CONSCIENCE: which resolve easily, the one into the other when it is remembered that truth is but justice in our words, and justice is but truth in our deeds. How wonderful the unity in which all things are bound up in God, the centre from which all things radiate, and the circumference in which all things are contained! In Jehovah justice and truth eternally meet; each, in its turn, the regulative principle given to man as a being capable of knowledge and of action.

This judicial supremacy of conscience is founded, in the text, upon its being the interpreter of God's rectoral justice in the administration of human affairs. The first step in Paul's great argument upon justification through the imputed righteousness of another, is to conclude all men under condemnation of the law which they have transgressed. With the Jews, this law will, of course, be the law "written and engraven in stones," whose requirements are easily ascertained. With the Gentiles, this law will be "the law written in their hearts," interpreted by the operations of natural conscience. In either case the inexorable justice of God is recognized, which in the last day "will render to every man according to his deeds," (v. 6,) "for there is no respect of persons with God." (v. 11). The principle of the Divine procedure is then explicitly stated: "for as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law." (v. 12.) The text follows with the application of the principle to the whole Gentile world who "do by nature the things contained in the law," and "are thus a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." (vv. 14, 15.) There is therefore a law implanted in the nature of man, of which the conscience is the witness, the interpreter and the judge. The relation of God's inflexible justice to this conscience as its authoritative standard, I desire now to unfold and to enforce.

I. *A complete demonstration of this may be found in that image of God, in which man was originally created.* In the earliest of all records,

we read thus: "And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness." The next statement in the narrative presents this determination carried into effect: "So God created man in His own image—in the image of God created He him." (Gen. i: 26, 27.) This image defaced by sin, is restored by grace; for the Apostle speaks of "the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (Eph. iv: 24.) In almost identical language he speaks again of "the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him." (Col. iii: 10.) It is highly suggestive, that the holiness wrought within us by grace should be represented thus as the restoration of the Divine image; and the terms selected to denote this thought furnish the clue to the features in which this resemblance consists. My hearers, let us not glide indolently upon the surface of the inspired word; but let us pause upon the significance of those names by which God reveals Himself. When, from the pavilion within which He dwells, He flings down upon earth the words through which we are to form some notion of His absolute being and of His infinite perfections, there is a direct and solemn challenge of our attention. What conception then have we of the august Being who is announced to us under the names of Jehovah, I am that I am, the Eternal Father, the everlasting God, and the like? It will repay us to pause and analyse just here.

The first and most rudimental thought, thrust upon us by the force of the description, is that of God's original and necessary being. The thought is illimitable. But, in order that any other may exist, we are obliged to postulate a being from whom even in thought we cannot detach the notion of essential and underived existence. Surrounded by innumerable forms of created being, from the mote that floats in the sunbeam to the "angel" whom John saw "standing in the sun," we must assume an absolute Being as the source from which all contingent existence shall be derived. Our simplest notion, underlying every other which we have of God, is, that HE IS. Eternal, necessary, underived existence—an existence which so clings to the notion of a God that, with all our intellectual chemistry, it cannot be separated—this is the rudimental germ, which expands into the full, complex conception of the infinite Jehovah.

But what next? We ascend from the physical to the moral plane—from the existence to the rectitude of God. He not only IS, but He is HOLY; infinite, unchangeable, underived in the one, as in the other. In the Scriptures, holiness is ascribed to God in the same exclusive sense, with being itself—as the original and essential property of God alone, and

without which it is impossible even to think Him. "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy." (Rev. xv: 4.) Holiness may be a property of the creature, but then it is in him both derived and contingent. Just as with the creature's life, we can conceive of it as being lost; whilst in God it so exists as to be the source from which the moral nature of the creature is derived. GOD IS, and GOD IS HOLY—these are the two fundamental ideas which underlie the complex notion of a God, revealed to us as BEING, and as MORAL BEING.

Upon these two planes, then, we are to find that image of God in which man was at first created. There must be a natural, and also a moral, resemblance to God; and the former in order to the latter, as the basis on which it rests. Thus, "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, justice, holiness, goodness and truth,"—a Spirit, simple, uncompounded, indivisible, without body, parts or passions; and He creates us spirits—giving to man a soul, endowed with the high properties of intelligence and will, in which there is just enough resemblance to God to make the one a shadow of the other. To man is given the power to think, which is at least a faint reflection of the Divine reason. Man recognizes the right in its distinction from the wrong, even though it be only in the bitter struggle between the two in his own experience; which casts a dim shadow upon the earth of the consummate rectitude of the Divine will. The human heart heaves like the sea, with its tides of strong affection; in distant resemblance to Him whom the Scriptures best describe in the words, "God is love." In the possession of this simple, spiritual essence, the soul, capable of thought, knowledge, affection, purpose, design and action, we trace the natural image of God in man. Let it be noted also, with due wonder and worship, as making the shadow more like the substance which casts it, that God has stamped upon this soul the attribute of immortality. Though from its immateriality it be exempt from division and decay, yet because it is created it is destructible by the same power which brought it into being. In the constitution, however, which God has ordained, man's spirit is immortal. Stupendous truth! That which creation brought out of nothing, is rendered capable of endless existence—an existence, too, which is not only endless, but incapable of change! Is not this the shadow of the true? God throws the reflection of His eternity upon the soul of man, and renders it immortal!

So far then the natural image; which is also moral, in that man was created holy. The righteousness of the Divine nature is reflected in the rectitude of the human. "God hath made man upright," saith the



Preacher, "but they have sought out many inventions." (Eecl. vii: 29.) The soul was, in the beginning, perfect before God, in the integrity of all its powers. The understanding was filled with light; the heart was knit through all its affections to God as the supreme good; and the will bowed with the homage of its obedience to the authority of its lawgiver and judge. The natural image of God, consisting in the possession of an immortal soul with all its prerogatives and destinies, lays the foundation of the moral image in knowledge, righteousness and holiness. These terms could never have been predicated of any being, who was not first endowed with a spirit capable of development in these particulars. And now man, created in this two-fold image, is placed upon his trial; that, in the exercise of these faculties, and in the practice of these virtues, he may acquire a character capable of enduring without change throughout the ages of the future.

Is it not plain that conscience is indispensable to a nature upon which this image of God is stamped? Is it not absurd to speak of a moral nature, which is devoid of the moral faculty? How shall a creature be made in God's image, and yet be destitute of the power to recognize His holiness, or to have fellowship with Him in His rectitude? In the intuitions of conscience, man looks directly upon the holiness of God; and recognizes the image in which he was originally created, from which he has fallen by sin, and which it is the office and purpose of grace to restore to all the redeemed.

II. *The supremacy of conscience, as interpreter of God's inflexible justice, is seen from the fact that man is created under law.* Our popular science applies the term, law, to the processes of blind matter; but it is in a sense wholly figurative, if not indeed allegorical. Thus it speaks of the law of gravitation, of the law of cohesion, of the law of solids, of the law of fluids—in short of all the laws, which the detective science of chemistry with its subtle analysis uncovers to the view. I do not refer to this nomenclature in the spirit of criticism—much less, of censure. Science must have compendious terms, in which her large observations may be generalized. Only let it be understood that this term is borrowed from another and a higher sphere, and is used in a sense purely tropical. The laws of nature can only mean the uniform procedures of nature, with the annexed idea of a secret and mysterious power lying behind the observed facts to which their uniform occurrence must be referred. The whole process is however mechanical; and the terms, obedience and law, can only be applied metaphorically. Matter is dead and inert; it can only be operated

upon. It has no intelligence—it neither knows its creator, nor itself. It has no reflective faculty by which to adapt means to ends in contrivance and design. It has no property of will, through which to exercise choice and to determine its own action. You cannot predicate freedom of it, so that it shall be a proper subject of law. All that you can say, is that under the same conditions the same substances will always exhibit the same properties, or will undergo the same changes. This uniform sequence of events, science chooses to express under the imposing word, law; simply because law, in its proper sphere, must be constant in order that it may regulate and control. What this proper sphere is, you perceive as soon as you rise above matter to spirit. Here you meet with intelligence, to which law can address its precepts—and with will, to which law can address its sanctions. A being who is self-conscious and reflective, who is capable of being addressed by reason, and of being swayed by motives, who has the power of choice and is therefore invested with the control of his own conduct—such a being is the subject of law in its proper signification, and may appropriately be represented as obeying or transgressing.

Here then is man, created in the image of God, and therefore endowed with precisely these attributes, who is placed by His Maker under the jurisdiction of law. The question arises, is he competent to be a subject of government, without just such a judging faculty as the conscience? What, for example, shall he know of obedience or of sin, unless something within him responds to the *authority* which exacts the obedience and will vindicate itself against disobedience? In this, something more is required than bare intelligence. The relation to God as the ruler and judge must not only be *perceived*, it must be *felt*. Obedience must not only be recognized under the definition to the understanding, as conformity with the requirements of law; it must be seen in the beauty of its rectitude, and the glow of warm self-approval must diffuse itself through the spirit. Transgression must be seen in its deformity and shame, involving the feeling of blameworthiness and of guilt. It is this last which enters into the conception of *punishment*. I need not remind you that suffering is not punishment, but only an element in it. It must be retributive, in order to be penal. There must be an established connexion between the suffering and the previous conduct, to constitute it punishment. It must be judicially inflicted, with a view to vindicate a just authority which has been despised and resisted. Neither the joys of heaven, nor the tortures of hell, would be retributive, except as determined by the conduct and character of those to whom they are dispensed in the way of award.

Conscience therefore, as the organ of law, must interpret to us the justice and rectitude of the Divine Ruler, before we can compass the duty of obedience, or feel the blameworthiness of sin, or have that conviction of guilt which recognizes the penalty annexed to transgression. As subjects of God's government, conscience does respond to the righteousness with which it is administered; and pronounces the law to be holy, and "the commandment holy and just and good." (Rom. vii: 12.)

III. *It is upon this original conviction of inexorable justice, the whole doctrine of atonement rests.* This truth which is to the Gospel just what the sun is to the planetary system, the very eye which gives it expression and clothes it with life—shall I, my hearers, go into its detailed exposition? "God so loved the world," says the Master to Nicodemus, "that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii: 16.) But why must the love of God take this definite form? Why cannot He, whose nature is Love, open His heart at once and let out its broad affections upon a lost and guilty world? Why must this love dig for itself a channel through the obedience and death of one who suffers in the transgressor's stead? Hear how the Apostle sketches the outline of the Gospel: "for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness—that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Rom. iii: 23-26.) It is then because God is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, or to look upon iniquity," (Habak i: 13,) that He must punish transgression and sin. His necessary justice has annexed the penalty to disobedience, and His truth has proclaimed the decree "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Ezek. xviii: 4.) Therefore it is, "without shedding of blood is no remission." (Heb. ix: 22.) Grace does not consist in setting aside the law, either in the precept or the penalty; but in providing a righteousness which shall fulfil them both, through which the sinner may be justified forever. The whole work of human redemption founds therefore upon this essential justice and rectitude of Jehovah, in the administration of His law. Without this, the necessity for a Mediator would not exist; nor would grace have interposed the scheme by which "mercy and truth might meet together," or "righteousness and peace kiss each other," in sweet and blessed reconciliation. (Ps. lxxxv: 10.)

This is not all. Not only does the Gospel build upon law, and grace

enthroned itself upon the bosom of eternal justice; but *through the conviction of this justice as interpreted by conscience, the sinner himself appropriates the redemption of Christ by which he is saved.* You perceive at once that this view complements the other. The sense of justice in God demands an atonement for sin: the sense of justice in man recognizes the same necessity, and accepts the sacrifice which takes away the guilt. Look for a moment at the steps, by which the sinner ascends to saving faith. First of all, there is the work of the Holy Spirit in conviction, whereby the sinner is brought to feel his guilt. The conscience, which before was drugged to sleep, is roused to the discharge of its testimonial function. As a witness, it testifies against the actions of the sinner as contravening the authority which should have been respected and obeyed. Then, conscience, clothing itself with the ermine of justice, ascends the tribunal and judicially pronounces the sentence which fastens upon the soul the sense of guilt. It thunders out the anathema of the violated law, "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Gal. iii: 10.) Under the pressure of this woe, the sinner lies crushed before God. Neither pilgrimage, nor fasting, nor penance, nor will-worship of any kind, will avert the terrific doom. Conscience, as the organ of law, presses the guilty transgressor to the edge of the fatal precipice; its piercing voice utters the fearful cry of "blood." "blood," "without the shedding of blood is no remission."

Just then, what? Christ, His Cross, His bleeding sacrifice, His perfect atonement,—all is held up, by the Spirit, before the eyes which are so filled with despair. The revelation breaks over the soul, like the glory of heaven: God's holy and inexorable justice is met—the severe claims of a perfect law are all cancelled—the frightful debt of the sinner is paid by his surety. In the language of the half-idiot boy, the pierced hand of the Redeemer, with its trickling blood, passes over and smirches out the record of sins; so that when justice shall search for the accusation, it cannot see it under the blood. But in all this, conscience must do her work. Until she interprets the necessary justice of God, man's eye is blind to the need of a Redeemer; until she can feel this justice satisfied by the sacrifice upon the cross, there is no acceptance of the salvation after it has been wrought.

This may be worth a little illustration. What do we understand by the word, pardon, for example? I offend you, let me say. The moral faculty in you, which pronounces upon your conduct and fills you with shame, pronounces also upon my conduct and covers me with censure. You have no means of measuring my blameworthiness, except by the

warmth of your displeasure. After a little your resentment cools, and you find this and that to plead in extenuation of my fault; until at length you rise in the largeness of your generosity to its complete forgiveness. In all these changes of feeling, what have we but conscience laying the law of strict justice over against my conduct, both in the accusation and in the palliation? It is this identical operation of conscience, that carries the penitent sinner to the mercy seat, with the confession "I have sinned and done evil in thy sight." And when God, in the freeness of His grace, pronounces our pardon and draws us to Himself in peace,—how shall we feel the refreshment of pardon, unless conscience should reveal justice to us satisfied by the blood which has washed away the guilt? Whether therefore we regard the necessity for the atonement itself, or the power of the sinner to rest upon it, the whole depends upon the union of justice and mercy in God, and upon their affirmation by the human conscience in the exercise of its judicial function.

IV. *The progressive sanctification of the Christian is measured at every stage by the standard of God's holiness, as applied by an enlightened and tender conscience.* The instant conscience feels the need of redemption from the guilt of sin, it must equally recognize the need of sanctifying grace to deliver from its pollution. The God who is too holy to pardon without complete satisfaction to justice, is also too pure to lay the sinner in His bosom who has not been washed from his defilement. The conviction is as thorough in the one case, as in the other. The whole nature must be transformed. A Divine influence must sweep over every faculty in its turn. "The eyes of the understanding must be enlightened, to know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." (Eph. i: 18.) "The conscience must be purged from dead works, to serve the living God." (Heb. ix: 14.) The affections must be weaned from "the weak and beggarly elements," and be "set on things above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." (Col. iii: 1, 2.) The will must be subdued, until "every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." (II Cor. x: 5.) By the transfiguring power of Divine grace, the believer grows up at length to "a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (Eph. iv: 13.) But at every stage of the transformation, the Divine holiness is the standard; which it is the special function of the conscience to apply.

It is scarcely necessary to press the discussion further. If, in the first creation, God threw the shadow of His own likeness upon man in the sense of justice imbedded within the soul, of which conscience is the interpreter

—if as beings under law, there must be a judging faculty in every one of us which shall enforce the obligation of obedience—if the justice which is in man shall greet the justice in God, the one accepting the atonement which the other provides—and if, finally, there can be no development of holiness in the creature, which does not involve the application of a Divine measure by the conscience: then is it plain that this moral faculty finds its sphere in that eternal and infinite justice of God, which is the law of its action.

A subject like this, which presses upon obligation and duty at every point, is pregnant with the most practical and momentous issues.

In the first place, *the error is destroyed to its root, which denies the necessity of the atonement in adjusting the sinner's relations with God.* Unbelief cannot drive in deeper folly, than to cheapen the justice which lies at the foundation of government and law. The holiness of God is as absolute as His being. You cannot think the one away from Him, any more than the other. He is God, because He is holy." "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts—the whole earth is full of His glory." (Isa. vi: 3.) The justice in man, which is but the shadow of the justice in God, declares that the penalty of law cannot be withdrawn. If there be any solution of this dark problem, it is in the proclamation of grace, that "God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself; \* \* \* "for He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (II Cor. v: 19, 21.)

In the next place, *what have we to do with that bald system of natural religion which ignores the fact of sin altogether,* and babbles incessantly about the grandeur of man? Human nature is grand, when restored to the image of God which is now defaced by sin. Until then it is a temple in ruins; moving pity to tears, as it looks upon the wreck of a glory that once was. It is not by the power of genius and thought, nor yet by the passion of mere desire, that man mounts up to heaven. There must be a meekness for its service and its joy. Heaven would be hell to the unholy; for only "the pure in heart shall see God." (Mat. v: 8.) If you could place the unwashed sinner in very contact with God upon His throne, by the mere instinct of guilt would he shrink from that consuming holiness, and sink by the weight of his own corruption lower and lower into the pit that is bottomless. It is a dreadful thought, that the brightness of Jehovah's presence would wring from the guilty soul the prayer to escape—that even "the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels" would be wel-

comed as a place of retreat from "the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." Dreadful alternative! When hell, with all its horrors, is sought as a refuge from contact with that holiness which brings to the sinner a more consuming torment!

Once more—*this instinct of justice in the human soul, how solemn its protest against oppression and wrong*, with which the history of earth has been dripping ever since the first murder to the present time! What a pledge does it give of that final reckoning, "when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ!" (Rom. ii: 16.) What power of endurance it gives in seasons of reproach and suffering, to lean solidly against the judgment throne; and wait for the coming vindication, which shall clear the aspersions, and avenge the wrongs of the righteous! And more than all, *what assurance of complete salvation is afforded through the redemption of the soul by Christ!* The safety, and therefore the glory of the gospel, is that our salvation is founded upon the immutable justice of Jehovah; and that law itself makes out the title to "the 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 ready to be revealed in the last time." (I Pet. i: 4, 5.) This it is that gives to the believer "the peace that passeth all understanding,"—the "peace which is able to keep our hearts and minds by Christ Jesus," the peace which swells at length into joy in the upper temple.

## XXIX.

### LOVE, THE LAW OF THE HEART.

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1 JOHN, IV; 16: "*And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*"

Those who are familiar with our current literature, will easily recall a remarkable book by one who deserves, in his later writings at least, to rank as the most philosophical of our English novelists—in which the wild attempt is made to sketch the career of a being without a heart. This fantastic creature is represented as possessing the most exquisite animal organization, singularly alive to all the pleasures and to all the pains derived through the senses—as being endowed also by nature with an intellect sharp and clear, and brilliant as the diamond—but without a heart. This description is not to be understood in a relative sense, as we sometimes employ the expression of one whose sensibilities are blunted, or of one whose social instincts are feeble—but that he was absolutely destitute of all affections and of all passions, save such as he might share with the brutes who are destitute of reason. The object of this "Strange Story" was to portray the enormous crimes into which such a being, moving amidst the complex relations of human life, would, without malice and without remorse, necessarily plunge. The book is profoundly suggestive; and no thoughtful reader can rise from its perusal, without being impressed with the office which the heart fulfils in the economy of life, and with the necessity of bringing it under the guidance and control of safe and authoritative principles.

This reference opens to you, my hearers, the topic of this discourse. I have already attempted to exhibit the binding authority of God's revealed truth, as the Law of the Intellect—and then the perfect righteousness of the Divine nature, as the Law of the Conscience. It will follow in appropriate order to present THE DIVINE LOVE, revealed to us through our incarnate Redeemer, AS THE LAW OF THE HEART.

I. *Consider man as necessarily existing in social relations, all which require the exercise of the affections.* The fact is, that we are born in the midst of relationships. The little infant upon the breast, drinking its first joy from the light of its mother's eye, soon understands its earliest relation



to be that which it sustains to her who bore it. Then cuddling in the nest by the side of brothers and sisters who keep it warm, it learns the tie by which it is bound to these, the fraternal relation under the shadow of the parental. As soon as it comes to exercise its independent choice, the child forms its own friendships amongst companions at school; multiplying and, it may be, changing these—until, at maturity, the heart shoots forth its sweetest and strongest affections, like the tendrils of a vine; and weaves new relations, of which itself shall be the centre, and about whom others in their turn shall constantly circle.

This power is most remarkable in man to assume throughout life new relations, charged with new responsibilities, and filled with new affections. The process never ceases, until the light of life is extinguished in the choke-damp of the grave. No sooner have we passed our novitiate before the world, than we are clothed with solemn public trusts; which bind us to society by new bonds, and call into play affections and emotions of a totally different kind from those of the domestic circle. The accumulation of duties, and the variety of affections, which result during a long life, would be a sufficient marvel of itself; how much is this increased by the fact that the one is borne without any sense of oppression or fatigue—and the other, without the experience of anything like collision or inconsistency between feelings which are so diverse. Through the expansive power of the human heart, new relations are formed and new affections are excited, whilst the old are neither displaced nor rendered obsolete. They are distributed in concentric circles, and find a ready adjustment in their own sphere—the earlier affections being the nucleus around which they naturally crystallize. The heart sweeps from its centre, over all these circles in their turn; and finds no jar between the duties in each, simply because they are clearly defined by different boundaries and cannot be contradictory. The love of the child for the parent does not interfere with that of the brother to the sister; nor does the affection of the father for his offspring prevent a broader love for the country which is the common mother of them both. The diversified friendships of human life may intersect at a thousand points; and so long as one is not projected upon another as its competitor and rival, occupying the same space and mutually exclusive, there is found no want of reconciliation in the affections called into play, nor in the functions which they are expected to discharge.

Not only is man possessed of a certain ubiquity in occupying these different relations at once, but through the interlacing of these he obtains the education by which his moral nature is developed. Separate a child at birth from all intercourse with the race, and how much could you teach

it? Without pausing to determine the amount of abstract knowledge it might acquire by didactic instruction—which would be itself an interesting and somewhat intricate problem—it is perfectly clear there can be no cultivation of the moral sensibilities without social contact. History affords melancholy illustrations of this, when under the influence of a fatal asceticism men flee to the solitude of the desert, or of some monkish cell, in the vain hope of being holier through this seclusion from the temptations of the world, and by this solitary communion with their own thoughts. The result in every case has been the wreck of that holiness which they sought to stimulate, the destruction of that virtue which they meant to build up. Even Jehovah, let it be said in the muffled tones of reverence and awe, finds His blessedness in the social communion of the adorable Trinity. Though One, he is not solitary. The three equal Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, hold intimate communion in the mystery of the God-head, and have a mutual joy in beholding the Divine glory reflected from each. Man therefore, made in the image of his Maker, can find the perfection and joy of his nature only in the practice of social virtues, and in the play of social affections. That nature rises in rebellion against the violence which would repress its instincts, and imprison it in complete isolation from intercourse with its own kind. In this deep and constant solitude, mildew and decay creep over the heart and turn it into a melancholy ruin; like some ancient abbey whose grey walls are covered with the lichen and moss, and from which no sound issues but the howl of the dog or the hooting of the owl.

Hence it is, that God flings every one of us right into the battle of life. We are born, and we die, in the bosom of relationships; and the whole parenthesis of life is filled with duty and with love constantly exacting upon us. We must jostle each other upon these highways. There must be motion and clash. In the friction of daily intercourse, the sensibilities must be awakened, and the affections stirred. "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." (Prov. xxvii: 17.) The interlacings of society bind us all up in a joint communion. The competitions of business, the constant call for mutual toleration, the combinations in which we are united for the prosecution of Titanic enterprises, the friendships which are struck out like sparks of fire in this clash of interest—all the antagonisms and repulsions, no less than the attractions and complications of society, constitute that discipline in which man finds his education. And if here and there one falls between the wheels of the ponderous machinery, and is ground to powder under the temptations and solitudes of life, let the offset be found in the massive virtue which is developed in

others, and in the heroic achievements by which men are so often made immortal upon earth.

Two facts challenge attention just here : *first*, that all human relations have their genesis in love ; since no form of society exists, which does not trace itself back to the Family as the source from which it is drawn : *secondly*, that it is the principle of love in man which diffuses him over all these circles ; and without which it would not be possible to occupy his place in any one of them. The circles multiply and widen, until they strike the boundaries of time—and are taken up to spread themselves over the boundless eternity to come. How shall the heart move securely in its orbit, with complex revolutions in so many circles around so many centres—except by the attraction of a superior Love, like the sun among the planets, holding all other love in allegiance to itself? The same Jehovah, who reveals His truth to the understanding and renders man capable of knowledge—who discloses righteousness to the conscience, and renders man capable of virtue—reveals His infinite goodness, and renders man capable of affection. Love, as it resides in God, infinite and eternal, becomes the law of the human heart—the standard and the measure by which all its affections shall be tried, both as to their quality and degree.

II. *The importance of the affections, and the need of a law for their control, will appear from the fact that no faculty of our nature can be exercised without bringing them into play.* I had occasion two sabbaths ago, to dwell upon the unity of the human soul and the co-ordination of its various powers. I will not repeat, further than is necessary to bring the fact distinctly to your notice. There is the understanding, which deals with truth and is the organ of knowledge. There is the conscience, which deals with right and is the organ of justice. There is the æsthetic faculty, which deals with the beautiful and is the organ of taste. As the complement of all these, we have the heart which deals with the good, and is the organ of love. The last is as indispensable to the integrity of man's constitution, as any of the others. These powers, let it be noted, are bound together in the unity of the soul, as the different forms in which its activity is displayed ; and therefore no one of them can be employed without the co-operation of all. It might be worth the trial, to see whether it be possible to think with vigor upon any subject, without a greater or less glow of feeling. You cannot rub two sticks of wood together without producing fire ; and can there be this friction of thought, without a corresponding development of latent heat? We find in this fact the solution of a practical difficulty often presented in Christian experience. One will say to you with profound sadness in his tones, " I am afraid that my reli-

gious exercises are too exclusively intellectual: I admit the truth and yield to it the full consent of my reason—but do not experience those lively emotions which should correspond with the strength of my convictions." Is there not a fallacy in all these self-accusations of a penitent and believing soul? Has not God so bound together the mind and the heart, that the movement of the one will be followed by the excitation of the other? It may be that in neither of the two has the action been gracious in its character. This will depend entirely upon the agency of the Holy Ghost. But when this blessed Person puts forth His power upon the soul, is not the correlation of its faculties still preserved in the necessary connexion of thought and feeling? And when both exist, is not the law still enforced by which they are determined to some definite and formal expression in outward action?

There is a species of trinity in man. He has mind and can think. He has a heart which throbs with affection and desire. He has a will which puts forth its choice, and becomes the spring of all his activity. And where the law of connexion is not contravened, thought tends to feeling, and feeling to action, in every case. The wonderful philosophy of the Gospel is seen in its practical recognition of this co-ordination between the powers of the human soul. In the urgency of its command to believe on the Lord Jesus, it calls upon the sinner to embody in the act of faith whatever knowledge and feeling may happen to exist; which in their turn will be increased by the reaction of the effort to give them utterance in the life.

The importance of the affections, as a constituent of man's nature, will appear further from the fact that through them he is aroused to action. If motion shall depend more immediately upon the decision of the will, this agency is at last rather instrumental than causative. The real seat of power lies in the affections. Were man endowed only with intelligence, he would be a creature simply of contemplation. Truth might spread its boundless panorama before him, and the mind, like the eye, might look forth upon the varied scenery; but it would be without a pulse of emotion. The relation of parts to the whole might be perceived, and the unity of the landscape might be recognized; but it would be with a cold, intellectual vision. There would be no sense of beauty stealing over the spirit with its insinuation of a most subtle pleasure, unless he were equipped with the faculty of taste. Without this friction of emotions and desires, man must abide in the stagnation of repose forever—like an image of stone, exquisite in sculpture, but silent and unimpassioned as the marble from which it is chiselled. The Divine wisdom is singularly illustrated in the

correlation of our faculties, by which the exercise of any one shall roll the tidal-movement through them all. As the waters of the sea, by some mysterious ground-swell from beneath, roll with their tumbling waves upon the shore; so the fountains of feeling and desire are broken within us at the touch of truth, and we are borne upon the strong current of the affections to this line of conduct or of that. Thus man becomes the self-acting being that he is; conscious of the spontaneity of his own movements; with which the sense of personal responsibility is, of necessity, so closely attached. Because he has a heart, he moves upon the plane appointed by Jehovah as the sphere of his activity. Like a charged battery, it sends forth its secret influence and electrifies the being who else would drowse in eternal repose, and turns him from a life of contemplation to a life of action.

If then the heart performs this necessary function, does it not require a law for its guidance equally with any other faculty of our complex nature? This law, too, must be precisely adapted to that which it controls. Truth, for example, must be the law of the mind, because the mind moves only in the sphere of knowledge, and truth is its natural object. Taste deals only with the beautiful, because this is the sphere in which alone it can move. Conscience deals with the right, because it is the organ of that justice which alone can be its law. In like manner, the heart deals only with the good, and can be satisfied and measured only by the Divine love. "There be many that say, who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." (Ps. iv: 6, 7.)

III. *The endless growth in the affections, outstripping all earthly relations, proves the Divine Love to be their measure and their goal.* I have already commented upon the diffusive property in human love, which easily spreads itself over the various relations we sustain in life. This power of indefinite expansion of course involves the capacity for endless growth; yet the two are sufficiently distinct to be considered apart. Let it be observed then, that the affections, in this particular, only obey the law which Providence assigns to our other faculties. The infant, in its cradle, passes through the same intellectual processes with the philosopher who is making his largest generalizations. There must be a moment when its first observation is made, and the second, and the third. A step must then be taken a little in advance; when it shall institute its first comparison, and frame its first judgment. With the accumulation of these materials, the mind is pushed, as by the force of instinct, to arrange and to

classify—until its conclusions are embodied in certain principles satisfactory to its little reason, precisely as with the man of science who stands upon the topmost pinnacle of human knowledge. Undoubtedly, these inductions will be crude enough at first, and the conclusions often false. The classification will turn upon outward resemblances, which a more correct science will afterwards displace by a classification founded upon secret affinities, hitherto undetected. But the understanding moves by the same law, and knowledge is acquired by the same method, in the child as in the philosopher. It is only as the mind advances upon this constant line, that it grows; and by this normal growth alone, is it possible for the child to develop into the sage. Precisely under the same rule of exercise and growth, must we place the affections of the heart. Human life becomes thus an expanding lesson in love. Every throb of true affection towards any object, enlarges the capacity to love. The greater the number of those whom we bring within the circle of our affections, the more are we able to enlarge the circle and to take in the objects that are beyond. This is God's way of teaching us the holy art of loving: expanding the affections through these finite relations—then graciously transforming them, and lifting them to the comprehension and embrace of Himself as the chief good.

It is easy to trace the principles by which we ascend. Every man, who analyzes his experience at all, is conscious of this growth in the heart, in consequence of which no earthly object can exhaust its power to love. If it were not so, we would never be able to put on new relations or to extend our love in new directions. Just as all the forms of earthly knowledge are finite, and the mind reaches the limit and yearns after what is beyond: so all human relations are finite relations, and the joy arising in them is a finite joy; and the heart overflows them all, and spreads out in a broader flood through channels that are deeper. All this is immensely typical. The finite in its unsatisfactoriness, is suggestive of the infinite: the finite in its successive enlargements, is the ladder upon whose rounds we ascend towards the infinite. Is it not the law of every love which is true, that it takes the poison of selfishness more and more out of the heart, and that we love more largely and generously to the end? What is needed but Divine Grace to transfigure and sanctify the love, which has passed through this large education, in order to lift it into the sphere where God is unveiled as the satisfying portion of the soul? When the finite has been exhausted, what remains but the infinite either to be known or loved? Just as the understanding bounds along the curve of the finite, gathering momentum to shoot off, at length, upon its

own tangent, until it reaches the infinite—just as the conscience is dissatisfied, until it can translate the nature of God Himself, and find in it the absolute rectitude which shall be the standard of all duty—just as the taste searches through all typical forms of beauty, ever sweeping upward through stars and suns until it folds its wings and gazes upon the beauty that is in holiness and God—precisely so, the heart learns to project itself beyond the finite and contingent, and craves the infinite in goodness. All are bound together under the same necessity: the intellect, to crave the infinite in truth—the conscience, the infinite in rectitude—the taste, the infinite in beauty—and the heart, the infinite in goodness. The whole nature given to man is evermore enlarging in its capacities; and by the renewing power of the Holy Ghost, it is at length fitted for the communion and enjoyment of God in His glory.

IV. It will form an appropriate conclusion of this discourse, to consider *the provision which is made in the Gospel of Christ to satisfy this ever craving necessity of love in the human soul.* If all nature be a type—so that, from a spear of grass to the most intense longing of human desire, we understand nothing aright save as it interprets God to our thought—then surely these affections can be met only by a personal revelation of Jehovah to the heart of man. This is the glory of the Gospel—that it discloses a personal God, in personal relations with His creatures; attracting them to Himself, by the exhibition of His supreme goodness in the gift of eternal salvation.

“God is Love:” and that we may be like Him, He is ever saying to us—love. He gives to us the wife of our youth, and says: “in this sweetest of earthly ties, learn what it is to love.” We toss our first born into the air with a father’s pride, and the instinct of trust overmasters in the child the sense of its peril. In the wild joy which finds expression in the glee of both, God is teaching again the great lesson of love to man on earth. Lest by repetition it should grow stale, see how God freshens the stream of human affection as it flows on to the close of human life; diversifying the relations, and multiplying the objects—love passing from children to children’s children—spreading over church and country, until it overtakes the world in the breadth of universal philanthropy. In each change, the love is more and more unselfish; and in each modification, it has a relish and flavor of its own. Thus the heart is rendered mellow, and retains the sweetness of its love; till death closes the scene upon earth, and the educated heart expands with higher and holier charities in the world to come.

In order that these affections may be transferred to God Himself, to

whom all these lower and typical forms of love have ever pointed, He must be disclosed as a Person. Hence the Gospel rises in its teachings far above either science or philosophy. It is not enough to know Him as

“ The great First Cause, least understood ;”

nor yet as the secret force lying behind the screen of nature, and giving activity to all her procedures. We must know Him in the personal relations in which He stands to us as our Ruler and Redeemer, “ our Father in Heaven,” “ from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift,” and in whom we are to find at last our portion and our joy. The Gospel unfolds to us not only His personal subsistence and relations, but the infinite excellency of His nature in all of its glorious attributes; and crowns the whole with revealing the unspeakable mystery of the Incarnation. Thus Jehovah is brought within the range of our thought and within the embrace of our affections. We might apprehend God in the distinctness of His personal being, and yet the awful stretch of His infinitude might turn the love of Him into a vague and unappeasable longing. We might stand upon the lip of that boundless sea which divides the finite from the infinite, and our intense yearnings might yield at last only to disappointment and despair. But in the Gospel we behold “ God in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself ”—not only assuming our nature and standing upon our plane, but redeeming our souls from death by the sacrifice of the cross. He is nigh to us, and we touch Him. There are sensibilities and affections by which we can knit to Him as our blessed Lord and Head. He is not only revealed to us an object of love, but provision is made for fastening this love upon Him; and we can exclaim “ the desire of our soul is to thy name and to the remembrance of thee:” (Isa, xxvi: 8,) “ whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee!” (Ps. lxxiii: 25.) In Jesus Christ, God is revealed to us in His whole nature of love—love exhibited in all the forms which it can assume—love, solving the problem of human guilt—love restoring the lost, cleansing the defiled, and opening the portals of heaven to those who shall sit down in the light of its joy forever.

How the argument grows upon the sinner, for the acceptance of the gospel! It comes with its revelation of truth, and satisfies the reason; with the disclosure of righteousness, to meet the needs of the conscience; with the utterances of infinite love, to answer all the cravings of the heart. What other system sweeps thus over the breadth of man's nature, with the purpose of meeting it at every point with what it may need just there?



Its perfect adaptation to human wants is the overwhelming evidence of its divine origin. Only He who knows man as the workmanship of his own hands, could have so precisely taken the measure of our necessities. Only He who created man in His own image, could thus have found in Himself the substance which answers to the shadow. It is the consummation of folly to accept of anything in its stead. What can science or philosophy tell us of God's ultimate purpose in the creation of the world? What can they reveal of God's moral relations to our race? What can they testify as to the methods of His grace or the counsels of His love? Shall man turn away from the Revealer, who comes from the bosom of the Father to tell us what we could never otherwise know? Shall man turn away from the Redeemer, who comes to lift the curse and sweetly to reconcile us with God? Shall man reject it as incomprehensible, when it finds its interpretation in the very wants which are satisfied by it? Can anything lie closer to us, than this gospel of the Son of God? or speak with a sweeter appeal to every sense and power of the soul? What a proof of insensibility, that men can be indifferent to that which has so perfect a claim upon their regard! Alas, it is the old plaint of two thousand years ago: "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." (John i: 10, 11.) "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (John iii: 19). Must it be in all the generations to come, that Christ shall continue to say with such unutterable pathos, "ye will not come to me that ye might have life!"

## XXX.

### OBEDIENCE, THE LAW OF THE WILL.

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JAMES I: 22: "*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*"

The general obligation of obedience is here stated with great emphasis. Indeed, the very design of James in this epistle, is to set forth what may be termed the doctrine of practice. Paul, for example, elaborates the principles upon which the gospel rests, with only an incidental and inferential application of these to the conscience. James, on the contrary, gives himself with a blunt directness to the assertion of these principles as the necessary elements of the christian life. There is no contradiction between the two, as some have supposed. It is the same gospel in both, approached from different sides. Paul's distinctive business is with grace as it lies in the doctrine; James' particular concern is with grace as it lies in the experience. Paul is the theologian, James is the casuist. Paul constructs the science, James points out its uses. Yet they both cross the separating line enough to show that they are entirely at one in Christ Jesus. Paul, in the sweep of his argument, will sometimes gather up the doctrine and hurl it upon the conscience with a directness and vigor which James could not hope to surpass. Again, James will pause in his exhortation to lay the basis of doctrine, with a precision not inferior to that of Paul.

A fine illustration is afforded in the context. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures." (vv. 17, 18). Could Paul himself state more explicitly the sovereignty of Divine grace, or the necessity of the new birth in order to salvation? Yet see how the practical James fences both against Antinomian perversion: "but be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway

forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whosoever looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." (vv. 22-25.) Here then James lays his doctrine of practice side by side with Paul's doctrine of faith: "and the reconciliation between the two is given by Paul himself, when he defines the faith by which we are justified as the faith which worketh by love." (Gal. v: 6). Nay, it is anticipated in the Gospels, in that striking phrase so often employed, "doing the truth." (John iii: 21; 1 John i: 6).

By this exposition, I am led directly to the last topic in this series of Discourses, to-wit: OBEEDIENCE AS THE LAW OF THE WILL, the definite form in which its energy shall be expressed.

I. The path will be opened into this discussion by dwelling a little upon THE ESSENTIAL ACTIVITY OF MAN'S NATURE; the consideration of which is necessary to complete the view taken in the preceding Discourses. The survey of all the powers with which man is endowed, compels the conclusion that God designed him for action.

1. *This will appear*, in the first place, *from the very nature of the soul*. We know nothing either of matter or spirit, save from their properties: and perhaps the fundamental characteristic of the latter is that of *self-action*. Matter is inert, and is moved upon from without. True, God has displayed His wisdom and power by imprisoning within it certain forces; but these are held in equilibrium, so as to be in a state of repose. It is not until you disturb this balance by the intrusion of a foreign influence, that you witness the peculiar behavior in the properties of matter which it is the office of science to disclose. The calmness of this sabbath morn, for example, arises from the antagonism of forces which are quiescent simply because they are neutralized. Let this equilibrium be disturbed but for an instant, and the tornado, which but a few days since swept over a neighboring town, unroofs our dwellings and levels them to the ground.

But when you turn from matter to spirit, you observe not only that it is possessed of amazing energies, but that the development of these is spontaneous. It moves forward by an action from within itself, and with a consciousness of its own freedom and power. Indeed the contrast between the two is presented in our complex organization. For when the body sleeps, the dreams which we indulge prove the mind to be still in action. Through the locking up of the senses, the spirit's communication with the outward world may be cut off; but the ceaseless activity of mind

is shown through those mental processes which even sleep cannot interrupt, and which are sometimes as vivid as the thoughts by day. As soon therefore as you touch the spiritual part of man's nature, you find that which is essentially active, and which is always conscious of the spontaneity of its own movement. When we rise above man to beings who are still more spiritual, we discover an activity more conspicuous, because unembarrassed by the flesh; "who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire." (Heb. i: 7.) We ascend at length to Him who is "before all things and by whom all things consist;" and postulate a God who neither slumbers nor sleeps, whose essential life is the source of all activity in Himself and in the creature. You remember that word of Christ in which there is so much of quiet majesty, "my Father worketh hitherto, and I work;" (John v: 17), in which He puts Himself upon the plane of equality with the Father, and affirms His absolute divinity. But the point of comparison is that necessary activity which, in the highest sense, is the attribute of Him who is the Supreme Spirit: "God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth." (John iv: 24.) Just so far then as man gives evidence of a soul, do you find that God from the beginning intended him to be a creature of action.

2. This is further shown from *the tendency in thought and feeling to concrete into the external act, which is the natural product of both.* Here is man endowed with the faculty to know, placed in a world whose startling phenomena like shocks from a Leyden jar rouse the dormant mind to vigorous exercise. Thoughts multiply with a fecundity which would be oppressive, were it not for the marvellous facility of framing themselves into propositions and judgments—thus condensing into knowledge, the mind's furniture forever. The intellectual machinery once set in motion can be arrested by no earthly power, and the activities of the day are reproduced in the illusions of sleep by night. But we scarcely begin to wonder at this productiveness of thought, before we strike a greater marvel. This mental friction has kindled a fire which sets the heart aglow. Though a man should think in ice, yet science tells us there is latent heat in the cold icicle hanging from the eaves of a house; and all history testifies to the reserved power which lies in those silent men of thought, who at length burst from their quietude and like pyramids of fire set the world ablaze with their energy,

This leads me at once to the greatest mystery of the whole—all this thought and emotion flowing, through a decision or choice of the will, into some external action which stands before the eye the embodiment and

representative of both. What mean these mute, yet expressive gestures of the body, if they be not the natural signs for the interpretation of thought? And this wonderful endowment of human speech by which, through arbitrary and conventional sounds, we give bodily form and shape to our thoughts and desires—what is the significance of it, except that God did not mean thought to be always silent? Man was intended for action; and hence this mysterious necessity to translate what is within; this strange compulsion in man to produce himself out of himself—visibly represented to his own eye, and to the eye of others, in that which is the concrete embodiment of thought, passion, desire and will.

3. The proof of man's essential activity is almost complete, *when you observe him placed in the bosom of a thousand relations.* Constituted for action, as we have already seen, we discover the sphere in which this activity must be displayed. He is not placed upon an insulated stool with glass feet, to sever all connection with the earth upon which he stands. On the contrary, innumerable threadlike ties bind him to the race of which he forms a part; and in working out the problem of human history, each must be an integer in the equation—a unit in the vast total, without which it could not be reached. Man, as he moves, touches the secret wires which run through life in every direction, and gather to their centre at the throne of God.

What are we obliged to infer from these adaptations of man to his place in the social sphere? Born in a nest of relationships, he abides in them until death; nay, he multiplies them by his own choice, or else under the pressure of his surroundings, as they change from day to day. Yet, he is fitted by nature to fill these varied relations, just as clearly as the bird is fitted for the element in which it soars, or the fish for that in which it swims. Created by his Maker a free spirit, action is the necessity of his being; and therefore every faculty tends to express itself in outward form. Thought glides into feeling—feeling concretes into the visible and representative act—and the being who is under this law of development, finds himself in the associations which stimulate these tendencies, and draw them out in their manifestations. If the proof of design is not apparent here, then it cannot be inferred from any of the marvellous adjustments in the natural world. The being who finds himself in a net-work of relationships, through which he has the power to move, is shown by his fitness to the place that he was intended to fill it with all the activity which belongs to his nature.

4. The culmination of proof on this point, is found in *the sense of personal responsibility in man to the justice and law of God.* Would that I

had the power to represent the majesty, and yet the practicalness, of this suggestion! Consider it well, and what can be more solemn than the necessity which is upon us to think? And then, the equal necessity which is upon us to feel? And then, the logical compulsion upon us to act? All three moving in their respective spheres with the silent and resistless energy which characterizes all the operations of nature. The earth makes no noise, whilst it spins upon its axle, nor yet when it sweeps in a grander orbit around the sun; yet all the planets yield unresistingly to that power of attraction which God has made the law to every particle of matter throughout the universe. So man, in obedience to that law of connexion established between the faculties of the soul, is evermore passing through the process by which thought and emotion crystallize into acts, which make up the history of his life. Whether he reek of it or no—to borrow a conceit from the ancient Schoolmen, the soul is perpetually throwing off the shadowy forms of itself. Thoughts, affections, activities—taking embodiment and shape in the words we breathe, in the desires we feel, in the deeds we perform—all bearing a shadowy resemblance to the nature from which they spring, going up before us to the solemn judgment, and standing there the silent witnesses of what we have been, and of what we are!

Great God, can it be true? These images of ourselves, produced out of ourselves, shall they confront us there? Shall these mysterious shadows of our own life be cast upon the curtain of the Judgment? Shall our very thoughts take shape before us, to tell the universe exactly what we are? No wonder that under this self-revelation before the Omniscient Judge, "every mouth shall be stopped and all the world become guilty before God." (Rom. iii: 19.) Ah, my hearers, what shall we do in that day of exposure, if there be not a covering for our guilt? How shall we endure the confusion and the grief, if there be no "Days-man" to throw the mantle of His righteousness over our shame, and hide it from sight forever?

II. Perhaps it has not been necessary to submit these proofs of the *essential activity of man's nature*. Yet what is admitted without hesitation may profitably be held under arrest, if only to deepen the conviction of the truth. I wish now to show how THE GOSPEL ADDRESSES ITSELF TO HIS ACTIVITY, IN THE OBEDIENCE WHICH IT EXACTS OF THE WILL. This, you perceive, completes the circuit, and puts Christianity in direct connexion with every department of the soul. We have Truth informing the reason, Justice directing the conscience, Love actuating the heart, and finally Obedience expressing the energy of the will. Viewed from these four points of the compass, man will be recognized as capable at once of knowledge, of duty, of desire, and of action.

1. *This may be inferred from the fact that the Gospel speaks so directly to the understanding and the heart.* This consideration is simply initial, and gives the advantage of starting from the lowest plane. Upon the supposition that no command can be found in the Scriptures laying its authority upon the will, still the voice which speaks to the other powers speaks of necessity to this. I could not be asked to stoop to an admission lower than this; and yet with this conceded, it is clear how the Gospel lays its hand upon all the active powers in man. All those immense propositions respecting God, eternity, and the soul, coming by direct revelation from heaven, arouse and feed the intellect until man lifts his head above the stars, and holds communion with the angels in glory. Throughout the ages, too, in the great Hereafter, this truth will expand before us in the disclosures to be made of Jehovah in the splendor of His majesty, and in the tenderness of His love. Just so far then does the Gospel provide, both here and hereafter, for all the activity into which this knowledge will at length transmute itself. In like manner, the affections of the heart are stirred, when the Divine holiness is seen embosomed in grace—as the cloud which tempers its brightness to the human gaze. God is revealed to us in the tender relations of His covenant as the Father and portion of His people, and we are taught to “love Him who first loved us,” I John iv: 19.)

If then the Gospel did nothing more than to excite the affections by presenting an object infinitely worthy of their embrace, these affections tend, as I have shown, to express themselves in outward acts—revealing man's nature on its active side, as distinctly as on its intellectual, or its emotional. The three are so bound together that, without any special injunction of obedience, it would be implied in all that the Gospel reveals either to the understanding or the heart.

2. *The practical faith which the Gospel demands, appeals directly to the human will.* It cannot be necessary to remind you how this call to immediate faith in the Redeemer sounds from every page of the sacred word. The one, simple direction to every sinner, is “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” (Acts xvi: 31.) Under every form of language, it is urged upon the sinner as the one thing to be done. Even the Old Testament economy, when we have the key to unlock the meaning of its types and shadows, points through them all to that faith in Christ which is more definitely expounded in the New Testament. “Before faith came,” says the Apostle, “we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed; wherefore

the law was our school-master to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." (Gal. iii: 23, 24.) In truth, as may be seen from the tenor of Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, all the institutions of Moses served for the construction of a language,\* in which the doctrines of redemption by sacrifice, and of sanctification by the Holy Ghost might be revealed to the faith of the Church.

But this faith by which the sinner is justified and saved, is the obedience of the will to the great command of the Gospel, and draws upon the whole activity of our nature. It is more than belief, or the mere assent of the mind to certain verbal propositions. It involves equally the affections of the heart and the determinations of the will, in the exercise of that trust which is really its essence. "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" asks the Eunuch: "if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest"—is the reply of Philip. (Acts viii: 36, 37.) Hear too the explicit testimony of Paul: "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. x: 9, 10.) It is under the force of these and similar testimonies, that our Standards define saving faith both as a grace and an act: a grace, as the principle is implanted by the Holy Spirit in the new birth; (Eph. ii: 8,) an act, as it is performed in the use of our rational faculties. (John i: 12.) The Shorter Catechism gives this answer to the 86th question: "faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as He is offered to us in the Gospel." True faith then, under any definition of it, includes that operation of the will in which obedience is yielded to the claims of God as our redeemer, and to all the conditions upon which our salvation is suspended. In its fundamental requisition, therefore, the Gospel draws upon the whole nature of man, as a being of action.

I cannot dismiss this topic without recalling to your attention a thought, not sufficiently enlarged upon in the discourse of last Sabbath. I refer to the wonderful philosophy of the Gospel, in the urgency with which it presses upon the sinner the duty of immediate faith in the Redeemer. There is not a verse in the Bible which turns the inquirer back, to ascertain whether his convictions are sufficient to warrant his coming to Christ.

\*See this admirably discussed in a work entitled "Philosophy of the plan of Salvation."



This would be to throw the creature into the maelstrom of his emotions, whirling in the fatal vortex by which he is sucked down at last and disappears in the gloomy depths. The Holy Spirit knows too well that no surer method can be devised to destroy feeling, than the direct effort to create it—that the subtle essence evaporates in the manipulation of it—and that it must be allowed to rush without stoppage to the concrete act in which it culminates. Hence the holy impatience with which, in the Scriptures, man is hurried forward to the act of faith, in which all pious thought and feeling are embodied at last. The Holy Ghost, to whom is assigned the office of applying the gospel to the heart, will not contravene the laws of man's rational nature. He puts Himself in accord with them; and works, with His omnipotent power, through them all. He enlightens the mind, and rouses the conscience, and stirs the heart, and subdues the will; and then produces all to the view, in the acts of obedience which this will renders to the commands of grace. It is by the reaction of all this upon the heart, that its affections are kindled to a warmer glow—which again seek expression in the outward life; and so by the action and reaction, the warmth of spiritual life is kept equal at the heart and at the extremities.

3. In this connexion, observe that faith must not only be exercised—but *Christ must also be openly confessed before the world.* "Confession with the mouth" is, by the Apostle, closely conjoined with "belief in the heart." (Rom. x: 9.) Yet there are not a few who seek to evade the obligation to unite with the Redeemer's Church upon earth. The reasoning by which this neglect is defended, is specious. "Is not religion after all only a matter betwixt the conscience and God? Is it not enough to repent of sin, and to embrace the Saviour, in the secrecy of my own heart? Why should I be subjected to the trial of changing front in the presence of the world, and of running the hazard of bringing reproach upon the Church by the irregularities into which I may possibly fall?" Such are the opiates by which an accusing conscience is sometimes put to sleep—the pleas, by which perhaps many persuade themselves honestly that they are free from censure.

The reply to all this special pleading is exceedingly simple. We can afford to set aside all discussion of the question, in this, whether connexion with the visible Church be an indispensable prerequisite to salvation? We are not required to tie the infinite and sovereign grace of God to any ritual, as the necessary condition of salvation. We may expect to find not a few in heaven, whose names were never enrolled upon the register of

the Church on earth. It is an immense relief to be discharged from the responsibility of deciding upon cases like these, by remitting them to the judgment of Him who alone has the prerogative. Still it remains true, that Christ has constituted His Church an organized and visible society; and that He has equipped her with laws and officers, with ordinances and sacraments, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Eph. iv: 12.) It is still true, that He has commanded every being who accepts the salvation He has wrought, to make visible profession of his faith by Union with this Church, in which the fellowship of the saints shall be constantly maintained. Without adjudicating any of the cases which God reserves for trial at the last day, we can take our stand just here; and say, that it is immensely perilous to refuse obedience to the least of God's commandments. Whether union with the visible Church be, or be not, essential to salvation, it may not be safe for us to pronounce. But we can say, that no man can live in neglect of any duty which the Saviour enjoins, even though it should be only through a misapprehension of the judgment, without serious detriment and loss to the interests of the soul. It must draw after it the forfeiture of many blessings, which might otherwise have been enjoyed. The decision has already been pronounced, "whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." (Mat. v: 19.)

Even though one may work his way safely along the edge of the Church, in no way distinguished from the world, it must always be with a sense of degradation under the meanness and cowardice which it involves; it must always be with a sense of peril, from which in the nature of things it is impossible to be wholly divested; and it must be also with the sad forfeiture of many comforts and joys, which is not deplored simply from ignorance of what really has been lost. See then how the Gospel lays hold upon the active principle of our nature, in its requisition first upon the exercise, and then upon the profession, of our faith in Christ.

4. This line of proof is strengthened by the fact, that *every Christian is required to partake of the corporate life of the Church, and to assume his portion of the common labor and toil.* Beyond a doubt, God could dispense with all the work and anguish which He lays upon the Church in the evangelization of the world. He could, in the flash of an instant, convert the whole human race and not leave a single rebel against His grace. The Holy Spirit, who had the key to your heart and to mine, could as easily open the door of every other heart upon the face of the earth. But God has chosen to lay upon His Church this duty of pre-

claiming the Gospel by which the nations shall be saved ; and the burden which is laid collectively upon the whole body, is laid distributively upon each component part of that body.

Remembering now that " every beast of the forest is His and the cattle upon a thousand hills," one cannot cease to wonder that God should leave His Church to experience so much anguish in the propagation of the truth. What an expenditure of effort, to raise the sum which is necessary to support a few missionaries upon heathen soil ! How difficult to keep alive the feeble organizations in the scattered hamlets of our own land ! What sacrifices are imposed upon the heralds of the Cross, in the poverty and self-denial with which they proclaim " the glad tidings of great joy " to sinful men ! It seems one of the deep mysteries of Divine Providence, that all this should be entailed upon those who are engaged in His work who could so easily relieve the pressure ; until we recall the fact that the discipline which is laid upon the individual believer, is needful also to the collective Church. One conclusion is certainly established—that, in all this work of toil and sacrifice in which the Church engages each of her members, there is a clear recognition of that active principle in our nature, upon the constant exercise of which our spiritual health, no less than our natural, so much depends.

5. Passing from these four connected points, let it be noted that *the Gospel does not dispense with any of the relations in human society*. It takes the sinner just where Providence has assigned his lot, and makes him " a new creature in Christ Jesus." It sanctifies all the relations in which he is embosomed, and converts them into means of grace. Ancient Sparta, you remember, destroyed the family that the State might be supreme. The youth were removed from parental care and control, given over to the public nurse and the public school-master, to be trained not for the home, but for the State. And it is the vice of many of the systems of modern reform, that they sweep across the web of natural associations in accomplishing their benevolent designs—and fail at last, because they cannot succeed in this disintegration of society. Christianity, on the contrary, comes down into the world, not as a law, but as a life. Conscious of its power, it seizes man in the midst of all the duties which he owes to his home, to the community, to the State, to the world. It does not relax any of these claims ; but under their united pressure, it consecrates him to a new service superior to them all. Thus does the Gospel in its refusal to blot out any of our natural ties, respect the active feature in man's nature. It saves him in the heat of his action ; and then puts him down in the sphere to which he naturally belongs, to be a witness to those who know him best of the power and sweetness of Divine grace.

6. It is worthy of notice, that *the discipline, through which we are sanctified, falls upon us exactly in the sphere of our earthly activities.* It is not required of me to speak, just here, of the necessity for all this discipline. You recognize it as the key which unlocks the great mystery of human life, and without which human history would be a riddle. But every problem opens to us under this statement, "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." (Heb. xii : 6.) Our probation, which originally was one of law, is now through the intervention of grace a probation of mercy. The virtues implanted in the heart by the Spirit, are by this discipline reduced to practice, and form the character suited to the unchanging life beyond the grave. You recollect that exquisite hymn of John Newton, in which the fulness of religious experience, atones for the lack of poetic merit :

"I asked the Lord that I might grow  
In faith and love and every grace ;  
Might more of his salvation know,  
And seek more earnestly His face.

'Twas He that taught me thus to pray,  
And He, I trust, has answered prayer ;  
But it has been in such a way,  
As almost drove me to despair.

I hoped that in some favored hour,  
At once He'd answer my request ;  
And by His love's constraining power,  
Subdue my sins and give me rest."

Ah ! This is the way in which we would like the work of sanctification to be advanced, by the sweet influx of God's grace into the heart, without the need of any conflict, or any sorrow !

"Instead of this he made me feel  
The hidden evils of my heart,  
And let the angry powers of hell  
Assault my soul in every part.

Yea, more : with His own hand He seemed  
Intent to aggravate my woe ;  
Crossed all the fair designs I schemed,  
Blasted my gourds, and laid me low.

Lord, why is this ? I trembling cried,  
Wilt thou pursue thy worm to death ?  
'Tis in this way, the Lord replied,  
I answer prayer for grace and faith.

These inward trials I employ,  
 From self and pride to set thee free,  
 And break thy schemes of earthly joy,  
 That thou mayest seek thine all in me."

How rich the display of wisdom and love, which brings into harmony the inward and the outward in every Christian's experience—the inward grace, and the outward discipline which cultivates it into practical virtue! Just as the potter, who moulds the clay upon his wheel into the shape he desires, and then builds the furnace, filling its womb with the blazing fire, into the heart of whose flame he places the vessel which he means to harden for serviceable use: so God casts you and me into the furnace of affliction, heated seven times hot, and brings us out without the smell of fire upon our garments.

The general exposition of this truth, is not, however, what I now propose to your consideration. It is rather the fact, that this painful discipline overtakes us in the midst of the duties and activities of life. Here, for example, is one of yourselves toiling through a lifetime to build a fortune, which will fill your old age with plenty; and suddenly the whole tumbles down upon your head, overwhelming you with bankruptcy and ruin. Whatever may be the special lesson God has in this for you, others cannot look upon you driven back to work, when the elasticity and strength of youth have fled, without a profound conviction that life is meant to be one of toil even to the end.

In like manner, with our sorrows: God calls us to those tender offices of love around the beds of the sick. The mournful ministry is drawn out through weeks and month and years, during which, with a sweeter sympathy and a deeper affection, we fold the sufferers in our arms. Will this suffice? Ah, no! the heart must gather itself up for the last great sacrifice of love, when it bows before the altar and says, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job. i: 21.) Why is it, that these bereavements fall upon us just as we have made the largest investment of affection? Simply, because the discipline would not reach us, if it did not touch the point that was the most tender, and where the sensibilities are the keenest. But this is only another illustration of the way in which the Gospel recognizes the activity of our nature, and says: "be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

7. In the last place, *see the provision for all the activity of man's nature—in the great duty of worship.* God gives us His truth, which in quiet meditation, we revolve and inwardly digest, assimilating it to the

mind, so that it grows in stature almost equal to that of an angel. Then God reveals to the heart all that is beautiful and lovely in the person of His incarnate Son, drawing out our affections until we exclaim in the trustfulness of faith, "My Lord, and my God!" Is this enough? No: We must fall into rank with the whole "sacramental host of God's elect," and under the banner of the Church, subdue the nations by the truth, until all "the Kingdoms of this world, shall become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ." Will this answer? No: this overflowing energy of the sanctified heart must be gathered in from this wide diffusion, and pour itself forth in solemn and adoring worship, before "Him that sitteth upon the throne and before the Lamb."

We worship, whilst we live—we worship with that sublimest of all trust, when at death we convey the soul with the last breath to Him that redeemed it—and then we pass through the open gates and lay our worship, with that of angels and Cherubim in the censer of our High Priest above, that He may waive it forever before the throne of His Father in glory. Surely, a being, who has such capacity for worship here on earth, and such a life of worship lengthening through the eternity to come, cannot deny that God has created him for action, and has made ample provision for its exercise in the gospel of His grace.

What, my hearers, shall I say in the conclusion of this discourse? Will you tell me what I ought to say? Well this; I do not know the length of your line, how far it reaches into the knowledge of Christ Jesus, our Lord: but be that knowledge little or much, express it in your life. Whether you have scaled the heights of Christian experience, and from the Delectable mountains can descry the towers of the distant city—or whether you be struggling at the base beneath—whatever the measure of your hope and love and joy, I ask for the production of it in the sphere of action. Come out from your self. There is a monkery amongst Protestants, as bad as that amongst the devotees of Rome. It is when a Christian locks himself up in the solitude of his own thought, in the exclusiveness of his own experience—when he ties his hand to his side, and gives it to no form of productive labor. Look at that Stylite of the ancient monasticism, upon his pillar of stone, with arm stretched up to heaven until it has withered to its socket. Wherein are you better than he, if in this day of Christian effort you lie a drone in the Christian hive, and bear no fruit of honest Christian toil to the Master's feet? Here are we in this great city, with thousands around us profaning God's name, and desecrating His Sabbath—what are you and I doing in the way of testimony against this abounding

iniquity, or in the way of effort to bring sinners to the knowledge of the truth? Lift up your voice in the service of God! I bind you to it, by the nature God has given you as creatures of action. I bind you to it, by the genius of Christianity which opens a sphere for your holiest energies. I bind you to it, by the faith you have professed in Christ, your Redeemer. I bind you to it, by the sacramental emblems through which you have recorded your vows—by the red wine which symbolizes the blood shed for the remission of sin—by the bread broken to represent the bruising of Him who died under avenging law to pay our debt to justice. By all these tokens of God's love to you and of your obligation to serve Him, come with a contrite heart and take the Lord's cross upon your shoulder, and the Lord's testimony upon your tongue. Fasten yourselves to the chariot of your King, as he rides forth gloriously to victory. Then shall it be yours to receive the crown of life, with the benediction of the Judge," well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

## XXXI.

### FAITH IN GOD AND THE MEDIATOR.

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JOHN xiv: 1: *"Ye believe in God, believe also in me."*

These words open our Lord's farewell discourse to His disciples, and form the text from which all its topics are developed. Let us place ourselves at the historic moment in which they were spoken. Christ's personal ministry was drawing to its close, and "the time of His departure was at hand." His disciples were gathered around Him to celebrate the last Passover; upon which was grafted the ordinance of the Supper, constituting one of the links of connexion between the two Dispensations. The sop has already been dipped and given to the traitor; who instantly withdraws from the scene, to bear his part in the dismal tragedy soon to be enacted. The disciples need to be prepared for the catastrophe—not only for the death upon the Cross, but also for the longer separation which lay beyond it; when they should mourn for Him "whom the Heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." (Acts iii: 21.)

His words fall upon the ears with a muffled and funereal sound: "Little children, yet a little while am I with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, whither I go ye cannot come, so now I say to you." (John xiii: 33.) We, alas! know too well, how bitter are the words of parting, which fall from merely human lips and rupture only earthly ties. But this bereavement was such as never before had shattered human hopes. The Master—for whom they had surrendered everything in life, who had filled with His priceless love every need of the soul, and who had summoned them to the high enterprize of subduing an apostate world by the simple power of truth; the matchless Being, who had won them by His sweetness as "the Son of Man," and overawed them by His majesty as "the Son of God," was now to be withdrawn from their sight. They awoke to the sense of loneliness and sorrow, which only such a bereavement could create—and they keenly appreciated the peril of what must now assume before their eyes the character of a mad crusade against the religions of the world. In the midst of this overwhelming gloom, they are lifted to a sublime act



of faith in Him. He is removed indeed, but only to discharge His mediatorial office in Heaven. He promises to send the Holy Ghost to abide with them as "the Comforter;" and consoles them with the assurance of His return, at length, to take them to Himself.

All this requires that they should trust in Him, though absent in the body: and the point is made, that it should be a trust like that reposed in the existence and power of the unseen God; "ye believe in God, believe also in me." The sense remains unchanged in all the interpretations put upon the two clauses of the text. They may be construed declaratively, thus, "ye do believe in God, and ye do believe in me"—or imperatively, thus, "believe in God and believe in me"—or, as in our version, "ye do believe in God, believe also in me." It is well to emancipate ourselves at once from the quibbling of a mere verbal exegesis. In all these renderings, the parallel is simply presented between faith in God, and faith in Jesus Christ; and this faith is challenged for the one, precisely upon the grounds on which it is challenged for the other. We have then, in the very form of the thought, an unexpected and striking proof of our Lord's supreme Divinity. It would be the climax of absurdity, no less than of blasphemy, for even the most exalted creature to claim the trust in himself, which is due to the absolute God. Except, that "the Word was with God, and the Word was God," the assumption of equality implied in this comparison is simply inconceivable.

I propose then to consider, UPON WHAT GROUNDS THE MEDIATOR MAY CHALLENGE TO HIMSELF THE KIND AND DEGREE OF FAITH WHICH BELONGS TO THE SUPREME GOD.

I. *The same ground is laid in the human soul, for believing alike in God and in a Mediator.* It is a significant fact that not one verse can be found in the Bible which affirms the existence of God, as a proposition by itself. It is assumed throughout; and is so thoroughly interwoven into the texture of the Scriptures, that the attempt to eliminate it would tear the entire fabric into shreds. The sacred writers proceed with their narration, implying continually the being of God, without appearing to entertain a suspicion that the denial of it could possibly occur to any mind in the universe. Take, for illustration, the very first verse in the Bible—"in the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth:" in which Jehovah is presented as engaged in the august work of creation—and where to raise the question of His existence, would strike the reader as the most impertinent trifling. It is certainly remarkable that, whilst the Divine existence must lie at the foundation of all religion and of all revelation, it is not considered necessary formally to announce it. The amaz-

ing hazard would scarcely be run, if there were not some provision in the nature of man for the recognition and embrace of what is so indirectly unfolded.

Parellel with this, are one or two other facts well worth our attention. For example, no demonstration, however complete, adds one particle to the strength of our antecedent conviction that there is a God. The explanation of which is, that it is not by any line of argument that we ascend originally to the discovery of this truth. The experiment may be made by each one for himself. Take any of the proofs upon which we are accustomed to rely for the demonstration of the Divine existence—the argument from design in the adjustments of nature, or the metaphysical proof deduced from the infinitude, the unchangeableness, the omnipresence of God and the like—you will discover that nothing has been gained beyond the simple verification of a truth which had found a lodgment in the mind independently of all argument. “The invisible things of Him,” saith Paul, “from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead,” (Rom. i : 20.) The argument drawn from creation is irrefragable, because the mind proceeds by a necessary and immediate inference from the finite to the infinite, from the contingent to the absolute, from the created to the Creator. The terms by which we are compelled to define the natural, imply the supernatural; the definition lying in the contrast between the two, and the comparison implying that both are known. The value therefore of the argument for the being of a God consists not in discovering this truth to us, so much as in vindicating it to our reason, and rendering it impregnable against external assault. A familiar illustration will make this distinction plain. When puzzling over a difficult problem in Algebra, a youth at school will sometimes use the answer in working out the unknown term in the equation; after which it is easy to reverse the process, and work out the answer in its turn. In like manner, with the notion of a God existing as a great faith in the mind, it is easy to vindicate it by these external proofs which authenticate it at the bar of reason.

The idea of God lies so close to us, that we separate it with difficulty sufficiently far from us to make it a subject of reasoning at all. It is a self-evidencing truth, and as independent of proof as the existence of the human soul. If a man should ask how he is to know whether he has a soul, the readiest answer would be that the proof is found in the fact that he is able to raise the question. He must have a soul in order to ask whether he has one. It is a perfectly self-evidencing truth, proving itself just as the sun by the shining of its own light. It is not a question which could be raised by

any beast of the field; for being without souls, there is nothing in the nature of a beast to which the notion of such a thing as soul could attach. But man is conscious of certain processes, intellectual and moral, for which it is impossible to account, except upon the admission that he is a spirit. They cannot be explained by any of the laws of matter, for they are not in accordance with any of the properties of matter; and you are obliged to postulate a cause sufficiently cognate to produce the effects which are to be explained. Besides, if there was no such thing as soul or spirit, how came the notion of it to exist? Upon what law, or by what principle, did the idea form itself in the being who first entertained the conception? Creative as the human imagination may seem to be, it has no power to produce something out of nothing. The elements which enter into its most fantastic structures are furnished to it in the disclosures of nature, either explicitly made or implicitly contained. We may imagine, for example, creatures which never had a real existence, as the Centaur; but then the constituents of that grotesque image are furnished to us by nature, in the horse and in the man—and it is only the strange combination of the two which is the work of the fancy. The conception therefore of what we call soul or spirit, which is as nearly universal as any notion can be, could never have been formed, if the reality answering to it had not somehow been disclosed. The simple fact is, the soul hears the voice of spirit speaking to it; and in the response which it makes, recognizes its own nature.

Precisely so with the fact of the Divine existence. The truth is no sooner announced than it awakes its own echo in the human soul, just as the voice is returned through the reverberation of the hills; and for exactly the same reason, that both are fitted by nature to give back the sound which broke the solitude in both. In the one case, you have only to look at the configuration of the landscape to detect at once the reflectors which caught the wave of sound and rolled it back—the echo being reflected in its turn once and again, until the original voice dies away in the distance amongst a dozen mocking imitations of itself. In the other case, that image of God in which man was originally made may be expected to recognize the reality of God's being, as soon as confronted by it. The religious nature, in which consists man's likeness to his Maker, is fitted to receive the idea of God as soon as it is proposed, just as a mirror is made to reflect an object before it. The thought which is awakened in the one, like the image upon the surface of the other, is the shadow which the truth has cast from the reality of its own substance. This is what I mean, when I say that the notion of a God lies so close to us that no reasoning

upon it adds to the strength of our conviction. It is so entirely the spontaneous echo of the soul to the truth which wakens it, so completely the image which the soul reflects when God presents Himself before it, that no proof of it as a proposition of the reason can deepen the impression. Though not an intuitional truth, it is reached by an inference so immediate as to carry with it the self-assertion of what we are accustomed to distinguish as a first truth. It is so congenial with the religious nature of man as to be instantly recognized; and we cannot get behind this immediate response, so as to interpose the demonstration on which we think it should rest, and which it so perfectly anticipates.

This yields the solution of two notable facts, that the belief in a God should be both *universal* and *ineradicable*. I must not allow myself to be enticed into the discussion of either, further than to show the basis which is laid in our nature for the reception of this primary truth. Wherever man is found upon the globe, he is susceptible of religious ideas—which indeed are definitely formed and expressed, just in proportion as mind itself has been developed. If certain races or tribes should be discovered wholly destitute of religious symbols—as some perhaps a little rashly have asserted—they are invariably found to be intellectually scarcely above the level of the brutes. In such cases, were the ignorance of God as entire as some maintain, the exception would conspicuously establish the rule. It is an ignorance arising from the stagnation of mind. As soon as thought is aroused by the communication of the truth, there is found the same susceptibility to religious impressions which observation has shown to be characteristic of the rest of the human race. This universal diffusion of the notion of a God receives a competent explanation, when it is seen to be the instinctive response of man's spirit to the truth as soon as it is presented.

But wonderful as may be this universal admission of God's existence, it is perhaps surpassed by the fact that the notion, once entertained, never loosens its grasp upon the human spirit. For my own part—except for the guilt and the doom which it draws upon the parties themselves—so far as the safety of the truth alone is concerned, I would not care if half the world were atheists, and should spend their lives in proving that "there is no God." I would stand by and smile at the effort to prove the tremendous negative. It would not for an instant occur to me that God was in any sort of peril. Nay, the truth itself is just as imperishable under the blows of this ponderous assault, as it is safe in the hands of the most skilful apologists who rise in its defence. In short, I am willing to accept the most pronounced atheist who ever lived and wrote—all the better, if he

be gifted with the subtle genius of a Byron or a Shelley—I will accept him as the champion of the truth which he proclaims whilst he destroys. Do you not see, that this truth asks for nothing more than simply to be announced? And the atheist announces it to those whom the apologist cannot hope to reach. When the sentence is written with ink upon the page, “there is no God,” what ideas are associated in the mind with that august name? Is not the conception at once raised of a Being Self-existent, Uncaused, Infinite and Eternal in His nature and attributes? How came the thought of these qualities for the first time into any human brain; if they are not qualities of any real being any where? How comes it to pass that, by a logic wrought into its original constitution, the mind which thinks the finite is obliged to think along with it its correlative, the infinite? that by the same inwrought and constitutional logic, the mind is obliged to think in conjunction the caused and the uncaused, the temporal and the eternal, the contingent and the absolute? By all means, let the atheist write on; and as often as he pronounces that word, God, these essential perfections of the Deity chisel themselves in deeper and deeper impression upon the mind which vainly strives to deny them all. By all means, let him be a preacher of this truth; for as often as he proclaims “there is no God,” man’s soul responds with its echo, God—and sets its seal to the truth which was spoken in the blasphemy of the denial.

You understand then, my hearers, what was intended in the proposition that a ground is subjectively laid in the nature of man for the belief in a God. Created in God’s image and after His likeness, the religious nature with which man is endowed responds directly to the voice that addresses it. From the deep cavern of the soul comes the echo, as soon as this truth is spoken. In all the flow of thought, in all the decisions of conscience, in all the movements of the affections—by his fears and by his hopes, in his aspirations and in his joys—in the entire action of his spiritual nature, man casts the shadow of this truth in the thought which reflects it. God made the soul to be the mirror in which He should behold the image of Himself. It is not strange that he should lay in its depths a religious capacity for the instantaneous recognition of His presence before it.

If I can succeed now in showing that a basis is laid as well in our nature for the belief in a Mediator, you will see why the two are put together in the text: “ye believe in God, believe also in me.” The passage from one to the other is by a natural bridge. Observe, then, that the idea of God is not complete, when we think of Him only as Being, even though it should be uncaused and infinite. He is not simply Being, but Moral Being. In the holiness of His nature, as well as in the supremacy of His

will, He is the Law to His creatures whom He has made capable of knowing Him. We carry along with this idea of God, that also of law. The conscience yields its contingent, no less than the reason—and the heart equally with both—in making up the complex notion of God. With the recognition of the Divine Being, there fastens upon the soul a sense of responsibility to Him as supreme in authority. No sophistry can destroy, though it may for a time obscure, the conviction that we are amenable to the Divine law. It is the response of the human conscience to the voice of justice; which, however overborne by the noise and clatter of the world, will make itself heard at the last. If the law of God be transgressed, this sense of responsibility takes the form of conviction of guilt. The conscience, which before recognized the obligation of the precept, now responds to the obligation of the penalty. If obedience has been withheld from the one, then suffering must be inflicted by the other. This is the immediate response of the soul to the authority, as before simply to the being, of God.

You will say, then, that despair must at once overwhelm the soul, under this conviction of guilt. Reason would so pronounce; because its logic conducts to the conclusion that nothing remains after sin “but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.” (Heb. x: 27.) When lo! We are confronted with one of the most marvellous paradoxes in human experience, viz: that the soul which instantly responds to the accusations of a perfect law, under a profound conviction of its guilt, somehow cannot rid itself of the equal conviction of God’s conversableness with His creatures. I wish to state the fact in its breadth, and without any explanation just yet. My hearers, it is a blessed truth that God reserves despair as the portion of the damned: and it enters into no earthly experience, unless its beginning be felt in those whom God has judicially abandoned this side of the grave. It is a most wonderful contradiction, if you will think upon it. Side by side with that clear view of the Divine holiness, which causes even an angel to veil his face in adoring awe—side by side with that sense of guilt, when the weight of infinite justice lies upon the conscience of the transgressor: when you would expect the soul to shrink in terror from the one, and to be crushed under a sense of woe by the other—there runs parallel with both an ineradicable conviction that this just and holy God may be propitiated. It may not always be embodied in a proposition held up before the reason; but it exists as a sentiment in the heart, sustaining the sinner from the collapse of despair.

It is not wholly inexplicable to those who will push the investigation

deep enough into what is fundamental in man's religious nature. We have not the whole idea of God, when we view Him in His being, in His justice, in His holiness and power. There is another side, in which we view Him as love, and crowned with the attributes of mercy and grace. Must there be no provision for the soul's spontaneous recognition of God as the Father, as well as the Judge, of His people? Shall I tell you that the reconciliation of justice and mercy, of holiness and truth with compassion and love to the sinner, is found in Redemption? And because in this we have at last the full-orbed revelation of God to His creatures, therefore in constituting the nature of man, the Creator laid a basis for the recognition of a Mediator, not less than for the recognition of a Deity. It lies a dormant capacity, as to both, until the occasion calls it into action. When God stands before the soul in the reality of His being, the soul responds by pronouncing the name of its God; when the one Mediator stands before the soul burdened with its guilt, the soul responds by pronouncing the name of its Redeemer. The same subjective ground is found in the nature of man, as a creature and as a sinner, for the recognition of both; and therefore Christ says so justly in the text—"let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me."

II. *Both these truths lie within the province of faith, because both rest alike upon revelation.*

You will safely gather from what I have said, that I hold an original revelation to be indispensable to any religious belief in the Divine Being. The analogies I have employed, infer this. If faith in God be the echo of the soul to this truth, the echo requires as its antecedent the voice which shall produce it. If again this recognition of the Deity be the reflection of Him from that religious nature which constitutes the Divine image in man, then must Jehovah stand before the mirror which casts the shadowy resemblance. There is no such thing as evolving the notion of God out of our own consciousness, or knowing Him by any simple intuition. He is high and lifted up, far beyond the reach of any or of all our natural faculties. Indeed, it has always seemed to me absurd to pronounce dogmatically what man could know of God in the exercise of his reason without the aid of revelation, simply because the experiment has never been tried. God spoke with man, face to face, in the garden of Eden: and the duties which were laid upon him as the father of the race and the head of the lower creation, required this revelation of the Divine existence and authority. The truth thus made known would, from its own character, propagate itself from one generation to another, through all time. It needs only to be uttered, to call forth an appropriate response from every human soul. Tradition could scarcely drop out of its utterances the one

truth which was the foundation of every other—which an inward religious instinct would prompt man to retain—and which every generation in its turn, by the same instinct, would be prompted to take up from the slightest suggestion.

This fundamental conviction was not however left to perish through the chances of traditional transmission. As soon as human sin called for the disclosure of Mediation, both these cognate truths were embalmed in rites of religious worship, in which the God of mercy spoke both to the fears and to the hopes of man. The doctrine of sacrifice enshrined within itself the only hope, which a guilty conscience could recognize, of salvation before a holy God: and amidst a thousand melancholy travesties of the great and solemn propitiation for sin, man's faith in God and in a Redeemer has been lighted by the fires of myriads of altars blazing upon earth's mountain tops from the hour of the Fall till now. Apart then from the subsequent disclosures which God has made upon the pages of His written Word, there was that first grand and typical revelation made to man when he first woke to the consciousness of guilt, in the first victim whose blood smoked upon the first altar.

It must be so. In the sensible peril which lies upon the soul, when convinced of sin—in the frightful conflict with sin as a reigning principle within—man cannot rest his religious being and his eternal destinies upon any certitude less than the testimony of God himself. The conclusions of finite and imperfect reason do not give firmness of basis to sustain the tremendous pressure of a creature's religion, which is to endure through eternity. Thanks be to God, even under the Dispensation of what we call Natural Religion, and before man became a sinner, no other foundation was laid for our knowledge of God than the immediate revelation of Himself. And when the immense chasms are considered, which lie in our abstract reasoning upon the existence of God, the heart warms into a grander doxology for the completeness of Divine revelation. When we have pushed the argument from design to its utmost verge, it gives you immense intelligence indeed, but not necessarily infinite. The disappointment is sickening, when it is discovered that, alone and of itself, it yields a Demiurgus, when we were looking for a Creator. If, too, any man think to ascend by easy gradation from effect to cause, until he reaches the First Cause of all, what is his surprise to find that he must leap from the topmost round of this great ladder, by an immediate inference, to a belief in being which is undervived and self-existent? If the necessity of this inference enables it to verify and to vindicate the truth that there is a God, let it be for congratulation that the conviction itself rests upon a higher certainty in the self-



evidencing power of the truth to the human soul. Resting alike upon the Divine testimony, our Savior in the text challenges an equal faith in God and in Himself.

III. *The faith here challenged must be practical*—receiving both in the relations they sustain to us, and through the works which they execute. It is no belief in God to accept Him only as a philosophical necessity, a logical postulate by which to account for something else, the first of a series of causes which produce the phenomena of this changing universe. The true idea of God is not reached until He is invested with personality, endowed with intelligence and will, and standing in well defined relations to the creatures of His power. He is, for example, our CREATOR, in whom we “live and move and have our being.” There must accordingly be cherished a sense of complete dependence upon Him in all things; taking the definite shape of submission to His will, as the original proprietor to whom we belong by the most unimpeachable of all rights, that of creation itself. Again, He is our RULER—and we, His subjects, acknowledge His supremacy in the obedience which we yield to His perfect law. He is revealed as the CHIEF GOOD, containing within Himself all that the creature can possibly need, or should desire; faith therefore accepts Him as the portion of the soul, in this world and in the world to come. He is GOD, “glorious in holiness” and worthy of the adoration and praise of all beings in heaven and earth. We recognize this in our worship, which we reverently offer in the name of the Mediator who undertakes to present it for us before the throne of His Father. The faith which does not show itself in actual trust, as Jehovah fulfils all these functions, does not come within the definition of the word given in the Scriptures.

Our Lord challenges a like practical faith in the Mediator. When He says, “believe also in me,” He means that we shall confide in the *efficacy of His atoning sacrifice*; and that we shall bring in nothing else, either to subvert or to supplement this the sole ground of a sinner’s acceptance with God. He means, that we shall rely upon the *power of His intercession* grounded, as this is, upon the value of His blood shed for the remission of sin: and that in all our pleadings at a throne of grace, we shall base our expectations solely upon the fact that He takes up the prayer and enforces it with the merit of His own claim upon the Father’s justice and truth. He means, that we shall accept Him as *the Prophet*, who alone has the power to reveal God’s truth to man—(John i: 18,)—that He it is, as the Head of the Prophetic Dispensation, who speaks through Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel of the Old Testament, and no less through

John, and Paul, and Peter of the New—and that we believe in Him. when we bow with docility before the dogmatic authority of that Revelation of which He, through the Spirit, is really the author. He means that we shall receive Him unto our hearts as OUR KING; sweetly obeying His gracious commands in the spirit, not of hire, but of “love which constraineth us—because we thus 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.” (II Cor. v: 14, 15.) Precisely as we believe in God revealing Himself to us in creation and providence, through his law and by His covenant; so we are to believe in the Mediator, through a practical trust in all the work by which He redeems the sinner from eternal death.

IV. *This faith is to be reposed in God and in Christ, notwithstanding the darkness which may shroud the Dispensation of either.* What mystery hangs about the work of creation! Who can stretch his thought over and beyond the domain of chaos, and comprehend how Jehovah brought the universe out of nothing by the simple word of His power? Well may Paul remand this to another faculty than that of reason: “through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” (Heb. xi: 3.) Who can resolve the methods of Providence, and tell how the Almighty “stretches out the north over the empty place, and hangs the earth upon nothing?” (Job. xxvi: 7.) Let the astronomer touch the point of support upon which rests this vast orrery of the heavens, “cycle and epicycle, orb in orb,” and tell how all is suspended upon the naked will of Him who “spake and it was done, who commanded and it stood fast.” (Ps. xxxiii: 9.) Can the philosopher dive far enough into the secrets of mind, to explain how God’s eternal and ordaining purpose moves through the complex machinery of human thought and will, without arresting the movement of a single wheel, or displacing the sense of responsibility which underlies the free activity of the creature? And yet, in face of all that is insoluble in creation and providence, man believes in God—believes in Him though not disclosed to bodily sense, but only traced through the footprints He has left in these stupendous works of His power.

Just so, says Christ, “believe in me,” whatever the mysteries of grace—though you cannot follow me with the eye, as I sit down upon my Father’s throne—though you cannot explain the methods of that discipline by which you are educated for heaven, and cannot comprehend how love should be at the bottom of so much suffering and sorrow—yet, in face of

all this darkness, "believe in me" just as you "believe in God." "Believe in me," though unseen; "believe in me," as you trace the execution of all the offices which as Mediator I discharge. Let it be a faith which triumphs over distrust and fear, in the one case just as in the other; "ye believe in God, believe also in me."

Upon this double pivot all religion turns, both theoretical and practical. Whether it be in doctrine, or whether it be in experience, God in Christ is the object of our faith. Alas! my hearers, that so many should fail, in any true sense, to recognize either! Where can we look without tracing the signs of God's presence and power? From the rose that blooms upon its stem to the star which sparkles in the sky; the broad interval is filled with the testimonies of Him that created all. Nature pours out her voice in every form of utterance to the praise of her Divine author. The trees whisper to each other the great secret, as their tops wave in the breeze; and the hoarse voice of the deep rolls up the sound continually to the listening stars.

"God! let the torrents, like a shout of nations,  
 Answer! and let the ice-plains echo, God!  
 God! sing ye meadow-streams with gladsome voice!  
 Ye pine-groves, with your soft and soul-like sounds!  
 And they too have a voice, you piles of snow,  
 And in their perilous fall shall thunder God!  
 Ye living flowers that skirt the eternal frost!  
 Ye wild goats, sporting round the eagle's nest!  
 Ye eagles, playmates of the mountain storm!  
 Ye lightnings, the dread arrows of the clouds!  
 Ye signs and wonders of the element!  
 Utter forth God, and fill the hills with praise!  
 \* \* \* \* \* Tell ye the silent sky,  
 And tell the stars, and tell yon rising sun,  
 Earth, with her thousand voices, praises God!"

And yet the earth is without a soul. She calls upon man to become her priest—that gathering up her testimonies in the compass of his thought, he may pour upon them the incense of his affections, and wave the offering of all this worship before the Eternal Creator. Alas, for any who may be living without God in the world, if at the last Nature shall pile these testimonies as stones upon their grave, and seal them, under a just condemnation, to everlasting perdition! Alas, that a being who has a soul should be more insensible to the glory of God, than the poor dumb earth which must ask of us the voice by which to articulate its joy!

More important still to us, my brethren in Christ—these brief words

disclose the perfect test of a true Christian experience. To believe in the Mediator just as we believe in God, is the certain proof of the new birth. Man's instinct turns to a religion of law, not of grace. The language of duty he understands, but not of mercy. He "goes about to establish his own righteousness, and does not submit himself to the righteousness of God." (Rom. x: 3.) When it becomes easy to turn to Christ, to lay our sins upon His altar, to rely solely upon His blood, to knit the affections to Him in willing and obedient service—surely, something has opened the eyes that were blind, and changed the heart that was hard! It is the instinct of the *new life* to cry out, "my Lord and my God!" No man ever turned to Christ, centering upon Him all His hopes, and finding in Him all his joy, that was not drawn by the Father through the Spirit. It is life out of death, to see "Christ as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" It is the simplest and safest of all the tests by which to try our Christian hope—"what think ye of Christ?" If we can truly respond in the language of Peter's sublime confession, "thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"—then will it be, because "flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto us, but our Father which is in heaven." (Mat. xvi: 16, 17.) Oh, blessed Spirit of God, so fill us with the faith, the love, and the joy of Christ, that we shall be drawn to him as readily as iron to the magnet! Let His presence fill the soul, and faith in the Mediator will be as true an instinct as the faith in God.



## XXXII.

### COMMUNION OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.

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I COR : x : 16. “ *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?* ”

These words refer unquestionably to the Lord's Supper. The specification of the two elements used, and the identification of these with the blood and body of Christ,—both fasten the application to this ordinance. This is confirmed by the evident allusion to the Jewish Passover, which was merged into the Christian Eucharist. In the observance of the former, after the roasted flesh had been eaten with bitter herbs, the president of the feast arose with a cup of mingled water and wine, and rendered thanks to God ; which was hence denominated “ the cup of blessing.” It was at this stage, after the Paschal feast had been punctually kept, our Lord instituted the Supper intended to be its substitute ; in which Judaism threw off its typical signification, and lost itself in Christianity as its fulfilment.

If however the least doubt should linger as to the correctness of this reference, it will be removed by attending to the scope of the Apostle's argument ; which is an earnest dissuasive from connivance with heathen idolatry in any of its forms. The special danger to this lay in the social usages of Corinth ; by incautious participation in which, Christians might inadvertently commit themselves to the endorsement of a false and idolatrous worship. It is no part of God's design to shield the Church from all contact with the world. On the contrary, it is through the interlacing of both by common ties, that the influence of the one pervades the other to its salvation through Christ. Paul therefore discriminates between the intercourse which is necessary, and that which endangers the testimony to be borne for the truth. “ Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof.” Nay, further : “ if any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go—whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.” (vv: 25, 27.) In all these cases the Christian is not required to suspect any snare, or that he is not

dealing with others upon the ordinary principles of human intercourse. "But if any man say unto you, this is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not, for his sake that showed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." (v. 28.) In this case, a new feature is introduced, forcibly discriminating it from the others. The feast is not an ordinary entertainment, but is a sacrificial feast. It is given in honor of the Deity to whom the sacrifice was offered, and is thoroughly religious in its purpose and design. The beast was slain upon the altar as an act of worship, through its blood restoring the transgressor to the favor which he had forfeited: and in token of the reconciliation and as the means of its enjoyment, the feast is instituted upon the sacrifice, in which the parties hitherto estranged are supposed to partake together. Participation therefore in such a feast presupposes one to be a worshipper of the idol, and pledges to his support. To make this plain to the conscience of the Christian, Paul illustrates the principle by reference both to Jewish and to Christian ordinances. "Behold Israel after the flesh; are not they which eat of the sacrifices, partakers of the altar?" (v. 18.) Certainly the Jew who participates in a Jewish feast, is understood thereby to profess the Jewish faith, and is committed to its defense throughout. In like manner, he who sits at the Lord's table has "fellowship with Him in His sufferings and death," and is bound forever to His service. Upon this broad principle then, that in every religious feast the partaker is completely identified with the Being to whom the sacrifice was offered, the incongruity is patent to "drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils,—to be partaker of the Lord's table and of the table of devils." (v. 21.) It is to be at once a worshipper of the only living and true God, and a devotee of idols.

We perhaps have no occasion for the particular use which the Apostle makes of the principle in the text, as directed against heathen idolatry with which we are not brought in contact. But we have an abiding interest in the fact or principle itself, upon which the argument is founded. My object will be, in connexion with the administration of the Lord's Supper in this house to-day, to expound the NATURE OF THAT COMMUNION WE HOLD WITH CHRIST IN THE SAME, AND TO EXHIBIT THE FEATURES IN WHICH IT IS PECULIAR. Most certainly we gain little, and lose much, by closing our eyes against this high mystery of communion with our Lord, by eating and drinking, wherein we are made partakers of His body and blood.

I. *In the supper, we hold special communion with Christ in each of His offices, as He is the King, the Priest and the Prophet of his Church.*

It is not, of course, intimated that every act of worship does not include these three offices so essential to the Mediator's work. They are all so related as to be inseparable, and the mention of one necessarily involves the others. For example, the truth which the Prophet discloses is that which the Priest has wrought out and constituted such,—either directly lying in the work of redemption which He accomplished, or as being antecedently so necessary thereto as to be of necessity unfolded. In like manner, the Kingdom which the Mediator administers is that acquired through His priesthood. Those are the proper subjects of it, who were given Him in the Covenant of Redemption, whom He has purchased with His blood, and over whom He is constituted the Lord and Head forever. If there be a wider extension of His authority over others, it is designed to be subordinate and subsidiary to that empire which is wielded more immediately over the subjects of His grace. The Priesthood of Christ may be represented then as underlying all the offices which he is called to discharge, giving the material which is worked up in them. It is impossible, therefore, to think of one without implying the other two, and they are together involved in any true worship of the Redeemer.

At the communion table, however, there is a more direct and special homage rendered to Christ in each of His offices, separately viewed. The distinction between this and other acts of worship, is that here the communion with Christ in these offices is *explicit*, whilst in them it is *implicit*. Just as with the adorable Trinity, the recognition of each Person involves the recognition of all, because the three Persons are the one God, and we think the Trinity only when we think it in unity. It is the tri-unity. Communion with one Person is *implicitly* communion with the whole God-head. Yet there are special acts of worship, as in the Doxology and Benediction, when the thought is directed to Jehovah in His plural subsistence, and the reference to the three Persons in the God-head is an *explicit* reference. So, there is an implication of all the Redeemer's offices in the mention of any one of the three; but in the Supper, the communion is *explicit* in each. Let us look at this a little more minutely.

We are accustomed to speak of some parts of human worship as *natural*; by which is meant, that they have a ground in our own nature as God has constituted it, and in the necessary relations in which we stand to Him as our Creator. Prayer and praise, for example, have their foundation in nature. Reason itself decides that, if we are creatures, our dependence should be constantly acknowledged to the great Being in whom we live and move. Desire should not reach forth to any good, without going first in prayer to Him whose prerogative it is to bestow or to withhold it. Nor



should we rejoice in the possession of any blessing, without expressions of gratitude and love to Him who has opened His hand in this kindness upon our head. So true is this, that viewed in any light which reason can shed, an intelligent creature, who lives without prayer and worship of God, is simply a monster in nature—and the day will come when the deformity will be so revealed as to shock the moral sentiment of the entire universe. The Lord's Supper is contradistinguished from these, as being a *positive institute*—resting solely upon the appointment of Jesus Christ, and upon the express command: "do this in remembrance of me." Human authority would never have ventured to introduce such a service as this; nor would human wisdom have stumbled upon any worship so sublime in its reach, and still so simple in its form. In its observance, then, we render conspicuous homage to that kingly authority by which it was ordained, an act of formal obeisance to the supremacy of Christ in and over His Church. It is, you perceive, more than a single act of obedience to one out of many commands of our King. It is a typical and comprehensive act, covering the whole obedience of a life. It is the formal sacramental vow, by which we bind ourselves to the person and cause of our Master forever; in which, through most expressive symbols, we are knit to Him and participatè in His life. It is impossible to conceive of any consecration more solemn than this, by which we are identified with Christ in His spiritual kingdom.

It will require even fewer words to indicate our communion with Christ as the only Priest in his Church. The very design of the ordinance is to show forth Christ in His death. (I Cor. xi: 26.) In the Jewish Passover, the memorial character of the service—and lying beneath this, its typical reference also—were well brought out in the dialogue between the children and the parents, which became incorporated as one of the features of the feast. "And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you what mean ye by this service?—that ye shall say, it is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses." (Exod. xii: 26, 27.) Just so, the Lord's Supper is an emblematic representation of the sacrifice in which Christ "offered Himself once in the end of the world," to "bear the sins of many." Under a figure, He is "before our eyes evidently set forth, crucified amongst us." (Gal. iii: 1.) We profess to receive Him as our substitute under the law, making atonement for our sins. It is the most solemn and explicit homage which can be paid to Christ, in the discharge of his Priesthood.

Since, too, we could attach no significance to these symbols without the

explanation which He himself hath given, there is an equal recognition of His Prophetical office and authority. In these respects, our communion with Christ in the Supper is peculiar. It is the public and formal acknowledgment of Him as our Redeemer, in each of His necessary offices; and it is the solemn declaration, that in each of the three we are partakers of His life; so that He "of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." (I Cor. i: 30.)

2. *In this holy ordinance, the object of faith, and its consequent actings are special.* No little confusion of thought in respect to faith, arises from blending its generic with its more special and technical signification. In its broadest sense, it has respect simply to the truth of statements made to us, and of course to the veracity of the witness. It is co-incident with belief, or the mere assent of the mind to what is held by it as true. But it is easy to see that the truth, thus received, may draw along with it what shall deeply stir the affections, and rouse into action the whole energy of our nature. If I am startled at midnight with the cry that my house is on fire, it would not be possible to believe it and yet curl myself up to the nap which had been so rudely disturbed. I could not recognize the signs of a loathsome disease upon my person and believe that the whole system was tainted with its poison, with only a cold assent of the judgment, involving no flush of the emotions and no action of the will. The interests at stake are too immense to be resigned with indifference; and if in either case, a mode of deliverance should be proposed, then faith must assume the form of trust and involve a cordial acceptance. When therefore the Scriptures describe the condition of a sinner under the sentence of the Divine law shut up to everlasting death, it is idle to restrict the faith in such a revelation to an unimpassioned intellectual assent to it as a proposition simply true. For if it be true, there must be a corresponding recognition of it as a fact that is dreadful. If, further, these Scriptures reveal a Saviour whose province it is to deliver from this death, it is idle to talk of a faith which does not joyfully rest upon his power, and accept the proffered relief. It depends upon the nature of what is disclosed to us, and upon the practical interest we have in it, whether the faith shall sink to the level of a mere intellectual belief, or whether it shall draw upon all the powers of the soul in personal trust and loving acceptance. When it is asked what is meant in the Scriptures by faith in Jesus Christ, we have only to consider what is our need of Him, and what He offers to do for us. to see that the word has no significance except in the sense of the closest appropriation of Him in all His blessed work. Faith in Christ is not simply *belief*, resting upon the divine *veracity*; but it is *trust*, resting

upon the divine *fidelity*. It is not simply the mind dealing with the truth ; but it is the heart dealing with the promises.

But in the Supper, faith is directed exclusively to the Saviour himself, as engaged with the work for which He became incarnate. It looks upon Him in that nature in which "He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities," "making His soul an offering for sin." (Isa. liii: 5, 10.) Not only so ; it looks upon His body, divided into its constituent parts of flesh and blood. In the Jewish sacrifices the two were distinguished ; the blood, wherein was the life, was poured out at the altar ; and the bloodless flesh was eaten in the sacrificial feast. So here ; faith beholds the blood, the life poured out for our redemption—and the body risen and in heaven, the pledge and source of all the blessedness and glory we shall hereafter enjoy. In the specific actings of this faith as directed to the person of our suffering Lord, "the cup of blessing" in this ordinance is termed "the communion of the blood of Christ."

3. *We do sacramentally and spiritually eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, through the identification of these with the bread and wine in the Supper.* The core of the Apostle's argument against participation in heathen feasts, is the identification of the idol with the sacrifice offered to it. In his view, to partake of the one is to partake of the other. In the illustration which he draws from the Supper, there must be therefore a similar identification of Christ with the elements which are chosen to represent Him. The sacrifice through which He "put away sin," was Himself. (Heb. ix: 26.) As this consisted in the offering of His human life, it is represented in the Supper under the emblems of bread and wine. The bread broken, sets forth His body bruised under the law ; the wine poured out, adumbrates "the blood of the new testament shed for many for the remission of sins." (Mat. xxvi: 28.) The communicant therefore who eats the bread, symbolically eats the flesh represented under it ; when he drinks the cup, he drinks under a symbol the blood for which it stands. The design of the whole ordinance is to render more real to us, through these representative emblems, the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross. The sacramental actions in which we engage, have a significance as true as that of the emblems which are employed. The eating and the drinking are both of them real acts ; and they set forth a real feeding of the soul upon Christ, by the living faith which receives Him. To the subjective faith wrought in the soul by the Holy Ghost, by which the Saviour is embraced, there is the objective presentation of Him in that very work of suffering and death by which He made atonement for sin. In the eating and in the drinking, there is a spiritual communion

with Christ in His body and blood, which He offered in sacrifice for the life of the world.

The language which I have employed is, I trust, sufficiently guarded to show that this is no *carnal* eating of the Lord's body. This could not be, unless there was first an actual transmutation of the elements into the flesh and blood of Christ. We cannot eat His literal body, whilst only the bread is before us; nor drink the veritable blood, whilst the cup sparkles only with the wine. That no transmutation of the elements has taken place, is affirmed to us by our bodily senses; four out of five concurring to prove that the substances before us have undergone no change, but exhibit still to the most critical detection only the properties of bread and of wine. It will be no relief from the dilemma to allege that the change is miraculous, and must be believed upon the authority of the miracle. The point in dispute is precisely this, whether any miracle has been wrought in the case; and this can be only determined by evidence of the change alleged to have been accomplished by it. No one denies that a miracle sufficiently establishes whatever it is wrought to prove. But then it must be known that there is a miracle in the case; and it lies in the very nature of a miracle, that it appeals to the observation of the senses for its own verification. A miracle which does not challenge the testimony of sense, vacates its claim to the supernatural altogether, and sinks to the level of imposture and of magic. How much more an alleged miracle which is not only unattested by the senses, but which has to be accepted against the protest of them all?

Stripped of needless mystery, the truth is simply this: in the Supper we eat the bread; as bread, it is received into the system and is assimilated to it. Its strengthening power, as food, depends precisely upon this fact. Because it is inwardly digested, its constituent properties are distributed throughout the body, giving nutriment to the blood, the muscle, the flesh and the bone of which that body is composed. So, by faith, the soul receives Christ in his atoning work as objectively presented in the bread and in the wine—refreshes its sense of pardon by resting upon the blood through which this pardon was procured;—and feeds its hopes of eternal life by looking upon the body of Christ once bruised for sin, but now risen and reigning in glory. Who shall say, that the one feeding is not as real as the other? They differ only as the organs differ, by which the respective acts are performed. The body is material, and its eating is gross and material like itself: the soul is spiritual, and its eating is spiritual like itself. In the one, sense recognizes bread, and is nourished by it: in the other, faith recognizes the Redeemer's atoning sacrifice, and is nour-

ished by it. Perhaps, it may be rendered plainer through an illustration. We read an allegory, or a fable, which is utterly insipid, as long as the thought is fastened upon the grotesque narrative alone: but the moment it is recognized as the mere costume in whose drapery a spiritual truth is hidden, it has an inexpressible charm for us. The emblem, which at first served as a vehicle to convey the truth, becomes the dress which adorns it. So with the symbols employed in the ordinance of the Supper—faith cuts right through to the truth, which they are intended to represent. The external sign is laid aside, when it unveils to us the thing signified; which is instantly seized as the food of the soul. This unquestionably is what the Apostles intends, when he speaks of “not discerning the Lord’s body;” and of those being “guilty of the body and blood of the Lord,” who “eat the bread and drink the cup unworthily.” The sign and the thing signified are blended together, so that to enjoy or to profane the one, is to enjoy or to profane the other. And this gives the clue by which to interpret our Lord’s remarkable language in the Gospel of John: “the bread that I will give will be my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. \* \* Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.” (John vi: 51, 53.) “The communion of the blood of Christ,” which we outwardly manifest by drinking of the cup, is to experience within our hearts the reality of Christ’s satisfaction for sin, as applied by the Holy Ghost in the expiation of our guilt before God. “The communion of the body of Christ,” as manifested in the eating of the bread, is to realize in our own souls the fact of our living union with His body; upon which depend our sanctification in this world, and the glory which shall follow in the world to come. By the consenting act of our will we accept the blood as our ransom, and the flesh as our food. As Father, Son and Holy Spirit consent to His substitution for us, so we consent to accept Christ as that substitute. We become thus, in law and in fact, one body and one blood with Christ. It is His death, and it is our death; it is His blood, and it is our blood—and that by the concurrent choice of all parties concerned—and therefore it avails to our redemption. It is hard to see how we could more partake of Christ, than when we truly eat His flesh and drink His blood.

4. *In the sacrament of the Supper, we have fellowship with the mystical Christ, as all believers are equally one body and blood with Him.* This defines exactly the unity of the Church—not a collective unity, but organic. It is not the aggregation of units, made one as those are brought together and then massed: but it is the oneness of a common life, diffused through all the members from a common Head. Believers are united each

to Christ; and the life communicated to them by the Holy Ghost in the new birth, is that purchased by Him and treasured in Him as the trustee of His people. This is symbolized in the Supper, and is definitely expounded by the Apostle in the passage before us. We eat the bread: what was just now bread, is now ourselves; we are thus one bread. So all who spiritually feed upon Christ who is represented under the emblem, become one body and blood with Him, and are of necessity one body as between themselves. "For we, being many, are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread." (v. 17.)

It is well to see clearly in what this spiritual unity of believers really consists—that it springs out of their relation to Christ as redeemed by His blood, out of their union with Him by the faith which receives Him and rests upon Him alone for salvation, and by that spiritual life dispensed from Him through the quickening energies of the Holy Ghost. It is of this true spiritual unity, our Lord speaks in His priestly prayer: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: \* \* \* \* I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." (John xvii: 20, 23.) Consider well the separate clauses just recited. Those for whom this intercession is offered form a class by themselves in every age, consisting only of such as "believe in Christ through the word." They are to be one, after the manner of the adorable God-head—"as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee." And finally, this oneness between themselves proceeds from their antecedent relations to the Son and to the Father—"I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."

What a deplorable letting down of the thought, to sink this inward unity of the spiritual life into the outward unity of churchly organizations! Almost every truth has its external form in which it manifests itself to the world; and there is a constant tendency to over-estimate this necessarily imperfect expression of a truth, so that it shall hide out of sight that which it only represents. The shadow becomes so imposing as to eclipse the substance which casts it. The popular idolatry of the day is just this exaggeration of external union amongst Christians, and the utter confounding of this with that unity which forms the burden of the High Priest's prayer. The rolling together of believers into massive organizations is not union, but conglomeration: and when effected by the suppression of important testimonies, it is the counterfeit of that which itself is but a representative image of something infinitely better. The real unity of the Church, ever asserting itself in the inner life of its members, shines through

the outward diversities of thought and opinion which obtain ; and is often made conspicuous by the contrast, showing the agreement to be no mere conformity enforced by authority, but the free concurrence of separate experiences in the reception and enjoyment of the same blessed truths. It is the design of the Lord's Supper, in part, to signalize this communion of believers with each other, in the Lord. All differences are merged at His table. The only fact there known, is their common union with their living Head. The cup of blessing is the token of their joint communion in the blood, by which they have all been equally redeemed from death.

5. *The worship of Christ in the Supper is peculiar, in that it is at once a memorial, a prophetic, and a covenanting ordinance.* It would take a large discourse to expand these topics, which involve an exhaustive exposition of the whole ordinance. I group them together as exhibiting the nature of the service in which we there engage. "This do in remembrance of me," said Jesus as He distributed the bread. Also after the cup, "this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me: for as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." (I Cor : xi : 24, 25, 26.) The Supper was designed therefore to be a historical monument of the Savior's death—it is intended to show this forth in all generations, till the end shall come. Besides the benefit accruing to the communicants themselves, it has this further use to the world without,—that it preserves alive the remembrance of the great fact upon which its salvation turns. It holds forth the Redeemer to the acceptance of such as hitherto have rejected Him, with the witnesses present who testify to the completeness of the provisions of Divine mercy to meet all the necessities of the soul. It is indeed a most precious and useful ministry, thus to declare the salvation of God to sinning men.

But the Supper is no less *prophetic*, than declarative. It is instituted to "show forth the Lord's death *till He come.*" His distinct promise to His sorrowing Disciples, was, that He would "come again and receive them to Himself." (John xiv : 3.) This reappearing of Christ upon earth was announced by the angels at the time of His ascension : "this same Jesus, which is taken from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." (Acts i : 11.) "Whom the heavens must receive," says Peter, "until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." (Acts iii : 21.) The Gospels and the Epistles are alike full of testimonies to the second coming of our Lord : "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father, with His angels, and then shall He reward every man according to his works." (Mat. xvi :

27, and xxiv : 30.) "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." (I Thes. iv : 16, and II Thes. i : 7, 10.) It is needless either to multiply the testimonies, or to show this second coming of our Lord to be an essential part of His mediatorial work, equally with the first. It is only necessary to observe how admirably this ordinance is fitted to preserve the knowledge of a truth so likely to be forgotten, in the long absence of Christ in the heavens. The nature of the communion proclaims the fact that He still lives, and that He lives to return: "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" The distinction of the elements and the communication in each, have their significance. The one points backward to the death of the sacrifice, through which sin is atoned: the other points forward to the life treasured in the body of the Mediator above, to be communicated in the sanctification upon earth and in the glory of heaven.

The feature, however, which involves the greatest responsibility on our part, is its federal or covenanting obligation. It is the seal of God's gracious covenant with us, according to the definition of a Sacrament in our Standards; "a holy ordinance instituted by Christ—wherein, by sensible signs, Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed and applied to believers." But in every covenant there are two parties, with mutual stipulations. In the Supper, we renew our engagement to be the Lord's—openly accepting Him, as I have before shown, in all His offices as the Redeemer of His seed. It is therefore the most solemn transaction in which the soul can engage; dealing with all that is dreadful in law, and with all that is tender in grace; accepting under the sanction of an oath, all the provisions of mercy, and binding our own obedience with cords to the horns of the altar, (Ps. c. xviii: 27,) as a sacrificial offering to Him who offered Himself as a sacrifice for us. (Heb. ix: 26–28.) It is therefore, under every aspect, an act of worship as unique as it is solemn, which is intended to be conveyed in the interrogatory of the text; "the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?"

This subject, beloved brethren, will find its own application in the meditations you will yourselves indulge, whilst sitting at this table. With all the solemnity of the service, sometimes throwing the shadow upon the soul of something like fear, you will nevertheless esteem the privilege to be great of this complete identification with the Master whom you love. Let the humility be profound as it may, and the penitence deep as a true sense of



sin can make it—but let neither the one, nor the other, dim the festal character of this worship. We approach this table in order that we may “with joy draw water out of the wells of salvation.” (Isa. xii: 3.) We are here that we may hide the sins which trouble us, beneath the covering of the blood. We are here that we may take large draughts of spiritual life from the open side, whence issues the full stream of life upon all the redeemed. Sadness of heart does not belong to the bride who is “adorned for her husband.” (Rev. xxi: 2.) The responsibility of the consecration may be great; but it will only cause the heart to throb with a stronger pulse of joy.

One preliminary suggestion may perhaps assist you in the vows you will here secretly make to Him, who has bought you with His blood. This incorporation with Christ draws after it a corresponding separation from the world. It is implied in the Apostle’s entire argument, out of which the text is taken. We cannot be partakers of Christ and also of an idol. The world has its Sacraments, as well as the Church. I will not specify them here, but leave it to your educated conscience to ascertain what they are. There are forms of pleasure and pursuits of business, which are so intensely of the world that everybody accepts them as the badges of the world. Those who engage in them are naturally construed as being of the world, and belonging to it, just as those found at the sacramental board are construed to be followers of Christ, and professors of His religion. What I desire to say is, that these two are antagonistic. The one excludes the other, and we cannot wear the badges of both. I desire that your own spiritual life shall put out its instinct of recoil from all that would compromise the interests of the soul. I wish only to impress you that separation from evil is involved in the very name given in Scripture to the Church of the Redeemer; it is the body that is CALLED FROM. Consecration *to* something, is of course consecration *from* something. The call which carries you to Christ, takes you away from what you leave behind. What is it that you and I have given up? In what respects does the Master say of us, “they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world?” (John xvii: 14.) May the anointing which we have received of Him teach us, this day, what this pregnant Scripture means! May “the unction from the Holy one” reveal to us all that is involved in “the communion of the blood of Christ,” and which will not allow us to eat of that which is “offered in sacrifice unto idols!”

## XXXIII.

### CHRIST'S UNIVERSAL DOMINION.\*

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Ps. xcvii. "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof."

MAT. xviii: 18. "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

I have placed together these two passages, the one from the Old Testament and the other from the New, because they cover the whole doctrine of God's providential government. The first affirms the fact that such a government exists, with allusion to the security and joy which it brings to the creature. The second sets forth the agency through which it is administered. It will scarcely be expected of me to cover, in a single discourse, this entire field of thought. I may be allowed to premit the first, which will not be denied by any who defer to the authority of the Scriptures, or by those who attend to the orderly working of human history. The second will demand a fuller expansion, as not felt in all its significance even by Christians themselves. Your attention therefore will be solicited to THE MEDIATORIAL JURISDICTION OF JESUS CHRIST OVER THE UNIVERSE.

We are accustomed to distinguish between the *essential* kingdom of Christ, as He is God, and His *mediatorial* kingdom, as He is the God-man. In His Divine nature, being of the same substance and equal with the Father in power and glory, He is invested with the same authority and rule. In what may be termed the absolute kingdom of God, we are not warranted in separating the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost from a co-equal jurisdiction. But apart from this essential kingdom, the Mediator has acquired the right to rule in that complex nature which belongs to Him as the Son of God, and as the Son of man. The proper subjects of this kingdom are the Redeemed, who are organized in a visible society which is the Church, over which as Mediator He more directly rules. It is of this our Lord speaks, when He says: "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not

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from hence. (John xviii : 36.) Its spiritual nature is thus amply defined—a kingdom which is administered through the truth, because its jurisdiction is over the consciences and hearts of men—in which Christ alone enacts laws, appoints offices, institutes sacraments—and into which is allowed no intrusion of human legislation and authority. But whilst the authority of Christ is more immediate over the Church, it has a wider extension and holds all nature in its grasp. It is of this broader rule that I shall speak this morning, and that under the two following aspects:

I. AS TO THE GROUNDS UPON WHICH THE MEDIATOR CLAIMS THIS UNIVERSAL JURISDICTION; and

II. AS TO THE PRACTICAL RESULTS OF SUCH A BENEFICENT ARRANGEMENT.

I. The grounds upon which Christ administers this providential government, may be set forth in five particulars :

1. *It pertains to Him as the Eternal Word, by whose immediate agency the worlds were produced.* If you will collate the passages of Scripture bearing upon the point, you will easily gather that it is through the second Person of the Godhead the Deity is revealed, and the Divine power is exercised. The reasons for this lie too far concealed in the mystery of the Godhead, for the creature to explore : but the facts are too plainly given upon the authority of revelation, to be rejected. It is the official function of the Father, as the first in the order of thought, to represent GODHOOD, in its idea and reality, to all creatures to whom He is revealed. He must therefore always be conceived of as the absolute and the unknown. When Moses, in the passion of desire excited by communion with God in the cloud upon the mount, offered that over-bold prayer : “ I beseech thee, show me thy glory ”—the answer was returned which checked the presumptuous advance, “ thou canst not see my face ; for there shall no man see me and live.” (Ex. xxxiii : 20.) Job asks with tremendous emphasis in his tone, “ 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 measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.” (Job xi : 7, 9.) John declares that no man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” (John i : 18.) Paul affirms the inviolability of the Divine secrecy, “ dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto ; whom no man hath seen, nor can see.” (I Tim. vi : 16.) All the acts of God terminating without Himself, are consequently mediated through the Son : who as the second in the order of thought, and imme-

diately of the Father by an eternal begetting, is naturally the exponent of the Divine energy as it breaks forth in its manifestations.

But whatever may be thought of generalizations like this, we have adequate testimony that the Son is the immediate Efficient through whose producing agency the worlds were created. "All things were made by Him ; and without Him was not anything made, that was made." (John i : 3.) Again, "by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers ; all things were created by Him and for Him : and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." (Col : i : 16, 17.) Testimony could not be more explicit, nor the amplification more full. The Son created out of nothing the very matter itself, of which the worlds were fashioned. He gave to it alike its substance and its form. He stamped upon it all the properties which it is the business of science to analyze ; and He established those laws under which they operate and are developed. What can be more suitable than to assign to Him the office of governing and controlling that which He himself creates and upholds ? If He becomes incarnate, He brings, along with his Divine nature, His original authority and rule. In this Divinity, we have assurance of His competency to wield the power of which he cannot be divested ; and therefore He says : " all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

2. *The government of this lower world pertains to Him as the Second Adam.* This touches, you perceive, the second term of the Mediator's person, who was both the Son of God and the Son of man.

Adam was made in the image of God, not only as having intelligence, reflecting upon his Maker the glory of a rational soul ; but also that he might honor God through the operation of law. This too, not simply as he was a subject, in the obedience which he should render ; but as being in his sphere the maker and administrator of law. He was accordingly invested with immediate jurisdiction of the lower creation. The animals defiled in pairs before him to receive their names, in token of their subjection to his supremacy. Beyond this, he was constituted a ruler in the little State, as it then existed within the family ; out of which would spring the Patriarchal authority, adapting itself with indefinite elasticity to an almost indefinite expansion, and which must, in the lapse of years, make man a constructor of governments, and a legislator. Had not sin intervened, we might have been presented with the grand spectacle of a single monarchy over the whole earth. To us, accustomed to the disabled condition to which sin

has reduced us, the suggestion may appear sufficiently startling. But death being then unknown, the first Father would have continued in the exercise of the premiership to which he was at first appointed, and which no guilty descendant would have risen to dispute. In the absence of sin, too, there could have been no clashing of interests to break the peace of the world. With the diffusion of the race, power would necessarily be broken and distributed; all heading up at last in the progenitor from whom it was derived, who would everywhere be recognized as the vice-regent of Jehovah upon earth. It passes before the mind as a splendid vision, melting into air as soon as it is beheld. Alas, the earliest page of human history is stained with the record of the Fall, from which hour man has been incapable of this sublime trust. This disintegrating power of sin has been sadly proved, through all the centuries, in destroying the noblest social structures which human wisdom can erect. The earth is strewn with the wreck of broken empires. Nothing abides. Kingdoms emerge from obscurity, rise to greatness, and then crumble to decay. The glory of human legislation is perpetually turning into shame. We are constantly shocked by the swift declension in public morals; and wonder how a degenerate offspring can so soon betray the virtues which should have been their inheritance from an honored ancestry.

Shall God's purpose fail, in showing forth the beauty of justice and equity through a human administration of law? The answer is returned in the appointment of the second Adam, the archetypal man of whom the first Adam was but the shadow and the type, who seizes the falling sceptre and illustrates, in His kingly no less than in His priestly office, the glories of law. God speaks, by the mouth of His prophet, of the Saviour's human exaltation to this office: "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it—and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is, and I will give it Him." (Ezech. xxi: 27.) So David in the Eighth Psalm: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet." (Vv. 4-6.) Which entire passage the Apostle carries over in its typical application to Jesus Christ, as the second Adam: "but now we see not yet all things put under Him (man); but we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Heb. ii: 9.) It is impossible to escape the conclusion established in this comparison. Man was constituted in the beginning the monarch of earth. But this jurisdic-

tion, being forfeited by sin, can only be reclaimed and exercised by one who has fulfilled the conditions in which the first man has failed. Hence the Mediatorial sway of Jesus Christ over the creatures is a right inhering in Him as "the second man, the Lord from heaven." (I Cor. xi: 47.)

3. *This dominion belongs to Christ by virtue of His Father's grant.* This is the ground of the claim asserted in the text, "all power is given unto me." The Scriptures abound with testimony upon this point; "yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree—the Lord hath said unto me, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Then follow the words of the grant; "ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." (Ps. ii: 6-8.) The Prophet Isaiah declares, "unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given—and the government shall be upon His shoulder. \* \* \* Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this." (Isa. ix: 6, 7.) So Daniel, with even greater explicitness: "I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before Him: And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." (Dan. vii: 13, 14.) In the New Testament, we have the declaration from Christ's own lips, "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son;" and to make it plain that this grant of power is made to the Mediator, He adds, "and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man." (John v: 22, 27.) He builds His priestly intercession upon this grant; "as thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given Him." (John xvii: 2.) Paul sets forth this universal dominion in its exact relation to His supremacy in His Church; "when he raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." (Eph. i: 20-23.) And the climax of testimony is given by the "great voices in heaven, saying, the kingdoms of this world are become the king-

doms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever." (Rev. xi: 15.) The chain of proof runs through the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament; the holy seer in Patmos echoing the strain which fell from the harp of David, and from the lips of ancient prophets—until at last the dawn of the Millennium breaks upon the sight, when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Isa xi: 9.)

It does not impair the certainty of this fact, whether we can penetrate the reasons for this grant of power, or whether the arrangement be ascribed to a purely arbitrary exercise of the Divine will. This reason is distinctly unfolded by Paul, as the reward of Christ's voluntary humiliation and shame; "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, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. ii: 9-11.) But whether the reason be disclosed or withheld, in either case this grant is a clear ground of right; for the Father has undisputed authority to convey, and the Mediator entire competency to receive this trust.

4. *It is, further, a right which has been acquired through suffering and death.* If the title to empire be secured by grant, much more is it confirmed by purchase. This purchase was made through the obedience by which Christ "magnified the law and made it honorable." (Isa xlii: 21.) Let this be pondered, until the heart is filled with the amazement and the praise it should excite. The Eternal Son leaping from the bosom of the Father, in the sweep of His condescension, passes through all the ranks of angels down to man at the bottom of the scale. In the swift descent, He gathers in Himself all the intervening grades, and stands upon the earth to render an obedience which shall be representative of that which is due from intelligent creatures throughout the Universe. It is designed to uphold the majesty of the Divine government, and to consolidate the interests of God's whole empire. It was an "obedience unto death"; (Phil. ii: 8,) that is to say, an obedience which searched through the precept until it reached the penalty—an obedience which first honoring the commandment, also fulfilled the sanction. It is therefore a complete obedience, covering the law in both its divisions; surpassing, in its virtue and extent, the obedience hitherto rendered by all classes of being in heaven and upon earth. It stands therefore before the eye of the Universe as a protest against the disobedience of the creature, and a triumphant vindication of the Divine law. Sin had lifted its dreadful front, even in heaven and

before the throne of God. It had exhibited a fearful power to propagate itself, in the seduction and fall of man in Eden. Who could tell what ravages it might commit through the universe? How shall its progress be arrested, and security be given against any further infringement of the law? These were solemn questions which angels might raise, but were incompetent to resolve. The tremendous exigency could be met only by the resources of infinite wisdom and strength. "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law," (Gal. iv: 3,) to render a glorious and representative obedience; which should take off the stain cast upon it by the sin of angels and of men, and be the perfect pattern of that which the holiness of God demands. Upon the ground of this perfect vindication of the government and law of God, we can see how "an end of sin" may at length be made, in the everlasting punishment of that which already exists, in the eternal confirmation in blessedness of such as are pure, and in the final restraint put upon the spread of the dreadful leprosy beyond the limits in which Divine justice confines it forever. Surely the Redeemer has acquired, through this high achievement, the right to administer the law which He has vindicated from reproach, and to rule the empire which He has conserved!

Akin to this is Christ's title to supremacy, as the architect of grace; which, as an historic principle, is henceforth incorporated with the law equally with the justice whose claims it has cancelled. It is a thought ineffable in its sweetness—that the law, which has abundantly vindicated itself in the infliction of the penalty, should find its sanction to the holy in heaven, not in the threat of everlasting death, but in the assurance of eternal life. Wicked men and apostate angels are cast into the lake of fire, and justice is satisfied in their eternal overthrow. Again the majesty of law was honored when "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." And so complete was the homage rendered to the law in the sternness of its exactions, that the grace which met them all sits by the side of justice, wielding her queenly sceptre over all who are confirmed in holiness. He who wrought this grace in the forge of His own passion and death, is "exalted to be a prince and a saviour." Blessed fulfilment of the ancient type, when the glory of Divine grace shall be the covering of the law, the Shekinah upon the Mercy Seat, the visible glory of the Divine presence amongst His people forever! "And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads." (Rev. xxii: 3, 4.)

5. *This providential rule of the Mediator is necessary to his govern-*



ment in the Church. For this reason, it is termed His *subsidiary* kingdom: He is "the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." (Eph. i: 22, 23.)

For example: the Redeemer is pledged to the care and support of His people, which extends even to the things of this present life. His direction is, "take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed? \* \* But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." (Mat. vi: 31, 33.) But how shall Christ redeem this pledge of worldly maintenance, unless the control of nature be in His hands? It is not through miraculous intervention, but through the orderly working of natural laws, He leads us to expect the fulfilment of this promise. He must therefore command the seasons in their turn, in order to secure to us both seed-time and harvest. He must appoint the course of the sun—the rain and the dew must be at His disposal—and by this providential control of the natural world, He "giveth meat unto them that fear Him." (Ps. cxi: 5.)

Christ is still more solemnly pledged to the sanctification of those whom He has redeemed. The very design of grace, as stipulated in the Covenant with His Father, is "that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Eph. v: 26, 27.) But how shall the discipline be varied, through which the godly are weaned from this world, unless the entire administration of Providence be committed to Him for this purpose?

Observe, too, how the history of the Church is complicated with that of the nations of the earth, in every age. This greatly enlarges our view of the Mediatorial sway. For if the care of individual believers is exceedingly minute, and requires the universal presence of their Head, this control of nations and the subordination of them to the welfare of His Church demand resources of wisdom and power which are inconceivably grand. Yet no truth is more constantly affirmed in holy Scripture: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed. \* \* He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision." (Ps. ii: 1-4.) "The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice—the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." (Ps. xciii: 3, 4.)

It is scarcely necessary to press the thought further, either in the way of illustration or of argument. Under every aspect, the purposes of grace within and towards the Church depend largely, for their execution, upon that wider but subsidiary authority given to the Mediator, whereby He controls all nature, and administers all providence for the benefit of His Church. Without dwelling longer upon this topic, the right of Jesus Christ to this universal jurisdiction may safely be based upon the five grounds I have already indicated.

II. The consequences which flow from this momentous truth are sufficiently practical, to make a slight enumeration of them answer as the application of this discourse.

1. First of all, *it gives unity to history*. We read and hear much of "the philosophy of history." Exactly what is comprehended under this ambitious phrase, it might be difficult to determine. It assumes this, at least; that every fragment of history is the part of a stupendous whole, which can be interpreted aright only as its relation to that whole is discovered. A certain purpose or design is felt to pervade the whole, and every portion of that whole; which would prove, to the explorer fortunate enough to seize it, the thread of Ariadne guiding safely through a labyrinth of greater intricacy than that of ancient Crete. It is usually a learned effort to trace the progress of the human race, from a state of primitive barbarism, up to the degree of refinement and culture of the most civilized nations. All the influences which contribute to this result are carefully noted; the advancements and the retardations are calculated with the utmost precision, to ascertain the range and power of the general movement; that which is the most variable and contingent is sought to be reduced under the operation of recognized law; and the final conclusion is reached that history will have run its cycle, when all the tribes of men shall have passed through the same education, and universal man has reached the highest development of which his nature is capable. It is not the business of the pulpit to criticise the speculations of philosophy; and in this instance, it is wholly unnecessary. All that is so proudly written upon the perfectibility of man, and of the value of knowledge in hastening the approach of this golden age, may be conceded. It is not worth while to enter upon any issues that are not decisive. But when human history has reached its end in this world—what then? If the threads broken at the grave, are gathered up and woven by unseen hands into a new web beyond the stars—what then? Have we got the true "philosophy of history" at all, unless

it explains the purpose achieved by it in the ages to come, and throughout the continuity of being that loses itself in the vastness of eternity ?

Ah ! My hearers, the grand mistake of philosophy, vitiating its teachings from the Seven Sages of Greece to the thinkers of our own day, is that it makes man, and not God, the measure of all things. The Gospel does not directly teach science ; but it gives the principle which corrects many of its aberrations, when it adjusts man's relations aright, and makes God in all things supreme. See, how it applies here. If Jehovah be infinite in all his perfections, containing within Himself all that can be desired of wisdom, and power, and goodness—then the creation of intelligent beings to whom all this can be disclosed, is a purpose which is infinitely worthy of Him. And “the philosophy of history” will find its key in the continuous revelation which God will make of Himself, through the ages of eternity. Creation, Providence and Grace, are thus bound together in the will and purpose of the Most High. “The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and God-head. (Rom. i: 20.) The shifting scenes of Providence present the same glory to the view ; whilst in grace, He opens to us the infinite heart, and shows that “God is love.” Revelation finds its climax in the last, which includes and glorifies the other two. Thus, in the Mediatorial supremacy of Jesus Christ, human history gathers up its several parts ; and finds its unity in the completed discovery of Him who must otherwise have remained to us forever “the unknown God.”

The only key which unlocks the complications of ancient history, is the subordination of the World-Empires to the fortunes of God's ancient Church. Not more truly do the moons of Saturn move around that great planet, than were the kingdoms of antiquity the satellites revolving around the Hebrew Church, having their destinies determined by their relations to her. Beginning with the Nomadic tribes on the south and east, and Philistia, like a selvage border on the west of Palestine, to the stronger powers of Tyre and Sidon on the Mediterranean Sea—passing again from these to the more lasting kingdoms of Egypt and of Syria, of Babylon and Assyria, of Persia, of Greece and of Rome—we find them all standing in providential relations to ancient Israel, serving as ministers to accomplish God's declared purpose in behalf of His Church. Indeed, one of the great lessons to be drawn from the whole of Old Testament history, is just this—“that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever He will.” (Dan. iv : 32.) For this end, the prophet stands by the side of the historian, to make authoritative expo-

sition of passing events as accomplishing the designs of Him, who "doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." (Dan. iv : 35.) If we do not equally see this in modern history, it is because the prophet no longer speaks, and the interpretation is withheld. But the lesson that runs through two thousand years of the world's history under the exposition of the Holy Ghost, is surely a lesson intended for all time. The doctrine of the text has therefore a special value in the unity it gives to history, and in which is found the philosophy of its teaching.

2. *This Mediatorial supremacy explains to us also the intermingling of mercy with providence.* What an exquisite symbol of this was afforded in one of the earliest of John's visions in Patmos! "And immediately I was in the Spirit: and behold a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone; and THERE WAS A RAINBOW ROUND ABOUT THE THRONE, in sight like unto an emerald." (Rev. iv : 2, 3.) It is the emblem of mercy, and gives assurance of the staying of wrath. How easy to comprehend it, when it is the author of grace who executes justice, and who covers its claim with a perfect obedience He himself has rendered! Hence, the extension of common mercies to the guilty no less than to the righteous. It is under the administration of Him who "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." (Mat v : 45.) How long are the wicked spared, for the sake of the righteous with whom they are bound up in the relationships of life! and how often, like Sodom, are even guilty nations reprieved, which but for the Church enshrined within them would be consumed with the edge of God's avenging sword! It rolls an immense responsibility upon the Christian, but a responsibility to be accepted with joy, to remember that the Church of God is the true Palladium of a nation's safety. For when in all the past has a people been destroyed, in which a living Church was bearing aloft its testimony for the truth of God? Not until that Church becomes corrupt and apostate, will the covenant rainbow disappear around the throne which grace has converted into the seat of mercy.

3. Consider, finally, *the wealth of consolation to the Christian in the fact that to the Savior is committed the administration of Providence.* "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" (I Pet. iii : 13.) Are we not sheltered within the covenant, whose promise is that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." (Rom. viii : 28.) What shameful inconsistency in trusting to the Redeemer's care the soul

with its immortal destinies, and not the perishing body with the petty interests of this poor mortal state! Nothing removes from the Church the sad reproach which this contradiction involves, but the want of attention to the supremacy of Christ announced in the text. Let the mind be fully persuaded, that "all power is given in heaven and in earth," to Him who hath redeemed the soul from death, and it will become easy to remit our cares to Him that careth for us. It is the believer's privilege to lay the burden of care and toil, and grief upon the bosom of His Lord, in obedience to the Apostolic injunction—"be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." (Phil. iv: 6.) For, "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him: for he knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust." (Ps. ciii: 13, 14.) In view of this gracious Headship of our blessed Redeemer over the universe, what remains but to convert the doctrine of this discourse into a doxology of praise? Let us unite our voice with that of the great multitude which, "as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings," John heard in heaven, "saying, salvation, and glory, and honor, and power unto the Lord our God. Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great: Alleluia, for the Lord • God omnipotent reigneth." (Rev. xix: 1, 6.)

## XXXIV.

### LOOKING AT THE UNSEEN.

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II COR. IV: 18. "*While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.*"

This is one of the passages so frequent in the writings of Paul, in which human language wrestles in its agony to utter the deep things of God. Word is doubled upon word, and emphasis is piled upon emphasis, in the effort to construct a form of speech which shall not break down under the intensity of the thought. Read the paragraph, and notice how every word is weighted with meaning. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment"—ah, who that lies under the crush of a great sorrow ever thinks it to be *light*! And when grief lengthens its shadow along the path of life, until it deepens into the darkness of the grave, who feels it to be *brief*! Yet in the contrast with all that is to follow, the Apostle contradicts the exaggeration of sorrow; and with a fivefold intensification of his own, describes the blessedness in which this discipline will terminate. See how the language glows with the fervor of his inspired passion; "for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us—glory." Had he been content with the use of this one majestic word, we would pronounce the sentiment sublime; a word so vast in its import, that we cannot bring it within the compass of a definition—its very vagueness magnifying the objects which are dimly seen through the haze—but which as completely fills with its splendor the bounds of our conception, as the sun fills the earthly horizon with the brightness of his beams. But with all of its dim magnificence, the word "glory," is too narrow for the Apostle's thought—it is to him a "weight of glory." It is no empty cloud drenched with the light of the setting sun, whose crimson folds overlaid with burnished gold seem to hang like curtains over the windows of the palace of the Great King; but rather that sun itself, a globe of glory—whose solid joy rests, with the weight of its true substance, upon the heart which is only too happy under the pressure of its amazing riches. Will this strong utterance suffice? No; for it is an "exceeding weight of glory;" a glory always outrunning the thought which seeks to measure it—which widens in its range and passes beyond the limit of human comprehension—always the glory which exceeds the bounds of present expe-

rience. And this thought is turned twice over upon us, with the thickness of a double emphasis; for it is "a more exceeding," and then "a far more exceeding weight of glory." The whole energy of language is spent, when the Apostle adds: "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The line of human thought may be stretched over the whole length of time; but when it touches the shore of eternity, its measure is exceeded. Inspiration itself can discover no finite equivalent, in which to render the dimensions of the infinite and the eternal; and Paul himself sinks under the exhaustion of the attempt to portray the future glory of the redeemed.

It is not my purpose, however, to dwell upon the uses of sanctified affliction; but rather to present what Paul seems to consider as necessary to that result, THE ADVANTAGE OF A STEADY CONTEMPLATION OF THINGS UNSEEN AND ETERNAL.

I. *It brings repose to the spirit amidst the ceaseless changes of life.* All things on earth are in a constant flow. Our very bodies, which seem to be the same from year to year, are really in a perpetual flux—throwing off and replacing, at every instant, the particles of which they are composed. The everlasting mountains, as we fondly term them, waste imperceptibly under the abrasion of the elements. The sea, with its ceaseless surge, gains upon the shore. The earth is every where changing its features, under the silent operation of forces imbedded, from the first, within its solid frame. The heavens present their shifting scenery of cloud and sunlight; whilst the stars, which for centuries have smiled out of the darkness upon us, recede deeper into space; and make room for younger constellations, which seem as though born out of their death. Change is written upon all that we behold, the theme of pious reflections to moralists of every age. The string is thus mournfully touched by the Royal Preacher: "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually; and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full: unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. All things are full of labor, man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done, is that which shall be done—and there is no new thing under the sun." (Ecl. i: 4-9.) Under the weariness of this endless change and iteration, what a relief it is to fix the mind upon God who is unchangeable, and upon Eternity which is constant! As the dove of Noah floated with burdened wing over the waters, and found no resting

place but the ark ; so the spirit of man turns from this sea of restlessness to Him who is from "everlasting to everlasting," "in whose sight a thousand years are but as yesterday when it is past," "the Father of lights with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." The voice of Christian song breathes out the sentiment of security and peace which is thus begotten :

"Thy throne eternal ages stood,  
Ere seas or stars were made ;  
Thou art the ever living God,  
Were all the nations dead.

Eternity, with all its years,  
Stands present to thy view ;  
To Thee there's nothing old appears ;  
Great God ! there's nothing new.

Our lives through various scenes are drawn,  
And vexed with trifling cares ;  
While Thine eternal thought moves on  
Thine undisturbed affairs."

Disastrous change blots out what is beautiful in the moral, as well as in the physical world. We watch through years the promise of our children's infancy and youth ; and whilst we clasp them in the fulfilment of all that we had dared to hope, lo, death stings them in our passionate embrace, and they are stifled beneath the kisses of our love. Every day, some tie is snapped which binds us to earth ; new and feebler ties replace those that perish—until the exhausted heart loses its power to reproduce, and we stand alone amidst the surging crowd around us. It is not change alone, but the sorrow which change brings when it breaks up the relations and friendships of life :

"Friend after friend departs ;  
Who hath not lost a friend ?  
There is no union here of hearts,  
That finds not here an end,  
Were this frail world our final rest,  
Living or dying none were blest."

Blessed be God, that we are able to look at the things which are not seen ; and thus take heart to fulfil the duties here, which will come back to us in the sweet rewards of heaven hereafter ! The affections which are bruised in these earthly bereavements, are only transferred to the world in which there is no more death—to bloom, with immortal freshness and fragrance, in the new life with which they are inspired before the throne of God.



Consider too the disappointment we experience in the miscarriage of the wisest plans and the sudden overthrow of hopes and fortune. A long life is spent in building up what proves to be a house of cards, that tumbles into ruin in the first financial disaster. The vast majority of our race is doomed to struggle with the energy of despair against immediate starvation, with not a spark of hope to relieve for an instant the gloom of an existence burdened with care; whilst the sad reverses of human fortune are perpetually burying beneath their ruins multitudes who once were regarded with envy as the pampered children of wealth. Who can unlock the stores of anxiety and care endured in fending off the anticipated bankruptcy,—and the despair which crushed out all the energies of the soul beneath its weight, when at length the crash came! How wearisome and sad it is! And where shall the spirit find repose, except as it looks far off over the changes of life to the “crown of glory which fadeth not away.” (II Pet. v. 4.) If there be a spectacle more refreshing than another to the angels as they gaze upon this world of sorrow, it is that of a good man under adversity; who accepts this life as one of pure discipline, recognizes the love of his Divine Father in all the sufferings he endures, accepts the good with gratitude and the evil with patience—who is neither intoxicated by prosperity, nor disheartened by misfortune—but preserves the sweetness of his temper in all, and grows every day more “meet for the saints’ inheritance in light.” What shall better tone the spirit and hold it to a just moderation in joy and sorrow alike, than the steady contemplation of things unseen? In view of these, the disturbances we encounter here appear as the impertinences of a dream when one awakes.

“His hand the good man fastens on the skies,  
And bids earth roll; nor heeds its idle whirl.”

II. *The presence of the unseen gives assurance of the final triumph of truth and rectitude.* Even grief with all its sadness does not throw so dark a shadow upon the world, as this bitter and enduring conflict between the powers of good and evil. It is the work of years, for example, to build up in your boy a virtuous and noble character; and when it seems to you strong as the everlasting granite, how are you sometimes overwhelmed with disappointment and sorrow, in seeing it crumble like a bank of sand under the first temptations to which it is exposed! The same degeneracy obtains upon a larger scale, and we stand aghast at the swift declension in public morals. Corruption and vice spread their taint through the whole frame of society, which threatens to dissolve at once in its utter rottenness. It is not merely the conflict between virtue and crime which saddens, but the frequent defeat of the one, and the brazen ascendancy of the other. The heart which bravely contends with the profligacy of the

times, is called to weep despondent tears when truth lies buried in a protest awaiting a future resurrection. We sicken at the dismal prospect, and wonder what the end will be; until we think of God, and gather courage to believe that in Him truth and righteousness must at length prevail.

It is however in the sphere of religion this conflict is fiercest, and the issue is apparently the most doubtful. In that preliminary experience which passes under the name of conviction for sin, the two forces are drawn out in array; and the battle never ceases, until we sleep in death. How often is the cry of anguish wrung from the believer, under the pressure of this conflict: "Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It is only the sight of the unseen and eternal which enables faith to respond, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. vii: 24, 25.) Multiply this individual experience by the thousands upon thousands whom Divine grace has brought into the Redeemer's kingdom; then multiply the product by all the generations, which have lived and died since God has planted His Church upon the earth; and we shall begin to have some conception of the severity of this struggle between holiness and sin. Let those who fret over the small results achieved by the pious in any given locality and period, consider the desperate nature of the enterprise to which the Church is summoned. She finds a whole generation of sinners opposed to holiness and God, whom she must undertake to subdue. If completely successful, the triumph dies in the very moment of the victory. She has no leisure to sit down in the enjoyment of her spoils. The next generation is a generation of sinners, and the battle must be at once renewed with these. As fast as the Church has trained a race for immortality and glory, these are no sooner swept into heaven, than she must buckle on her armor for new toils in the never ceasing battle with Satan and with sin.

Ah! What shall the issue be, if the Church at times suffers defeat and is put to rout? If in these sad discomfitures, she becomes dispirited and throws down her arms? And what, if treason finds its way into her ranks: and the truth, which is her only weapon, be renounced and betrayed? What, if heresy shall poison her creed, and paralyze her faith? What, if scandals arise in her own borders, and the enemy be found in possession of her fortresses? What, if schism split her blessed communion into a thousand feuds, which devour the strength that should be hurled against the common foe? Alas! Are not the pages of her history full of melancholy wranglings and apostacies, when the truth was betrayed and the Saviour was "wounded in the house of His friends?" Have there not been long seasons of declension and heresy, when the leprosy of false doctrine has smitten the camp of the Lord's people, whilst the Lord's enemies were

laying waste His territory, and destroying the souls of men? What shall those do "that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done" in these times of declension? What shall give them courage to endure, when others are found faithless? It needs only one look at the things not seen, to reassure the fainting heart of the final triumph of truth and rectitude. In Jehovah all truth dwells; and He is infinite in His resources of wisdom and power. How is it possible that His cause shall be defeated? And what are these temporary reverses but the stratagems of His skill, to make the display of His triumph more glorious in the end? "The Kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision." (Ps. ii: 2-4.) Hope and courage are kindled in the armies of the Great King, when they hear His voice "declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient time the things that are not yet done—saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." (Isa. xlvi: 10.)

III. *The sense of things eternal gives endurance to bear the pains of present discipline.* I need scarcely remind you that this is the precise connexion in which the words of the text are found: "for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." This sanctified use of afflictions does not accrue, unless we look away from things temporal to things eternal. It is not difficult to trace the influence thus exerted, in giving strength to the children of sorrow. The only key to the mystery of human suffering, is the relation it sustains to God's purposes of grace. That He should endow man with such vast powers of thought and will, and then overwhelm him with disappointment in the execution of his fondest schemes—that He should endow the creature with such capacity for love and open to him such treasures of affection in the sweet relationships of earth, it would seem, only to bruise the spirit with the bitter bereavements which we constantly sustain—these are the mysteries of human life which philosophy can never explain. The solution can be found alone in the dreadful fact of sin, and in the gracious purpose of God to deliver His children from its power. With this clue we thread our way through the labyrinth, and find ourselves able to interpret the dispensations of Providence, otherwise so dark. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he, whom the father chasteneth not? \* \* \* Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous;

nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." (Heb. xii: 6, 7, 11.)

This explains to us not only the *fact*, but also the *severity* of the Divine discipline. Let us understand, once for all, that there is nothing unreal or fictitious with God. It is the folly of the world to suppose the contrary. Men in their blindness regard the Divine existence as an inference merely of their own logic—that, except as they postulate Him in the chain of necessary causes, He has no being outside the circle of their own deductions. I warn you that, as we draw nigh to God, we touch the border of stern and unalterable facts. Everything in God, and about God, is awfully true and real. His government and law are real; and lay their inexorable demands upon every living conscience of creatures in heaven, earth or hell. His justice is real, when it denounces "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile." (Rom. ii: 8, 9.) His mercy is equally substantive and true, when it contrives the way to save the sinner from eternal death without impairing the integrity of the law, or relaxing the bond under which the creature is held to obedience. The substitution of Christ Jesus for guilty sinners was a real offering of the just for the unjust, and the penalty of sin was not lightly laid upon the person of the adorable sufferer. The change wrought by the Holy Spirit in conversion is no superficial reformation of manners, but a true restoration of life to souls that are dead. Adoption into the family of God is no legal fiction, such as obtains in human jurisprudence, the shadow without the substance. On the contrary "power is given to as many as believe in His name, to BECOME the sons of God; which ARE BORN, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of men, but of God." (John i: 12, 13.) It will not therefore surprise you to find the same reality in the discipline by which our affections are weaned from the world and fixed upon heaven. The strokes of the Almighty are intended to be felt. The sorrows, which deepen upon us as we advance in years, are not dreams of the imagination. Let those testify, who have felt the iron enter again and again into the soul; and to whom life would be a desolate waste, but for the green and fragrant memories which lie along the past.

But when the true character of this world is discovered, as being an educational institute in which man is trained for nobler destinies in the world to come, courage is infused to bear the discipline which accomplishes so gracious a purpose. We enter at once into the Apostle's triumph, and "glory in tribulations also." The highest reach of human philosophy is bare submission to that which is inevitable. Divine grace, however, transforms evil into good, as soon as we "know that tribulation

worketh patience—and patience, experience—and experience, hope—and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.” (Rom. v: 3, 5.) This is triumph; when pain and grief are not only disarmed of their sting, but made to serve as ministers of grace to those who shall be the “heirs of salvation.” The entire secret of Christian endurance, and of sanctified sorrow, lies in the contrast which is discovered between “the things which are seen,” and “the things which are not seen.”

IV. The last advantage which I will enumerate, is that *it places this life before us distinctively as the sphere of duty and of toil.* I desire to utter no commonplaces upon this topic, which makes human life a real epic. I shall be content if I can impress you with a single suggestion: of all beings in the universe, the redeemed sinner has the most splendid opportunity to fill a career of usefulness and glory. The grand significance of this earthly history is scarcely felt by the most thoughtful and devoted of those “who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality.” The conflict with sin is not a single conflict in the experience of individual saints, but it is a part of that mighty struggle between the forces of darkness and light begun before man was fashioned from the dust. And the triumph which is secured in the sanctification of the believer, is but the pledge of that final victory when God shall make an end of sin and holiness shall prevail throughout His blessed empire.

The introduction of sin into the universe is a mystery, which it is no part of my purpose here to attempt to explain. For reasons best known to Him who permitted it, and which we can at least partially explore, the standard of rebellion was first raised in heaven itself. Jude tells us of “the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, and are reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.” (v. 6.) Wonderful mystery! the seal of which may not be broken until we stand together upon the mount of God, and learn in the light of Jehovah’s throne the connexion of all worlds, and the wide spreading relations of His infinite will. Sharp was the conflict, and decisive the issue, when the first rebels were hurled into the “everlasting fire” which inflexible justice had “prepared for the Devil and his angels.” So far holiness had triumphed, and the first act in the great drama was closed.

It was however not the *destruction* of sin, but only its defeat. All the resources of the Divine Being were not yet disclosed, nor was the worst evil of sin as yet perceived. Its fearful power to propagate itself remained to be seen in the fall of a second race, with the first transgressor as the tempter. What consternation must have been produced through the ranks

of the holy, when the fatal leprosy had struck another world, and another race lay prostrate beneath the curse! Shall sin have power to spread from orb to orb, and shall no class be safe from its dire contagion? Is the conflict to be eternal, and must Omnipotence be forever tasked in suppressing new revolts? He, whose prerogative it is to bring good out of evil, allowed this extension of sin in order to its final overthrow. The resources must be evoked, not of power alone, but of wisdom and of grace. God must be known as Love—and this revelation of Himself shall be made in the complete extirpation of that which had wrought such disturbance in the universe. He will “make an end of sins, and bring in everlasting righteousness.” (Dan. ix: 24.) For this the earth was built, that it might be the theatre of redemption. For this man was created, that in his history might be solved the awful problem of sin, and the last battle be fought which will shut it up in its own place forever.

You need not that I should tell you the old story of the cross; nor how “Jesus, our Lord, was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” (Rom. iv: 25.) It is only necessary that I should remind you of all that was involved in this humiliation and triumph of the Redeemer. Not only was personal salvation thus secured to all who accept Christ as their substitute under the law, and make His perfect righteousness their own; but sin itself was slain, “and death and hell were cast into the lake of fire.” (Rev. xx: 14.) When the dispensation of the Gospel shall be brought to its close—when the elect shall be gathered in from the four quarters of the globe, and Christ shall appear, “without sin,” “to be glorified in his Saints,”—then “shall He sit upon the throne of His glory,” and in the final banishment of all the wicked the last result of grace will be reached. Then shall be closed forever the battle between holiness and sin. The separation will be complete of the righteous from the wicked. Sin and Satan will have exhausted their resources. All who have taken part with them in opposition against God, “will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.” (II Thes. i: 9.) Sin will be confined in the prison of despair, with no power to break forth any more; and all the rest of the universe shall be happy in holiness and in eternal exemption from temptation and from fear. Glorious consummation of grace, when redeeming love shall thus make an end of sin, and all the universe shall be filled with righteousness and peace!

Do we fully understand, my brethren, the significance of our own personal history in connexion with all this? What a splendid privilege is ours, to take part with the Redeemer in the glory of this last struggle with

the powers of darkness, and in the glory of the victory which shall ensue ! It is no mean warfare in which we are embarked, if thus associated in the outworking of all that is strong and virtuous in the character and purposes of Jehovah our King. The temptations we encounter, may be sharp ; the sacrifices to which we are summoned, may be severe ; the toil we undergo, may be constant ; but the victory is sure, and the triumph splendid. It is impossible that we shall know defeat. Reverses we may encounter, but not final disaster.

“What though the prince of darkness rage,  
And waste the fury of his spite :  
Eternal chains confine him down  
To fiery deeps and endless night.

What though thine inward lusts rebel ;  
’Tis but a struggling gasp for life :  
The weapons of victorious grace  
Shall slay thy sins and end the strife.”

Only let us look across the border at the crown which awaits the conqueror, and we shall esteem this life precious because of the conflicts in which we engage. If there be a lot which angels might envy, it is that which grace assigns to us of concluding the Lord’s battle against sin, and of chaunting at last the triumphal song to Him who has “redeemed us by His blood, and made us kings and priests unto our God.” (Rev. v: 9.)

It is not needful to enlarge these thoughts. One conclusion fastens itself upon every mind : that the only consistency, whether of character or of conduct, is to be had “by looking at the things not seen.” Only then, have we a true understanding of the things which are seen, which else by their false light would mislead and betray. Only then, are we supplied with motives that are constant and pure. Only then, are we inspired with the lofty courage which can “endure as seeing Him who is invisible.” But with eternity as our measure, we assign a true dignity to this life as the season of enterprise and toil in which are to be secured the prizes held out from heaven to our sanctified ambition. And perhaps, in the experience of all this, we shall better comprehend the Apostle’s definition of faith as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” What must be the power of that principle which gives reality to the eternal world, and causes the objects of sense to disappear as the shadows which are lost in the substance ! Let the prayer of the disciples be our prayer, this day : “Lord, increase our faith !” So shall we hourly feel the spell of that bright world which throws back its glory upon this, taking the gloom out of sorrow and the sting out of death.

## XXXV.

### THE GOSPEL, THE POWER OF GOD.

ROM. I: 16. "*I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth.*"

Christianity may be viewed under three aspects, in each of which it is immeasurably superior to any system with which it may be compared. As a *scheme of speculative truth*, it excels human philosophy both in the *range* and in the *method* of its teachings. It tells of God, his nature and perfections, his creative power and providential care: it tells of man, his faculties and destiny, of eternity and its issues. Whilst its aim is higher than the inculcation either of science or philosophy, its scope includes both. No discovery in the one, nor sound principle in the other, but serves to strengthen its evidences or to illustrate its mysteries. But whilst it includes both, it overpasses both in the disclosure of truths upon which earthly oracles are dumb. It teaches not by virtue of human discovery, but upon the authority of an inspired testimony; by which conjecture is reduced to knowledge, and opinion is converted into faith. The meaning of the record once ascertained, we are lifted into certainty—even as to matters which reason confesses her inability to explore.

In the *sphere of morals*, it transcends all human ethics—not only that it places man in wider relations, sets forth duty with greater precision, and supplies principles of action which are higher—but pre-eminently in the fact that it presents a more perfect and unvarying standard of obligation in the Divine law, emancipating us from the shifting canons of utility and expediency, or from the still more capricious sense of fitness and propriety. We are no longer subject to the whims of fancy or of taste, but have a definite law for the measurement both of character and of conduct.

The full *power* of Christianity, however, is not felt, until we accept it as a Gospel—until we rise into the sphere of religion, and until we consider it as the kind of religion which is suited to the case of a sinner. This precisely is what the text affirms; that "the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth." When we wish to be most deeply impressed with a sense of God's power, we are apt to select



our illustrations from the visible and material universe—perhaps for the reason, that the movement of physical force gives us the first conception of what we call power; which, once obtained, is readily transferred from the sphere of the natural to that of the spiritual and moral. But you will observe that the Apostle Paul finds the highest evidences of Divine power, not in the kingdom of nature, but of grace. True, he proves the heathen to be without excuse, since, “His eternal power and Godhead are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made,” (Rom. i: 20). But for one reference to the works of creation, he makes a dozen to the scheme of grace, when he would impress us with the vast resources of Jehovah’s wisdom and power. Hear him in the text, “for I am not ashamed”—which is but a suggestive way of describing the triumphant joy with which he contemplates “the Gospel of Christ,” as being “the power of God unto salvation.” He brings out the thought on this its positive side, in Galatians: “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” (Gal. vi: 14). Again, he writes to the Corinthians: “the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God. \* \* \*

But we preach Christ crucified—unto the Jews, a stumbling block; and unto the Greeks, foolishness—but to them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God, (I Cor. i: 18, 23, 24). In his epistle to the Ephesians, he prays that they might know “what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe; according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.” (Eph. ii: 19, 20). These are but instances of the frequency and unction with which Paul sets forth THE GOSPEL AS EXHIBITING THE FULNESS OF DIVINE POWER: which is the topic to which I will restrict your thoughts this morning.

Two difficulties obviously oppose the salvation of a sinner. The first is external, arising from his relations to the Divine law as one condemned under the penalty: the second is internal, arising from his actual character unfitting him for fellowship with his Maker. In other words, the guilt and the disability of sin must both be removed: the one, in the complete justification of the believer—the other, in his perfect sanctification. You perceive then the two directions, on either side of the line which the text draws before us, where we are to look for the illustrations of God’s power which the Gospel of Christ shall furnish.

#### I. THE PROOF OF POWER IN THE REMOVAL OF HUMAN GUILT.

We are so familiar with the idea of pardon, as not to appreciate the

difficulty of applying it. Indeed, nothing seems to us easier. If God be independent and sovereign, He has only to will it; and pardon is secured. The delusion is confirmed by the false analogies which are drawn from governments administered by men. If these, confessedly limited and imperfect, may yet exercise a dispensing power in setting aside the penalty of law; how much more may that government do the same, which is perfect in its character, and absolute in its dominion. Men do not stop to consider that this perfection itself creates the difficulty in the case. An ill-jointed machine may not be the worse for its irregular movements, which are in a sense allowed and provided for; whilst one that is perfect in its structure flies to pieces, as soon as it deviates a hair's breadth from its original course. It must be remembered that the Divine law, springing, as it does, from the nature of God, must invariably and exactly express His perfections. Its inextinguishable vitality and force are due, not simply to its being the utterance of His sovereign will, but to its being the exposition of His holy character. All His attributes are in it, to be announced and to be vindicated. They leap forth upon transgression and pursue the criminal, just as the lightning flashes out from an angry cloud. They cannot be held in abeyance, any more than mortal power can seize the thunderbolt and imprison it again in the cloud whence it has escaped. If then the holiness, the justice and the truth of God unite in pronouncing death upon the transgressor, where is the room for pardon, until these very attributes equally concur in the provision of mercy? Here is the problem to be solved: how shall a holy God pardon the sinner, when that same holiness decrees his punishment? How shall the law, which exactly expounds the character of God, set the attributes of his nature at variance? How is it possible, in the administration of a government which admits of no deviation from truth, that mercy shall find a channel for its outflow; except that channel be cut in the granite rectitude which underlies the law itself? It is just this, in the Apostle's mind, which makes the Gospel the power of God to salvation; "for therein," he adds, "is the **RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD** revealed from faith to faith." (v. 17.) Let us break this truth into its component parts.

I. *Power is displayed in constituting the substitute who shall take the sinner's place under the law.* It should be accepted as an axiom, that the law is unchangeable like its Author whom it discloses. It can never, in a single particular, recede from its original demand. If violated, it must be repaired; through an atonement, in the penalty—through a vicarious obedience in the precept. Upon this point, there is not room for the slightest dispute. The law cannot be dishonored through its subjects. If pardon be possible, it is not until law has vindicated its claims in the per-

son of a substitute who undertakes the cause of the guilty. Thus "mercy and truth are met together." (Ps : lxxxv : 10.) Grace provide the Day-man, while justice acknowledges the satisfaction which he renders.

But here the difficulty emerges, which wisdom and power must combine, to surmount. If this substitute be sought among the creatures, then his obedience is due for himself and cannot be set over to the account of another. It can have no intrinsic merit, by which to secure the salvation of the lost. It is destitute of value, except as it may ensure his individual acceptance before God ; whilst the impossibility of supererogation bars the transfer of his righteousness into the possession of another. Clearly then, the eye of the lawgiver must range above created beings—and find within His own pavilion of light, and lying in His own bosom, the substitute who can interpose the assistance which shall be effective. What is required, is the obedience of one not himself a subject of law, and with whom it shall be entirely optional to assume the obligations of another party. This difficulty, I need scarcely remind you, finds its solution in the tripersonal subsistence of the Deity—and in the appointment of the Son, by the Father, to undertake the work of human redemption.

But this redemption consists in the endurance of the curse ; and how shall the Divine suffer and die ? Nay more, how shall the great contradiction be compassed of bringing Him under the jurisdiction of the law, who is supreme over it and from whose nature, as their fountain and source, issue its eternal distinctions of right and wrong as recognized by the human conscience ? These interrogatories plunge us into the mystery of the incarnation—"the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." (I Tim: iii. 16.) Behold the power which brings together, in the person of Jesus Christ, the Divine and the human—that which is above law to glorify, and that which is under law to obey—that which can protect the interests of heaven, and that which can represent the wants of earth—that which can assert the prerogative of mercy, and that which can meet the exactions of justice. View the stretch of omnipotence over the whole compass of being, and the bringing together its two opposite poles ; being infinite, uncaused, eternal, as it is found in God—being finite, conditioned, created, as it is found in man.

The bare conjunction of these extremes in the one person of the Mediator, should sufficiently impress us with the power that accomplishes it ; but we have not yet touched the core of the mystery. The humanity of Christ might have been *created*, precisely as that of Adam in the beginning. This however would not have put Him in relation with our race : nor would the right of redemption be vested in one so totally a stranger to our blood. This substitute must not only be man, but a member of the

class whom He comes to redeem. He must not only be *created*, He must be *born* a man. Yet how shall He be brought under this law of descent, and yet escape the terrible inheritance of sin which comes by derivation to all others of the race? Behold another manifestation of power in that supernatural conception in the womb of a virgin, estopping the entail of sin by making him only "the seed of the woman." "And the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." (Luke i: 35, compared with Gen. iii: 15.) Thus doubly is power revealed, in the union of Christ's Divinity with the humanity which it assumed, and in the supernatural creation of that which yet must conform to the conditions of a natural birth.

But when the Divine and the human are made to co-exist in the one person of our Lord, what shall be the relation in which they mutually stand? Shall the Divine overshadow and oppress the human? or shall the human absorb the Divine? or shall they stand apart without mixture or confusion, yet so blent in the unity of the complex person that, by a communication of properties, what is done in either shall be held as done in both? Wonderful power of God, which holds together these contrarieties in one consistent and truthful paradox! Wonderful constructiveness of grace, by which the righteousness wrought is alike human in the nature that renders it, and Divine in the nature which glorifies it! The "righteousness revealed from faith to faith," whereby "the Gospel of Christ" becomes "the power of God unto salvation!"

2. *Power is displayed in sustaining Christ's human nature under the pressure of the penalty.* I am unable to see how Jesus could be a proper substitute for the guilty, unless He actually sustained the curse beneath which they lay condemned. Nor do the expressions of Scripture, touching this point, warrant any modification in the penal character of the sufferings which He endured. Judge for yourselves, my hearers, the import of language like this: "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. (II Cor. v: 21.) "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." (Gal. iii: 13.) "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed." (I Pet. ii: 24.)

Accordingly, the expressions are most intense which describe the reality of our Lord's distress, in suffering for the guilty." I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is

melted in the midst of my bowels." (Ps. xxii: 14.) Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none." (Ps. lxxix: 1, 2, 20.) Such is the pathetic strain with which prophecy anticipates his sorrow; nor is that of history less sad in depicting its fulfilment. The Apostle speaks of "the strong crying and tears with which He offered prayers and supplications unto Him that was able to save Him from death." (Heb. v: 7.) The evangelist records the anguish of Gethsemane, "when His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." (Luke xxii: 44.) Not less significant was the great horror of darkness at the crucifixion, nor the bitter wail, "my God, why hast thou forsaken me." (Luke xxiii: 44, 46.)

How could that which was merely human in Christ abide the full infliction of his Father's wrath? This question gathers deeper emphasis when it is considered that the Redeemer was the only being in all the universe against whom this judicial displeasure of God was ever let out at once, and laid down in bulk. Even the spirits in Hell have an eternity in which their sorrow can be broken in parts, as they are able to sustain the pressure. But this sufferer must be able to say "it is finished;" as He went through, in that one hour of darkness and desertion, to the very bottom of the curse. Had not the human been upheld by the Divine, must it not have sunk in utter exhaustion beneath the weight of that wrath which measures out the just desert of sin? Behold the tokens of that power by which He was mysteriously sustained, in the ministry of angels sent twice to strengthen him after the temptation in the wilderness, and after the agony in the garden. (Mat. iv: ii; Luke, xxii: 43). We know not how this strength was, through such agency, conveyed to his sinking frame: but it is the symbol of a great fact; that without the intervention of Divine aid, the sufferer must have been consumed by the heat of that anger which unrepressed burns to the lowest hell.

"He knelt; the Savior knelt and prayed,  
 When but His Father's eye  
 Looked through the lonely garden's shade,  
 On that dread agony:  
 The Lord of all above, beneath,  
 Was bowed with sorrow unto death.

The sun set in a fearful hour,  
 The stars might well grow dim,  
 When this mortality had power  
 So to o'ershadow Him!  
 That He who gave man's breath might know  
 The very depths of human woe.

He proved them all; the doubt, the strife,  
 The faint, perplexing dread,  
 The mists that hang o'er parting life,  
 All gathered round his head:  
 And the Deliverer knelt to pray—  
 Yet passed it not, that cup, away.

It passed not, though the stormy wave  
 Had sunk beneath His tread;  
 It passed not, though to Him the grave  
 Had yielded up its dead.  
 But there was sent Him from on high,  
 A gift of strength for man to die.

3. *There was vast exhibition of power in exalting Him, through the resurrection, to universal Mediatorial authority and rule.* This resurrection and this exaltation are expressly claimed to have been accomplished by might: "according," says the Apostle, "to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised him from the dead, and set him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." (Eph. i: 19-21). Even were it not distinctly stated, it must necessarily be inferred from the character of the work itself. What less than creative power can restore animation to the wasting flesh, hold it back from crumbling into dust, arrest the spirit in its separate flight far into the unseen world, and re-establish the mysterious link by which the two are married in immortal wedlock? What a stupendous transformation of the properties of matter, in that which is recorded of the Lord's body after the resurrection; and how were the laws of nature apparently contravened, in the visible ascension of that body through the clouds into heaven? True. "there is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body" (I Cor. xv: 44) and both unquestionably have their own governance. But it is "the natural body" which alone we know on earth; and "the spiritual body" is that which succeeds it by a marvellous transfiguration. What must be the resources of that power by which the one is converted into the other?

Think further, if you please, of the change wrought in what is purely human in Christ Jesus when, in company with the Divine, it is "seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high;" (Heb. 3: Acts ii: 33 and v: 31) and is there exalted to universal priesthood and royal supremacy. It is not as the Son of God alone, but equally as the Son of man, that "the Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." (Ps. cx: 1.) It is not for me to expand, much less to explain, the thought. The suggestion of it suffices to fill the soul with adoring wonder: how it is that God's power confederates the human

nature in Christ with the Divine, in a state of exaltation and of glory;—how “this man,” Christ Jesus, shall have capacity to “judge the world in righteousness, whereof we have assurance in that God hath raised Him from the dead—(Acts xvii: 31)—how the human in Him shall be glorified into power to wield that Providence which is committed to His hands; (Mat. xxviii: 18.) Nay more, when the Kingdom shall be delivered to the Father, that God may be all in all, (I Cor. xv: 24,) how He shall remain in His complex person, the God-man, eternally the head of His redeemed people and the fountain of their blessedness and joy. Under all these forms, we behold the power of God exhibited in co-ordinating the finite factor in our Lord’s person with the infinite and eternal, so necessary to the fulfilment of His functions as the Priest and King of His Church. In revealing the righteousness by which the sinner is justified forever, the Gospel is truly “the power of God to salvation.”

II. We consider next THE EVIDENCE OF POWER, IN THE SUBJECTIVE CHANGE WROUGHT WITHIN THE SINNER HIMSELF.

1. And right upon the threshold, *is the power displayed in regeneration, when we are made new creatures in Christ Jesus.* The highest prerogative is that of bestowing life—it is creation, in the fullest conception of the term. Of course, the nobler the life, the more exalted is the power that conveys it. As you rise through the degrees of the scale from the lowest form of animal life, to the highest, intellectual and moral, your sense of the power is proportionally enlarged. What then must be the majesty of that influence, which can pour the life of holiness into the human soul—a Divine life whereby, as Peter expresses it, we “might be partakers of the Divine nature?” (II Pet. i: 4.) Therefore, is it represented in Scripture as a veritable creation; “for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” (Eph. ii: 10.) Again, it is set forth as a resurrection; “even when we were dead in sins, bath quickened us together with Christ; and hath raised us up together, and hath made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” (Eph. ii: 5, 6.) Under either view, whether it be a new creation or a resurrection from the old, nothing short of omnipotence is equal to the achievement.

But our conception of this power will be greatly heightened, by considering the capacity for resistance lying in that sinful soul which is thus quickened into spiritual life. It is more than the infusion of natural life into an organized form of dead and inert matter, as in the resurrection of Lazarus. It is the planting of a new principle in a nature which is wholly disinclined to its reception, and which is actively engaged in repelling its entrance. What vastly enhances the difficulty, admission must be secured in the face of this active resistance and yet with the full concurrence of an

opposing will. Who can solve the mystery of such a paradox? Only He, whose promise to the Son is "thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." (Ps. cx: 3). "It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God: every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." (John vi: 45.) Stupendous as the revolution is, when the sinner is "turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God"—the hand which works the change must not infringe the laws which govern the complex movement of man's spiritual nature. The new life, like "the spirit of the living creatures in the wheels" of Ezekiel's vision (i: 20,) is breathed into the delicate machinery, making every part of it vital with a new energy, but not disturbing the rule of its action prescribed from the beginning. The "thoughts are to be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ," (II Cor. x: 5); but without contravening the fundamental laws of thought established by God himself in the human mind. The "affections are to be set on things above," (Col. iii: 2); but it must be through the magnetism of that grace which sweetly draws them, by the law of affinity, from earth to heaven. The will must be subdued to "the obedience of faith;" but it must be by the power of that love which attracts its choice, as the warmth of the sun breeds life in the buried seed and brings it out from the frozen soil. Behold the power of God in the new birth; through nature subduing nature, to work out the grace which is above nature.

2. *There is power in preserving the Christian amid the temptations, and under the discipline, of this unfriendly world.* The old writers were accustomed to compare grace in the heart, with a spark of fire upon the bosom of the ocean. The depths open beneath it; yet it comes up from its grave in the waters, glowing with its life and heat still. Mountain waves lift it up, until it sparkles like a star upon the sky; but the floods cannot quench it. With all the enmity of water against fire, the little coal lives on and outrides the fury of the tempests. The figure is not too strong to illustrate the power of endurance God has lodged in the grace which He has planted in the human soul. In the midst of what unfriendliness it is capable of surviving! It breathes the foul air of the sin inbred within us, and the choke-damp of our natural corruption does not kill it. Even the fumes which come up from the depths of our own depravity, do not extinguish the life so wonderfully preserved. It encounters the shock of deadly temptations without, which overwhelm but do not destroy. Noah rises up from his drunkenness to worship God by sacrifice upon his altar of earth. Jonah returns from his guilty flight to Tarshish, to call Nineveh to repentance. Elijah lifts himself from fretful despondency under the Juniper tree, to hide his face in the mantle at the



voice of God on Mt. Horeb. David recovers from his adultery, to exclaim "against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." (Ps. li: 4.) Peter arrests his profane oath under the rebuke of his Master's eye, and goes out into the darkness to "weep bitterly." (Luke xxii: 62). All these are examples of the fatal tendency to sin in the best of men; but illustrations, too, of the survival of grace through it all; begetting in the soul those repentings with which they turn again to the Lord, by whom they have been redeemed.

What shall be said, likewise, of that sore discipline under which, with broken bones, we so often cry out "hath God forgotten to be gracious, hath he in anger shut up His tender mercies?" (Ps. lxxvii: 9.) Must not the power, which upholds the earth when broken by the fury of the elements, be the power which sustains the life of grace under the stress of those sorrows?

3. But the climax of this power is reached in *the believer's final transition to heaven, where he is made perfect in holiness and bliss forever.* It may seem incredible to us in the hour of severe temptation when, for the moment, we go down under the fierce assault; or in the hour of our penitence, when we weep tears of shame over the sin which has clouded God's face with a frown of displeasure. It seems impossible then, that the last stain will be purged from the conscience, and the last wrinkle be taken out of the character, and that we shall be presented without blemish before the throne of the Father. What a wonderful transformation, when we shall be made meet to lie in the Divine bosom and to drink eternal draughts of Divine joy! Yet this is the destiny which awaits every child of grace, however obscure may be his experience now. The nature will be holy; the habit of holiness will be perfectly formed; the acts of holiness will be easy; the exemption from temptation and fear will be complete; the delights of holiness will rush in upon the soul through every spiritual sense; and the saint's capacity for joy will be filled to the brim. "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" and well may we, with Paul, glory in that Gospel which is thus "the power of God unto salvation"—that salvation which is threefold in its form, a salvation from the guilt of sin, a salvation from the dominion of sin, a salvation from the presence and being of sin!

It is through such views of "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God," that the spirit of the believer mounts to an assured hope of eternal life. The application of this discourse to every stage of Christian experience, would therefore be natural and easy. Nor could any use of it be sweeter.

than to excite the heart to praise Him who is both "our Righteousness and strength."

But I turn my eye this morning to a different class; and seek to show the sinner the ground of hope to him, in this power which resides in the Gospel to save. It may be that, like Job, he has been exclaiming in darkness: "Oh that I knew where I might find Him! That I might come even to His seat! I would order my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments." (Job xxiii: 3, 4.) Perhaps, the very portraiture which has been drawn of the Gospel as the Gospel of power, has lifted it beyond the reach of his hope; as he sinks beneath the sense of that sovereignty, through which this grace is dispensed. Let me then bring it within his grasp once more, by suggestions which he may have overlooked.

1. *It is a comfort to know that there is an agency somewhere, which is competent to achieve what is impossible to us.* It does not require much to break the gloom of absolute despair. Blessed be God, for the instinct of hope; and that it clings to what is so slight, in the hour of darkness and trial! Even the possibility of deliverance will rouse the flagging energies, and set them in defence against the evil. But here is the assurance that power does exist, could we but find it, to accomplish all that a despairing spirit could ask. Let the word ring out then, which speaks "of the power of God to salvation." The bare suggestion of it is a gospel to the soul which, under a sense of its own weakness, is quailing before the terrors of an accusing conscience. The power may not touch us as yet; it may appear afar off, and give no sign of its approach; but there, at least, it is—and the shipwrecked spirit will hang out to it the signals of distress, and hope for deliverance.

2. *The disposal of this agency rests with a being who is infinitely merciful and good.* Were it otherwise, the power might never be stirred, or it might be wielded for destruction rather than salvation. But He with whom this power is lodged has given proof of His willingness to save, in the gift of His own Son to redeem us from death, and in the revelation which makes known to us "the glad tidings of great joy." In prayer, therefore, we are making no apostrophe to lawless force; neither do we pour out a despairing wail to a being who is bitter in his malice, or else wanton in his caprice. It ought to be ever an intelligent appeal to infinite love, all the more hopeful for the wisdom which directs in its manifestations. See, O sinner, how the probabilities thicken upon those who are still "the prisoners of hope!"

3. *Consider, further, that every legal obstruction to the outflow of Divine mercy has been removed by the atonement of Christ.* It is not a question any longer, whether it is possible for God to forgive. The Gos-

pel, which is "the power of God to salvation," hath already "declared His righteousness—that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Rom. iii: 26). No other sacrifice need be offered, than that which was once offered "in the end of the world to take away sin." (Heb. ix: 26). The mercy which saves, has laid its foundation deep in the justice which condemned. The channel is free, through which salvation flows to the lost. The rainbow of peace spans the sky, the bridge over which Divine love passes from heaven to earth with pardon and life to guilty man. Let the sinner but look upon that sign of the covenant, and trust in the grace of which it is the seal.

4. If the heart be still paralyzed by fear, listen to the voice pealing forth *the offer of pardon and the promise of eternal life to all who will accept the gift*. Why, the Gospel throbs with God's entreaties to the sinner to be saved through His grace. "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God;" (II Cor. v: 20). Such is the constant accent of the Scriptures, rendering doubt an insult to the Divine veracity, and fear an outrage to the Divine honor.

5. Perhaps one step is gained nearer the sinner, when I add that *his present conviction of sin, and distressing sense of inability, are but the first steps of the returning prodigal, under the drawing of almighty love*. It is not a pleasant experience as yet, to be rudely awakened from our dreams of security and peace—to lose the mantle of self complacency in which we were wrapped—to be stripped bare, and left in the shame of our nakedness—to struggle with frantic zeal for a righteousness of our own, only to be strangled under the sense of our utter helplessness towards all good: this is an experience little short of the misery of the damned. But then they that are whole need not a physician: and the cry for a healer, under a cruel sense of disease, is preliminary to the cure. If God's Spirit has touched thee, sinner, with this conviction of your guilt and ruin—if the sense of your inability cuts you off from the worse than useless attempt to establish your own righteousness—then some important steps have been taken in the right direction. It is by just such practical knowledge, stubbornly gained in the school of experience, that the Holy Ghost usually teaches the soul its need of a Divine Saviour—that one comes to recognize the **POWER OF GOD** unto salvation. Take courage then, and cry the more importunately; in the hope that "He who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Phil. i: 6). At last it must be made plain to you, that the only hope for a lost sinner is the fact that there is power with God to save unto the uttermost; and that the promise of salvation is freely offered to all who will "take hold of His strength, and make peace with him." (Isa. xxvii: 5.)

My hearers, the glory of the Gospel, in exhibiting God's resources, challenges both your admiration and acceptance. How extreme the folly of superseding, or amending it by devices of our own! How much worse the guilt of denying, or rejecting it! It appeals directly to every faculty in man, which renders him the crown of the lower creation. It lays its credentials before human reason, to be adjudicated. It submits its claim to man's intelligence, to be approved—to man's judgment, to be embraced. It appeals to man's conscience, as that by which it shall be purged—to man's affections, as that by which they are to be blessed. It calls upon man's honor, that by it he may repair the wrongs he has done to the law. There is not a sentiment in man's bosom from which it does not demand a response; not an instinct which it does not challenge as an inlet to blessings it would confer.

I dare not close this synopsis without a caution; perhaps it may prove a word of warning. There is another display of God's power, which may not be a "power unto salvation." Now it is associated with love, is under the direction of grace, and works out pardon and life to the wretched. But then it will be linked with justice, will be under the direction of wrath, and will work "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." (II Thes. i: 9.) Oh, that men could discern the tie by which the two are bound together—the logic of that necessity, by which "he that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. (Prov. xxix: 1.) Power cannot be trifled with. Its return stroke will be that of the lightning, more fatal in its flash backward to the skies than when its keen edge first cut the cloud.



## XXXVI.

### CHRISTIANITY, THE SPIRIT OF POWER.

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II TIM. I: 7. *“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”*

The character of Paul is exceedingly attractive, as presented in his pastoral epistles. In his larger writings, which are predominantly argumentative and polemic, his more delicate personal traits are somewhat covered and obscured by his official relations to the Church at large. It is one of the penalties which men pay for position, that their private affections must be held in abeyance, and they are known to many only in the coldness and reserve of their official functions. Thus, in his elaborate treatises, Paul appears before us chiefly as the logical expounder of the Gospel. His business is solely with the truth committed to his advocacy; and, in the severity of his reasoning, he will make no abatement of his doctrine, in consideration of human weakness or prejudice.

The particular truth, too, which he was summoned to announce and defend, placed him in direct antagonism to the whole current of existing thought and belief. The conception of a religion designed for man as man, which should be entirely Catholic in its scope and in its spirit, was entirely foreign to the mind of Jew and Gentile. It was equally opposed to the exclusiveness of the one, and to the particularism of the other. The Jew stood in proud isolation upon the covenant of God with Abraham; construing the promise “to be a God to him and to his seed after him,” as a writ of exclusion towards all who were not lineally the fruit of his loins—and that too in face of the co-ordinate promise of the same covenant, that “in him should all the families of the earth be blessed.” (Gen. xii: 3, with Gal. iii: 8.) In like manner the heathen religions were strictly local or national; which neither aimed at propagandism, nor tolerated interference within the boundaries each claimed for itself. Indeed the Greeks, with all their culture, never reached so broad an induction as the brotherhood of the human race, all being the children of the same Divine Father. The unity of blood, and the relation of all to a common Providence, were propositions absolutely new as delivered by Paul to the Athenians from

Mar's Hill: "God that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands: neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth; and hath determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation." (Acts xvii: 24-26.) In this supreme ignorance of the common origin of the race, and of the universal reach of Divine Providence, it is not strange that the thought of a universal religion had never passed through their minds even as a dream of the night. When therefore Paul stripped off the envelope of Judaism, and drew out of its folds a Catholic religion such as Christianity, he encountered a storm of opposition, both from Hebrew bigotry and from Gentile philosophy, such as before had never rolled its flood against any teacher.

During a long and eventful life, he moves before us upon this elevated plane, amidst perils which never daunted his spirit, under difficulties which never embarrassed his prudence, apparently without a blunder or a flaw,—until we come at length to wonder whether he possessed those sensibilities which are so allied to weakness, that through them arise chiefly our temptations and our errors. True, in all his writings there are occasional bursts of passion, which make us see how much of tenderness can really lie in the depths of a strong nature. But they occur only in the pauses of his argument; and reveal the emotions which the truth is able to produce in a soul in full sympathy with its lofty principles. But in the smaller and more confidential letters addressed to Timothy and Titus, the Apostle discloses a heart affectionate and soft as that of a woman. Thus in the immediate context, Paul lavishes his love upon Timothy in terms of endearment like these: "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;"—what a mighty throb of love is this, worthy of an Apostle's heart! He continues the strain of affection—"greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy: when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice, and I am persuaded that in thee also." (vv. 3-5.) From this outburst of personal affection, he proceeds with counsels such as a wise father would convey to a dear child; but with all that delicacy which marks genuine affection, whatever there may be of rebuke in these is rather suggested than openly charged. He exhorts Timothy to constancy and boldness in the proclamation of the truth. You have often observed how wonderfully God confederates men

in life ; so that the virtues of one may cover the defects in another, and by the conjunction of the two constitute an agency more perfect for the accomplishment of high designs. Such was Melancthon in his relation to Luther at the period of the Reformation ; who, unless propped by a will superior to his own, might possibly have sunk, through ignoble compromises of the truth, to the imbecility even of Erasmus. Timothy was unquestionably of that gentle cast which verges towards timidity ; and which, though by no means unfaithful to duty, experiences a distress in its performance amounting to a lower species of martyrdom. To guard against the danger in this direction, and to hearten him in the discharge of what, to such a temperament, would appear rugged and severe, Paul addresses the consideration of the text—that the spirit of the Gospel is a spirit of sublime and efficient courage, by which the minister of truth should seek to be inspired : “for God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” The combination of terms is most remarkable. The leading thought, as shown from the whole context, is that the Gospel is POWER ; yet lest it should be confounded with mere brutal force, it is presented as being tempered with *gentleness* and *prudence*. Its strength is always animated by a generous love, and is directed by wisdom.

I have selected this theme to-day as an appropriate sequel to that of the last Sabbath. We were then led to consider the Gospel, as being the complete exhibition of the Divine resources in the redemption of the sinner. But if the Gospel be nothing less than “the power of God,” surely in its influence upon the world it will exhibit a degree of this power with which it is vital. The spirit, which it will infuse into men, will be the spirit of power regulated by prudence ; simply because in itself it is “the power of God, and the wisdom of God, unto salvation.” Be not disheartened, though you fall consciously below the ideal which is drawn ; for it is our privilege to approximate nearer and nearer, each day, that standard which in its perfection will ever be unattainable by us : and just in so far as this ideal is reached in our experience, to that extent we shall have a sense of the power which the text describes.

I. *There is power, in the strength of those convictions produced by faith resting upon an inspired testimony.* It is wonderful how God has constituted man a creature of knowledge. The argument from adaptation in proof of benevolent design, is nowhere more full than just here. First of all, there is the endowment of mind, the faculty of intelligence ; capable of indefinite expansion, so that neither in this life, nor in the life to come, is it possible to assign the limit of its growth. Then the universe without, what is it but the vast repository of facts—the drawing of which



forth from their concealment gives birth to different forms of science? For long as they may lie hidden within the folds of nature, an imperious curiosity, like the instinct of the bee, impels to those interrogatories, which shall never be satisfied until the last secret of earth is yielded up to the torture of scientific research. And not the least important of these adaptations is that law of mind which demands conviction as the result of inquiry, and puts us under the necessity of reaching solid conclusions in order to intellectual repose. Under these conditions, it is impossible to anticipate what new forms of science may yet be disclosed; or to determine how far the boundaries of human knowledge may be pushed, in the investigations which are yet to be made.

In the joy of all this, one almost feels that science will yet construct the broad stairway by which man will at last mount to the presence and throne of Jehovah himself. Alas, that science must veil her face behind the saddest of all her confessions! In the language of a great thinker,\* who has but recently passed into the unseen world: "The study of nature alone is ever revealing more mysteries than it solves. At every step the darkness grows faster than the light. Endless links, endless adaptations, ever terminating in the physical—endless repetitions, in fact, of the same forms of force—they never lead us out of the labyrinth, but only extend farther and farther, on every side, the limitless unknown." Oh, that such tears should be in the voice of science, as her torch gives light to see the deeper darkness which surrounds! Each law of nature, as it is explored, reveals other laws which call for deeper research—law folded within law, fact within fact, truth within truth—until baffled reason cries out in her anguish because she cannot touch the central core within it all. The truest lesson of all that science teaches man, is the need of a Revelation. After she has opened world upon world to human thought, she must confess herself unable to lead the soul within the pavilion in which Jehovah dwells. She must kneel with reverence upon the height of all her generalizations; that God may part the cloud from above, and let down upon her head the light of the glory which fills the sanctuary of His presence. Nature herself asks for Revelation, to explain the secrets of her own being; and knowledge leans upon faith, for the testimony upon which truth shall be embraced.

It is of no little significance, too, that the transcendental truths, which faith receives solely upon the authority of Revelation, are the most practical in their character and lie the nearest to us. The issues which they raise involve the destiny of the soul, and are intuitively seen to be of

\*Tayler Lewis, L. L. D., in the Vedder Lectures, 1875.

supreme importance. Until the human mind could be brought to certainty upon these topics, it was not sufficiently disengaged to pursue either philosophy or science with success. Nothing in the history of the past is more touching, than the vain toil of the noblest spirits to solve the mysteries of God and the soul by the light of reason alone. Yet till these questions found an answer in a Divine Revelation, the spell which they cast upon the soul could not be broken; and we are confronted with the historical fact that all the productive philosophy and science which the world enjoys, dates from the time when the authority of the Scriptures was recognized in determining the issues which relate to God, eternity and the soul.

Here then is the capital advantage enjoyed by the Christian. He accepts Divine truth, simply and alone upon the warrant of an inspired testimony. This, you perceive, carries him over all difficulties. Truth thus attested becomes only a fact, and as fact it is received without dispute or hesitation. The most incomprehensible mysteries stand upon precisely the same footing with the most demonstrable propositions. Neither the one, nor the other, is received because it is known, but simply because it is revealed: and both are believed with the same unwavering assurance.

The faith, moreover, by which this result is achieved, is a Divine principle, wrought in the soul by the power of God. Its outward manifestations may be determined by those laws which necessarily direct all the actions of the human spirit; but the power within, which grasps these eternal verities in their reality and significance, is communicated from that holy Being by whom the revelation is made: "by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. (Eph. ii: 8.) The truths unfolded are Divine truths, which can only be seen through supernatural light. The Holy Ghost, by whom this light is shed upon the soul, quickens all its faculties to receive what is revealed; and to appropriate and to assimilate it as knowledge, just as though it had been reached by original investigation and discovery. It is of the nature of faith to be "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Heb. xi: 1.) If it be not this, it is nothing. It is the telescope that brings the far off world of spirits and lays it in open vision at our feet. It is the eye that looks through this telescope, and verifies every thing as real and true. Nor is it only the verity which is recognized, but the practical and supreme importance of what is seen. Faith not only apprehends, but appropriates: it not only verifies, but it digests and assimilates. It takes up the truth in its objective reality, and incorporates it into the experience of a living soul:

so that it becomes henceforth a portion of its substance, entering into the blood and bone of all the believer thinks and feels and does.

What, my hearers, must be the firmness of conviction which this faith shall produce, when itself developed to its fullest proportions? Put together the parts of this cumulative argument. The testimony is unimpeachable: for being Divine, it relieves from the suspicion of credulity the utmost exercise of human credence. The faith which receives the testimony, is equally inspired with the truth it conveys; and as a Divinely implanted principle, must be competent to assure the reality of all it embraces. Whilst, in addition, there is the verification afforded in our own experience—when this truth is inwoven with all the exercises of the heart, and its presence is felt in every faculty of our being. It would richly repay each of us, to consider how far the most incomprehensible mysteries of Revelation are thus submitted to verification in the experience of all the truly regenerate. The triune existence of the Godhead is a mystery which lifts its head into the heavens, far beyond the comprehension of the reason. But it is not difficult of apprehension, as a declared fact: and is brought still more within the range of our faculties, when it is seen that thereby God discloses Himself to the creatures; (John i: 18); and that thereby God becomes the Redeemer and Savior of lost men (II Cor. v: 19.) It would not be difficult to pass around the entire circle of Christian doctrine, and to show how the most abstract and incomprehensible of them all realize themselves as concrete facts in the living experience of God's children. It is mainly through this inward and spiritual verification, that our Lord fulfils his promise "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John viii: 32.) The principle is again affirmed, "if any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." (John vii: 17.)

Can this unwavering assurance of the truth be aught than an element of power in the Christian? What is it that makes men strong, but the power of the convictions within them? So long as their opinions are unformed or unstable, their course is wavering and inconsistent. The soul is bewildered, and totters in all its movements. No vigorous blow is struck by an arm that is uncertain of the right. A strong will must always rest upon a clear judgment of the true. And if the Christian, or the collective Church, be at any time shorn of their power, it is at a time when they are shorn of their convictions. Because they see dimly, they feel faintly. The giant is weak, because he lies in the lap of Delilah, and the secret of his strength has been wrested by deceit and treachery.

II. *There is power arising from confidence in the resources of God*

*pledged to the believer's support.* It is well, my friends, to have done with superficial views of life; and yet to paint it in all of its solemnity, would require colors too dark for many to receive. There is that, however, in the sternness of its grandeur, which should render it doubly attractive. Surely he mistakes the end for which he was born, who desires to be cradled amidst earthly delights and to be nursed always from pleasure's bottle. This is to remain in the imbecility of infancy, and never to rise to the dignity and strength of manhood. Life commands our reverence in its conflicts, its discipline and its toils. These bring out the virtues which ennoble man, and fit him for immortal honors in the world to come. The conflict is only that which truth wages against falsehood, and holiness against sin. It is a conflict not only with evil in the individual heart, but with evil as it seeks to dominate the world. It is a warfare, of which the end shall be the expulsion of sin from God's vast empire, and the triumph of holiness and virtue in it forever. It is a conflict which confederates man with Jehovah in the high purposes of His providence and grace—in which simply to participate, makes one a hero; and in which to succeed, is to be crowned with eternal glory. But a conflict which issues in such a destiny, must be proportionately severe while it continues: and there can be no assurance of final triumph, except in the supernatural forces which faith shall be able to summon to our aid.

If you choose to change the view and to regard life under the aspect of a discipline for the life to come, the lesson is equally impressive. What pressure is required to render character compact, so that it shall endure without change and be equal to all the duties and responsibilities which eternity may impose? What training can be too severe, under which the habits of obedience and trust shall be so confirmed that man need no more forever be subject to temptation or trial? Yet the discipline which accomplishes this, must be measured only by the strength of Him by whom it is administered: and the same strength which bows the heart beneath its woe, must interpose to sustain and to sanctify. "I had fainted," says David, "unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living: wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart." (Ps. xxvii. 13, 14.)

In like manner the toils and sacrifices to be endured in the service of our Master—ought they to be estimated by any other standard than the greatness of that grace of which we are made partakers, or the glory of that Kingdom in whose conquests and triumphs we shall eternally rejoice? Yet who is sufficient for "the work of faith and labor of love, to which each is summoned in this militant Church of Christ on earth? But when

it is remembered that, under all the exigencies of this mortal state, the resources of infinite wisdom and power are pledged to our relief, who can afford to despond? Distrust and fear have no place in the soul which feels that the Divine omnipotence is aback of it. Our moments of timidity and weakness, are the moments in which the sense of our covenant relation to God is obscured; but when this is assured to us, that "our God shall be our strength,"—(Isa xlix: 5,)—we recover heart to exclaim in the metaphor used by David "by thee I have run through a troop, and by my God have I leaped over a wall." (Ps. xviii: 29.)

III. *The spirit of the Gospel is pre-eminently that of love—hence of power.* It is a reproach to philosophy that it is so often content with narrow and partial views, when it descants upon the nature of man. It is for example, so ravished with the glory of his intelligence, and so intent upon magnifying its achievements, as sometimes to forget the other faculties which make up the complement of his being. Even our Theology, when too largely cast in the mould of philosophy, partakes of this fault. The soul of man, which is an indivisible unit, in the speculations of those subtle thinkers, finds itself cut up into sections, and divided off with partitions. The seat of responsibility is lodged here and not there, or there and not here; and man is not found to be a sinner, until he is caught in one of these secret chambers where all depravity has taken up its abode. I confess, my brethren, to a growing disinclination to theories, whether philosophic or religious, which do not cover man's entire nature with their view. And I am sure that a fruitful source of the discomfort which darkens many a true Christian experience, is this disregard of the correlation between the faculties of the human soul, equally necessary to the theory and to the practice of all religion.

I must not be tempted into wide digression. Let the illustration suffice, which is furnished in the topic immediately before us. The power which man wields, is not physical power; for in that he is excelled by the beasts of the field. Nor is it alone intellectual power; which, though it may explain his ascendancy over the brutes and over matter, will not account for the influence which he acquires over his own kind, nor of itself will it fit him for the immortal career which he is to accomplish beyond the grave. He has conscience and heart, as well as intellect; and the power which resides within him is moral, no less than intellectual and physical. Love is the bond which holds the universe of intelligent beings to each other and to God. It is from love we take our birth. Society, in all its forms, has its origin in it; and every relation, as it is created, is filled with its presence and power. Love is in the moral sphere, what the great principle

of attraction is in the natural. The atoms are not more firmly held together in the solid globe, nor these globes fastened to their orbits in the void immense—than is the whole society of angels and of men knit together by this golden bond of love. Wherever it exists, there is power; and the sense of power will depend upon the degree with which each heart shall be under love's magic influence.

The secret of this moral power which love wields, may easily be exposed. It is in itself a constant force. Even when it does not flame forth in passionate emotions, it is a reserved principle in the heart, retaining life and vigor in its secret root. It is therefore not intermittent and unsteady; but like the laws and forces of the material world, always operating—and with the greater efficiency, because of the silence with which they sweep in their ceaseless activity. Again, love breaks down the selfishness of our nature, which is always *inertia*. Alas! that selfishness, which is always driving man in upon his own centre; and which, the more vigorously it may work, only causes him to spin and hum on one spot, like a top, with a movement which has no progress! But love comes with its self-denying energy, empties man out of himself, and sends him forth upon errands of benevolence to others. From this it follows, that love smooths the asperities of life, conciliates all whom it touches, takes away much of the friction which renders action so full of labor. It puts man in sympathy with the world in which he must live, reconciles him to the duties which constitute his task—and if no more than by this negative removal of obstacles increases the power which may antecedently exist. When to this is added all the positive force which it brings into the character itself, we cannot overestimate the strength which is born of it in the experience of him by whom it is felt.

IV. *The adjustment of all the faculties, which grace effects in the believer's soul, gives power.* Perhaps, we have no definite measure by which to ascertain the loss of power arising from the schism which sin has caused in man's nature. It would be a curious theme for speculation, could the result be truly approximated. The general fact, however, will be admitted, that sin has deranged the order in which the faculties originally stood when man came from the hands of his Maker. The understanding, the organ of intelligence, God originally placed in the front—as He placed the eye. It is the seeing faculty, and is therefore exactly suited to be the guiding faculty. In the light which mind should shed upon his path, man was to direct his steps—discerning the true nature of all objects, and rendering a judgment which should be the guide of action.

What the understanding saw, and the conscience approved to be good—around this the heart wrapped its affections, and in the strong desires

aroused was found the stimulus to motion. Whilst, finally, the will lent its aid in the choice it exercised, and in the action which this choice at once prompted. Ah, my hearers, how much easier would be the conflict with sin, if this order were observed in all of its approaches! Did Satan or the world ever deal thus fairly with you, in any of their temptations? Do they ever bring their suggestions, in the first instance, to the bar of your reason or conscience, and seek to satisfy the judgment in what they propose? Is not "the deceitfulness of sin" conspicuously exposed in the fact, that every temptation is first addressed to the imagination and the fancy, to the passions and the appetites; which God never designed to be the faculties which should lead, but those which should follow? When the beautiful pictures which the fancy or the taste have drawn, captivate the heart—then with special pleas the mind must be obscured, and the conscience either smothered or ensnared: after which it is easy to draw the will into the triple conspiracy, and the sin is finished which slays the soul.

This fearful derangement by which sin surreptitiously creeps in and gains the mastery, makes the spiritual conflict so arduous in those who by grace are renewed. When the understanding and the conscience find themselves arrayed against the affections and appetites, what exhaustion must ensue through the struggle? Will it be no source of strength, when grace not only re-establishes the arrangement, by which the judgment is put in the direction once more; but when a Divine illumination will so fill that understanding with knowledge, that its decisions will be ensured against mistake? "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted. For thou art the glory of their strength; and in thy favor our horn shall be exalted." (Ps. lxxxix: 15-17).

V. *The Gospel gives the power which springs from life.* Just here we touch the fundamental distinction, which separates Christianity from every other system of morals or religion. It is not a doctrine, but a life. This lifts it out of the region both of ethics and of philosophy. Both of these are a doctrine, and nothing else. They sit in the chair and teach, but they do no more. They are constrained to assume in the pupil the ability to understand and to practice what is taught. They are alike powerless to save the sinner from ruin, because they cannot restore to him the life which he has lost. It is the solemn farce of one who should minister to the white grave-stones, upon which the names of those dead are engraved. But the Gospel comes with life in its gift, for those who are buried beneath

the curse of the law. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." (I John v: 11): Its constant cry is, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." (Eph. v: 14.) The Gospel hath its doctrine, but is itself more than doctrine: for the doctrine teaches of the life that is in it—the source from which it is drawn—the price by which it was purchased for the sinner—and the manner in which it is conveyed by the Holy Ghost.

This Gospel of life must be therefore a Gospel of power; for the one is the attribute of the other. A machine may move; but you must put the power within it, which shall drive the pistons and roll the ponderous wheels. Until you create this force, the most perfect machinery is wholly a dead thing. Convert that foreign and applied force into life, which shall reside in the mechanism and actuate every portion of its structure, and you have power of another sort. This is the idea which Paul would suggest in his well chosen word; when he says "God hath given us, not the sprit of *fear*, but of *POWER*. The power is that which resides in the thing itself, not foreign to it—which depends upon the nature and qualities of that which acts and is not imported from without. And because God through His grace makes us alive in Christ Jesus, in this life resides the power which is tempered with prudence and inspired by love.

That Gospel then, which in its emanation from God is His power unto salvation, in its outworking through Christian experience is "the spirit of power, of love and of a sound mind." Its Divine origin is proved in the Divine results, which no human agency is competent to produce. In the strength of its convictions, in the supernatural resources it brings to human aid, in the wealth of love it begets in the heart, in the adjustment of those faculties which were in fatal collision, and in the communication of a new and spiritual life—in all these particulars, it brings the power from above by which the believer rises from the conflict with sin to the enjoyment of eternal victory in the presence of the angels.

Frequently in the history of the Church and of particular individuals, this latent power in the Gospel asserts itself,—by cutting loose from adventitious aids, and working the most stupendous results through its own energy alone. Men without learning, without eloquence, without prestige of any sort, are sometimes called to speak Jehovah's word; which goes forth "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. iv: 12.) Perhaps, this is the precise lesson to be gathered from the



career of the most remarkable lay evangelist of our own day. Under an immediate inspiration from within, an obscure artisan is lifted from the work-bench. Without any furniture for his spiritual calling other than with which he is immediately clothed by the Holy Ghost, this man speaks to thousands in the London of the Old World and in the Boston of the New, with all the authority of a Divine success. Criticise it as we may—nay, feel in the bottom of your heart, as I certainly do, that nothing justifies the movement but its occasional and exceptional character—be never so firmly persuaded that as soon as the precedent is reduced to system and perpetuated, the truth is overthrown in the destruction of that Church to whose care it is committed: still there rises before us the majestic fact of the complete sufficiency of God's word to assert its own supremacy though the most incomplete of human agencies. In the very presence of European science and culture, with the leaders of modern thought pouring their scorn upon the Bible as an obsolete book, and upon Christianity as an effete religion, that book and this religion win a response from the hearts of countless thousands: and the human agent in the stupendous work is one like Amos, who was "no prophet neither a prophet's son; but whom the Lord took and said go, prophesy unto my people Israel." (Amos vii: 14, 15.) It is no small demonstration of the power in the Gospel to assert its own sufficiency that in the oldest and proudest city of our own land, so long frozen into spiritual torpor by the denial of the Lord's Divinity and redeeming grace, this humble layman should by simple proclamation of the word produce this recent and powerful reaction of simple faith in Jesus as the Son of God and the Redeemer of man. Let us rejoice at every proof of the Divine power which resides in the Gospel of our Lord: and most of all, in that personal experience of its efficiency "whereby we are crucified unto the world and the world unto us."

## XXXVII.

### THE STILL SMALL VOICE.

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I KINGS XIX: 12. *“And after the fire, a still small voice.”*

The biographies of the Bible are models of historic truthfulness. Those ancient heroes are presented, not only in their moments of faith and power when they achieved immortal deeds; but equally in the seasons of unbelief and weakness, when they wrought deeds of shame. Who, for example, that saw Elijah alone upon Mt. Carmel, confronting the prophets of Baal, and submitting to the ordeal of fire who should be recognized as Israel's God,—could recognize the same Elijah immediately afterwards, quailing before the impotent malice of a wicked woman, and fleeing for his life to Beersheba within the limits of Judah?

It is scarcely necessary to sketch the familiar history, which is here placed in such vivid contrast, except so far as to prepare the way for the application of the text. When the Hebrew Commonwealth was rent into the rival kingdoms of Judah and Israel, the latter was afflicted with a succession of wicked princes, such as could not fail to bring any people to ruin. Jeroboam, the founder of the new dynasty, has in sacred history the unenviable notoriety of being “he that made Israel to sin,” by establishing the worship of the calves at Bethel and at Dan. His successors improved upon his wicked example, until it is recorded of Ahab that he did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.” (I Kings xvi: 33.) During his reign the apostasy of Israel was nearly complete, and idolatry became more constant and more compact than before. By his marriage with Jezebel, a Zidonian Princess and a woman of infamous memory, the Phœnician deities, Baal and Astarte, were introduced into Samaria. The temple worship was abandoned; even the altar of the Lord on Mount Carmel was broken down. (I Kings xviii: 30;) and with this the last vestige of the ancient Hebrew ritual had disappeared. The priesthood of Baal supplanted the house of Levi, and idolatry became the religion of the Court and of the nation. In the bitter persecution which ensued, the prophets of the Lord would have

been utterly cut off from the earth, but for the pious zeal of Obadiah who "hid them by fifty in a cave and fed them with bread and water." (Ibid v: 4.) At this juncture God raises up Elijah, in some aspects of his character and mission, the most remarkable of all the ancient prophets. He threatens the Divine judgment in the withholding of rain and of dew from the land; which, so far from softening the heart of these wicked rulers, only quickened their resentment; and as God hid Elijah in His pavilion, their vengeance was wreaked upon the unoffending prophets, as I have just stated. After three years Elijah again presents himself before Ahab, boldly accuses him of troubling Israel by his sins, and challenges him in the presence of the assembled people to settle the controversy as to the religion of the realm by a miraculous test. Then follows the sublime scene on Mt. Carmel, when Elijah standing alone against the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of the groves which eat at Jezebel's table," (Ib. v: 19) refers the solemn question to a supernatural adjudication, in the terse proposition, "the God that answereth by fire, let him be God." (v: 24.)

You would expect a being capable of such sublime courage, and possessing the nerve to execute Jehovah's wrath in the slaughter of the presumptuous invaders of His sanctuary—surely, you will say, such a hero, prophet will walk all his days in the light of this splendid triumph. Alas! scarcely has the sun gone down upon the momentous scenes of that day—before the heart of the stern reformer quails before the menace of the enraged queen, "so let the Gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time." (I Kings xix: 2.) Alarmed for his personal safety, and thoroughly dejected as to the fate of the true religion amongst his own people, he flees from the anger which he has aroused into Judea; and leaving his servant at Beer-sheba, wends his solitary way across the desert to Mt. Horeb. What motives, beyond the impulse of fear, urge him to continue his flight thus far, are not precisely stated in the record. We may easily believe that it was partly under a Divine monition, and partly under the prompting of his own desire. It is wonderful how strong the faith is even in the unbelief of the true Christian. It is this which distinguishes him always from the unregenerate; that when the comfort of God's presence is denied, against all the evidence of sense, the soul of the believer falls back upon the naked power and promise of Jehovah, and trusts where it cannot see. It was just like a desponding, yet believing, prophet—especially was it in accordance with the ascetic spirit which marked the religious experience of this Dispensation—that Elijah should desire to refresh his flagging zeal.

and to receive new revelations respecting the desperate fortunes of the Church, precisely on the spot where God at first gave His law to Israel, and where Moses set up the tabernacle according to the pattern showed to him upon the mount. Let the reflection come with its wealth of comfort to the heart writing bitter things against itself in seasons of spiritual darkness, that probably at no other moment does our faith stand out more in its naked strength, or is more acceptable to Him upon whom it leans, than when we fall back upon it alone for support in sorrow and in gloom.

The exhaustion and despondency of the prophet reach their climax at the end of the first day's journey; when, sitting beneath a juniper tree, he requested for himself that he might die—and said, "it is enough; now. O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers." (v. 4.) Compare the cowardice of this despairing wail with the calm majesty of the prayer offered on Mt. Carmel,—“Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word; hear me, O Lord, hear me—that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.” (Ch. xviii: 36, 37.) But before the harsh censure drops from our lips, let it be considered how far this horrible depression may be due to the law of reaction which God has planted in our nature, that we may not be consumed by the fire of our emotions. His heart had been strung to its highest tension in the mighty issue with the prophets of Baal, and by the necessary expenditure of force he must swing to a corresponding degree of depression. May it not be that much of our spiritual gloom is due to the same law of reaction; and that the bitter accusations we register against ourselves, may be often discharged by the searcher of hearts as resting upon most innocent foundations? It is worthy of remembrance, too, that for this very reason our severest temptations will come to us in the moment of relaxation from the most intense spiritual service and enjoyment.

At length the Prophet stands upon Mt. Horeb, amid the rugged scenes rendered sacred by the most wonderful of historic associations. Jehovah passes before him in the wind, which “rent the mountains and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord—but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind, an earthquake—but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake, a fire—but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire, a still small voice.” (vv. 11, 12.)

The language of symbol, which is here employed, is always the most impressive form for the conveyance of thought, especially where the design is to arouse the feelings in a corresponding degree. It was profusely

employed by Jehovah in communicating His will to the prophets, and through them to His people. Instances multiply upon you, as soon as you draw upon the history for examples. You remember how Ezekiel predicted the siege of Jerusalem by portraying the city upon a tile and sitting down before it as a beleaguering force—and the captivity which ensued, by digging through the wall of his house and carrying out the stuff in the evening, “as they that go forth into captivity.” In like manner the burning bush, in which God appeared to Moses, was not only a wonder such as might challenge his attention, but an instructive emblem of the endurance of the Church in the most consuming trials—well suited to nerve the heart of Moses to the great work which he was summoned to execute. So with these symbols, we have not far to go in their exposition. These were natural prodigies, in which the power of God was clearly displayed. Nay, throughout sacred history, they were the symbols of the Divine judgments against the ungodly. The wind, when it swept with the force of the tornado, and levelled the proudest structures to the ground—the earthquake, when the pillars of the globe seemed to totter, and the solid earth reeled as a drunken man—and the fire, such as that once rained down from heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah—were the recognized signs of Jehovah’s presence to avenge His insulted majesty. When therefore the wind and the earthquake and the fire successively passed by without any revelation from God, it was plainly to be seen that He did not propose to deal just then with His covenant people in wrath. A silent, but most severe rebuke was thus administered to the impatience and petulance of the prophet, who somewhat fretfully complained that “the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword—and I, even I only, am left—and they seek my life, to take it away.” (v. 14). It is impossible to mistake the querulousness which lies beneath the zeal in this language of the Prophet—somewhat like the anger of Jonah, because the Lord was slow to vengeance and seemed indifferent to the sufferings of His servants. When the revelation came at length, not in any of those terrific symbols, but in “the still small voice,” it was a declaration that God would deal with His people in mercy rather than in judgment—and the bitter, uncharitable spirit of the stern reformer was put to shame, in the comparison with the Divine forbearance.

A similar instance is furnished in the history of Moses, upon this very mount of Horeb; betwixt whom and Elijah, a remarkable parallel could be drawn. The one was the giver of the law—the other, its restorer in days of apostacy: showing how the one must follow the other through all

the history of the Church in this sinful world. Both Moses and Elijah appear upon Horeb to commune with God face to face, and to receive His will. Both signalize their zeal against idolatry—Moses by the slaughter of those who danced around against the Golden Calf—Elijah, by the slaughter of the prophets of Baal. To both Jehovah appeared in these portentous phenomena, which were only preliminary to the revelation of His grace. After all the displays of majesty and power in the thunderings and the lightnings, in the fire and smoke which rested upon Sinai, as Moses climbed its rugged face to speak with God in the cloud—the peculiar disclosure of the Divine glory was afforded to him in the cleft of the rock, when the glory of the Lord passed by and a voice proclaimed, “the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.” (Ex. xxxiv: 6, 7.) How wonderfully akin are these appearances of God to His two servants! Not only in the fact, that His glory is to be found in His mercy; but also, in the dark back ground of unswerving justice, upon which this bright disclosure of mercy is cast.

We have then the clue to what is signified by “the still small voice,” which came after the wind, the earthquake and the fire. I conceive it to be no mystical misappropriation of the passage, but a right application of its scope and spirit, to take this as a symbol of God’s dealings with the soul in its conversion from sin to holiness. The law will do its work upon the conscience in the wind, in the earthquake, and in the fire; but God will not be found a Saviour in these. The revelation of God which shall have power to change the whole man, will be made by “the still small voice” of Divine love which whispers afterwards. This simple and practical thought I desire now to illustrate and to enforce.

I. *All the adverse dispensations of Providence, and threatenings of the Divine law, are in themselves powerless to subdue, until God speaks with “the still small voice” of His love.* The wonder is ever before us, and a perpetual scandal. Men are laid low in sickness—yea, they are brought even “into the dust of death,” and remain to the end utterly insensible to the realities of eternity and the judgment. The common saying, that “death is an honest hour,” is mournfully disproved in the fate of thousands who are as insensible to the peril of their position when about to enter upon the destiny they have challenged, as in the time of health when the doom seemed to be indefinitely postponed. Through what bitter bereavements do men pass, often succeeding each other with frightful swiftness and increasing in their severity, without the least impression upon

the heart for good ! The judgments of God fall upon happy homes, blotting out in one instant all the light and joy of human life—yet men cling with as much blindness and madness as before to the impertinencies of this perishing world ! How steadily will the unconverted listen to the denunciation of God's wrath against sin, without a proper dread of His displeasure ! These awaken attention indeed, and fill the soul with awe—but they are wholly inoperative in themselves to turn the sinner from the evil of his ways to the service and worship of God. On the contrary, the more severe and the more frequent the Divine judgments, the more embittered the sinner becomes in his hostility, and the more estranged are the affections from the Being who is revealed only in the wind, the earthquake and the fire.

It is a most suggestive fact, which may be turned to profit in a thousand directions, that naked authority may pound away forever upon the human will without effecting a breach—simply because, in the constitution which God has ordained, the force which controls the will lies entirely aback of the will itself, in the faculties of which it is merely the executive agent. Until the mind is enlightened to perceive the evil of sin, and the conscience to feel its guilt and shame,—until, besides these, the affections are changed and a complete revolution is wrought in the desires—there can be no true sorrow for sin, and no turning away from it with “endeavors after new obedience.” Hence, “the still small voice” must follow the wind, the earthquake and the fire. The law speaks only the language of justice ; its office is to slay. When grace speaks, it is with the gentle whisper in which love breathes into the ear the assurance of forgiveness. Amidst the terrors of conviction, a quiet influence steals over the sinner—he knows not whence it comes, nor whither it will bear him—but he is mastered by its spell into perfect submission before God. Let the awakened sinner learn whence his deliverance shall come. The Apostle clearly points it out : “for ye are not come to the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words : \* \* \* but ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel,” (Heb. xii: 18-24). In the experience of every saved soul, it is written, “but the Lord was not in the wind : and after the wind, an earthquake—but the Lord was not in

the earthquake : and after the earthquake, a fire—but the Lord was not in the fire : and after the fire, “ a still small voice ” which spake of love and melted the soul into harmony with its Maker.

II. *This voice addresses the individual alone, and has power to authenticate itself as the voice of God.* The dispensations of Providence are public. They are an open display of God's power before the eyes of all before whom they are wrought. They can no more be concealed than the wind, the earthquake, and the fire. Whilst those upon whom they more immediately fall may have a key for their interpretation in their own consciousness and character, not equally possessed by the mere observer—still in all the march of his providence, God moves before us in the public demonstration of His authority and presence. But “ the still small voice ” comes with a secret and confidential communication to the individual. It is more directly personal than any other revelation. Those who are the nearest to us, do not catch the sound ; it is a great secret which Jehovah whispers into the ear that hears it. Thus it happens that a great change has been quietly wrought in the soul, without a suspicion of the fact by those around until it is openly announced. A temple has been built up for God in a human soul, and so much as the sound of a hammer has not been heard. The husband has bowed at the throne of sovereign mercy, and the wife never heard so much as a sigh from his lips ; the child is born into the kingdom of grace, and the mother never shared one pang of all the spiritual anguish. So much closer is God able to come to the soul ; and so transforming is that whisper of His love, which subdues the sinner to Himself.

It is not strange that this voice should possess the power to authenticate itself. Elijah instantly recognized it as the voice of Jehovah : “ And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave.” (v. 13.) So when the voice speaks to us, it takes hold upon every faculty of the soul. The understanding is enlightened by its truth—the conscience is aroused by its authority—the heart is melted by its sympathy and love—the will is subdued by its power. Just here lies the strangeness of the wonder ; that the voice in its effectiveness must blend with every attribute of man's being, so that it might be difficult always to distinguish between the influence which is so omnipotent from without, and the free actings of our own intellect and will—yet in and through all this spontaneous movement of our own powers, the Divine voice makes itself known by its own authority and grace. We wrap our faces in our mantle, and yield without resistance to its effective control.



III. *This voice changes its accent, to suit the different conditions of those it may address.* It is, at first, a voice of gentle, but irresistible conviction. It speaks not in anger, but mournfully, as the voice of one who is grieved. This is the difference between a *judicial*, and a *gracious*, chiding. There is no rasping in the tones of the latter. Love cannot speak with the sharpness of satire, nor with the bitterness of invective. It feels the injury and wrongfulness of sin, as keenly as justice itself. But then its office is different, and it can afford to be compassionate without a betrayal of its trust. With unutterable pathos, therefore, it expounds to the sinner his whole life. It shows how uniformly he has broken a "law which was holy, and the commandment holy and just and good," (Rom. vii: 12)—and a law which was intended for his guidance, protection and blessing. The exposure is so complete, that the soul is overborne by a sense of shame, and cannot "so much as lift up its eyes unto heaven." With the same exquisite tenderness, the deep ingratitude is depicted of abusing the watchful providence which has followed the guilty transgressor by day and by night, and which should have led him long since to repentance. (Rom. ii: 4.) And then the coals of fire are heaped upon the sinner's head, when this pleading voice goes on to show how the offers of forgiveness have been declined, and the soft entreaties of the Gospel have been resisted—until the whole weight of the Saviour's Cross seems to lie upon him "who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing." (Heb. x: 29.) Taking up thus each count in the indictment of the law, this voice of love searches the conscience until it is broken into contrition and melts at once under the offer of mercy.

This point gained, how easily the voice changes into that of *persuasion*! It opens to the soul the beauty of Christ, and his exact fitness to be the Saviour of the lost. His power to take away all sin, and the freeness with which His finished salvation is offered to those who will accept the gracious boon, are set home upon the heart with overpowering evidence. The life of God is brought so nigh, that it takes hold upon the spirit just ready to sink into despair; which, in its "effectual calling," finds itself both "persuaded and enabled to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to it in the Gospel."

How easily now the spirit of conviction and of conversion passes into that of *consolation*! Christ being revealed to the soul in His redeeming work, and the principle of faith being implanted by which He is received as a personal Saviour, the Holy Ghost discharges His office of Comforter and seals upon the conscience a sense of pardon and complete acceptance

with God. The voice is one of sweetest reconciliation, and speaks into the soul "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." (Phil. iv: 7.) Oh, how pleasantly it breaks upon the troubled heart, like the first streak of the morning light; and like the morning, it chases the darkness away and there is no more night! With all the consciousness of remaining unworthiness, the voice of the Comforter so brings to remembrance whatsoever Christ hath said (John xiv: 26,) that we are "kept in perfect peace, with the mind stayed on him" who is "the strength of our salvation." (Isa xxvi: 3, Ps. cxl: 7.)

Being then within the kingdom and covenant of our Heavenly Father, what shall the voice be except the voice of *guidance and direction*? In the various relations which we sustain in life, how the duties springing out of them appear to clash! And who has felt able to resolve, by the mere force of reason, these questions of casuistry? It is often difficult to determine, at a given moment, which obligation is the most commanding. The case which appears the most simple in the abstract, may become so complicated through its surroundings, that the wisest judgment is baffled and the most enlightened conscience is bewildered. We take it to God in simple faith, with an honest purpose to find and to follow the path of duty; and as we rise from the prayer, "our ears hear a word behind us, saying, this is the way, walk ye in it." (Isa xxx: 21.) Our philosophy may have no explanation of the mystery. But the fact occurs too often in the history of the righteous, to be contested—that, after the longest and deepest uncertainty, the perplexity is no sooner committed to God in the prayer of faith than the mind rests in complete repose in a decision which it is absolutely unable to explain satisfactorily, even to itself. The attempt to justify the decision before the judgment, throws us back upon the original dilemma; whilst the conviction which brings with it such repose, is as clear and strong as though it rested upon infallible authority. It was "the still small voice" speaking to the heart, and causing it to recognize its duty as by a spiritual sense.

Finally, it is the voice of *encouragement and hope*, strengthening us under the conflicts and trials which belong to a state of discipline; and through which it is necessary we should be brought off "more than conquerors through Him that hath loved us." (Rom. viii: 37). Blessed confidences these, between the Father above and the children of his grace, "in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs!" (Song of Sol. ii: 14). "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." (Ps. xxv: 14).

IV. *The effect of this "still small voice" is to bow the soul before God*

*in obedience and worship.* This was the result in the text "and it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering of the cave." (v. 13). Here again we have the language of symbol, which however is easy of interpretation. To draw the mantle over the head was an Eastern mode of expressing the emotions of fear and awe. When God proclaimed His covenant name to Moses out of the burning bush, it is recorded "and Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God." (Ex. iii: 6.) Even the Seraphim, whom Isaiah saw in vision before the throne, "with two of their wings covered their face and with twain they covered their feet, and with twain they did fly," (Isa. vi: 2,) "having more wings," as one has expressed it, "to hide themselves before God, than to do His bidding." In the case of Elijah, the character of the emotions indicated by this action is plain from the emphasis with which it is said that "God was not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire." There was no revelation of the Divine presence and will in any of these. But no sooner did the voice speak, than it was recognized by the prophet, and his soul was filled with reverence and awe. "He wrapped his face in a mantle," in token of that dread which warned him that "no man could see God and live." (Ex. xxxiii: 30.) With this sentiment of awe was combined the consenting spirit of obedience. He stood upon the mount, at the entrance of the cave, to receive and to execute the Divine counsel.

And when "the still small voice" speaks to the Christian heart, it awakens a love responsive to that which trembles in its own tone. Enmity is subdued; prejudice is removed; pride is overthrown; hesitation and distrust are displaced. "God's people are made willing in the day of His power." (Ps. cx: 3.) Love begets love; and under its constraining sway, a sweet obedience is rendered to the Divine will—and man's whole nature is brought into accord with that of his Maker.

To you, my brethren in Christ, who have long held communion with your Lord, nothing need be said beyond the exposition to which you have now been listening. Our comfort and joy is, that "the still small voice" will speak to us in every emergency: and whether it be a voice of warning, or a voice of rebuke, or a voice of correction, or a voice of instruction, or a voice of consolation—it will be to us a voice full of tenderness which the pious ear will delight to hear. Only let it be ours to wait upon the mount; that it may speak to us in the direction of duty, in the resolution of doubts, or in the comfort of hope, as our case may require. With the assurance it will convey to us of our Father's love, we shall never be terrified at the

wind, or earthquake, or fire. Neither the portents of nature, nor the startling dispensations of a mysterious Providence, shall make our souls afraid.

“Let mountains from their seats be hurled  
Down to the deep and buried there;  
Convulsions shake the solid world,—  
Our faith shall never yield to fear.”

To the unconverted in this house what shall I say, but that they need just to hear this “still small voice” of the Spirit. Perhaps God has often appeared before them in the stern dispensations of His Providence. The strong wind has rent the mountains and broken in pieces the rocks—the earthquake has shaken the solid globe to its centre—or the fire has consumed with its fierceness all that filled life with joy or with hope; but nothing will avail without the voice. Let me remind you then that this voice is still and small. It will not be heard in the midst of the world’s din and clatter. Have you found no pauses in your life, in which that voice may speak? And have you bowed your ear to catch its faintest whisper? As I range my eye over this audience, I can trace in many of these pews those whom I have long been expecting to come out from the world, with the solemn declaration of Joshua “as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” (Josh. xxiv: 15.) How long will ye “halt between two opinions?” Are you willing to provoke the Almighty to further judgments? Remember that He has infinite resources which will not suffer his purpose of love to be defeated. But it is fearful to think how great may be the severity you may compel Him to use, in plucking you as brands from the burning. Be persuaded to close the controversy with Him, at this very instant. Hear the voice which has so long been speaking as the voice of conviction, whilst it now tenderly persuades you “behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (II Cor. vi: 2.)



## XXXVIII.

### CHRIST A PRIEST AFTER THE POWER OF AN ENDLESS LIFE.

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HEB. VII: 15, 16: "*There ariseth another Priest, who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.*"

It is not difficult to account for the intense devotion of the ancient Jews to their own ritual of worship. It was in itself a most imposing service; addressing itself to the senses and captivating the imagination, whilst its mysterious types and symbols challenged investigation of their sacred and secret import. In its minutest particular, too, it had been given by Jehovah; so that against every rival lawgiver they could say, "we know that God spake unto Moses—as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is." (John ix: 29). In addition to both these considerations, for fifteen hundred years it had been the peculiar badge distinguishing them from other nations as in covenant with God. Nay, if we choose more properly to date their history from Abraham with whom this covenant was originally made, we shall have a more definite idea of the length of time which this history covers, by remembering that it runs just as far back from the advent of our Lord upon earth as we to-day stand in advance of the same period. It was therefore bound up in all their national associations; and whatever was heroic and glorious in the achievements of their fathers, clustered around this venerable ritual as the centre of every noble inspiration. It is not strange then that the suggestion of its being cancelled, or superseded, should be regarded as sacrilegious. The deepest resentment was kindled at every intimation of this. One of the charges against Christ at His trial was, "this fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days," (Mat. xxvi: 61) and a little later, the same accusation is reproduced against the proto-martyr Stephen, "this man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us." (Acts vi: 13, 14.)

In this epistle Paul addresses himself with vigor to root out this strong,

but natural, prepossession. In defining the relation of Christianity to Judaism, it becomes necessary to show that the latter was always designed to be simply a transitional and intermediate Dispensation. The argument must of course be drawn from acknowledgments in the system itself; from which it would appear that Judaism, so far from being dishonored, was really transfigured and glorified as it was absorbed and found its completion in Christianity.

The two leading parts of Judaism were its *sacrifices* and its *priesthood*; and in both the Apostle finds an equal defect. See how he establishes this of the first: "for the law, having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." (Heb. x: 1-4; see also ix: 9-14.) The proof is conclusive. The blood of bulls and of goats cannot take away sins, because these brute beasts cannot stand as representatives of men who have souls. At the most, they can only typify a better sacrifice to be "offered once for all in the end of the world." (Heb. ix: 26.) And their repetition, year by year, was a confession of utter impotency to "make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience," (ix: 9.)

By a similar argument, the constant succession in the priesthood proved the same defect in it; "and they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death." (Heb. vii: 23.) Not only so, but they must offer sacrifice for their own sins, before they offered for the people. (Heb. v: 2, 3.) If this defect lay confessed upon the face of the whole Levitical economy, then it was not intended to be final, but simply preparatory to another.

Upon this point, however, a fact of overwhelming significance lay to the Apostle's hand in the Hebrew history. Three hundred years before the Aaronic priesthood was instituted, there existed a Priest whom Abraham himself acknowledged, and to whom even Levi in the loins of Abraham paid tithes. This Melchisedec bursts upon us in the record perfectly isolated and alone. So far as history concerns itself with him, he is "without father, without mother, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life." (Heb. vii: 3.) In the language of another, he flashes out from the darkness, like a gleam of light, only to be lost instantly in the darkness again. The significant feature in his case is, that he appears

upon the scene without genealogy, not receiving his priesthood by descent nor transmitting it by succession: in which particular he becomes an eminent type of Christ, whose priesthood is derived from none, but is rooted altogether in his own person. After the lapse of more than eighteen hundred years, this superior priesthood of Melchisedec is revived, in accordance with the prophecy of David, "the Lord hath sworn and will not repent, thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." (Ps. cx: 4, see also Heb. v: 6, 10 and vi: 20, and vii: 3, 15, 17.) The type simply merges into the anti-type. The unchangeable priesthood, which Melchisedec only historically represented, is actually vested in the Lord Jesus Christ; and the Levitical order simply lay between the two. Evidently the priesthood of Melchisedec brought up the sacerdotal office in its highest, but most general, form; whilst the Aaronic priesthood elaborates the idea in all of its details, more particularly in relation to sacrifice. The latter is therefore disciplinary in its character, the "school-master to bring us unto Christ." (Gal. iii: 24). Having fulfilled this function, it slides from the view; and leaves the other standing in its bold projection, in the priesthood of Christ the true and only Melchisedec.

It is precisely in this connexion the words of the text are introduced, to show the provisional character of Judaism, which finds its consummation only in the Gospel: "if therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? \* \* \* for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, who is not made after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life." (vv. 11, 15, 16).

A strong antithesis forces itself upon the attention, in this language. The Levitical order existed only by statute. It was legislated into being—the priesthood being appointed by God, every part of the sacred ritual being separately enacted, and the efficacy of the whole system being dependent upon the strictest conformity with the law under which it was constituted. This statutory law, moreover, developed itself in carnal or fleshly commandments, as soon as it descended to the regulation of details. Three particulars will sufficiently evince this. For example, the law was a carnal or fleshly law, which transmitted the office of the priesthood by descent from father to son—the right to administer the sacred function being determined by birth after the flesh. Again, the service in which this priesthood ministered "stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the times of refor-



mation." (Heb. ix: 10). But, pre-eminently the commandment was carnal in respect to the fact that these sacrifices availed only to an external and ceremonial cleansing. As Paul chooses to utter the thought, "the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh." Beyond this they had no power: their significance was exhausted in simply adumbrating "the blood of Christ" which should "purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God." (Heb. ix: 13, 14).

On the other hand, and in most vivid contrast, Christ is "made a Priest after the power of an endless life." The ground of His priesthood is the *power* which resides within Himself; and this power manifests itself in the possession of a *life* which is *indissoluble*—not simply *endless* in fact, but *ineextinguishable* in its nature. His priesthood, therefore, having its root in this indestructible life, is forever unchangeable. Being perfect in itself, and in its results, it must supersede that which is confessedly imperfect and that which, from its entire character, is seen to be purely pedagogical and introductory.

This general exposition prepares us to inquire:

I. IN WHAT RESPECTS CHRIST, AS A PRIEST, POSSESSES THIS ENDLESS OR INDISSOLUBLE LIFE? The solution is to be found in the union of the Divine and human in the person of our Lord, in which lies the whole mystery of the incarnation.

There is no difficulty of course, in regard to the first of these two factors. In so far as Christ was God, life in its fullest sense must be attributed to Him. Hence it is said of the Word that was with God and that was God, "in Him was life, and the life was the light of men." (John i: 1, 4.) In like manner, our Lord claimed in His discussion with the cavilling Jews that "as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." (John v: 26.) Whatever the mystery which may lie in the Sonship of Christ, it must not be suffered to contravene that which underlies the very idea of a God, the notion of being self-existent and underived. Life resides in the Son, precisely as it resides in the Father; life in its fulness, without derivation, free from all contingency, indissoluble, necessary, and eternal. Hence Christ is able to conclude His parable of the Shepherd by saying: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again; no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again—this commandment have I received of my Father. (John x: 17, 18.) It is just "the power of an endless life," which is here asserted in "the power to lay it down" and "the power to

take it again." The inspired John testifies of the same, in the opening words of his general epistle: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life; for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." (I John i: 1, 2.) "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son; he that hath the Son, hath life—and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." (Ibid v: 11, 12.) Christ Jesus, then, in His Divine nature, not only *has* life, but *is* life.

The difficulty lies not in His Divinity, but in His humanity. And let it be remembered that in His human nature the priestly function was exercised. The priest can only intervene on behalf of the race to which he belongs; "for every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." (Heb. v: 1.) How then shall He, as man, have this "power of an endless life?" Mark, my hearers, I do not attempt to *explain*, but only to *state*, that which forms the core of what perhaps is the deepest mystery in all the Scriptures, the incarnation of the Son of God—a mystery which, besides all that is unfathomable in the tri-une existence of the Godhead, has difficulties of its own equally insurmountable. What then is the testimony of Scripture upon this point? "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God—but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." (Phil. ii: 6-9.) Without too extended an exegesis, you will observe the Divinity and the humanity placed here side by side, the reality of both being expressed in identically the same language. The Divine, of course, pre-exists, and takes up the human through a veritable incarnation—he "took upon him the form of a servant." The Person of the Son assumes a true human nature in both of its constituent parts, "a true body," and "a reasonable soul." The problem is, how shall this, which is created and finite, be filled with "the power of an indissoluble life;" so that what is true of the one term of the Mediator's person, shall be equally true of the other?

It must be borne in mind, that the human nature in Christ never subsisted alone, but always in union with the Divine which assumed it. I will not attempt to indicate the point of time in which the human nature is completed in any of the race; but at whatever moment the soul and the body were brought together in Christ to form His human nature, at that

moment they both existed in union with His Divine person as the Son of God. Not the minutest fraction of a second can be allowed to intervene, without making Christ a mere creature, responsible for Himself under the law, and incapable of enduring a vicarious death, or rendering a vicarious obedience. If then the humanity was never separated from the Divinity in Christ, it is not so difficult to see how the weakness of the one should be supported by the strength of the other. The character of the union between the two is such, that constantly in the Scriptures what is done in the one nature is referred to the other, and what is wrought in either is attributed to the person to which both belong. Even in Christ's death, neither part of His human nature was separated from His Divine person. A complete divorce was effected between body and soul, but neither the one nor the other was parted from its living connexion with the Lord's Divinity. There was no suspension in death of His sacerdotal function; on the contrary, in that very death was found its highest exercise. As in the Levitical economy, the sacrifice was only completed in the death of the victim, and the priest's office was to pour forth the blood which was the life,—so Christ, being at once the Priest and the Sacrifice, fulfilled His priestly function in His own death. He must abide as the priest, in order to offer His life as a sacrifice for the guilty. Unless we could penetrate the mystery of the Hypostatic Union, we must remain ignorant of the mode in which the Divine vitalized the human in the Mediator's person. But the fact itself is stamped upon the pages of Scripture, that the redemption achieved in the human possesses an infinite value from the glory of the Divine nature with which it was associated.

This dark theme will be somewhat illuminated, if we consider the different tenure upon which our Lord's human life was held, after the resurrection. It was thenceforward secured to Him under the guarantee of law, beyond the possibility of invasion or of loss. Peter thus speaks in his Pentecostal sermon; "whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. (Acts ii: 24.) In accordance with this Paul testifies: "knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God." (Rom. vi: 9, 10.) Again, he writes; "for to this end Christ both died and rose and revived, (lived again,) that He might be Lord both of the dead and the living." (Rom. xiv: 9.) The last scruple of the sceptic will be swept away by the solemn proclamation of Christ himself: "I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive

for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." (Rev. i: 18.)

We all understand that the resurrection of Christ was as necessary a part of His redeeming work, as the death. Without it we could never know whether the sacrifice which He offered for our sins, had been accepted by the Father. As He went into the grave under a judicial sentence, He could rise from it only through a judicial acquittal. This acquittal could not be withheld if Christ, in His vicarious death, truly paid our debt to justice and to law. His resurrection therefore was a moral necessity, as the seal certifying the completeness of His atoning sacrifice. Having borne our sins into the grave, He must rise again in order to show that they were left behind and could no more be pleaded against us for condemnation. Hence it is written that "He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." (Rom. iv: 25.) Having satisfied the claims of law through His perfect obedience, it was "not possible that He should be holden of death." The life therefore which He now enjoys, is held by Him under the terms of the covenant into which He entered with the Father; and is assured to Him forever, under the solemn sanction of the law which He has fulfilled. In that human nature in which His priestly office was discharged, and in which the sacrifice was made for sin, Christ has then "the power of an endless life." The double proof is furnished, on the one hand, in its relation to the Divine person of our Lord in the Hypostatic Union; and, on the other hand, in the legal guarantee under which life was assured to Him in the resurrection, by virtue of the consummate obedience rendered both to the precept and to the penalty.

II. This point being settled, it remains to inquire HOW THIS EXALTS THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST AND ENHANCES ITS VALUE TO US. The answer will break into several propositions:

1. *A perfect priesthood infers a perfect sacrifice.* The terms are exactly correlative; the function of the priest is simply that of "offering gifts and sacrifices for sins." (Heb. v: 1, and viii: 3.) The two must therefore be proportioned, the one to the other. The Hebrew sacrifices were defective, and so the Levitical priests were imperfect. Inasmuch as the blood of bulls and of goats could only typify the cleansing from sin which it was unable to accomplish, the priest by whom that blood was spilt was "not suffered to continue by reason of death." They were suited to each other in this very imperfection which was mutually confessed. If then Christ be a living and unchangeable Priest, the sacrifice which He offers must be proportionally perfect. The suggestion would shock you, that our blessed Lord should stand by any Hebrew altar and offer the sacrifices of the Levitical law. The incongruity between the glory of the

Priest and the inadequacy of the offering is so apparent, that the conjuncture of the two in our thought seems to have a tinge of blasphemy.

It is no small advantage to accumulate the proofs of the sufficiency of that one offering, upon which the removal of all our guilt must depend. A more conclusive demonstration cannot be urged than this, which is wrapped in the language of the text. He, "who is made a priest after the power of an endless life," can minister at no altar but that which is eternal, and can lay upon it no sacrifice which will not take away all sin. The "endless life" with which Christ is endowed is the pledge which the Law of God itself affords, that all its claims are cancelled forever against the sinner for whom He shall undertake to plead. We understand then what the Apostle means, when he declares Christ to have been "raised for our justification." (Rom. iv: 25.) The resurrection proves the penalty to be exhausted in the death, through which we find the expiation of our guilt. The "endless life" of the Priest establishes, beyond dispute, the perfection of the sacrifice by which the sin is "put away." (Heb. ix: 26.)

2. *Through this endless life, Christ ever presents for us His sacrifice before the Father.* It is the inference deduced by the Apostle himself in the immediate context: "but this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood—wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. vii: 24, 25.) Ah, the untold comfort which lies in this truth for us, my brethren in the Lord! The great trouble in our Christian experience is to rise to the height of this great argument,—that "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." (I Pet. iii: 18.) And this at least is certain, that the degree of peace which we experience is measured by the compass of our faith, in taking up all that is involved in the death of Christ as our substitute under the law.

But who would be willing to stake his eternal salvation upon his own feeble pleading of this mighty and sufficient argument? Then comes the truth with all its precious assurance to our hearts, that "Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." (Heb. ix: 11, 12.) With "the power of an endless life" this priest stands before the Majesty on High, to plead the merit of His own sacrifice. How perfect must be the advocacy! When the very being pleads the sufferings, who

first endured them! Surely he who felt the pangs of death, must know whether these satisfied the curse! He who felt the power of the resurrection, must know the completeness of His acquittal! How can the plea fail, when presented by Him for His redeemed? And having an unchangeable priesthood founded in His own endless life, no contingency can arise here or hereafter to prevent His "appearance in the presence of God for us." (Heb. ix: 24.) Whatever there is of faith in our prayers to lay hold upon this argument of a Saviour's sacrificial death, is but the reflection of the power of His living and eternal intercession on our behalf at the right hand of His Father above.

3. *The great want of the sinner is LIFE; which is supplied from the endless life in Christ.* First of all, there is *legal* death: in which through the condemnation under which the sinner lies, every privilege is forfeited—life itself being under seizure, to be wrested from the guilty as soon as the law chooses to foreclose its mortgage. But this Priest lifts the bond by Himself bearing our sins in His own body, and "there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," (Rom. viii: 1): and as the "life" is "endless" in Him, there can be no limitation of the pardon which He shall be able to procure—redeeming from forfeiture the life guilt which covers beneath its curse.

Then there is *spiritual* death, in which the principle of holiness is extinguished; and which needs the quickening of the Holy Ghost in order to its restoration. (Eph. ii: 1.) Here is the blessed connection betwixt our justification and sanctification: "that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Hear the Apostle's logic in the case: "for if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we shall not serve sin." (Rom. vi: 4-6.) No exposition can add either clearness or force to this testimony. The life with which we are quickened by the Holy Ghost, at the new birth, is the life which Christ, our High Priest, purchased for us through His own death. It is stored in Him as the treasury, from which it may be dispensed under His trusteeship to those whom He has redeemed. The Spirit communicates it from Him to us; and the faith which unites us to His living person is the channel of its continual conveyance, through the whole of our progressive sanctification. You see at once the assurance of Christ's power to bestow the life, from the fact that it is endless in Him.

Finally, there is the life of *glory*, into which we are translated at last

when the great victory is achieved over death, and the eternal triumph is secured to the believer. How the Scriptures connect the blessedness and glory of heaven with Christ and the "endless life" which is in Him, it would be an impertinence in me to show. The joy of heaven is to be with Christ: the glory of it, is that which the Father has given Him and in which we are permitted to share, (John xvii: 24); the eternal life, is that which flows from Him to them, from the eternal Father—"I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." (Ibid. v: 23.) Life then—the life the sinner needs, to lift him from the condemnation in which he is buried—the life, which is to lift him out of his "death in trespasses and sins, and make him a new creature in Christ Jesus"—the life, which is to deepen in the experience of the Christian, as he grows up to "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," (Eph. iv: 13)—the life, which is to triumph in the agonies of nature's last hour, taking from death its sting, and its victory from the grave—the life, which is to bound along the curve of the infinite future, and be filled with all the knowledge and blessedness of God; all, all comes to us *through* Him and *from* Him who is "made a priest, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life."

4. *Christ, as the ever living Priest, eternally conducts the worship of the redeemed in heaven.* It would appear that worship must be the absorbing employment of the creature. Every thing must flow into this, in the end. The manifestation of the Divine glory is the supreme motive of all the Divine acts; for in the nature of the case, no other would comport with the onliness of the Divine Being. If so, no other motive can be supreme with the creature than to *reflect* this glory, without authorizing that idolatry which the Scriptures prohibit. All the obedience of the Christian, all the active service which he renders to the Church, all the knowledge he acquires of Divine things, all the grace ministered to him by the Spirit, all the emotions of love and joy which may lighten his experience—all this must resolve at length into praise, and go up as the incense of acceptable worship before God.

It is the priestly function of Christ, our Head, to conduct this worship on our behalf. We can render back in praise no more of the Divine glory, than is shed down upon our own hearts by the Holy Ghost; and Christ must stand as the intervenor, through whom, as "the brightness of the Father's glory," it must first stream upon us. When He has enriched us with all these communications of love and grace, He is our interpreter before the Father. Clothed with our nature, He represents us in the furniture of all our sanctified affections and desires. What our poor speech is

so inadequate to utter, He translates into the language of the God-head. The stammering praises we seek to embalm in song He gathers in His golden censer, and waves before the eternal throne. It is this that heartens the believer's worship on earth, and fills with such unspeakable bravery the spirit which would utterly sink beneath the sense of its own unworthiness.

How much better will it be in heaven! where, after "the power of an endless life," Christ shall discharge an unchangeable priesthood in mediating the worship of the redeemed forever and forever. This alone shall make us the peers of angels, in that "temple not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." If we should stand there only upon the strength of our own voice to bear its part in the sublime chaunt, this would utterly fail to respond in the chorus, after listening to the richer melody of those who never sinned. But in the Universal Church into which we and they are integrated alike, they will have no advantage of us in the relation we sustain to our blessed Head. And when He gathers all the praise in His censer, oh, how rich will be the notes falling from the lips of that priest, by whom our redemption was achieved! These thoughts need not be expanded here. They are only suggested, that we may take them into our hearts as, at the table of our Lord, we seek to have "fellowship with Him in His sufferings." (Phil. iii: 10.) In each of these particulars, we can see how much the priesthood is enhanced by "the power of an endless life" in which He has been constituted.

What words, dear brethren in Christ, will most fitly express the conclusion to which your minds are brought in this discourse? There are none so appropriate, as those furnished by Paul himself in this identical epistle: "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. iv: 14-16.) "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for His own sins and then for the people's; for this He did once when He offered up Himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated forevermore." (Heb. vii: 26, 28.) "Having therefore, brethren, bold-



ness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." (Heb. x: 19-22.) Such is the inference that should be drawn by the people of God. For those who yet stagger beneath the burden of sin, the inference is not less pointed and precious: "but this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood; wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. vii: 24, 25.)

## XXXIX.

### THE RIGHTEOUS SCARCELY SAVED.

I PET. IV: 18. *“And if the Righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?”*

The gospel of the circumcision was committed to the Apostle Peter, precisely as that of the uncircumcision was committed unto Paul. (Gal. ii: 7. 8). Whilst, therefore, this circular is addressed to believers in those provinces of Asia Minor, which had been the theatre of Paul's missionary toil, we are not surprised to find, in the introduction, that class distinguished who were recognized as being of “the Dispersion.” The evident design was to strengthen them in the faith they had already embraced, (v: 13), as well as to prepare them for the persecutions to which they would necessarily be exposed. (iv: 12-19). The distress which the Apostle has chiefly in view, is that which would follow the destruction of the Jewish state; which he sufficiently designates in the phrase “for the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God.” (v. 17). At the same time, the text clearly overleaps this historical event, and contemplates the more distant and the more awful scenes of the final judgment.

In the perspective of prophecy, events which are near, and those which are distant, are brought together in the range of vision, and are blended into one. In consequence of this overlapping of the two, the earlier becomes a prophetic type of the latter; and the fulfilment of the first prediction pledges to our faith the fulfilment of the second. Instances of this blending of distinct and widely separated events, may easily be gathered from the sacred record. For example, the sign given to Ahaz, of his deliverance from the two kings of Judah and of Syria, was the child of the Virgin; whose actual birth did not take place till after the lapse of nearly eight centuries. (Isa., 7th ch.) So in the prophetic association betwixt the destruction of Jerusalem and the terrors of the judgment day. In the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, our Lord clearly points to the former when He refers to “the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place.” (vv. 15-28). Yet, before He closes the fearful description, the picture is drawn of the great assize when the living and the dead shall be brought before His bar. vv. 29-31. The

first catastrophe exactly covered the last, as the eye of the prophet looked down the vista of the ages. In describing the one, he seemed to be describing the other; of which it thus became historically the symbol, and prophetically the type.

The argument of Peter in the text is presented in the strongest form of logic, from the less to the greater probability. It is put interrogatively, as a direct appeal to the moral judgment of the reader—carrying with it a challenge to resist the conclusion, if it be possible. This is felt by the writer to be so irresistible, that the utterance of it may be safely left with those to whom the argument is addressed: "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it 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 sinner appear?"

It is necessary just here to intimate a caution in the interpretation of the text. Evidently it must not be understood as implying any defect in the provisions of the gospel, or as clouding with suspicion the certainty of the believer's salvation. The atonement for sin is perfect; the Mediator standing between us and God is fully competent to the trust assumed; the righteousness by which we are justified, is commensurate with the law we had broken: certainly, there is nothing wanting in this part of the Gospel scheme. So, when this redemption comes to be applied. The agent is the Holy Ghost, equal with the Father and the Son in power and glory, whose work must therefore be perfect. All the grace needed in our sanctification is treasured in Christ, that it may be dispensed—and the Holy Spirit dwells within us, to make the immediate application. When too we come to the final stage of this salvation, the glory into which the saint shall be introduced is already prepared for him through our Lord's ascension into heaven. (John xiv: 2-4). The certainty of this salvation cannot, therefore, be impugned. It is secured by the covenant promise of Him who "is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or, hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" (Num. xxiii: 19). This assurance is made doubly sure, by the close articulation of the Gospel scheme, in which all its parts are fitted the one to the other with the nicest adjustment, and the unity pervading the whole displays the wisdom with which it was designed. Whilst the distribution of offices amongst the persons of the Godhead, is seen to be just what is needful to give efficiency to the plan, and guarantees the accomplishment of the end which is proposed. Whatever then may be intended by the Apostle when he speaks of the righteous as "scarcely saved," no distrust can be entertained as to the

completeness of that salvation revealed in "the glorious gospel of the blessed God."

But there is a human side in this salvation on which man is the actor, as well as a divine side on which God is the agent. The Scripture saith, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure. (Phil. ii: 12, 13). It is, I conceive, upon this human side, where the agency and the experience of the Christian are brought under review, we are to find the true interpretation of the text. However complete the scheme of divine mercy, and however certain the salvation it provides for the sinner, every believer finds that, so far as his own part in the work is involved, he is but "scarcely saved." Let us look into this a little.

I. *We are made to see that there are real obstacles to be overcome, in any plan of salvation which God may devise.* It is not proper to speak of degrees of power in omnipotence, and therefore all things may be regarded as alike easy to God. But there is a marked difference in the Scriptural account of God's works, when viewed as exhibitions of *physical* or of *moral* power. We are presented with the difficulties of the latter, that a deeper impression may be made of the power which subdues them. Thus the work of Creation, which lies so far beyond the compass of reason that it can be accepted only through faith, (Heb. xi: 3,) is yet presented in Scripture as requiring only a *word*. In each of the days, the creative act is described thus, "and God said,"—"for He spake, and it was done—He commanded, and it stood fast." (Ps. xxiii: 9.) But in redemption there was counsel; as though wisdom must be brought in to consider and to surmount embarrassments. It was a scheme gradually unfolded through a period of four thousand years, before its completion in the sufferings and death of Christ upon the Cross. Nay, a language must be constructed in the types and symbols of a figurate economy, through which the methods of saving grace might be revealed to the world. How wonderful the contrast! And God means the Christian to understand the obstacles, over which the great salvation is brought to his door in the sweet offers of the gospel.

Descending from this broad survey, you may choose to enter into the details of this amazing scheme. I warn you, that difficulties will thicken upon every step of the investigation until, it may be, you will pause in alarm. When justice, truth and holiness have united in the decree, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die,"—how shall mercy and love protest against it, without a schism in the attributes of God which it would be blasphemy to suggest? Do you fall back upon the idea of *SUBSTITUTION*? Then

explain the embarrassment of expiating the sins of the guilty by the sufferings of an innocent party. Would it not be tyranny in the lawgiver to lay this dreadful service upon any who should be unwilling to assume it? And could any creature lawfully propose it of his own accord? Perhaps, if the law-giver could himself achieve the task—if he who has the deepest interest in preserving the integrity of his own administration could endure the penalty—in that case, the repugnance to justice would be lost in the sacrifice which lays the suffering exactly upon him. But do you not see that you have risen now above the human plane to the divine? You have found the Son of God, so far one with the Father as to be identified with the Lawgiver; and yet so far distinct from the Father, that He may freely offer to take the sinner's place.

But then how shall "the Word be made flesh?" (John i: 14.) For until the Divine is also human, the substitute is not yet found. Need I tell you, that you have just struck upon the deep mystery of the Incarnation? Passing this by, however, do you clearly see how this substitute shall *really* feel the shame of the sins He has assumed? The suffering you may conceive as coming upon Him from without; but the shame is within. Here is the dilemma; how can He, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled," encounter this strange emotion of shame? And yet without it how can He be said to put His soul in our soul's stead, as a true substitute must?

Without pressing further these difficulties, which lie in the Scripture facts of incarnation, substitution, and vicarious atonement, turn your thoughts a moment to the office which the Holy Ghost discharges in our salvation. Evidently, His agency must be omnipotent: for it is His function to give life—to make the sinner a new creature in Christ Jesus—to raise him from his death in sin, that he may "walk in newness of life." (Rom. vi: 4-6.) Yet in all this work of Almighty power, He must not disturb the autonomy of man's nature. The sinner must be plucked from the jaws of hell, and a complete change be wrought in his whole character: whilst not a pin of the delicate machinery shall be jarred from its place, in the spontaneity and responsibility of the acts which he shall put forth under the impulse of all this grace.

I sweep over these points rapidly, having no purpose beyond that of passing them in review. They are but illustrations of what must be surmounted in any plan of mercy which may be revealed to us; and it is in the solution of these and kindred difficulties, that the gospel of Christ becomes "the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth." They are so brought home to us, in our Christian experience, that we cannot suppress the feeling of being "scarcely saved." Indeed they sometimes

so frown upon us with their rugged grandeur, that we smile at the flippancy of the assaults which infidelity has ever made upon them. Dr. Payson used to say that he could write from his own experience against Christianity, if he chose to do it, with a power that would put to shame all that infidels had ever dreamed. And it is true. The man, who has drawn into his own experience what Divine grace has achieved in order to his salvation, could furnish the skeptic with difficulties that would blanch his cheek with terror. Yet they have all been conquered in the gospel of the grace of God, as the believer with a blessed experience fully knows. It is his prerogative therefore to say to the sinner who rejects this gospel, these difficulties remain with their eternal pressure against you. By this gospel the Christian is only saved; "what then shall the end be of them that do not obey it?" The oppressive silence which follows this interrogatory, is the most solemn condemnation that can be pronounced.

II. *The righteous are scarcely saved, in view of the struggle with which each passed into the Kingdom of God.* What a long period of apathy and indifference, during which God was pleading for admission into the heart that was barred against His approach! What resistance of motives drawn from three worlds, the attractions of heaven, the tortures of hell, and the emptiness of earth—against which three-fold battery the human spirit has the power to hold out in obstinate siege! Over what a dreary waste memory travels, when it brings up the years of impenitence and unbelief, during which we listened to the denunciations of wrath and to the pleadings of love, alike unmoved by the pains of the one and by the pathos of the other! Then followed conviction for sin, and the sense of guilt. Can we not recall the unutterable wretchedness, when we were first overwhelmed by the shame and disgrace of all this? And was it relieved when we awoke to an equal sense of our helplessness, and gloom settled for a time into the blackness of despair? Is it difficult to reproduce the agony of those fruitless attempts to escape the bondage of sin and the curse of the law under which we groaned? What self-inflicted tortures goading the conscience to remorse, in the vain hope that remorse might transform into a peace-giving repentance! What a strain upon the whole nature, in those spasms of effort to lay hold upon the cross with the faith which would make the Saviour ours! Truly then the kingdom of heaven broke in upon us, as one expresses it, "with a mighty movement and impulse," and it was with a species of violence that we took it by force. (Mat. xi: 12.) Can the Christian recall these pangs of the second birth, when he passed from spiritual death to spiritual life, without feeling that he was "scarcely saved?" And he will read, in that experience, the certain

doom of those who have never felt the anguish of this middle passage from sin to holiness.

III. *The righteous are scarcely saved, in the severity of the conflict with indwelling sin, with the world and with Satan.* It would cover the whole personal history of the Christian, to develop the three points here specified. Nothing can be attempted beyond the merest suggestion. As to the first of the three, the new life is infused by the Holy Ghost, and then is left to its own law of growth: or to vary the form of expression, the principle of holiness is implanted, which by the law of expansion pervades the whole nature and takes possession of every faculty. Throughout life, until death brings a blessed release, the antagonism exists between what the Apostle calls "the flesh" and "the spirit:" "for the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." (Gal. v: 17). To the end of his career on earth, the believer is 'putting off, concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts and is putting on the new man, which after God; is created in righteousness and true holiness. (Eph. iv: 22, 24). The Christian does not live, who cannot enter into the sad complaint of Paul: "I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii: 14-25.)

The conflict with the world is severe in two particulars. There is, for example, its *obtrusiveness*. We are so much under the dominion of sense, always unfavorable to the acting of faith. Through the five senses, this world of matter is ever rushing in upon the world of spirit. In vain do we seek to shut down the gates and bar out the invader. With profane rudeness it tramples upon our seasons of holy meditation and secret communion with God—thrusting its trifles upon our notice, and with boisterous positiveness asserting that to be real which we have so often found to be empty as the shadow. In addition to which there is the *benumbing influence* of the world, so unfriendly to piety in all its maxims, opinions, habits and laws. Here we are—in the world, with no power to separate ourselves from it—with all the energies tasked in resisting the snares by which we may, at any moment, be entrapped.

And what shall I say of the Devil? Most certainly not that which the shallow scepticism of the day openly proclaims—that he is a myth, a dark superstition, a fantastic spectre conjured up by fear in an uncritical age, the traditional legend of a gloomy and ascetic past. It was the lot of

Him whom we call our Master and Lord, to enter into conflict with this most personal of all foes: and there can be no testimony more unimpeachable than of the witness who declares, out of the bosom of the dismal strife, that Satan is "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." (Eph. ii: 2; John xii: 31). With fearful significance He is even styled "the God of this world," having power to "blind the minds of them that believe not." (II Cor. iv: 4). The reality of jurisdiction which this fell usurper has acquired over the forces of nature, is more than shadowed to us in the temptation of our Redeemer himself; when he "took Him into an exceeding high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and said unto Him, all these things will I give thee, If thou wilt fall down and worship me. (Mat. iv: 8, 9). I have no speculations to offer as to the mode in which this vision was accomplished. The wonder is equally great, and equally attests the stretch of Satanic power, whether we suppose an actual spectacular display before the eye of the body—or a mental conception wrought through the imagination alone. The point to be noticed is that, in either case, it was a work accomplished by the Devil: and it gives the clue to much that is experienced by the Christian who, through temptation, enters into the sorrow of his Lord. Who can describe the limit of power granted him to inflame the passions of men, to stimulate lust and desire, to fill the imagination with pictures of sin, to enter into men's dreams and to pass the most weird apparitions before the eye closed in sleep? Nay, when the arts of solicitation have all been exhausted, what resources of malice are displayed in harassing those whom he cannot destroy! What horrible suggestions, full of filth or full of blasphemy, are suddenly thrown into the mind—which recoils from it with a degree of horror showing them to be arrows from the bow of an enemy without! But say—if a Christian can come out of a life-long conflict with this triple conspiracy of the world, the flesh, and the devil, without the conviction riveted upon him of being "scarcely saved?"

IV. *That he is scarcely saved, is proved by the severe discipline to which he is subject during life.* Trials, doubtless, are allotted to all: for the double reason that by the interlacing of human relations the pious and the wicked are bound up together—and because this Divine providence operates chiefly through natural and established laws, under which all men live alike. But there is this fundamental difference between the sorrows of the righteous and of the wicked: that the former are embraced within the covenant which God has made with His people, and fall therefore under the ministration of love. I scarcely know what should excite a



deeper gratitude, than the tenderness and unction with which this distinction is pressed upon us in the Word of God. If you turn to the Old Testament, there is the testimony of the Eighty-ninth Psalm: "if his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes: nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail—my covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." (vv. 30-34.) If you turn to the New Testament, there is the ever classical passage in Hebrews: "for whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." (Heb. xii: 6-11.) But discipline cannot accomplish its purpose, without being severe. It can neither vindicate the divine holiness in the dispensation of mercy, nor can it correct the waywardness of our sinful hearts, without putting us to the torture. What those suffer whom God undertakes to purify, must remain a secret betwixt Him who inflicts and them who endure. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness;" and can we come forth from the pressure of grief and pain, without knowing that we are "scarcely saved?" The teaching power there is in sorrow—oh what depths of ignorance it does uncover! What sins of omission, what sad deficiencies of character,—which we would never have suspected, unless the probe had been driven deep by the faithful hand of love! But he who thus comes out of "the furnace heated seven times hot," must know that he has been "saved as by fire."

V. *The Christian is scarcely saved, in view of the divorce between his person and his works at the judgment.* There is an important sense in which they do go up with him to the bar for trial, "for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." (Ecc. xii: 14.) These are the evidences, by which character will be established. They must therefore be passed under review.

in the day when human destinies are declared. In the case of believers, these works have no significance except as proofs of a gracious state and of a living union with Jesus Christ: "then shall the king say unto them on His right hand, come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat—I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink—I was a stranger, and ye took me in—naked, and ye clothed me—I was sick, and ye visited me—I was in prison, and ye came unto me." (Mat. xxv: 34–36).

There is, too, a blessed sense in which these works follow the believer into heaven, there to receive a gracious reward. Our Lord intimates as much in the parable of the talents, when to him who had used well his trust it was said: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things—enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (Mat. xxv: 21, 23.) And the voice, which John heard from heaven, sweeps away the last vestige of doubt: "Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." (Rev. xiv: 13.)

But whilst these Christian works are recognized as evidences of our state before God, and as proofs of personal zeal in the Divine service, they are entirely disallowed as forming any part of the ground of our acceptance in the day of Judgment. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest—for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." (I Cor. iii: 11–15.) How prophetic of this separation of the believer from the imperfect works he has wrought, is that solemn disclaimer of them which he himself is constrained to make in the hour of death! At no moment does the redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ seem so precious, as when the curtain is lifted which hides the realities of the eternal world. The language of every departing saint is, "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost—which he shed upon us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour." (Tit. iii: 5, 6.) What can this repudiation of his own righteousness, prophetic of a more public divorce

at the Judgment, import—except that salvation is purely of grace? In no uncertain tone is the testimony delivered that, so far as his personal agency is involved, every Christian is compelled to feel that he is “scarcely saved.”

In the application of this fact, according to the Apostle’s argument, it will be best to be pointed and brief.” “If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” Before this solemn question is answered, let the advantages possessed by the righteous be carefully considered.

1. *They are scarcely saved, notwithstanding their union with Christ from whom life is constantly derived.* The preceding exposition was intended to free the gospel from the suspicion of incompleteness. But I am anxious that you shall appreciate its sufficiency, in all its parts. What a splendid gain it is to the believer “to be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith?” (Phil. iii: 9.) What vantage ground can be higher, than to be “complete in Him who is the head of all principality and power”—in whom “dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily?” (Col. ii: 9, 10.) Who can be safe, if he be not—unto whom Jesus Christ has been “made of God wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption?” (I Cor. i: 30.) Yet in the face of all this, the Christian confesses with Peter that he is “scarcely saved.” What possible hope can then be cherished by those who are “without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world?” (Eph. ii: 12.) Is not the argument well put by the Apostle, and can its force be evaded?

2. *The righteous are scarcely saved, notwithstanding the indwelling of the Holy Ghost to sanctify and glorify.* The Christian has, in this presence of the Comforter, a double assurance of his salvation. He is given as the seal and pledge of this: “in whom,” says the Apostle, “after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.” (Eph. i: 13.) And we can see the nature of the guarantee in the fact that the Holy Ghost is the quickener, the fountain of spiritual life to those in whom he abides. Yet with this perfect assurance of salvation, in the actual presence and official working of the agent by whom salvation is applied, it is still most solemnly true that “the righteous are scarcely saved.” What must the end be of those who not only “have done despite unto the Spirit of grace,” but who (so

far as they can testify from any experience of His power,) "have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost?" (Acts xix: 2.) Is not the argument pertinent? If they are "scarcely saved" in whom there is a well-spring of life, how utterly dead must they remain upon whom the Holy Spirit hath never breathed?

3. *The righteous are scarcely saved, notwithstanding the entire change wrought in their character and desires, at their conversion.* God knows, my brethren, that we are conscious of grievous imperfection in ourselves. The harsh world can bring no accusation against us, save that of insincerity, half so severe as those to which we daily answer at the bar of conscience. But with all this, we are constrained to proclaim the stupendous change which Divine grace has wrought within us. "One thing we know—whereas we were once blind, now we see." (John ix: 25.) A new nature has been implanted, with its own instincts, appetites, aspirations and desires; and the tendency of these is to holiness, detaching from sin and leading us to God. If then with this magnificent advantage we are but "scarcely saved," what is their hope who are still under the power of evil and in whom the yoke of spiritual bondage has never been broken?

4. *The righteous are scarcely saved, notwithstanding the support drawn from the promises and grace of God.* These recur to the saint in every season of darkness and trial, affording the nourishment by which his spiritual strength is renewed. It is one of the offices of the Comforter to "bring them to our remembrance," and through these channels to pour upon the soul the rich grace of God by which we are saved. But if with this aid we are only saved at the last, how melancholy the forebodings of those who cannot point to a single line in the word of God that does not warn them against the day of final ruin?

Let the unconverted themselves answer the question of the text: if with all these splendid opportunities "the righteous are scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Alas! there is no answer, but in a most oppressive silence. In that deepening silence, let the sinner indulge two reflections. When he shall stand before the bar of judgment, his probation will be ended: he has reached his destiny, and that destiny he has deliberately chosen. Upon what principle can he expect the Almighty to reverse this decision, to contravene his choice, and to force upon him that which he has persistently rejected? The grace by which we are redeemed is as sovereign in its application, as in its origin: but it saves no being against his will. On the contrary, it is written, "the people shall be willing in the day of thy power," (Ps. cx: 3). If thy Judge shall render his decision upon this just and necessary principle, the

destiny which the sinner has chosen will be the destiny he will experience. He has chosen death, and death must be his portion.

Besides this, the sinner has completed his education ; and it is an education which unfits him for heaven. If placed amongst the glorified by arbitrary authority, he could not share their joys. He has not been rendered "meet for the saint's inheritance in light." What, O sinner, if you yourself should earnestly pray to be banished from the glory of that presence, whose dazzling splendor would prove a more terrible torture than the darkness of despair! What picture can be drawn of the sinner's doom more dreadful, than that hell with its horrors should be coveted as an asylum from the intolerable anguish of being in the light of God's presence and holiness forever? I have not the heart to say anything after this. Oh, that you could be persuaded to faith and repentance, whilst change is possible! At least, let the difficulty with which salvation is accomplished by us, be a sufficient plea for your immediate entrance upon the work. May God, in His mercy, set home the truth of the text upon every conscience here! May the echo of its unanswered question linger upon the ear, until the answer shall come back from the sinner kneeling at the Savior's cross!

## XL.

### THE NEW BIRTH.

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JOHN III: 3: "*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*"

This interview with Nicodemus is particularly interesting, as being our Lord's first contact with the purest and most intelligent Judaism of his day. The voice of Prophecy had been silent through four hundred years, but is now heard again: and the Jewish ruler, convinced by the miracles of Christ that He was at least a teacher sent from God, hastens to the oracle for light. The nature of his inquiries is easily gathered from the colloquy between the two. The cry had rung out from the banks of the Jordan, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand;" and this "master in Israel" would learn the nature of that kingdom, how it stood affected to the ancient system of Moses, and what were Christ's personal relations to the same.

Jesus however anticipates his pupil, and answers directly to his hidden thought. "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him:" such is the courteous introduction with which the interview is opened. But our Lord cuts through all circumlocution at once in his reply, "verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." As though he had said, "you would ascertain what is the nature of this kingdom of the Messiah: understand then that it can be known only by participating in its blessings." A German writer has quaintly, but truly said: "the kingdom of God is nothing into which a man can think, or investigate, or study, or read, or hear, or talk, or discuss himself—man can only experience his way into the kingdom of God." The fundamental pre-requisite, therefore, our Lord teaches to be "the new birth."

Nicodemus staggers at the mystery—"how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born." To this rejoinder, two extreme interpretations have been given. The first attributes the utmost obtuseness of intellect to Nicodemus, as taking Christ's word in its exact literalness. The second, regarding this as incredible, attributes to Nicodemus a perfect comprehension of our

Lord's parabolic style, which he simply retorts in his dilemma. It might perhaps be paraphrased thus: "you require altogether too much—it is morally as impossible for the fully formed thought or character to reverse itself, to go back to the beginning and fashion itself anew, as it is physically impossible for an adult to return into the womb and be born a second time." Between these lies an intermediate opinion: that Nicodemus, surprised by the unexpected and startling assertion of Christ, answers confusedly and foolishly—or else with craft, to draw from Him a fuller explanation of His meaning.\* Whatever may have been his design in asking the question, our Lord, in re-affirming the statement, couples with it a sufficient exposition of its import: "verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The explanatory words, here added, clearly indicate that the change required is not *physical*, but *moral*—that is to say, not a change in the organic structure of the soul, nor an addition to the complement of its faculties—but a spiritual change wrought in its affections and tastes and desires by the power of the Holy Ghost, and leading directly to acts of holy obedience. This is clearly the meaning of the phrase, "born of water." This is the element of cleansing, profusely used under the old economy as the symbol of purity, and incorporated for the same reason in the New Testament Ordinance of Baptism. To be "born of water," then, according to the fixed import of the symbol, is simply to be born again to holiness of heart and life.

This doctrine of "the new birth," though mysterious, is an elementary Christian truth, placed by the great Teacher in the front of all His utterances. It is represented in Scripture under other forms of expression, equal in their emphasis. Sometimes it is called a *creation*: "for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." (Eph. ii: 11). It is termed a *resurrection*: "that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life." (Rom. vi: 4, 5). It is styled a *quickening*: "and you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." (Eph. ii: 1.) It is compared by the prophet to the conversion of *flint* into *flesh*: "a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." (Ez. xxxvi: 26.) These co-ordinate expressions certainly imply a change which is radical, pervading, transforming—a change as great in the faculties and movements of the soul, as that experienced in the body when an infant is born into the world, or when a corpse is raised

\* See statement of these in Stier's "Words of the Lord Jesus," in loco.

from the tomb. This change our Lord declares to be indispensable to salvation in His kingdom.

The subject naturally divides into these two questions: WHAT IS THE NEW BIRTH? and WHY IS IT SO NECESSARY TO OUR SALVATION? The answers to both will exhaust this discourse.

I. WHAT, THEN IS IT TO BE BORN AGAIN? A question of surprising difficulty, the moment we pass beyond a general description and attempt a scientific definition. An illustration or two will perhaps sufficiently indicate the embarrassment. Here then is a corpse before us, perfect in its structure, symmetrical in feature and form, complete in the ligatures which bind the parts together, covered with a network of nerves and sinews through which it should be capable of sensation and of motion. What is lacking? Nothing but *life*—the life which should actuate the whole. But what is LIFE? Ah, who shall answer? It evades research. The anatomist has never taken it up on the point of his scalpel, as he does the tissue or the cell, with the joyful discovery, 'see, here it is.' He may describe the conditions on which it depends; he may enumerate the signs of its presence; he may recount the results which it can accomplish. But what it is in itself the most advanced science has never been able to pronounce, and probably will never be competent to disclose.

Now it is just this mystery of life which we encounter, in discussing the question of "the new birth"—a mystery by so much the greater, as the *spiritual* life is more hidden and delicate than the *natural*. Precisely the same difficulty meets us in the exposition of the one, as of the other. It is easy enough to say that spiritual life depends, as the condition, upon communion with God from whom alone it is derived—and that its certain fruit will be a holy obedience to the will of God. But this description of the life is not the exhibition of it in its primary essence. On this account, the treatises which undertake the discussion of this topic are laid down with the most profound disappointment. They describe "the new birth" on its *negative*, rather than its *positive* side. They tell abundantly what it is *not*; but fail to point out exactly what it *is*. The defect is not easily supplied. Still, analogies have been suggested, which do appear to throw light upon the nature of the change in "the new birth."

For example, we speak of one man as constitutionally irascible or malignant, and of another as constitutionally amiable; intending thus to intimate a tendency in the two, to the class of actions which are defined by these terms. The soul is the same in both as to its original structure, having the same faculties, and under the operation of the same general laws. But the prevailing disposition, which lies back of all these natural faculties and



qualifies their action, is different in the two men. This inner principle, whatever it be, which enthrones itself as a ruling power within the soul, controlling its affections and determining its acts, may be as difficult to seize and define as the principle which we call the life. Yet no exposition of human character or conduct is satisfactory, which does not signalize it. In the abstract, as a thing to be metaphysically understood and expressed, the one is as difficult as the other; in the concrete, as a daily fact thrusting itself upon the observation, both are equally practical and tangible. It would be a queer description of man that should make no reference to the mysterious principle of life residing, we know not where nor how, within the frame—informing every part, so that without its pervading influence every limb would lie passive and be incapable of fulfilling any function. Equally defective would be any analysis of man's spiritual nature, which did not find seated in the midst of its faculties the hidden and prevailing disposition that controls every manifestation and gives complexion and character to every act.

But let us abandon these abstract and metaphysical forms of expression for illustrations more easily understood. When we speak of the nature of the lion, or of the lamb, of the tiger, of the bear, or of the dog, do we mean anything more than the habitual disposition of these animals which determines their character and conduct? Knowing this, we can pronounce beforehand what their behaviour will be under given circumstances. In like manner we speak of a holy nature in the saint, and of a wicked nature in the sinner; meaning by this a holy or sinful principle dominating in the one and in the other, determining their actions and giving them moral character in the eye of the law.\*

Thus when God in the first instance created man, He not only created the soul with all its faculties of memory, judgment, conscience, heart and will, necessary to constitute him a responsible and immortal being; but He placed within that soul, in the bosom of all its powers, a holy disposition which should preside over the whole as the principle of spiritual life, manifesting itself in holy exercises and acts of obedience. This principle sin has destroyed. The soul remains in its structure what it was before

\* The first clear conception of this subject, in its philosophical and positive aspect, was obtained by the writer from the first of Dr. Thornwell's Discourses on Truth, (Coll. Writings, vol. 2, pp. 468-9); where the substance of the preceding paragraphs may be found. With equal felicity of illustration and analysis, he describes holiness as "not a habit, nor a collection of habits, but the indispensable condition of them all. \* \* \* All moral qualities inhere in it, as properties inhere in substance. It is to the moral faculties of man what extension is to matter—the very form of their existence."

A vain attempt has been made to identify an old article on this subject in the Princeton Review, read with profit many years ago.

the Fall. The same faculties remain to the sinner, which are necessary to him as man. He could not be divested of one of these, without being divested of responsibility, and without being thrown in a different category from that in which he was created. The fundamental disposition, however, has been changed. The principle of holiness has been supplanted by that of sin; which henceforth, as the regulative principle, moves the man in a direction forbidden by God's law.

In the new birth, the Holy Ghost restores this lost principle of holiness; which is, from the beginning, the principle of spiritual life in man. Hence the propriety of the technical phrases under which His work is described.

He "*quickens*" those "dead in trespasses and sins;" because the restoration of holiness, as a ruling principle in the soul, is the restoration of its true and real life. Of course, its power is at once displayed in the holy acts which it prompts; and the change is visible in the character and life of the believer. It is just as though God should supernaturally change the original disposition of the tiger into that of the lamb, manifesting itself in a corresponding change in the characteristic acts of the two. Or, it is just like the graft which infuses a new virtue into the tree, qualifying the fruit it shall hereafter produce, without altering the texture or displacing a single fibre in trunk or limb. So the eternal Spirit, moving upon and through all the powers of the human soul without infringing their liberty of action, "*quickens*" the sinner into spiritual life by restoring the lost principle of holiness. The man, who is "born again," finds that he is "born of the water and of the Spirit;" since under the new disposition which has been implanted, the whole character is toned to acts of purity and obedience.

Let us take another illustration. Two men look together upon the same landscape: the one, with the "dull, leaden eye of an ox"—the other, with the keenest appreciation of its beauty. What precisely makes the difference between the two? Both have the same physical and mental organization—they have the same eyes, the same faculties of thought and will—the perceptions of sense are exactly the same in both. What then is the difference? Simply this: one has sensibility and taste, the other has not. It may be an original or an acquired faculty; but it explains the fact that, in the same circumstances and with identically the same sensations, one has the *feeling of beauty* which the other has not. The possession of this æsthetic principle by the one, or its absence in the other, qualifies the exercise of soul as to the appreciation of natural beauty. In like manner, there is such a thing as *moral* beauty; in accordance with that exquisite epithet of David's in several of his Psalms, when he speaks of "the

beauty of holiness:" (Ps. xxvii: 4, and l: 2, and xc: 17 and cx: 3.) But this requires a holy taste for its discernment; which is possessed by the renewed in heart, because implanted by the Holy Ghost in "the new birth." There is a ready appreciation of the loveliness that is in God, to which the soul finds itself attracted; and in its contemplation there is conscious and ineffable delight. In this experience the sinner cannot share, simply from the insensibility which must always attach to spiritual death.

Hence it appears that the change, which is wrought in regeneration, is not a *physical* change upon the substance of the soul, altering its structure or enlarging the number of its faculties; but it is a *moral* change, in the implanting a new and holy disposition which, by the constitution of our being, will direct and qualify all the future exercises of the man. Thus he will see with a new light in the understanding, will feel with a new direction in the affections, and will choose with a new power in the will. Holiness has been restored to its original supremacy in the soul; the usurpation of sin has ceased; and the whole character puts on the livery of the power which it obeys.

This transformation is effected by the Holy Ghost, in a direct exercise of supernatural and gracious power. Yet it is accomplished in a way perfectly congruous with man's rational nature—by illumination of the mind, purification of the affections, and direction of the will. The great perplexity is in reconciling the essential activity of man's spirit with that degree of passiveness necessary to the reception of a new principle from without. Undoubtedly the soul is active; we cannot conceive it to be otherwise. Neither in this world, nor in that to come, is this necessary activity ever remitted. Yet, from the nature of the case, man is wholly passive in regeneration—not so much the agent as the patient—not the subject who acts, but the object which is acted upon. How shall we reconcile the amazing paradox? How shall we trace the activity so essential to spirit, in the very moment when it is the passive recipient of an influence by which its whole character is transformed? Perhaps an analogy drawn from one of Mr. Coleridge's acute distinctions, so characteristic of his subtle genius, may help to clear up the apparent contradiction. "In attention," says he, the mind is passive—receiving impressions from without: "in thought, it is active—producing from itself." And yet is there not intense activity in the eagerness with which these external impressions are taken up by the mind? Must not power be exerted to a high degree, in simply holding the mind in that receptive condition which is the peculiar mark of attention? All the anguish of mental discipline lies just in

this, to gain that mastery over our own faculties which is necessary to the acquisition or to the reproduction of knowledge. This illustration will serve to show that activity may not be intermitted, but may be called to its highest exertion, whilst yet we are the passive recipients of a new power communicated to us from without. Just as this mighty river, which girdles our city, may be instantly arrested in its flow and turned back in its course—and there will be only a metaphysical point of time at which its waters are not in motion: so the whole current of the sinner's thought and feeling may suddenly be turned from the world to God—and whilst he is entirely passive in the supernatural change, there will not be an instant in which he is not conscious of the fulness of his activity and responsibility before God.

Gathering up these thoughts into distinct propositions, we reach three conclusions: *First*, that in "the new birth" a supernatural change is wrought upon the whole nature of the sinner, in the transformation of that inner disposition which gives color and tone to every act, and which is brought at once under the controlling power of holiness. *Second*, the Holy Ghost is the author of this change; who yet accomplishes it in perfect harmony with the fundamental laws of our spiritual economy, never interfering with that spontaneity which is essential to responsibility. It is rather His office to enlighten the mind, to purge the affections, and to magnetize the will; so that, with the power of a new life, man shall himself cling to God as the sum of all knowledge, of all holiness, of all blessedness and love. *Third*, that while through every change in his experience the sinner is perfectly conscious of his essential activity, yet in "the new birth" he is the passive recipient of a new life, just as in creation or as in the resurrection of the dead from the tomb.

II. But I pass from this abstruse and difficult theme, to the assertion in the text of THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF THE NEW BIRTH: "verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

1. *The dominion of sin can only thus be broken.* Salvation involves two elements—deliverance from the *guilt*, and then from the *power* of sin. The one is a *relative* change—the other, an *actual*. The one is a change in our *legal state*, whereby we pass from the condemnation of the law and are *justified* before God. The other is a change in our *actual character*, whereby we are *sanctified* for God's service and presence. The two are distinguishable in thought, though inseparably connected in experience. By the logic of grace, the former draws the latter after it by necessary consequence; for when God takes the sinner into favor, if this be not wholly

delusive, He must render him also capable of its enjoyment. All God's judgments are according to truth; and He can declare no man blessed who is not a partaker of His grace. If the sinner is released from condemnation, it is because a real righteousness has been reckoned to him as his own; and if, being righteous, he is to lie upon the Divine bosom, then must his impurity, as well as his guilt, be removed—lest God be defiled. Hence the two are presented in their close conjunction, throughout the Scriptures: "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Rom. viii: 1-5.) "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection; knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." (Ibid. vi: 5, 6.)

Such is the constant testimony of Scripture, that where the *guilt* of sin has been cancelled through that mighty solvent, the atoning blood of Christ—there the *power* of sin must also be broken, and its *dominion* must be overthrown in the human heart. This, of course, is accomplished in our sanctification, which must have its beginning in the "new birth." Just as in mathematics you conceive of the point before you conceive of the line, and yet the point loses itself immediately in the line which it generates—so the principle of spiritual life implanted in the new birth, moves forward from that point; and in its grand progression marks out the broad, blessed line of a holy life, through which we grow in meetness for the presence and glory of our Father above. The power of sin is first broken, when we are born anew into the kingdom of God. Holiness is then planted in the germ; which will, in the completeness of its growth, finally expel sin and destroy it in its *being* no less than in its *dominion* and *power*.

2. "*The new birth*" is indispensable to obedience and good works. Here lies the precise distinction between morality and religion—two things which men so curiously and obstinately confound. The moralist does a thousand right things, compelling thereby the approbation of the good. But he does them from natural considerations of propriety or prudence, and makes his own judgment the standard or law. Plainly there is no *obedience*, until it is rendered in conformity with the will of another—in deference to his authority and honor, and under the impulse of a constraining personal affection. Our Saviour, you remember, resolves all the obedience which God approves into the single principle of love; "thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; this is the first and great commandment. And the second

is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Mat. xxii: 37-39.) "Love," declares the Apostle Paul in his comprehensive style, "love is the fulfilling of the law." (Rom. xiii: 10.) Evidently there can be no love, except it be directed to a person; who, if he should stand in the relation of a ruler, must present his authority as the object of our regard. Obedience, therefore, is more than outward conformity, in life and conduct, to the letter of the law; it is the homage which our whole inner nature renders to the will and glory of God. Before the sinner is competent to this, he must be called from death to life. Spiritual life is the necessary antecedent of true obedience, just as natural life is the antecedent of breath and of motion.

Look at Lazarus "bound hand and foot with grave-clothes." Can the dead stir? Can that motionless breast heave with mighty resolves? Can he come forth whilst the great stone, rolled against the mouth of the tomb seals him up to darkness and despair? Only let Him speak who is "the Resurrection and the Life"—let Him, who holds in His hands the keys of death and hell, utter the word "Lazarus, come forth"—and behind the barrier of rock the Almighty Quickener breathes once more into those decaying nostrils the breath of life. So when the same immortal King shall, from His throne of power, utter the same "come forth" to the sinner dead in transgression and guilt, the Holy Ghost will breathe into him the spiritual life which will burst the cruel fetters, and "create him anew in Christ Jesus unto good works."

3. "*The new birth*" is necessary to any living union with Christ. This is the exact pivot upon which our salvation turns. However complete the redemption wrought by our adorable substitute, it is altogether foreign to us until it becomes ours by identification with its author. But this union is two-fold, in *law* and in *fact*. It is *legal* when, in our justification, the law reckons to us the work of Jesus Christ; on which ground alone we are absolved from condemnation and are accepted before God. It is *vital* when we are made partakers of the life which is "hid with Christ in God." (Col. iii: 3.) "Because I live," says Christ, ye shall live also. (John xiv: 19.) "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." (Ibid. vi: 57.)

It is necessary that we should live, if united with Christ. Can anything more monstrous be conceived than that the living Lord, who has purchased life for His people through His own sufferings, should have one solitary member clinging to Him, who is "dead in trespasses and sins"? No; He who covers us with His righteousness because of our union with Him in

law, will also quicken us with His life that we may be one with Him in fact. In the conjunction of the two, the mystical Christ becomes an object most beautiful to the thought; in their severance, an object so hideous that we shut it out from the mind as blasphemy.

Consider too that the Holy Ghost is the bond of this union. But what a contradiction, that He who is the Quickener—whose name indicates His function as the giver of life—should dwell in a heart that is dead! It is only necessary to put the terms of the proposition together, to see that they are mutually destructive. The great promise of our ascending Lord was that He would send “the Comforter, that He may abide with you forever.” (John xiv: 16.) And the instant He enters the soul however dead in sin, it becomes instinct with life which this presence breathes. Whether then we look at union with Christ, on the one hand—or the indwelling of the Spirit, on the other, through which the union is accomplished—we see the necessity of the new birth. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

4. “*The new birth*” is indispensable to fellowship with God. Need I say that this is the original instinct, and the high prerogative of every rational creature? Just for this, my hearers, you and I were born, to hold fellowship with God! And there are obscure yearnings for this in the hidden depths of every human heart. If the ears were only open to hear them, there are solemn voices of the soul continually crying out for God. Every earthly love, by which life is sweetened, is witness to the truth that the heart which loves the finite can find its satisfaction only in the love of the infinite. Every thought is a spark ascending to the Great Mind, of which all other minds are born. Every movement of discontent is the soul’s scorn of that which is “seen and temporal.” Every aspiration of ambition is the flutter of the wing which would mount into the face of the sun.

It is the great discovery of grace which makes one wise forever, to learn that God only is the all-sufficient good. “There be many that say, who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.” (Ps. iv: 6.) But we must be like God, to hold communion with Him: “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos iii: 3.) To this end, the Saviour’s utterance holds true: “except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.”

5. “*The new birth*” is absolutely necessary to the enjoyment of heaven. This completes the idea of salvation, as being deliverance from the *guilt*, the *stain*, and the *being* of sin; beginning in justification, carried forward in sanctification, and ending in our translation to heaven. Could we but look into God’s lexicon, we should see not the difference, but the identity,

between the grace and the glory—the two words which lie so near together in the dictionary of the gospel. Grace is glory in its beginning—it is glory in the seed and in the germ. Glory is grace in its ripe fruitage; it is the light shining through all the graces of the believer, bursting at length into the full splendor of Jehovah's blessedness and joy upon the Mount of God, which is to be the Mount of the soul's transfiguration forever.

If then we are to see the light of that "upper day"—if we are to look upon the face of God's throne, and to bathe our spirits in the glory of His presence—the beginning point is in the new birth, where we first experience "the grace of God that bringeth salvation." The electric circuit is not complete, except the two poles be put in connexion. We must first know that as *grace*, which in the end we are to know as *glory*. It is in the new birth we first come to the knowledge of holiness and of God, which is to be the light and joy of the soul forever. Well may the truth return upon us in the double emphasis of our Lord's testimony, "verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

In the application of this subject, I am constrained, *first*, to call your attention to *the apologetic value of this doctrine of the new birth*. Let it be observed that Christianity is the only religion of which this truth constitutes a part. Heathenism, in all its forms, knows nothing of it; nor yet any of the subtle and dreamy theosophies of the East. Both may have their ceremonies of ablution symbolizing the notion of purity, as their altars and sacrifices shadow forth the idea of expiation. But in none of their liturgical rites, nor in their dogmas of religious faith, is the hint breathed that a soul dead in sin can be born again in the image of God. Deism has no place for such a truth in its narrow creed. Rationalism, in its thousand Protean disguises, never had its slumber disturbed by any dream of such a mystery. Yet it is clear that, if a religion is to be devised for a sinner, this new spiritual birth is one of the great wants to be provided for. The absence, therefore, of such a doctrine in any religious system, is sufficient to convict it of imposture; whilst the prominence assigned to it in the Sacred Scriptures, proves their divine origin; and the system of grace which they reveal, is shown to be a safe foundation for a sinner's hope. Were I then driven to the last defence of Christianity, I would plant myself upon this declaration of the Saviour in the text, and stake the issue upon it. If the Gospel be the only system that provides for the regeneration of man dead in sin, then is it the only religion that comes from God, and the only religion which is suited to our case.



In the *second* place, I reason that, as "the new birth" comes from God, so every sinner is thrown in absolute dependence upon God. And again—because this "new birth" is from God, every sinner may hope to experience it through the working of His grace and power. It is a two-edged doctrine cutting through presumption on the one side, and through despair on the other—like the sword of the Cherubim, turning every where as it guarded the way of the tree of life. Hear the universal proclamation, "ye must be born again!" If any of you, like the proud builders upon the plain of Shinar, are laying resolve upon resolve, reform upon reform, constructing a tower of refuge from the coming deluge of Jehovah's wrath—learn how vain it is! Except a man be BORN AGAIN, he cannot see the kingdom of God. The Divine life must come from above: the creative power must be exerted again, as it was at the first; the voice that wakes the dead must call the sinner from his spiritual grave.

If, under a sense of this dependence, you fold your hands and say "what can we do," I will tell you this: you can hope abundantly in the power and goodness of Him who has the life to give, because He is Himself the life. Wonderful! my hearers, wonderful, that our hope should come right up from the bottom of our despair! Wonderful, that our life should spring out of the body of our death! Dead in sin, and therefore helplessly dependent upon God—who, just as soon as we feel this, turns His face and says to us, live. Cry out to Him, O sinner! Cry, as you never cried before! Cry, as the wild eagle cries when hungry for its prey! Cry, as the young lion when he makes the forest tremble with his roar! He, "who provideth for the raven his food," may hear your wail of anguish, and open for you the prison doors and give you life out of death. Oh, when did the orphan's cry ever fall upon the ear of the great Father above, without his drawing the wanderer to His bosom, and saying "this my son was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found!"

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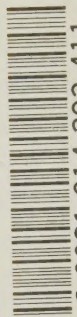
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